

# Explore: Time With God

Your introduction to a regular time with God

## THE BIBLE: Look who's talking!

📖 **2 Peter 1 v 16-21**

1

*Stand by for the ride of your life! Because, if the Bible really is God's Word, then it's not just a book about God, but a book by God. In other words, as you open the pages of your Bible and read today's passage, you will actually be listening to God speaking to you!*

### God spoke through men

**Read 2 Peter 1 v 20-21**

You often hear it said that the Bible was written by men whose understanding was limited by their own times and circumstances—and so it doesn't really apply to how we live and think today. What do these verses say about that?

It's a great word picture in v 21. The idea is of a sailing ship being blown along by the wind. Scripture isn't simply man's ideas, or man's 'spin' on God's ideas. It is God (the Holy Spirit) breathing out His own words through man. Until God 'blew', the men who wrote down the Bible had nothing to say; they were like sailing yachts without wind.

Some people say we hear God as we pray, or are silent. But really it is when we open the Bible that we listen to God, for it is here that God speaks definitively.

• 'But doesn't God speak in lots of ways?' Yes, He speaks through creation, through our conscience, through experiences we have, even through dreams sometimes—but these are more like the teacher clapping to get the children's attention. The Bible contains the clear, undisputed words that God is speaking to us today. So we must come, bowing in our hearts as we read, to receive everything God says.

### Men spoke from God

**Read 2 Peter 1 v 16-19**

Yes, God is speaking, but not in a vacuum! A real man, an apostle called Peter, has real concern and is writing a real letter to real Christians. To hear God's words to us now, we need to understand what God was saying through Peter to the people then. What is it that Peter wants his readers to be sure about (v 16)?

And what is the reliable truth that Peter is telling us about Jesus? That, far from there being uncertainty about who He was, they should see He was the very person all the Old Testament was pointing to (v 19). Jesus is God's final revelation, His last word to mankind. If they believed the Old Testament scriptures, how much more should they now receive the truth about Jesus. That's Peter's word as a faithful witness—and it's also God's word.

🙏 PRAY

- Thank God that He has not left us groping around in the dark on the important issues in life.
- Praise God for the Bible, and ask Him to help you come to it humbly, ready to hear, and glad to obey.

## Sure thing

2

📖 **1 Peter 1 v 22-2 v 3**

*A salesman calls at the door offering to replace all your windows for free. The doctor looks seriously into your eyes as he tells you the results of your test. Whose word do you trust?*

I wonder how many years it will be before people look back to the 'old days' at the beginning of the 21st century and laugh at the way we believed the kind of world view the media churned out. And yet now people look at you as if you are mad if you dare to suggest God's words in the Bible are a safer guide...

### New is true?

**Read 1 Peter 1 v 24**

Peter isn't ashamed to quote words that were already 700 years old when he wrote. Now you can add on another 2,000. But they're as fresh as today's bread from the baker's. Every day humans fade and die, and their ideas get buried with them. And every day is a new testimony to the unchanging truth of God's words. Everything God has said has proved true; everything God has said is still proving true.

🕒 TIME OUT

- What are we doing to God's unchanging truth if we tweak it to 'bring it up to date'?
- In practice, what can we do to help ourselves rely on God's truth when all the pressure is to go with what everyone else is saying?

### Old is dead?

**Read v 22, 23**

- What is Peter's argument in these verses?

You see just how new God's ancient word is? Peter is saying that God's word is the key to living a life of genuine love towards others. It's not that it simply contains truth which will help us love one another—it's actually alive in us if we've been born anew through it! God's living word is giving us life and love as we trust and obey what He says. So of course we will be hungry for what gives us life...

### The Bible—boring?

**Read 2 v 1-3**

At last we find words that we can rely on, answers that satisfy, truth that never shifts ground, promises that will certainly be kept. And a sign that God is at work in us is that we are hungry for it. Like wailing newborn babies crying out in distress until we are happily and contentedly feeding on God's life-sustaining truth. Is that you? Or do you still have a 'take it or leave it' attitude to reading the Bible. If so, it might say more about you than the book in your hands...

## Spiritual minds

3

📖 **1 Corinthians 2**

*Here's a great prayer many use as they come to read the Bible: 'Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law' (Psalm 119 v 18).*

But why do we need to ask for that? Is it that the Bible is a particularly difficult book needing extra brain-power to work out? No—the reason is that it is God speaking, and we therefore need God to open our ears and eyes to receive it. As the Holy Spirit of God breathed out the words originally, we need the Holy Spirit of God to breathe those words into our lives. So go on, ask now!

### God speaks nonsense!

**Read 1 Corinthians 2**

The heading is tongue in cheek of course, but it helps make Paul's point. God's words are 'foolishness' unless we have God's Spirit. Now don't think the Bible is some kind of mumbo jumbo needing 'spiritual' gymnastics to interpret—that's not Paul's point at all. God's words actually make perfect, glorious sense—but our human minds and desires are so screwed up that we won't take it in. So at one level we understand what the Bible is saying—because God's message to human kind is simple enough for children to grasp. But at another level it leaves us confused because it goes right against the flow. What is at the heart of God's message of wisdom—which to human thinking is nonsense? See v 2, 7.

- Why did the Jews and Romans have Jesus crucified? See v 8, 9.
- So how can we understand or receive God's message? See v 10-14.

🕒 TIME OUT

Reading the Bible should be a very humbling experience. It means asking God to overturn our wrong thinking and replace it with His wisdom, which our world thinks is nonsense. Until we do that, the Bible will remain a closed book to us...

### Spiritual minds

God's Spirit opens our eyes as we think. Unlike some kinds of meditation, we don't empty our heads when we come to the Bible: we fill our minds with God's truth. Never imagine that thinking is unspiritual! It is only wrongthinking, merely human reasoning, which is unspiritual. So as we approach the Bible it is with prayer for God to enlighten us and with minds set on understanding God's words.

🙏 APPLY

We are to use our minds like the Jews of Berea, who, when they heard the good news about Jesus, 'received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.' (Acts 17 v 11)