

used as the rule of faith? There are several passages that may be used in an attempt to prove this, and they will be commented on below: **Acts 17:11** - This verse simply says that the Bereans were more open to Paul's message and examined the Old Testament scriptures to see if what Paul was saying, probably about Jesus being the Messiah, was true. *It doesn't say that ONLY scripture should be used.*

1Cor 4:6 - In this verse, the phrase "Do not go beyond what is written", is not referring to scripture. By this phrase, Paul is telling them that they should not have favorites in this life, and that they should not boast that they are more important than others. This verse has nothing to do with Sola Scriptura. Rev 22:18-19 - In this passage, the word "book" is referring to the book of Revelation, not the Bible, which wasn't put together until several centuries later.

2Tim 3:16-17 - Notice that this passage says that all scripture is "useful" or "beneficial (NWT) for teaching ...". In other words, it is saying that scripture is beneficial for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, and that all these things make the man of God equipped for every good work. It does not say that ONLY scripture is beneficial for these things. Point out that just as "godly devotion is beneficial for all things" (1Tim 4:8, NWT), making "firm assertions constantly" is beneficial (Tit 3:8, NWT), and "the manifestation of the spirit" is beneficial (1Cor 12:7 NWT), use of scripture is also beneficial. Also, when Paul was talking about "scripture", he was referring to Old Testament scripture since that was the only scripture available at the time. There are not many Christians alive today who believe that only Old Testament scripture is sufficient as the basis of all their religious beliefs. The fact is, there are many references in the Bible to the use of scripture, but nowhere in the Bible does it say that ONLY the Bible should be used as the sole basis for religious beliefs. Therefore, if your Jehovah's Witness relative or friend says he believes that ONLY the Bible should be used as the basis for religious beliefs, ask him why he believes this if it's not stated in the Bible. The reality of Sola Scriptura is that it is a doctrine that came to the forefront

during the Protestant Reformation. When the reformers rejected the authority of the Catholic Church, they needed some other source for their authority and the Bible was used for this purpose. This has since resulted in tremendous division among Christians and has led to the formation of thousands of Protestant denominations, each one using the Bible as their rule of faith, but each one different in their religious beliefs and practices.

Finally, just in case there is any question about it's teachings on the Bible, the Catholic Church teaches that the Church, "... relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author ... God inspired the human authors of the sacred books ... The inspired books teach the truth." -*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pg. 31, and "God is the author of Sacred Scripture because He inspired its human authors; He acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error His saving truth." - Ibid. pg. 37, and, "The Church 'forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful ... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ', by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." - Ibid pg. 37.

Also, if you are told that Catholics don't read the Bible, you may want to remind your formerly practicing Catholic, Jehovah's Witness relative or friend that many Catholics do regularly read the Bible and are well versed in Scripture, that Scripture is read at every Eucharistic celebration, as has been done for almost two millennia, and that passages from the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms, the Epistles, and the Gospels are read at every Sunday Mass.

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Questions Catholics Should Ask Jehovah's Witnesses

The best way to evangelize to Jehovah's Witnesses is to ask questions. It helps JW's focus on weaknesses in their own materials.

It gives Catholics serious apologetic ammunition and reacquaints them with the solid foundations of their Catholic Faith.

Unfortunately, many people who become Jehovah's Witnesses as adults were at one time practicing Catholics. As a result, there are many Catholics who find themselves in the position of having to explain and defend Catholic beliefs to their relative or friend who has become a Jehovah's Witness. If you are a Catholic who finds yourself in this situation, or if you are a Jehovah's Witness who was at one time a practicing Catholic, and would like to know why the Catholic Church teaches some of the things that they do, then this is for you. Below is a brief discussion of 12 topics that a Catholic may encounter in a discussion with a Jehovah's Witness.

The Catholic Church and the Bible

Before getting into a discussion of what the Catholic Church teaches about the Bible and of what the Bible says about scripture, it is important to understand where the Bible came from and how it came to contain the books that it does. To start with, it is important to realize that the Bible was not just miraculously handed down from heaven one day in its printed form. The books that comprise the Bible were written over a period of about 1500 years, by many different authors, and in more than one language. It contains a collection of many separate books, and as a result, the name "Bible" comes from the Greek word "biblia", which means a collection of books. Also, the Bible was not produced in print until at least the 15th century. Before that, each copy of the Bible had to be laboriously handwritten, a task which was done primarily by monks. Because of this, Bibles were very expensive and very scarce compared to nowadays, where almost every Christian household contain a Bible and a copy of

the Bible can be purchased very cheaply in almost any bookstore.

Old Testament:

The original Hebrew Scriptures can be divided into 1) the Pentateuch, commonly believed to have been written by Moses around 1400 BC, but probably written by several different authors, 2) the Prophets, which includes the 4 major prophets and the 12 minor prophets, and 3) the Writings. Around 250 BC, when the Greek language became common, a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek was started and completed around 100 BC. It was called the Septuagint, which means 70 in Latin, because this was the approximate number of scholars who did the translation. In addition to the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint also contained the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch, and parts of the books of Daniel and Esther. The first century Christians accepted the Septuagint as their version of the Old Testament and used the Septuagint when citing Old Testament passages, as is evident from New Testament and other early Christian writings. These 7 books were later referred to as the Deuterocanonical books. During the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, only the original Hebrew Scriptures were accepted as the canon of the Old Testament by Protestants, while the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches continued to accept the Septuagint as the canon of the Old Testament. That is why today, Protestant Bibles contain 39 books in the Old Testament and Catholic Bibles contain 46 books in the Old Testament, although both Bibles contain the same books of the New Testament.

New Testament:

The New Testament contains 27 books and includes the 4 Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles or Letters, and the book of Revelation. The books of the New Testament include the following:

-Gospel of Matthew - Written by Matthew the Apostle between 80-100 AD

-Gospel of Mark - Written around 70 AD and felt to have been the first Gospel written

-Gospel of Luke - Written by Luke the physician between 70-85 AD

-Gospel of John - Written by the Apostle John between 90-100 AD

-Acts of the Apostles - Written by Luke as a sequel to his Gospel between 70-85 AD

-Letters of Paul - Written by Paul between 50-60 AD Paul was martyred around 62 AD

-Letter to the Hebrews - Authorship unknown. Written at least before 96 AD

-Letter of James - Believed to have been written by James, the leader of the early church in Jerusalem, sometime before 62 A.D, the year in which James was martyred.

-Letters of Peter - Felt to have been written by the Apostle Peter sometime before his martyrdom around 64 A.D.

-Letters of John - Written by the Apostle John between 90-100 AD

-Letter of Jude - Written by "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James" (Jude 1) around 80-90 A.D.

-The book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse - Written by the Apostle John between 90-100 A.D

Besides the 27 books now contained in the New Testament, there were many other works known to and read by the early Christians. Some were considered inspired and Apostolic, such as the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, the Epistle of Clement, etc., and some were treated as not having any Apostolic authority, such as the Gospel of James, the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of Paul, and other gospels, epistles, and apocalypses. It wasn't until late in the 4th century at the Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) that the Church proclaimed once and for all which writings would be considered the inspired Word of God and included as part of Sacred Scripture and which ones would not. Between 390-405 A.D., St. Jerome translated the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into Latin, which had become the common language of the people. This translation was called the Vulgate and became the official text of Sacred Scriptures. Then, as noted

previously, during the Protestant Reformation, the Deuterocanonical books were excluded from the Protestant bible. Since then, several versions of the Protestant bible have been produced, such as the King James Version (KJV) in 1611, the New International Version (NIV), and the Revised Standard Version (RSV). In 1961, the Watchtower Society released its own version of the Bible called The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT). Although it contains the same books as the commonly used Protestant bibles, many of its verses are translated differently and have a meaning different from the commonly used Catholic and Protestant Bibles.

The Watchtower Society makes the claim, "The one true Christian congregation would have to be an organization that holds to the Bible as its foremost authority, not one that quotes scattered verses but rejects the rest when these do not conform to its temporary theology." - *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, pg. 706, and speaking of C.T. Russell (the founder of the WTS) and his associates, "Accepting the Scriptures as supreme authority, they also rejected as unscriptural the teachings of the Trinity, ..." - *Ibid.* pg. 707. Ask your JW relative or friend two very simple questions.

(1) Do you accept the Bible as your supreme authority and believe that ONLY the Bible is the basis for all your religious beliefs? If he says yes, then he believes in Sola Scriptura, which states that scripture and scripture alone should be used as the sole rule of faith. In other words, for something to be considered a true Christian belief, it has to be stated somewhere in the Bible. Even though the Watchtower Society teaches that the Bible is their "supreme authority", the individual Jehovah's Witness is really taught to believe whatever the Watchtower Society is CURRENTLY teaching as "the Truth". In other words, they are taught to believe in the Bible, but only as interpreted by the Watchtower Society.

(2) If you believe only what is in the Bible, then somewhere in the Bible the doctrine of Sola Scriptura should be stated. Can you show me in the Bible where it says that ONLY the Bible should be