

WHY SHOULD YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

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WHY SHOULD YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

Are there any reasons why you should believe that the Bible comes from God? Millions of people in the world trust what is written in that book we call the Bible. Those people who believe in Jesus as God's Savior for mankind stake their faith on the Bible. Should you believe the Bible? What would cause you to believe that the Bible is God's book, God's Word?

There are many reasons why I believe that the Bible is God's book. Those reasons can be summed up into two categories. First, I believe in the Bible because of its **nature**. Secondly, I believe in the Bible because of its **topics**. Do you believe in this ancient book? Why do people count this book as special, different from any other ancient book? Why should I believe this book came from God?

The Preservation of the Bible

One important feature to consider about this ancient book is its **preservation**. Long ago Scribes spent hours each day for months to produce one hand-written copy of this book. Why? Why go to the expense of paying someone to copy this book? Because they thought its message was originally delivered to its writers by God. As a consequence of this dedication and that faith, the Bible is the best preserved ancient book in the world.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Have you heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls? In 1948 a young Bedouin boy threw a rock into a high cave that bordered the Dead Sea in Palestine. He heard something break! He climbed up to the mouth of the cave and looked inside. He saw several clay jars laying beside the one his rock had broken. He reported this to his family and it was soon discovered that the jars contained ancient scrolls. Soon several caves had been explored and they too contained clay jars with ancient scrolls inside. When finally the scrolls were in the hands of archaeologists it was determined that the scrolls were written about 100 years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

There were several kinds of ancient documents found in the clay jars, but one of the best preserved was a copy of the Bible book we call Isaiah. Isaiah was a Hebrew prophet who lived and prophesied 700 years before Jesus was born. Isaiah's book was found in that cave. Up until this find at the Dead Sea, the

earliest manuscript known of the book of Isaiah was a copy written 1,000 years after the birth of Jesus. So, in 1948 a copy of Isaiah was discovered that was 1100 years older than any other copy in existence. Those two copies were virtually identical! What does this suggest? Since all of the Bible's 66 books were preserved in the same meticulous style, it says that the books of the Bible are the best preserved ancient books in existence. The Jewish scribes were so meticulous about their work that two copies of Isaiah, separated by 1100 years, made no significant difference whatsoever! The books of the Bible are the best preserved ancient documents in the world.

The Bible's Nature

But I told you that I believe the Bible is God's Word **because of its nature**. Part of its "nature" is the fact that it has been preserved! God meant for it to speak to every generation! The Bible shows that God has chosen to reveal Himself and His thinking through the means of written documents. In the book of Deuteronomy, the 5th book of the Bible, Moses was commanded to write a Song. It is called the Song of Moses. However, the words were dictated by God. God had a special purpose in commanding Moses to write the song and teach it to the Israelites. God predicted that the people of Israel would turn away from following His covenant, and the Song was intended to bring them back! That's right!

The Song of Moses

"Now therefore [God commanded] write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song **may be a witness** for me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant. And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, **this song shall confront them as a witness** (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give." So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel." [\(Deuteronomy 31:19-22 ESV\)](#) No doubt, Moses wrote the words of that Song by inspiration. God dictated the words! God wanted that Song written down so that it would be **preserved** in a document. It was written first in the handwriting of Moses, later it would be preserved in the handwritings of nameless Scribes, **but** the words were from God.

Earlier I told you that the book of Isaiah was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Isaiah preached God's message in an extremely dangerous era. The people of Israel were about to be invaded by the Assyrian empire. The Israelites should have been turning to their God. But, in fact, they were turning away from God. They did not want to hear Isaiah and God's other prophets preach to them. Government leaders were courting the help of Egypt. They wanted to sign a security agreement with the Egyptians. However, God's prophets were saying that the nation had better sign with God.

God decided to make a statement about this proposed security arrangement with Egypt, and He told Isaiah to write it down. God said, "Egypt's help is worthless and empty; therefore I have called her "Rahab who sits still." And now, [God continued] go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as **a witness forever**. For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."
(Isaiah 30:7-11 ESV)

God's Witness

Did you hear it? Did you hear God's purpose for writing it down? God wanted His words written down so that the written word would be "a witness forever." This is the nature of the Bible! God has preserved it as a witness to what God has revealed to mankind. And the Bible's witness is designed to last forever!

When you read the Bible its words are a witness to you! That's right! And how appropriate those words are for every age; appropriate not only for you but for everyone! Even though the forty writers of the Bible lived over a span of 1500 years, they were writing for every generation! In every book of the Bible you will find information that is helpful to you. I call these things "eternal trues."

It is true, however, that in the Bible you will find actions and behaviors that are **not** required of you. For instance, animal sacrifices were commanded and practiced under the covenant that God gave Moses and the early Jewish people.

But people today live under a new covenant, called the New Testament of Jesus Christ. The inspired Jewish Christian man who wrote the New Testament book of Hebrews said this, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." [\(Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV\)](#)

Yes, many Old covenant things do **not** apply to you because you and I are now under the authority of God's Son, Jesus Christ. But nevertheless, the whole Bible is a means for our encouragement, and it tells the story of God's great salvation that comes through God's beloved Son. Jesus' apostle Paul said this about the Old covenant's encouragement: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." [\(Romans 15:4 ESV\)](#) The Bible teaches endurance; it teaches encouragement; it teaches hope.

The Topics of the Bible

And that brings me to my second major reason for believing the Bible is from God. The topics the Bible addresses compel me to listen! That's right! The Bible's subject-matter captures my attention and provides me "truth" on those topics of endurance, encouragement, and hope. The main topic of the Bible is **salvation** from our sins. Do you know that you are lost in sin? Do you know that you need salvation? Do you know that when your body dies, you will live on in the spirit in one of two locations? The topics of the Bible should capture your attention!

Seeking the Sender's Glory

On one occasion a crowd heard Jesus speak and they were impressed with the topics he taught. They marveled at what Jesus was teaching and they asked each other, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" So Jesus answered them, "**My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority**

seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood." (John 7:15-18 ESV)

Jesus did not have to go to school because he was just a mouthpiece for his Father who sent him. God sent Jesus to say what God wanted said as a witness to the world. Jesus declared that if he was seeking his own glory, then a person might suspect that Jesus was lying. But if Jesus was seeking the Sender's glory therefore the messenger would have no need to lie. This was also true of all the prophets that God had sent to the Jewish nation; all those who lived before the time of Jesus were sent to glorify God who had sent them. But notice what Jesus said about your **knowing the source** of the teaching; about your **knowing** whether it's true or a lie! Can you detect a lie? Jesus said, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God..."

So, I ask you, what do you want? What is your interest, your will? What do you desire? Are the topics of the Bible of interest to you? If not, then you will remain blind to the messages of God. You will cast the Bible upon the trash heap; it will be of no use to you. But if you have a desire to know God, then you will open your Bible and drink from its wells. Jesus said, " **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**" (Matthew 5:6 KJV)

GOD AND THE BIBLE

There are many reasons to believe that there is a God and that God reveals Himself through the writings that we call the Bible. Do you believe in God? Do you believe in the Bible?

The Library of the Bible

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books. However, the English word "Bible" means "book". One book! Why then should sixty-six books be gathered into ONE book, one library? The reason is that all sixty-six books, written over a period of 1500 years, are believed to be actually from one person! Even though there were at least 40 men who wrote down the words of the Bible, and even though those 40 men lived over a period of 1500 years, there is good reason to believe there was only one person who was directing those men in what they wrote. That one person was God, through the inspiration of His Holy Spirit!

Characteristics of the Library

First, let us examine some distinguishing characteristics of the Bible and then we will discuss why many people believe that it came from God.

The sixty-six books contained in the one book, the Bible, are divided into two main divisions. The divisions are called the Old Testament and the New Testament. These labels came from God Himself in the book called Hebrews. (Read Hebrews chapter 9.) The word "testament" means "will" or an "agreement." The word "covenant" is a closely related word. The "covenants" referred to in the aforementioned titles are reported by the writers to be God's covenants between Himself and His people. These covenants are for His people and for the world.

Categories - Law

The Old Testament (or covenant) contains 39 books. The New Testament contains 27 books. The first five books of the Old Testament are entitled: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These first five books have been categorized as **Law**. Readers and students of the Bible have "categorized" the books, not the authors.

History

Next comes twelve books that are categorized as **History**. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are the books of "History."

Poetry

The next five books are characterized as **Poetry**. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are the books of "Poetry."

Prophets

The next seventeen books are generally called **The Prophets**. This group is divided into the "Major" prophets and the "Minor" prophets. The words "Major" and "Minor" have reference to the length of the books, not their importance. Except for the book of Lamentations, all the books in this category are named for the prophet. The Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The Minor Prophets number 12 books and include, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The New Testament Library

The 27 books of the New Testament are generally grouped into five categories. The categories are the four books called the **Gospels**, the one book of **History**, the 13 **Epistles of Paul**, the nine books of the **General Epistles**, and the one book of **Prophecy**.

The Gospels

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are titled the "Gospels" because they contain the life of Jesus of Nazareth who is called the "Christ." The word "Gospel" means "good news."

History

There is one book of "History" in the New Testament which is called the "Acts of the Apostles", which is somewhat a misnomer because the book deals mostly with the activities of just two apostles, Peter and Paul.

Epistles of Paul

The next division is called the "Epistles of Paul." The word "epistle" denotes a "personal letter." This division is composed of Paul's 13 personal letters to seven churches and three individuals. Paul's letters are Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

General Epistles

The "General Epistles" are Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude.

Prophecy

The one book categorized as "Prophecy" is the book entitled Revelation. Revelation is the last book of the New Testament in both chronology and position in the New Testament.

In a later lesson we will study the similarities and the differences between the two covenants, the Old and the New Testaments, and also give a short description of each book. In the remainder of this lesson, we will discuss the following question.

"Why do I and others believe that the true author of those sixty-six books is God?"

First, most all those books **claim** to be from God. Of course, that does not necessarily make it true. However, this is where a person must start in examining the evidence as to whether or not the Bible is from God. If the Bible is God's Word then we would expect it to **claim** to be from God? Readers must examine the Bible's claim, and make a decision as to whether they believe the claim. Should we believe what the Bible says about itself or should we disbelieve it?

God Said

One of the phrases that a person reads several times in the Old Testament is the phrase, "God said." From the first book called Genesis all the way down in history to the 32nd book, called Jonah, you find this phrase, "God said." Someone claim to have overheard God. That is, someone reported the words he or she heard God say.

The Lord Said

There is another phrase that is used more often than "God said." Over two hundred times in the Bible you will read the phrase, "the Lord said." God is "the Lord."

God is the one who authorizes. He is the one who commands. God is the one who forbids. He is a Judge and holds people accountable for their actions. He is the one who speaks and reveals His will to mankind. God inserted Himself into human conversation. God had something to say and He said it in the language of humans! He is the Lord. He interrupts history to say what is on His mind and to act! And those interruptions pertain to the situation in the world at that time, and they are recorded in the Bible by those who heard and observed God's actions.

The Lord has had something to say about many things, but especially has the Lord spoken concerning "sin." We will study "sin" more closely in a later lesson.

The Lord Spoke

Another frequent expression found in the Bible that makes a **claim** for God's authorship is the phrase "the Lord spoke." For instance, "the Lord spoke to Moses, saying." Or, "the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying." The Israelite King David once said, "The Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2) King David was describing one aspect of God's "inspiration." We call this aspect of inspiration "verbal inspiration" because God gave each "word" to David so that David could repeat it verbally. Not only did God speak to David, but the Lord spoke through David. David became the Lord's mouthpiece. Bible students call this "verbal inspiration."

Inspiration

In the New Testament, Jesus' apostle Paul used the word "inspiration." Paul wrote, "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2Timothy 3:16-17) The word "scripture" means that which is written down on some kind of material. Paul said that the major purpose of inspiration (written down) was so that the "man of God" (or a person who aspires to be a "person of God") could be completely furnished with the details that define "good works." In other words, inspiration (written in scripture) teaches mankind how to behave in order to please God.

The Lord was speaking through David. The Lord was inspiring David. And when David, or someone who heard him speak, faithfully **wrote down** what David said, it was then called "scripture." And Paul says that all the scripture was given through "inspiration."

Prophecy

Jesus' apostle Peter put it this way: "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2Peter 1:21) "Prophecy" is the word that describes the "content" of the "scripture."

So God's Holy Spirit was the means by which God inspired the men who wrote the "prophecy" that we find written in the Bible. This explains the unity

that can be seen among the 66 books of the one Bible. The writers were influenced by one eternal Spirit that lived in every age, every century. God's Holy Spirit is said to have "carried along" the bearers of the messages; those men heard it and spoke it and wrote it down. This is what the Bible **claims** for itself.

God's Motivation

Secondly, it might be helpful at this point to consider **God's motivation** for writing and preserving Scripture. God's motivation in inspiring and preserving what He has had to say to humans is **love**. God loves His creation.

When God created the earth and its universe the angels sang for joy! (Job 38:7) God created the human spirit and enabled humans the power to pass it on through physical procreation. He created humans out of His great love. If you love your wife and children then you will be motivated to protect them and provide for them. You will be interested beyond measure for their health and well-being. That is human love. Can you multiply that concern to the Father of all spirits? The Bible teaches that "God is love." Jesus' apostle John wrote, "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (1 John 4:16 ESV)

God (**Love**) has been particularly concerned about human "sin". Why should God be so concerned about the world's misbehavior? Is this not natural in humans? How much more in God, the "Father" of every spirit? The reason **Love** is so concerned about sin is because **Love** must hold every human accountable for his/her behavior. God is concerned because of the fact that out of true justice He must punish sin, whether the sin is found in humans or angels! God loves the people of the world. They are His creation! And so, God does not want His children to be condemned when He comes to judge sin!

God's motivation of love is seen throughout the Bible, but perhaps in no better place than Malachi 3:16-18 where it says that "Those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. 'They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.'" (Malachi 3:16-18)

You see, God makes a distinction between people. Some are considered righteous because they know (fear) God and are serving God by following His

instructions. To "fear" God is to respect Him. On the other hand, there are the wicked. These are those people who do not know (fear) God nor serve Him, and so they do not follow God's instructions. Knowing (fearing) God and following His instructions is called "serving God." People who do not know (fear) God and thus are not doing God's will for humans are not "serving God." To "fear" God is to respect Him, and to "serve" God is to obey Him.

Knowing the Bible is important if we are to serve God, for the Bible is God's instructions as to how to "serve" God. But can we trust the Bible's **claim**? Is the Bible truly God's Word?

Fulfilled Prophecy

Prophecy fulfilled is another reason people believe the Bible's claim. There are several words that describe **what** God inspired prophets to write down. One word we have already discussed is the word "scripture." The word "scripture" literally means, "that which is written." Alongside the word "scripture" we often find in the New Testament the word "fulfilled." What does it mean that the scripture is fulfilled? It means that something written years ago describes an event or a person that actually happened many years AFTER the writing of it.

Jesus and Fulfillment

Many times, Jesus spoke of the "scripture" being "fulfilled." One interesting occasion was when Jesus returned to Nazareth after being baptized in the Jordan River by his cousin John. Jesus preached throughout the country of Galilee, and healed afflicted people. But now He returned to Nazareth where he was raised and to the synagogue where He had studied the scriptures as a young man.

Jesus in Nazareth

The New Testament writer Luke tells the story: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** Jesus then rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were

fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:16-21) (Isaiah 61:1, 2)

The words that were read from the scroll Jesus called "scripture." A prophet by the name of Isaiah had written that scripture over 700 years before Jesus was born. That "scripture" had been copied over and over again down through the centuries. There is no way to know how many of those scrolls were in existence in Jesus' day, but probably every synagogue had one. Jesus said that that 700 year old scripture which he read from predicted his ministry. "Today," Jesus said, "this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Remember what Jesus' apostle Paul said, "All scripture is inspired by God...." (1 Timothy 3:16)

That old prophet Isaiah had preached and wrote about the future that would be fulfilled 700 years later. Isaiah was able to do this because he was inspired by God's Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit empowered Jesus of Nazareth 700 years later to do the things that were written in the scroll. How else could Jesus "proclaim good news to the poor," or "proclaim liberty to the captives;" how else could he heal "the blind," or "set at liberty those who were oppressed" with demons and physical afflictions? Who else could preach that "the year of the Lord's favor" had arrived? No one could do these things or preach these things except the one Anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who told Isaiah about the life and work of Jesus Christ 700 years before He was born!

One 700-year-old Prophecy!

Just **one** 700-year-old prophecy fulfilled would be a great reason to believe there is a God and that the Bible is His Word. But that one prophecy is not all there is! There are hundreds of Old Testament prophecies that have been fulfilled which have been documented in history books. These prophecies I am referring to did **not** pertain to Jesus. These prophecies pertained to historical events that were later confirmed by historical records. However, when we consider **just** the prophecies that pertain to Jesus, they too number in the hundreds. Some Bible scholars have counted over 400. Twenty-five of those prophecies about Jesus come from just one chapter in the book of Isaiah that contains only 12 verses! Read Isaiah chapter 53 and you will find 25 prophecies about Jesus Christ, written over 700 years before the Christ was born.

God's prophecies, delivered through His inspired prophets, have never failed. And the prophecies yet unfulfilled will not fail either! You will do well to believe in God and in His Word, the Bible. If you will believe in God, and believe in His Word, the Bible, then you will begin to know the love that God has for you and the world.

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then you should be happy and eager to study the message of Jesus recorded in the Bible. However, if you do **not** believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, then you may wish to **consider** what Jesus has to say. Today, we will discuss some good reasons why you should closely study and obey the Bible.

I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I first made that confession when I was twelve years old, even though I believed it before that age. I was then baptized for the forgiveness of my sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. But, even now, I can think of many reasons WHY I should study the Bible.

Reasons for Studying the Bible

When I think of the **reasons** why I should study the Bible I remember what Jesus said to Satan. After Jesus was baptized by His cousin John, the Spirit of God came upon Jesus and led Him out into the wilderness. For 40 days and nights Jesus fasted. That is, he did not eat anything. Jesus was busy. The Bible does not tell us what he was busy with, but surely it had something to do with the work that He was about to begin, that God had given him to do. After fasting that many days, Jesus became very hungry. This is when the Tempter chose to test him and said, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread." Jesus answered this way, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

Soul Food

Think about what Jesus said. Jesus believed that God had spoken. And just as surely as a person needs food to live, there is something just as important: **we need food for the soul**. We need every Word God has spoken. Every word that comes from the mouth of God is like food to the soul. What are we human beings going to think? What will we write? What will we advise? How then should I conduct my life? Which direction should I go? What example should I leave to young and old? You see, our soul-food determines how we answer those questions.

The Israelite King David once wrote a song which says, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:1-3 ESV)

Friends, if you were to write a song of the soul, what would your song say? The human spirit is hungry for God. Our souls want to hear from our Maker. And truly, our Maker has had something to say. It is true, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

It is Written

So think again about what Jesus said. When Jesus said "It is written", He was quoting a statement found in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. The Old Testament was Jesus' Bible. Jesus quoted a statement that was over 1400 years old. But yet, that statement was "from the mouth of God" and **was just as true and just as relevant** to Jesus in His temptations as it was 1400 years before. Some people object to listening to or reading the Bible because it is the oldest book we know. But the words of God span the ages. They are relevant to our soul's condition today! They are worthy to be considered. In fact, if given a chance, the words of God can be counted on to clarify the situations of your life. That's right! The words of God can strengthen you against the temptations of Satan. The words of God can give your soul direction; they are as important to your soul as a rudder is to a boat. Yes, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Those "words" of God are found in the Bible, and they are very old.

When Satan's first temptation of Jesus did not work, he tried twice more. But Jesus answered each time with a quotation from that 1400 year old book, Deuteronomy. The answers to the temptations in your life are also found in the Bible. The Bible is God's Word, every word. Jesus believed that and trusted the Word. Because **Jesus** trusted that Word is good reason why **you** should trust the Bible and study the Bible.

The Bible's Concern with Eternal Life

But another reason for studying the Bible is important. You see, the Bible is not only concerned with your life here **on this earth**. The biggest story of the Bible is that it teaches the human family about continuous life **after** our earthly experiences. And not only does the Bible teach us about the **existence** of continuous life, but it also assures us that every person will experience it. That's right! Continuous life has been granted to every human being.

The ability to-live-forever was first granted to the first people God made. God made the first couple "in His image" (Genesis 1:26) ...that is, God created humans to have the God-like ability to live continuously. Now God had no fleshly

body. So the image in which humans were made was not fleshly. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit...." (John 4:24) So the characteristic about people which is made in the image of God **is** the spirit within people.

The Tree of Life

God prepared a human body that would shelter the spirit made in His image. However, God had to prepare a special means by which the human body (and its spirit) could be sustained. That special means was called "the tree of life." (Genesis 2:9) But the first couple forfeited continuous life on earth in a human body when they chose to disobey God. The penalty for sin/disobedience is death, that is, the separation of the human spirit from the human body. In administering that penalty God had to separate the couple from the means of continuous life on earth. So God drove the first couple away from the tree of life. But what about their spirits made in God's image? What about the continuous life that God had instilled inside human flesh; what about the spirit made in the image of God?

How Can God Save?

The Bible tells the story of HOW God can save the human spirit from continuous separation from God. It tells the story of how each spirit, each human being, can have continuous life **not** on earth, but WITH God.

We call this "continuous life" Eternity. Solomon wrote, "[God] has made everything beautiful in its **time**. Also, he has put **eternity** into man's heart...." (Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV) And so, the Bible speaks of "time" and "eternity." Time is temporary; eternity is forever.

The Word "Eternity"

But the word "Eternity" applies both to life WITH God, and to life WITHOUT God. That's right! Once my Eternal spirit was begotten by my parents, the ability to live eternally has been present with me. I have carried that eternal spirit in this fleshly body all these years. But when my decaying fleshly body can no longer sustain my spirit in this world, then my spirit will leave my body for eternity. Solomon put it this way: "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7 ESV) James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote, "You do not know what tomorrow will bring." And then James asked, "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little **time** and then vanishes." (James 4:14 ESV) "Time" is what you have **in** this body; you are here for a "little time"; what you have **outside** the body is "eternity."

Present Eternity

However, it is not accurate to speak of eternity as something that happens AFTER this life. Eternity is present throughout our earthly sojourn. That's right! For instance, it is illustrated in what happened to Jesus that day He was tempted by Satan. Do you remember the rest of that event? After Satan left Jesus in the wilderness, the Bible says that "behold, angels came and were ministering to him." I do not know if the angels turned those stones into bread, but they were serving the Son of God in a fleshly manner. Do you see it? In the same timeframe we see the blending of time and eternity! The earthly body of Jesus (in time) was being served by eternal angels. In fact, the Bible says that angels are "ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" ([Hebrews 1:14 ESV](#)) So, it is not accurate to speak of eternity as something that happens only after I die; eternity is all around us and present with us even while our spirits are still locked in a fleshly and in "time."

So why should you study the Bible?

You should study the Bible because of Jesus' example. And you should study the Bible because it tells the true story about how you can have a continuous life with God. The Bible tells how you can be saved from your earthly sins, and fitted for heaven, your true destiny.

WHY LIVE BY THE BIBLE?

Why should you allow the Bible to direct your life? There are critics who ridicule people who live by principles found in the Bible. The critics mock Bible believers calling them by prejudicial names, names like "Bible-thumpers," "stupid", "ignorant", "judgmental", and perhaps the most despised name of all, "intolerant." When I choose to believe in the Bible as a guiding principle of my life, then I risk being called by these names.

But WHY should I allow an ancient book to direct my life? WHY should you?

The Best Principles to Live By

People who genuinely believe IN the Bible as God's Word want to live by the Bible's principles. These people believe the Bible's principles have come from God. When people practice Bible principles they become the finest examples of human behavior anywhere in the world! That's right! And that is a good reason to **follow** the teachings of the Bible because they are the best principles in the world to live by.

Jesus' half-brother James put it this way: "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." (James 3:13-18 ESV)

This is an excellent description of a Christian who is basing his or her life on Jesus Christ and His biblical principles for living. Does that mean that every believer in Christ is living by Jesus' principles? No! Unfortunately, not every so-called Christian believes in living by the Bible.

Earthly Wisdom

James shows us that there are two kinds of conventional wisdom in the world. James calls one of them "earthly"; the other is heavenly; the heavenly

wisdom comes from God. Earthly wisdom is based on "getting ahead" in life. It's all about me! My behavior will be unspiritual and even devilish when I live out of jealousy and selfish ambition.

Heavenly Wisdom

On the other hand, if I live by heavenly principles then those principles will first be "pure." That is, heavenly principles are lived without selfish ulterior motives. Instead of clashing with the ambitions of other people, my actions will be "peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." Don't you like to deal with someone with those characteristics? Friend, if you are NOT a Christian and yet you behave according to those "heavenly principles", then by some means you have learned that this is the best way to live life. In fact, by treating other people this way you are practicing Jesus' golden rule by treating others the way you wish to be treated. (Matthew 7:12)

Advice for Sojourners

Jesus' apostle Peter had this to say to Christians: "Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:11-17 ESV)

Peter's advice came from the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians were ridiculed in the first century just like they are today. Christians were living lives that the majority thought was completely ridiculous. But those Christians were following heavenly wisdom; through the inspired apostles they had gotten their instructions from Heaven! That's right! Yes, you should follow the Bible because it gives guidance in the best way to live on earth.

In the next chapter of his letter, Peter continued this same kind of reasoning about how to conduct your life. "Finally, all of you have unity of mind,

sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For [Peter now quotes from his Bible!]

'Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.' (Psalm 34:12-16)

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:8-17 ESV)

Yes, one great reason to live by the Bible is because living by those principles brings the greatest joys of earth and peace for your soul.

The Life After this one

However, there is another reason for living life according to Bible teaching. The reason is simple: **there is a life after this one!** That's right! There is a life after this earthly life and it is a reward for those who obey Jesus Christ in this world! The Bible prepares you in this world so that you can receive "a place among them that are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18) in Jesus Christ. Jesus said there was a reward waiting in the age to come. Jesus' apostle Peter said to Jesus one day, "See, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." (Mark 10:28-30 ESV)

Whatever a person leaves behind for the sake of Christ and the Gospel will be multiplied a hundredfold in **this world**. However there is something else that person will receive in the age to come; that person will receive "eternal life." An

eternal existence with Christ is waiting for those who will live in this world by Christ's principles for living. Friends, those principles are contained in your Bible, and especially in that part of the Bible called the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

Eternal life is a great promise indeed. It is even alluded to in the Old Testament. The old prophet Malachi, in the last book in the Old Testament, had this to say: "Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. "On the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." (Malachi 3:16-18 NIV)

God sees the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Can you? The Bible is the book that makes this distinction clear! Consider these words about the wicked: "In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak who are caught in the schemes [the wicked] devises. [The Wicked Man] boasts about the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD. In his pride the wicked man does not seek [God]; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. [The Wicked Man's] ways are always prosperous; your laws [O God] are rejected by him; he sneers at all his enemies. He says to himself, "Nothing will ever shake me." He swears, "No one will ever do me harm." [The Wicked Man's] mouth is full of lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue. He lies in wait near the villages; from ambush he murders the innocent. His eyes watch in secret for his victims; like a lion in cover he lies in wait. He lies in wait to catch the helpless; he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net. His victims are crushed, they collapse; they fall under his strength. [The Wicked Person] says to himself [or herself], "God will never notice; he covers his face and never sees." Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless." (Psalm 10:2-12 NIV)
[Brackets indicate my insertions to help carry the subject along throughout the passage. LM]

The God of heaven will NOT forget the helpless, and neither will He forget the wicked! Two different lifestyles; two different philosophies of life! There is the honest person and there is the liar. There is the giver, and there is the taker, the thief. There is the selfish, self-seeking person, and there is the person who cares about helping others. There is the person who is covetous for every dollar he can get; and then there is the person who will give away his last dollar to

someone who needs it more than him or her. There is the one who will crush you, and then there is the one who will lift you up! The Bible teaches "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (Philippians 2:3-4 NIV)

Two different lifestyles; two different destinies! Why don't you adopt the Bible as your guide for life? Let Jesus Christ be the captain of your salvation! Don't face the next world without Him!

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

One of the important things I like about Bible study is the fact that when I open the Bible I am at the source! When I read the words of Jesus written by the inspired writers, I know that I am truly reading the words of Jesus.

When I read the words of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude, I know that I am reading trustworthy words given to them by God's Holy Spirit. This is greatly reassuring. After all, Jesus said "...take my yoke upon you and learn of me..." (Matthew 11:28ff.)

The New Testament of Jesus Christ is our solid connection to Christ. The Old Testament is God's preparatory work that was needed to bring God's salvation into the world.

Inspiration

I cannot learn from Jesus by meditation. I will not be able to think through my own thoughts and come to the thoughts of Jesus. The old prophet Jeremiah spoke of this problem in these words: "I know, O LORD that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. [and then Jeremiah prayed:] Correct me, O LORD..." (Jeremiah 10:23-24, ESV.) This should be the prayer of an individual when he or she opens the Bible. "Teach me Lord. Correct me Lord. Show me the way, O Lord." Our God uses his word in exactly those ways, that is, to teach, correct, and guide.

The Bible's inspiration is the thing that makes the Bible **the** primary source of facts and information about God and His plan for human redemption. Because of its inspiration, all the Bible's facts and information can have its wonderful affect upon my life. Even as David said,

"Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word! Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word. My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes. My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right." (Psalms 119:169-172, ESV.)

Jesus' apostle Paul told the young Christian Timothy, "... you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man

of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17, NKJV.)

What is Inspiration?

Well, what about “inspiration”? What is that like? Isn’t that like someone sitting down and meditating and coming up with ideas? No; it is not like meditation. In meditation you begin with your own thoughts and then expand upon them trying to come up with something new. However, by inspiration the writer is given new thoughts, thoughts that the writer never would have thought of by himself, thoughts that are not built upon human ideas or preconceptions. “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:6-9, ESV.)

Revelation

The Old Testament king, David, was inspired. He described it this way: “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.” (2 Samuel 23:2, ESV.) The apostle Paul called it “revelation.” “For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:11-12, ESV.)

Today, you and I must receive the “revelation” through a different means. We receive our information by a completely different means than the one described by Paul and David. In Paul’s lifetime even his journeys, his movements were sometimes dictated by revelation. Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 2 that fourteen years had gone by in between his visits to Jerusalem, but when he returned to Jerusalem, he did so because of revelation: “I went up because of a revelation and set before them [the apostles and elders in Jerusalem] ... the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.” (Galatians 2:1-2, ESV.) In our day, we **read** the words of Paul that were given to him by revelation.

On another occasion on the second missionary journey, this same apostle Paul wanted to turn north into the country of Bithynia, but the Spirit forbid him. So, he attempted to turn south into Asia. The Spirit also would not allow that. So,

Paul assumed correctly that the Spirit wanted him to travel straight ahead till the road ended at the seacoast and the city of Troas. While there in that city Paul saw a vision of a Macedonian man saying, “come over and help us.” So, Paul and those men with him set sail for Macedonia. They followed the leading of the Spirit. Paul called these kinds of interventions, revelations. In our day, we **read** the words of Paul that were given to him by revelation.

The Mystery of Christ

Paul told the Ephesians: “the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 3:3-5, ESV.)

Paul had obtained “insights” into the “mystery of Christ.” The good news about Christ, that is, the gospel is called the “mystery of Christ” because the details were not known by people in earlier generations. A “mystery” is something that is not clear...the word literally means “hidden.” In earlier generations godly people did not have an understanding or an insight into God’s plan of salvation for the world. It was hidden from their view, from their knowledge.

The Old Testament laid the foundation for it, but no one really understood the plan until the Lord Jesus came to earth. Jesus began to reveal the plan during his public ministry. But He told his disciples that they were not able to fully understand what he was telling them until the Holy Spirit came to guide them into all the truth. (John 16:12-15.) After His ascension Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of revealing what God wanted the world to know. The Holy Spirit gave “revelation” or “insight” into the mystery of Christ. The good news about Christ was only revealed to Christ’s apostles and prophets in the church of Christ, like Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These were the writers of the New Testament.

Didn’t the first century Christians know the “mystery”? Yes, they knew it because God inspired the apostles and prophets in the church to tell them, either orally or in writing. We have in the New Testament what the inspired men wrote. Even as Paul said to the Ephesians, “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ....”

How Do We Receive Insight?

This is the way you and I receive our insight into the gospel of Christ. That's right! We get understanding by reading Paul's insight. We also get insight by reading Matthew's account of the life of Christ, or Mark, or Luke, or John. We learn of Christ by the written Word of God.

There have been many attempts through the centuries to discredit the Bible. None of them have successfully brought down the reliability of the Bible. There are those who have dug up spurious gospels, like the gospel of Thomas, or the gospel of Peter, etc. These spurious books were not written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The early church recognized these counterfeits and excluded them from the sacred selections.

Jesus intended that the church of Christ have these words that would guide and comfort our hearts. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples that he was going away. "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you." (John 16:5-15, NKJV.) Have you put your trust in the Word of God?

Yes, what I like about Bible study is the fact that I am reading and studying the primary source. There is no other like it! There is nothing that can help us like sitting at the feet of the Holy Spirit listening and learning the words of God from the Holy Bible. The scriptures lead us to and contain the words of eternal life, and this life is in Jesus himself. As Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." (John 5:39-41, ESV.)

Do you refuse the message of the scriptures. Will you continue to reject eternal life that is in Jesus Christ, the son of God?

THE KEY FOR INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

How do you "take" the Bible? It seems that two different people can read the same Bible-saying and come up with two opposite views! Some people call this a matter of "interpretation." And it is. These two people have two interpretations of the same words!

Is the Bible-saying so muddy, so mysterious, that it can be understood in more than one way? Is the fault with God, or is the fault with the readers? What does it take for two people to understand the Bible alike?

Reframing the Scriptures

Newt Gingrich, an American political figure, and historian recently gave four illustrations as to how "readers" understand the news. He shows how the same news story can be interpreted as **good news** by some, but **bad news** by others. Gingrich says that Americans increasingly **reframe** the news to fit their own worldview.

I think this phenomenon has been in the world for a long time. Humans everywhere are in the "reframing business". In fact, I believe "reframing" is an age-old occurrence. People are naturally this way. We humans always attempt to justify our thinking and our behavior. And so, we tend to understand things based on our own experiences, our own desires, our own politics, our own worldview! We have our own reading classes! Thus, we have our own Truth! Can two things be TRUE when they contradict one another? No friends, if one thing is TRUE, then its opposite is FALSE!

Religious Reframing

What does this occurrence have to do with religion? Well, look around you! How many religions do you see in the world? Are there truly that many gods? How many churches do you see saying opposite things about the Bible? Do some churches' teaching suit you, but others' do not? Are there that many Bibles?

I am reminded of hearing about a group of self-described Bible scholars who meet periodically to discuss the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ. The group is called the **Jesus Seminar**. They take a saying of Jesus and vote on it. Is this truly something Jesus said, or is it a fake saying? And so, these so-called Bible scholars

cut up Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John until there is very little left. I would say that these people have no **real** interest in believing and obeying Jesus Christ!

What about you? Do you wish to believe and obey Jesus Christ? Can you trust your understanding, your interpretation of his TRUTH?

Equipped to Understand

There is one thing you and I **need** in order to be equipped to understand the Bible alike. That one thing is taught by Jesus in John, chapter 7. Jesus was talking with a hostile group of people who wondered how Jesus came by the knowledge he exhibited. "The Jews there were amazed and asked [one another], "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"" (John 7:15 NIV)

Jesus replied, "**My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.**" (John 7:16-17 KJV) Those people to whom Jesus said this had their own worldview of Bible teaching. And it was their understanding that religious teachers could come by their doctrine only from the academic scribes and rabbis. Jesus had not been properly trained in the schools of the scribes and rabbis. So how had Jesus come to know this impressive doctrine that He was teaching?

Jesus' answer was that He was simply the mouthpiece of the One who sent Him. "**My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.**" Then Jesus made a remarkable statement. He gave His audience the key to understanding the origin of His "doctrine." "**If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.**" What was the source of Jesus' teaching? Did Jesus' teaching originate with God, or Himself? How was a person to know? "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Jesus' Rule of Evidence

Jesus then proceeded to give an important rule of evidence. Jesus said, "**Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.**" (John 7:18 NIV) Ah yes! Here is the key to understanding! Do I attempt to understand the teaching of Christ **for my own "personal glory"**, or do I interpret the teaching of Christ and the Bible so as to promote my own desires? Or, do I truly desire **to practice in my life the "will" of God**? Do I seek to live for "the glory of the one who sent" Jesus?

You see, the key to interpretation depends upon what I am seeking! My interpretations of God's Word depend upon my worldview! If I am seeking my personal desires then I will interpret the doctrine to suit myself, to justify what I do. However, if I am seeking God's will for my life so as to further God's glory with my life, then I will discover the truth in the teaching! No wonder that Jesus said that His follower must "take up the cross and follow him." Jesus' follower must "die" to his own interests in order to recognize the interests of God!

Straighten Your Deep Desires

You can straighten out your life by straightening out your deep desires! You can use the Key to interpretation to understand God's Word if you will discover and straighten out your own deep desires! The question becomes: Do you want to do God's Will?

Jesus kept on teaching God's truth even in the face of opposition. He was teaching people who did not want to do God's will. Jesus even accused these opponents as having a different "Father" than the one they claimed. On one occasion these hostile opponents replied to Jesus "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." (John 8:41 ESV)

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? [There is our question! "Why do you not understand what I say?"]

Why can't people agree on what Jesus and the prophets say? Why can they not interpret the Bible alike? Jesus gave the reason. "It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and **your will** is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me." (John 8:42-45 ESV)

When will we come to grips with our desires? When will the chords of our strong desires be broken? When will we claim the true and living God as our god? When will we drop Satan from the throne of our hearts? WE MUST DESIRE TO DO GOD'S WILL IN ORDER TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE CORRECTLY!

Pray this Prayer

Our prayer should be this: "[Oh] God, see what is in my heart. Know what is there. Put me to the test. Know what I'm thinking. See if there's anything in my life you don't like. Help me live in the way that is always right." ([Psalms 139:23-24 NIV](#))

David asked God, "Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind." ([Psalms 26:2 ESV](#))

Moses told the Israelites in the wilderness, "Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you. Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him." ([Deuteronomy 8:2-6 NIV](#)) Those words are good advice for you and me!

We should remember the God who has made us and who has sustained us all these years! Jesus' apostle Peter says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen." ([1 Peter 5:6-11 ESV](#))

The old proverb reads, "The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, [but] the LORD tests hearts." ([Proverbs 17:3 ESV](#))

Is the LORD testing your heart? Is the LORD giving you some doubts about your own desires? Have your interpretations of the Bible twisted God's truth, because you desired it your way?

Evidently, some of the people with whom Jesus was talking began to understand what Jesus was teaching when He said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:28-32 ESV)

We can know Jesus' truth, and we can know it alike! Will you seek to do God's Will, so that you can know the truth? According to Jesus, if we will abide in His word then we can be truly His disciples. We can know Jesus' truth, not our own interpretations. We will come into oneness; we will come into agreement! After all, it is Jesus' truth that will set us free!

Visit a church of Christ near you and give over your heart to knowing Jesus' truth!

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Even though the Bible is the all-time best-selling book, the world is still largely ignorant of the contents of the Bible. Why is there so much ignorance of this great book? Is it too hard to understand? Is there a special key that a person needs in order to understand it? Are you interested in understanding the Bible?

The Blessing of the Bible

The Bible is composed of 66 separate units which we call books. Each book has been divided into chapters, and chapters have been divided into verses. God did not divide the books this way, but humans did so because it made for easier access to the messages of the Bible. Sometimes the divisions of chapters and verses can cause misunderstanding, but for the most part, they have become very helpful to Bible students. You can become a Bible student. That's right! People who can read in their own language can understand the Bible written in their language. The world is blessed that the Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages and dialects.

Learning From the Bible

Learning the Bible is like learning school subjects. Students can learn more quickly if they take a systematic approach to the subject like a textbook would lay it out. Furthermore, a student can learn more quickly if the student has a teacher to guide him or her in study of the subject.

Philip was a teacher of Jesus Christ. He met a man from Ethiopia out on a road one day. Philip approached the man's chariot and overheard the man reading from the Bible. Philip asked the Ethiopian man if he understood what he was reading. The man answered with his own question, "how can I except some man should guide me?" The Ethiopian could read; he knew the words, why couldn't he understand what the words meant? The reason Philip could understand those words was because he knew the "rest of the story." Philip knew the fulfillment of the prophesy that the Ethiopian man was reading.

The man in the chariot was reading from the prophecies of Isaiah. Isaiah lived 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Particularly the Ethiopian man was reading from the place we call chapter 53, where it was written, "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." Acts 8:32-33 (ESV)

The man asked Philip, "About whom...does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. Acts 8:34, 35 (ESV)

The thing that made Philip a teacher and reputable guide was the fact that he knew the rest of the story. Philip knew how that 700-year-old prophecy had been fulfilled. He knew the good news about Jesus.

Become Jesus' Student/Learner

A teacher is a person who has also read the material and has had his own questions answered. A teacher has been over the road, and so he knows the way. He himself has been a learner.

Jesus invited people to learn about him. He said, **All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.** [Well, who will the Lord choose? Who will Jesus allow to know the Father?] **Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**" Matthew 11:27-30 (ESV)

In the school of Jesus Christ there is found rest for your soul. There is peace in the heart that flows like a deep river. The knowledge of Christ enriches your soul, it gives you vision beyond your years.

As we read the Bible, we will be like the Ethiopian man; we will have questions. But we can rely upon Jesus to explain to us His teaching. In John, chapter 7, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. "About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" So Jesus answered them, **"My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood."** (John 7:14-18)

Desiring to Do God's Will

When a person wants to do God's will, not his own will, not anyone else's will, then that person will come to know what the will of the Lord is. He will come to trust that the teaching comes from God. Students of God's Word must get their motives in order. They must read and study the Bible while wanting to do

the will of God above everything else. Jesus said "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**" Matthew 5:6 (ESV)

Paul encouraged Timothy "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)

We have a saying in America for those who have begun a new job. We say that the new person must "learn the ropes." That is, the new worker must have some time to become familiar with the job. They must learn to use their hands in a way that they have not used them before. Give a child a screwdriver and watch. The child has a difficult time working with the screwdriver. But give the screwdriver to a seasoned electrician or an experienced carpenter and you can see the difference between experience and no experience. The same thing is true about handling the Word of Truth, God's Word found in the Bible. It takes reading and study and practice in order to become a disciple, a learner of Jesus. Jesus said, "come learn of me." When we are heavy-hearted, burdened with our sins, Jesus invites us to come learn of Him. He is meek, that is, he is open and gentle. He is lowly in heart. Jesus does not have an ego problem. His yoke, his burden, that is, his requirements are easy and light. With Jesus we can find rest for our souls.

Paul encouraged the young man Timothy with the analogies of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer: "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything." 2 Timothy 2:3-7 (ESV)

It takes three things to be good students of the Bible. It takes pure motive, dedication to the task: we must want to do the will of God, not becoming entangled in civilian pursuits. Secondly, it takes discipline (playing by the rules). The student must take the proper steps in order to learn from God's word. Thirdly, like farming, it takes hard work in order to have a crop. We must spend the necessary time that it takes to learn the knowledge of Christ.

The reason there is a Bible in the world is because God intended for it to be here and blessing you and me. "The LORD says: "My thoughts and my ways are not like yours.

Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours. "Rain and snow fall from the sky. But they don't return

without watering the earth that produces seeds to plant and grain to eat. That's how it is with my words. They don't return to me without doing everything I send them to do." (Isaiah 55:8-11)

Are you a student of these great words of God? You will find them in your Bible. You can understand them. Christ will bless those who have a will to do God's will. Do you have that desire?

THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

Whether you are reading the newspaper or reading your Bible you will interpret as you read. Will you interpret what you are reading correctly? One of the most important principles of interpretation is to consider the writer's purpose for writing.

When we know the purpose for which it is written we have a better chance of interpreting the written message correctly. Have you ever wondered: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE?

The Real Purpose

I once had a graduate course in Family Therapy. The textbook was a typical family therapy textbook until the last chapter of the book! In the last chapter the authors began to write like so called "new age" writers! It made me wonder what the real purpose for that book was. Was it just to inform students about Family Therapy, or was there a hidden agenda? God and His Holy Spirit are the authors of the Bible. Why did they write it? What is the purpose of the Bible?

The English word "Bible" never appears in our English translations, except on the cover! But the meaning of the word is quite visible at many places in the Bible. The Greek word literally means "book".

We are told that the word Byblos was originally the name of the inner part of a stem of the papyrus plant. The inner substance of that plant was removed, dried and attached to others in order to make paper, which provided a surface that could be written upon with ink. Pretty soon the paper itself was called Byblos, or book. We find this Greek word many times in the scriptures. Notice the following instances of the word:

Matthew's Purpose

In Matthew 1:1 Matthew starts off by telling his readers about the contents of his writing: Matthew called it "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Within that verse we also get a glimpse into the purpose of Matthew's book. He wanted people to read about the generation of Jesus Christ, that is, the lifetime of Jesus Christ on the earth, what He did and what He said. Matthew tells us about Jesus' miraculous birth and ends the book with Jesus' miraculous ascension back to His heavenly Father. Matthew wanted us to hear the teaching of Christ so that it could change our lives, so that the readers could be like a man who built his house upon the rock, instead of sand. Matthew quoted Jesus as saying, **"Everyone then who hears these words of mine**

and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27, ESV.)

Prophecy

Matthew also wanted his readers to know that Jesus' life was the subject of prophets who had lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Jewish prophets predicted Jesus' coming. They wrote their predictions in that collection of books called the Old Testament. Several men predicted many things about Jesus' life including His suffering, His death, and His resurrection. Those prophets also foresaw Jesus' second coming, which is still in our future. Those prophets who predicted these things about the life of Christ wrote the prophecies down, so that readers could believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The apostle John said this about the prophet Isaiah: "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. (John 12:41, ESV.)

Jesus himself spoke about the "books" in the Old Testament. Jesus was talking about the resurrection of the dead when he said: "And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" (Mark 12:26, KJV.)

Jesus was referring to Moses' book that we call the book of Exodus. Jesus said that that reference in Exodus proved that God would raise the dead! That's right! God used the present tense when he spoke to Moses and said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus concluded that since God is NOT the God of the dead, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive somewhere, and since they are alive, they will be reunited with a resurrected body when Jesus comes again.

Don't you know that the reason God preserved that book of Moses was because it would open the eyes of people in later generations about the eternal spirit in mankind. There was a purpose, a reason, why Moses was inspired to write.

In the book of Philippians, we read of another book.

"I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side

with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Phil 4:2-3 (ESV)

Evidently this book of life contains a list of names of people who have believed and obeyed Jesus, the Son of God. This book is mentioned twice more in the book of Revelation:

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Revelation 3:5 (KJV)

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:15 (KJV)

If you are to be saved from the lake of fire, your name must be recorded in the “book of life.”

In all of these instances where we read of books, the purpose of the book is suggested in its name. The word “book” indicates the medium by which the purpose is accomplished. Example: Matthew’s purpose in writing was to tell about the “generation” or lifetime of Jesus Christ on the earth. (Matthew 1:1)

The One Grand Purpose of the Bible

Gather all the Holy Scripture into one book and call it THE BOOK, the BIBLE. Is there one grand theme, one grand purpose, for the writing of the Bible? What is the purpose of this great Book?

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy by saying,

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (ESV)

Do you want to be a man or woman of God? This is the purpose of Scripture. This is the purpose of the Bible. Salvation is necessary because sin is in the world, and in us! That’s right!

All scripture is breathed out by God because He wants the people of the world to be saved from the consequences of their sins. The only way that God could justify forgiving mankind is by the sacrifice of His own son on our behalf. Just as by the one act of Adam’s disobedience we all were turned away from the

tree of life, by Jesus' one act of righteousness on the cross we can now have access to God's eternal life.

The apostle John gave the reason for His book as follows:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John 20:30-31 (KJV)

The Bible tells you what to do to be saved by Jesus Christ.

Believe in Jesus as the Christ. Jesus said, “Unless you believe that I am he, you shall die in your sins.”

Repent of your sins – Jesus said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Confess your faith – ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” Matt 10:32-33 (ESV)

Be baptized – Jesus said to his disciples, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:15-16 (ESV)

Are you ready to fulfill the purpose of the Bible in your life? Are you ready to become a Christian? Obey the gospel of Christ while you have breath and life. Obey today!