

I. Intro/Review

A. Discipleship Series

B. Foundation of Discipleship - The way we view Scripture has profound ramifications. To have confidence in the Bible is in no way a side issue, for it is the foundation of both corporate and personal belief and of expressions of Christianity.

1. Forms Body of Christ - Though interpretation may differ within the body of Christ, the truth of the Bible is the cord that binds the Church together and the foundation of all theology. It is the authoritative representation of the faith delivered to all the saints through Christ and the apostolic witness. Without the Scriptures we would have no plumb line for faith and practice.
2. Personal Life in God - In our personal lives, the Bible is our guide into communion with Jesus. We would all fall away without the written word speaking to us and stirring us toward love and faithfulness. We are nourished in our inner man through the written word in profound ways.

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in your statutes; I will not forget Your word....Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law. I am a stranger in the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me. My soul breaks with longing for Your judgments at all times...How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!...The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple...Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for your commandments. Psalm 119:14-16, 18-20, 103, 105, 131-132

“The soul can do without everything except the word of God, without which none at all of its wants are provided for.”— Martin Luther

II. What Makes Scripture, Scripture?

- A. Authoritative - Our bibles are made up of 66 books that were written by over 40 different authors in roughly a 1,500 year span. The question is why are these 66 books looked at as scripture? Why were these books believed to be worthy of being in our bible and other writings about God are not?

Simply put, what separates scripture from all other writings is that the books chosen to be in the canon of scripture are seen as **authoritative**.

1. The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words, in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. The direct result of this statement is that Scripture is therefore true, since it is contrary to God's nature to communicate any falsehood. (Num. 23:19; Titus 1:1-3; Heb. 6:18)
- B. Three Pillars of Authority - Within scholarship there are three pillars or tests that writings must pass in order to be considered authoritative scripture.
1. Inspired - Inspiration of Scripture refers to its origin, that it is "God breathed". This, however, is not attributing the source of Scripture to divine dictation. While there are examples of direct communication, for the most part "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Inspired writings are viewed as authored and guided by God but the individual human dimension of Scripture is preserved and the traits of the authors still come through in their writing. (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21)

We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared. We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities. We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write. We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's word. - Chicago Statement on Biblical Authority

2. Infallible - Infallibility, or the affirmation that Scripture is without fault, simply means that the Bible is not able to lead us astray in matters of faith and practice. It serves as a reliable and completely trustworthy guide in spiritual truth as we search to know and obey God. (Ps. 12:6, 18:30)
3. Inerrant - Inerrancy refers to the affirmation that the manuscripts in their original form do not affirm anything contrary to fact. This includes historical, scientific, and geographical data. Inerrancy includes infallibility, but extends its definition beyond matters of faith.

This isn't saying the Bible speaks with modern scientific precision, but that it doesn't say anything false. Thus, figures of speech, approximations, or loose quotations are entirely valid (e.g. the sun rises or rain falls). (John 17:17)

III. Biblical Survey

A. Old Testament

1. The collection of written words from the Lord began with the ten commandments and grew throughout the time of the patriarchs and into the prophetic era (see Deuteronomy 31:22; Joshua 24:26; I Samuel 10:25; I Chronicles 29:29; II Chronicles 20:34, 26:22, 32:32; Jeremiah 30:2; Ezekiel 43:11; Daniel 7:1; Habakkuk 2:2). By approximately 435 B.C., the Old Testament canon was closed, ending with the book of Malachi.
2. Septuagint - The translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek was made by Hellenistic Jews in Alexandria during the period 275-100 B.C. Greek speaking Jews and Christians relied heavily on it up until and during the life of Christ and the early Church. The Septuagint is commonly abbreviated LXX, owing to the tradition that there were seventy translators involved in the project.

B. New Testament

1. The accounts of the life of Christ and the apostolic doctrine were composed between A.D. 40-50 and A.D. 90-100. Mark is generally considered the earliest gospel and the writings of John were some of the last books to be written.
2. Authors are either apostles or those in direct contact with the apostles. For example, Mark is thought to have based his account of the gospel directly from the testimony of Peter; Luke traveled with Paul and was trusted by him.
3. A.D. 367, Athanasius named the 27 books accepted by the Eastern Church at that time. Thirty years later, in A.D. 397 at the Council of Carthage, the Western Church agreed and the canon was essentially settled.
4. Apocryphal literature is not included in the Jewish canon. Jerome made the distinction that these were not books of the canon but books of the Church.

Earliest Church evidence is decidedly against the inclusion of Apocryphal books. There are no New Testament references to any of the books.

C. Bible Translations

1. The invention of the printing press in 1450 was the beginning of the exposure of Scripture to the masses.
2. Martin Luther made a translation into German after the Reformation; the King James Version was completed in 1611. (KJV)
3. Today our versions of the Bible are the product of numerous scholars scrutinizing the earliest manuscripts to try to produce the most accurate translation.
 - a. Word For Word - These translations prioritize strict adherence to the original vocabulary and sentence structure. They are ideal for deep, analytical Bible study and the only source for developing doctrine.
 1. Translations Include - ESV, NASB, NKJV
 - b. Thought for Thought (meaning for meaning) - These translations prioritize conveying the original meaning and intent in natural, contemporary English. They are highly accessible and easy to understand for group reading and personal devotions.
 1. Translations Include - NLT, NIV, CSB
 - c. Paraphrase - These are highly interpretive versions rewritten by authors according to their opinions to express the biblical message in modern, conversational language.
 1. Translations Include - The Message, The Passion Translation, The Complete Jewish Bible, The Living Bible.

IV. Key Concepts

- A. There are three key concepts concerning how we view the scriptures in their word-for-word translated form. These three concepts are absolutely paramount for all believers to know and to disciple others in.

1. **The Bible is Clear** - The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it. (Ps. 19:7, 119:130)
 - a. It is a glorious statement of God's mercy, kindness, and desire for nearness that He has made His word so abundantly accessible to everyone. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit the simple are made wise and those wise in their own eyes are confounded.
 - b. It is important to realize the prerequisite for this promise of clarity is humility, sincere seeking, and obedience to the word. These three heart postures are available to everyone and within the reach of any heart who desires understanding.
 - c. In my opinion the very common testimony of readers today regarding the difficulty of understanding the Bible has little to do with the words themselves and is largely due to a lack of hunger, sincere holiness, and patience.

2. **The Bible is Necessary** - The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.
 - a. The scriptures are God's chosen means of authoritative communication. In other words, the Bible is the manner in which God has chosen to communicate and preserve special revelation throughout the ages.
 - b. The necessity of Scripture should not be taken to mean that someone must possess a Bible in order to be saved or follow Christ. Instead, we must affirm that in order to be saved and be a disciple of Jesus one must have somehow come to the knowledge of the truths authoritatively represented in Scripture. (Rom. 10:13-17)

3. **The Bible is Sufficient** - "The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words

of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

1. The Spirit’s prophetic witness does not cease with the canonization of Scripture. However since scripture itself tells us to test all prophetic utterance against scripture we know that no new revelation is necessary or from God.
 - a. Understanding the sufficiency of Scripture keeps our attention on obedience to the primary teachings of the Bible as the essence of the will of God. We put far too much pressure on ourselves trying to discern what the Lord wants us to do at any given time.
 - b. The vast, overwhelming majority of the will of God for our lives is found within the testimony of Scripture, a truth that frees us from anxiety over discerning God’s desires from moment to moment.
 - c. At the same time, we must be open to both personal and corporate prophetic words that the Lord supernaturally confirms through scripture and understand we should respond when He goes to those lengths to communicate something to us.