

Establish the Authority of the Bible

By Larry E Miller

Please do not overlook the importance of doing this.

A person's basis for authority is extremely important. Why is this true?

Typically, Roman Catholics lean heavily on tradition and what their Priest says. However, you can show them that the Roman Catholic Church **does believe** that the scriptures are a word from God with authority. Their Catechism states, "God is the author of Sacred Scripture. The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." 1* "These inspired books teach the truth.... the books of scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which GOD, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see [confided] (sic) to the Sacred Scriptures." 2*

So, the individual Catholic person should be bound by conscience to accept what the Bible says to be authoritative and true for them.

Begin with what Jesus Christ taught about authority. Read Matthew 5:18. "For verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (KJV). What does this verse say about the issue of authority? Note that a "jot" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and a "tittle" is the smallest stroke that distinguishes one letter from another. This would be like changing a capital "O" to a capital "Q" in the English language.

Continue with Luke 24:44. "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'"

What does this declaration by Jesus Christ add to the issue of biblical authority? (Read John 5:45–47; 12:44–50, and discuss what they add to the issue of the Bible as authority?)

Also, what the apostles declare about the topic is extremely important. Here are some passages that might be helpful in certain situations. Acts 2:24–36; Acts 13:16–41; 2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Peter 3:1–2; 2 Peter 3:15–16; 2 Timothy 3:14–17.

After you have a good understanding of what these verses are saying, you are ready to use them in your conversation/evangelism. If the person is willing, keep going through the different passages as far as seems necessary until he or she seems to understand and accept the Bible as authority regarding his or her own salvation. The journey may be short for some, while longer for others.

ISSUE: What is one's authority for discovering and determining what salvation truth is?

For most Roman Catholics, it is whatever the Roman Catholic Church (their Priest) says.

For many, perhaps most, Roman Catholics, crucial to them understanding and accepting the saving gospel is their acceptance of the Bible as final authority. **They begin to understand that they have been taught something different by their church, and it is here that they must transfer their confidence from the church to the Bible as final authority.** If they are having trouble making this transition, lead them to Mark 7:1–13, a powerful passage on tradition versus the Bible as authority. **When they decide the Bible is right and the church is wrong, a key milestone in their spiritual understanding has been reached.** Hints that transition is occurring would be indicated by comments like, *"You know, the Catholic Church teaches that Mary had no children other than Jesus, but that isn't what the Bible says."* Or *"I didn't quite believe that the pope is infallible."* Or _____.

Having experienced this spiritual transition in the lives of numbers of people, several examples of responses are sealed in my memory. One person was surprised that Jesus Christ and the New Testament authors had so much to say about the authority and importance of the Bible. As she became engaged in serious Bible study, one lady indicated that it seemed there was one Jesus she had understood through her church involvement and another Jesus revealed in the Bible. This fact was surprising to her and presented an internal spiritual challenge until she chose to accept that the Bible reveals the real Jesus.

Also, some were surprised to learn Jesus Christ had sufficiently paid for our sin; therefore, no other payment needed to be made or could be added to what Jesus had done. I remember one man saying that he suddenly realized the sin-paying work of Jesus was enough. Others were surprised by what can be called the "illuminating power of the Holy Spirit" in bringing them new and important understanding from the pages of holy scripture. One such example was the light on the face and joy in the heart when they understood a passage like ***Ephesian 2:8–9. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."***

Having been thoroughly indoctrinated into a system that advocated the need to merit eternal life, it was amazingly liberating to learn that grace is unmerited, and that saving faith doesn't include any kind or number of self-works. I remember one person saying that she had kept on trying to climb the ladder to salvation but would always climb two rungs and fall back three.

*These and many stories like them can be shared, illustrating the importance of understanding and accepting the holy scriptures as **final authority** in important spiritual matters like the way of salvation.*

1* Catechism, par. 105. Compare 80, 81, 107.

2* Catechism, 107.