

# **The Word of God — The Bible**

**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**

John 17:17 (NKJV)

**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

**I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.**

2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NASB)

**For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

Philip F. Benedict  
A servant of the Lord Jesus Christ

P.O. Box 496  
Ridge, MD 20680

## **Introduction**

For over twenty years I (Phil Benedict) taught in small churches in the south. As I taught and talked with ordinary people about Biblical topics, I observed that there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about some of even the most basic teachings of the Bible -- which is the Word of God. I began writing a few simple Bible study guides to give out as I would teach on various Biblical topics.

This is not a book. It is simply a collection of Bible study material relating to the Bible. I have not attempted to make it all flow smoothly with a lot of introductions, transitions, conclusions, or lengthy explanations.

It is my intent to let Scripture speak for itself. The Word of God speaks clearly on the key issues of life. It is my conviction that the Word of God is far more powerful and effective than my own advice or counsel. For this reason, I have kept my own "commentary" to a minimum and have quoted many Scriptures that pertain to the subject being covered.

As I have written these studies, I have been keenly aware of my own need to grow in my walk with the Lord and of my own failure to be all that God would have me to be. I have personally grown in my own walk with the Lord as I have studied and sought the leading of the Spirit of God in writing these study guides. I still have a long way to go.

## **About Phil Benedict**

I (Phil Benedict) grew up in a godly Christian home and was saved as a young child. I was active in our church youth group in Boise, Idaho, where I met my future wife, Linda. We married when we were young and God has blessed our marriage. We have now been married for over fifty-four years (as of January 2021). We have four children, all of whom are actively serving the Lord. We both graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and from Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. I have also taken classes in secondary school administration at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Idaho, as well as classes in Cherokee heritage from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and classes in drug and alcohol counseling at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. We have served as "full time" Christian workers for over thirty-five years. We have been members of UIM International (United Indian Missions) for over twenty-five years.

## **Thanks to My Wife**

God has given me an exceptional wife. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life and in the writing of these study guides. Without exaggerating, she has spent many hundreds of hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding these study guides. She has been a genuine ministry partner. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

## *My Prayer*

It is my prayer and my desire that the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified through these Bible study guides. I pray that the Spirit of God will draw some to Himself as they go through these study guides or hear them taught. I pray that these study guides will help some to grow in their walk with the Lord as they have helped me to grow in my own walk with Him. I pray that there will be some who, empowered by the Spirit of God, will be committed to living a transformed life of obedience and faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **How to Get the Most from These Study Guides**

The subject matter in these studies deals with fundamental Biblical truths but it is not a light study. Take your time as you go through these studies. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

It is important that one take time to read, to digest, and to absorb the Scriptures in these guides. Take time to carefully read and think about them. Meditate on them and the truths they teach. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Learn to love God and His Word. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life.

Remember, we are instructed to seek God with all our heart.

**But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.** Deuteronomy 4:29 (NASB)

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

### **Note:**

Individuals and churches have permission to download and make copies of any or all of this study for individual use or for use in group Bible studies. No part of this study may be reproduced and then sold or used in any kind of a fund-raising project. It must be given away free of charge.

## Table of Contents

Chapter One: Important Truths About the Bible.....	5
Chapter Two: What Is God’s Purpose for the Bible?.....	19
Chapter Three: An Overview of the Bible.....	39
Chapter Four: From Moses To You. A Short History of the Bible.....	47
Passing on God’s Infallible Word from Generation to Generation	
Chapter Five: Absorbing the Word of God.....	69
Understanding, Loving, and Applying God’s Word	
Chapter Six: God’s Word, Sound Doctrine, and False Teaching.....	92

*Chapter One*

## **Important Truths About the Bible**

The Bible is our record of truth that God has made known to man. The Bible teaches us how we can know God and gives us directions in how to walk with Him. It is the only authoritative written source of spiritual truth that God has given to man. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we commit our entire lives to learning, understanding, and obeying God's Word, the Bible.

In spite of its great importance, many Christians have a casual attitude toward the Bible. We may take it to church with us on Sundays, but it collects dust the rest of the week. For most Christians, it's not really important enough to read daily or to pay much attention to at all. Even more "mature" Christians can grow cool in their attitudes. We must diligently guard against this. The Bible is God's message to us. Ignoring it leads to trouble, heartache, and fruitless living.

There are several key Biblical words that we need to correctly understand.

### **1. Revelation**

*Revelation refers to truth that God has made known to humans, or to God's action in making truth known to us. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Revelation 1:1*

**I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12**

From Galatians 1:12, how did Paul get the information that he taught and wrote about?

**Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:2-6**

**None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" -- but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:8-10**

**The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, Revelation 1:1**

What does Revelation 1:1 state about the book of Revelation?

Well over 1000 times in the Bible, there are phrases such as “the Word of the Lord came to me saying”, or “the Lord has spoken” or “the Lord said”. Look at the following examples:  
 Isaiah 1:2,10, 3:16, 8:1, 43:1, 44:24, 45:14, 49:8, 50:1, 56:4, 66:1; Jeremiah 1:4, 2:1, 4:1, 35:12, 40:1, 48:47; Ezekiel 6:1, 7:1; Daniel 9:2; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1;  
 Obadiah 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Nahum 1:12; Habakkuk 2:2; Zephaniah 1:1;  
 Haggai 1:1; Zachariah 1:1; Malachi 1:1-2.

Either the Bible is God’s revelation of truth to man or it is the biggest forgery ever developed by man himself. What a blessing that it is not a forgery. It is, in fact, God’s revelation of Himself to us. Because of it, we can know God and we can walk with God.

**For self-examination.** Be honest with God and yourself as you answer these questions.

Do you regularly take time to read and understand the Bible?

Have you developed a casual attitude toward the Bible?

Have you developed a love for the Word of God?

Are you helping anyone else to understand and put into practice the Word of God?

Are you convinced that the Bible is absolutely true?

Do you believe the Bible is completely true today, even though it is not believed and is ignored by the vast majority of mankind?

Most Christians would say that they believe the Bible is true, but do your actions demonstrate that you believe all the Bible is true?

## **2. Inspiration**

*Divine inspiration is the activity of the Holy Spirit whereby He enabled the Biblical authors to receive God’s special revelation and to speak it and write it in their own language and style, without any error or omission. The speakers and writers of God’s words were inspired in the sense that they were*

*acted upon by the Holy Spirit to produce God's truth in human language. The words written by Biblical authors are, in fact, the very words of God.*

The definition of divine inspiration in the paragraph above is very important. Take time to read and think about it and to understand it.

In the following verse (2 Peter 1:21), the word "prophecy" refers to all of the Word of God spoken by the prophets, not just the parts of Scripture that tell about the future.

**... for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke [as they were] moved by the Holy Spirit.** 2 Peter 1:21

**All Scripture is God-breathed...** 2 Timothy 3:16

**...words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.**  
I Corinthians 2:13

To better understand inspiration, the words "plenary" and "verbal" are used to more clearly define inspiration.

**Plenary inspiration** means that all parts of the sixty-six books of the Bible are equally inspired.

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**  
2 Timothy 3:16-17

All parts of Scripture are from God and are all equally true. The words of Jesus are not more inspired or more true than the book of Jonah. Paul is not more inspired than Peter. The New Testament is not more inspired than the Old Testament. All of the Bible is equally inspired.

In your mind, are the words of Jesus more true than the words of Paul?

Is the book of John more true than the book of Esther?

**Verbal inspiration** means that every word given by God, even its grammatical form, is inspired by God. God inspired the actual words used by the writers of the Bible, not just the thoughts behind the words. God did not simply put thoughts in the mind of Biblical authors as they wrote. He inspired each word that was written by the authors of Scripture.

**Every word of God is flawless.** Proverbs 30:5

**The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.**  
Galatians 3:16

Notice that in Galatians 3:16 Paul teaches a spiritual truth based on whether a word is singular or plural.

From 2 Peter 1:21, what kind of men were the prophets?

As these men spoke, who was guiding their speech?

From 2 Timothy 3:16, who is the source of all Scripture?

What does Galatians 3:16 indicate about the very words of Scripture?

Why do you think each word of Scripture is important?

### 3. Illumination

*Illumination is the activity of the Holy Spirit in giving us understanding of spiritual truth in the Bible.*

**We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.** 1 Corinthians 2:12

**I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints,**  
Ephesians 1:18

Within Scripture there are certain words that need to be understood if we are to understand the truths taught in the Word of God. Words like grace, redemption, salvation, repentance, believe, and faith all have meanings somewhat different than their everyday usage. A good Bible dictionary such as *Ungers Bible Dictionary* or *The Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* can be a big help in understanding the Biblical usage of words. Regular English language dictionaries like “Webster’s” normally give definitions of words as they are used in everyday speaking, rather than how they are used in Scripture. A good Bible dictionary is much better.

### 4. Inerrant, Infallible

*The teachings and the historical records that are in the Bible, as they were originally written, are true, right, and accurate. They do not and cannot contain error.*



Our human opinions and our understanding of the Bible may be inaccurate, but the Bible itself is always right, accurate, and without error.

It should be noted that the Bible does record false statements made by man and even by Satan. For example, Job's three friends made untrue statements that are accurately recorded in Scripture. They are accurately recorded, but that is not saying the statement itself is true.

**...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,** Titus 1:2

What does Titus 1:2 say about God?

Can a God who cannot lie teach false information in His Word, the Bible?

**I have much to say in judgment of you. But He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from Him I tell the world."** John 8:26

What does Jesus say about the Father in John 8:26?

**Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** John 14:6

What does Jesus say about Himself in John 14:6?

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

What does Jesus say about God's Word in John 17:17?

**And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him.**  
John 14:16-17

The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible. What is the Spirit called in John 14:17?

**All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal.** Psalm 119:160

What does Psalm 119:160 say about God's Word?

**Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.**

Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)

What does Proverbs 30:5 say about God's Word?

**The Lord's words are absolutely reliable. They are as untainted as silver purified in a furnace on the ground, where it is thoroughly refined.** Psalm 12:6 (NET)

What does Psalm 12:6 say?

## 5. Translation

The word "translation" is not a word from the Bible itself. *It describes a process which makes God's revelation available for people to read in their own language.* The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek and also a little Aramaic. To "translate" the Bible is to write the Bible in a language other than Hebrew and Greek so that it can be read and understood by people who speak that language. Since very few people speak and read Hebrew or Greek, it is necessary to translate the Bible into languages that are used by people today. All Bibles that are written in English are translations from the original Hebrew and Greek.

**Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Matthew 28:18-20

There is no question that God wants us to preach the gospel and make disciples (followers of the Lord Jesus Christ) in all parts of the earth. Often the Bible will use the phrase "in all the earth" or "to the ends of the earth" when in one way or another it speaks of the spread of the Word of God. To make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God must be translated into the native tongue of the individuals who are being taught. It is hard to understand how one can be a disciple without having the Word of God available to him.

**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** Acts 1:8

**I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth."** Isaiah 49:6b

**Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere Him.** Psalm 33:8

**Worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth.**

Psalm 96:9

We, here in the United States, can easily get a Bible. If we want, we can even get it in several different translations. This is not true for many in the world today. Many do not have any of the Bible in their own language. According to information from Wycliffe Bible Translators, there are people who speak some 4500 languages that need the Bible translated into their own language. When this study was put together, the full Bible has been translated into over 300 of these languages. The New Testament has been translated into about 800 of these languages and about 1000 languages have at least one book of the Bible. There are still well over 2000 languages that do not have any Scripture in that language.

God wants all people to have His Word. Today many men and women around the world are working to translate the Bible into some of these languages. This is a difficult and thrilling ministry. To give God's Word to people who do not have it is a very noble and fulfilling lifetime ministry. Do you have a deep appreciation for the Bible which has been translated into a language you can understand?

Will you pray that the process of Bible translation into languages without the Bible will go quickly?

### *The Bible and Truth*

**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.** 2 Timothy 2:15

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

**Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately.** 2 Timothy 2:15 (NET)

How is the Word of God described in 2 Timothy 2:15?

From these two verses, what can we conclude about the Word of God?

The Bible, the Word of God, is true. Those who love and submit to it have a solid foundation and anchor for life here and for eternity. They are blessed by God. They can have peace, be productive, and look forward to an eternity secure in heaven with God.

How important is it to correctly handle and teach the Word of Truth?

**Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant.** 2 Samuel 7:28 (NASB)

How are God's words described in 2 Samuel 7:28?

**For the word of the LORD is right and true; He is faithful in all He does.** Psalm 33:4

**And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,** Ephesians 1:13

**...the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel...** Colossians 1:5  
From Psalm 119

**The statutes You have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy.** Verse 138  
**Your righteousness is everlasting and Your law is true.** Verse 142  
**...all Your commands are true.** Verse 151

**All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal.** Verse 160

From the verses above from Psalm 119, list several things that are said about the Word. Over and over God's Word is described as true, trustworthy, or some other similar statement. What do you think that God wants us to know from these verses?

**Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.** John 8:32

In this verse Jesus tells us that the truth will set us free. What will God's truth free us from?

### *The Bible Records the Supernatural*

**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** Genesis 1:1

**He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."** Revelation 22:20a

The very first verse of the Bible tells of the greatest supernatural actions of God ever recorded anywhere. Creation is not a natural process; it is supernatural. In the very last two verses of the Bible, the supernatural return of the Lord Jesus Christ is recorded. The Bible begins and ends with the supernatural.

Not only does the Bible begin and end with the supernatural, every chapter and essentially every verse in between, in one way or another, record or speak of supernatural things.

In the Bible, God creates the universe in six literal days by speaking it into existence.

God throws Satan out of heaven to earth.

In the Bible, angels, demons, and spirits are real.

In the Bible, God speaks to man and man speaks to God.

In the Bible, God, in judgment, destroys all mankind except for eight people with a worldwide flood.

In the Bible, a virgin gives birth to the Son of God.

In the Bible, Jesus dies a supernatural death and then resurrects from the dead.

In the Bible, God forgives man's sin.

In the Bible, every person who has died will be resurrected and stand before God in judgment.

In the Bible, heaven and hell are real places.

In the Bible, future events are accurately foretold.

In the Bible, God destroys the earth with fire and creates a new one.

In the Bible, a sea and a river dry up to allow God's people to cross. Iron floats on water. Dead people come to life. Blind and other sick people are instantly healed. Armies are supernaturally destroyed. A man becomes an animal. A donkey talks. God sends fire to earth. A person turns into a pillar of salt. God writes on stone. A bush burns without burning up. Men walk in a burning furnace without harm. God gave visions to men. A man enters heaven and returns to earth. A man walks on water. The earth stops turning. Stars fall to the earth. Water turns to blood. The moon turns to blood. God kills two brothers. God used storms, wind, and rain to judge people.

If you were to try to take all the supernatural out of the Bible, there would be little, if anything, left. It is impossible to say that the Bible is a good book, but only just a natural book just like any other book. If the supernatural parts of the Bible are all just stories that somebody made up, then the Bible is permeated with falsehood, lies, and deception.

The Bible is a true record of how God has dealt with man and it is an accurate record of divine truth that God has revealed to man. We who know and love God, know and love His Word. It is our source of knowledge about God and His plan of salvation. We are truly blessed.

### *The Word of God Is Powerful and Effective*

**For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** Hebrews 4:12 KJV

**For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.** Hebrews 4:12 NIV

**For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 NASB**

Carefully read Hebrews 4:12 several times.

How is the Word of God described in this verse?

What will the Word do?

In your own words, what is this verse teaching?

**As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire. Isaiah 55:10-11**

What does God say His Word will do in Isaiah 55:11?

**Is not My word like fire," declares the LORD, " and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? Jeremiah 23:29**

**Therefore this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people have spoken these words, I will make My words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes. Jeremiah 5:14**

**By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made... Psalm 33:6**

Is it man's wisdom and talents that accomplish God's will and purpose, or is it God's Word that accomplishes His purpose?

*The Word of God Gives Victory Over Satan and Sin*

**How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word. Psalm 119:9**

**I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You. Psalm 119:11**

Are you regularly absorbing the Word of God and growing more like Him?

Carefully read **Matthew 4:1-11**. Briefly describe what takes place in this passage.

Every time Jesus was tempted, what did He use to defeat the tempter?

What can we do to consistently be victorious over temptation?

Now carefully read **Ephesians 6:10-18** at least two or three times.

From verse 10, describe God's power.

From verse 10, what do we do in relation to God's power?

From verse 11, how much of the armor are we to put on?

How much of the armor can we safely leave off?

From verse 12, who do we struggle against?

From verses 14-17, list six pieces of our armor and briefly explain how each one of them is tied to the Word of God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.** Ephesians 6:18

In Ephesians 6:18, what are we commanded to do?

Praying in the Spirit does not mean to pray in tongues. Praying in the Spirit is praying in submission to God, being led and empowered by the Spirit of God. When we pray in this manner, we see God working in response to our prayer. It is a tremendous and exciting experience when we see Him at work through us and through prayer.

From verse 18, when are we to pray in the Spirit?

From verse 18, what kind of prayers and what kind of requests should cause us to pray in the Spirit?

From verse 18, when can we stop praying for each other?

What do you think will result from this kind of praying?

Do you sense the Spirit of God leading in your prayers?

These are key passages relating to our struggle and victory over Satan. It is important to note that every piece of armor in one way or another depends on our knowing and using the Word of God. It is our only offensive weapon. **...the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.** We are also clearly commanded to resist him. This is God's plan for us to be victorious over Satan. We are never given instructions in the Bible to rebuke Satan or to pray a hedge around somebody or something. Rebuking Satan and praying hedges will have little or no effect if we do not obey the clear-cut teaching of Scripture relating to victory over Satan.

### *The Word Is Eternal*

Man's word, his ideas, and his teachings change as time passes, as knowledge is gained, and as circumstances change. Today's beliefs may, in fact, be tomorrow's joke. What one culture accepts as true is not believed by others. Not so with the Word of God. It is eternal, unchanging and true in all generations.

**Your word is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens.** Psalm 119:89

**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.** Mark 13:31  
**For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the Word that was preached to you.** I Peter 1:23-25



The Word of God is from God and is eternally true. It will last forever. As man and his concepts change, the Word of God will remain true, relevant, dependable, and unchanging. It will teach some from every generation to know and walk with God. There is no other source of spiritual truth and anyone or anything that contradicts it is false. It is and always will be the solid foundation on which to build and anchor our lives. It teaches us to know and to walk with God.

### *The Results of Rejecting the Word of God*

**If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.** 1 John 1:6

**The man who says, "I know Him," but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.** 1 John 2:4

Men who reject or ignore Biblical truth face severe consequences. Romans 1:18 says they face the wrath of God. Hebrews 10:26-27 are solemn verses indicating that those who know the truth but reject it face God's wrath, judgment, and hell. In the Bible God reveals the way to know Him. There is no other way of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God.

## Psalm 1

**Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.**

### *God's Revelation Through Nature*

To a much lesser degree, God has also revealed Himself through nature. God points to what He has created to illustrate His own divine nature and power.

**"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that they are without excuse."** Romans 1:20

**The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of His hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;**

**Night after night they display knowledge.  
 There is no speech or language  
 Where their voice is not heard.  
 Their voice goes out into all the earth,  
 their words to the ends of the world.  
 In the heavens He has pitched a tenet for the sun,  
 which is like a bridegroom coming forth from His pavilion,  
 Like a champion rejoicing to run His course.  
 It rises at one end of the heavens  
 and makes its circuit to the other;  
 nothing is hidden from its heat.**

Psalm 19:1-6

**When I consider Your heavens,  
 the work of Your fingers,  
 the moon and the stars,  
 which You have set in place,  
 what is man that You are mindful of him,  
 the Son of man that You care for him?**

Psalm 8:3-4

Nature is a very powerful testimony of God's divine nature, His power, and His goodness. If one is honest with himself, every person who lives can see this from what God has created. Man has created many false ideas, such as the theory of evolution, in a deliberate attempt to destroy or greatly distort this revelation of God. They make creation the product of pure natural chance rather than being a direct creation of God. For those who believe this, it dims or destroys this powerful revelation of God. This distortion of truth is not of God, but of Satan.

The wonders and the beauty of nature should cause Christians to lift their heart and soul in praise and worship to God.

For the unsaved there is enough revelation of God, through nature, that he is without excuse for rejecting God (Romans 1). Even those who have never heard about Jesus or God's plan of salvation will not have an excuse for rejecting the revelation God has given them. If an unsaved individual responds to the revelation God gives through nature, God will sufficiently reveal Himself to that individual so that he can put his faith in God.

This should in no way be an excuse for any Christian not to be an active witness or not to be an active supporter of world missions. God makes it very clear that we are to be His witnesses and we are to take the message of salvation to the very ends of the earth. To refuse to do this is to rebel against what God has instructed us to do.

## Chapter Two

# What Is God's Purpose for the Bible?

In the Word of God there is great blessing promised to those who make the teaching of the Word of God their way of life. Psalm One is one description of the blessings in store for those who make the Word the focus of their life.

**How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.**  
Psalm 1:1-3 (NASB)

The following Scripture is a key passage that describes in greater detail what the Word of God does in the life of a believer. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 is a key passage of Scripture. It gives the primary reasons why God gave us His Word, the Bible. Very carefully read this passage several times. These verses will be the outline for most of this second study guide.

**But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**  
2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NASB)

The first purpose for Scripture in these verses is that Scripture enables us to understand God's plan of salvation. Scripture teaches us how to know God. It teaches us how to be saved. Following is a Biblical explanation of God's plan of salvation. Every Christian should be very familiar with this and be ready to explain it to individuals as the Spirit gives us the opportunity. If you have never made the decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be His follower, you need to very carefully go over this section.

## The Word of God teaches us how to know God. Understanding the Plan of Salvation

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** John 3:16 (KJV)

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** John 3:16 (NIV)

**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

**And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,...”** Acts 16:31a (ESV)

The greatest truth of all time is that you and I, even though we are sinners, can be saved from the penalty of sin that God pronounced on all people. Even if we are “the worst of all sinners”, all our sin can be totally forgiven.

An equally great truth is that God will credit His own righteousness or goodness to us and our record before God can be absolutely clean. We can know and walk with the holy God. God, who created and sustains the universe, even adopts us into His own family. We are His children! We can know and fellowship with Him while we are on this earth, and then we will spend an eternity with Him in heaven. It can't get any better than that!!!

Here, in simple steps, are the basic Biblical truths which relate to and explain the God-given plan of salvation.

### *1. God is absolutely holy. He is sinless and pure.*

In the Word of God, the word “holy” means to be separated unto God. When used of God, it means that God is totally separated from all that is sinful or evil. There is not the slightest tint of sin or evil in God's character. He is one hundred percent sinless and pure.

**Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you -- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?** Exodus 15:11 (NIV)

**Holy and awesome is His name.** Psalm 111:9b (NASB)

**...“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.”** Isaiah 6:3 (NIV)

**No one is holy like the LORD, ...** 1 Samuel 2:2a (NKJV)

### *2. God created man and woman in His own image.*

**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.** Genesis 1:27 (KJV)

When God created man and woman in His own image, they, too, were sinless and pure. As sinless and pure individuals, Adam and Eve brought glory to God and there was a perfect love, harmony, and fellowship between God and man. At this point, Adam and Eve did not experience sorrow, pain, trouble, or unhappiness of any kind. Rather, they experienced all the blessings and joy of walking in perfect fellowship and harmony with God.

3. *The first two people, Adam and Eve, rebelled against God and sinned.*

**Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Genesis 3:1-6 (NKJV)**

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin by disobeying God, and they both gave in to that temptation. When they became sinners, their harmony and fellowship with God was broken. Instead of walking and fellowshiping with God, they were separated from God, facing the wrath and judgment of God. They were spiritually dead. They could do nothing on their own to earn or gain reconciliation with God. They were no longer capable of fulfilling the plan and purposes for which God had created them.

4. *All of Adam and Eve's descendants, which is all of us, are now born sinners.*

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned... Romans 5:12 (NASB)**

**For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19 (NIV)**

**For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:22 (NASB)**

Once Adam and Eve sinned, they passed on a sin nature to all of their descendants. As a result, all of us are sinners and each of us has a sin nature. *We sin because we have a sin nature and we sin because we individually choose to sin.* God pronounced the judgment of death on all people because all people have sinned.

5. *Everyone, including each one of us, has sinned.*

**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Romans 3:23 (KJV)**

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12 (NASB)**

**As it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one:" Romans 3:10 (KJV)**

**For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.** Mark 7:21-23 (NIV)

**All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.** Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

This verse (Isaiah 64:6) states that our “good side” – our righteousness -- is like a pile of filthy rags. It does not say that our bad side is like filthy rags, but rather this is God’s description of our good side. God is not impressed with our goodness; it’s nothing but a pile of filthy rags.

**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?**  
Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV)

*There is a huge moral gap between the holy God and sinful man. We will never be able to come to God on the basis of our own goodness. Even “little” sins separate us from God.*

6. *The consequence or the penalty of all sin (“large” or “small”) is death.*

**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.** Romans 5:12 (NKJV)

**For the wages of sin is death...** Romans 6:23a (NKJV)

**But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),** Ephesians 2:4-5 (NASB)

In Scripture there are three kinds of death. Each one is a consequence of sin. These three kinds of death are:

#### *A. Spiritual Death*

Spiritual death is to be separated from God because of our sin. Every person who has not been saved is spiritually dead.

**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.** Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)

**When you were dead in your sins...** Colossians 2:13a (NIV)

### *B. The Second Death*

The second death is to be cast into hell with no hope of ever being reconciled to God. All who are separated from God by sin, or all who are spiritually dead, will spend an eternity separated from God, suffering eternal judgment and punishment in hell.

**But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."** Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)

**Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.** Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV)

### *C. Physical Death*

This is normal physical death. At the end of our life on earth, our bodies die. This also came as a result of Adam's sin. Before sin, there was no physical death.

**Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.** Romans 5:12 (NIV)

Eventually the bodies of all people, saved and unsaved, will be resurrected from the dead.

**For since by a man came death, by a man (Jesus) also came the resurrection of the dead.**  
1 Corinthians 15:21 (NASB)

*7. Because God still loved us, He sent His own sinless Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become a man and to die on the cross to pay the penalty of death for our sin.*

**But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**  
Romans 5:8 (ESV)

**For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.**  
1 Peter 3:18a (NIV)

**He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.**

Romans 4:25 (NIV)

**...so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people;** Hebrews 9:28 (NIV)

Jesus was absolutely sinless; therefore, He did not have to die. However, He chose to die so that He could pay the penalty of death for our sin. He was our substitute. What a blessing that is!!! Because Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, we can escape the judgment of death that we are under. We do not have to spend eternity separated from God in hell.

*8. God accepted the death of Christ as full payment for the penalty of our sin.*

**He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

**In Him (the Lord Jesus Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us...**

Ephesians 1:7-8a (NASB)

**For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.** Colossians 1:13-14 (NASB)

The penalty or the price for our sin has been paid. Jesus paid it in full. God, who pronounced the judgment or penalty of death on every human because of sin, accepts the death of Jesus as full payment for our sin.

*9. There is absolutely nothing you can do to earn or to make yourself worthy of forgiveness for your sin. The only way to be forgiven is to accept God's forgiveness of sin as a free gift.*

**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.** Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

**Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,** Romans 4:4-5 (NASB)

**But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved.** Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)



It does absolutely no good to try to improve yourself or to “clean up your act” before you come to God for forgiveness. We are all sinners and we cannot change that. We can only come to Jesus exactly as we are -- as sinners. All the goodness in the world cannot change that.

*10. When God forgives our sin, He also credits us with His righteousness.*

**But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,** Romans 4:5 (NASB)

**This is why "it was credited to him (Abraham) as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.** Romans 4:22-24 (NIV)

**God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

When God forgives our sin, He also credits us with His own righteousness. We can be saved, not because we are righteous, but because God will credit His righteousness to our account.

*11. To be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must individually choose to put your faith or trust in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ alone to pay the penalty for your sin.*

In the Bible the words “believe”, “faith”, and “trust”, all come from the same Greek root word and they all have essentially the same meaning. *To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to make a deliberate personal choice to put your trust in His death on the cross as the full payment of the penalty for your sin.* You can either pay the penalty yourself by spending an eternity in hell separated from God, or you can accept His death as the payment for your sin and have eternal life with God. The choice is yours!!!

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** John 3:16 (NIV)

**And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, ...** Acts 16:31a (ESV)

**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.** John 5:24 (NKJV)

*12. When one comes to Jesus for forgiveness of sin, he commits to turning away from a lifestyle of sin and to being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

To choose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to put our trust in His death on the cross as the full payment of the penalty for our sin, is to commit to turning from our lifestyle of sin and to being a follower of Jesus. We leave our past sinful way of life to follow Him. That does not mean we will be perfect or even close to perfect, but it does mean that we are committed to being a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ becomes supreme in our life and we choose to follow and be obedient to Him.

*In the Bible, to believe is not simply to give mental assent, but to turn one's whole being over to God.*

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

**...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”** Luke 13:5b (ESV)

**For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.** 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)

**You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.** Ephesians 4:20-24 (NIV)

Once you choose to put your faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as the payment for sin and begin to follow Him, you never know where He will lead you. It is exciting!!! Hold on to your hat and let's go. You have begun an incredible journey!

## **What Salvation Is Not**

Following is a list of things that people have claimed when asked if they are saved. They believe that these things will somehow gain them merit with God. Some of these are good things but they will not save us. The truth is that a person could do or experience all of these things and still not be genuinely saved. Here is a list of things that *salvation is not*.

1. It is not “going forward” in church, “making a decision for Jesus” or being baptized.
2. It is not “attending” or joining a church.
3. It is not having a “relationship with Jesus” or “connecting with Jesus”.
4. It is not knowing what is in the Bible.
5. It is not being “religious”, being sincere, being a good person, or keeping the golden rule.
6. It is not doing the best you can or turning over a new leaf.
7. It is not when your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds.

8. It is not having a “spiritual experience” or a “spiritual awakening”.
9. It is not giving all your problems to Jesus.
10. It is not “speaking in tongues”.
11. It is not taking communion or the sacraments.
12. It is not being born in a Christian family or in a Christian country.
13. It is not keeping the ten commandments or following any other set of rules.
14. It is not tithing or giving money to worthwhile causes.
15. It is not having an uncle who is a Baptist preacher or having a grandmother who donated the land on which the church was built.

Absolutely none of these things will result in our being saved. The only way to be saved is to repent of sin and accept God’s forgiveness of our sin as a free gift.

## **The Word of God teaches us how to walk with God.**

Again, let’s look at our key passage of Scripture for this chapter.

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 3:17 (NASB)

This passage clearly teaches what God’s purpose is for the Word in the life of a believer. God also tells us what will be the result when the Word does its work in our life. First, let’s look at what the Word of God does in the life of a believer.

### *1. The Word of God teaches right doctrine.*

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for *teaching*...

In this verse (2 Timothy 3:17) the word “teaching” is the same word that is translated “doctrine” in many other parts of Scripture and in some other Bible translations of this verse. Right doctrine is the foundation of right living. False doctrine, distorted doctrine, half-truths or watered-down truth does not lead to right living in God’s eyes or to God’s blessing on our life. It does not teach us to know or to walk with God.

**You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.** Titus 2:1 (NIV)

**Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.** 1 Timothy 4:15-16 (NIV)

**Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.** 2 John 1:9 (ESV)

Sound doctrine encourages.

**He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.** Titus 1:9 (NIV)

Right doctrine leads to right living. A correct Biblical understanding of doctrine and a commitment to obedience are the foundation for a lifetime of solid growth. It leads us to greater faith in God, to productive service, to freedom from the bondage to sin, to strength, to encouragement, to assurance of salvation, to fruitfulness, and to peace.

Incorrect teaching can come from many different sources. Friends, family, churches, and, yes, even teachers and ministers very often mislead people with wrong teaching. Television preachers are notorious for their distorted, selfish, and outright false teaching.

If an individual's motives are not in tune with God's purpose, He will not correctly teach God's Word. If an individual or a preacher or teacher does not regularly study and absorb God's Word, then he will very likely be a source of weak or distorted teaching.

Most of us are in a position to teach someone. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, Sunday School teachers, youth workers, and pastors are all in a position to teach. You do not have to be a theologian to be a teacher, but you do need to be regularly absorbing the Word of God and be very careful about what you teach.

If an individual's understanding of doctrine is Biblically inaccurate, it will lead to wrong attitudes and behavior patterns and can lead to fear, anger, guilt, fruitlessness, frustration, distrust and other unhealthy feelings and wrong ideas.

Once we know God, correctly understanding and putting genuine Biblical truth into practice leads to many blessings, great rewards, and productivity in our walk with God. Again, it would be well to review the following Scriptures that we already have given several times in this study.

Psalms 19:7-11, Psalm 1:1-6, and Matthew 7:24-27.

## *2. The Word of God rebukes wrong behavior.*

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, *rebuking*, ...

For those who seek to draw near to God, the Word of God rebukes or convinces of error in behavior and in doctrine. The desired result is the acknowledgment of wrong on the part of the one rebuked.

**How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.** Psalm 119:9-11 (NASB)

**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

**But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.** John 16:7-11 (NASB)

All Christians -- pastors and laymen -- in cooperation with the Spirit of God, have the responsibility to rebuke our fellow Christians when there is on-going sin in their life. This may be tough, but there are times when we need to have wrong behavior pointed out to us.

### *3. The Word of God corrects wrong behavior and wrong teaching.*

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, *correcting*...

The Greek word for “correct” literally means to set up straight again. It is a restoration to an upright or right state. This is a natural follow-up of rebuke. After rebuking us, the Word of God restores us to doing what is right in God’s eyes.

Rebuke and correction go hand-in-hand. The Word of God not only points out the wrong behavior, it also tells us how to correct the wrong behavior. The pattern is common in Scripture. Following is one example:

**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.**  
Ephesians 5:18 (NIV)

The books of First and Second Corinthians have very strong rebukes in them. However, Paul does not leave it there. He tells the Corinthian people what must be done to get back to serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *4. Training in righteousness:*

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and *training in righteousness*...

The Word of God gives instruction in right living. Righteousness simply means what is right in God's eyes. There are many hundreds of Scripture passages which would come under this category.

**Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.** Ephesians 4:25-28 (NIV)

**Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.** Romans 12:9-19 (NIV)

There are many other Scriptures which teach us the importance and value of the Word of God in the life of a believer. Following are Scripture passages that teach us about the power and effect of the Word of God in the life of a believer.

### *5. Correctly understanding and applying Biblical truth leads to godly living.*

**...the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness,** Titus 1:1b (NIV)

**Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

The Word of God frees us from the control of sin and from many harmful things such as anger, fear, guilt and pride.

**Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.** 1 Timothy 6:2b-4a (ESV)

### *6. The Word of God enables us to be productive and to bear spiritual fruit.*

Most of us want to be more effective servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The following verses tell us how to bear genuine spiritual fruit in our life:

**Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.** Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

**"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.***  
John 15:5-8 (NIV)

*7. Remaining in the Word of God leads to answered prayer.*

**If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.** John 15:7 (NIV)

*8. The Word of God brings peace and joy.*

**Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.**  
Psalm 119:165 (ESV)

**The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;** Psalm 19:8 (NASB)

**When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.** Jeremiah 15:16 (NIV)

**But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"**  
Luke 11:28 (ESV)

**Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them... ...And their joy was very great.** Nehemiah 8:12 and 17b (NIV)

*9. The Word of God gives victory over sin.*

**Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.** Psalm 119:11 (KJV)

**How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.**  
Psalm 119:9 (ESV)

**Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth (the Word of God) so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.**

1 Peter 1:22 (NIV)

**Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.** John 15:3 (KJV)

### *10. The Word of God gives victory over Satan.*

Carefully read the following Scriptures which are all responses of Jesus to Satan when Satan tempted Him to sin.

**But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'** Matthew 4:4 (NKJV)

**Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' "**

Matthew 4:7 (NKJV)

**Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'** Matthew 4:10 (NIV)

Notice that in every response of Jesus to Satan, Jesus quoted the Word of God. If Jesus relied on the Word of God to resist the temptations of Satan, how much more do we need to know and depend on the Word in our struggle against Satan.

Now carefully read Ephesians 6:10-18.

**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the *belt of truth* buckled around your waist, with the *breastplate of righteousness* in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the *gospel of peace*. In addition to all this, take up the *shield of faith*, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the *helmet of salvation* and the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.** Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)

When we put on the armor of God, we have victory over Satan. Without the armor, we are defeated. Note how each of the pieces of armor is anchored in the Word of God.

**belt of truth: Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.** John 17:17 (KJV)



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

**gospel of peace:** *Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.* Psalm 119:165 (NIV)

**shield of faith:** *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Romans 10:17 (KJV)

**helmet of salvation:** *...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* 2 Timothy 3:15 (NIV)

**the sword of the Spirit,** *which is the word of God.* Ephesians 6:17 (KJV)

**pray in the Spirit:** *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.* John 15:7 (NIV)

**Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.** James 4:7-8a (KJV)

*11. The Word of God is the source of faith.*

**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** Romans 10:17 (KJV)

**Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?** Galatians 3:5 (NIV)

## **When the Word of God does its work in our life, we are thoroughly equipped to do the work of God.**

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.** 2 Timothy 3:17 (NASB)

When the Word of God is doing its work in our life, we are being equipped to do the work of God. When we correctly understand Biblical teaching, when we are being rebuked and corrected, and when we are receiving on-going training in righteousness, we are being thoroughly equipped for every good work.

If you are neglecting the Word or not submitting to Scripture, then this process is not going on in your life and you are not being equipped to do God's work. We need to carefully examine ourselves to see if we are allowing Scripture to work in our lives.

## **A Word to Pastors and Teachers -- Preach the Word!!!**

The Word of God makes it crystal clear that we are to teach and preach the Word of God, and we are to teach it accurately.

**Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.**

1 Timothy 4:13 (NIV)

**In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: *Preach the Word*; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction.** 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

**They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** Acts 2:42 (NIV)

We are also explicitly told to accurately teach and preach the Word.

**You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.** Titus 2:1 (NIV)

**Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.** 1 Timothy 4:15-16 (NIV)

**Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.** 2 John 1:9 (ESV)

**He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.** Titus 1:9 (NIV)

**message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.** 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (NIV)

Now let's again look at our key passage of Scripture.

**In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: *Preach the Word*; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction.** 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

The Word of God is powerful and effective. Pastors and teachers are instructed to preach and teach the Word. They are not told to preach *about* the Word or to preach spiritual generalities or to occasionally refer to a Bible verse when they preach; they are told to "*preach the Word*".

As we have seen, the Word teaches, rebukes, corrects, and gives instruction in right living. There is power in the Word. Messages and lessons should be solidly based in the Word rather than on random thoughts and opinions. Spiritual growth comes from the Word of God, not from man's wisdom.

Most preachers and teachers would verbally agree with this, but, in reality, many churches, pastors and teachers do not take this seriously. Some give little time to serious study of the Word and they get up time after time with little study or preparation, expecting the "Spirit will lead them". The result is often shallow platitudes that result in little or no genuine spiritual growth. The goal in preaching for some seems to be to stir emotions and make people feel guilty, and some speakers are quite good at it. However, often essentially the same message is preached or taught time after time and church members, young and old, stagnate for lack of sound Biblical teaching.

Many Christians are hungry, even starving, not for physical food but for spiritual food that comes from the Word of God. Many often come to the altar seeking spiritual strength and growth, but they go home the very same person because their souls have not been fed, only stirred.

Many churches rely on programs, methods or entertaining music programs to build their church. Methods and implementing programs can be helpful. They have their place. However, a church that does not have a solid ministry of preaching and teaching genuine Biblical truth will always be a spiritually weak and ineffective church. Churches may be successful in drawing large numbers of people and even baptizing a lot of people; however, if they do not have a solid Biblical preaching and teaching ministry, they will be a weak and immature church no matter how many methods and programs they have in place or how many people they baptize.

**In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction.** 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

*It is difficult to express the seriousness of these verses. Paul states that "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus", he is giving these instructions. It is as if God and Jesus are both there telling Paul to give these instructions. There is no more serious way to express the importance and value of a teaching than to claim to be giving these instructions in the presence of the almighty God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Teaching and preaching the Word of God is serious business. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are both present stressing the importance of what Paul is writing.*

**"Who will judge the living and the dead"**. God will judge all saved and unsaved people. It is a sobering reality that our preaching/teaching can affect people for eternity. Those of us who are in a position to teach need to remember that those whom we teach will be judged by God. Let's make sure that we teach them right. We must prepare them to be judged by God.

**"And in view of his appearing and his kingdom"**. Jesus is coming back. Will He find us faithfully obeying Him? After He returns there will be no more opportunity to teach or preach and be used by God to teach His people or bring the unsaved into the kingdom of God.

After stating that the Word of God was given by God Himself, and explaining the purpose of the Word of God, and explaining the seriousness of teaching/preaching, Paul then gives the young pastor, Timothy, this charge (command):

**“Preach the Word: be prepared in season and out of season”**. Not only are pastors and teachers to preach the Word, they are to be ready or prepared to preach or teach at all times. They are to be continually studying and learning the Word of God. They can never relax their vigil. If they are not learning and growing, their preaching/teaching will not be very effective and it will not result in much spiritual fruit. Not only must they be learning and growing, they must continually put into practice what they are learning. If they are not living holy, godly lives, their preaching and teaching will be ineffective.

After instructing Timothy to “*Preach the Word*”, Paul goes on to give more specific instructions in how to preach the Word. He tells him to **“correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction”**.

Notice the close correlation between these instructions and the purposes of the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16, which are **“teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”**.

When we teach and preach, we must follow the instructions given by Paul in these verses and stay in line with the purposes of the Word of God.

Paul tells Timothy that in his preaching of the Word, he is to:

### *1. & 2. Reprove and Rebuke*

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; *reprove, rebuke*... 2 Timothy 4:2 (NASB)

These words are very similar in meaning. They both have to do with pointing out sin; however, rebuke is stronger than reprove. The pastor/teacher is to reprove and rebuke wrong behavior and wrong doctrine. The aim for the one being reprovved is for him to recognize the error of his ways, to repent and to be brought back into fellowship with God. The word *rebuke* in the NASB is the same word as *correct* in the NIV.

### *3. To Encourage or to Exhort*

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and *encourage*... (NIV)  
To encourage or to exhort is to come along beside someone to aid, to help, to comfort or to give consolation.

The pastors and teachers are to have compassion, calling one to their side and giving the help and comfort the individual needs. They encourage that one to be strong in the Lord and to commit himself to faithful service to the Lord.

**He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.** Titus 1:9 (NIV)

**These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority.**  
Titus 2:15a (NIV)

**We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,** 1 Thessalonians 3:2 (NIV)

**The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.** Psalm 19:7a (NIV)

#### 4. *With Great Patience*

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- *with great patience...* (NIV)

Patience means long suffering, endurance, not quickly agitated.

When teaching others, we do not become impatient or agitated quickly. Just as in our own life it has taken time to grow in our walk with Him, so we cannot expect those we teach to have quick growth. Solid growth takes time.

**Love is patient, ...** 1 Corinthians 13:4a (NASB)

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, *patience*, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

**And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.** 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NIV)

#### 5. *And Careful Instruction*

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and *careful instruction.* (NIV)

It is the pastor's and teacher's role to give careful instruction (teach/train) in the Word and how to live right. If we, as pastors and teachers, want to be used by God to accomplish His will and purpose, we must give urgent attention to what God and Jesus so emphatically taught in these verses. God help us to be effective preachers and teachers of the Word of God.

Once we know God (are saved), then we are ready to begin a lifetime of spiritual growth. As life moves along, we should know Him better and better, and our walk with Him continually deepens.

This growth will be very shallow or non-existent if we do not continually absorb and live by the Word of God.



\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 and \_\_\_\_\_.

The historical books cover the conquering of Canaan, the time of the judges, the time of the kings, the Babylonian captivity and the return of the Jews to their own land. These books are the framework on which all the rest of the books of the Old Testament rest. Historically they cover right up to the time that the Old Testament ends.

The next five books are called books of poetry. These books are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

Job was probably written by Job. The events that took place in Job occurred early in the historical period of time covered by Genesis. It may have been the first book of the Bible written.

Psalms is a collection of ancient hymns of praise and worship written primarily by King David. They were widely used in Jewish worship and have been cherished by people in every age.

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon were all written by King David's son, Solomon.

The prophets were godly men that God used to give His Word to the nations. They "spoke forth" the Word of God as God revealed His message to them. Not all prophets wrote what they spoke. And there were some who wrote, whose writings were not part of Scripture. All of the prophets lived in the period of time covered by the historical books.

The last seventeen books of the Old Testament were written by prophets. They are:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

These seventeen books are often broken down into two groups—the major prophets and the minor prophets. The only reason the last group is called "minor" prophets is because the books are shorter than the books written by the "major" prophets. The first five books are the major prophets. These five books are: \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

The last 12 books written by prophets are the minor prophets. These twelve books are:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.



The Old and New Testaments are separated by a period of four hundred years. These are sometimes called the “four hundred silent years” because no part of the Bible was written in that period of time. While there are no recorded Bible events written about in this period of time, there was plenty going on in non-biblical, or secular, history. During much of this time, Syria and Egypt were battling for prominence. Since Israel was in between these countries, their land was often devastated by armies that fought or passed through there. Some of the most significant historical events that affected the Jews were:

1. Alexander the Great established Greek rule in Palestine. (Israel) 333 B.C.
2. After Alexander died, Israel was ruled and fought over by the Egyptians and the Syrians, 323-198 B.C.
3. Jewish revolt under Judas Maccabees. 166 B.C.
4. Israel was ruled by descendants of Judas Maccabees. 166-63 B.C.
5. Rome conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C.

The New Testament opens with the birth of \_\_\_\_\_.

The first four books cover the life of Jesus. These books are sometimes called the Gospels. These four books are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

The next book is a history of the early church. It is the book of \_\_\_\_\_.

The next thirteen books are all letters written by Paul. They are sometimes called the Epistles of Paul. These thirteen books are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

The author of Hebrews is not known.

James wrote the book of \_\_\_\_\_.

Peter wrote the books of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

John wrote the books of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(John also wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation.)

Jude wrote the book of \_\_\_\_\_.

John wrote the book of Revelation telling about what will happen in the \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Books of the Bible – Authors and Date of Writing

Conservative fundamental Biblical scholars will not always agree on dates. This is especially true of the earliest Biblical writings. These dates give close approximations rather than exact dates.

However, it should be emphasized that they are close. We do not agree with liberal Bible scholars who deny the inspiration of Scripture and assign much later dates to much of the Bible. (Examples: Daniel and the four Gospels)

### Old Testament

BOOK	APPROXIMATE WRITING DATE	AUTHOR
Genesis	1445-1405 B.C.	Moses
Exodus	1445-1405 B.C.	Moses
Leviticus	1445-1405 B.C.	Moses
Numbers	1445-1405 B.C.	Moses
Deuteronomy	1445-1405 B.C.	Moses

Moses was a great man and national leader whom God used to deliver His people out of slavery in Egypt. Under Moses they were established as an independent nation and prepared for entry into the promised land (Canaan, which is present day Israel).

Joshua	1405-1385 B.C.	Joshua
--------	----------------	--------

Joshua was initially an assistant to Moses. After the death of Moses, Joshua himself became a great leader and led them into the promised land and in the conquering of the land.

Judges	Approx. 1043 B.C.	Samuel
Ruth	1030-1010 B.C.	Samuel?

Samuel was a priest and judge who led the nation in the later period of time covered by the book of Judges. He anointed both Saul and David, the first and second kings of Israel.

I Samuel	931-722 B.C.	Unknown
II Samuel	931-722 B.C.	Unknown
I Kings	561-538 B.C.	Unknown
II Kings	561-538 B.C.	Unknown
I Chronicles	450-430 B.C.	Ezra?
II Chronicles	450-430 B.C.	Ezra?
Ezra	457-444 B.C.	Ezra
Nehemiah	424-400 B.C.	Nehemiah and Ezra?

Ezra was a priest who returned to Israel from captivity in Babylon. He was a godly man and national leader. Jewish tradition credits Ezra with the final assembly of the Old Testament books.

Esther	450-333 B.C.	Unknown
Job	Unknown	Unknown
Psalms	1410-450 B.C.	David & others
David was the second and greatest king of Israel. He was a great king, military leader, musician, and poet. The Psalms are some of the greatest writings of all time.		
Proverbs	971-686 B.C.	Primarily Solomon
Ecclesiastes	940-931 B.C.	Solomon
Song of Solomon	971-965 B.C.	Solomon
Solomon was the third king of Israel. As a young king, he asked for and received wisdom from God. However, as time passed, he allowed his wives and his wealth to turn his heart away from God.		
Isaiah	700-681 B.C.	Isaiah
Isaiah was a prophet and talented writer.		
Jeremiah	586-570 B.C.	Jeremiah
Lamentations	Approx. 586 B.C.	Jeremiah
Jeremiah was a prophet who warned the people of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and exile and captivity of the Jews in Babylon. He faithfully served for many years even though few, if any, ever listened to what he said.		
Ezekiel	590-570 B.C.	Ezekiel
Ezekiel was captured in his native land and carried into captivity in Babylon where he ministered to his fellow Jews who were also captives. He was a prophet, priest and a powerful preacher.		
Daniel	536-530 B.C.	Daniel
Daniel, as a teenager, was captured and taken to Babylon. He was true to God and rose to prominence in both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires.		
Hosea	750-710 B.C.	Hosea
Hosea was a prophet who lived in the northern kingdom. He was an educated man who had a long ministry, serving during the reigns of six different kings.		
Joel	835-796 B.C.	Joel
Amos	Approx. 750 B.C.	Amos
Amos was a shepherd. He was not educated in schools of the prophets or priests; yet God called him to preach, primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel.		
Obadiah	850-840 B.C.	Obadiah

Jonah	Approx. 775 B.C.	Jonah
Micah	735-710 B.C.	Micah
Nahum	Approx. 650 B.C.	Nahum
Habakkuk	615-605 B.C.	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	635-625 B.C.	Zephaniah
Haggai	Approx. 520 B.C.	Haggai

Little is known about the prophets Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi. We should not get the idea that they are not important books of the Bible because not much is known about the author. They are important books with important messages. We need to listen to what God gave these men to speak and write.

Zachariah	480-470 B.C.	Zachariah
-----------	--------------	-----------

Zachariah was a priest and prophet born in Babylon who returned to Israel and served while Zerubbabel was governor of Israel.

Malachi	433-424 B.C.	Malachi
---------	--------------	---------

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets, serving after the Babylonian captivity.

## New Testament

Matthew	A.D. 50-60	Matthew
---------	------------	---------

Matthew was one of the twelve disciples. Matthew was with Christ in His public ministry. Before becoming a disciple, Matthew was a tax collector.

Mark	A.D. 50-60	Mark
------	------------	------

Mark was a cousin of Barnabas and a close associate of Peter. On Mark's first ministry he seemed to fail; however, he matured and became a profitable servant and writer of Scripture.

Luke	A.D. 60-61	Luke
------	------------	------

Luke was a physician and a close associate of Paul. He was apparently the only Gentile author of Scripture.

John	A.D. 80-90	John
------	------------	------

John was one of the twelve disciples and a close friend of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before becoming a disciple, he was a fisherman by trade. John also wrote the books of 1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation. He was known for his love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts	A.D. 62	Luke
------	---------	------

Written by Luke. (see Luke)

Romans	A.D. 56	Paul
I Corinthians	A.D. 55	Paul
II Corinthians	A.D. 55-56	Paul

Galatians	A.D. 49-50	Paul
Ephesians	A.D. 60-62	Paul
Philippians	A.D. 60-62	Paul
Colossians	A.D. 60-62	Paul
I Thessalonians	A.D. 51	Paul
II Thessalonians	A.D. 51-52	Paul
I Timothy	A.D. 62-64	Paul
II Timothy	A.D. 66-67	Paul
Titus	A.D. 62-64	Paul
Philemon	A.D. 60-62	Paul

The apostle Paul wrote the thirteen books listed above. Paul was a very well-educated Jew who started out hating and persecuting the followers of Jesus. After his conversion and a long period of preparation, Paul became the leading missionary of the early church. Under the direction of the Spirit of God, the Gospel was spread far and wide. Paul was a deeply loving man. He loved God and he loved those he ministered to. He was one of the greatest men who has ever lived.

Hebrews	A.D. 67-69	Unknown
---------	------------	---------

The author of Hebrews is unknown. Many are convinced it is Paul, but others are just as convinced that it is not Paul. Hebrews is a great part of the inspired Bible, but we will never know its author until we get to ask somebody in heaven.

James	A.D. 44-49	James
-------	------------	-------

The author of James was James, the half-brother of Christ. James at first rejected Jesus, but later believed and became a leader in the early church.

I Peter	A.D. 64-65	Peter
II Peter	A.D. 67-68	Peter

I and II Peter were written by the disciple Peter, who was one of the earliest followers of Jesus. Peter was clearly picked by Jesus as the leader of the disciples, and was the leader of the early church. He was an impetuous fisherman who most likely would not have been chosen by men to be a leader. After many mistakes and failures, he became a bold preacher and gifted leader.

I John	A.D. 90-95	John
II John	A.D. 90-95	John
III John	A.D. 90-95	John

The author of I, II, and III John is the apostle John. See the Gospel of John for information about John.

Jude	A.D. 68-70	Jude
------	------------	------

Jude was another half-brother of Jesus. Like James, he at first rejected Jesus, but later came to faith in Him.

Revelation	A.D. 94-96	John
------------	------------	------

Revelation was written by the apostle John. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ. Revelation, which deals with the future, was the last book of the Bible written. When it was written, John was an old man who had been banished by Roman officials to Patmos, a small island in the Aegean Sea. John was the last living apostle and he remained faithful to the end.

Praise the Lord for His Word!!!

## **From Moses To You...**

### **Passing on God's Infallible Word from Generation to Generation**

As Christians, we have learned to love the Word of God. But many of us do not have any idea about how it has come to us from ancient times. It's an exciting story of how God has preserved his Word from generation to generation. Today we are a favored people. We are privileged beyond measure. Throughout history, few, if any, have had the Word of God so freely available to read and study. Even today, most people in the world do not have the Word as readily available as we do here in the United States.

Knowing some of how all this has come about should give us a deeper appreciation and commitment to live by the inspired Word of God.

To begin our study, let's go back to the beginning of written records. To understand how the Bible has come down to us, it is helpful to know something about the kinds of materials used to write on in early times.

### **Ancient Writing Materials**

#### *1. Stone*

Egyptian inscriptions on stone that date back very early, to almost four thousand years before Christ, have been found and translated. In almost every part of the earth the most ancient writing has been found on stone. This is consistent with the earlier forms of writing mentioned in the Bible.

**When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.** Exodus 31:18 (NIV)

**And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster. 3 And you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over to enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you,** Deuteronomy 27:2-3a (ESV)

Making and using stone tablets for writing would be a difficult time-consuming cumbersome process. Therefore only a few people were in a position to write or record important material. While there are some ancient stone tablets that still exist, there are no original stone portions of Scripture known to exist today.

## 2. *Clay*

In the centuries before Christ, Assyria and Babylonia used clay tablets extensively for writing. Huge libraries of clay tablets have been discovered. Some scholars believe that these clay tablets are what is being referred to in Ezekiel 4:1

**You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem.** Ezekiel 4:1 (NKJV)

## 3. *Wood*

Wooden tablets were commonly used in Greece for several hundred years in Old Testament times. It may be that the tablets mentioned in Isaiah 30:8 and in Habakkuk 2:2 were wooden tablets.

## 4. *Leather*

Specially prepared animal skins were used for hundreds of years by the ancient Israelites for writing purposes. Leather was evidently the material used to make early copies of the Old Testament. Using leather for writing is not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament; however, Jewish law specifically stated that Scripture was to be copied on animal skins. In 2 Timothy 4:13, the parchments that Paul speaks of were likely copies of portions of the Old Testament copied on animal skins.

**When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.** 2 Timothy 4:13 (NASB)

## 5. *Papyrus*

By New Testament times, the common writing material was papyrus. Pith from the papyrus plant was cut into thin strips and laid together to form a sheet. Another set of strips were then laid in the opposite direction. Then the page was put under pressure and the moisture would bind it together to form a page. The pages could be used individually or joined together to form a roll or scroll. Scrolls varied in size, but were normally nine to ten inches wide and about thirty feet long. By the second century A.D., they had discovered how to join sheets together into a “codex”, or a book. The book form was generally preferable to the scrolls. Early copies of the New Testament Scripture were copied onto papyrus sheets in book form rather than on scrolls.

Papyrus was to the New Testament writers what leather was to the Old Testament writers. It was more convenient and more accessible than anything else that had been developed up to that time. A big disadvantage, however, was that it was made from a fragile plant. It simply would not take a lot of wear. As a consequence, the original New Testament Scriptures and the earliest early copies of the New Testament are no longer in existence.



## 6. *Vellum*

By the third century A.D., new and greatly improved methods of preparing animal skins for writing had been developed. This material was called vellum or parchment. About the fourth century, vellum replaced papyrus as the major material used in copying Scripture. Vellum was much more durable than papyrus. The earliest copies of Scripture in existence today date back to these times and are made of vellum.

## 7. *Paper and the printing press*

The use of paper dates back to ancient times, but it was not widely used until the eighth century. By the thirteenth century, paper was the material of choice in most of Europe. Widespread use of paper made possible the invention of the printing press which was developed in 1456.

### **No Original Biblical Manuscript is known to Exist Today**

It is important to understand that no original Bible manuscript is known to be in existence today. The original writing of Moses, David, Paul, Peter, and all the other biblical writers have all been lost. What does exist today are handmade copies of the original Biblical manuscripts. Today when we talk or write about Biblical manuscripts, we are referring to hand made copies of the original Biblical writings. In the rest of this study guide the word “manuscript” is referring to these hand written copies of the originals.

### **From Moses to You -- Hand Copying the Word of God**

From the time that Moses wrote the first books of the Bible until the development of the printing press, the Bible was preserved and passed on by hand copying each individual Bible or part of the Bible. Moses lived about 1500 years before Christ. The printing press was not developed until 1456 A.D. and it was many years after that before printing developed enough to mass produce Bibles. The first books of the Old Testament were passed on by making hand written copies for nearly three thousand years. The New Testament was hand copied for some thirteen to fourteen hundred years. That means that the Scriptures have been hand copied for over 3000 years, but have been produced on a printing press for only about 400 years.

To copy all of Scripture by hand is an enormous task. It has been estimated that it would take a scribe about ten months to make one copy of the Bible. And think for a moment about the conditions under which they worked. They did not have modern pens or paper. Many wrote on animal skins using a quill that continually had to be dipped in ink. Working conditions such as lighting would be poor by our standards. Heating and cooling were poor. Writing materials were very expensive. As a result, Bibles were scarce and very expensive. It would often take up to a year's wages to buy a Bible, if it could be bought at all. Very few individuals could afford a Bible. Since they could not have one

personally, people would wait for many hours in long lines for a chance to read the Bible. It was so precious that it was often chained in place to keep it from being stolen.

### *What About Copying Errors?*

The doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy refer to the original manuscripts of Scripture. As the Biblical authors wrote, they were writing under the inspiration of God and all Biblical writing was without error. However, these Biblical doctrines do not teach that there would be no errors made in the copying process. Down through the centuries many thousands of copies were made. It is obvious that copy errors were made because no two existing complete manuscripts are exactly alike.

The work of even the most careful scribe contains some copy errors because of the tremendous volume of work done and because the copier was human.

There are several kinds of errors that occurred in the copying process. Difficulty reading another person's writing, confusing similar letters of the alphabet, the mis-reading of abbreviations, the omission of some lines or words because the scribe's eye 'jumped' a line or lines ahead, or the opposite error of writing the same passage twice because his eye 'jumped' a line back to where he had previously been copying. Where a word or phrase is used on a number of occasions on one page, such mistakes would have been easy to make.

When the Scriptures were dictated and several scribes listened and copied at the same time, errors could arise through mis-hearing. Some variants probably came about because words that have a similar sound were confused, or because the diction of the person reading the manuscripts was not clear. Scribes were also liable to make mental errors and errors of judgment. It is easy to replace the word that has been read by a synonym, or to change the word order, or to misspell a word.

Another kind of error is when a scribe would deliberately change the text to "improve" it. A scribe may have observed what he perceived as a difficulty in the text so he would make a few "minor" corrections to iron out the difficulties.

## **More About Manuscripts**

In spite of the difficulty in hand copying the Bible, today there are some five or six thousand Bible manuscripts that contain a sizable part of the Bible. If one were to count all the manuscripts, even those that may only be a scrap left from a deteriorated manuscript, there are some twenty to thirty thousand manuscripts in all. A wealth of manuscripts have been preserved for us.

Many manuscripts have been discovered in the last 150 years. There may still be others somewhere out there waiting to be discovered.

One of the earliest almost complete manuscripts of the Bible is called "The Vatican Manuscript" or "Codex B". It is believed to be the most exact copy of the New Testament in existence. It dates back

to the fourth century (A.D. 300-400). The first section of Genesis and the last of Revelation have worn off the manuscript. From early times it has been kept at the Vatican in Rome. Down through the centuries, the Vatican (the Roman Catholic Church) has seldom allowed Biblical scholars to study it. Of nearly equal value is “The Sinaitic Manuscript” or “Codex Aleph”. This is also a fourth century manuscript that was discovered in a monastery on mount Sinai in 1844 by a man named Constantine Tischendorf. This extremely valuable manuscript has the complete New Testament but is missing parts of the Old Testament. It is kept and owned by a British Museum.

A third valuable manuscript is called “The Alexandrian Manuscript” or “Codex A”. This is a fifth century manuscript. The Old Testament has only ten pages missing. It was made in Alexandria, Egypt.

There are many, many other manuscripts. As time passed, the number of manuscripts multiplied. Today many of those manuscripts are put into groups based on where and when they were made. There are at least four major groups. Christian scholars debate among themselves as to which manuscript group is the best. Unfortunately, many angry words have been spoken and written about which group should be used. This debate is hot in some circles with people who actually know very little about the whole subject, arguing vehemently, repeating what they heard someone else say, and at times making claims that have little or no basis in truth.

Between 1947 and 1960, in caves around the Dead Sea in Israel, there were a series of old manuscript finds. These have become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Not all of the manuscripts were of the Bible; however, several hundred Biblical manuscripts or manuscript fragments were found. One complete manuscript of Isaiah is dated clear back to about 200 B.C. A fragment of Samuel dating back to the third century B.C. is thought to be the oldest of all known Biblical manuscripts. Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest manuscripts available for a particular part of the Bible.

*The major significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they have resoundingly confirmed the tremendous accuracy of existing Biblical texts.*

Some of the manuscripts are much older than the manuscripts previously available to Bible scholars. In spite of the age difference, there were very few differences in the texts. Another significance is that the non-Biblical manuscripts have shed some new light on the meaning of some obscure Hebrew words used in the Old Testament. A third significance is that these manuscripts have verified many conservative positions on the dates of Old Testament writings and events.

*There are some minor differences in manuscripts.*

As we have already seen, there is no question as to how some 99 percent of the Bible text should read, and there is absolutely no Biblical doctrine in question because of different wording in the various texts. Even though the uncertainties apply to only a very, very small percentage of the Bible, the differences that do exist have at times led to angry words and many accusations being made. Again, this debate is hot in some circles with people who actually know very little about the whole subject, arguing vehemently, repeating what they heard someone else say, and at times making claims that have little or no basis in truth.

One example of a verse that reads differently in different manuscripts is Romans 8:1. The phrase, “*who do not live according to the sinful nature, but according to the spirit*” appears in some manuscripts in both verse 1 and in verse 4. However, in the earliest manuscripts, the phrase appears only in verse 4. The King James Version has it in both verses while the New American Standard Bible, the New International Version and other fairly recent translations have it in verse 4 only.

Another difference that has caused a lot of anger is found in 1 John 5:7-8. The phrase “*in heaven: the father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one*” appear in four very late manuscripts written in the tenth century after Christ. These words are apparently not in any of the many manuscripts that were copied before the tenth century. Again, because these words were apparently not in the original manuscripts, they are not included in translations such as the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version. Since the words “*in heaven: the father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one*” very strongly support the trinity, and since later translations leave them out, those translations have been accused of watering down the doctrine of the trinity. This is simply not a true accusation. The translators were simply trying to accurately translate the Bible as it was originally written and inspired by God.

### *Reassembling the Original Text*

Well trained men who have been committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture have extensively studied and compared manuscripts. Biblical scholars have intensely study these manuscripts in minute detail. They can discern where copying errors were made and are able to recreate the original texts with great accuracy. They are able to very accurately re-create the original text so that we have very accurate reconstructions of the original text. It should also be reemphasized that there is absolutely no Bible doctrine that has been changed or is in question because of variations in manuscripts.

*Essentially all conservative Bible scholars agree that there is no question about how virtually all of the original Bible text should read. They agree that no Bible doctrine is in question because of variant readings. John MacArthur, a leading Bible scholar, states that 99.9 percent of the text is certain and that absolutely no doctrine is in question because of copy errors in manuscripts. Many other conservative Bible scholars and teachers have stated essentially the same thing.*

When one considers that there are some five to six thousand major manuscripts and there is some 99+ percent agreement, we can only be amazed and praise God who has so well preserved his own Word for us today.

*While the doctrine of Biblical inspiration technically applies to the original Biblical manuscripts, in a practical sense, translations such as the King James Version, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the New International Version are inspired in the sense that they faithfully represent the content of the original writings.*

Greek and Hebrew scholars have undertaken the task of re-creating the original Greek and Hebrew texts for all the Bible. This is done by painstakingly studying the manuscripts and then deciding how

the text should read. The major Greek texts that have been developed are the “Received Text” which is also called the “Majority Text” which was developed in the sixteenth century, the “Westcott and Hort Text” which was developed in the nineteenth century, and the “United Bible Societies Text” in the twentieth Century. “The Nestle Text” was also developed in the late nineteenth century.

## **About Translating**

The word “translation” is not a word from the Bible itself. It describes a process which makes God’s revelation available for people to read and to study in their own language. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek and also a little Aramaic. Since only a few people speak and read Hebrew and Greek, it is necessary to translate the Bible into languages that people know and understand today. All Bibles that are written in English are translations from the Hebrew and Greek. Translating is not an easy process. Anyone who speaks more than one language knows that the meaning and usage of words vary tremendously from language to language. You simply cannot translate word for word to correctly convey an idea. Bible translators first have the very difficult task of understanding an ancient language and culture as it existed around 2000 to 3500 years ago when the Bible was written. People in these ancient cultures had different ways of thinking, of speaking, and of writing. They used expressions and word orders that make little sense to us. Translators have to understand all this and then translate the text in such a way that it is an accurate translation, but can still be understood and make sense to us in our modern cultures. You simply cannot do a strict word for word translation and expect it to be understood today.

To illustrate this, let’s look at a warning on a foreign made washing machine that had originally been written in a foreign language and then translated into English. It is apparent that the translator did not know English well and consequently it was not a very good translation.

The warning read, *“Notice: Before the spinning tub is ceased to rotate, never touch the clothes in the tub, so as to prevent the clothes from twisting the finger, and the accident can be avoided”*. Now we get the idea of what they are trying to say, but how much better it would have been to say, *“Warning! To avoid serious accidents, do not reach into the tub until it quits spinning.”*

This simple illustration demonstrates that translators cannot simply just do a word for word translation from one language to another. No translation is perfect, but most of them can be trusted to faithfully present the Word of God.

John R. Rice in his book *“Our God Breathed Book---The Bible”* has a good perspective. He states on pages 376 and 377, “When we speak of a flaw in this translation or that, we should remember that the flaws are so few as to be a minor and almost insignificant part of the whole...”, “Whatever their faults, all translations have the very word of God.”

*For a moment, you be the translator.*

Old Testament Hebrew was written in lines without spaces between the words and without punctuation. They used only consonants, no vowels. Instead of writing from left to right, they wrote from right to left. A sentence in English written like the Hebrews wrote might look something like this. See if you can read it.

...RFRHTNTNKRHCHTFDNLTSHTRDNCTLPDBNMCBDNDTNGNGGNVHSKRHCNRTSWDN  
NRTSHT

It may help a little if we turn it around, reading from left to right. Remember there are still no vowels.

THSTRNNDWSTRNCHRKSHVNGGNRNTTDNDBCMBNBDYPLTCNDRTHSTLNDFTHCHRKN  
TNTHRFR...

It is still basically impossible to read, so now let's add vowels.

THEEASTERNANDWESTERNCHEROKEESHAVINGAGAINREUNITEDANDBECOMEONEB  
O DYPOLITICUNDERTHESTYLEANDOFTHECHEROKEENATIONTHEREFORE...

Many can figure it out now, but it is much easier when we add punctuation, spaces between the words, and use lower case letters.

“The Eastern and Western Cherokees having again reunited, and become one  
body politic, under the style and title of the Cherokee Nation: Therefore,” ...

It would have been difficult to understand the meaning of this sentence using only what was given in the first example, even though this little exercise was done entirely in English, a language we know. Now think of how hard it would be translating an ancient language that was spoken 3000 years ago, by a people who thought differently, had unknown figures of speech, and who had an entirely different way of writing. The scholars who developed Hebrew and Greek texts and who translate Scripture have to go through this process. They must also understand the culture of the people who wrote Scripture. They must then put all of this together and translate it into a modern language in such a way that it is faithful to the original text, but put in such a way as to be understood by modern readers. It is no wonder that various translations will have somewhat different wording.

Now let's look at **Psalm 139:15-16**. A word for word translation from the ancient Hebrew might read something like this:

*Hidden was not from you framework of me made I was when hidden constructed with skill in earth the  
bowel thereof substance of me saw your eyes unformed yet and book in yours were written them all  
fashioned my days you did they weren't*

We might understand a little of what is said, but overall it doesn't make a lot of sense to us. Now let's see how it is translated in various translations.

**1611 King James Version** Psalms 139:15-16

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret: and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned: when as yet there was none of them.

**1769 King James Version** Psalm 139:15-16

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret: *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

**New King James Version**

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.  
And in Your book they were all written,  
The days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them

**New American Standard Bible**

My frame was not hidden from thee,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.  
Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in thy book they were all written,  
The days that were ordained *for me*,  
When as yet there was not one of them.

**New International Version**

My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth  
your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

Bible translation is not an exact discipline. To get a better idea of what the original text was saying it can be helpful at times to read a Scripture from several different translations. No translation is perfect and no translation is the “original Bible”. God has blessed us with a number of good translations and it is a good idea to take advantage of them to help us correctly understand the Word of God.

Some translations are a little more free with the wording in order to make it more understandable. For example, the New International is a little more free with the language than the New American Standard Bible. As a consequence, the New American Standard is a little closer to the original text and is a little more accurate; however, it is a little harder to read than the New International which took a little more liberty with the text in order to make it more understandable. In spite of their differences, they are both translations and both stay close to the original text and both can be trusted to convey the original teaching of Scripture.

### *Early Translations of the Bible*

As we have seen, the Bible was written primarily in Greek and Hebrew. Unless you know and understand these languages well, you must depend on a translation in order to read the Bible. Following is some important information relating to early Bible translations:

1. The process of Bible translation began about 250 years before Christ when the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek. This translation was called the Septuagint.
2. By the end of the third century A.D., the Bible had been translated into Armenian, Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Georgian. As time passed, there continued to be translations into other languages.
3. About 400 A. D., Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. This translation, called the “Latin Vulgate”, served as the Bible for the Roman Catholic Church for many centuries.
4. The invention of the printing press in 1456 and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation about this time, stimulated more Bible translations. In this time period the Bible was translated into German, Italian, Spanish, and French.

### *Translations into English*

For the first 1300 years after Christ, varied portions of Scripture had been translated into English; however, it was not until the 1400's that translations of major portions of the Bible into English were undertaken.

**Wycliffe.** The first major Biblical translation into English was done by John Wycliffe and his associates about 1400 A.D. Wycliffe, a highly respected Oxford scholar, strongly believed that the ordinary man could understand Scripture and should have it in his own common language. Wycliffe, who has been called the “morning star of the reformation”, suffered persecution for his work, and after he died his body was dug up and burned. Copies of the Wycliffe Bible were very expensive because they still had to be copied by hand.



**Tyndale.** In the early 1500's William Tyndale determined to translate the Bible and make it available to the common people. Tyndale, a Greek and Hebrew scholar, set a high standard for his work. Because of his translation work, he was forced to flee for his life from England. He continued his work in Europe, and before his death, he had translated the New Testament and large parts of the Old Testament into common English. Tyndale was betrayed and imprisoned for his work. After many months in prison, he was strangled and burned at the stake. Tyndale's work is extremely important. It not only gave the Bible to common Englishmen, a large portion of the text was carried over into the King James Version which was made a few years later.

**Other translations in the 1500's.** Not long after Tyndale's martyrdom, Miles Coverdale, relying at least partially on Tyndale's work, was the first to publish a complete copy of the Bible in English. John Rogers, a scholarly friend of Tyndale's, also published what was known as "Matthew's Bible". John Rogers was burned alive because of his work. At least partially because of changing political and religious times, several more translations followed in the late 1500's, each having its particular strengths and supporters. The "Taverner's Bible", the "Great Bible", the "Geneva Bible", and the "Bishop's Bible" were all products of the 1500's.

**King James Version.** In the early 1600's, King James of England, in order to bring unity to various factions in England, commissioned a new translation of the Bible to be made. The result was the publication in 1611 of the "Authorized" or the "King James Version" of the Bible. A major difference between the "King James Version" and earlier versions was that there was a committee of some 48 scholars from varied backgrounds who worked on the translation. Previous translations were largely the result of one individual's work.

After the King James Version was introduced, it faced considerable opposition. It was felt that a new translation was not needed and that it was inferior to previous translations. With time, it gradually gained acceptance and has remained the standard English Bible for nearly 400 years.

In 1613, two years after it was published, it was revised with some 400 corrections being made. It was again revised in 1629 to correct printing errors, and other revisions were made in the text. A more thorough revision was made in 1638. In 1769, it underwent a major revision and updating of language. The 1769 edition has lasted until modern times. In 1975, the Thomas Nelson Publishers commissioned a group of 130 scholars to make the "King James Version" current for modern day readers. The result of their work was the "New King James Version".

The King James Version has, without question, been one of the finest Bible translations of all time. While it was not perfect, it set a new standard for scholarship and accuracy. Its beauty of language makes it a literary masterpiece that has stood the test of time for nearly 400 years.

## *Twentieth Century English Translations*

In the twentieth century there has been a proliferation of some twenty to thirty new modern English translations. Some of the most significant twentieth century translations and paraphrases are as follows:

1901 American Standard Version  
 1963 The New American Standard Version  
 1965 The Amplified Bible  
 1971 The Living Bible  
 1972 New International Version  
 1975 The New King James Version  
 1995 The Contemporary English Version  
 1996 New Living Translation  
 2001 The English Standard Version

It is important to know that these translations were made by men committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Individuals from different denominations participated so that the translations would not be slanted by any one particular denomination. The intent has been to accurately and clearly translate the Bible into modern English, not to distort it as some have vehemently asserted.

## *Reasons for New Translations*

Within the conservative evangelical Bible believing community, there are several reasons why new Bible translations are made.

### *1. Millions of people do not have the Bible translated into their own language*

We, here in the United States, can easily get a Bible. This is not true for most people in the world today. Many do not even have any of the Bible in their own language. Today many men and women around the world are working to translate the Bible into some of these languages. This is a difficult and thrilling ministry. To give God's Word to people who do not have it is a very noble and fulfilling lifetime ministry.

There are several thousand languages spoken in the world today that do not have the Bible in their language at all. We must make the Bible available to people who do not have it in their own language. This process is proceeding at a faster rate than ever before, but it is still painfully slow. In the past, it has taken a translator about fifteen years to learn a language and culture, then translate the Bible, and then go through the checking process and prepare it for publication. Computers have cut the time down some, but it is still a tedious process. Wycliffe Bible Translators estimates that there are over 7000 languages spoken in the world today. They estimate that if the Bible were translated into about 2000 key languages, most people in the world could read the Word of God in their mother tongue. Today there are still only about 500 out of these 2000 languages that have the Bible

translated into their language. The church needs to give high priority to translating God's Word into languages that do not yet have it.

There is no question that God wants us to preach the gospel and make disciples (followers of the Lord Jesus Christ) in all parts of the earth. Often the Bible will use the phrase "in all the earth" or "to the ends of the earth" when, in one way or another, it speaks of the spread of the Word of God.

**...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.** Acts 1:8 (NASB)

**...I will also make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.** Isaiah 49:6b (NASB)

There are many other similar verses in the Word of God such as Isaiah 42:10; Psalm 33:8; Exodus 9:16; 1 Chronicles 16:23 and 30; Psalm 8:9; Psalm 66:1-4; Psalm 83:18; and Psalm 96:9.

We are commanded to make disciples of all nations. A disciple is a learner and a follower. It will be very hard to make disciples if the people do not have the Word of God in their own language.

**Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

## *2. Languages continually change.*

Languages continually change. What was meaningful and easily understood by our forefathers will not be so easily understood by our grandchildren. The desire to have a Bible in the commonly understood language of the day has been a major force behind new translations. This is a worthy goal. God never intended that his Word be obscured or be confusing to common people. In fact, when the common man could not easily read and understand it, it led to many problems in the church and abuses by the clergy. When being saved from an eternity in hell is dependent on correctly understanding God's Word, we must make God's Word as understandable as we can to every person. This is a very important reason for new translations.

There are also reasons for upgrading translations. Biblical scholarship and understanding of ancient Hebrew and Greek has tremendously increased in recent times. Understanding an ancient language is far more complex and difficult than most of us realize. The Bible was written from about 2000 to 3500 years ago in a language and culture and with grammatical forms very different from our own. There are times when it is uncertain what some words or phrases meant.

In recent years, many Godly men have given their entire lives to this study. As a result, understanding of ancient Greek and Hebrew has increased. This intense study by Bible scholars has shed some new light on the text of Scripture. As this understanding has increased, it is reflected in the texts of later Bible translations.

### *The Difference Between a Translation and a Paraphrase*

There are differences between a translation and a paraphrase. A translation attempts to stay close to the original text of Scripture with the goal of conveying only what the original text says. A paraphrase is a little different. A paraphrase takes more liberty with the text. Many paraphrases attempt to may attempt to explain or teach what the text is saying rather than simply translating the text. As a consequence, there is a much greater possibility of incorrect teaching being included in a paraphrase.

Recent translations have been the work of a large group of translators who put the translation through a series of tests and checks to ensure its accuracy. Most paraphrases are the work of a single person rather than a larger group and therefore you do not get the tests and checks on the wording. Again, this opens the door for incorrect wording or teaching to find its way into the paraphrase. Paraphrases have been popular because of their ease of reading and understanding. It is the opinion of this writer that they may be helpful at times, but they should not be your primary Bible.

One of the first and a popular paraphrase in the past is the “The Amplified Bible”. Probably the most popular paraphrase of all time is the “Living Bible”. A new paraphrase that has appeared recently is called “The Message”. It is the rather strong opinion of this writer that “The Message” is not one that should be a regular part of one’s reading. It simply goes too far in adding to the text and it also has some wording that is borrowed from New Age terminology.

Kenneth S. Wuest is an excellent Greek scholar who is committed to orthodox Christian principles including the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. He wrote “An Expanded Translation of the New Testament” which is somewhat similar to a paraphrase in that it takes more liberty with the words, however, it is done very well by a qualified Greek scholar. It is the opinion of this writer that this translation is an excellent translation to use when one would like to read a paraphrase.

### *What Translation or Version Should I Use?*

For most of the last 400 years, the King James Version has been used by millions of Christians. It is one of the finest translations ever made. If you have been using it and growing in your understanding of God’s Word and growing in your walk with God, there is no reason to change. However, if there are passages you don’t seem to understand, it may be helpful to use or consult other translations. If you are a teacher or a parent or grandparent reading the Bible to children, or youth, or adults who are not real familiar with the Bible, then you should seriously consider using a more recent translation. The greater the understanding, the greater the power and effectiveness of the Word.

There are parts of the Bible that are not easy to understand in any translation. Yet in these passages, there are gold mines of God's revealed truth. God gave us all of the Bible. Yet there are major portions of the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, that for all practical purposes, are ignored or neglected. This is done by both pastors and laymen. However, we will never understand God as He has revealed Himself in his Word unless we begin to absorb what He has revealed in the whole Bible. Using an easier to read and understand version is a good place to start in your pursuit of understanding God's revealed truth.

The New King James Version is very good and helpful. The New American Standard Bible is a very good teaching Bible. It is accurate and the text is easier to read and understand. The New International Version is a little more free in the translation and is easier to read. The New Living Translation is a little more free than the others and can be very helpful in difficult areas of the Bible. Any of these translations are good and can be very helpful. For individuals who have trouble reading, a version such as the New International Reader's Version may be helpful. A newer translation, The English Standard Version is also a good translation.

God has given us his Word. He has preserved it and given it to us today in an amazingly accurate way. Let's commit ourselves to reading and studying it, to believing it, to living it, to teaching and preaching it, to spreading it throughout the world, to using it to refute false doctrine, and to loving and serving other members of the body of Christ. Praise God for his written Word!!!

### *Some Versions That Should Be Avoided*

When cults who are not Christians or who are Christians in name only, make translations that deliberately alter Scripture, we must recognize them as deliberate perversions of the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses have a translation called the "New World Translation" in which the text has been deliberately altered to discredit the deity of Christ. The Mormons have also tampered with Scripture. The Reader's Digest published what they called the "Shorter Bible" in which they removed the "irrelevant" parts. These and any other similar translations must be recognized for what they are. They have been deliberately changed to support a false doctrine taught by non-believers. Thus, they need to be avoided by those of us who accept all of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. I personally would suggest that "The Message" a recent paraphrase be avoided.

## **A Word About Chapter and Verse Divisions**

One should know that the chapter and verse divisions in Scripture are not part of the original writing. They were added later to make study and finding various parts of Scripture easier. Most of the chapter and verse divisions are well placed and helpful, but the serious student of Scripture must realize they are the product of man's efforts, rather than being inspired by God. There are many places where verse divisions break right into the middle of a thought, and thus they can make understanding more difficult. There are places where even some poorly placed chapter divisions break into the middle of a thought. When seriously studying the Bible, one should read it as if the chapter and verse divisions are not there.

## The Bible Is Complete! The Canon of Scripture

Have you ever wondered or been questioned about the make-up of the Bible? How did these 66 books come to be in the Bible? Is it possible that other books should be in the Bible, but somehow got left out? Or maybe a book was put in the Bible that shouldn't be there? Why does the "Catholic" Bible have books that are not included in "Protestant" translations? These kinds of questions are asked by those with a healthy desire for greater understanding of the Bible and also by some who would like to discredit the Bible. In this part of this lesson we are going to look at how and why the 66 books of the Bible came to be included in our Bible.

In our study, the word "canon" is not referring to a weapon used in battle. When the word "canon" is used in reference to the Bible, its root meaning refers to a measuring rod. The word is referring to the standard used to determine if a book should in fact be a part of Scripture. In common Biblical usage today, it refers to the actual 66 books which make up the Bible.

In this lesson we are going to look at the make-up of Scripture from two different perspectives. The first perspective is a perspective of faith. The second perspective is to look at it historically to see how the Bible developed in history.

*Does the Bible now contain what God intended to be in the Bible?*

**The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.** Isaiah 40:8 (NASB)

**For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.** 1 Peter 1:23-25 (NIV)

**I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.** Matthew 5:18 (NIV)

**Your word is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens.** Psalm 119:89 (NIV)

**All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.** Psalms 119:160 (NIV)

Our record of God's spoken and written Word of God is the Bible. The Bible is God's truth that He revealed to man. According to these verses God's Word stands forever, is imperishable, and enduring. It is inconceivable to think that some of what God chose to reveal to all mankind and that He intended to be in our written Word, somehow got lost or left out of the Bible. God himself states that his Word is imperishable and enduring. Again, how could some of what He intended to be preserved in the written Word of God be lost? It would no longer be imperishable and enduring, and God would be weak and unable to preserve His Word.

We recognize that from a human standpoint, man played a role in the selection of the Biblical books. This, however, does not override God's sovereign will and purpose in revealing Himself to man through his Word, the Bible. We have what God intended us to have. God is God. In his own sovereign way and timing, He has revealed to man what we need to know about Him, how to know Him, and how to walk with Him. He does this through the 66 books to make up the Bible.

**For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**

Revelation 22:18-19 (NKJV)

It is recognized that this warning's immediate reference is to the book of Revelation. However, the book of Revelation is one of 66 books, all of which were equally God-breathed. This warning is just as applicable to the other 65 books as it is to the book of Revelation. The same faith which causes us to be confident that none of the Word of God got left out, also gives us confidence that no part of the Bible was added that God did not intend to be a part of His inspired Word.

### *What About Other Books Mentioned in the Bible?*

There are non-Biblical books that are mentioned in several places in the bible.

**Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.** Joshua 10:13 (ESV)

**Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer,**  
1 Chronicles 29:29 (NASB)

**Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."** Jude 1:14-15 (NIV)

Each of these non-Biblical books or records have faded out of existence. While they may have been valuable, they were never part of the imperishable enduring Word of God. Our faith in God leads us to believe that He has preserved all of his written Word for us, and that He has not allowed any non-inspired books that are not his Word to be included in the Bible to confuse and mislead us.

## God used people to assemble the books of the Bible.

### *The Old Testament Canon*

Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament. They were immediately recognized and accepted as the Word of God. As time passed and the prophets recorded their messages in writing, the recognized body of Scripture grew. It is not known exactly when the 39 books of the Old Testament were recognized as the complete body of Scripture. However, Jewish history credits Ezra with compiling the final grouping of books as we now have them. Josephus, a credible Jewish historian writing shortly after the death of Christ, credits Ezra with the final compiling of the Old Testament. This would have dated the completion of the Old Testament canon at about 450 B.C.

Jesus himself recognized the authority of the Old Testament by continually quoting from many of its books and referring to it as Scripture. This is solid evidence of the legitimacy of the Old Testament.

**Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”** Luke 24:44 (ESV)

**Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.** Matthew 5:17 (NKJV)

**The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."** Matt 19:3-6 (NKJV)

### *The New Testament Canon*

As the New Testament authors began to write, their writings were read, studied, copied, and sent to other churches. There were other letters and books that were also written during this time. As time passed, non-Scriptural writings began to fade from use, while the books which now form the 27 books of our New Testament came to be accepted and recognized as being as equally inspired as the Old Testament Scripture. Some books such as II John and III John, Hebrews, and James were questioned at first, but with time they came to be universally accepted. Other books such as “The Shepherd of Hermas” and “The Gospel of Thomas” were thought by some to be part of Scripture, but with time they failed to pass the strict standards used to determine what was Scripture and what was not Scripture.

In the first centuries after the formation of the church, church councils were called by church leaders to decide important issues facing the Christian church. Acts 15 records what might be described as the first of these councils. Many more councils followed. In A.D. 397, in what was called the Third



Council of Carthage, the 27 books of the New Testament along with the 39 books of the Old Testament were recognized as the completed Word of God. Later councils re-confirmed that decision.

As the church leaders discussed what books should be included in the New Testament, they asked very important questions about each book. Each book had to pass very strict guidelines before it could be accepted as part of God's written Word.

Following are five questions that were asked about each book before it was included in the Bible as the inspired inerrant Word of God. Each book was thoroughly examined and evaluated before it was included in the New Testament. Look at these five questions very closely. They form a tough test that had to be passed by each book.

1. *Was it written by an apostle? If not, was the author closely allied with the apostles (such as Mark & Luke)?*
2. *Was the subject matter and the treatment of that subject matter consistent with the rest of Scripture?*
3. *Was it universally accepted by Christian churches, or was it seriously questioned by some Christians?*
4. *Did it stand the test of time, or with time was it fading from use?*
5. *Did it give unmistakable internal evidence of inspiration? Did the Holy Spirit use it to convict men of spiritual truth?*

These tests were a high standard. Only the genuine inspired Word of God could meet this standard.

### *What About the "Apocrypha"?*

There are fourteen books called the "Apocrypha" that the Roman Catholic Church includes in its Bible that "Protestant" denominations do not include. These books were written during the "four hundred silent years" between the Old and New Testaments.

The following observations about these books should be noted.

1. The books themselves never claimed to be from God.
2. The books were rejected by the Council of Carthage and councils that followed. .
3. The early Jews never believed these books were inspired by God, and they were never part of the Jewish Scriptures or Old Testament.

4. The early Christian church did not believe they were part of Scripture.
5. In the New Testament, Jesus and the other authors quoted from the Old Testament many times. However, not once did Jesus or any other New Testament author ever quote from an Apocryphal book.
6. While the book of I Maccabees is considered valuable history, the contents of several of the books are whimsical and silly and the authorship is uncertain.
7. It was not until 1546 that the Catholic Church declared them to be part of the Bible. At the Council of Trent, which was held to consider strategy to stop the Protestant reformation, the Catholic Church declared that the Apocryphal books were part of Scripture.
8. There are no conservative protestant Biblical scholars who believe that the fourteen Apocryphal books are indeed part of the inspired Word of God.

These books fail to pass the test for being genuine God given inspired revelation of truth. They were added to the Catholic approved translation not because they could pass the test but rather, they were added in order to combat the protestant reformation.

## **Personal Conviction**

Today, one may consider all the evidence and still not be convinced that the Bible is the revealed inspired Word of God. That is because our faith in the Word of God is based in our own reading and study of the Bible itself, and on the understanding, we receive from the Holy Spirit. Our faith comes from the Lord, rather than being primarily based on human logic.

Genuine faith in the Bible comes through our own personal absorption of the Word of God. As we read and meditate on the Word and as the Spirit of God works in our hearts and as we listen and submit to the Word, then we can know for sure that 'yes' this is genuinely the Word of God, and we can have total confidence in it. Individuals who consistently absorb the Word, who see God at work in their own lives, who serve the Lord, and who commune with Him in prayer, are not troubled with doubts about the genuineness and truthfulness of God's written Word, the Bible.

## **Now for Some Fun---See If You Can Match the Following**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Number of books in the Bible
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Author of the first 5 books of the O.T.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ According to Jewish tradition, this man compiled the O.T.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The O.T. was completed by this date
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Name of the Jewish historian who credited Ezra with compiling the O.T.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ What language was the O.T. written in?
7. \_\_\_\_\_ What language was the N.T. written in?

8. \_\_\_\_\_ The name of the O.T. translation into Greek
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Approximate date of the Septuagint
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Number of books in the New Testament
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Date the church officially recognized the completed N.T.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Council that recognized the books of the N.T.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Name of books included in Catholic Bible but not in the original Bible
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Date the Catholic Church added the Apocrypha
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Apocryphal books
16. \_\_\_\_\_ The 66 books of the Bible are often call the \_\_\_\_\_ of Scripture.

- |                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| A. 250 B.C.            | J. 66        |
| B. Council of Carthage | K. 14        |
| C. Septuagint          | L. Ezra      |
| D. Canon               | M. Josephus  |
| E. Ebenezer Scrooge    | N. Latin     |
| F. 250 B.C.            | O. Greek     |
| G. A.D. 397            | P. Apocrypha |
| H. 39                  | Q. Moses     |
| I. 27                  | R. Hebrew    |

List the five tests which were used to determine if a book should be included in the N.T.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

What are six reasons we do not accept the Apocrypha as part of the inspired Word of God?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**The following resources were used to aid in the development of this lesson:**

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary

Merrill F. Unger  
Moody Press

Holman Bible Dictionary

Trent Butler, General Editor  
Holman Bible Publishers

How We Got the Bible

Neil Lightfoot  
Baker Book House

Which Version Now?

Bob Sheehan  
Cary Publishers (England)

“A Layman's Guide to Bible Versions”

Eternity Magazine

“Bible Translation Update”

Wycliffe Bible Translators

“The International Bible Examined”

Anonymous

“The King James Only?”

Grace Theological Seminary

“The Biblical Position on the KJV Controversy”

Dr. John MacArthur

“New Light From Old Manuscripts”

G. Christian Weiss

The Holy Bible The 1611 King James Version

Thomas Nelson Publishers

Our God-breathed Book---The Bible

John R. Rice  
Sword of the Lord Publishers

God's Word Hasn't Changed. The King's English Has.

Thomas Nelson Publishers.

A Ready Reference to the History of the English Bible

American Bible Society

The NIV, The Making of a Contemporary Version

Kenneth Baker, Editor  
International Bible Society

*How We Got our Bible*

“Christian History” magazine Issue 43 (Vol. XIII, No. 3)

## **Absorbing the Word of God**

### **...Understanding, Loving, and Applying God's Word**

These guides are designed to help you to learn, to understand, and to live what God teaches us in his Word, the Bible. God gave us the Bible to teach us how to know and to walk with Him. Take time to carefully read and think about the Scriptures used in this guide. Meditate on them and the truths they teach. Absorb them. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life. Learn to love God and his Word.

Take your time as you go through this study. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

Take your time as you go through this study. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

**Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1**

**The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.**

**The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.**

**The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.**

**The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.**

**The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.**

**The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.**

**By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.**

Psalm 19:7-11

**As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire. Isaiah 55:10-11**

**All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Many people begin a life of serving the Lord Jesus Christ but as time passes their commitment to Him dims. There is no longer any excitement or joy in their walk with God. This doesn't mean that they no longer know God, but they are certainly feeling spiritually dry, unproductive, and they may be deeply discouraged. Others who begin a walk with God are, after many years, still strongly committed and enjoying a satisfying and productive spiritual life.

What makes the difference?

This is not always an easy question to answer; however, one thing is clear. Those who are committed and productive in their walk with God learn to regularly absorb and live the Word of God (the Bible). Those who become dry and unproductive do not make absorbing and applying the Word of God a regular part of their lives. God, who is the author of the Bible, expects us to read, to absorb, and to live his Word. We need to be willing to change attitudes and behavior patterns as we see areas of our life that need changing. Unwillingness to submit gives Satan a foothold and leads to defeat in our life.

The Word of God leads us to faith in God and through it we learn how to live a God honoring life. Through the Bible we gain understanding, encouragement, and strength, and it leads us to growth, fruitfulness, and peace. To neglect God's Word leads to fruitlessness and frustration.

To be effective, our Bible reading/study needs to be regular. We must discipline ourselves and put effort into developing consistency—over long periods of time. Solid spiritual growth takes time. We cannot expect instant growth. Quick growth is sometimes shallow and does not last.

Be realistic in your expectations. God can work through any believer, even those whose growth is slow and sporadic; however, those He can consistently use are those who are faithful to Him and his Word over long periods of time.

What are some reasons that some people have a long productive walk with God and others seem to fall by the wayside?

What is one thing that individuals who have a long-term productive walk with God have in common?

Read Ephesians 4:27. What does it mean to give Satan a foothold? What does Satan want to do if he has a foothold in your life?

Are you satisfied with your walk with God?

## **Long Term Growth**

To consistently walk with God over a long period of time, five things are important. They are:

1. To regularly absorb and to submit to the Word of God.
2. To develop good prayer habits.
3. To regularly participate and serve in a solid, Bible teaching and practicing church.
4. Be careful about what you allow in your mind.
- 5 To honor God with our finances.

These five things are as important to our spiritual life as air, food, and water are to our physical life. Which of these five things do you need to work on?

Each of these five things are important. This lesson concentrates on number one, the absorption of the Word of God.

### **From the Pages of the Word to Life Changing Truth**

Simply reading the Word of God does not mean you will automatically have a right understanding of the Word. Read the passage several times. Meditate on what you read. Ask God for a right understanding. You may want to use some trusted Bible study aids. You may also want to ask a Pastor who is a good Bible teacher. As you understand Biblical truth, be thankful and give God praise for the truths you learn. Then put what you learn into practice.

### **Effort, Discipline, and Absorbing God's Word**

To regularly read and study the Bible requires effort and discipline. Spiritual growth and walking with God does not come automatically. It is not a passive activity. It is an active pursuit.

Read Proverbs 2:1-6. List eight active verbs that are to be part of our pursuit of wisdom.

As a result of our pursuit, in verses 1-5, what does God do in verse 6?

When God responds to our pursuit of wisdom, what happens in verses 7-22? List ten things.

Now read Proverbs 1:20-33. What is the result of not pursuing wisdom?

It is important to remember that God will always respond to the prayer of a repentant person. However, when an unbeliever refuses to accept God or when a believer does not seek to know God better or seek wisdom, he may suffer the consequences stated in this passage of Scripture.

From this Scripture, when will God not respond to an individual's call to God?

Now read II Peter 1:3-11. In verse 3, what has God given us?

What do God's promises enable us to do in verse 4?

What is our response in verse 5? How hard are we to work at it?

Now read II Timothy 2:15. Summarize what it says.

How are we to handle the "Word of God"? How much effort are we to put into it?

The reason many of us do not spiritually grow very much is because we don't put much effort into it. We are not saved by our good works or by our own efforts; however, spiritual growth takes consistent effort and discipline on our part.

## **Correctly Understanding God's Word**

Many Christians never develop good Bible reading/study habits. Some say things like "I just open my Bible and read where ever it opens". This results in little learning or long-term growth. Others say they don't read the Bible because they don't know how to interpret the Bible. Correct interpretation is very important; however, most of the Bible doesn't need to be interpreted. It says what it means and no interpretation is needed. What is needed is submission and obedience. Some others say they prefer to read the Bible "devotionally". What is meant by this is a little hard to define. It generally puts an emphasis on getting a good feeling from reading the Bible. There is certainly nothing wrong with good feelings, especially as they go along with being uplifted, inspired, and being encouraged through the Word. However, it is not enough to read just to get a good feeling. Long term growth comes as we correctly understand and then put into practice what God teaches in his Word. Many others know that they should read and study the Word, but other things continually get in the way. There just never seems to be enough time. The truth is that they really don't value knowing God very much. Other things are more important.

It takes time, effort, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2) to understand spiritual truth. Understanding does not normally come from a single light reading of a passage in the Bible.



We need to take time to read, and re-read again and again, and to meditate, and to pray for understanding, all in an unhurried and thoughtful manner. We need to give the Spirit a chance to work and illuminate our understanding. This process does not happen in a hurry. However, the rewards are tremendous as one begins to see God at work in his life.

As you read, there will be parts you don't understand. That is okay. Nobody understands all the Bible. After you read it a number of times and have asked for the Spirit's illumination, if you still don't grasp it, you may wish to read some reference books or ask someone who can help. You probably will not completely understand it yet and you may need to leave that passage of Scripture for now. At some point in the future, you may understand it better. There are some things that we will never totally understand while we are here on earth. Even good Bible scholars regularly debate many things they simply do not understand.

## **A Note to Parents, Teachers, Pastors, and Anyone Else Who Teaches God's Word**

Many times, in a Sunday School class or a Bible study very little learning takes place. Nobody has studied or prepared, and nobody really understands the text, and, as a result, nobody teaches. In the place of good teaching, questions like "What do you get out of this verse?" or "What do you think this means?" are asked. The resulting discussion is often a pooling of Biblical ignorance and misunderstanding. The overall result is little or no spiritual growth. Sometimes more harm than good is done because wrong ideas are suggested and accepted. It is a dangerous thing to mishandle the Word of God.

When we have the privilege of teaching the Word of God, it is a tremendous privilege, but it also is a tremendous responsibility. It would be well for all teachers to seriously look at the warning given in James 3:1.

When we teach the Word, the passage we are teaching must be fresh and meaningful to us. When we have been blessed and challenged by a Scripture passage, then we can pass on that blessing to others. If we have not prepared and have not been blessed by a passage of Scripture ourselves, it is highly unlikely that we will be very effective in teaching that passage. When we are spiritually dry, we are not good teachers of spiritual truth. If a teacher will follow the suggestions given in this lesson, it could make a tremendous difference in his teaching.

## **Suggestions for a Regular Pattern of Absorbing God's Word**

There is no absolutely "right" way to have a regular Bible reading/study program. We are all individuals. If you have already developed good patterns of Bible study and are consistently growing in your walk with God, then there is no reason to change. However, if you are struggling in this whole area of Bible study, then here are some suggestions that may be a tremendous help. This suggested pattern of reading/study is meant for the "average" or "ordinary" person who is not a Bible scholar. Anyone who has just a minimum reading ability can follow this pattern. If you have

limited reading skills, a Bible like the New International Readers Version may be helpful. This version is written for individuals who have trouble reading.

Following are four approaches to reading/studying the Bible. Approach One is the foundation for just about any kind of serious Bible reading/study and it doesn't take a scholar to do it.

## **Approach One—Repetitive Reading**

Approach One centers around the idea of repetitive reading. Pick out a part of Scripture that you would like to know and understand better. Read that passage over and over and over again. The more you read it, the more it begins to sink in and the longer you will remember what it teaches. Read it carefully and thoughtfully. Think, meditate, and pray about what you read. Ask God for understanding. As you read, be thankful and give God praise for the truths you discover.

This approach means that you will spend fairly long periods of time in a short passage. You may spend a week, several weeks, even several months digesting a single book or passage. That is okay. It is much better to spend a longer period of time in a short passage than to cover more material and not absorb or remember much of what it teaches.

It is helpful to read in several different versions. This helps in understanding the passage and it also adds some variety to your reading. The King James Version, New King James Version, New American Standard Bible, New International Version, New International Reader's Version, and the New Living Translation are all translations that are reliable and helpful.

If you are not sure where to begin reading/studying, then begin with the two-year reading program at the end of this paper. It is an excellent way to start.

**Here are some practical suggestions for putting this approach into use.**

### **A. Individual Chapters**

You may want to pick out one chapter or perhaps one Psalm. Read that one chapter several times a day for at least a week. At the end of a week's time you will have read that chapter fifteen to twenty times. As you read it over and over, your understanding will gradually increase. Each time you read it, you will understand and appreciate those truths a little more. Each time you read it, it will sink in a little deeper and you will remember it longer. Remember---do not read in a hurry. Take time to slowly read, think, meditate and pray about what you read.

### **B. A Book of the Bible**

The same approach that we used for an individual chapter can be used for an entire book of the Bible.

For example, the book of Ephesians has six chapters. The first day, read chapter one several times. The second day, read chapter two several times. The third day, read chapter three several times. Repeat this pattern until you have read the entire book. In Ephesians, this would take six days, one

day for each chapter. When you have finished the first six days, repeat this whole pattern, reading the whole book at least three or four more times. From time to time, you may wish to vary the routine and read several chapters in a row or even the whole book at one time. Reading different versions will add some variety and help in understanding some parts of the book. That means you will be spending about a month reading the book of Ephesians. All this may sound like a lot of time in one book; however, each time it is read, your understanding will increase and you will remember it longer.

### **C. Longer Books**

The same process can be used for longer books of the Bible. The book of John has twenty-one chapters and some of those chapters are quite long. You may wish to read only a half chapter a day and take about forty days or so to read through the whole book one time. Again, that is okay. We are not in a hurry. Now read the book again using the same pattern. Again, from time to time you may wish to vary your reading by reading several chapters in one day. Also using different translations will add variety and increase understanding. By the time you repeat this process four or five times, you will spend three or four months in the book of John. After absorbing the book in this manner, you will have a deeper appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Several months is not too long to get to know the One who brought us salvation and whom we are to pattern our lives after.

### **D. Single Paragraphs**

You may wish to select a single key paragraph for study. Use the same process of repetitive reading. You will probably end up reading the shorter passage many more times. That is okay. As you begin to probe its depths, you will be richly rewarded.

## **Approach Two---Using Basic Reference Materials**

Approach One should be the foundation of an individual's reading/study program. However, sometimes there will be something you may want to look up to get some more information. The following are basic Bible study aids that can sometimes help.

### **A. Study Bible**

A study Bible is a basic Bible study aid. It gives all kinds of information that is helpful. It gives short explanations of the text, historical backgrounds of the books and their authors, maps and charts, explanations of unfamiliar words, explanations of weights, measurements, distances, etc.

There are many different study Bibles. One good one is the NIV Study Bible. A more recent one that is very good is the MacArthur Study Bible. This is based on the New King James Version.

### **B. Bible Dictionary**

A Bible dictionary gives information about key Bible words and topics. There are a number of Bible dictionaries available, but an old trusted Bible dictionary is called Unger's Bible Dictionary, or more recently the New Unger's Bible Dictionary.

### **C. Concordance**

A concordance is a book that is used to find a Scripture when you cannot remember the reference. If you can remember a key word from a verse, you can look up that verse by looking up that key word. Some concordances also give a very short Hebrew or Greek definition of the Word. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible is the old standby.

### **D. Nave's Topical Bible**

This is a very helpful tool, especially for teachers and pastors. All the major topics of the Bible are listed along with the Bible verses that deal with that topic. It is very helpful when preparing a lesson on a particular topic.

### **E. Word Studies**

Word studies take key words of the Bible and give more complete Hebrew or Greek definitions. They will often explain the word's usage in a particular verse of the Bible. Some word studies are difficult to understand and use correctly, but with time and practice they can be very helpful for a more indepth Bible study. The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words by Lawrence O. Richards is a fairly easy-to-use word study and is a good one for first time users.

### **F. Other Bible Study Aids**

There are literally thousands of commentaries and other books written about every conceivable Bible topic. Some are good, some are not so good, and others are just plain bad. We need to be careful what we read and accept. It is a good idea to check with somebody who should know before buying or using a Bible study book that you are not familiar with.

## **Approach Three—Reading Through the Bible, an Overview**

In a sense, this is the opposite of Approach One. In this approach we begin reading through the entire Bible. If you average about two chapters a day, it will take you just over a year and a half to read through the entire Bible. This reading approach will give you a broad overview of Scripture and a basic understanding of God. You will not understand or grasp all you read and in places you may feel overwhelmed or get bogged down. Keep on reading anyway. You may wish to alternate between reading Old Testament and New Testament books.

It may not be the best to use only this approach in your reading and study of the Word. Approach One should be the foundation of your Bible reading program. Once you have Approach One going and you want to absorb more, then a through the Bible reading program can be very beneficial.

## **Approach Four---Memorizing God's Word**

There is nothing like memorizing key verses of the Bible. Verses you memorize will become part of you in a way no other approach to Scripture can match. A good way to do it is to discipline yourself to memorize one verse of the Bible a week. Regularly review what you have memorized, or it will

slip away. Children memorize very quickly and what is memorized as a child may stay with them for a lifetime.

## **Suggestions for An Effective Daily “Quiet Time” of Bible Reading and Prayer**

Many Christians set aside a time each day to have a “quiet time” or “devotions”. The idea is to have a time each day to read the Bible, to think and meditate about what you read, and to have a time of prayer. It is a time to be alone with God. This is extremely important. If you regularly spend time with God, you will grow in your walk with God. If you do not, your growth will be slow and sporadic and you will often feel spiritually dry and discouraged.

Many Christians feel frustrated in their attempts at being consistent and productive in their daily “quiet time” with God. Following are some suggestions that blend together a quiet time and Approach One. If you don’t know where to begin your Bible reading, then use the two-year reading program at the end of this paper.

If you have already developed a healthy pattern of time with the Lord and you are growing in your walk with Him, then there is no reason to change. However, if you are struggling with this, then putting into practice the following suggestions may well be one of the most important things you can do to grow in your walk with the Lord.

1. Start your daily quiet time by finding a time and place where, as much as is possible, you can clear your schedule and be alone and uninterrupted for about thirty to forty-five minutes or so. Once you figure out the time and place, keep this time as if you had a daily appointment to meet with God.
2. Now, as much as possible, clear your mind of everything else that would distract you or interfere with your time with God.
3. Think back over the last few hours or days. Confess any known sin that you have not already confessed.
4. Pray Psalm 139:23-24.  
Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if  
there is any offensive way in me, and lead me  
in the way everlasting.
5. Now carefully and thoughtfully read and re-read the passage of Scripture in your reading schedule. The two-year reading program for new Christians is an excellent place to start.
6. Spend some time meditating on what you have read and learned. *Pray through the passage with thanksgiving and commitment.* Worship and praise God in relation to the truths you learn from

this passage. This time of meditation can be a precious time of allowing God to speak to you, deepening your love for Him, and giving you understanding and insights that will sustain and strengthen you.

### **What Is Scriptural Meditation?**

To quietly and unhurriedly think about or to ponder Biblical truths, asking God for understanding and submitting to his direction in your life.

7. If you would like to be a little more thorough in your reading, you may wish to ask yourself some questions about the passage. Following are some suggested questions:

- a. What are the major truths in this Scripture passage?
- b. What are the instructions or principles for living?
- c. Are there any direct or implied promises or warnings?
- d. What can I learn about God?

8. Now, seeking the Spirit's direction, determine what actions or attitudes in your life need to be changed and brought into line with what you have learned from his Word. Then determine that with his strengthening, you will make those changes.

9. Now spend time praying about current needs and those items on your prayer list.

Note: You may wish to jot down any blessings or insights you received. It is amazing how quickly we forget things. By writing them down, it also helps us to have them available to share with others who can be encouraged and benefit from what has blessed us. Do you have a regular quiet time with the Lord?

If you do, how can you make it better?

### **Option: Keeping a Written Record**

If you would like to take your program a step farther, you may wish to keep a written record of your study and your discoveries from the Word. To do this you may want to use the following forms. Filling out these forms are not necessary for a quality time with the Lord. In fact, some feel that they detract from the quiet time. They are provided for your use if you want them. Don't feel guilty if you don't use them.

The value of these forms is that it makes one think about what we have read and it keeps their observations for future use. It also makes a deeper impression on one's memory and therefore we remember it longer. These forms can be very valuable if we are teaching or training someone else. In fact, *these forms can be an excellent way to prepare for teaching a particular passage.*

Following this form there is also a **sample form for a prayer list**. Making a prayer list is not difficult, just write down prayer requests so you can keep and remember them.

### **Absorbing the Word (Optional Written Record)**

You may make all the copies of these forms that you wish.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**What passage did you read and meditate on?** \_\_\_\_\_

What are the major truths in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Were there any instructions or principles to live by? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

What are the direct or implied promises or warnings? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

What do we learn about God? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Write out a key verse. \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**MEDITATION** - What blessings or insights did you gain from your time of meditation?

---

---

---

---

**APPLICATION** - What attitudes or behavior patterns should you work on today to be more in tune with the Word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

What can you share with someone else that would be helpful or a blessing to them? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Ideas for future study. \_\_\_\_\_

---



**Sample Prayer List**

Every day    Mon.    Tues.    Wed.    Thurs.    Fri.    Sat.    Sun.  
(Circle the appropriate day.)

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_
- 16. \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. \_\_\_\_\_
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_

## A Two-Year Bible Reading Program

The following Bible reading program is based on the idea of repetitive reading. Instead of reading a lot of Scripture, you read the same section of the Bible for several days. The reason for this is simple. Most of us do not understand everything we read the first time through. This is especially true of the Bible. It is rich in depth. The more we read a section of the Bible, the more we understand it and can put it into practice.

This two year Bible reading program is geared to those who are just getting started in their walk with God. It is a good one to help get new Christians started on a productive walk with God. While it is geared to new Christians, it can be helpful to anyone who has not had a systematic Bible reading/study program.

You are certainly free to read more than what is suggested in the following Bible reading schedule, but this is a good pattern to use as the core of your Bible reading/study program.

1.     **(week 1)** John 3:16-21 (chapter 3, verses 16-21). Read these verses every day for one week. As you read, think about what you read. Ask God for a right understanding of these verses. If you have questions, ask your mentor or someone else who should know. Do not accept everybody's answer as absolute truth. There are a lot of wrong or poor answers given when asking questions about the Bible. It is a good idea to be skeptical if an answer just doesn't seem right.
  
2.     **(week 2)** Read 1 John 1:5-10 and 1 John 2:1-6 every day for one week. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to regularly confess our sin. We do this to keep our walk with God fruitful, productive and satisfying. When we sin, we do not lose our salvation, but there is a loss of our joy and productivity. As soon as you sin, confess it and get back on track with God.
  
3.     **(week 3)** Psalm 1. Read this chapter every day for a week. This is not a difficult part of the Bible. Read, think, and absorb what you read.
  
4.     **(week 4)** Read Psalm 32 every day for a week. Each day after you have read it, quietly sit back and think about what you have read. Thank God for the truths that you learn.

After you have read this Psalm for two or three days, begin answering the following questions:

From verses 1 and 2, who is blessed (happy)?

From verses 3 and 4, what is the result of not confessing sin (keeping silent)?

From verse 5, what happens when we confess our sin?

From verse 6, what should Godly people do?

From verse 7, what two things does God promise?

From verse 8, what does God promise?

From verse 9, what should we not be like?

From verse 10, what difference is there between the wicked and those who trust in God?

From verse 11, what should believers do?

Every day thank God for saving you and for the things He is doing in your life. Talk to God about yourself, your family, your friends, and others you know.

**5. (week 5)** Read Psalm 33 every day for a week. Again, each day after you have read it, quietly sit back and think about what you have read. Thank God for the truths that you learn.

Again, after you have read it for two or three days, begin answering the following questions:

From verses 1-3. Most of us don't have harps and lyres, but what can we do to show our joy and give God praise?

From verse 4, what does it say about the Word of God?

From verse 5, what does God love?

From verses 6 through 9, what is God's relationship to the earth?

From verse 8, what should our attitude toward God be?

From verse 9, who controls the people and nations on earth?

From verse 10, how long will God's plan stand?

From verses 12 through 15, who does the Lord watch?

From verses 16 through 19, what will not save a nation? Who delivers us in times of trouble?

From verses 20 through 22, what does it mean to "wait" on God?

Who is our hope in?

What should we do while we wait?

**6. (week 6)** Read Psalm 34 every day for a week. Follow the same pattern that you followed in weeks one and two. Take time to think about what you read. This time, as you read it verse by verse, you make up the questions in your own mind and then think about the answers. From this Psalm ask yourself questions that have to do with what God does for his people and what our response should be. Don't forget to take time to talk to the Lord and thank God for all the things you learn.

**7. (week 7)** Now read Psalm 139 every day for a week. Again, take time to think and meditate about what you have read. This is a very personal Psalm. It covers how deeply the God of the universe knows and cares about you personally. He protects and leads you. He not only knows you, but He designed you personally and has a purpose for you. The last two verses are a beautiful prayer of submission to the God who knows you so well. Again, after you have read it for two or three days, begin asking yourself questions about what is said and thanking God for the truths you discover.

**8. (This will take about two weeks.)** Genesis, chapters 1-3. Read one chapter a day. Obviously this will take three days by reading one chapter a day. After you read all three chapters, start with chapter one again and read all three chapters again. Repeat this process until you have read all three chapters at least four times. These are very important chapters. They are the foundation on which all of the rest of the Bible is built. These chapters should be understood exactly as they are written. We don't need to try to change anything to accommodate modern "scientific" theories.

**9. (This will take about two months.)** Now we are going to a longer passage of Scripture in the New Testament. The book of Mark has 16 chapters. The length of the chapters vary. Read one chapter a day. After you have read all 16 chapters, start over again and read it all the way through again. Then read it all the way through a third and a fourth time. The purpose of this reading is to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ better. Jesus is not only our Savior, He is also our example of living that we are to follow. If we are to be like Him, we need to know Him as well as possible. Reading the book of Mark through three times will help us to know Him better and to begin to live more like Him. Again, as you read, think and meditate about what you read.

**10. (about four or five months)** Now read the Book of John. John has 21 chapters. It is a little “deeper” book and you may need to go a little slower. There are some very long chapters. You may wish to take two or even three days to read and think about some of the chapters. You will not understand everything, but keep on reading anyway. As you move along in your reading, you will understand more and more all the time. Read the whole book at least two or three times. The book of John emphasizes the truth that Jesus is God. After you finish this reading, you should have an even greater appreciation of Jesus, who is God Himself, and have a deeper commitment to serve Him.

**11. (about one month)** Now to a shorter book. The book of 1 John has only five short chapters. Read a chapter a day. Carefully think about what you read. Repeat this process until you have read the book through at least four times. 1 John is a sobering book. It makes us examine our own way of life and ask ourselves if we really know God and are we living a life pleasing to Him. 1 John tells us that if we are continually living a sinful pattern of life, then we really don’t know Him. Instead of continuing in that unbroken lifestyle of sin, we confess the sin and turn from it. All Christians, even mature ones, will sin, but we should always be growing in our walk with Him. There are many tests given for us to use to evaluate our lives. This book (1 John) should cause us to deepen our commitment to walking with Him. Don’t move through this book quickly. Spend a lot of time thinking and meditating about what you read.

**12. (about two months)** Now back to the Old Testament and the first book of the Bible again, the book of Genesis. Genesis is an entirely different kind of a book. It is historical in nature. It tells of man’s beginnings and where we came from. Genesis is fifty chapters long. Read a chapter a day. Genesis is an important book, but for now you only need to read it through once. You may wish to come back to it later. A basic understanding of Genesis will help you to understand what God is like, and it will also help you to understand much of the New Testament. It should be noted that we accept the historical and scientific accuracy of all of Genesis, including the first eleven chapters. Jesus Himself quoted from each of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which indicates that He Himself accepted their authenticity.

**13. (about one month)** Now back to the New Testament and the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a short book with only six short chapters that are loaded with good teaching and practical instructions for life. Read a chapter a day and be ready to spend a lot of time meditating. Read through the entire book at least five times.

**14. (about three months)** Now for the book of Romans. Romans is sixteen chapters long. It is a “heavier” book than many others. Don’t hurry through it. Sometimes you may wish to spend two or three days in one chapter. You should read it through at least three times. Romans gives us the foundation of truth upon which our faith is built. Essentially all the major doctrines of our faith are covered in this book. You may wish to buy a commentary to help you understand some of the passages. John MacArthur’s commentary on Romans is a good one to keep handy as you read this book.

**15. (about two months)** The book of Proverbs is an entirely different kind of a book. Through the use of proverbs or wise sayings, Solomon, under the inspiration of God, gives advice on how to live. While some of the verses or proverbs tie in to the verse before or after it, most of the verses are individual proverbs. Proverbs covers almost every conceivable topic. You will never digest all of this book. There is simply too much there. If you have school age children, this is an excellent book to read to them. In a very natural way it allows you to discuss with them right conduct in almost every part of life. It should be noted that a proverb is a general truth about life. It is not saying that every proverb will be true one hundred percent of the time in every person’s life. In Proverbs there are thirty-one chapters. Read it at least once. You may wish to read it through again.

**16. (about two months)** Now let’s go to the books of 1 and 2 Peter. These books together have eight chapters. These are very practical books giving instruction on various aspects of our walk with God. These are not long chapters, but read just a single chapter a day and spend plenty of time thinking and meditating on the contents of each chapter. These are books that will have to be read at least four or five times through to begin to digest the contents. You will greatly benefit from the reading of these books.

**17. (about two months)** 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Like 1 and 2 Peter, these two books combined have eight chapters. Follow the same pattern given for 1 and 2 Peter. Read one chapter a day. Spend lots of time thinking and meditating, and stay in these two books until you have read the entire books through at least four or five times. These books will give you a lot of hope and peace about what God has in store for us in the future.

**18. (about two months)** Revelation. Revelation, chapters 4-22, deal with the future. It is not easy reading and you will most likely be a little confused after reading it. Don’t expect to understand it all. Read the book through once or twice. It will give you some idea of the judgment that unbelieving people will face.

Now, on your own, you can continue studying the Bible. God gave us every part of the Scripture and each part has a purpose. Studying Scripture is a life time pursuit and it is part of our lifetime growing process. Continue studying and applying the Word, and you will have a productive and satisfying lifetime walk with God.

## Bible Reading Chart

### Supplement to Approach Three---(Reading Through the Bible)

When you decide to begin a reading-through-the-whole-Bible reading program, the following chart can help you to keep track of your reading. The chart has all the books of the Bible listed on it. After each book there is a number for each chapter in that book. As you read through your Bible, check off each chapter you read. This is a simple way to remember where you are in your reading. (This is especially important for us old folks, although I suspect that the younger generation may benefit from it as well.)

It would probably be a good idea to alternate your reading between the Old and the New Testaments. This is especially true of first-time readers as they read through some of the first books (after Genesis) of the old Testament. It is easy to get bogged down.

### Old Testament

Genesis      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

Exodus      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

Leviticus    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

Numbers     1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36

Deuteronomy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34

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

Judges      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

Ruth        1 2 3 4

1 Samuel    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

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

1 Kings     1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

2 Kings 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

---

1 Chronicles 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

---

2 Chronicles 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 3

---

Ezra 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

---

Nehemiah 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

---

Esther 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

---

Job 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42

---

Psalms 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32  
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60  
61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88  
89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111  
112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130  
131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150

---

Proverbs 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

---

Ecclesiastes 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

---

Song of Solomon 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

---

Isaiah 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35  
36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65  
66

---

Jeremiah 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32  
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52

---

Lamentations 1 2 3 4 5

---

Ezekiel 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32  
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48

---

Daniel 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

---



Hosea 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

---

Joel 1 2 3

---

Amos 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

---

Obadiah 1

---

Jonah 1 2 3 4

---

Micah 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

---

Nahum 1 2 3

---

Habakkuk 1 2 3

---

Zephaniah 1 2 3

---

Haggai 1 2

---

Zechariah 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

---

Malachi 1 2 3 4

---

## New Testament

Matthew 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

---

Mark 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

---

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

---

John 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

---

Acts 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

---

Romans 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

---

1 Corinthians 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

---

2 Corinthians 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

---

Galatians 1 2 3 4 5 6

---

Ephesians 1 2 3 4 5 6

---

Philippians 1 2 3 4

---

Colossians 1 2 3 4

---

1 Thessalonians 1 2 3 4 5

---

2 Thessalonians 1 2 3

---

1 Timothy 1 2 3 4 5 6

---

2 Timothy 1 2 3 4

---

Titus 1 2 3

---

Philemon 1

---

Hebrews 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

---

James 1 2 3 4 5

---

1 Peter 1 2 3 4 5

---

2 Peter 1 2 3

---

1 John 1 2 3 4 5

---

2 John 1

---

3 John 1

---

Jude 1

---

Revelation 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 20 21 22

*Chapter Six*

## **God's Word, Sound Doctrine, and False Teaching**

### **Revelation 1:9-3:22 \* Messages to Seven Churches**

Carefully read Revelation 1:9-20 several times. This is an awesome passage. Spend time thinking about what you read.

In this passage of Scripture, the apostle John sees an amazing vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. This vision cannot be adequately described; it can only be read and marveled at. Here Jesus is presented in all his glory and majesty. It would be well for all of us to marvel at the glory and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may wonder why God gave John a vision of the glory and majesty of Jesus before giving him the messages to the churches. While Scripture does not say exactly why the vision was given, it is a safe conclusion to say that Jesus wanted us to have a glimpse of his own glory, power, majesty, and authority, before He gave the messages. These messages are not something to causally and lightly skim over. They are from the majestic, the glorious, and the powerful God and creator of the universe and of man himself. God is saying this is very important. Listen to what I have to say!!!

In the vision John is told to write a message to each one of seven churches. These messages are recorded in chapters two and three of Revelation.

We need to carefully examine each message. In these messages we find how God evaluates seven churches. He gives us this evaluation so that we can examine our own church and see how healthy we are as a church.

Following are outlines of the message given to each church. These outlines do not replace your careful reading and absorbing the truths given in each message. To get lasting value from these messages, you must carefully read, think about, and absorb these truths out of the Bible itself.

#### **Revelation 2:1-7 \* Message to the Church at Ephesus**

- A. Positives about this church ...They worked hard.
- ...They persevered.
  - ...They did not tolerate wicked men.
  - ...They tested those who claimed to be apostles.
  - ...They endured hardship.
  - ...They hated the practices of the Nicolaitans. (The Nicolaitans denied the fundamentals of Scripture and they practiced a loose immoral lifestyle.)

- B. Negatives about this church
  - ...They had lost their first love.
- C. God's instructions to them
  - ...Remember from where you have fallen.
  - ...Repent.
  - ...Do the things you did at first.
- D. Warning to church
  - ...Failure to repent will result in the church being removed.

### **Revelation 2:8-11 \* Message to the Church at Smyrna**

- A. Positives about this church
  - ...They suffered afflictions and poverty; yet they were rich.
  - ...They had been slandered.
  - ...They would suffer continued persecution, prison and even death.
- B. Negatives about this church—**None**
- C. God's instructions to them
  - ...Be faithful, even to the point of death.
- D. Warning to church—**None**

### **Revelation 2:12-17 \* Message to the Church at Pergamum**

- A. Positives about this church
  - ...They remained true to God's name.
  - ...They did not renounce their faith even when one of them (Antipas) was put to death.
- B. Negatives about this church
  - ...They tolerated the teachings of Balaam (free living and immorality).
  - ...They tolerated the teaching of the Nicolaitans. (The Nicolaitans denied the fundamentals of Scripture and they practiced a loose immoral lifestyle.)
- C. God's instructions to them ...Repent.
- D. Warning to church
  - ...If you do not repent, I will come and fight against you with the sword out of my mouth.

### **Revelation 2:18-28 \* Message to the Church at Thyatira**

#### A. Positives about this church

- ...They practiced right deeds.
- ...They had love and faith.
- ...They served and they persevered.
- ...They were doing more than they did at first.

#### B. Negatives about this church

- ...They tolerated a false teacher (the false prophetess, Jezebel).
- ...They tolerated immorality.
- ...They tolerated eating of food offered to idols.

#### C. God's instructions to them

- ...To those who tolerate Jezebel----repent.
- ...To those who do not tolerate Jezebel—hold on to what you have until I come.

#### D. Warning to church

- ...I will cast Jezebel on a bed of suffering.
- ...I will make those who commit adultery with her to suffer intensely.
- ...I will strike her children dead.

### **Revelation 3:1-6 \* Message to the Church at Sardis**

#### A. Positives about this church

- ...They have a few people who have not soiled their clothes (by sin).

#### B. Negatives about this church

- ...They had a reputation for being alive, but they were dead.

#### C. God's instructions to them ...Wake up.

- ...Strengthen what remains, what is about to die.
- ...Remember what you receive.
- ...Obey.
- ...Repent.

#### D. Warning to church

- ...(Jesus) will come like a thief.

### **Revelation 3:7-13 \* Message to the Church at Philadelphia**

#### A. Positives about this church

- ...God has given them an open door that no one could shut.
- ...They had a little strength.
- ...They have kept God's Word.
- ...They had not denied the name of God.
- ...They had kept God's command to patiently endure.

#### B. Negatives about this church---None

#### C. God's instructions to them

- ...Hold on to what you have.

#### D. Warning to church---None

### **Revelation 3:14-22 \* Message to the Church at Laodicea**

#### A. Positives about this church---None

#### B. Negatives about this church

- ...You are neither hot nor cold.
- ...You are lukewarm.
- ...They thought themselves rich and had acquired wealth, but they were wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

#### C. God's instructions to them

- ...Buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.
- ...Be earnest and repent.
- ...Invite Him to come in and eat with them.

#### D. Warning to church--- "I am about to spit you out of my mouth..."

## **Matthew 13**

In Matthew 13 and in other places, Jesus used a series of parables to teach and warn about future pollution of the Kingdom of Heaven. In this series of parables, He is teaching about the present time, or what we sometimes identify as the "church age" or the "age of grace".

## **The Parable of the Wheat and Tares (weeds) \***

Matthew 13:24-30 and Matthew 13:37-43

In this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a field. Jesus plants good seed in a field. The good seed represents the Word of God. In the night an enemy (Satan) comes and plants weeds in the field. Both the good seeds and the weed seeds grow up together in the field. This parable clearly teaches that there are genuine believers who are part of his kingdom, and there are also false believers or fakes who will be there as well. In the end, the fakes will be sorted out and thrown into the lake of fire (hell).

## **The Parable of the Net \* Matthew 13:47-50**

In this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fisherman's net. The net is let down into the lake to catch fish. They caught many fish, both good and bad. The fishermen harvested the good fish and threw the bad away. This is similar to the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the weeds. When the "gospel net" is thrown into the water, many who are not genuine believers are caught. In the end, the unbelievers will be separated out and thrown into the fiery furnace (hell).

In these parables we can conclude that there are many people who appear to be genuine believers, but they are not. It is a wise church who will be on guard against phonies, planted by Satan, who will bring the influence of Satan into the church.

## **The Parable of the Yeast \* Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20-21**

In this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast put in a loaf of dough. The small amount of yeast works its way through and permeates a large amount of dough.

In Scripture yeast is a symbol of evil. This parable is simply teaching that evil will permeate the professing Kingdom of Heaven.

## **The Parable of the Mustard Seed \* Matthew 13:31-32 and Mark 4:30-32.**

In this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is like mustard seed. A mustard seed is a very small seed, but in this parable, it grows into an abnormally large tree. Birds find refuge in its branches. The Kingdom of Heaven grows large and even gives shelter to evil influences (the birds).

Again, these parables are teaching us that evil and falsehood will permeate professing Christendom. It is a wise church who stays alert to the influences of Satan and evil in the church.



## **Victory Over Satan \* Ephesians 6:10-18**

Behind all distortions of the Word of God is Satan. In **Ephesians 6:10-18**, we are told how we can get victory over Satan. Twice in these verses we are instructed to put on the full armor of God. If we are going to remain standing in our battle for the Lord, we must put on all the armor.

The first part of the armor we are instructed to put on is the “belt of truth”. Truth is the first part of the armor mentioned. An accurate understanding of Biblical truth is the foundation on which we build our lives. To accurately understand Biblical truth is to accurately understand the battle commands given by our Commander in Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not accurately understand our orders and begin to fight in our own human understanding of truth, we will be defeated. We must accurately understand and follow God’s instructions or we will live in defeat. That is why false doctrine is so serious. If we follow and build our life on false teaching or untruth, we will never have spiritual victory and we will live our lives in defeat.

### **The Word of God, Satan, and False Teaching**

One thing that deceives many people is that individuals who teach false doctrine use and quote Scripture. Sometimes they will make extensive use of Scripture. When people hear this, many will assume that the teaching is right since the Bible is quoted or referred to. Few people will personally study the Word sufficiently to determine if the Scriptures are being taught correctly. Satan himself knows the Word of God, and will deceitfully use it to accomplish his own purpose. We see an example of this when Satan was tempting Christ. Satan used Scripture to tempt Jesus. Satan used Scripture for his own deceitful purpose. False teachers do the same thing. They use Scripture for their own purpose and cause many to believe untruth. A sad thing is that many saved teachers and pastors who do not know the Word well will also teach incorrect teaching, either because they do not study and/or they are not careful to teach the Word accurately.

Christians have the following three lines of defense against being deceived by incorrect teaching of the Bible:

1. Develop systematic Bible reading and study habits so that they will be knowledgeable enough to recognize incorrect and false teaching.
2. Christians need to be careful to be taught by teachers and pastors who are committed to correctly teaching the Word.
3. Walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, and be led by his Spirit. Listen to the Holy Spirit. If we are walking with Him, He will let us know when a teaching is not right.

## **Commitment Based on Truth**

In **Romans 10:1-2**, Paul's prayer for his own Jewish people is that they be saved. In verse two he states that they had a zeal for God but their zeal was not based on knowledge. Notice they were very committed to serving God. They had zeal. However, their zeal for God was not based on truth. As a consequence, they were not even saved. They had a zeal for God, but were not saved. This is another example of the seriousness of wrong doctrine. Their wrong doctrine did not bring them to know God and they were unsaved, going straight to a Godless eternity.

**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.** 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of Truth.** 2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.** 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

**He (an overseer or pastor) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**  
Titus 1:9 (NIV)

**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 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work -- which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.** 1 Timothy 1:3-7 (NIV)

## **Recognizing False Teachers**

The kinds of false teaching are endless. There are world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and many more that are false to the core. There are many cults such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, and many others that claim to believe the Bible, but again they are false to the core. Roman Catholicism is a false system that has enough Biblical truth that it deceives many honest seekers. There are many "Christian" denominations that claim to teach and follow the Bible but they deny that it is absolute truth or that it is the inerrant Word of God. As a result, they can teach a social and political gospel that has little resemblance to the Biblical truth.

Pentecostals or Charismatics teach the Bible, but accurate doctrine and accurate teaching is not important to many of them and, as a result, their teaching is often a mixture of truth and error. This is, in some ways, the most dangerous of all because it can sound so right but, in fact, it distorts the truth and leads many away from the truth.

One example of mixed truth and error is the so called “prosperity doctrine”. In some Christian circles today, there is a prominent teaching that if you give, God will make you rich. They teach that God wants every Christian to be wealthy. Just have faith and God will give you everything you want-- large elaborate homes, expensive luxury cars, the most elaborate showy wardrobes, and so on. This is a greed-driven “Prosperity Gospel” that is taught in a good many sectors of Christianity today. This doctrine most often appears in the modern charismatic movement and is known by several different titles—the Word Faith movement, the Faith Formula, Positive Confession, or Name It and Claim It. They all essentially teach that “faith” can be used to influence God for their own selfish gain whenever they want. The movement claims to be able to teach you what to do in order to get God to deliver all the money and possessions imaginable. Often what you supposedly need to do is give a big offering to the person doing the preaching and then God will supposedly give us everything we could possibly want. In reality, the only one getting rich is the one receiving all the offerings.

Don’t be taken in by this movement. It is a gross distortion of Biblical truth. It is a distortion of many Old Testament promises that teach that we will be blessed and will prosper if we will honor God in the way, we live our lives.

Individuals such as Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuler claim to believe the Bible taught only the “positive” parts of Scripture. They completely deny or ignore things such as sin, hell, and the shed blood of Christ.

Within Baptist circles there is a tendency to be careless with Scripture and teach what we think Scripture says rather than taking time to dig out the truth. Often, we simply teach what we have heard someone else say rather than teaching the Bible itself.

Much of false teaching seems to center around two important topics---Salvation and our Lord Jesus Christ. Only a few teach that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. Many things are added to faith. Works, sacraments, baptism, speaking in tongues, and many other things are added to salvation. It is all an attempt to make man and his own effort responsible for salvation. Many cults deny that Jesus is God. Jehovah’s Witnesses say He was the highest created angel. Mormons say He was a man (the brother of Satan) who became a god.

We can identify false teachers as those who distort the fundamental teachings of Scripture such as:

- A. the inspiration and inerrancy of all of the Word of God
- B. who the Lord Jesus Christ is
- C. the trinity
- D. the way of salvation
- E. the virgin birth, the miracles of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ
- F. the accuracy of the Biblical record of creation exactly as recorded in Genesis.

We can also identify false teachers as those who:

- A. handle Scripture in such a careless manner as to distort its teaching.
- B. make untrue statements (either intentionally or unintentionally) about what the Bible teaches.

It is very true that Christians need to watch out for false teaching and wrong doctrine. However, there are times when other solid Bible believing and teaching groups will have disagreements over some teachings of Scripture. There are some solid Bible teachers who disagree with us over the timing of the rapture. This does not make them false teachers. The “Grace Brethren”, a very solid group known for their good Bible teaching, believe that based on John 13:13-17, we should practice “foot washing” in the churches. While we may not agree, we certainly do not identify this very solid group as false teachers.

## **Biblical Texts and False Teaching**

**For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

2 Timothy 4:3

**Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.** Titus 1:9

**At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.** Matthew 24:10-11

**Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.** Hebrews 13:9

**Some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.**

1 Timothy 4:1

**I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!** Acts 20:29-31a

**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’**

Matthew 7:21-23

**If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.** 1 Timothy 6:3-5

**Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.** 1 John 2:18

**Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John 1:7**

**See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. Colossians 2:8**

Godless chatter --- 2 Timothy 2:16

Godless myths --- 1 Timothy 4:7

**Let no one deceive you with empty words... Ephesians 5:6**

**Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have labored at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror. All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame ... Each of them goes on in his error; there is not one that can save you. Isaiah 47:12-15**

**When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Isaiah 8:19**

**For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 2 Timothy 4:3-4**

**Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, ... Colossians 2:18-19**

**Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. Colossians 2:20-23**

**I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Romans 16:17-18**

**Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says'--when the LORD has not spoken.**  
Ezekiel 22:26-28

### **The Fruit, or Results, of Teaching Biblical Truth (Right Doctrine)**

equips people to do the work of God --- 2 Timothy 3:17

builds a solid church --- Ephesians 4:12-16

builds a solid foundation for life --- Matthew 7:24-27

Sound doctrine encourages. --- Titus 1:9

truth that leads to godliness --- Titus 1:1

**You will save both yourself and your hearers.** 1 Timothy 4:16

**Whoever continues in the right teaching has both the Father and the Son.** 2 John 1:9

**In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.**  
Titus 2:7b-8

**My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.** I Corinthians 2:4-5

**If you point these things out (false teaching), you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus.**  
1 Timothy 4:6

**Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.** 2 Corinthians 4:2

**The Fruit, or Results, of Not Teaching Sound  
Doctrine, or of Not Teaching the Whole Counsel of  
God, or of Teaching False Doctrine, or of Teaching  
Mixed Doctrine (Truth Mixed with Untruth)**

(The opposite of everything that is the fruit of truth or right teaching [doctrine])

In 1 Timothy 1:9-10 there is a list of things given which are “contrary to sound doctrine”. In other words, these are the fruit of wrong teaching. This list includes lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, adulterers and perverts, slave traders and liars and perjurers.

**For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.** 1 Corinthians 1:17

**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.**  
1 Corinthians 2:14

**Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.** Acts 20:30

change the grace of God into a license for immorality --- Jude 1:4

God destroyed those who do not believe. Jude 1:5

people thrown into confusion --- Galatians 1:7

ruins those who listen --- 2 Timothy 2:14

become more and more ungodly --- 2 Timothy 2:16

teaching will spread like gangrene --- 2 Timothy 2:17

destroy the faith of some --- 2 Timothy 2:18

ruining whole households --- Titus 1:11

**Honor God with their talk, but their heart is far from God. Their worship is in vain.**  
Matthew 15:8-9

**Whoever continues in wrong teaching does not have the Father or the Son.** 2 John 1:9

Wrong teaching promotes controversies rather than God’s work. 1 Timothy 1:4

meaningless talk --- 1 Timothy 1:6

abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons --- 1 Timothy 4:1

**Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.** Ephesians 5:6

**Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' | Matthew 7:21-23**

### **Methods Used By False Teachers**

**Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.** Acts 20:30

**For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.** Jude 1:4

shepherds who feed only themselves --- Jude 1:12

**In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.** 2 Peter 2:3

**Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand...** Jude 1:10

**They flatter others for their own advantage.** Jude 1:16

men who divide you... Jude 1:19

quarreling about words --- 2 Timothy 2:14

**worm their way into homes and gain control over weak willed women --- 2 Timothy 3:6**

**wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming**  
Ephesians 4:14

rules taught by men – Matthew 15:9

pervert the Gospel of Christ – Galatians 1:7

They will secretly introduce destructive teaching. – 2 Peter 2:1



blaspheme in matters they do not understand – 2 Peter 2:12

They seduce the unstable. – 2 Peter 2:14

They appeal to the lustful desires of the sinful nature. – 2 Peter 2:18

They entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. (new Christians) – 2 Peter 2:18

They promise freedom. – 2 Peter 2:19

Don't let anyone deceive you. – 2 Thessalonians 2:3

They deliberately forget. – 2 Peter 3:5

**I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine sounding arguments.** Colossians 2:4

**By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.** Romans 16:18

### **Descriptions of Those Who Do Not Teach Sound Doctrine (Truth) or Who Do Not Teach the Whole Truth**

**They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.** 1 Timothy 1:7

savage wolves who will not spare the flock --- Acts 20:29

**Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.** Matthew 7:15

men whose condemnation was written about long ago – Jude 1:4

Godless men – Jude 1:4

dreamers, reject authority – Jude 1:8

Woe to them! unreasoning animals – Jude 1:10, 11

**These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm -- shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted -- twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.**  
Jude 1:12-13

**These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.** Jude 1:16

scoffers, do not have the Spirit – Jude 1:18, 19

having a form of godliness but denying its power – 2 Timothy 3:5

loaded down with sin, swayed by evil desires – 2 Timothy 3:6

always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth – 2 Timothy 3:7

men of depraved minds – 2 Timothy 3:8

deceivers – Titus 1:10

for the sake of dishonest gain – Titus 1:11

Their minds and consciences are corrupted. – Titus 1:15

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. – Titus 1:16

detestable, disobedient, unfit – Titus 1:16

Let them be eternally condemned. – Galatians 1:8-9

denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – 2 Peter 2:1

bold and arrogant – 2 Peter 2:10

Eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning. – 2 Peter 2:14

They have left the straight way. – 2 Peter 2:15

They are springs without water. – 2 Peter 2:17

mists driven by a storm – 2 Peter 2:17

empty boastful words – 2 Peter 2:18

heart is not right before God – Acts 8:21

hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron – 1 Timothy 4:2

scoffers...following their own evil desires – 2 Peter 3:3

He is conceited and understands nothing. – 1 Timothy 6:4

unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels – 1 Timothy 6:4

Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, – Philippians 3:2

his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head,  
– Colossians 2:18-19

## **Church Discipline**

God gives us instructions as to how to deal with an individual who is in the church but whose life becomes a reproach to the Lord or who begins to teach wrong doctrine. Any member whose doctrine is inconsistent with sound Biblical teaching or whose conduct or attitude is a reproach to Christ should be disciplined according to Biblical principles and suspended from membership by the church. Church discipline is God's way of reclaiming an erring believer and maintaining the purity of the church. This discipline must be done in a spirit of humility (Matthew 18:1-6), honesty (Matthew 18:15-17), forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-34), and by the authority of the Word of God (Matthew 18:18-20) if it is to be successful and a benefit to the body of Christ.

**Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.** Galatians 6:1-2

**And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone.** 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

**We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak...** Romans 15:1

**What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."**  
1 Corinthians 5:12-13

God gives us instructions as to how to deal with an individual who is in the church but whose life becomes a reproach to the Lord or who begins to teach wrong doctrine. Any member whose doctrine is inconsistent with sound Biblical teaching or whose conduct or attitude is a reproach to Christ should be disciplined according to Biblical principles and suspended from membership by the church. Again, church discipline is God's way of reclaiming an erring believer and maintaining the purity of the church.

Most churches ignore this whole area of church discipline. Most do not feel it accomplishes anything and will, in fact, hurt the church. It is interesting to note that Christ's first instruction to the church dealt with how the church was to deal with an erring person. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus mentioned the

church for the first time. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus gave his first instructions to the church and those instructions relate to church discipline.

An example of how important the purity of the church is to God is given in Acts 5. God literally killed both Ananias and his wife Sapphira for being deceitful and not telling the truth. Most of us today would not consider that to be a major offence and, in fact, most Christians will lie in certain circumstances. However, it was very serious to God and He demonstrated how serious it was by taking their lives.

### **Some Biblical examples of cases requiring church discipline are:**

*1. Private offenses whereby an innocent brother or sister is injured. In such a case, the offended party must first seek personal reconciliation.*

**"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that `every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17**

*2. Refusal to support oneself and one's family.*

The following Scripture is taken from 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14.

**In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.... ...For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."... ...We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat... ...If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14**

**If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8**

*3. Serious doctrinal error.*

There are literally hundreds of passages warning of false teaching and false teachers. This cannot be tolerated in the church. The very life of the church depends on keeping itself pure from false teaching.

**I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people. Romans 16:17-18**

*4. Being divisive or for repeated trouble making.*

**Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. Titus 3:10-11**

**I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. Romans 16:17**

*5. Overt sin.*

**It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 1 Corinthians 5:1-2**

All of 1 Corinthians 5 relates to this whole matter of church purity.

**What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." 1 Corinthians 5:12-13**

**But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 2 Timothy 3:1-5**

*When church discipline is exercised, the following procedure is a Biblical pattern to follow:*

1. Two or more spiritually mature men will be assigned the responsibility of confronting the individual concerning his sin. If the sin involves a matter between individuals in the church, those individuals should attempt reconciliation before bringing it to the church.
2. If the individual does not respond to this reproof, the church leadership shall warn him that the congregation must be told of the matter. If the individual still does not repent, the congregation shall then be informed of the identity of the erring member and the nature of the sin.

3. If such public rebuke does not produce repentance and resolution within a reasonable time, the church shall remove the erring member from membership. If need be, they should withhold fellowship from the sinning person so that his corrupting influence on the body of Christ will be ended. Requirements for restoration should be established at that time.

**All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

2 Timothy 3:16-4:4

## **The Word of God and Pastors and Teachers**

It is important to note that in the verses following II Timothy 3:14-17, the Spirit of God leads right into a description of the pastor's role as a preacher/teacher. This passage not only applies to the pastor, but also to anyone responsible for teaching the Word of God. Fathers, mothers, Sunday School teachers, youth workers, and others should respond to this passage. Let's look at some key parts of 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

**Preach the Word** - Pastors and teachers must preach/teach the Word of God. As we have seen, there is power in the Word. God never says He will bless messages on politics, psychology, sociology, etc., etc., etc. Messages and lessons should be solidly based in the Word rather than on random thoughts and opinions. This takes a significant amount of preparation. We simply cannot continually rely on our experience and knowledge to replace preparation.

**Correct-Rebuke** - These are exactly the same words as in chapter three. There are times the pastor needs to rebuke sin in the church, and then help to set the individual(s) back on the right path.

**Encourage** (exhort) - Church members need a lot of encouragement as they live and grow. It is the pastor's job to regularly encourage and nudge them on to regular growth.

**With great patience and careful instruction** - It is the pastor's role to give careful instruction (teach/train) in the Word and how to live right. And he must do it with great patience. In "normal" circumstances, most of the pastor's time needs to be spent giving sound Biblical teaching and training.

**The results of good Biblical preaching/teaching is found in Ephesians 4:11-16.**

**It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

**Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

The role of evangelists, pastors, and teachers is **to prepare God's people to serve the Lord**. This phrase is the foundation for the rest of this passage. From 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we learned that God's people are prepared to serve by teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in right living.

Very carefully read through this passage in Ephesians 4:11-16. Look at the results of preparing God's people to serve. The results are a mature, growing, unified church under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, with everyone doing his part.