

Take-Home One

Who Handed You This Book?

Unless Someone Guides Me | Session One

What We Found

A wealthy, literate, devout court official sat in a moving chariot reading Isaiah 53, one of the clearest messianic passages in the Old Testament, and could not tell who the prophet was talking about. He had everything except one thing, and what he asked for was not a better text. It was a person. “How can I, unless some one guides me?”

We searched for a verse listing which books belong in the Bible, and there is not one. The list came to us from the Church, discerned over centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is not a weakness in Scripture; it is the reason you own a Scripture at all. We found the same shape in Nehemiah 8, where the people hear the Law read aloud and the Levites still have to give the sense. That was not an accident of one assembly; the Law itself attached teachers to the text, sending hard cases to the priests and the judge (Deuteronomy 17:8-9) and telling Israel to seek instruction from the priest’s mouth (Malachi 2:7). Israel was never handed a text without a teacher.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Augustine

Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundation," ch. 5

He says he would not believe the Gospel itself unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved him to it. He is not putting the Church over the Gospel; he is naming how the book came to be in his hands and known to be what it claims.

Voice of the Church

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Against Heresies, Book III (summary)

Against opponents claiming a private key to Scripture, he makes apostolic teaching public and checkable: go to the churches the apostles founded, and see what has been handed on in the open.

Voice of the Church

St. Vincent of Lérins

Commonitorium, ch. 2

His famous test: what has been believed everywhere, always, and by everyone. He proposed it because Scripture is deep, people read it in contradictory ways, and nearly every party claims the text.

The Sealed Question

Do not discuss this with anyone. Write your answer, fold this page, and bring it still folded to Session Five. We will open them together.

MY GUESS

Write down the one verse you think most clearly teaches that Scripture alone is the final and only infallible rule of faith, the one authority no church, council or tradition may overrule.

Why that one?

Ready Response

Three ways this comes up in a real conversation, and what to do. The goal is never to win. It is to open a door that stays open.

“That’s not in the Bible.” Do not go hunting for a verse. You hunted for one this evening and came back empty, and the emptiness was the finding. Ask instead, warmly and with no edge: “Which book of the Bible tells us which books belong in the Bible?” Then stop talking; the silence does the work.

“The Catholic Church added books.” One sentence, no heat, then move on. Those books stood in the Greek Scriptures the early Church read and in the Latin Bible for over a thousand years, and the Council of Trent defined the canon in 1546 in response to the sixteenth century denial of their canonical status.

“I just read what it plainly says.” Half of it is true, and say so. Then hand him the man in the chariot, who read Isaiah 53 and could not say who the prophet meant. Why a person, not a clearer text?

Live It This Week

- Read Acts 8:26-40 slowly, once, without a commentary. Notice how much of it is God arranging a meeting.
- Find out who first handed you a Bible or first taught you the faith. Thank them this week, or offer a Mass for them.
- Look up how the Sunday Mass readings are chosen. You are handed Scripture on a schedule you did not design.
- Pray daily, by name, for the one person you most want to have this conversation with. Ask for their good, not for your victory.

Memory Verse

“How can I, unless some one guides me?” **Acts 8:31**

Before Next Session

Read: Luke 1:1-4 and John 21:25. Both are short. Ask one question as you read: what existed before the writing did?

Catechism: CCC 81, 82, 85, 107, 108, 120. If you read only one, read 120.