

SESSION 1

**THE INSPIRED,
INERRANT,
INFALLIBLE WORD**

Scripture Focus

Deut. 30:15, 16; Matt. 5:17, 18;
John 17:17; 1 Cor. 2:12, 13;
Gal. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17;
Titus 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2–4, 20, 21

Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God communicated His exact words through inspiration so that the Bible is inerrant and infallible.

Measurable Response

Students will trust their Bibles and use them as God's personal message to them.

Memory Verse

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). ESV

Teacher Preparation

- Believers in countries with no access to Bibles understand the preciousness of God's Word. They will risk their lives for portions of Scripture, committing them to memory so they can ponder them and share them with others.
- Read 2 Timothy 3:16. All believer should treat God's Word as their most valued and precious possession. It is God's personal words to us. It tells us all about Him and how to be right with Him and live for Him. Without the Bible, we would be desperately lost.
- Most students take the Bible for granted and fail to appreciate its value for salvation and every other aspect of life. Help them learn to appreciate their Bibles during this course and as a result of this session in particular. Be an example to them. Be glad for your Bible and hold it dear to your heart.

Cultural Barrier

This session addresses the idea that truth is subjective. The Bible presents truth as objective. It reveals precise truths about God, us, sin, salvation, and the future. Anyone who tries to deny, twist, or explain away the Bible's objective truth is a proud fool. Students need to submit to God's Word and humbly respond to the truth it reveals.

Session Starters

Option 1—Building Contest

Gather

- Jenga blocks or other blocks.
- Two bowls of dry cereal (e.g., Froot Loops, Corn Flakes).

Steps

1. Organize the students into two teams. Give each team half the Jenga blocks and a bowl of dry cereal or anything else that would cause an unstable foundation.
2. Each team must build a tower out of their Jenga blocks. Teams will be judged on their tower's height, design, and stability. Teams must build their towers on top of the cereal in the bowl. They aren't allowed to dig down through the cereal to build on the bottom of the bowl. Give teams five minutes to work. They must stop working when you call time.
3. Judge the towers and declare a winner.
4. Discuss the teams' tower-building process.

ASK: How did your tower's foundation affect your design and build?

ASK: What adjustments did you make to try to firm up your tower's foundation?

ASK: What would digging below the cereal do for your tower?

5. Transition to Bible lesson.

The name of this course is called Bedrock: Foundations of Faith. We will spend thirteen sessions reviewing and discovering doctrinal truths that form the foundation for our faith. This session starts with the Bible, the Word of God. We will learn why it is the firm foundation for both our beliefs and our lives. This session will encourage us to appreciate the Bible and use it as our bedrock for life.

Option 2—Important Items

Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.
- Paper and pens.

Steps

1. Write the following sentence starter on the board: "If I had to live without a/an ____ (item), I would . . ."
2. Give students examples of items to write in the blank (e.g., phone, car, toothbrush, styling gel). Students write their responses and share them with the class.
3. Discuss the students' responses.

ASK: How well do you appreciate and cherish the item you wrote in the blank?

ASK: When has a lost item turned your life upside down?

4. Transition to Bible lesson.

This course presents foundations of our faith so we might better understand God and the life He has called us to. This first session begins with the Bible. We will learn what makes it special and why it forms the bedrock for our lives. As such, the Bible is arguably the most important item in our lives. Without it, we would be utterly lost in this life and for eternity.

Bible Study

Gather

- Resource 29-R1.

I. Explanation of Inspiration

A. The Scriptures are God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21)

When we speak of the doctrine of inspiration, we mean that the Scriptures came directly from God. He breathed them out. The Greek word *theopneustos*, translated as "inspiration," literally means "God-breathed." As such, "inspiration" is God's superintendence of human authors so that they wrote without error His revealed words. The inspiration of the Scriptures places the Bible's authority with God, its author.

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21. **ASK:** What do we learn from these passages about what Scripture is and is not? *Scripture is the very words of God as communicated by the Holy Spirit to specific people. Scripture is not a product of human imagination or reasoning*

The Bible came from God. Over two thousand times in the Old Testament, the prophets attest, “Thus says the LORD.” The Scriptures are God’s own words of truth. The writings reflect the authority of His words.

B. The Scriptures had human writers (2 Pet. 1:2–4, 20, 21)

Biblical writers like Paul and James had distinct writing styles because they had distinct personalities.

ASK: What is your response to Biblical writers putting their personalities into their writing?

Recognizing writers’ personalities within Scripture does not diminish the divine nature of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit was still the source of all of God’s Word. To be sure, the human writers were not robots or transcription machines. Yet the writers’ personalities did not taint or lessen the pure quality of the Scriptures. When we think about it, the presence of the writers’ personalities in the inspired Word is a testament to God’s sovereignty. God gave the writers the personalities that would reflect exactly the style of writing He wanted in the parts of Scripture they wrote.

Peter wrote that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20, 21). That means the Bible isn’t a compilation of man’s ideas. Rather, the Holy Spirit moved, or carried along, the writers of the Word. Acts 27:15 uses similar movement language. It says Paul’s ship was being driven along by the wind. The wind determined the direction and destination of the ship. The passengers and sailors, though, could still move around within the ship. That picture may illustrate the way the Spirit used the personalities of the individual writers of Scripture. Their writing styles differed, yet the outcome was the inspired Word of God.

The completed Word of God is God’s personal message to humanity rather an encyclopedia of knowledge. God, therefore, limited the information He shared in His Word.

ASK: What general questions does the Bible not address? *What are the components of an atom? What is the cure for cancer?*

ASK: How do the subjects addressed in the Bible point to what is important in life? *The Bible’s focus on God’s glory and the work of redemption shows that humanity’s greatest need is to be reconciled to God.*

God’s Word is complete. It provides all we need to know for life.

READ: 2 Peter 1:2–4. **ASK:** How does God’s Word fit into the picture of having all things that pertain to life and godliness? *We learn about God and all He has to offer through His Word.*

God's inspired Word is our way to know God. He expects us to interact with His inspired Word and study it as a means of building a relationship with Him.

II. Extent of inspiration

A. The autographs are inspired (Matt. 5:18; 1 Cor. 2:12, 13)

Inspiration applies to the autographs of the Bible. The term "autographs" refers to the original manuscripts of the Bible books. In reference to his own writings, Paul asserted that what he wrote and taught was from the Spirit and thus inspired.

READ: 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13.

Only copies of the original autographs have survived. The copies aren't technically inspired. That, however, isn't a problem. We can trust our Bibles because God has promised to preserve His Word (1 Pet. 1:25). Jesus talked about the preservation of God's Word (Matt. 5:18).

In the days before the printing press, any copy of a literary work was a hand copy, or manuscript. The Masoretes, Jewish copyists, demonstrated the care used in writing copies of the manuscripts. They counted letters and words to be sure that the copied document matched the original exactly.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940s provided us with Hebrew manuscripts that dated to the second century BC. These manuscripts, over one thousand years older than the ones already available to us, were nearly identical to the later texts. All the variances were minor.

The New Testament manuscripts show similar accuracy. Thousands of copies of all or part of the New Testament are available to us. Complete New Testament manuscripts can be dated to the fourth century. There are even early translations of the New Testament from the second century. As scholars compare these many different manuscripts, they find the New Testament has been marvelously preserved. Our God wants us to know His Word, and He has assured that possibility by preserving His Word for us. We can speak of the Bible today as being inspired because it is an extremely accurate representation of the inspired original.

B. The words are inspired (Deut. 30:15, 16; Matt. 5:17, 18; Gal. 3:16)

The individual words of Scripture are inspired, not just the concepts or ideas that lie behind the words. After all, concepts can be expressed only through words. God could not impress a concept on the mind of a prophet; He would have to use words to communicate the concept.

Nowhere does the Bible urge believers to know the general ideas of God's revelation or to give attention to the basic ideas that God taught. We are to know the very words of God. God was serious about the Israelites' responsibility to heed His specific words.

READ: Deuteronomy 30:15, 16. **ASK:** How important was it for the Israelites to know the very words of God's commands? *The livelihood of Israel depended on the Israelites' knowing, trusting, and keeping the very words of God.*

The New Testament motivates us to hold a similar regard for the Bible's specific words. In Galatians 3:16 Paul made a point based on the difference between the singular and plural use of the word "seed" in the Genesis record of God's promises to Abraham (Gen. 13:15; 17:8). God holds us accountable for exactly what He has said.

Jesus said He came to bring to completion the promises God made in the Law and the Prophets (Old Testament). Jesus promised to fulfill all of them, even down to the smallest letter and the least stroke of a pen (Matt. 5:17, 18). In other words, He would fulfill the promises completely and precisely.

READ: Matthew 5:17, 18.

DISPLAY: Resource 29-R1. Point out the jot and tittle in the Hebrew word. They are the smallest letter and smallest part of a letter. God inspired even the smallest parts of His Word, and He plans to bring His Word to completion.

The Bible is God's revelation to us. That truth should motivate us to study, for we can know God and His will for our lives with certainty.

III. Effects of Inspiration

A. Scriptures are inerrant (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:2)

The word "inerrancy" comes from the Latin word *errare*, meaning "to wander." That meaning seems to suggest that inerrancy is associated with a departure from something. But the Latin prefix "in" is negative. It fills out the meaning of the word so that inerrancy means "free from error." Whatever is inerrant could be said to have not wandered from the truth. When we say the Bible is inerrant, we are saying that it is without error. But a fuller definition of Biblical inerrancy is needed to understand its full application.

Biblical inerrancy means the Bible is free from error and that it speaks the truth whether it addresses doctrine, ethics, or history. Of course the Bible records lies and deception, but it never presents them as truth. For example, a large portion of the book of Job records the misguided



29-R1

speeches of Job's friends. The Bible is still inerrant in that it presents those speeches accurately as examples of bad theology.

The term inerrancy is not found in the Bible. You won't find a verse that says all Scripture is inerrant. But we do know that the Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16). Inerrancy is the logical outworking of verbal inspiration.

ASK: What would we have to conclude about God if the Bible was both inspired and filled with errors and false claims? *Either that God didn't care if the Scriptures were completely true, that He was incapable of inspiring the Scriptures in an inerrant manner, or that God was less than perfect.*

READ: Titus 1:2; John 17:17. **ASK:** What truths about God point to the fact that His Word must be free from error? *He cannot lie; His Word is truth.*

Proverbs 30:5 says that every word of God is pure. The word "pure" has the idea of being refined and found to be pure. When God's words are "heated up and melted down," not one drop of impurity comes to the surface. There is nothing to skim off the top. All God's words are true, including those recorded in the Bible.

B. Scriptures are infallible (2 Tim. 3:16)

It was impossible for the writers to record an error of any kind as they penned the Scriptures because they were under the Spirit's guidance (2 Tim. 3:16). That impossibility of error is what is meant by the term "infallible." The Bible is inerrant because it is infallible, and it is infallible because it is inspired. To say the Bible is neither inerrant nor infallible is to flatly deny it is inspired by God.

During the transmission of Scripture from the originals, minor scribal errors were made in the copies. As a result, there are textual variants in the manuscripts we have today. Studying the manuscripts and comparing them helps us sort out the variations and complete highly accurate texts in their original languages. Such a study also shows that the variations are rather inconsequential, affecting not one foundational doctrine. These textual variations are not proofs against the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture. The terms inerrant and infallible apply to the original manuscripts. Since those originals were perfect, we can have the utmost confidence in our Bibles today. The Bible is the Word of God.

Memory Builder

Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.

Steps

1. Write 2 Timothy 3:16 on the board and review its meaning.

“Inspiration” is God’s superintendence of human authors so that they wrote without error His revealed words. Inspiration applies only to the original autographs. Yet our Bibles are reliable because of the measures taken to make copies of the original autographs. The inspired Word of God profits us by revealing God’s doctrinal truth, what is wrong with our lives, how to change our lives, and how to live for Christ.

2. Students read to the class some of their texts or tweets that are no longer relevant or meaningful.

ASK: What value do you think your texts or tweets would have 3,500 years from now?

ASK: What would need to be true of a message for it to be relevant for that many years?

3. Discuss the relevance of the Bible.

The Bible is like one long, catch-all text to us from God. It tells us all we need to know about Him and about living for Christ. There are parts of the text that don’t apply directly to us today, but all the parts are important in understanding God’s unfolding personal message to humanity.

4. Students find favorite verses and either read them to the class or text them to you or a fellow student.
5. Review the important role God’s Word plays in our life as the students work on memorizing 2 Timothy 3:16.

Session Application

Gather

- Smooth-sided bricks (one per student).
- Sharpie markers.
- Lego people and bricks.

Steps

1. Review the lesson.

“Inspiration” means “God-breathed.” The Spirit superintended human authors so that they wrote without error God’s revealed words. Inspiration applies to the writers’ original autographs, making them inerrant and infallible. God used careful copyists over the centuries to preserve His Word. Our Bibles today are reliable and accurate.

2. Discuss implications of the inspiration of Scripture.

ASK: Why is the inspiration of Scripture such a critical doctrine? *If we can't be sure all the words in the Bible came from God, then we can't be sure any of them did.*

ASK: How should we treat the inspired Word of God? *We should value, respect, and study it.*

ASK: What will you do this week in response to having God's inspired words in the Bible?

3. Give each student a brick and access to the Sharpie markers. Students write a summary statement of this session on the side of their brick. For example, "God's Word is inspired and trustworthy."
4. Students choose or construct a Lego person to represent themselves. Line their bricks up along a table. Students put their Lego person on their bricks.
5. Give students access to Lego bricks to use to begin building a structure to go on their bricks next to their Lego persons. Each week students will record another foundational statement on their bricks and have an opportunity to add to their Lego structures. The brick represents the foundations for faith and the structure represents building their lives on the foundations for faith.

Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews the importance and implications of the inspiration of the Scriptures.