

*Trusting*  
*the* **BIBLE**



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TRUSTING THE BIBLE

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# Preface

What do men as diverse as John Quincy Adams, Dwight Eisenhower, Mark Twain, John Milton, and Earl Warren have in common? Each man had high regard for the Bible. From a president, to a military general, to writers, to a chief justice of the Supreme Court, people from all walks of life and in all centuries of history have acclaimed the Bible's unique place in the literature of the world.

Perhaps you have heard or have sung the children's song, "The B-I-B-L-E—Yes, that's the book for me; I stand alone on the Word of God; The B-I-B-L-E!" The words of the song emphasize the importance of the Word of God as being "the book for me." In fact, the Bible is such an important book that we might say it's *the* Book for me!

A young man was packing for a lengthy trip. "I'm about finished," he told his friend. "I only have to put in a guidebook, a lamp, a mirror, a microscope, a telescope, a volume of fine poetry, a few biographies, a package of old letters, a book of songs, a sword, a hammer, and a set of books I've been studying."

"But," his friend objected, "you can't get all that into your suitcase."

"Oh yes," replied the young man. And with that he picked up his Bible, put it in the corner of his suitcase, and shut the lid.

How can one book be described in so many ways? Where did it come from? Why do we call it the Word of God? How did we get an English Bible? What is the message of this book that was written so long ago? These are

valid questions, and they deserve our careful attention. The answers to these and other questions are the focus of this study.

You will need to use your Bible as you work through the lessons in this study. Locating Bible books becomes easier the more you do it. You may want to memorize the key verse at the start of each lesson. Approach each lesson prayerfully. God will bless you as you study His Word!





## LESSON 1

# What Is Inspiration?

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

**T**ake a moment to look at the Bible you are going to use as you study this lesson. What makes this book different from any other books you own? If you had to describe the Bible to someone who had never had one, what would you say?

In order to fully answer those questions, you need to understand the meaning of some basic words that relate not only to the Bible itself but also to how we got the Bible. Once you grasp the importance and meaning of these words, you will better understand this

*“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”*  
(1 Corinthians 2:12).

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special book that helps us know God and how to relate to Him.

As a believer, you have the Holy Spirit living in you (1 Corinthians 6:19). Part of the Holy Spirit’s ministry is helping you understand God’s Word (1 Corinthians 2:12–14). Before you go any farther in this study, ask God to help you depend on the Holy Spirit for understanding. You may want to use the same words the psalmist used when he prayed, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

Studying this lesson will help you learn the meaning of some basic words related to the Bible as well as the meaning of the “inspiration” of the Bible.

### **THE BIBLE**

The English word “bible” comes from the Greek word *biblos*. The Greeks borrowed the word from the Egyptians, who used the word for parts of the papyrus plant. Since the Greeks made a kind of paper from papyrus, *biblos* came to be applied to writing material generally and, especially, volumes of written work; e.g., scrolls, books.

While the word “bible” is not found in English versions of the Bible, the word is found in the Greek New Testament.

1. Read Matthew 1:1. What word in that verse do you think is translated from the Greek *biblos*?

Centuries ago Christians began to refer to this collection of sixty-six books as the Bible, and we continue to use the term today.

### THE SCRIPTURES

A second word that is often used in relation to the Bible is “Scriptures.” The English word “scriptures” suggests “writing.” The Bible is a *written* book. But the word “scripture” itself is not usually used to refer to just any writing; it almost always refers to *religious* writing. Many religions have their own scriptures; for example, the Book of Mormon and the Quran. We will soon see, however, that our Scriptures, the Bible, have a divine origin that no other scriptures can claim.

2. Read Luke 24:45. When Luke recorded that the risen Christ opened the understanding of the disciples so that “they might understand the scriptures,” what part of the Bible do you think he meant: the Old Testament or the New Testament?
  
3. Read John 13:18, 17:2, and 19:24.
  - (a) What phrase is repeated in each of these verses?
  
  - (b) What does the phrase mean?

Some related words are “inscribe,” “scribe,” “script.”

The New Testament uses the word "scripture" fifty-three times. It is always used to refer to some part of the Bible.

**REVELATION** is the act of God whereby He communicates to mankind that which mankind would not otherwise know.

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The book that we hold in our hands is the Bible, or the Scriptures. The sixty-six books within the one book are the Word of God. God has *revealed* Himself to us in their pages.

### REVELATION

If a person is to know God, God must reveal Himself, since He is beyond mankind's intellectual grasp. We cannot research or investigate God to find out what He is like; our minds are not great enough. He Himself must tell us.

4. Read Psalm 19:1.
  - (a) What reveals God to us?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - (b) What do they reveal?

5. Read Romans 1:20. What did Paul say could be known about God from His creation?

The things about God that are revealed to us by His creation are commonly referred to as *general* revelation. We can see enough to know

that God exists, but we need more. We need *special* revelation, and God has provided this through His Son and His Word, both of which are rightly called “the Word of God.”

6. Read John 1:1–4 and 5:26.

(a) About Whom was John writing?

(b) When did “the Word [become] flesh”?

Read Luke 1:35 and 2:1–7.

Jesus, God’s Son, is God’s Word. He is the communication, or declaration, of all that God is. John wrote of Jesus, “No man hath seen God at any time; *the only begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father, he *hath declared him [God]*” (John 1:18; emphasis added). More than just having spoken the words of God, Jesus *is* the Word of God.

God has revealed Himself to us in His Son. When we read the words and actions of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels, we are reading about God Himself. But God has also revealed Himself in written form; that is, in the Bible.

7. Read Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12.

Both of these verses are talking about the Bible. What is the Bible called in both verses?

The Bible is God speaking to us. If two people want to get to know each other, they usually communicate to each other with

words (speech, letters, e-mail). God wants us to know Him. So He has communicated Himself to us through His Word, the Bible.

He tells us of his own past achievements, how he has created, judged, redeemed, raised up men to serve him, and created a people for himself. He tells us of his present work: how he orders and governs all things for the fulfilling of his purposes. He tells us of his future plans, sketching for us in mysterious but glowing terms the coming climax of history and the final destiny of his people. He tells us what he thinks about human life, and the different ways in which men live it. He gives us directions and counsel, and makes promises and announces warnings. He teaches us his own scale of values, detailing for us the things that he approves and the things that he hates.<sup>1</sup>

Realizing that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us through His Son and in His Word leads us to the question, How do we know the revelation is accurate? The answer to that question answers the question of this lesson, What is inspiration?

### **INSPIRATION**

The Bible is the Word of God. It is a divine book. Yet it is also a human book. It was, after all, written by men and in languages spoken and read by men. The writers reflected the cultures of their day. How, then, can the Bible be the eternal Word of God? Some extraordinary act of God would seem to be necessary



to allow an earthly book written by finite men to be the eternal Word of the infinite God. That extraordinary act is known as the *inspiration* of Scripture.

8. Read 2 Timothy 3:16. What was inspired: the writers or the writings?

The word “inspiration” is the result of two Greek words: *theos* (“God”) and *pneu* (“to breath”). God had Paul say in 2 Timothy that God Himself breathed out His Word. When you exhale, you breathe out the breath that was in you. The Word of God, the Bible, originated with God Who, from within Himself, breathed it out to man. God didn’t breathe *into* men (that is, He didn’t inspire the writers themselves); rather, He breathed *out* the Word itself. God breathed out His truth; the men received it and wrote it down.

Four other words are commonly associated with inspiration. The first word is *verbal*. Inspiration extends to the very choice of the words that express the truth. God breathed the truth to men whom He appointed. The Holy Spirit, in turn, guided those men in their selection of words. The *words* of the text in the *original* manuscripts of Scripture were inspired.

The second word is *plenary*, which simply means “all.” Read again 2 Timothy 3:16: “All

**INSPIRATION**  
is the influence that God exerted on men who wrote the Scriptures to make the product exactly what God wanted it to be and to keep it from error.

How men received and wrote God’s Word is the subject of lesson 2.

Remember, inspiration describes the Bible and not the men who wrote down what God breathed out.

Inspiration is related to the original writing of the writer himself. It does not apply to all the copies that were made of those manuscripts nor to all the translations into various languages. No original writings, or autographs, exist today.

A red-letter edition of the Bible may make a person think that the words of Jesus are somehow more inspired than all the rest of the Bible. Red letters serve only to highlight the words of Christ. They have nothing to do with inspiration.

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scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Every book of the Bible and every word in that book were God-breathed. Inspiration extends to the totality of Scripture.

The third word is *inerrant*.

9. Look up this word in a standard English dictionary. What does it mean?

10. Read John 17:17. What did Jesus say about the Bible?

The Bible is free from error; it tells the truth. Charles Ryrie says of inerrancy, “The Bible is inerrant in that it tells the truth, and it does so without error in all parts and with all its words.”<sup>2</sup>

Inerrancy is vitally important. If some parts of the Bible are accurate and others are not, how will we know which is which? We must accept that all of it is true—or none of it is of value to us.

The final word is *infallible*. The Bible is not only free from error, it is *incapable* of error. Just as the holy God Who inspired the Bible is incapable of error, so His revelation of Himself is incapable of error.

The Bible is not just a book to admire and defend. It is a perfect book, a practical book, and a powerful book.



11. Read Isaiah 55:11. What did God guarantee about His Word?
  
12. Second Timothy 3:16 and 17 tell us what God's Word can accomplish.
  - (a) List the four things from verse 16 for which the Bible is profitable.
  
  - (b) According to verse 17, what does the Bible accomplish in the life of the man (person) of God?

The Bible is a book like no other! We can use it, trust it, and, indeed, stake our eternal destiny upon it. It is the revelation of God Himself, the inspired Word of God.

### **FOR FURTHER THOUGHT**

1. Why is it so important to believe that the Scriptures are inspired?
2. Why do we emphasize that inspiration applies to the *original* writing of the Scriptures? (Think about what happens when different people copy something over and over again.)

3. What should the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture mean to you as you study your Bible?

**Notes**

1. J. I. Packer, *God's Words* (Downers Grove, IL: 1981), 19.
2. Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications/Victory Books, 1986), 83.