

How to Study the Bible Workshop

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Part 1: Why Should I Study the Bible?

1. The Bible is ESSENTIAL for spiritual _____ .

1 Peter 2:2: ...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.

2. The Bible is ESSENTIAL for spiritual _____ .

Hebrews 5:11-14: Concerning [Christ] we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

3. The Bible is ESSENTIAL for spiritual _____ .

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Our aim in studying the Bible is to _____ and to _____ .

John 20:31 ...but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

When we know God, we:

- _____ Psalm 95:1-3
- _____ Proverbs 3:5
- _____ John 14:15
- _____ Mathew 28:18-20

MBC Definition of a Disciple:

A follower of Jesus Christ who lives in biblical community and is committed to becoming like Him by obeying Him, serving Him and sharing Him.

Part 2: Basic Premises

A Few Specifics About the Bible:

The Bible was written over a span of _____ years.

The Bible is made up of _____ books or manuscripts and was written by at least _____ different authors.

The books of the Bible are not in _____ order!

There are 4 basic types of literature in the Old Testament. They are:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

There are 4 basic types of literature in the New Testament. They are:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

NOTE: See the *Book Classification and Chronological Chart Card* to see how the different books of the Bible are classified and ordered (Old Testament only).

Each of The Gospels only covers about _____ years of Jesus' life from a different person's vantage point. That's why they are so unique.

THE BIG IDEA: The Bible, all 66 books, by over 40 different people, tells one thing:
The story of God's _____.

Theological Premises About the Bible:

1. Every word of the Bible is _____ by God and because of this, the Scriptures are _____ in the original documents and _____ in their teaching.

2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

2. God spoke in His written Word by a process of _____ .

2 Peter 1:20-21: Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

Bible Translations

- *Word for Word Bible Translations: NASB, ESV, NKJV*
- *Thought for Thought Translation: NIV, NLT*
- *Paraphrase: The Message*

NOTE: See Appendix B: "Why So Many Versions" by Daniel Wallace for more information about translations.

3. The Bible is the _____ infallible rule of faith and practice for Christians.

John 17:17: Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

4. There is _____ to each passage of the Bible.

Exegesis means to _____

Examining the text to discover what the _____ intended it to mean.

Eisegesis means to _____

_____ your meaning into the text to fit your opinion.

5. Studying the Bible is a _____ experience in which _____ has a role and _____ have a role.

God's Role

- Empower us to both _____ His word and to _____ to do so
Philippians 2:13: ...for it is God who works in you to **will** and to **act** according to his good purpose.
- Empower us to _____ the reality and relevance of His word
1 Corinthians 2:14: The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he **cannot understand** them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.

Our Role

- _____
2 Timothy 2:15: Do **your best** to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
- _____
Psalms 119:27: **Let me understand** the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.
- _____
Joshua 1:8a: Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate** on it **day** and **night**...
- _____
Joshua 1:8: Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to **do everything** written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

In Summary, when we trust God by _____ ourselves to this process, we activate His supernatural power in our life.

NOTE: For more information about *The Inspiration, Inerrancy, Canonicity and Transmission of scripture*, see the articles in Appendix D, beginning on page 53.

TWO WAYS TO STUDY:

An investigative approach to studying Scripture that uses the text to draw conclusions.

Approaching Scripture with a concept or idea in mind and using Scripture passages to support that concept. (e.g. topical bible studies, doctrinal positions etc.)

The Inductive Bible Study Method

1. _____

What do I _____?

2. _____

What does it _____?

3. _____

How does it _____?

Part 3: Observation



A Short Observation Exercise:

1 Samuel 17:1-2: Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. Saul and the men of Israel were gathered and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines.

Read the passage above three times and list as many details as you can below (think simple!):

Steps for Observation

Step 1: Survey the Entire Book. Write down as many “big-picture” observations about the entire book as possible.

TIP: To do this step well, you will find it helpful to first read through the entire book, possibly even twice. Then do your best to list out the following details. You will only need to do this step once and details can be listed in any order.

Identify the _____.

- Legal Document
- Historical Narrative
- Poetry or Wisdom Literature
- Prophetic Writing
- A Letter

Examine the _____ of the entire book by answering the _____ questions.

- **WHO:** *Who was the author? Who was the author’s original audience?*
- **WHAT:** *What is the author writing about? What is taking place? What are the author’s circumstances? What is the author’s relationship to the readers?*
- **WHEN:** *When was this book written? When did the described events take place?*
- **WHERE:** *Where are the described events taking place? Where is the author/audience located?*
- **WHY & HOW:** *Why did the author write this letter? How did the author expect his audience to respond?*

NOTE: *This list is not an all-inclusive list of questions. Try to come up with more questions that will help you observe even more about the book you’re studying. You will also encounter difficulty in answering some of these questions in the Poetical and Historical Books. You will be able to investigate those questions you can’t answer in the next phase of inductive Bible study: interpretation.*

Describe the _____.

- The mood of the author (e.g. distressed, concerned, overjoyed, urgency etc...)

Step 2: Thoroughly examine the passage. Write down as many observations as you can for the specific passage you're studying.

Examine the _____ of the passage by answering the _____ questions.

- **WHO:** *Who is speaking in this passage? What people does this passage involve?*
Include any biographical information about people that you observe.
- **WHAT:** *What is happening in the passage? What events or issues are discussed?*
Include any historical information that you observe.
- **WHEN:** *Are there any hints to time in this passage? Any past or future events?*
Include any chronological information that you observe.
- **WHERE:** *Are there any hints to location in this passage?*
Include any geographical information that you observe.
- **WHY & HOW:** *Is there any explanation of why or how certain events are taking place? Do you see any hints as to purpose of meaning?*
Include any logical information that you observe but ONLY as the text provides.

TIP: Think simple when you do this step and don't rush! Write down as many details as you can. Next to prayer, this is the most important step in Bible study.

Examine the author's _____.

- Are there any repeated words?
- Are there any descriptive terms or "modifier" words?
- Do you see any unusual or difficult words?
- What are the main nouns and verbs?
- Are there any significant sentence and/or paragraph connectors (conjunctions)?
- Any other notable parts of speech?

Some Helpful tips for reading:

- Read Thoughtfully
- Read Repeatedly
- Read Patiently
- Read Prayerfully
- Read Imaginatively
- Read Meditatively
- Read Purposely
- Read Acquisitively

* from Howard Hendricks' *Living by the Book*. (Moody Publishers, 1991)

Observation Exercise

1 Timothy 1:1-7 - NIV

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy my true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. ⁵ The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

Step 1 – Survey the Entire Book

NOTE: For exercise purposes, we will not take time to read the entire book of 1 Timothy in class. However, many of the “big-picture” observations can often be found in the first few verses of a book. Students are encouraged to read through all of 1 Timothy after their first class to gain a greater understanding of the overall context of the book.

- A. Identify what type of literature 1 Timothy would be: _____
- B. Read the passage a 2-3 times and then write down some big-picture observations about the context of this passage. (e.g. *who was the author? who was the audience? when this was written?* Review page 9 for more questions about context)
- C. **Step 3:** Describe the atmosphere of the passage.

Step 2 - Thoroughly examine the passage.

- A. Write as many additional details about the passage that you can below using the investigative questions. If you don't observe anything related to any of those questions, leave the space blank.

WHO:

WHAT:

WHERE:

WHEN:

WHY:

HOW:

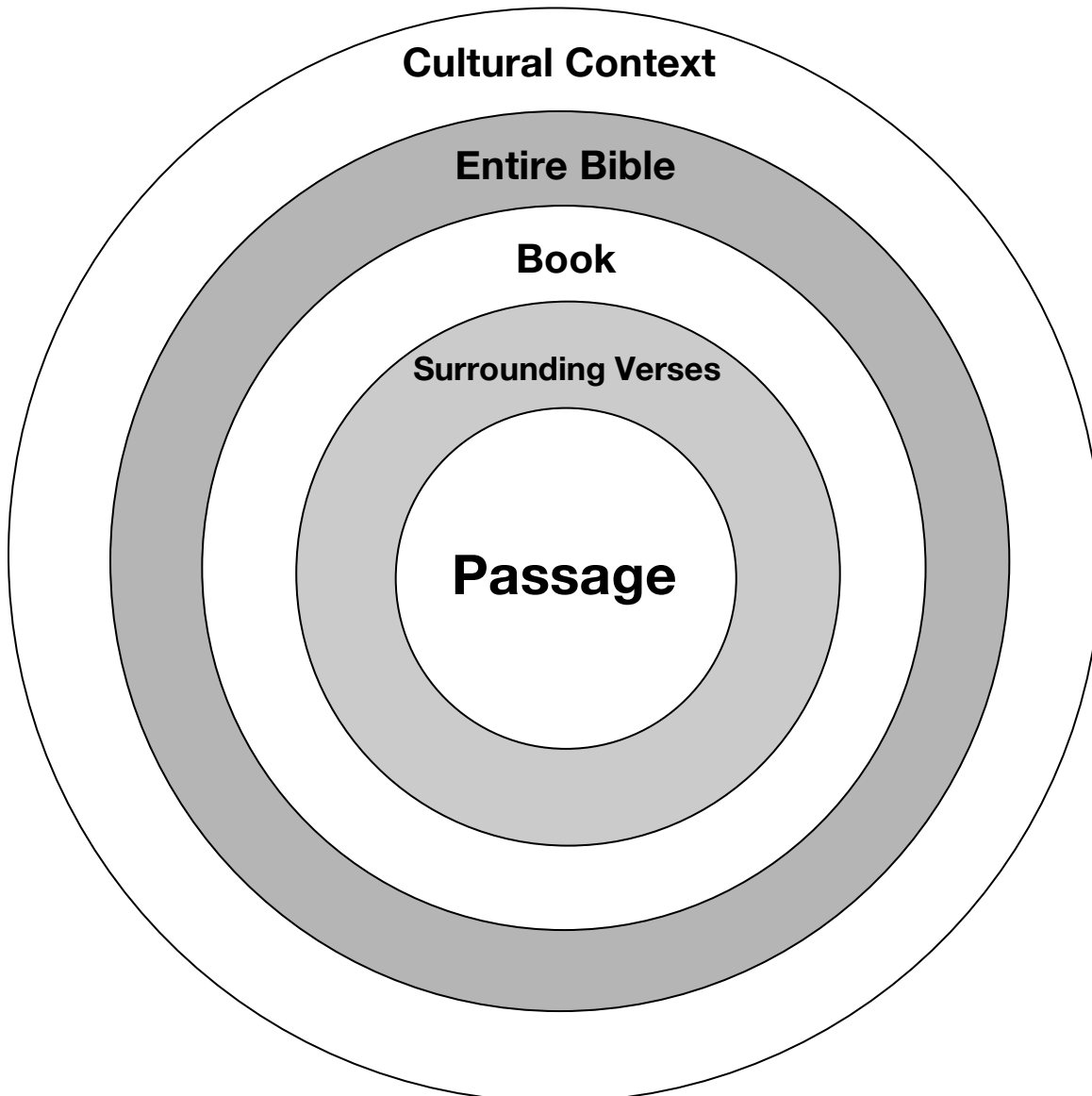
- B. Examine the author's word choice. Circle the words in the passage that stand out, re-occur, seem important, or connect ideas, then list them below.

Part 4: Interpretation

Reminder: Every passage has _____ meaning.

Not, “What does it mean to _____”; instead, “What does _____ intend it to mean.”

NOTE: See the article in Appendix A on page 35 by Walt Russell entitled, “What it means to me” for more insight on the danger of asking the question “What does this passage mean to me?”.



Steps for Interpretation

Step 1: Identify whether the passage is _____ or _____.

Acts 2:44-47: All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Philippians 4:4-7: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*TIP: The type of literature often determines whether a passage of Scripture is prescriptive or descriptive. Refer back to **page 3** for a list of the major types of literature in the Bible.*

Step 2: Identify the _____ of the passage.

TIP: Think about what verse, if it was removed, would most affect the meaning of the passage.

TIP: Be able to “back up” your main point with a verse.

Main Point Exercise

Matthew 6:1-6 - NIV

¹ “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

⁵ “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

1. Read through Mathew 6:1-6 twice. What is the **main point** (main verse) of the passage?

2. Identify the **parts** (secondary verses) if there are any and describe how they relate to the main point.

Part 1:

Part 2:

Interpretation Continued...

Step 3: _____ with other Bible verses (tracing a concept throughout Scripture to get more information).

James 2:24: You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

Ephesians 2:8-10: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- The meaning of each passage must _____ with the other passages in the Bible.
- Use passages that are _____ to interpret passages that are unclear.

*TIP: Remember to **exegete** (Examine the text to discover what the author intended it to mean). Don’t **eisegete** (Insert my meaning into the text to fit my opinion).*

TIP: Many Bibles include cross-references on every page for each verse. USE THEM!

TIP: A word study will often help clarify the meaning of a passage as you trace how it is used throughout the rest of the Bible.

Step 4: Use Bible Study _____ to help you understand the passage even better.

Use a _____

Bibles that include minimal study notes and basic overview information for each book of the Bible

- *NIV Study Bible*
- *Ryrie Study Bible*
- *MacArthur Study Bible*
- *ESV Study Bible*
- *Life Application Study Bible*

Use a _____

A theologian's (or group of theologians') study notes, which are useful for historical-cultural information and for ensuring accurate interpretation

- *Bible Knowledge Commentary by Walvoord & Zuck*
- *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Series*
- *Wiersbe Bible Commentary*
- *The New Illustrated Commentary*
- *The John MacArthur Bible Commentary*
- *Constable's Notes (Available FREE online @ www.soniclight.com)*

Use _____

- www.blueletterbible.com - One-stop shop for Bible Study that includes modern commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Greek/Hebrew resources, sermon links, and even related hymns.
- www.biblegateway.com - Great verse searching tool.
- www.biblios.com - Includes Greek/Hebrew resources
- www.biblestudytools.com - Similar to Blue Letter Bible
- www.bible.com (www.youversion.com) - MANY different versions

Other Helpful Bible Study Tools:

- **Bible Dictionary:** Includes definitions, articles and proper names for Biblical terms and concepts.
- **Bible Concordance:** A verbal index to the Greek and Hebrew words used in Scripture in alphabetical order.
- **Bible Atlas:** Collections of maps showing Biblical topography and geography.
- **Bible Software:** Digital Collections of all the above and more! Examples include:
 - *Logos*
 - *Accordance*

Suggestions on How to use Bible Study Tools:

1. Do your own study first!!
2. Go with specific questions
3. Use references to:
 - check your understanding
 - prompt more observations
 - provide supplemental information

Why We Misinterpret Scripture

Luke 24:1-3: On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

What is the main point of this passage???

1. _____.
2. Desire to supply our _____.
3. Overemphasis on _____.
4. “_____.”
5. _____.

Interpretation Exercise

1 Timothy 1:1-7 - NIV

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy my true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. ⁵ The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

Step 1: Review your observations on page 11 & 12, then read through 1 Timothy 1:1-7 again. Is this passage prescriptive or descriptive?

Step 2: Identify the main point of the passage and the parts? How does each part relate to the main point? Paraphrase the main point and each part.

Step 3: Cross-reference the main point with other Scripture passages.

Step 4: Consult a Study Bible, Online Resource, or a Bible Commentary to gather more information on the cultural context of this passage or to help you answer any questions you have about the meaning of the passage.

Part 5: Application

***NOTE:** Remember, each passage has one true _____, however, each passage can have _____ applications.

Steps for Application:

Step 1: Look for areas of _____ as you are reading the text.

Step 2: Look for _____ applications. For example:

- What can I _____ God for?
- How does this point to _____?
- How does this fit into _____ story?
- Is there a _____ I need to _____?
- Is there an _____ I need to _____?
- Is there a _____ I need to _____?

Step 3: _____ that God would remind you throughout the day to apply what you have learned.

Step 4: _____ what you've learned.

James 1:22-25: But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

***Warning:** Beware of _____, _____, or _____.

Application Exercise

1 Timothy 1:1-7 - NIV

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy my true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. ⁵ The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. ⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

Step 1: Review your observations from page 11 & 12 and your interpretation exercises on Page 20 & 21. Then re-read the passage above and write down anything that convicts you personally.

Step 2: What are some tangible applications you can draw from this passage? (What can I worship God for? How does this point to Christ? How does this fit into God's whole story? Is there a command I need to obey? Is there an example I should follow? Is there a sin I need to confess?)

Step 3: Spend some time in prayer. Ask God to remind you what you've learned throughout the day and to give you ability to apply what you've learned to your life.

Part 6: You Try It!!!

Exercise 1: Philemon 1 - NASB

¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker, ² and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; ⁶ *and I pray* that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. ⁷ For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

⁸ Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper, ⁹ yet for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—

¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, ¹¹ who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me. ¹² I have sent him back to you in person, that is, *sending* my very heart, ¹³ whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; ¹⁴ but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵ For perhaps he was for this reason separated *from you* for a while, that you would have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ If then you regard me a partner, accept him as *you would me*. ¹⁸ But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹ Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, since I know that you will do even more than what I say. ²² At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I will be given to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, ²⁴ *as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Observation

Step 1 – Survey the Entire Book: Read the entire book of Philemon (1 Chapter).

- A. Identify what type of literature Philemon would be: _____
- B. Read the passage a 2-3 times and then write down some big-picture observations about the context of this passage. (e.g. *who was the author? who was the audience? when this was written?* Review page 9 for more questions about context)

- C. Describe the atmosphere of the passage.

Step 2 – Thoroughly Examine the Passage

- A. Write as many additional details about the passage (in this case, the entire book!) that you can below using the investigative questions. If you don't observe anything related to any of those questions, mark them "unknown" to further investigate in the next step.

- B. Examine the author's word choice. Circle the words in the passage that stand out, re-occur, seem important, or connect ideas, then list them below.

Interpretation

Step 1: Read through Philemon 1 twice and review your observations. Is this passage prescriptive or descriptive?

Step 2: Identify the main point of the passage (book) and the parts? How does each part relate to the main point? Paraphrase the main point and each part.

Step 3: Cross-reference the main point with other Scripture passages. Are there any other verses listed in your personal Bible or that you recall from memory that would support the main thoughts in this passage?

Step 4: Consult a Study Bible, Online Resource, or a Bible Commentary to gather more information on the cultural context of this passage or to help you answer any questions you have about the meaning of the passage.

Application

Step 1: Review your Observations and Interpretations and then write down any areas of conviction from the passage above.

Step 2: What are some tangible applications you can draw from this passage? (What can I worship God for? How does this point to Christ? How does this fit into God's whole story? Is there a command I need to obey? Is there an example I should follow? Is there a sin I need to confess?)

Step 3: Spend some time in prayer. Ask God to remind you what you've learned throughout the day and to give you ability to apply what you've learned to your life.

Exercise 2: Haggai 1:1-11 NIV

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

² This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.' "

³ Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"

⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. ⁹ "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

Observation

Step 1 – Survey the Entire Book: Read the entire book of Haggai (2 Chapters).

- A. Identify what type of literature Haggai would be: _____
- B. Read the passage a 2-3 times and then write down some big-picture observations about the context of this passage. (e.g. *who was the author? who was the audience? when this was written?* Review page 9 for more questions about context)

- C. Describe the atmosphere of the passage.

Step 2 – Thoroughly Examine the Passage

- A. Write as many additional details about the passage (in this case, the entire book!) that you can below using the investigative questions. If you don't observe anything related to any of those questions, mark them "unknown" to further investigate in the next step.

- B. Examine the author's word choice. Circle the words in the passage that stand out, re-occur, seem important, or connect ideas, then list them below.

Interpretation

Step 1: Read through Haggai 1:1-11 twice and review your observations. Is this passage prescriptive or descriptive?

Step 2: Identify the main point of the passage (book) and the parts? How does each part relate to the main point? Paraphrase the main point and each part.

Step 3: Cross-reference the main point with other Scripture passages. Are there any other verses listed in your personal Bible or that you recall from memory that would support the main thoughts in this passage?

Step 4: Consult a Study Bible, Online Resource, or a Bible Commentary to gather more information on the cultural context of this passage or to help you answer any questions you have about the meaning of the passage.

Application

Step 1: Review your Observations and Interpretations and then write down any areas of conviction from the passage above.

Step 2: What are some tangible applications you can draw from this passage? (What can I worship God for? How does this point to Christ? How does this fit into God's whole story? Is there a command I need to obey? Is there an example I should follow? Is there a sin I need to confess?)

Step 3: Spend some time in prayer. Ask God to remind you what you've learned throughout the day and to give you ability to apply what you've learned to your life.

Part 7: Disciplines

1. Study the Bible _____ and _____.

Some Helpful Study Tools:

- A consistent _____ and _____
- A _____ or _____
- A _____
- A _____

NOTE: See Appendix C for a few examples of Bible reading plans ranging from a few weeks long to a year.

2. Study the Bible for both _____ and _____

John 20:31 ...but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Psalm 119:11, 18, 27: I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You... Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law... Let me understand the teaching of Your precepts; then I will meditate on Your wonders...

James 1:22: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

3. _____

4. _____ your life.

What do I do now??

- Begin to study scripture on your own. If you don't know where to start, consider one of the reading plans in Appendix C or choose another book of the Bible to study. (e.g. **Colossians** or **John**)
- Join a church Bible study. Check with your campus staff to learn about the different Bible study groups or communities that are available.
- Consider a Precept Inductive Study. Precept Ministries International has created guided inductive Bible studies for different levels on the entire Bible. Email: precept@mcleanbible.org for more information on MBC precept groups or visit www.precept.org to order an inductive study.

APPENDIX A: “WHAT IT MEANS TO ME” (BY: WALT RUSSELL)

The weekly Bible study began with comfortable predictability. After the customary pie, the members got cups of coffee and settled into their familiar niches around the room. Charlie, the leader, cleared his throat to signal that things were starting. As he did with merciless regularity each week, he began with the question, “Well, what do these verses mean to you?”

The discussion followed a familiar pattern. Each responded to what the verses meant to him or her, and the group reached its weekly general consensus—at least on the easier verses. They all knew what was coming, however: another stalemate between Donnell and Maria. Donnell had been a Christian for several years and was the self-appointed resident theologian. For some reason he always seemed to lock horns with Maria, a relatively new Christian, yet an enthusiastic student of the Bible.

The scene repeated itself every time they came to difficult verses. The passage would elicit conflicting interpretations. Donnell would argue vehemently for the interpretation of his former pastor, which usually seemed a bit forced to the rest of the group. But it was Maria, being new and perhaps more straightforward, who would challenge Donnell. Because she didn’t know the Bible that well yet, she would relate the difficult verse to her Christian experience in a way that contradicted Donnell’s interpretation. Donnell would only redouble his efforts.

The stalemate usually ended with Charlie, the leader, or Betty, the resident peacemaker, bringing “resolution” to the discussion. One of them would calmly conclude by saying, “Well, this is another example of how reading the Bible is a matter of personal interpretation and how a verse can mean one thing to one person and something else to another.” The group members would leave with a vague, hollow feeling in their chests.

A recent Barna Research Group survey on what Americans believe confirms what this brief scenario illustrates: we are in danger of becoming a nation of relativists. The Barna survey asked, “Is there absolute truth?” Amazingly, 66 percent of American adults responded that they believe that “there is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct.” The figure rises to 72 percent when it comes to those between the ages of 18 and 25.

Before we stoop to cast the first stones, we evangelicals might ask if we are without sin in this matter, especially when it comes to our approach to interpreting the Bible. I believe we may unwittingly contribute to the widespread malaise of relativistic thinking. Indeed, our big educational standbys—Sunday school, the adult Bible study, and the sermon—may help spread the disease.

A Mouthful of Confusing Signals

“What does this verse mean to you?” It is stunning how often we use this cliché to signal the beginning of the interpretive time in Bible studies and Sunday-school classes. But the question may send a mouthful of confusing signals.

First, it confuses the “meaning” of a passage with the “significance” of the passage. This point has been cogently made by literary critic E.D. Hirsch, Jr., in his book *Validity in Interpretation*. Hirsch asserts that “meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant...Significance, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable.”

The meaning of a text never changes. Our first goal is to discover this fixed thing. In contrast, the significance of that text to me and to others is very fluid and flexible.

By confusing these two aspects of the interpretation process, we evangelicals approach the Bible with an interpretive relativism. If it means one thing to you and something contradictory to me, we have no ultimate court of appeals. We can never establish and validate “the one correct interpretation.” In fact, our language and approach suggest that there is no such animal.

In conservative Christian circles this has tragically led to people seeing the authority of God residing in the most powerful preachers of his Word rather than in the Word itself. This explains Donnell’s appeal, “But my pastor says....”

Second, the question “What does this verse mean to you?” reflects a drift in determining meaning that has been going on for a century in literary circles. The classical approach was to focus on the author and his or her historical and (later) emotional setting in life. Earlier in the twentieth century the focus shifted to the text, and authors lost their special rights to explain what their text meant. Texts allegedly take on a life of their own apart from their authors.

However, the drift has not stopped at the text. The focus for determining meaning is now on the interpreter. The reader allegedly “creates meaning.”

Applied to biblical study, interpretation becomes not discovering the absolute truths of God’s Word, but winning others over to what the text “means to us” because our system for explaining it is the most internally coherent and satisfying. The best we can hope for us to persuade others to join our interpretive community, at least until a more coherent and satisfying interpretation comes along.

Within academic circles, this emphasis on creating meaning has been broadly labeled “reader-response criticism.” It has had an enormous impact on many disciplines within both the university community and our broader culture, from the interpretation of literature to the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

Avoiding Relativism

What can we do to avoid this relativism?

First, we need to clean up our language when we talk about Scripture. If we want to discuss the meaning of the text, then we ask, “What does this verse or text mean?” If we want to discuss significance, then ask, “What is the relevance or significance of this verse to you?” The meaning of a text never changes. Our first goal is to discover this fixed thing. In contrast, the significance of that text to me and to others is very fluid and flexible.

Second, we must differentiate between our emotional posture (tolerant and sensitive) and our view of the truth (something absolute, which can be determined). We show sensitivity but avoid giving up too much “real estate.”

Establishing correct meanings entails lots of hard, interpretive work. When disagreements arise, it is tempting to retreat from the hard work under the banner of tolerance and sensitivity. Instead, we should underscore in a loving, sensitive manner that only one of several conflicting interpretations can be correct. This correct interpretation can be validated as the most likely one primarily by arguing from the main theme of the passage’s immediate context.

We who teach the Bible feel the pressure Americans generate for immediate application. We are therefore constantly tempted to skip the hard work of determining a biblical text’s meaning and move quickly to the text’s personal relevance. We should ask, “When was the last time we took the time during teaching a passage to establish its context?” Such work will take up part of our teaching time, and it is difficult to make the historical or literary contexts “sizzle.” The challenge is to make the setting of other people’s lives and questions as interesting as our own.

Many of us are unwilling to establish the passage’s literary context by tracing the biblical book’s argument. Or we do not establish the historical context by reading background material in a Bible dictionary, a Bible encyclopedia, or a good commentary.

Why? Increasingly we do not see value in establishing a passage’s historical and literary context. In believing that God’s Word directly addresses us, we ignore that he speaks to our needs through the historical and literary contexts of the people of the Bible.

But the reward for such work is that we have the controls and safeguard of the original context that the Holy Spirit used when he inspired the passage. The absence of such work increases our chances of emerging with wrong meaning, wrong emphasis, and wrong application. It may even negate the Holy Spirit’s power in our teaching of that passage.

Focusing on the felt needs of listeners makes it easy to end up with a great felt need desperately in search of a passage. The current emphasis on shorter topical preaching and topical Bible studies may unwittingly help feed this relativism in application. The mistake is a fundamental

one: elevating the hearers' context over the Bible's. Instead of holding the Bible's context and our contemporary context in a dynamic tension, we assume that the contemporary context is the most important one.

This perspective may be more dangerous than we think. It presupposes an existential and human-centered world view. Therefore, the onus is upon each individual to wring some sense of life through the exercise of personal choice. If we unwittingly cater to this world view, God and his Word become reduced to helpful items on life's smorgasbord of options that bring fulfillment. We must differentiate between our emotional posture (tolerant and sensitive) and our view of the truth (something absolute, which can be determined)...When disagreements arise, it is tempting to retreat from the hard work under the banner of tolerance and sensitivity. Instead, we should underscore in a loving, sensitive manner that only one of several conflicting interpretations can be correct.

It would be far better to appeal to a genuine felt need and then challenge the world view that surrounds that need. Our culture's context—an existential, human-centered world view—needs to be confronted by the Bible's context—a historical and God-centered world view. Verses isolated from their literary contexts seldom achieve such a confrontation. Whole paragraphs discussed within the flow of broader arguments come much closer.

Sprinkling single verses into the topical sermon or tacking them on at the end of a “need-oriented” Bible study do not point the listener to the God of the text, but to the teacher of the text. This is especially likely to happen with baby-boomer listeners, who tend to be more person oriented than authority oriented.

Our Needs are Not Enough

An example of how this works can best be illustrated by an approach to a four-part Bible-study series in light of Americans' strong felt need for happiness.

We might remember that Paul's letter to the Philippians was about “joy” and “rejoicing.” A quick read confirms the presence of those words. We have already determined our general targeted need in this series (people's hunger for happiness), and we have already assumed our general conclusion for the series (God wants to meet our need for happiness). Therefore, what we are really looking for are interesting and specific biblical bridges from our targeted need to our conclusion. So far, so good. But here is where the weeds get taller and the briars sharper.

We first face a choice about how much time and energy we are going to spend on uncovering the historical, cultural, and literary backgrounds of the Epistle to the Philippians. It seems straightforward enough: True happiness and joy come from knowing Christ and thereby being able to rejoice in any circumstances. A four-part Bible-study series might look like this:

- Joy in friendships (Phil 1:3-5)
- Joy in perseverance (Phil 1:25-26)
- Joy in teamwork (Phil 2:1-4)
- Joy in God's peace (with a low-key evangelistic twist) (Phil 4:4-7)

Here we have an expository series with some continuity from one book of the Bible (this satisfies the older folks in the group). We address significant emotional felt needs of both non-Christians and Christians within our culture (this satisfies the baby boomers). And we address some of the key issues people face (this satisfies the baby busters).

But instead of doing the hard work of investigating the epistle's historical and literary context, we made the mistake of assuming our context was the main context that mattered. We thereby distorted the meaning of these four passages. Focusing on the felt needs of listeners makes it easy to end up with a great felt need desperately in search of a passage.... The mistake is a fundamental one: elevating the hearers' context over the Bible's. Instead of holding the Bible's context and our contemporary context in a dynamic tension, we assume that the contemporary context is the most important one.

The existential perspective, for example, sets up happiness or joy as the goal. We also distort Paul's understanding of the gospel in Philippians if we interpret this epistle from our fulfillment-fixation perspective. If personal joy and peace are our primary concerns, the gospel is reduced to the God-given means for achieving this kind of fulfillment. It becomes an existential fix-all.

But the biblical perspective sees joy as a by-product of involvement in the gospel cause. By interpreting Paul's eight uses of the word gospel in Philippians within their original literary and historical context, we see that the gospel was something in which the Philippians shared in partnership (1:5) and in which Euodia and Syntyche shared Paul's struggle (4:2-3). The gospel was something Paul defended and confirmed (1:7), and which supplied the standard for the Philippians' conduct as they strove for the faith of it (1:27). Ironically, Paul's present sufferings turned out for the greater progress of the gospel (1:12), and Timothy's serving of Paul helped further the gospel (2:22).

The gospel, then, is not something that exists solely for our progress and personal fulfillment (although it does include these things). Rather, the gospel is something to which we are to give ourselves for its progress and fulfillment. The gospel is God's program for worldwide blessing.

Only entering into the cultural, historical, and literary context of Philippians allows us to grasp this insight. It requires bridging significant temporal, cultural, and language gaps. But isn't this why God has given the church Spirit-gifted teachers who can take advantage of the embarrassment of riches in Bible-study tools and helps?

A brief visit to a good Christian bookstore will quickly reinforce the fact that no other people in the history of the church have been blessed with our dizzying array of Bible-study aids. Our nemesis is not a lack of resources but a lack of understanding about their necessity.

We must establish the original historical and literary context of biblical passages. Once this work is done, then we can move to determining the needs a passage addresses. But the text, not our concerns, initially determines the focus. To ignore the necessity of this task is to risk sliding into relativism. We find few contextual safeguards in this land of “what-it-means-to-me” and probably very little of God’s voice.

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APPENDIX B: WHY SO MANY VERSIONS

I. Why So Many Versions?

"Breaking up is hard to do," as the song goes. Ma Bell did it--creating a glut of long distance companies almost as numerous as brands of deodorant.

The Bible did it, too. Before the year 1881 you could read any version you wanted--as long as it was the King James Version. But since 1881, *scores* of new translations have been printed.

How did the King James get dethroned? Which translation *is* best today? Are *any* of the modern translations really *faithful* to the original? These are some of the questions we'll be looking at in this essay. But initially, we'd just like to get a bird's eye view. We simply want an answer to the question, "Why are there so many versions of the Bible?"

There are *three* basic influences which have given birth to a multitude of translations.

First, in 1881 two British scholars published a Greek New Testament which was based on the most ancient manuscripts then available. This text, by Brook Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, made several notable departures from the Greek text which King James translators used. For the most part, the Westcott-Hort text was a *shorter* New Testament. That's because the older manuscripts (MSS) which they used did not contain passages such as the longer ending of Mark's gospel or the story of the women caught in adultery. The Greek MSS which the King James translators followed included these and many other passages.

At the same time the Westcott-Hort text made its debut, the *English Revised Version* of the New Testament appeared. A new era was born in which translations of the New Testament now used the few ancient Greek MSS rather than the many later ones.

Second, since 1895 many archeological and manuscript discoveries have been made which have which have pronounced judgment on some of the renderings found in the King James. The single most important discovery was that of the Egyptian papyri. In 1895, Adolf Deissmann published a volume, given the unassuming title, *Bible Studies (Bibelstudien)*, which *revolutionized* NT scholarship. Deissmann discovered that ancient papyrus scraps, buried in Egyptian garbage dumps some 2,000 years ago, contained Greek which was quite similar to the Greek of the NT. He concluded that the Greek of the NT was written in the common language of the day. It was not the dialect which only the most elite could understand. Since Deissmann's discovery, translators have endeavored to put the NT into language the *average* person could comprehend--just as it was originally intended. Not only that but the papyri have helped us to understand many words--words which were only guessed at by King James translators.

Finally, there have been *philosophical* influences. That is, the theory of translation is being revamped today. Missionaries have made a significant contribution toward this end--because they are eager to see a particular tribe read the Bible in its own language.

These three differences--textual, informational, philosophical--have been the parents of a new generation of Bible translations. But are these translations any good? Are they any better than the King James?

For the rest of the essay, we will examine each of these influences and then, finally, try to see which translation is best.

II. The Text of Modern Translations

Where have all the verses gone? The modern translations seem to have cut out many of the most precious lines of Scripture. They end Mark's gospel at the 8th verse of chapter 16; they omit the reference of the angel of the Lord stirring the waters at the pool of Bethesda (verse 4 of John 5); and, most notably, they excise the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8.

Besides omissions, these modern versions make significant changes in the text. For example, in I Timothy 3:16, the King James reads, "*God* was manifest in the flesh," but most modern translations read, "*He* was manifest in the flesh." In Revelation 22:19 the King James speaks of the "*book* of life" while virtually all modern versions speak of the "*tree* of life." Altogether, there are hundreds of textual changes between the King James and modern translations.

In this brief essay we cannot determine who is right. But we can make a few observations.

First, the textual changes in the modern translations affect *no major doctrine*. The deity of Christ, virgin birth, salvation by grace alone--and all the rest--are still intact. Though certain *passages* are omitted or changed, the doctrines are not. There are evangelicals who prefer the King James and there are some evangelicals who prefer the modern translations.

Second, the textual changes in these modern translations are based on the most ancient MSS of the Greek NT. These MSS date from early in the second century A.D. But the Greek texts behind the King James belong to a group of MSS--called the Byzantine text--which are much more recent. On the other hand, although these MSS are more recent, they comprise at least 80% of the 5000+ MSS of the NT that we presently have. It is theoretically possible that, at times, these MSS point to an early tradition as well.

Third, the King James NT did not always follow the majority of MSS. Actually, the Greek text behind the King James was based on only about half a dozen MSS. Now it just so happened that these MSS belonged to the Byzantine text. But on a few occasions there were gaps. And the compiler (a man named Erasmus) had to fill in those gaps by translating the *Latin* NT back into Greek. There are, therefore, some readings in the King James--such as '*book of life*' in Rev 22:19 or the wording of I John 5:7-8, which are not found either in the majority of MSS or the most ancient MSS. No serious student of the Bible would call them original (though many popular Bible teachers do).

Fourth, the charge that the more ancient MSS or the men who embrace them are unorthodox is a faulty charge. It is true that in certain places the ancient MSS do not explicitly affirm the deity of Christ--such as in I Tim 3:16. But neither do they *deny* it! Besides this, in *some* passages these ancient MSS make Christ's deity explicit where the King James does not! In John 1:18, the modern versions read "the unique one, *God*" while the King James has "the only begotten *Son*." Furthermore, the majority of *evangelical* scholars embrace this critical text. Even the men who edited the *New Scofield Reference Bible* of the *King James Version* personally *favor* the critical text!

Fifth, at the same time, there are *some* scholars today who are strong advocates of the Byzantine text--most notably, Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad. Together they edited *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* and Dr. Farstad was also the senior editor of the New King James Bible. Thus, it is possible to be intelligent and still embrace the Byzantine text, just as it is possible to be evangelical and embrace the modern critical text. (I happen to disagree with the resultant text that Farstad and Hodges have produced, but I respect their scholarship.)

Finally, we ought to quit labeling one another as heretics or idiots in the ongoing discussion. There needs to be charity on both sides. One of my college professors frequently said, "The Christian army is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded!" Unfortunately, this is especially true when it comes to translations of the Bible.

III. Deissmann and the Papyri

In 1895 a German pastor by the name of Adolf Deissmann published a rather innocent-sounding volume: *Bible Studies*. Yet, this single volume started a revolution in NT scholarship--a revolution in which the common man was the winner.

In the 1800s Deissmann began reading ancient Greek MSS. But *not* the great classical authors. He was reading private letters, business transactions, receipts, marriage contracts. What were these documents? Merely scraps of papyrus (the ancient forerunner to paper) found in 2,000-year-old Egyptian garbage dumps. In these seemingly insignificant papyri, Deissmann discovered a *key* to uncover the NT! For these papyri contained the common Greek language of the first century A.D. They were written in the *vocabulary* of the NT.

What's so *revolutionary* about that? you ask. It is revolutionary because up until 1895, biblical scholars had no real parallels to the language of the NT. They often viewed its Greek as *invented* by the Holy Spirit. They called it "Holy Ghost Greek." Now it is true that the ideas--even the words--were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But it's another thing to say that the *language* of the NT was unusual--that its grammar and vocabulary were, in a word, unique. If this were true, only the spiritual *elite* could even hope to understand the NT.

Deissmann's discovery burst the bubble on this view: the Greek of the NT was written in the language of the common man.

There are two implications of what Deissmann did for the Bible translations:

First, if the apostles wrote in easy-to-understand terms, then translations of the Bible should reflect this. We ought not to translate with big 50 cent religious-sounding words if the original was not written that way. The King James word 'propitiation,' for example, basically means 'satisfaction'--that is, God is *satisfied* with Christ's payment for our sins.

Our Lord's final word from the cross, "It is finished," has been found on papyrus business documents--on receipts, if you will. It means "paid in full."

In other words, Bible translations need to be clear. One of the obvious proofs of this is that the gospel *offends* people. And it cannot be offensive unless it is understood!

Second, the papyri discoveries have helped us to understand words which the King James translators merely guessed at. For example, in the King James version of John 3:16, the Greek word translated 'only begotten' really means 'one and only' or 'unique.' The Bible, then, does not say that Jesus was the *begotten* Son of God--which *might* suggest that he had a beginning--but that he is the *unique* Son of God.

But there is another implication of the papyri discoveries, though not related to Bible translations. Rather, it is related to preaching. Preachers of the Word of God need to make themselves understood. As one of my seminary professors was fond of saying, "We are not called to feed giraffes--we are called to feed sheep!" This does not mean that a sermon should be sloppy or inaccurate--just that it should be *clear*.

Deissmann has done a service for scholar and layman alike. He has shown that the language of the NT was understandable to the common man on the street. The ironic thing is that when the King James Bible was first published in 1611, it was condemned by many for being too *easily* understood! But after 400 years, the English language has changed. I, for one, invite the new translations because they give the gospel back to the people.

IV. Dynamic Equivalence Vs. Formal Equivalence

Most laymen today think that a *faithful* translation of the Bible *means* a *word-for-word* translation. If the original has a noun, they expect a noun in the translation. If the original has sixteen words, they don't want to see seventeen words in the translation. We might call this translation "formal equivalence." The King James, old American Standard, and the New American Standard come closest to this ideal.

On the other end of the spectrum is a "phrase-for-phrase" translation, or a *dynamic* equivalence translation. It is not so concerned about the *grammatical form* of the original language as it is of the *meaning* of the original. A dynamic equivalence translation is more interpretive--but it is also easier to understand. The New International Version (in part) and the New English Bible follow this philosophy.

Actually, anyone who has ever learned a second language knows that a word-for-word translation is *impossible* much or most of the time. Idioms in one language need to be paraphrased. Even the King James translators realized this. In a couple of places in the OT, the Hebrew text literally reads, "God's nostrils enlarged." But the King James has something like, "God became angry"--which is what the expression *means*. In Matthew 1:18 the King James says that Mary was found to be with child. But the Greek is quite different--and quite graphic: "Mary was having it in the belly"! And in many places in Paul's letters, the King James reads, "God forbid!" But the original has neither "God" nor "forbid." Literally, it says, "May it never be!" (as most *modern* translations render it!)

Therefore, when we speak of *faithfulness* in translation, we need to clarify the question: Faithfulness to *form*? or faithfulness to *meaning*? Sometimes faithfulness to one involves lack of fidelity to the other. There are problems with each of these. The King James, with its *attempted* fidelity to form, in *some* passages makes no sense. And in 1611 they made no sense! The New American Standard, likewise, is often characterized by wooden, stilted English.

On the other hand, dynamic equivalence translations sometimes are too interpretive. The NIV, in Eph 6:6, tells slaves to "Obey (their masters) not *only* to win their favor. . .," but the word "only" is not in the Greek and I suspect that Paul did not mean to *imply* it, either. This reveals one of the problems with dynamic equivalence translations: the translators don't always know whether their interpretation is right.

But *some* versions don't interpret--they distort. Some are notorious for omitting references to Christ's blood, or for attempting to deny his deity. In these instances, the translators are neither faithful to the *form* or the *meaning*. They have *perverted* the Word of God.

Yet, dynamic equivalence translators who are honest with the text often make things very clear. In Phil 2:6, for example, the NIV tells us that Jesus was "in (his) very nature God." But most formal equivalence translations state that he was in the *form* of God. The problem with these formally correct translations is that they are misleading: the Greek word for 'form' here *means* essence or nature.

Dynamic equivalence versus formal equivalence: two different philosophies of translation. A formal equivalence translation lets the reader interpret for himself. But too often, the average reader doesn't have the background or the tools to interpret accurately. The net result is that he often badly misunderstands the text.

On the other hand, a dynamic equivalence translation is usually clear and quite understandable. But if the translators missed the point of the original--either intentionally or unintentionally--they will be communicating an idea foreign to the biblical text.

There are pros and cons of each philosophy of translation. In the next section, we will see which translations have done the best jobs.

V. Which Translation Is Best?

In this essay we've been looking at the differences in Bible translations. We have noted that the Greek text behind the King James NT is different from the Greek text behind most modern translations. We have seen that the discovery of the papyri at the turn of the century has shed much light on the meaning of biblical words. And we have found that Bible translations, by-in-large, are either word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase translations and that there are pros and cons with each of these. Today, we want to look briefly at five or six popular translations and discuss their values.

But before we look at these translations, I'd like to make *three* general comments. First, you might think there is *no* hope of ever knowing what the Word of God really says. There are so many translations that read so differently! How can anyone who does not know Greek or Hebrew really know what the Bible says? I am personally convinced that the Holy Spirit is sovereign over even the worst translations. Even in extremely biased or sectarian translations, all the major doctrines can be found. And if you know which translations are best, then you will be much better off!

Second, one of the best safeguards you can follow is to stay away from the sectarian translations or those done by an individual. The New World Translation, by the Jehovah's Witnesses, is the best known sectarian translation. We will speak about this translation a little later. Translations by individuals include Moffatt's, Weymouth's, J. B. Phillips, The Living Bible, Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, and the Berkley *New Testament*. To be sure, there is much merit in each of these--especially the last four. But the idiosyncracies and theological biases of a translation are far more apparent when it is produced by one man.

Third, to the question "Which translation is best?", there can be no singular answer. I suggest that every Christian who is serious about studying the Bible own at least *two* translations. He should have *at least* one dynamic equivalence translation (or phrase-for-phrase) and one formal equivalence translation (that is, word-for-word translation). In fact, it would be good to have *two* dynamic equivalence translations--because in this type of translation, the translator is also the interpreter. If his interpretation is correct, it can only *clarify* the meaning of the text; if it is incorrect, then it only clarifies the interpretation of the translator!

Now, for the translations.

King James Version

The King James Bible has with good reason been termed, "the noblest monument of English prose" (RSV preface). Above all its rivals, the King James Version has had the greatest impact in shaping the English language. It is a literary masterpiece. But, lest anyone wishes to revere it because it was "good enough for St. Paul," or some such nonsense, we must remember that the King James Bible of today is not the King James of 1611. It has undergone three revisions, incorporating more than 100,000 changes! Further, there are over 300 words in the King James that no longer mean what they meant in 1611. If one wishes to use a Bible that follows the same Greek and Hebrew texts as the King James, I recommend the *New King James Version*.

Revised Standard Version

The RSV was completed in 1952 and was intended to be, in part, a revision of the King James. Of course, it used the ancient MSS of the NT, resulting in the omission of several verses and words. But the wording was still archaic. The RSV attempts to be a word-for-word translation where possible. The NRSV follows the same principle of translation, though has now become more "gender-inclusive" in its approach. At times this is very helpful; at other times, it is misleading.

New American Standard

The NASB is something of an evangelical counterpart to the RSV. It, too, was intended to be something of a revision of the King James. There are three major differences between the RSV and the NASB: first, the NASB is less archaic in its wording. Second, its translators were more conservative theologically than the RSV translators. Third, because of the translators' desire to adhere as closely to the wording of the original, often this translation is stilted and wooden. Still, the NASB is probably the best *word-for-word* translation available today.

New English Bible

The NEB was completed in 1971, after a quarter of a century of labor. It marks a new milestone in translation: it is not a revision, but a brand new translation. It is a phrase-for-phrase translation. Unfortunately, sometimes the biases of the translators creep into the text. The REB (Revised English Bible) follows the same pattern: excellent English, though not always faithful to the Greek and Hebrew.

New International Version

The NIV was published in 1978. It may be considered a counterpart to the NEB. It is more a phrase-for-phrase translation than a word-for-word translation, and the scholars were generally more conservative than those who worked on the NEB. I personally consider it the best phrase-for-phrase translation available today. However, its major flaw is in its simplicity of language. The editors wanted to make sure it was easy to read. In achieving this goal, they often sacrificed accuracy (in particular, in the NT, sentences are shortened, subordination of thought is lost, conjunctions are deleted).

New World Translation

Finally, a word should be said about the *New World Translation* by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Due to the sectarian bias of the group, as well as to the lack of genuine biblical scholarship, I believe that the New World Translation is by far the worst translation in English dress. It purports to be word-for-word, and in most cases is slavishly literal to the point of being terrible English. But, ironically, whenever a sacred cow is demolished by the biblical writers themselves, the Jehovah's Witnesses twist the text and resort to an interpretive type of translation. In short, it combines the cons of both worlds, with none of the pros.

In summary, I would suggest that each English-speaking Christian own at least a NASB or RSV and an NIV. As well, I think it would be helpful to possess a King James and even a New English Bible. And then, make sure that you *read* the book!

Epilogue

There is a recent translation that has not yet been completed, but has been available in part on the Biblical Studies Foundation web site. The NET Bible (or New English Translation) has all the earmarks of a great translation. When finished, it may well be more accurate than the NASB, more readable than the NIV, and more elegant than either. In addition, the notes are genuine gold mine of information, unlike those found in any other translation. I would highly recommend that each English-speaking Christian put this Bible on his shopping list as soon as it is completed!

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APPENDIX C: BIBLE READING PLANS

BIBLE READING PLANS

To gain a better understanding of the Bible’s grand story, it’s helpful to read through entire chapters and books of Scripture like you would any other work of literature. Included below are three different plans to help you get started. It only takes about fifteen minutes a day or two hours a week of reading to follow these plans. Don’t limit yourself to only one block a day—read ahead if you want. And if you get behind, don’t give up! Just start again where you last stopped. Blocks of reading are provided according to book and chapter. To locate a book, utilize the Table of Contents at the beginning of your Bible.

Bible Reading Plan #1: Exploring Jesus in Twenty-one Days

There are four different accounts that tell the story of Jesus’ life: the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This reading plan explores two of these accounts, which are found at the beginning of the New Testament about three-quarters of the way into the Bible.

Day 1: Luke 1-2
Day 2: Luke 3-4
Day 3: Luke 5-6
Day 4: Luke 7-8
Day 5: Luke 9-10
Day 6: Luke 11-12
Day 7: Luke 13-15
Day 8: Luke 16-18
Day 9: Luke 19-20
Day 10: Luke 21-22
Day 11: Luke 23-24
Day 12: John 1-2
Day 13: John 3-4
Day 14: John 5-6
Day 15: John 7-8
Day 16: John 9-10
Day 17: John 11-12
Day 18: John 13-15
Day 19: John 16-17
Day 20: John 18-19
Day 21: John 20-21

Bible Reading Plan #2: Sampling Scripture in Ten Weeks

This reading plan includes entire books or significant portions of books from different time periods and literary genres in the Bible. For example, it includes historical narrative, songs, prophetic messages, travel accounts and personal letters. This plan also traces the well-known stories of creation, the exodus, King David, the prophet Jonah, Jesus and the early Christian movement. By

reading these blocks of Scripture, you'll begin to discover the grand storyline of the Bible. In this plan, blocks of reading are delineated by *week* rather than *day*. But don't feel the need to accomplish an entire week's reading in one sitting. Pace yourself by reading a little bit each day.

- Week 1: Genesis 1-25
- Week 2: Exodus 1-20, Ruth
- Week 3: 1 Samuel 16-31, 2 Samuel 1-7
- Week 4: Psalm 1-41
- Week 5: Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah
- Week 6: Esther, Ezra
- Week 7: Mark
- Week 8: Acts 1-12, 1 Peter
- Week 9: Acts 13-28
- Week 10: Romans, Ephesians

Bible Reading Plan #3: Reading the Bible in One Year (option 1)

Many people benefit from reading through the entire Bible in a year. If you follow this plan, you'll accomplish this goal! These readings are also delineated by *week* rather than *day*. The plan begins with the Old Testament and moves into the New Testament, but does not follow the exact order of books in your Bible (which is not always chronological anyway). For example, the books of poetry and wisdom literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs) are interspersed into the first half of the Old Testament readings to provide some variety. Also, in the New Testament, books have been grouped according to common theme (like Matthew, Hebrews and James, which reflect a Jewish audience) or common author (such as the books and letters written by the apostle John). Reading the entire Bible in a year seems like a daunting task. Don't be intimidated! Stay focused, be patient and begin to find your place in the story.

- Week 1: Genesis 1-25
- Week 2: Genesis 26-50
- Week 3: Job 1-24
- Week 4: Job 25-42, Exodus 1-10
- Week 5: Exodus 11-34
- Week 6: Exodus 35-40, Leviticus 1-15
- Week 7: Leviticus 16-27, Numbers 1-4
- Week 8: Numbers 5-21
- Week 9: Numbers 22-36, Psalms 1-17
- Week 10: Psalms 18-55
- Week 11: Psalms 56-94
- Week 12: Psalms 95-150
- Week 13: Deuteronomy 1-19
- Week 14: Deuteronomy 20-34, Proverbs 1-7
- Week 15: Proverbs 8-31
- Week 16: Ecclesiastes, Joshua 1-10
- Week 17: Joshua 11-24, Judges 1-5

Week 18: Judges 6-21, Ruth
Week 19: Song of Songs, 1 Samuel 1-16
Week 20: 1 Samuel 17-31, 2 Samuel 1-7
Week 21: 2 Samuel 8-24
Week 22: 1 Kings 1-18
Week 23: 1 Kings 19-22, 2 Kings 1-16
Week 24: 2 Kings 17-25, Isaiah 1-11
Week 25: Isaiah 12-37
Week 26: Isaiah 38-59
Week 27: Isaiah 60-66, Jeremiah 1-14
Week 28: Jeremiah 15-36
Week 29: Jeremiah 37-52
Week 30: Lamentations, 1 Chronicles 1-12
Week 31: 1 Chronicles 13-29, 2 Chronicles 1-7
Week 32: 2 Chronicles 8-38
Week 33: Ezekiel 1-20
Week 34: Ezekiel 21-38
Week 35: Ezekiel 39-48, Daniel
Week 36: Hosea, Joel, Amos
Week 37: Ezra, Nehemiah
Week 38: Esther, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah
Week 39: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Week 40: Matthew 1-17
Week 41: Matthew 18-28, Hebrews 1-8
Week 42: Hebrews 9-13, James, Mark 1-9
Week 43: Mark 10-16, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude
Week 44: Luke 1-15
Week 45: Luke 16-24, Acts 1-7
Week 46: Acts 8-21
Week 47: Acts 22-28, Romans
Week 48: 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians
Week 49: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians
Week 50: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, John 1-10
Week 51: John 11-21, 1, 2 and 3 John
Week 52: Revelation

Bible Reading Plan #4: Reading the Bible in One Year (option 2)

The following two pages include the **M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan** (also available at: www.esv.org/biblereadingplans). This plan has you read through the entire bible in a year with two Old testament passages and two new testament passages every day.

Jan 1 Gen 1, Matt 1, Ezra 1, Acts 1
Jan 2 Gen 2, Matt 2, Ezra 2, Acts 2
Jan 3 Gen 3, Matt 3, Ezra 3, Acts 3
Jan 4 Gen 4, Matt 4, Ezra 4, Acts 4
Jan 5 Gen 5, Matt 5, Ezra 5, Acts 5
Jan 6 Gen 6, Matt 6, Ezra 6, Acts 6
Jan 7 Gen 7, Matt 7, Ezra 7, Acts 7
Jan 8 Gen 8, Matt 8, Ezra 8, Acts 8
Jan 9 Gen 9-10, Matt 9, Ezra 9, Acts 9
Jan 10 Gen 11, Matt 10, Ezra 10, Acts 10
Jan 11 Gen 12, Matt 11, Neh 1, Acts 11
Jan 12 Gen 13, Matt 12, Neh 2, Acts 12
Jan 13 Gen 14, Matt 13, Neh 3, Acts 13
Jan 14 Gen 15, Matt 14, Neh 4, Acts 14
Jan 15 Gen 16, Matt 15, Neh 5, Acts 15
Jan 16 Gen 17, Matt 16, Neh 6, Acts 16
Jan 17 Gen 18, Matt 17, Neh 7, Acts 17
Jan 18 Gen 19, Matt 18, Neh 8, Acts 18
Jan 19 Gen 20, Matt 19, Neh 9, Acts 19
Jan 20 Gen 21, Matt 20, Neh 10, Acts 20
Jan 21 Gen 22, Matt 21, Neh 11, Acts 21
Jan 22 Gen 23, Matt 22, Neh 12, Acts 22
Jan 23 Gen 24, Matt 23, Neh 13, Acts 23
Jan 24 Gen 25, Matt 24, Est 1, Acts 24
Jan 25 Gen 26, Matt 25, Est 2, Acts 25
Jan 26 Gen 27, Matt 26, Est 3, Acts 26
Jan 27 Gen 28, Matt 27, Est 4, Acts 27
Jan 28 Gen 29, Matt 28, Est 5, Acts 28
Jan 29 Gen 30, Mark 1, Est 6, Rom 1
Jan 30 Gen 31, Mark 2, Est 7, Rom 2
Jan 31 Gen 32, Mark 3, Est 8, Rom 3
Feb 1 Gen 33, Mark 4, Est 9-10, Rom 4
Feb 2 Gen 34, Mark 5, Job 1, Rom 5
Feb 3 Gen 35-36, Mark 6, Job 2, Rom 6
Feb 4 Gen 37, Mark 7, Job 3, Rom 7
Feb 5 Gen 38, Mark 8, Job 4, Rom 8
Feb 6 Gen 39, Mark 9, Job 5, Rom 9
Feb 7 Gen 40, Mark 10, Job 6, Rom 10
Feb 8 Gen 41, Mark 11, Job 7, Rom 11
Feb 9 Gen 42, Mark 12, Job 8, Rom 12
Feb 10 Gen 43, Mark 13, Job 9, Rom 13
Feb 11 Gen 44, Mark 14, Job 10, Rom 14
Feb 12 Gen 45, Mark 15, Job 11, Rom 15
Feb 13 Gen 46, Mark 16, Job 12, Rom 16
Feb 14 Gen 47, Luke 1:1-38, Job 13, 1 Cor 1
Feb 15 Gen 48, Luke 1:39-80, Job 14, 1 Cor 2
Feb 16 Gen 49, Luke 2, Job 15, 1 Cor 3
Feb 17 Gen 50, Luke 3, Job 16-17, 1 Cor 4
Feb 18 Ex 1, Luke 4, Job 18, 1 Cor 5
Feb 19 Ex 2, Luke 5, Job 19, 1 Cor 6
Feb 20 Ex 3, Luke 6, Job 20, 1 Cor 7
Feb 21 Ex 4, Luke 7, Job 21, 1 Cor 8
Feb 22 Ex 5, Luke 8, Job 22, 1 Cor 9
Feb 23 Ex 6, Luke 9, Job 23, 1 Cor 10
Feb 24 Ex 7, Luke 10, Job 24, 1 Cor 11
Feb 25 Ex 8, Luke 11, Job 25-26, 1 Cor 12
Feb 26 Ex 9, Luke 12, Job 27, 1 Cor 13
Feb 27 Ex 10, Luke 13, Job 28, 1 Cor 14
Feb 28 Ex 11, Luke 14, Job 29, 1 Cor 15
Mar 1 Ex 12, Luke 15, Job 30, 1 Cor 16
Mar 2 Ex 13, Luke 16, Job 31, 2 Cor 1
Mar 3 Ex 14, Luke 17, Job 32, 2 Cor 2
Mar 4 Ex 15, Luke 18, Job 33, 2 Cor 3
Mar 5 Ex 16, Luke 19, Job 34, 2 Cor 4
Mar 6 Ex 17, Luke 20, Job 35, 2 Cor 5
Mar 7 Ex 18, Luke 21, Job 36, 2 Cor 6

Mar 8 Ex 19, Luke 22, Job 37, 2 Cor 7
Mar 9 Ex 20, Luke 23, Job 38, 2 Cor 8
Mar 10 Ex 21, Luke 24, Job 39, 2 Cor 9
Mar 11 Ex 22, John 1, Job 40, 2 Cor 10
Mar 12 Ex 23, John 2, Job 41, 2 Cor 11
Mar 13 Ex 24, John 3, Job 42, 2 Cor 12
Mar 14 Ex 25, John 4, Prov 1, 2 Cor 13
Mar 15 Ex 26, John 5, Prov 2, Gal 1
Mar 16 Ex 27, John 6, Prov 3, Gal 2
Mar 17 Ex 28, John 7, Prov 4, Gal 3
Mar 18 Ex 29, John 8, Prov 5, Gal 4
Mar 19 Ex 30, John 9, Prov 6, Gal 5
Mar 20 Ex 31, John 10, Prov 7, Gal 6
Mar 21 Ex 32, John 11, Prov 8, Eph 1
Mar 22 Ex 33, John 12, Prov 9, Eph 2
Mar 23 Ex 34, John 13, Prov 10, Eph 3
Mar 24 Ex 35, John 14, Prov 11, Eph 4
Mar 25 Ex 36, John 15, Prov 12, Eph 5
Mar 26 Ex 37, John 16, Prov 13, Eph 6
Mar 27 Ex 38, John 17, Prov 14, Phil 1
Mar 28 Ex 39, John 18, Prov 15, Phil 2
Mar 29 Ex 40, John 19, Prov 16, Phil 3
Mar 30 Lev 1, John 20, Prov 17, Phil 4
Mar 31 Lev 2-3, John 21, Prov 18, Col 1
Apr 1 Lev 4, Ps 1-2, Prov 19, Col 2
Apr 2 Lev 5, Ps 3-4, Prov 20, Col 3
Apr 3 Lev 6, Ps 5-6, Prov 21, Col 4
Apr 4 Lev 7, Ps 7-8, Prov 22, 1 Thes 1
Apr 5 Lev 8, Ps 9, Prov 23, 1 Thes 2
Apr 6 Lev 9, Ps 10, Prov 24, 1 Thes 3
Apr 7 Lev 10, Ps 11-12, Prov 25, 1 Thes 4
Apr 8 Lev 11-12, Ps 13-14, Prov 26, 1 Thes 5
Apr 9 Lev 13, Ps 15-16, Prov 27, 2 Thes 1
Apr 10 Lev 14, Ps 17, Prov 28, 2 Thes 2
Apr 11 Lev 15, Ps 18, Prov 29, 2 Thes 3
Apr 12 Lev 16, Ps 19, Prov 30, 1 Tim 1
Apr 13 Lev 17, Ps 20-21, Prov 31, 1 Tim 2
Apr 14 Lev 18, Ps 22, Eccl 1, 1 Tim 3
Apr 15 Lev 19, Ps 23-24, Eccl 2, 1 Tim 4
Apr 16 Lev 20, Ps 25, Eccl 3, 1 Tim 5
Apr 17 Lev 21, Ps 26-27, Eccl 4, 1 Tim 6
Apr 18 Lev 22, Ps 28-29, Eccl 5, 2 Tim 1
Apr 19 Lev 23, Ps 30, Eccl 6, 2 Tim 2
Apr 20 Lev 24, Ps 31, Eccl 7, 2 Tim 3
Apr 21 Lev 25, Ps 32, Eccl 8, 2 Tim 4
Apr 22 Lev 26, Ps 33, Eccl 9, Titus 1
Apr 23 Lev 27, Ps 34, Eccl 10, Titus 2
Apr 24 Num 1, Ps 35, Eccl 11, Titus 3
Apr 25 Num 2, Ps 36, Eccl 12, Phm 1
Apr 26 Num 3, Ps 37, Sng 1, Heb 1
Apr 27 Num 4, Ps 38, Sng 2, Heb 2
Apr 28 Num 5, Ps 39, Sng 3, Heb 3
Apr 29 Num 6, Ps 40-41, Sng 4, Heb 4
Apr 30 Num 7, Ps 42-43, Sng 5, Heb 5
May 1 Num 8, Ps 44, Sng 6, Heb 6
May 2 Num 9, Ps 45, Sng 7, Heb 7
May 3 Num 10, Ps 46-47, Sng 8, Heb 8
May 4 Num 11, Ps 48, Isa 1, Heb 9
May 5 Num 12-13, Ps 49, Isa 2, Heb 10
May 6 Num 14, Ps 50, Isa 3-4, Heb 11
May 7 Num 15, Ps 51, Isa 5, Heb 12
May 8 Num 16, Ps 52-54, Isa 6, Heb 13
May 9 Num 17-18, Ps 55, Isa 7, Jas 1
May 10 Num 19, Ps 56-57, Isa 8, Jas 2
May 11 Num 20, Ps 58-59, Isa 9, Jas 3
May 12 Num 21, Ps 60-61, Isa 10, Jas 4

May 13 Num 22, Ps 62-63, Isa 11-12, Jas 5
May 14 Num 23, Ps 64-65, Isa 13, 1 Pet 1
May 15 Num 24, Ps 66-67, Isa 14, 1 Pet 2
May 16 Num 25, Ps 68, Isa 15, 1 Pet 3
May 17 Num 26, Ps 69, Isa 16, 1 Pet 4
May 18 Num 27, Ps 70-71, Isa 17-18, 1 Pet 5
May 19 Num 28, Ps 72, Isa 19-20, 2 Pet 1
May 20 Num 29, Ps 73, Isa 21, 2 Pet 2
May 21 Num 30, Ps 74, Isa 22, 2 Pet 3
May 22 Num 31, Ps 75-76, Isa 23, 1 Jn 1
May 23 Num 32, Ps 77, Isa 24, 1 Jn 2
May 24 Num 33, Ps 78:1-39, Isa 25, 1 Jn 3
May 25 Num 34, Ps 78:40-72, Isa 26, 1 Jn 4
May 26 Num 35, Ps 79, Isa 27, 1 Jn 5
May 27 Num 36, Ps 80, Isa 28, 2 Jn 1
May 28 Deut 1, Ps 81-82, Isa 29, 3 Jn 1
May 29 Deut 2, Ps 83-84, Isa 30, Jude 1
May 30 Deut 3, Ps 85, Isa 31, Rev 1
May 31 Deut 4, Ps 86-87, Isa 32, Rev 2
Jun 1 Deut 5, Ps 88, Isa 33, Rev 3
Jun 2 Deut 6, Ps 89, Isa 34, Rev 4
Jun 3 Deut 7, Ps 90, Isa 35, Rev 5
Jun 4 Deut 8, Ps 91, Isa 36, Rev 6
Jun 5 Deut 9, Ps 92-93, Isa 37, Rev 7
Jun 6 Deut 10, Ps 94, Isa 38, Rev 8
Jun 7 Deut 11, Ps 95-96, Isa 39, Rev 9
Jun 8 Deut 12, Ps 97-98, Isa 40, Rev 10
Jun 9 Deut 13-14, Ps 99-101, Isa 41, Rev 11
Jun 10 Deut 15, Ps 102, Isa 42, Rev 12
Jun 11 Deut 16, Ps 103, Isa 43, Rev 13
Jun 12 Deut 17, Ps 104, Isa 44, Rev 14
Jun 13 Deut 18, Ps 105, Isa 45, Rev 15
Jun 14 Deut 19, Ps 106, Isa 46, Rev 16
Jun 15 Deut 20, Ps 107, Isa 47, Rev 17
Jun 16 Deut 21, Ps 108-109, Isa 48, Rev 18
Jun 17 Deut 22, Ps 110-111, Isa 49, Rev 19
Jun 18 Deut 23, Ps 112-113, Isa 50, Rev 20
Jun 19 Deut 24, Ps 114-115, Isa 51, Rev 21
Jun 20 Deut 25, Ps 116, Isa 52, Rev 22
Jun 21 Deut 26, Ps 117-118, Isa 53, Matt 1
Jun 22 Deut 27, Ps 119:1-24, Isa 54, Matt 2
Jun 23 Deut 28, Ps 119:25-48, Isa 55, Matt 3
Jun 24 Deut 29, Ps 119:49-72, Isa 56, Matt 4
Jun 25 Deut 30, Ps 119:73-96, Isa 57, Matt 5
Jun 26 Deut 31, Ps 119:97-120, Isa 58, Matt 6
Jun 27 Deut 32, Ps 119:121-144, Isa 59, Matt 7
Jun 28 Deut 33-34, Ps 119:145-176, Isa 60, Matt 8
Jun 29 Josh 1, Ps 120-122, Isa 61, Matt 9
Jun 30 Josh 2, Ps 123-125, Isa 62, Matt 10
Jul 1 Josh 3, Ps 126-128, Isa 63, Matt 11
Jul 2 Josh 4, Ps 129-131, Isa 64, Matt 12
Jul 3 Josh 5, Ps 132-134, Isa 65, Matt 13
Jul 4 Josh 6, Ps 135-136, Isa 66, Matt 14
Jul 5 Josh 7, Ps 137-138, Jer 1, Matt 15
Jul 6 Josh 8, Ps 139, Jer 2, Matt 16
Jul 7 Josh 9, Ps 140-141, Jer 3, Matt 17
Jul 8 Josh 10, Ps 142-143, Jer 4, Matt 18
Jul 9 Josh 11, Ps 144, Jer 5, Matt 19
Jul 10 Josh 12-13, Ps 145, Jer 6, Matt 20
Jul 11 Josh 14-15, Ps 146-147, Jer 7, Matt 21
Jul 12 Josh 16-17, Ps 148, Jer 8, Matt 22
Jul 13 Josh 18-19, Ps 149-150, Jer 9, Matt 23

Jul 14 Josh 20-21, Acts 1, Jer 10, Matt 24
Jul 15 Josh 22, Acts 2, Jer 11, Matt 25
Jul 16 Josh 23, Acts 3, Jer 12, Matt 26
Jul 17 Josh 24, Acts 4, Jer 13, Matt 27
Jul 18 Judg 1, Acts 5, Jer 14, Matt 28
Jul 19 Judg 2, Acts 6, Jer 15, Mark 1
Jul 20 Judg 3, Acts 7, Jer 16, Mark 2
Jul 21 Judg 4, Acts 8, Jer 17, Mark 3
Jul 22 Judg 5, Acts 9, Jer 18, Mark 4
Jul 23 Judg 6, Acts 10, Jer 19, Mark 5
Jul 24 Judg 7, Acts 11, Jer 20, Mark 6
Jul 25 Judg 8, Acts 12, Jer 21, Mark 7
Jul 26 Judg 9, Acts 13, Jer 22, Mark 8
Jul 27 Judg 10, Acts 14, Jer 23, Mark 9
Jul 28 Judg 11, Acts 15, Jer 24, Mark 10
Jul 29 Judg 12, Acts 16, Jer 25, Mark 11
Jul 30 Judg 13, Acts 17, Jer 26, Mark 12
Jul 31 Judg 14, Acts 18, Jer 27, Mark 13
Aug 1 Judg 15, Acts 19, Jer 28, Mark 14
Aug 2 Judg 16, Acts 20, Jer 29, Mark 15
Aug 3 Judg 17, Acts 21, Jer 30-31, Mark 16
Aug 4 Judg 18, Acts 22, Jer 32, Luke 1
Aug 5 Judg 19, Acts 23, Jer 33, Luke 2
Aug 6 Judg 20, Acts 24, Jer 34, Luke 3
Aug 7 Judg 21, Acts 25, Jer 35, Luke 4
Aug 8 Ruth 1, Acts 26, Jer 36, Luke 5
Aug 9 Ruth 2, Acts 27, Jer 37, Luke 6
Aug 10 Ruth 3-4, Acts 28, Jer 38, Luke 7
Aug 11 1 Sam 1, Rom 1, Jer 39, Luke 8
Aug 12 1 Sam 2, Rom 2, Jer 40, Luke 9
Aug 13 1 Sam 3, Rom 3, Jer 41, Luke 10
Aug 14 1 Sam 4, Rom 4, Jer 42, Luke 11
Aug 15 1 Sam 5-6, Rom 5, Jer 43, Luke 12
Aug 16 1 Sam 7-8, Rom 6, Jer 44-45, Luke 13
Aug 17 1 Sam 9, Rom 7, Jer 46, Luke 14
Aug 18 1 Sam 10, Rom 8, Jer 47, Luke 15
Aug 19 1 Sam 11, Rom 9, Jer 48, Luke 16
Aug 20 1 Sam 12, Rom 10, Jer 49, Luke 17
Aug 21 1 Sam 13, Rom 11, Jer 50, Luke 18
Aug 22 1 Sam 14, Rom 12, Jer 51, Luke 19
Aug 23 1 Sam 15, Rom 13, Jer 52, Luke 20
Aug 24 1 Sam 16, Rom 14, Lam 1, Luke 21
Aug 25 1 Sam 17, Rom 15, Lam 2, Luke 22
Aug 26 1 Sam 18, Rom 16, Lam 3, Luke 23
Aug 27 1 Sam 19, 1 Cor 1, Lam 4, Luke 24
Aug 28 1 Sam 20, 1 Cor 2, Lam 5, John 1
Aug 29 1 Sam 21-22, 1 Cor 3, Ezek 1, John 2
Aug 30 1 Sam 23, 1 Cor 4, Ezek 2, John 3
Aug 31 1 Sam 24, 1 Cor 5, Ezek 3, John 4
Sep 1 1 Sam 25, 1 Cor 6, Ezek 4, John 5
Sep 2 1 Sam 26, 1 Cor 7, Ezek 5, John 6
Sep 3 1 Sam 27, 1 Cor 8, Ezek 6, John 7
Sep 4 1 Sam 28, 1 Cor 9, Ezek 7, John 8
Sep 5 1 Sam 29-30, 1 Cor 10, Ezek 8, John 9
Sep 6 1 Sam 31, 1 Cor 11, Ezek 9, John 10
Sep 7 2 Sam 1, 1 Cor 12, Ezek 10, John 11
Sep 8 2 Sam 2, 1 Cor 13, Ezek 11, John 12
Sep 9 2 Sam 3, 1 Cor 14, Ezek 12, John 13
Sep 10 2 Sam 4-5, 1 Cor 15, Ezek 13, John 14
Sep 11 2 Sam 6, 1 Cor 16, Ezek 14, John 15

Sep 12 2 Sam 7, 2 Cor 1, Ezek 15, John 16
Sep 13 2 Sam 8-9, 2 Cor 2, Ezek 16, John 17
Sep 14 2 Sam 10, 2 Cor 3, Ezek 17, John 18
Sep 15 2 Sam 11, 2 Cor 4, Ezek 18, John 19
Sep 16 2 Sam 12, 2 Cor 5, Ezek 19, John 20
Sep 17 2 Sam 13, 2 Cor 6, Ezek 20, John 21
Sep 18 2 Sam 14, 2 Cor 7, Ezek 21, Ps 1-2
Sep 19 2 Sam 15, 2 Cor 8, Ezek 22, Ps 3-4
Sep 20 2 Sam 16, 2 Cor 9, Ezek 23, Ps 5-6
Sep 21 2 Sam 17, 2 Cor 10, Ezek 24, Ps 7-8
Sep 22 2 Sam 18, 2 Cor 11, Ezek 25, Ps 9
Sep 23 2 Sam 19, 2 Cor 12, Ezek 26, Ps 10
Sep 24 2 Sam 20, 2 Cor 13, Ezek 27, Ps 11-12
Sep 25 2 Sam 21, Gal 1, Ezek 28, Ps 13-14
Sep 26 2 Sam 22, Gal 2, Ezek 29, Ps 15-16
Sep 27 2 Sam 23, Gal 3, Ezek 30, Ps 17
Sep 28 2 Sam 24, Gal 4, Ezek 31, Ps 18
Sep 29 1 Kgs 1, Gal 5, Ezek 32, Ps 19
Sep 30 1 Kgs 2, Gal 6, Ezek 33, Ps 20-21
Oct 1 1 Kgs 3, Eph 1, Ezek 34, Ps 22
Oct 2 1 Kgs 4-5, Eph 2, Ezek 35, Ps 23-24
Oct 3 1 Kgs 6, Eph 3, Ezek 36, Ps 25
Oct 4 1 Kgs 7, Eph 4, Ezek 37, Ps 26-27
Oct 5 1 Kgs 8, Eph 5, Ezek 38, Ps 28-29
Oct 6 1 Kgs 9, Eph 6, Ezek 39, Ps 30
Oct 7 1 Kgs 10, Phil 1, Ezek 40, Ps 31
Oct 8 1 Kgs 11, Phil 2, Ezek 41, Ps 32
Oct 9 1 Kgs 12, Phil 3, Ezek 42, Ps 33
Oct 10 1 Kgs 13, Phil 4, Ezek 43, Ps 34
Oct 11 1 Kgs 14, Col 1, Ezek 44, Ps 35
Oct 12 1 Kgs 15, Col 2, Ezek 45, Ps 36
Oct 13 1 Kgs 16, Col 3, Ezek 46, Ps 37
Oct 14 1 Kgs 17, Col 4, Ezek 47, Ps 38
Oct 15 1 Kgs 18, 1 Thes 1, Ezek 48, Ps 39
Oct 16 1 Kgs 19, 1 Thes 2, Dan 1, Ps 40-41
Oct 17 1 Kgs 20, 1 Thes 3, Dan 2, Ps 42-43
Oct 18 1 Kgs 21, 1 Thes 4, Dan 3, Ps 44
Oct 19 1 Kgs 22, 1 Thes 5, Dan 4, Ps 45
Oct 20 2 Kgs 1, 2 Thes 1, Dan 5, Ps 46-47
Oct 21 2 Kgs 2, 2 Thes 2, Dan 6, Ps 48
Oct 22 2 Kgs 3, 2 Thes 3, Dan 7, Ps 49
Oct 23 2 Kgs 4, 1 Tim 1, Dan 8, Ps 50
Oct 24 2 Kgs 5, 1 Tim 2, Dan 9, Ps 51
Oct 25 2 Kgs 6, 1 Tim 3, Dan 10, Ps 52-54
Oct 26 2 Kgs 7, 1 Tim 4, Dan 11, Ps 55
Oct 27 2 Kgs 8, 1 Tim 5, Dan 12, Ps 56-57
Oct 28 2 Kgs 9, 1 Tim 6, Hos 1, Ps 58-59
Oct 29 2 Kgs 10-11, 2 Tim 1, Hos 2, Ps 60-61
Oct 30 2 Kgs 12, 2 Tim 2, Hos 3-4, Ps 62-63
Oct 31 2 Kgs 13, 2 Tim 3, Hos 5-6, Ps 64-65
Nov 1 2 Kgs 14, 2 Tim 4, Hos 7, Ps 66-67
Nov 2 2 Kgs 15, Titus 1, Hos 8, Ps 68
Nov 3 2 Kgs 16, Titus 2, Hos 9, Ps 69
Nov 4 2 Kgs 17, Titus 3, Hos 10, Ps 70-71
Nov 5 2 Kgs 18, Phm 1, Hos 11, Ps 72
Nov 6 2 Kgs 19, Heb 1, Hos 12, Ps 73
Nov 7 2 Kgs 20, Heb 2, Hos 13, Ps 74
Nov 8 2 Kgs 21, Heb 3, Hos 14, Ps 75-76
Nov 9 2 Kgs 22, Heb 4, Joel 1, Ps 77
Nov 10 2 Kgs 23, Heb 5, Joel 2, Ps 78

Nov 11 2 Kgs 24, Heb 6, Joel 3, Ps 79
Nov 12 2 Kgs 25, Heb 7, Amos 1, Ps 80
Nov 13 1 Chr 1-2, Heb 8, Amos 2, Ps 81-82
Nov 14 1 Chr 3-4, Heb 9, Amos 3, Ps 83-84
Nov 15 1 Chr 5-6, Heb 10, Amos 4, Ps 85
Nov 16 1 Chr 7-8, Heb 11, Amos 5, Ps 86
Nov 17 1 Chr 9-10, Heb 12, Amos 6, Ps 87-88
Nov 18 1 Chr 11-12, Heb 13, Amos 7, Ps 89
Nov 19 1 Chr 13-14, Jas 1, Amos 8, Ps 90
Nov 20 1 Chr 15, Jas 2, Amos 9, Ps 91
Nov 21 1 Chr 16, Jas 3, Obad 1, Ps 92-93
Nov 22 1 Chr 17, Jas 4, Jonah 1, Ps 94
Nov 23 1 Chr 18, Jas 5, Jonah 2, Ps 95-96
Nov 24 1 Chr 19-20, 1 Pet 1, Jonah 3, Ps 97-98
Nov 25 1 Chr 21, 1 Pet 2, Jonah 4, Ps 99-101
Nov 26 1 Chr 22, 1 Pet 3, Mic 1, Ps 102
Nov 27 1 Chr 23, 1 Pet 4, Mic 2, Ps 103
Nov 28 1 Chr 24-25, 1 Pet 5, Mic 3, Ps 104
Nov 29 1 Chr 26-27, 2 Pet 1, Mic 4, Ps 105
Nov 30 1 Chr 28, 2 Pet 2, Mic 5, Ps 106
Dec 1 1 Chr 29, 2 Pet 3, Mic 6, Ps 107
Dec 2 2 Chr 1, 1 Jn 1, Mic 7, Ps 108-109
Dec 3 2 Chr 2, 1 Jn 2, Nahum 1, Ps 110-111
Dec 4 2 Chr 3-4, 1 Jn 3, Nahum 2, Ps 112-113
Dec 5 2 Chr 5, 1 Jn 4, Nahum 3, Ps 114-115
Dec 6 2 Chr 6, 1 Jn 5, Hab 1, Ps 116
Dec 7 2 Chr 7, 2 Jn 1, Hab 2, Ps 117-118
Dec 8 2 Chr 8, 3 Jn 1, Hab 3, Ps 119:1-24
Dec 9 2 Chr 9, Jude 1, Zeph 1, Ps 119:25-48
Dec 10 2 Chr 10, Rev 1, Zeph 2, Ps 119:49-72
Dec 11 2 Chr 11-12, Rev 2, Zeph 3, Ps 119:73-96
Dec 12 2 Chr 13, Rev 3, Hag 1, Ps 119:97-120
Dec 13 2 Chr 14-15, Rev 4, Hag 2, Ps 119:121-144
Dec 14 2 Chr 16, Rev 5, Zech 1, Ps 119:145-176
Dec 15 2 Chr 17, Rev 6, Zech 2, Ps 120-122
Dec 16 2 Chr 18, Rev 7, Zech 3, Ps 123-125
Dec 17 2 Chr 19-20, Rev 8, Zech 4, Ps 126-128
Dec 18 2 Chr 21, Rev 9, Zech 5, Ps 129-131
Dec 19 2 Chr 22-23, Rev 10, Zech 6, Ps 132-134
Dec 20 2 Chr 24, Rev 11, Zech 7, Ps 135-136
Dec 21 2 Chr 25, Rev 12, Zech 8, Ps 137-138
Dec 22 2 Chr 26, Rev 13, Zech 9, Ps 139
Dec 23 2 Chr 27-28, Rev 14, Zech 10, Ps 140-141
Dec 24 2 Chr 29, Rev 15, Zech 11, Ps 142
Dec 25 2 Chr 30, Rev 16, Zech 12, Ps 143
Dec 26 2 Chr 31, Rev 17, Zech 13, Ps 144
Dec 27 2 Chr 32, Rev 18, Zech 14, Ps 145
Dec 28 2 Chr 33, Rev 19, Mal 1, Ps 146-147
Dec 29 2 Chr 34, Rev 20, Mal 2, Ps 148
Dec 30 2 Chr 35, Rev 21, Mal 3, Ps 149
Dec 31 2 Chr 36, Rev 22, Mal 4, Ps 150

Inspiration – from “How We Got the Bible”

By: Sid Litke, Th.M

I. Definition

God’s superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man (from Dr. Charles Ryrie).

Theories of Inspiration

- A. **Natural inspiration** – There is no supernatural element. The Bible was written by great men, who often erred.
- B. **Partial inspiration** – The Bible contains God’s words but must be sorted out (“demythologized”) to find them. Other parts are purely human and may be in error.
- C. **Conceptual inspiration** – The thoughts of scripture are inspired but the actual words used are not. There is factual and scientific error.
- D. **Dictation theory of inspiration** – The writers passively recorded God’s words without any participation of their own styles or personalities.
- E. **Verbal, plenary inspiration** – All the actual words of the Bible are inspired and without error (see “verbal, plenary” below). This fits the Bible’s description of inspiration.

II. Inspiration is claimed in the Bible.

- A. General claims of inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21).
- B. The writers claimed to be inspired.
 - 1. David (2 Samuel 23:2 – “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me”)
 - 2. Jeremiah (Jeremiah 2:1-2 – “Thus says the Lord”)
 - 3. Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:1,2 – “commandments...by the authority of the Lord Jesus”)
 - 4. John (Revelation 1:1 – “The revelation of Jesus Christ...to his bondservant John”)
- C. Jesus claimed that the scriptures were inspired (Matthew 5:18; Luke 24:44 – “all fulfilled”).

III. Verbal, plenary inspiration is described in the Bible.

A. Key Texts

- 1. “God-breathed” writings (2 Timothy 3:16 – “All scripture is inspired by God”).
 - a. The word “inspired” literally means “God-breathed.”
- 2. “Spirit-moved” writers (2 Peter 2:20, 21 – “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”)
- 3. There was a God, Spirit and Man interaction
 - a. Zechariah 7:12 – “The words which the Lord of Hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets.”

- b. Acts 4:24, 25 – “God...who by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father, David... did say.”

B. The meaning of verbal, plenary inspiration

1. “Verbal” inspiration
 - a. The words themselves are inspired, not just the ideas (“words” – Deuteronomy 18:18; Psalm 19:160; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 4:4,7,10).
 - b. The precise verb tense is inspired (“I am” – Matthew 22:21,32).
 - c. The individual letters, in a word, are inspired (“seed” or “seeds” – Galatians 3:16).
 - d. The smallest part of a Hebrew letter was inspired (Matthew 5:17,18).
2. “Plenary” inspiration
 - a. All scripture is equally inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) – Genealogical records, historical narratives and salvation verses are equally inspired and true, even though they may not be equally pertinent to our lives.

C. The forms of inspiration

1. God directly revealed parts of scripture to some writers (prophets in particular) who spoke exactly the words God gave them (Moses – Deuteronomy 4:2; Isaiah – Isaiah 59:21; Paul – Galatians 1:12, etc.).
2. God otherwise superintended the writing of men who wrote exactly what God intended. They used their own styles and expressed their thoughts freely knowing what they meant. Yet, through the Holy Spirit, God at the same time determined the content and controlled the accuracy of all they wrote. This is the miraculous mystery of inspiration.

D. The limits of inspiration

1. Inspiration is limited to the writing of scripture; not everything the writer wrote or said (see handout on Canonicity).
2. Inspiration is limited to the original manuscripts and not every later copy or translation.

IV. Other evidences for the inspiration of the Bible

The Bible claims to be inspired, but there is even more than evidence than just these self-claims. Below are listed a number of confirming evidences that support the Bible’s claim to truly be God’s revelation.

A. Fulfilled Prophecy in the Bible

The Bible contains many prophecies recorded and then later fulfilled. Here are some examples:

1. Israel’s regathering after being dispersed (A.D. 70) was predicted by the Bible (Isaiah 11:11 – 750 B.C.; Ezekiel 37:1-14 – 600 B.C.). For almost 2,000 years (since A.D. 70) no nation of Israel existed. Then, on May 15, 1948, Israel became a nation. In 1967 (Six-day War) its area was quadrupled.
2. The Destruction of the city of Tyre was predicted in detail by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 26 – 600 B.C.). In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great completed the destruction begun by others. Each detail Ezekiel predicted was fulfilled.
3. Four great successive world kingdoms (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) were specifically prophesied and described by Daniel (Daniel 2& 7- 535 B.C.). Each detail was fulfilled as these empires rose and fell.

4. Over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament describe the details of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection. The odds of even a few of these coming true in one person are staggering – much less 300 of them.

B. The Unity of the Bible

The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by about 40 authors on three continents in two major languages. The writers included an Egyptian-trained scholar (Moses), a general (Joshua), Kings (David, Solomon), a farmer (Amos), a fisherman (Peter), a tax-collector (Matthew), and a rabbi (Paul), but amazingly they present a consistent viewpoint of life and set of facts.

One cannot imagine 40 different writers today, from such different backgrounds, agreeing on any subject. But in all its 66 books, the Bible is self-consistent on such significant issues as: where we come from (special creation by God), why we're here (to serve and glorify God), and where we're going (eternal life or eternal judgment). The principles, the moral viewpoints and the historical details are consistent throughout Scripture. There are no significant discrepancies (See Inerrancy).

C. The Supernatural Dynamic of the Bible

Christianity began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Since then, thousands upon thousands have been converted and their lives radically changed by the Gospel message in the Bible. The many testimonies of Christians to the life-changing effect of scripture is a confirming evidence of the Bible's inspiration.

D. The Distribution and Indestructibility of the Bible

The Bible is far and away the world's "best seller." By 1932 it was computed that 1-3 billion had been published. By the 1960's it is estimated that over 2 billion were published. Currently, a total of 3-4 billion is reasonable. No other book is even close.

The Bible in its complete form or portions of it is now available in 2,233 languages, according to the 1999 Scripture Language Report issued by the United Bible Societies (biblesociety.org), representing about 90% of the world's population.

Throughout the centuries, various enemies have tried to destroy the Bible (Diocletian Edict, circa A.D. 300). Voltaire, the French philosopher and skeptic, predicted in the 18th century that the Bible and Christianity would soon be obsolete. In 1828, fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society was using his press and his house to publish Bibles.

Jesus had predicted, "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

E. Archaeology supports the Bible

Numerous archaeological finds have supported the Bible's accuracy. Otherwise unknown places, events and dates have proven to be historically accurate. Nelson Glueck, a leading Jewish archaeologist said, "It can be categorically stated that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference" (Rivers In The Desert, Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy. 1959. p.31). This does not prove inspiration, but it confirms the credibility of writers who also claim that they wrote with God's authority.

F. A Logical Argument for Inspiration

Charles Wesley proposed the following logical argument: "The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.

1. It could not be the invention of good men or angels; for they neither would or could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, "Thus saith the Lord," when it was their own invention.
2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.
3. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must by given by divine inspiration."

(Robert W, Burtner and Robert Chiles, A Compend of Wesley's Theology, Abingdon Press. 1954. p. 20)

From: <https://bible.org/seriespage/inspiration>

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Inerrancy – from “How We Got the Bible”

By: Sid Litke, Th.M

Introduction

1. “Inerrancy” is a term used to explain that the Bible is completely true and contains no errors in the original autographs. The reason inerrancy is an issue is because some religious “scholars” believe that the scripture contains errors, yet they continue to claim to believe in “inspiration.” Actually, they’re trying to redefine “inspiration” to include possible errors. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss “inerrancy” because it assures that we understand inspiration to mean “without error.”

2. When inerrancy is denied, it begins a “slippery slope” effect. The denial of inerrancy often leads to the denial of other literal truths. Historical facts are taken as myths/stories (It is often claimed for example that the creation of the world and man in Genesis 1-12 wasn’t meant to be taken literally). Biblical viewpoints on issues, such as homosexuality or women’s roles, are easily denied when inerrancy is denied. One otherwise evangelical “errantist” acknowledges that Paul said, “Wives submit to your husbands” but he feels that “Paul was wrong.” It is one thing to interpret what a scripture means, but we don’t have the freedom to claim that a Bible author wrote something that was “wrong” or “in error.”

I. Inerrancy described (from Dr. Norman Geisler, Dallas Seminary class notes, 1983)

A. Definition: The Bible is wholly true (in whole and in part) in all that it affirms.

B. Logical reasoning

1. The Bible is God’s word (Matthew 4:4-11).
2. God is always truthful (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).
3. Therefore the Bible is completely true (inerrancy).

C. “What scripture says, God says”

Bible Said	=	God Said
Isaiah 55:3	=	Acts 13:34
Psalms 16:10	=	Acts 13:35
Psalms 102:26	=	Hebrews 1:5-6
Psalms 104:4	=	Hebrews 1:5-6
Etc.	=	Etc.

Throughout the New Testament there are quotes of Old Testament writers that are explicitly attributed to God. The fact that what scripture says is also what God says tells us that God's truthfulness is bound up in Scripture's truthfulness. To deny the total truthfulness of the Bible is to deny the total truthfulness of God.

D. Questions

1. *Why must there be flawless originals if our copies are not?*

Answer: Because God produced the original and He cannot err.

2. *Why didn't God preserve the copies from all error?*

Answer: He did preserve it from significant error, but just like God allows other things we don't understand, we must accept that He had a good reason.

3. *How accurate are our copies of the original Hebrew and Greek texts?*

Answer: About 99% accurate. We have 100% of the truth we need. The main issues are disagreements about which words were the original ones. We don't lack any of the original – we just have some disputed extra.

Note: Actually, we have thousands of existing manuscripts – each containing a variety of copying errors. But the fact that we have so many copies actually enables us to decide very closely what the original was.

Example: If you would receive 3 telegrams, each containing an error.

#OU HAVE WON \$1,000.

Y#U HAVE WON \$1,000.

YO# HAVE WON \$1,000.

The truth is clear, even if the telegrams disagree on their errors.

II. Inerrancy defended

Critics of inerrancy are quick to point out that there are supposedly contradictions in the Bible and that some statements in scripture are not literally or scientifically true. Two principles must guide our thinking about inerrancy.

A. Apparent contradictions are not necessarily real contradictions.

1. Some writers do not give all the truth about a certain event, but they do give only the truth. Parallel accounts may give different details. But they are not contradictory – merely complimentary.

How many angels were at Christ's tomb? Matthew 28:1-7 refers to "an angel; Luke 24:4 speaks of two angels.

Answer: Two angels were at the tomb. Where there are two angels, there is also one angel.

What was the inscription on the cross (Matthew 27:37 versus John 19:19)?

Answer: The complete inscription was evidently more words than either verse states. But everything in each verse was really on the inscription.

2. Some errors are errors in copying. These do not discredit inerrancy, which simply claims the originals are inerrant.

3. Some apparent contradictions are solved by facts we do not know.

2 Samuel 24:24 says David paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor property.

1 Chronicles 21:25 says 600 shekels. Perhaps the threshing floor was 50 shekels, and with the surrounding property, the total was 600.

2 Samuel 21:19 says Elhanan killed Goliath. 1 Samuel 17:50 says David did. Maybe David had 2 names (like Solomon did – 2 Samuel 12:24;25). Or maybe Elhanan killed Goliath's brother ("the brother of" was maybe omitted by a copyist). Or maybe there is another legitimate explanation.

Modern example: By Dr. Kenneth Kantzer:

"Several years ago the mother of a friend of ours was killed. We first learned of the death through a trusted mutual friend who reported that the woman had been standing on the corner of the street, at a bus intersection, waiting for a bus and had been hit by another bus passing by, and was fatally hurt, dying a few minutes thereafter. Shortly thereafter, we learned from the grandson of the dead woman that she had been involved in a collision, was thrown from the car in which she was riding and was killed instantly. The boy was quite clear; this was all the information he had. His story was not only quite clear and positive, but he had secured his information directly from his mother. No further information was forthcoming from either source. Now which would you believe? We trusted both our friends, but we certainly could not put the data together. Much later, upon further inquiry, we learned that the woman had been waiting for a bus, was hit by another bus and was fatally hurt. She had been picked up by a passing car, dashed to the hospital, but in this haste, the car in which she was being transported to the hospital collided with another, she was thrown from the car and died instantly."

4. The Bible is innocent of error until proven guilty. Based on the Bible's self-claim of inerrancy and the mass of evidence for inerrancy, we can assume there are good explanations for apparent contradictions.

The burden of proof is on the critic. There are at least plausible explanations for all so-called discrepancies (See Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, pp. 95-104).

B. Inerrancy allows for other forms of truth in human language besides technically literal truth.

1. Approximations – In Acts 7:6, Stephen may be approximating when he says the Egyptians captivity was 400 years while Exodus 12:40 says it was 430 years. Legitimate approximations do not violate inerrancy. If I actually say, “My ancestors came to America 100 years ago,” in context it is a legitimately true statement whether it was actually 110, 101 or 110 years.

2. Figures of speech – Christ is obviously not literally a “door” (John 10:7). He is the “entrance” in eternal life, however. Scriptural truth involves many figures of speech and symbols. But all such truth is still literal in that even figures of speech convey literal truths.

3. Language of appearances – When the Bible says the “sun set,” it merely is using a language of appearances, as we do, to convey the literal truth that the day ended.

4. Popular, not scientific truth – In Matthew 13:32, Jesus referred to the mustard seed as the “smallest” of seeds. Botanists today know of many smaller. But Jesus simply used the proverbial understanding of the mustard seed, which was considered smallest of the seeds, as popularly known in Palestine. This does not violate inerrancy.

From: <https://bible.org/seriespage/inerrancy>

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Canonicity – from “How We Got the Bible”

By: Sid Litke, Th.M

I. Introduction

How do we know that the 66 books in our Bible are the only inspired books? Who decided which books were truly inspired by God? The Roman Catholic Bible includes books that are not found in other Bibles (called the Apocrypha). How do we know that we as Protestants have the right books? These questions are addressed by a study of canonicity.

“Canon” is a word that comes from Greek and Hebrew words that literally means a measuring rod. So canonicity describes the standard that books had to meet to be recognized as scripture.

On the one hand, deciding which books were inspired seems like a human process. Christians gathered together at church councils in the first several centuries A.D. for the purpose of officially recognizing which books are inspired. But it’s important to remember that these councils did not determine which books were inspired. They simply recognized what God had already determined.

This study discusses the tests of canonicity that were used, the history of canonization and a brief explanation of why certain disputed books are not scripture.

II. Summary

The collection of 66 books were properly recognized by the early church as the complete authoritative scriptures not to be added to or subtracted from.

III. Tests of Canonicity

The early church councils applied several basic standards in recognizing whether a book was inspired.

- A. Is it authoritative (“Thus saith the Lord”)?
- B. Is it prophetic (“a man of God” 2 Peter 1:20)?
 - a. A book in the Bible must have the authority of a spiritual leader of Israel (O.T. – prophet, king, judge, scribe) or and apostle of the church (N.T. – It must be based on the testimony of an original apostle.).
- C. Is it authentic (consistent with other revelation of truth)?
- D. Is it dynamic – demonstrating God’s life-changing power (Hebrew 4:12)?
- E. Is it received (accepted and used by believers – 1 Thessalonians 2:13)?

(from: Norman L. Geisler & William Nix, A General Introduction To The Bible. pp. 137-144).

IV. The History of Canonization

- A. **Old Testament Canon** – Recognizing the correct Old Testament books
 1. Christ refers to Old Testament books as “scripture” (Matthew 21:42, etc.).
 2. The Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) officially recognized our 39 Old Testament books.
 3. Josephus, the Jewish historian (A.D. 95), indicated that the 39 books were recognized as authoritative.
- B. **New Testament Canon** – Recognizing the correct New Testament books
 1. The apostles claimed authority for their writings (Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:14).
 2. The apostle’s writings were equated with Old Testament scriptures (2 Peter 3:1, 2, 15, 16).
 3. The Council of Athanasius (A.D. 367) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) recognized the 27 books in our New Testament today as inspired.

V. The Disputed but non-canonical books

A. The Apocrypha is not scripture.

The Apocryphal books are 15 books written in the 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. They record some of the history of that time period and various other religious stories and teaching. The Catholic Bible (Douay Version) regards these books as scripture. The Apocrypha includes some specific Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory and prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:39-46), and salvation by works (almsgiving – Tobit 12:9). Interestingly, the Catholic Church officially recognized these books as scripture in A.D. 1546, only 29 years after Martin Luther criticized these doctrines as unbiblical.

Below are listed several additional reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired:

1. The Jews never accepted the Apocrypha as scripture.
2. The Apocrypha never claims to be inspired (“Thus saith the Lord” etc.) – In fact, 1 Maccabees 9:27 denies it.
3. The Apocrypha is never quoted as authoritative in scriptures. (Although Hebrews 11:35-38 alludes to historical events recorded in 2 Maccabees 6:18-7:42).
4. Matthew 23:35 – Jesus implied that the close of Old Testament historical scripture was the death of Zechariah (400 B.C.). This excludes any books written after Malachi and before the New Testament.

B. Other disputed books are also not scripture

1. There were other books that some people claimed to be scripture. Some of them were written in the intertestamental period and called Old Testament pseudopigrapha (or “false writings”). Others were written after the apostolic age (2nd century A.D. and following). These are called New Testament pseudopigrapha.

The writers often ascribed these books to the 1st century apostles (Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, etc.). Evidently, they figured they would be read more widely with an apostle's name attached. They include some fanciful stories of Jesus' childhood and some heretical doctrines. No orthodox Christian seriously considered them to be inspired.

2. There were some other more sincerely written books that had devotional value and reveal some of the insights of Christian leaders after the 1st century (Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, etc.). Although they are valuable historically, and even spiritually helpful, they also do not measure up to the standards of canonicity and were not recognized as scripture.

From: <https://bible.org/seriespage/canonicity>

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Transmission – from “How We Got the Bible”

By: Sid Litke, Th.M

Introduction

The term “transmission” describes the ancient process of copying Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to preserve them for future generation and to distribute them for greater use. Since there were no copy machines, the texts had to be copied by hand. In this way they were “transmitted.”

I. Writing Materials

A. The original writings of scripture were done on a variety of materials.

- Stone – Exodus 24:12; Deuteronomy 5:22; Joshua 8:31,32
- Papyrus (made by pressing and gluing two layers of split papyrus reeds to form a sheet) – perhaps mentioned in 2 John 12 (“paper”) and Revelation 5:1 (“scroll/book”)
- Animal skins (vellum – calf or antelope, parchment – sheep or goat, leather – cow or bull) – 2 Timothy 4:13 mentions parchment.

B. To inscribe on these materials a variety of tools were used, including stylus, chisel, pen and ink.

II. The copying process of the Old Testament (originally written in Hebrew)

A. Early copying

At first, during the Old Testament era, the only copies of the scriptures were kept at the temple (At first only the 1st 5 books – the Law). For many years, even the copies of the Law were lost, until they were found during Josiah’s reign (2 Kings 22:8-23:3). As the books of history (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, etc.), the books of poetry (Job, Psalms, etc.) and the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.) were written and gathered together, scribes began to copy the scriptures for use in various synagogues and for private purchase and study.

B. The Masoretes

The Masoretic scribes (A.D. 500-1000) in charge of the Old Testament manuscript copying used a very meticulous system of transcription and had a deep reverence for the text. God used their almost obsessive respect for the text to preserve the text’s accuracy. They had specific rules on the type of ink and the quality and size of parchment sheets. No individual letter could be written down without having looked back at the copy in front of them. The scribe could not write God’s name with a newly dipped pen (lest it blotch) and even if the king should address him, while writing God’s name, he should take no notice of him. They were so meticulous that they counted all the paragraphs, words and even letters, so they could know by counting, if they had done it perfectly. They knew the middle letter of each book so they could

count back and see if they had missed anything.

C. Existing Old Testament manuscripts

1. Masoretic manuscripts

We actually have very few complete or nearly complete Old Testament manuscripts existing today. There are 4 or 5 really significant Masoretic manuscripts that are the basis of the best Hebrew Bible available today. These copies were made between about A.D. 900 and A.D. 1000 by the Masoretes.

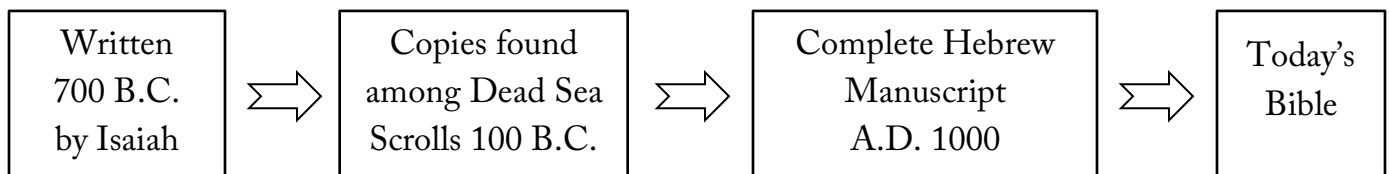
2. The Septuagint evidence

The Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language which was made in the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. There are about 300 existing copies of the Septuagint. This was the common Hebrew Bible used and quoted by Jesus and the apostles (who lived in a Greek culture, of course). Although written in Greek, scholars can generally determine what Hebrew words were being translated in the Septuagint. It provides evidence that the Hebrew Bibles were copied extremely well for all the years between the Septuagint translation (2nd/3rd century B.C.) and our best existing Hebrew copies (A.D. 900-1000).

D. The Dead Sea Scrolls

Since the oldest complete copy of a Hebrew Old Testament in existence is dated about A.D. 1000, that's a long time after the originals were written (1450-400 B.C.). But there are portions that date back farther. Most significant are the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in caves in 1947 by an Arabian shepherd boy. These well-preserved Hebrew text fragments date back to 100 B.C. They include many Bible portions, including some complete books. Their value to the credibility of our Bible is that amazingly, there is virtual agreement between these Hebrew texts and the ones dated 1,100 years later! This proves how accurately the scribes copied for all those years.

Example of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Through all the years of copying, the text of Isaiah remained virtually identical.



The evidence shows that our Old Testaments today are extremely accurate reflections of the original manuscripts.

III. The copying process of the New Testament (originally written in Greek)

A. The types of Greek manuscripts

The New Testament books were originally written in papyrus sheets (plant material – see above) or parchment (animal skin – see above). Writing at that time was done all in capital letters with no punctuation or division between words (uncial). So all the copies from the 1st to about the 6th century A.D. were done that way. (This form is sometimes responsible for confusion by Greek textual scholars today who need to determine where one word stops and the next begins.) By the 7th or 8th centuries, Greek manuscripts were put into small letters with punctuation, word, and paragraph divisions (miniscule). Both types of ancient manuscripts exist today.

B. The reliability of Greek manuscripts

The reliability of the New Testament Greek texts is even more certain than the Old Testament texts. The New Testament was written between A.D. 45 – A.D. 90. Some fragments of Greek texts exist that date back to A.D. 120 and A.D. 150. That’s only 35-100 years after the originals that Paul, John, Luke and others wrote! Another big help to Greek textual scholars is the fact that there are 4,000-5,000 New Testament Greek manuscripts (partial or complete) existing. By comparing these many copies, scholars can weed out many possible copying mistakes.

So there are two factors confirming that the Greek texts, available to scholars today, are very accurate reflections of the original writing. 1) We have copies dated closely to the time of the original writing. 2) We have lots of copies.

The following chart compares the New Testament manuscript evidence with other Greek literature (considered accurate by historians) from the same era.

<u>Manuscript</u>	<u>Date of Oldest Manuscript Existing</u>	<u>Copies</u>
Plato	1,200 years later	7
Caesar	900 years later	10
Herodotus	1,300 years later	8
Aristotle	1,400 years later	5
New Testament	Only 35-100 years later	4,000-50000

Once again we see that God has sovereignly preserved His word in virtually accurate form. We can be confident that the Greek texts, used by scholars making modern translations are very accurate.

C. Note on some differences in English translations.

Sometimes as we compare two translations of the New Testament, we find a substantial difference, such as verses or phrases being omitted (John 5:3-4; 7:53-8:11; Mark 16:9-20; 1 John 3:7,8, etc.). Some modern Bibles (NIV) also footnote a lot of smaller details (words, etc.) that differ in some manuscripts.

The debate centers on two theories about which Greek manuscripts are the best. One theory (Critical text view) is that the oldest manuscripts are the most accurate. The theory is that the oldest manuscripts are most significant although they are few. The other theory (Majority text view) is that the type of manuscripts that survived in greatest numbers are the most accurate (even if they are less ancient). Most modern translations are based on the Critical textual theory (NIV, NASV, RSV, etc.). The King James and the New King James Versions are based on the Majority textual theory.

This explains why occasionally a significant disagreement is found in the New Testament between the KJV and Modern Translations (Example: Are Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11 really part of the inspired text of the New Testament – see notes in the New International Version for the Critical Text View). This writer prefers the Majority text theory behind the KJV, although most of the modern versions may still be preferred by most English readers for overall accuracy and readability.

Regardless, the discrepancies are usually not major. Scholars and interpreters will continue to debate the theories, but no major doctrines or principles are affected by the discrepancies between Greek text and the resultant English versions of the Bible.

From: <https://bible.org/seriespage/transmission>

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