

SESSION 2: How the Bible Was Preserved

— SCRIPTURE: LUKE 24:44-45

— IN TODAY'S SESSION

The Bible is made up of 66 books. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. The Bible contains many books with many writers, written over thousands of years. Today we will look at how these books came to be contained in one book we call the Holy Bible.

— REFLECT

- Why do you think there so many books of the Bible?
- Instead of using many different writers, and being written over thousands of years, why didn't God have one person write the entire Bible?
- What is the difference between the Old and New Testament? How are they similar?

— DVD SEGMENT (PLAY SESSION 2)

- What thoughts and feelings did you have during the segment?
- Is there one thing you learned from this segment that you did not know or think about before?
- What is one idea you received from this segment?

— SEARCH THE WORD

The word *canon* means the official set of books that have been deemed authoritative for belief and practice. Before the time of Jesus and the New Testament, Jewish leaders and scholars determined what was accepted in the Hebrew canon. This was the scripture used during the time of Jesus and contained all 39 books of the Old Testament that we use today.

Why do you think it was important for the Jews to establish what was to be included in their scripture?

Read Luke 24:44-45.

- What does Jesus say about the Old Testament scriptures?
- What does the Old Testament point us to?
- In what ways is the Old Testament important to understanding the New Testament?

- Because they feel it is easier to understand, some people may have a tendency to read only the New Testament. Why should we not neglect the Old Testament?

The New Testament was written from approximately 45-100 A.D. These letters were circulated widely among Christians. At the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D., the 27 books of the New Testament were confirmed as canonical (official).

- Why do you think it was necessary to decide which books were to be considered official for the New Testament?
- How did they determine which books were authoritative and which were not?
- What thoughts do you have knowing that the Bible was written thousands of years ago?

— **SEARCH YOUR HEART**

The overall message of today's session is that books of the Bible were collected and determined authoritative by councils, rabbis, scholars, and church leaders based on certain standards and guidelines.

Invite your group to respond to the following questions:

- Based on your reading and today's discussion, how has your understanding of God's Word deepened?
- In what ways does knowing how the official books of the Bible were decided help strengthen your faith in the reliability of the Bible as God's Word?
- How might what you learned through the reading, DVD segment, and today's discussion help your daily walk with God?

Close in prayer, thanking God for guiding and leading those involved in determining the inspired and authoritative books of the Bible.