



Bibliology: The Doctrine of Scripture

DR. GARY S. LINTON

Contents

Introduction	3
Introduction to Apologetics	4
The Canonicity of the Bible	9
Theories of Inspiration of Scripture	17
Evidentiary Support for the Authenticity of Scripture	21
Biblical Hermeneutics: Guidelines to Proper Interpretation of Scripture	30
Differences Between the Old and New Covenants	36
Responsibilities Under the New Covenant	40
8 Prerequisites to Benefiting From the Word	48
14 Benefits of the Word of God	51
Bibliography	54

Introduction

Bibliology is the study of the doctrine of scripture. In this study we will be dealing with the basics of apologetics, how we arrived at what is now in our present day Bible – the canonicity of scriptures, various theories of inspiration, evidentiary support for the authenticity of scripture, Biblical hermeneutics – how to properly interpret scripture, differences between the old and new Covenants, our responsibilities under the new covenant, requirements to benefiting from God's Word and benefits of the Word of God.

The Bible is the most authentic historical document in existence. It has survived countless attacks throughout history attempting to destroy it and yet it remains. It is to be trusted as not a mere historical document alone, but it is much more. It is in fact, God's Word to mankind. Every “whosoever” in the pages of holy writ can be substituted with your name, in that, it is written to and for each of us. When reading the Bible, it should be read as if it was a letter written specifically for and to us as individuals. Along with being written to individuals, it also speaks of and to the church and the world as a whole.

The reading and study of God's Word must be the priority of all believers. When I was first saved, I began to devour His Word. My first few years as a Christian, I read through the Bible three to four times each year. I also began to memorize the Word. From those beginning days, I memorized upwards of 600 to 700 miscellaneous Bible verses, along with memorizing multiple books of the Bible. I did not put the Word to memory to say, “look what I have done,” but in an attempt to fill myself with all that He is. I pray this study of Bibliology will place a hunger within your heart for God's Word as it did mine and many others throughout history.

“Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts.” ~ Jeremiah 15:16

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” ~ Psalm 119:103

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” ~ 1 Peter 2:2-3

Introduction to Apologetics

The Church has always maintained that in scripture we have the embodiment of divine revelation – God’s Word to man. It is God communicating to man concerning Himself, man’s lost condition, God’s love, how man might be saved (redemption), warning of impending judgment for those rejecting His love, and the warfare with Satan in the battle for the souls of men.

The scriptures are God breathed. Peter wrote, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Paul said, “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).

Some have tried to pervert and twist this inferring it is “all Scripture given (that is given) by inspiration of God,” suggesting that some scripture is given by inspiration of God and some may not be. By this, inferring the Bible merely contains the Word of God. If that were so, what part contains the Word of God and what part doesn’t? Who decides which parts are divine revelation and which are not? No, the Word is emphatic, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). All scripture is God breathed.

It’s amazing how many mainline denominations over the years have fallen into error here. Even today many of our young, nondenominational churches have denied the inerrancy of scripture. Denying the inerrancy of scripture is the first step in theological liberalism. Once we begin doubting the infallibility of the Bible, it is a slippery slope. From here we begin to falter in other areas of essential Christian doctrine. This is indicative of the time in which we live.

Harold Lindsell, in his book “Battle for the Battle,” points out how many theologians and scholars began to doubt the inerrancy of scripture when working on their post doctorate degrees. “Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). William Tyndale said the day would come when “A ploughboy with a Bible would know more of God than the most learned ecclesiastic without it.” (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, page 3)

We as Evangelicals must hold firm our belief in the inerrancy of God's Word and be able to defend it. We must "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer (make a defense) to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

We as Christians and pastors particularly, must be ready and equipped to stand firm on and defend not only the inerrancy of scripture, but all doctrines essential to the Christian faith – the reason for writing this introduction to apologetics.

Apologia

Our English use of the word conveys the idea of excuse, apology or amends for some injury done. However, Apologia (apology) is a verbal defense, a speech made in defense and is sometimes translated answer in scripture. Any honest inquiry has a right to be answered.

I'm not referring to those wanting to argue or flex their intellectual muscles, not honestly seeking answers. Christianity has real answers for those honestly desiring truth. Clark Pinnock, an able apologist wrote, "An intelligent Christian ought to be able to point out the flaws in a non-Christian position and present the facts and arguments which tell in favor of the gospel." (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, page 3)

A common accusation aimed at the Christian is that all we have is a blind leap of faith. Many seem to think one has to commit intellectual suicide to become a believer in Christ and the scriptures. What they are really describing is existentialism, which is a blind leap of faith, a leap into the dark in hope of the ultimate experience. Each person's experience is unique to him alone.

Christianity, on the other hand, is a leap into the light (2 Timothy 1:12 and John 8:31-32). Clark Pinnock said, Christian apologetics "Strives at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel in an intelligent fashion, so that they can make a meaningful commitment under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false." (Evidence that Demands a Verdict, page 2)

Apologia is Used Eight Times in Scripture

- Acts 22:1 “My defense”
- Acts 25:16 “Make his defense”
- I Corinthians 9:3 “My (answer) defense”
- 2 Corinthians 7:11 – “Vindication”
- Philippians 1:7 “Defense and confirmation of the gospel”
- Philippians 1:17 “Defense of the gospel”
- 2 Timothy 4:16 “My first (answer) defense”
- I Peter 3:15 “Ready to make a (give an answer) defense”

Rejection of Christ and the Authenticity of Scripture is Usually for the Following Reasons

1. **Ignorance.** Jesus said, “You are mistaken (do error), not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). “My people (perish) are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). This is often self imposed and willful ignorance, refusing to look at the facts. Read also Romans 1:18-23.
2. **Pride.** “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God” (John 5:44). This is often spiritual or religious pride, “That is what I believe and I don’t care what you say.”
3. **Moral problems - sin.** “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light

for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (John 3:19-20). If they accept the authority of scripture and Christ they might have to change, God will begin dealing with things in their life, like Jesus did with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-27).

4. **Self will.** “You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life” (John 5:40). Jesus demands to be Lord and we want to do our own thing and run our own life.

A Strong Defense of the Faith is Expressed in the Following Ways

1. **Verbally.** We must lay out a defense of the faith in a systematic way and present people with a challenge to commit their life to Jesus. “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

A verbal defense of the faith also has to do with our defending the faith against false teaching. Jude said, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

It’s incumbent upon us as followers of Jesus and especially ministers of the gospel to defend our faith (essentials of gospel and Christian faith) against those who would seek to pervert it (2 Corinthians 11:3-4 and Galatians 1:8-9).

2. **Through love.** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). There is no better defense of the faith then seeing God’s people loving one another.
3. **Through unity.** Jesus prayed, “That they may all be one... that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Dr. Francis Schaeffer called love and

unity among God's people the great apologetic. Jesus prayed that we all might be one (unified) in order that the world would believe Jesus was sent to be the Savior of the world.

When the world sees Christians from diverse backgrounds, varied economic and social statuses experiencing unity and love for one another it's a testimony to the proof of the gospel. Read also 1 Corinthians 1:10, Romans 16:17 and Ephesians 4:11-16.

4. **With our lives.** Paul said, "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2). We are to present a defense of the gospel, not only verbally, but also with our lives. St. Francis of Assisi put it this way, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words." Men will read our lives for the better or worse.

Jesus faithfully represented the Father – "Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness" (Revelation 1:5). Will we faithfully represent Him? He gave us the empowerment of the His Spirit for this very purpose. "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Let's make a defense of the faith by means of our lives and words.

Let's study to show ourselves approved unto God and be ready always to give a defense of what we hold dear and fight for the faith that has been delivered to us through holy writ – 2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 3:15 and Jude 3.

Canonicity of the Bible

The canon is a list of books included in the Bible officially accepted as inspired of God. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. Sixty-six books in total make up our present Bible. In this study we will examine how the Old and New Testament canon was established, and what criteria was used to insure the authenticity of the Bible. The word canon comes from the Hebrew “ganeh” and the Greek “kanon” and means a rod or reed, which was used as a measuring rod, rule or standard of measurement.

The church didn't create the canon or books accepted as scripture, but recognized they were inspired from their inception. So the canon are those books which have been measured, found satisfactory, and approved as inspired by God. Origen (184/185 – 253/254), an early Christian Alexandrian scholar and theologian, used the word to denote what we call the rule of faith – the standard by which we are to measure and evaluate.

The Establishment of the Old Testament Canon

The Old Testament canon was clearly established in the minds of the Jews before 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Titus. At that time the sacrificial system was halted, the Jews were scattered and there was a need for something definite. In 90 A.D. the Counsel of Jamnia solidified the canonicity of Old Testament scripture. During this time the canonicity of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon was established.

It was the view of two Jewish scholars, David Kimchi (1160-1232) and Elias Levita (1465-1549), that the Old Testament canon was completed by Ezra and the members of the Great Synagogue. Raven suggests three reasons that make this view probable (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 103):

1. **The testimony of Josephus** (Jewish historian, 33-100 A. D.). Josephus said that the Old Testament canon was completed during the reign on Artaxerxes Longimanus in the lifetime of Ezra.
2. **Ezra was particularly concerned with the sacred books.** He is called “the scribe” (Nehemiah 8:1, 4, 9, 13; 12:26, 36), “a ready scribe” (Ezra 7:6), and “a

scribe of the words and of the commandment of Jehovah, and of his statutes to Israel” (Ezra 7:11). It therefore stands to reason that he would have been greatly concerned with the completion of the Old Testament Canon.

3. **The character of Ezra’s time was set for it.** After the exile the people were founding anew the religious institutions of the nation. What would be more natural than to gather the volumes of the sacred library together?

Jesus’ Testimony of the Old Testament Canon

Jesus bore witness to the three divisions of the Old Testament. The Hebrew bible was divided into three sections: The law, the prophets and the writings. Jesus bore witness to these three divisions of the Old Testament. “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Jesus mentions Psalms because it was the first and largest book of the writings.

Jesus never disputed the canonicity of the Old Testament. Jesus often disagreed with the Jewish leader’s tradition, yet He never disputed the canonicity of the Old Testament. He said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? You invalidated the Word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:3-9). He told them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Again He said, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Jesus constantly verified the canonicity of Old Testament scripture.

Jesus testified to the extent of the Old Testament canon. When arguing with the religious leaders Jesus said, “Upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:35). Abel was the first to be murdered and Zechariah was the last to be martyred in the Old Testament order. Abel was slain by his brother Cain and Zechariah was stoned in the house of God while prophesying. Genesis was the first in chronological order and Chronicles the last.

Jesus testified to the sacredness of Old Testament. He said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18). Speaking to the disciples after His resurrection He began “With Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27, 44-45).

Old Testament Scriptures Jesus Endorsed as True

- Creation (Matthew 19:4-5, Mark 13:19).
- The personality and character of Satan (John 8:44).
- The universal flood (Luke 17:26-27).
- Destruction of Sodom and Gamorrah (Luke 17:28-30).
- Moses and the burning bush (Mark 12:26).
- Manna in the wilderness (John 6:32).
- Jonah swallowed by a big fish (Matthew 12:39-40).
- The existence of the tabernacle (Luke 6:3-4).
- The unity of Isaiah (Matthew 8:17, Luke 4:17-18).

Jesus endorsed these Old Testament passages as true, verifying the canonicity of the Old Testament. We must therefore accept our present collection of Old Testament books as complete and canonical as we have them.

Testimony of the New Testament Concerning the Old Testament

- **The Gospels.** Jesus said, “Have you never read in the scriptures; You are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures; How then could the scriptures be fulfilled; But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled; You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me; The scripture cannot be broken” (Mathew 21:42, 22:29, 26:54, 56, John 5:39, 10:35).
- **The Apostle Paul.** “Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures” (Acts 17:2); Paul in his letters: “Which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures; what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness; For the scripture says to the Pharaoh; For the scripture says, Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame; Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah; Whatever things were written before were written for our learning; Now made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures made known to all nations; I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and the scripture has confined all under sin; What does the scripture say?; For the scripture says; and all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:8, 22; 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16). By these we see the Apostle Paul testified to the sacredness of Old Testament scripture.
- **The Apostle Peter.** Peter said, “No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, 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 1:20-21). Peter said of Paul, “In all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). Peter and the New Testament in its entirety gives witness to the sacredness of Old Testament scripture.

Why Apocryphal Literature is not Canonical

Apocryphal means hidden or concealed. Jerome, in the fourth century, was the first to call a group of literature apocryphal. Below is a list of a number of reasons why the apocryphal books, used by the Roman Catholic Church, were not canonical. The first four are reasons [Unger's Bible Dictionary](#) gives for their exclusion from the canon. The rest are historic testimonies.

- They abound in historic and geographical inaccuracies.
- They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with inspired scripture.
- They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired scripture.
- They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.
- Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20 B.C.-40 A.D.), quoted the Old Testament and recognized the three divisions of the Old Testament but never quoted the apocryphal books as inspired.
- Josephus, Jewish historian (30-100 A.D.), referenced a number of Old Testament books but never quoted any apocryphal books as inspired.
- Jesus and the New Testament writers never quoted from any apocryphal books, though there are hundreds of quotes from most canonical books.
- The Jewish scholars at Jamnia, 90 A.D. never recognized them.
- No canon or counsel for the first four centuries recognized them.

- Jerome, who did most of the work on the Latin Vulgate (fourth century Latin translation of the Bible), refuted them and often debated with Augustine over this.
- Most church fathers rejected them and frequently spoke against them.
- Many Roman Catholic scholars through the reformation period rejected them.
- Martin Luther and the reformers rejected them.
- They are not consistent with the rest of scripture.

A Few Broad Principles Aimed at Determining Canonicity of the New Testament

- **Apostolicity.** Was the writer one of the apostles? If he was not an apostle, did he have a close relationship with one of the apostles, in order to raise it to the level of an apostolic book? For example, Mark had been Paul's disciple and Luke was not an apostle but he accompanied Paul throughout the book of Acts.
- **Content.** Did it maintain a strong spiritual character? This is where most apocryphal books were rejected.
- **Universality.** Was it universally accepted by the church? For example, did the church fathers accept it?
- **Inspiration.** Did the book give evidence of being inspired? By the fourth century all 27 books of the New Testament were accepted as canonical. After Council of Rome (382 A.D.) and the Third Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) the question of what books were in the canon was closed. By the year 500 A.D. all the Greek speaking church had accepted all books presently in the New Testament.

Five Facts Concerning the Credibility of the New

Testament Books

- **The writers were competent.** They were qualified to witness and teach divine truth. Most of them were eye witnesses and those who were not eye witnesses were intimately involved with one of them who were.
- **The writers were honest.** This can be observed by the moral overtone of what they wrote, their high regard for truth, and that they were in danger in every area of life for what they wrote. Many of them were martyred for what they preached and wrote. It stands to reason, if they had not been honest in their testimony and writings that they would have retracted their testimonies before giving up their lives. William Paley (1743 – 1805), an English Christian apologist, philosopher and utilitarian, said, “There is no evidence any false witness has ever so acted.”
- **Their writings agree with each other.** The gospels can be put together and Acts is the historic background for most of Paul’s writing. Some have tried to infer that James and Paul stood in contradiction in their writings, but they merely stood back to back fighting opposite foes.
- **Their accounts agree with history and experience.** There were many accounts to contemporary history in the New Testament. As an example, Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2). There is no evidence that the Bible contradicts one fact of history.
- **Miracles also attest to the credibility of New Testament writers.** The scriptures were birthed in the miraculous. Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3).

The Apostles were promised that “These signs will follow those who believe” and “they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word signs following” (Mark 16:17, Mark 16:20).

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 2:4). Paul ministered with “Mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God” (Romans 15:19).

Theories of Inspiration of Scripture

The Bible is the most unique literary work in all of history, containing the very revelation of God. Questions have been raised as to how the Bible was inspired and to what degree inspiration permeates its pages. Studying the theories of inspiration is part of bibliology, which is a must for any serious student of the Bible, especially those entering the ministry. Let's look at a few definitions of inspiration before considering the various theories of inspiration.

Definitions of Inspiration

1. "God's superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man" – Dr. Charles Ryrie.
2. "The inexplicable power which the divine Spirit exercised over the authors of scriptures, to guide them even in the employment of the words they were to use, and to preserve them from error as well as from every omission" – Dr. Gaussen, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*.
3. "The supernatural influence of the Spirit of God on the human mind, by which prophets and apostles and sacred writers were qualified to set forth divine truth without any mixture of error" – Webster, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*.

Differentiating Between Inspiration and Illumination

Many confuse inspiration with illumination, but they are very different things. Inspiration is the impartation and recording of divine truth by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21). Illumination is the Holy Spirit enabling Christians to grasp and understand divine truths (John 16:13-14, 1 Corinthians 2:14).

Prophets were often given divine truth or inspiration, but denied illumination or understanding of the truth given. Caiaphas was a vehicle of an inspired message, but he had no understanding of its meaning (John 11:50, John 18:14). So, illumination is the Spirit of God giving man understanding of divine truths already given, namely the Word of God.

Theories of Inspiration

1. **Intuition or illumination theory.** It's not the writings that are inspired, but the writers themselves. Inspiration is merely superior insight on behalf of natural man into moral and religious truth. God inspired individuals who wrote scripture. If this were true, this type of inspiration could be claimed by Plato, Socrates and many others. Even today anybody who is similarly inspired could potentially write scripture.
2. **Dynamic or partial inspiration.** This view believes God provided the enabling needed for the transmission of truth which the writers of scripture were commissioned to deliver. This made them infallible in matters of faith and practice but not in areas of nonreligious character. Parts of the Bible are inspired, primarily those related to faith and practice.

In this view, the Bible merely contains the Word of God, only certain portions of Scripture are inspired, such as prophetic passages, or that certain portions of the Bible are more, or less, inspired than others. This doesn't explain how the writers of scripture were inspired with perfect supernatural knowledge in one sentence and not in another.

This view of inspiration depends on the discernment of fallible man to decide what is and what is not inspired by God.

3. **Neo-orthodox inspiration.** This view is similar to dynamic or partial inspiration. It maintains while there are supernatural elements present, the Bible contain errors and cannot be taken literally. Neo-orthodoxy maintains God speaks through scripture as a means of communicating truth to the individual. However, this truth is realized only to the degree the individual recognizes or comprehends it.

Therefore, the Bible is not divinely inspired, but rather a channel through which divine inspiration flows. It elevates the subjective experience of the individual over scripture. As with dynamic or partial inspiration, this view makes truth dependent solely on the discretion of the individual. There are no absolutes with this view.

4. **Natural inspiration.** There is nothing supernatural about the Bible. The writers were just men who wrote books or letters the same way anybody would. Over time, the Bible came to hold special significance for Christians. This view holds the Bible is of an entirely human origin and no different than any other piece of literature. The Bible was written by men who were subject to error in what they wrote. Therefore, it is no different than any other work. This view should be rejected as erroneous.
5. **Conceptual inspiration.** The thoughts of scripture are inspired but the actual words used are not. Only the concepts or thoughts in the Bible were inspired. God gave ideas to the writers of scripture who did their best to convey those ideas in writing. This view weakens the concept of biblical inspiration, maintaining that God only inspired the concepts, and not the individual words written. This view completely contradicts the Bible's concept of divine inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:19-21, and Isaiah 59:21.
6. **Dictation theory.** The writers recorded God's words without any participation of their own styles or personalities. They mechanically recorded the words of scripture, much as a secretary might write down the words they were told to write. This view asserts that God dictated the Bible in its entirety. Some even argue that the grammar must be perfect in every place because it's the Holy Spirit's grammar.

This view excludes individual personalities in the writing of scripture. A dictated Bible would present a consistent level of style and vocabulary, rather than the diversity of human characteristics that are displayed in scripture. This ignores the fact there are apparent differences in the styles of the different writers. Some have tried to explain this saying the Holy Spirit adopted the style of the writer in each case.

7. **Verbal, plenary inspiration.** This view of Biblical inspiration holds that the Holy Spirit provided both verbal and plenary inspiration to the original writers. Both the words and ideas of scripture are inspired by God. Plenary means all the words used by the writers in their original manuscripts were equally inspired. Verbal means God directed the choice of the individual words used by the writers in their original manuscripts.

God so partnered with them to record His Word in the Bible in its entirety. This view accepts that the writer's personalities were used of God based upon their

unique backgrounds, including their styles and vocabularies. The Holy Spirit directed the writers of scripture in such a way that the original manuscripts were both verbally and fully inspired, infallible and without error.

This is in harmony with the declaration of 2 Timothy 3:16 which says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Evidentiary Support for the Authenticity of Scripture

How do we know the Bible is authentic? 2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us faith is involved, but is it blind faith? No, we don't have to take a blind leap of faith to believe the Bible is the Word of God. In fact, the Bible is the most authentic historical document in existence. There are more evidences confirming the authenticity of scripture than there is to prove Caesar was emperor in Rome, or that Washington crossed the Delaware. Below are a few important external and internal evidences attesting to the authenticity of scripture.

External Evidences:

A Divine Revelation is Expected

Reason tells us God would naturally provide such a revelation for His creatures. Man has sinned, is separated from God, and knows no way of returning to Him apart from God giving us a written revelation of Himself. The revelation of God in nature isn't enough. It reveals He exists (Romans 1:20), but it doesn't show how we might be reconciled to Him. Without such a written revelation, man is in a helpless and hopeless state (Ephesians 2:11-12). Reason says that if God is a good and loving God, He'd naturally provide such a revelation.

Strong finds this argument in the arrangement for the healing of bruises in plants, for the mending of broken bones in the animal creation and in the provision of remedial agents for the cure of human diseases (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 83). If God provides things like these, which we need, it stands to reason He would provide the most important need – the communication of God to man through written revelation. Though this may not be completely valid in proving the revelation of God, it contributes to that view.

The Miracle of the Bible's Existence

Arthur W. Pink put it this way, "When we bear in mind that the Bible has been the special object of never ending attack and persecution the wonder of the Bible's survival is changed into a miracle" (Arthur W. Pink, The Divine Revelation of the Bible:

Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 83). For over 2,000 years, mankind's hatred of the Bible has been persistent, determined and relentless. Every possible effort has been made throughout history to destroy and undermine faith in its inspiration and authority. Innumerable enterprises have been undertaken to consign it to oblivion. Below are a few examples:

- After discovering Christians grounded their faith in scripture, Roman Emperors attempted to destroy the Bible. Diocletian demanded by royal edict, in 303 A.D., that every copy of the Bible be destroyed with fire. He destroyed so many Bibles and killed so many Christians that when they were silent for a time he was convinced he had put an end to both Christianity and the Bible. So much so that he caused a medal to be struck with the inscription, "The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored." It was only a few years later when Constantine rose to the throne that he declared Christianity a state religion (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 84).
- Voltaire, the noted French infidel, who died in 1778, predicted that within 100 years after his death Christianity and the Bible would be extinct. God must have a great sense of humor. Only twenty five years after his death, the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded, and the very presses Voltaire used to print his atheistic literature were used to print the Bible (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology; page 85).

"The very fact that the Bible has been so singled out for such relentless persecution causes us to wonder at such a phenomenon" (Arthur W. Pink, The Divine Revelation of the Bible, Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 83). Why would the Bible be so singled out above and beyond any other book in history? Is it not because the enemy of our soul knows its power and that it is in fact, an embodiment of divine revelation. There is no other explanation for it being the object of such attacks. It alone has been sought after to be destroyed. The fact that it still exists and copies of it abound reveals the miraculous nature of its existence.

The Influence of the Bible

The Bible has influenced more people than any other book in existence. Its message has changed countless lives. It has changed drunkards and drug addicts into sober responsible citizens, criminals into law abiding citizens (2 Corinthians 5:17), comforts

the sad and hurting (Romans 15:4), satisfies the spiritually hungry and thirsty (Matthew 5:6, John 7:37-39), and its promises give hope, courage and strength to those in despair (Romans 15:13, Matthew 5:4). None other has influenced so many great men and women. The testimonies abound of how the Bible and its message has influenced and changed lives. Below are a few:

- William E. Gladstone said, "If I am asked to name the one comfort in sorrow, the sole rule of conduct, the true guide of life, I must point to what in the words of a popular hymn is called "the old, old story" told in an old, old book, which is God's best and richest gift to mankind."
- Robert E. Lee, the great southern general said, "The Bible is a book in comparison with which all others, in my eyes, are of minor importance, and which in all my perplexities and distresses has never failed to give me light and strength."
- Woodrow Wilson said, "The opinion of the Bible bred in me, not only by the teaching of my home when I was a boy, but also by every turn and experience of my life and every step of study is that it is the one supreme source of revelation, the revelation of the meaning of life, the nature of God, and the spiritual nature and needs of man. It is the only guide of life which really leads the spirit in the way of peace and salvation" (Thiessen, Lectures in Systematic Theology, page 87).

When I was young, I was visiting a church and an evangelist handed out the following poem. It really depicts the influence the Bible has, and how it has touched people's lives.

*Though the cover is worn,
And the pages are torn,
And though places bear traces of tears,
Yet more precious than gold,
Is the Book, worn and old,
That can shatter and scatter my fears.*

*When I prayerfully look,
In this precious old Book,*

*Many pleasures and treasures I see,
Many tokens of love,
From the Father above,
Who is nearest and dearest to me.*

*This old Book is my guide,
Tis a friend on my side,
It lightens and brighten my way,
And each promise I find
soothes and gladdens my mind
As I read it and heed it today.*

*To this book I will cling,
Of its worth will I sing,
Though great losses and crosses be mine;
For I cannot despair,
Though surrounded by care,
While possessing this blessing Divine – Anonymous*

Archaeology

Dr. W. F. Albright, John Hopkins University, said, “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.” Nelson Glueck, renowned Jewish Archaeologist, said, “No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference” (Paul E. Little, Know What You Believe, page 25). We do not prove the Bible by archaeology. The Holy Spirit confirms within our hearts that the Bible is the Word of God. However, it is encouraging to know and helps to solidify and strengthen our faith that archaeology gives validity to the authenticity of scripture. Where there has been doubt, archaeology has more often than not confirmed biblical records.

There are ample Biblical references that were once doubted which archaeology has confirmed as true. The Hittites were once doubted to exist as a people until archaeology proved it so. The battle of the kings in Genesis 14 is no longer guarded with suspicion since inscriptions in the valley of the Euphrates shows four kings were real persons. None of the rulers of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, or Medo-Persia are represented in a manner contrary to history. In apparent conflict, rather than conclude

the Bible in error, we must leave it open pending further discoveries since new information has always confirmed scripture rather than disproved it.

Miracles

The scriptures were sealed and birthed in the miraculous. John ended his account of the life of Christ saying, “Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

Nicodemus said to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”(John 3:1-2). It was said of the Apostles, “They went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed” (Mark 16:20).

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments God confirmed His Word through signs and wonders. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). What we need is a resurgence of the supernatural confirming “Thus says the Lord.”

The writer of Hebrews said, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will (Hebrews 2:3-4)?

The Bible’s Power to Change Lives

The Bible testifies to the power of God to change lives (2 Corinthians 5:17). History also testifies to this, as well as present times. Charles Bradlaugh, at one time one of England’s most outstanding Atheist, challenged a minister to a debate. “The minister said a debate wouldn’t change anyone’s opinion, so I propose that I bring concrete evidence of Christianity, in the form of those whose lives have been redeemed from

sin and shame by its influence, and you by Atheism. I will bring one hundred. If you can, bring one hundred also. If you can not bring one hundred then fifty. If you can not bring fifty then bring twenty. If you can not bring twenty, Mr. Bradlaugh, then I will be satisfied if you can bring just one person whose life has been redeemed from sin and shame by the influence of Atheism.” Mr. Bradlaugh withdrew his challenge.

Internal Evidences:

The Unity of Scripture

The unity of scripture is a miracle in itself. The Bible was written over a 1,400-1,600 year time span, it had forty or more different writers (one author – God), and they all varied greatly in their backgrounds. The writers were made up of poets, kings, farmers, fishermen, doctors, philosophers, and statesmen. They not only lived in different times periods but they also lived on three different continents. Yet with all this diversity, they wrote with continuity. They wrote with doctrinal unity, one moral system, one plan of salvation and one major theme – the redemption of mankind. From the fall of man and the loss of paradise in Genesis to paradise being regained in Revelation, the theme is consistent, the redemption of man.

Imagine taking two people today and asking them to write a book. Instead of the diversity we find in scripture, let's make it easy on them. Let's pick these two people from the same age bracket, similar backgrounds, race, social status, similar political views and intellectually compatible. Ask them to write on the same topic. You can just imagine that when they finished there would, without a doubt, be varied points of disagreements. On the other hand, in the Bible there is so much diversity and yet it is written with unity and continuity throughout. As such, it could be nothing other than divinely inspired.

Prophecy

This is such an exhaustive topic, we will simply attempt to summarize. There is so much of prophecy in scripture that we see has been fulfilled that it boggles the mind. Most prophecy is so improbable in the natural that only God's hand in it could bring them to pass. For instance, Israel's dispersion. They were given the promise land and because of their disobedience they were scattered to the nations. There was no

national land for the Jews until 1948 when they were miraculously given their land back and began returning to Israel (this also reveals our nearing the end, see Matthew 24:32-33). If we think about it, how could this have taken place outside of divine intervention.

Consider the prophecies concerning Jesus. There were over 300 prophecies concerning Jesus' first coming. There were twenty nine prophecies fulfilled about Him in one twenty-four hour period surrounding His death. These prophecies were spoken by different people in five different centuries (1,000 to 500 B.C.). They dealt with the place, time, and manner of His birth and death, people's reaction (mocking and spitting), piercing of His side, and death. Coincidental? Not likely. Fulfillment of these would have to be deliberate and beyond human control. There may have been some in history who might have fulfilled one or maybe two but not all of them.

In His book, [Science Speaks](#), Peter Stoner applied the science of probability to eight prophecies concerning Jesus and the probability of all 8 prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of one person. That probability is one in ten to the seventeenth power or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. To try to comprehend a number like that, Stoner used the following illustration:

Cover the entire state of Texas two feet deep in silver dollars. Mark one silver dollar and drop it from an airplane flying somewhere over Texas. Stir the silver dollars thoroughly over the entire state. Then blindfold someone and let them travel anywhere in the state they wanted, stopping only once, at a spot of their choice to dig into the silver dollars and pick out the marked one. The chance of a person being able to pick the marked dollar in one try is the same chance as one man fulfilling only eight Messianic prophecies. Stoner concluded, "The fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in ten to the seventeenth power of being absolute." Another good resource is [Evidence that Demands a Verdict](#) by Josh McDowell.

The Bible was Written by Eyewitnesses

The scriptures were written by eyewitnesses. Luke tells us, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:1-2). "To these He also presented Himself alive after His

suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). John wrote, “What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you” (1 John 1:3). Peter said, “We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (1 Peter 1:16).

Our entire judicial system is predicated on the premise of eyewitnesses. This gives great credibility to the authenticity of scripture. To think the apostles lied and just made everything up is a stretch beyond belief. Imagine if they had been lying and made a pact with each other saying they would all testify they had seen Jesus alive after His death. They swore to one another that none would back down from their story. Under normal circumstances we possibly could believe this as plausible. However, each apostle died for their witness to the resurrection of Christ, with the exception of John.

History tells us he was boiled in oil alive, then banished to the isle of Patmos for his testimony. One or two of them might hold out to the death but seeing their fellow apostles tortured and killed would have surely caused the others to say, “Forget this.” One of them would have given in if it had been something they made up, but no, they all stuck with their story. Why? Because they had witnessed Jesus alive post resurrection and knew it to be true. It was a message worth dying for. As a result, we can trust what they said to be true.

The Character of the Bible

When we write a resume we attempt to highlight and embellish our strengths, emphasize the positive and down play our weaknesses. The Bible does the opposite. It told things the way they actually were, never shading the truth to cover up for the sins and imperfections of it’s most prominent characters. It tells of all the violent acts, David’s sin with Bathsheba, Moses killing an Egyptian, Peter’s denial of Jesus, Paul and Barnabas’ dissension and so on. If a movie were produced of the Bible much of it would be an R rating at the very least.

Claims of the Bible Itself

Since the Bible was attested to by many external evidences, is truthful in its character, and written by eyewitnesses, we can trust what it says about itself. The Bible claims to

be the very Word of God, the embodiment of divine revelation. In the Old Testament we see statements similar to this throughout, “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying” (Exodus 14:1, Exodus 14:15, Exodus 14:26, Exodus 16:4, Exodus 25:1, Leviticus 1:1, Leviticus 4:1, Leviticus 11:1, Numbers 4:1, Numbers 13:1, Deuteronomy 32:48). Moses was commanded to write what God told him in a book (Exodus 17:14, Exodus 34:27) and we are told he did (Exodus 24:4, Exodus 34:28, Numbers 33:2, Deuteronomy 31:9, Deuteronomy 31:22, Deuteronomy 31:24).

The Prophets speak thus, “The Lord hath spoken” (Isaiah 1:2), “Then said the Lord unto Isaiah” (Isaiah 7:3), “Thus saith the Lord” (Isaiah 43:1), “The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying” (Jeremiah 11:1), “The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel” (Ezekiel 1:3), “The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea” (Hosea 1:1), “The word of the Lord that came to Joel” (Joel 1:1). Statements like these occur approximately 3,800 times in the Old Testament. Thus, the Old Testament claims to be the very Word of God.

The New Testament also claims to be the Word of God. It claims to have been “confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Hebrews 2:3). “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment” (1 Corinthians 14:37). “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). We have in scripture an embodiment of divine revelation, the very Word of God. Also read Galatians 1:8, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 5:9-10, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Peter 3:2, 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Biblical Hermeneutics: Guidelines to Proper Interpretation of Scripture

2 Timothy 2:15 says we must “study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” The following guidelines are not exhaustive, but will give students of scripture a general understanding of the interpretive process. They are meant to be practical tools anyone can benefit from.

Differentiate Between Exegesis and Hermeneutics

Biblical exegesis is a systematic process by which a person arrives at a reasonable and coherent sense of the meaning and message of a biblical passage. In the process of exegesis, a passage must be viewed in its historical and grammatical context with its purpose and time of writing taken into account.

Hermeneutics stands in the same relationship to exegesis that a rule-book stands to a game. The rules are not the game, and the game is meaningless without the rules. Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied hermeneutics. In this sense, hermeneutics may also be seen as the method of exegesis.

Using this analogy, hermeneutics is the rule-book of the game while exegesis is the game. Hermeneutics deals with the rules of interpretation, while exegesis deals with the actual interpretation of the passage. This is done in four ways:

1. The context of the time it was written.
2. The purpose for which it was written.
3. An analysis of the original language.
4. The relevancy to our culture and lives.

Differentiate Between Metaphoric and Literal Language

Metaphoric language is usually easily distinguished from literal language. For instance, when the writer uses “like” or “as” in describing something they saw in a vision or dream, it is clearly metaphoric or symbolic. John did this frequently when recording what he saw in his revelation on the Isle of Patmos. He was attempting to share futuristic things he had never seen before using what he had from the first century to draw from.

A few obvious metaphors in the Bible include:

- “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust” (Psalms 91:4). God is clearly not a chicken or eagle. This passage was talking about God’s protective covering.
- God’s “stretched out arm” (Jeremiah 32:17). Jeremiah was not describing God’s body parts. He was referring to God’s mighty and creative power.
- “The Lord thy God is a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24). God is not saying He’s a blast furnace. This verse was describing Him as a jealous God.
- “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). Jesus was not portraying Himself to be a loaf of bread. He was saying we get our spiritual sustenance from Him.
- “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Jesus was not saying He is a light bulb. He is the source of truth and enlightenment.

Approach Scripture with Humility

“But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2). The first requisite for one to understand God’s Word is humility. We dare not approach the Bible with an attitude of pride and superiority.

Many approach scripture on a mere intellectual basis. The Bible is a spiritual book and must be understood spiritually. “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). We must cry out in humble dependency as David, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Psalms 119:18).

We must approach the Word to find out what we are to believe, not to support what we believe. When we find something we disagree with, we rationalize scripture until it reconciles with our beliefs, or we search for scripture in support of what we believe and to refute what we disagree with. We must approach the study of God’s Word with humility, depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth as to what we are to believe (John 16:13-14).

Approach Scripture with a Submissive Spirit

Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17). If we are not willing to obey God and put into practice what He shows us, our insight into His Word will be limited at best. “To everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away” (Matthew 25:29).

We must be willing to do what He reveals to us if we expect Him to give us further insight and understanding into His Word. This is why many people don’t get much out of the Bible. If we are going to have an ongoing revelation (unveiling) of God’s Word, we must have a “yes” mentality. Say, “Yes God! Whatever you reveal to me, whatever revelation you give me, I will walk in it.” If this is our daily attitude, we will be on the way to “rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Pray for Illumination from the Holy Spirit

The unregenerate man can’t understand God’s Word. As soon as a person is born again (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:23) he immediately has an understanding of scripture. The light has been turned on. We simply cannot understand the Word apart from the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, “The natural man receives (understands) not the things of the

Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We must be completely dependent on the Spirit of God when seeking to interpret scripture. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates our minds and spirits to understand the Word. He is the one who guides us into all truth (John 14:26, John 16:13-14, 1 John 2:20, 1 John 2:27). Whenever we study the Word we must cry out to God, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law” (Psalms 119:18).

Use Dictionaries and Reference Books

On an elementary level, start by using dictionaries and comparing translations. [Bible Gateway](#) is an excellent tool that allows you to quickly look up verses and passages. For example, Hebrews 2:18 in the KJV says, “He is able to succour them that are tempted.” The NASB substitutes succour with “come to the aid of” and the NIV uses the word “help.” The word succour actually means to help or come to the aid of. It’s not that succour is wrong but it’s simply not used often any more. For more in depth studies use tools like [Strong’s Concordance](#), [Thayer’s Lexicon](#), [Vine’s Expository Dictionary](#) and [Wuest’s Word Studies](#).

Use Commentaries

It’s foolish and prideful to think we can’t learn from others. Commentaries are great tools that will help you understand and interpret scripture. I recommended you use at least three commentaries, and preferably seven or more. This way you are not using one person’s opinion and can pool together all their insight and let the Holy Spirit give you the revelation He wants for you. There are many useful commentaries, but I prefer [Chuck Smith](#), [Matthew Henry](#), [William Barclay](#), [Henry Ironside](#), [Martyn Lloyd Jones](#), [G. Campbell Morgan](#), and [J. Vernon McGee](#) to name a few.

Interpret Scripture with Scripture

Scripture is always the best interpretation of scripture. The Bible says, “Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:10). As we compare the passage or verse we are studying with

other scripture we get a more balanced interpretation of scripture. A particular verse or passage should always be cross referenced with other related scripture.

Interpret Scripture According to its Context

We can prove anything from scripture by taking a phrase out of context. To get the proper meaning of a verse or passage we must carefully look at the verses and chapters surrounding what we are studying. For instance, we can disprove the existence of God by taking a phrase out of context. The Bible says, "There is no God." But when the context is viewed, we see that, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalms 14:1). There may be many great applications of scripture but only one proper interpretation of a passage.

Interpret Scripture According to the Time it was

Written

Understanding what was going on at the time a passage was written is imperative to proper interpretation of God's Word. We should study what the customs were at the time and what was happening in the particular church, city, area, or region. For instance, many New Testament letters were directed to a specific church to counteract problems that were going on in the congregation or city.

For example, when dealing with women wearing make up and jewelry in 1 Peter 3:3-5 and 1 Timothy 2:9, Peter emphasized their adorning should not be "merely" those things. During that time prostitutes typically adorned themselves in this way, so the emphasis was for them not to look like they were women of the night. They were not saying women should not look as attractive as they can. Henry Ironside commenting on this said, "Any old barn looks better with a new coat of paint."

Another good example is in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 when Paul told women to "keep silent in the churches." The early church setting was similar to the synagogue in that the women and men sat on opposite sides and women would often call to their husband or ask a question in the midst of the service. Paul wasn't saying women were never allowed to speak, but he was simply saying they were not to be disruptive.

He was telling the women that if they have questions they should “ask their husbands at home” (1 Corinthians 14:35). This is a great application for people who talk during church services. It’s very disruptive. Any discussion or conversing should be done when the service is over and not during the sermon. When this takes place, it’s no wonder people don’t get anything out of the message. Talking also interferes with what the Holy Spirit is wanting to do in the lives of others in the service. A couple good reference books are [Halley’s Bible Handbook](#) and [Manners and Customs of the Bible](#).

The Most Obvious Interpretation is Usually the Correct One

God doesn’t hide things and try and make His Word difficult to understand. He says what He means. Yes, we can find deep insights and applications from a verse or passage, but the most obvious meaning is usually the correct interpretation. Years ago I was ministering to someone and they said, “Everyone interprets things differently. It’s all according to how one interprets the Bible.”

I quoted Romans 3:23, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Then I asked what it meant to them. They replied, “We have all sinned.” Then I quoted Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death.” Again I asked what that verse meant to them. They said, “You sin you die.” The Word means exactly what it says. So, the most obvious interpretation of any verse or passage is usually the correct one.

Differences Between the Old and New Covenant

Covenants are conditional promises made to humanity by God. There are two distinct covenants mentioned in the Bible – the old (first) covenant and the new covenant. The following is an outline of the differences between the old and new covenants.

The Old Covenant

The first or old covenant was between a holy God and sinful man. Was there anything wrong with the first covenant? Of course not. “The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12). The problem was man’s inability to keep it. The failure was with man and not God. The covenant designed to result in life, resulted in death. Paul said, “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death” (Romans 7:10). With the advent of the law 3,000 people died (Exodus 32:28).

The New Covenant

“Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The old covenant revealed we needed something better. “Therefore the Law has become our tutor (schoolmaster) to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The new covenant is between the Father and the Son. God told Jesus if He would go to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3) and go to the cross for the sins of mankind (1 Peter 3:18), God would forgive the sins of anyone who

accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 1:12, Romans 4:4-5, Romans 5:1, Romans 10:13).

Why will this covenant succeed when the first one failed? Because the new one doesn't depend on us. It's a covenant between the Father and the Son. God lived up to the first contract, but we failed to live up to our part. In the new contract man is left out of the equation. Jesus lived up to the covenant by going to the cross in payment for our sins. God lived up to the covenant by forgiving and justifying all who put their faith in Jesus. "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). This one cannot fail because both parties involved lived up to their side of the contract.

The Good News

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge (condemn) the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

The first covenant brought death, but life ensued at the coming of the new covenant. When the law came, 3,000 died (Exodus 32:28). When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, 3,000 received eternal life (Acts 2:41). What a glorious contrast. The new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted by the writer of Hebrews in chapters 8:8-12 and 10:16-17. The key word in Hebrews is "better." Jesus is better than the angels, the high priestly system, Moses, and He created a better covenant. In Hebrews 8:10-12 we see four "I wills" or benefits of the new covenant.

- **Enlightenment.** "I will put My laws in their mind" (Hebrews 8:10). A fresh enlightenment is received under the new covenant. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only came upon people to perform certain tasks. Under the new covenant, the Holy Spirit permanently lives within us (Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 3:16) guiding us into all truth (John 16:13) and giving us an understanding that wasn't available under the law. The light has been turned on!
- **Desire.** "And write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10). Under the new covenant it's not about law, but desire for God. He gives us a desire to follow

Him, do His will and please Him. “For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (Romans 7:5-6). Under the new covenant, we are given a new founded desire and power to follow Jesus, do what pleases the Father and obey God (2 Peter 1:3-4).

- **Relationship.** “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Hebrews 8:10). Under the old covenant only certain people had a relationship with God. God was referred to as the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Under the new covenant, God promises to have a relationship with anyone who will trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

After the resurrection Jesus told Mary, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God” (John 20:17). Christianity is about a relationship, not religiosity. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).

- **Pardon.** “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). Under the old covenant there was immediate judgment for sin. Under the new covenant, there is complete pardon of all transgressions.

Not only are we forgiven, we are also justified (Romans 3:26, Romans 4:25-5:1). God sees us through the blood of Christ just as if we had never sinned. We are declared the righteousness of God in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:21).

Below are three benefits of our pardon:

1. **Freeness of our pardon.** God is a merciful God. “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalms 86:15). Praise the Lord! Peter thinking about God’s mercy proclaimed, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

2. **Fullness of our pardon.** All of our sins are under the blood. No matter what we have done, we are forgiven when we come to Jesus. There is no sin that God won't forgive when we trust Jesus as our only hope of salvation. Notice the plurality of our sin – “their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” The multiplicity (fullness) of all our sins are all washed away, by the blood of Jesus, under the new covenant. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).
3. **Fixedness of our pardon.** Our sins are gone forever – God does not remember them. People often throw our sins back in our face, but Jesus is our great advocate (1 John 2:1) declares, “I paid for that. It's been forgiven forever, back off!” “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalms 103:12). Our pardon is fixed forever – “I will remember no more.”

Micah prophesied of this, “He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). Corrie Ten Boom used to say that God casts our sins into the sea of His forgetfulness and puts up a sign saying, “NO FISHING!”

Don't let the devil, others or even yourself bring up what God has washed away from our lives forever (1 John 1:7, 1 John 1:9, Hebrew 10:14, Romans 8:33-34). Remember, the accuser of the brethren has been cast down (Revelation 12:10, Luke 10:17-19).

Responsibilities Under the New Covenant

Do believers have any responsibilities under the new covenant? The [old covenant](#) was a contract between God and man, which man could not live up to. The new covenant was a contract between God the Father and God the Son and both lived up to their side of the contract.

Jeremiah foretold of this new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This prophecy of Jeremiah is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12 and 10:16-17. Just before and after referring to the new covenant the writer says, “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). “Where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:18).

Praise the Lord! Jesus did it all. It’s all about Him. He made the way for us. He made provision under the new covenant where we failed under the old one.

So, do we have any responsibilities under the new covenant? Just following discussing the new covenant the writer says “let us” three times in verses 22, 23 and 24-25. With these two words he is challenging and exhorting us about our responsibility under the new covenant.

We Must Draw Near

Hebrews 10:22 – “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Our first responsibility is to spend time drawing near to God (James 4:8).

Below are a few ways we can draw near to God:

1. **The blood of Jesus.** The context is always imperative. “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a

new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God” (Hebrews 10:19-21). When Jesus died on the cross the veil of the temple was ripped apart from top to bottom by God the Father.

The veil was eighteen inches thick and interwoven. It was what kept mankind out of the the Holy of Holies – God’s presence. The veil was ripped apart signifying man’s sin was atoned for and that nothing could keep us from God’s presence as long as we came through the blood of Jesus. Let’s draw near God with all boldness by the blood of Jesus. Also read Proverbs 28:1, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:14, Romans 3:25-26, Romans 4:4-5, Romans 5:1-2, 1 John 1:7, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

2. **Submit to God.** “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8). Submission to the Lord is a special way of drawing near to God. When a believer submits to God they are choosing to draw close to Him in obedience and full surrender as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. We are in essence making Him not just Savior but Lord of our lives.
3. **Spend personal time with God.** Whenever we set apart time to spend alone with God we are purposely drawing near to God. Jesus made this a priority in His life as our example. “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). This should be a daily practice of every born again believer. “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Let’s spend daily time drawing near to Him!
4. **Practice His presence.** We draw near to God by constantly practicing God’s presence. “He Himself has said, I WILL NEVER DESERT (LEAVE) YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU” (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). His promise is that He will always be with us. It is incumbent upon us to constantly acknowledge and conscientiously dwell on His presence. In doing so we are drawing near Him.
5. **Fellowship with other believers.** “Where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). When we gather together with those of like precious faith, He is there with us. We know He is always with us but His presence is in our midst in a special way when we gather

in His name. John wrote, “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us” (1 John 4:12). If God resides in every believer, it stands to reason His presence would be magnified the more of us are assembled as one in His name.

6. **Worship Him.** Worship (both personally and corporately) ushers in His presence in one of the most profound and powerful ways we can ever imagine. The Bible says, “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with joyful singing. Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His holy name” (Psalms 100:2-3 and 4).

And again, “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of (Your people) Israel” (Psalms 22:3). I’ve noticed, the more intensely I am involved in worship the more I sense His presence. Let’s worship our Lord with all we have within us. The Psalmist said, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name” (Psalms 103:1).

7. **Exercise your faith.** We must approach Him “In full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:22). Jesus made the way for us to come to God without fear having become sin for us and making us the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our hearts and consciences have been cleansed. Guilt can keep us from and hinder us from drawing near God.

We must draw near “in full assurance of faith” that we have been cleansed of all sin and guilt by the finished work of Christ on our behalf. Faith is the key. We are saved by faith and we must approach Him by faith, believing we are “The righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). “Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

Washed with Pure Water (Hebrews 10:22)

Four suggested scenarios as to what “pure water” refers to:

1. **Baptism.** Baptism is probably the first thing most think of, however, it says “pure water.” This was written to Hebrews. Any baptizing would have likely been done in the Jordan river which was very muddy – anything but pure.
2. **The Holy Spirit.** Water was frequently a type of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. Jesus said, “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive” (John 7:38-39).
3. **The blood and water from Jesus’ side.** “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34). Many have speculated this to be a sign of dying from a broken heart. Read also 1 John 5:6.
4. **The Word of God.** Water was also used as a type of God’s Word in scripture. Jesus said, “Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). Paul said, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word” (Ephesians 5:25-26).

Our Confession

Hebrews 10:23 – “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Confession is powerful in the spiritual realm. It was said of those in the tribulation period battling the devil or Anti Christ – “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11).

Below five aspects concerning confession:

1. **Never give up or quit.** Holding fast is essential to our Christian faith and survival as followers of Christ. Holding fast signifies persistence, endurance, tenacity, stubbornness and simply refusing to quit or give up.

When we get saved the devil immediately attacks us. He does everything he can to get us to give up. If we refuse to give up, we are promised God will bring us through to a successful conclusion (Philippians 1:6).

2. **Hold on to the confession of your hope.** This is how the enemy endeavors to make us give up. If he can cause us to lose hope we begin to weaken. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” (Proverbs 13:12).

We must hold onto “the God of all hope” (Romans 15:13). “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

It is imperative we cling to the promises of God and never forget,

“He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23).

“It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

“But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

3. **Confess Jesus as Lord and Savior.** Confessing Jesus is imperative to salvation. “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

“But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart that is, the word of faith which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:8-10).

This is not a one time confession at conversion. It is something that is to be ongoing throughout our entire Christian walk. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Let’s hold fast our confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

4. **Witnessing for Christ.** The Bible says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). If we are not fishing (witnessing) we are not following. Read also Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15.
5. **Trusting God.** I am not nor have I ever been part of the Word of Faith movement. Nevertheless, there is always an element of truth in everything. We mustn’t throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. It is incumbent upon us to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.”

We must hold onto what we are hoping and believing God for. The only way we should ever let go of it is if the Holy Spirit shows us we are in error and that we should alter or change what we are believing God for.

“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17).

We're to Consider One Another

Hebrews 10:24-25 – “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” It is an interesting study to go through all the “one anothers” in scripture and a great series for you preachers.

Considering one another is the challenge. Putting others first. The scriptures exhort us, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every

man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another” (Romans 12:10). If we could heed this it would solve most relationship problems.

1. **Provocation.** We are exhorted to provoke, stimulate and challenge one another. I like the old King James here – “Provoke.” This is particularly a challenge to us Pastors (Preachers or Ministers). The writer is basically saying we should be really pushy, in a loving manner of course. We are to keep pushing and challenging our people or one another until they are doing what they need to be doing and beyond.

I’ve always been big on follow up. At my first pastorate/church plant, if someone missed church I was calling or visiting them first thing Monday morning. There is one person I went to visit frequently. I found out years later they would often hide in their closet from me when I came over.

To the best of my knowledge, these many years later, they are faithful in church and being used of God to this day. It was said of Simon of Cyrene that he was “pressed into service... to bear His (Jesus’) cross” (Mark 15:21). Many who are pressed into His service end up becoming someone great in service to the King.

2. **Love and good works.** “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (Hebrews 10:24). We are not saved by works but unto good works. After speaking about salvation by grace apart from works Paul said, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10).

“Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being by alone” (James 2:17). John Calvin put it this way, “It is faith alone that saves, but faith that saves is not alone.” We must provoke one another to love and good works. Read also John 13:34-35 and 1 John 3:16-18.

3. **Fellowship (church).** The context here is fellowship. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). Fellowship, according to this scripture, should be more prevalent and frequent today than ever before,

“As ye see the day (of His return) approaching.” It’s interesting that believers fellowship less today than we ever have. Few churches have more than Sunday morning services today. This is primarily because they can’t get people to show up to anything more than one service a week.

The reason for fellowship should be because we are considering one another. “Let us consider one another, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:24-25). It’s common to hear people in church complain about not getting enough attention or not getting their needs met properly. Though we should not ignore our personal and spiritual needs that is not what fellowship is all about. We are to go to church (fellowship) because we are considering everyone else and their needs and not our own needs.

What can I do to love and be a blessing to everyone else in the church I attend? If the truth be known, just showing up is an encouragement to others. I should go because others will be encouraged and blessed by my presence.

Let’s draw near to the Lord, hold fast our confession and consider one another thus fulfilling our responsibilities under the new covenant!

8 Prerequisites to Benefiting From the Word

As followers of Jesus, God desires that we receive the full benefit from His Word. God's Word exists for our good and benefit. If we are going to receive the full benefit and value from the Word of God that He has intended, there are specific requirements or prerequisites which must be implemented. Let's make sure we are [receiving the fullest benefit from the Bible](#) that we possibly can.

Benefiting from the Word of God:

1. **Being born again.** "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

When the Word is preached we are convicted of sin (John 16:8-9), see our need of Christ, and accept Him as Lord and Savior. God's spirit unites with ours bringing it to life. None of the benefits of the Word apply to us unless we are born again.

2. **Reading - Studying the Word.** "Blessed is he that reads" (Revelations 1:3).

Many Christians do not study the Word of God regularly. You may have a Bible laying on your coffee table that you never open. The blessings of the Word are only for those who read it. Can you remember the last time you read the Bible?

3. **Listening to the Word being proclaimed.** "Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of this prophecy" (Revelation 1:3).

This is why church is so important. Hearing the Word refers to it being taught or preached. If we want to receive a blessing from God, we must hear the Word proclaimed, taught, preached and expounded upon.

It's only then will our faith grow and we will begin to see the full benefit from the Word. (Romans 10:13-17). Let's listen to the proclamation of the Word at every

opportunity. Listen to programs on the radio, TV, Internet, church, home Bible studies and tapes, CDs and wherever we can.

4. **Apply it to your life.** “Blessed is he that reads and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand” (Revelation 1:3).

To receive the full benefit of the Word we must [put it into practice](#). When we do, we will be blessed in all things (James 1:25, Joshua 1:8). Otherwise, we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22).

5. **Meditate on scripture.** “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night” (Joshua 1:8).

There may be times when you focus on a verse or phrase and repeat it over and over again, like when memorizing Bible verses. God wants us to constantly meditate on His Word (Psalms 1:2-3).

6. **Memorize the Word.** When it comes to the Word of God, we must do more than a casual reading. We need to study it, know it, and be able to use it as needed. It’s great to know where to find certain passages, but it’s even better to memorize them. Below are a few verses to get you started.

“Thy Word have I hid in mine heart” (Psalms 119:11).

“The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide” (Psalm 37:31).

“I have written unto you young men because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you” (1 John 2:14).

“If you abide in me and my words abide in you” (John 15:7).

7. **Exercise faith.** “For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2).

When God reveals something to you through the Word you must step out in faith and apply it to your life. Otherwise, the Word will not benefit you.

8. **Use it.** The Bible compares itself to a sword in Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17. The Sword of the Spirit is part of the armor of God and our main offensive weapon.

A soldier won't last very long in battle if he doesn't use his weapon. Jesus used His sword when He was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Every time Satan came to him He used his weapon, eventually driving the devil away (Luke 4:13).

If we are going to make full benefit of the Word of God it must be properly implemented. God gave His Word to benefit us. Let's make full use and benefit of God's Word – The Bible!

14 Benefits of the Word of God

The Bible is a living instruction book that brings blessing and hope to all who read it. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word as “alive and powerful” and 2 Timothy 3:16 says it is “God breathed.” 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us the Bible was written by anointed men of God, but the author is God.

Benefits of the Word of God

1. **Answered prayer** (John 15:7, Proverbs 28:9). Jesus said if we continue in a vital relationship with Him and His Word is in us, whatever we ask will be given to us. If His Word is in us, we must conclude that we will be [praying in His will](#) (1 John 5:14-15). However, if we turn our ear away from hearing His Word, our prayer is an abomination to God (Proverbs 28:9).

2. **Victory over sin** (Psalms 119:9-11, 1 John 2:14, John 8:31-32, Psalms 37:31). The Word of God makes us aware of sin and keeps us from sliding down a slippery slope. It doesn't mean we will never fail, but we won't continue to slide down. Like Peter, we will rise up victorious over failure. After denying Christ, he ministered with power on the day of Pentecost. The Bible will keep you from sin as sin will keep you from the Bible.
3. **Spirit-Filled living** (Ephesians 5:18-19, Colossians 3:16). There's no easy way to stay filled with God's Spirit. We must read the Word and spend time with Him in prayer. The context of these passages is nearly identical. One refers to being filled with the Spirit, while the other talks about the Word of Christ dwelling in us. The secret to being filled and remaining full of the Holy Spirit is to saturate yourself with His Word.
4. **The Word brings purpose in life.** “Sanctify them in your truth, your Word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world” (John 17:17-18). Jesus came into the world to fulfill a purpose. Likewise, as we study His Word we find purpose in Him. Sanctification is not only setting us apart from sin, but also setting us apart for His divine purpose. Want to know God's purpose for your life? Dive into the Bible until He reveals it to you.

5. **The Word causes spiritual growth** (Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 2:2). We cannot grow spiritually apart from the Word. If we don't eat we won't grow and will eventually die. We grow from the Word in two ways:
- **Maturity.** Peter said we must desire the milk of the Word to grow, but we can't thrive on milk alone. We must also eat solid food to grow to maturity (1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Hebrews 5:12-14).
 - **Increased faith.** All Christians want to have more faith. Even the disciples desired this (Luke 17:5). The best way to increase faith is by spending time in the Word. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word" (Romans 10:17). Our faith will never grow through personal study alone – we must also hear the Word proclaimed in church (Romans 10:13-17).
6. **The Word produces fruit in our lives** (Psalms 1:2-3). The Psalmist gives us a picture of a tree planted near a river with its roots going deep into the ground drinking water. Every time we immerse ourselves in the Word of God we are filled with His Spirit (John 15:16). Just like the tree planted by the river, the result is fruitfulness.
7. **The Word defeats the enemy** (Matthew 4:3-11, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5). The Bible is the main offensive weapon for every Christian. We have victory over the enemy through the Word. We are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus said Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31) and he desires the same for us. Jesus used the Word to defeat Satan and so should we. It equips us and makes us strong for battle (1 John 2:14). Knowing it isn't enough. A weapon must be used or it is worthless.
8. **The Word brings success to life** (Joshua 1:8, Psalms 1:2-3, James 1:25). God told Joshua the Word must not depart from his mouth and he must do all that is written in it (Joshua 1:8). The principles in the Bible work. Meditate on them day and night (Psalms 1:2-3). God promised if we put the Word into practice He will bless us in all things (James 1:25).
9. **The Word makes us competent counselors** (Romans 15:14, 2 Timothy 3:16). Biblical counseling is listening to a person's problems or struggles and applying God's Word to them. Concerning the children of Israel, Moses said, "When they have a dispute, I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws" (Exodus 18:16). This is exactly how we are to counsel. What I think

does a person little good, but what God says is of infinite value. It's the Word that has the power to change lives.

10. **The spoken Word is powerful** (Isaiah 55:10-11). Don't be afraid to say Bible verses out loud. When going through difficulties or ministering to someone, speak His Word with authority. It will be released into the spiritual realm and continue to work until it fulfills God's purpose. Like rain watering seed in the ground, it may take a season to come to fruition, but it will come to pass.
11. **The Word is a cleansing agent** (Ephesians 5:25-27, John 15:3). The Word has a cleansing affect in our lives. Have you ever done something wrong, confessed it as sin, knew God had forgiven you (1 John 1:9), but still felt guilty? It's during these times we must allow the Word to cleanse us. It is both a mirror showing us our sin (James 1:23-24) and a wash basin to cleanse us from impurities.
12. **The Word brings comfort and hope** (Romans 15:4, Hebrews 6:17-20). Many Christians can testify to being discouraged and hopeless, and after reading a few verses or hearing a message preached were filled with hope, comfort and encouragement. During times of despair we usually don't feel like reading the Bible, but this is exactly when we need to. Get into the Word and let God encourage you.
13. **The Word gives guidance and direction** (Psalms 119:105). "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). The Bible shines a light on our path so we know which way to go. However, the light shines only so far in front of us. As we walk forward, it shines further out. We must walk in the light we have before we receive additional light (Matthew 25:29).
14. **The Word brings joy into our life and situation** (Jeremiah 15:16). Jeremiah said God's Word was the "joy and rejoicing" of his heart. Why? Because he was called by His name.

I wonder about people who claim to be called by Jesus' name but have no desire for His Word. Jeremiah did more than casually read the Word, he devoured it. Devour and absorb the Word of God. When you do, it will fill you with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

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