

What Is The Bible?

No book has...been more hated or more loved...caused more controversy or been credited with changing more lives...been so profusely published or so violently prohibited. Yet no book is more important for us than the Bible.

Without the Bible there would be so many things that we would not know, such as...God, the origins of life, God's plan for the family, life after death, how to be saved, God's plan for the nations, and the church.

In this lesson, we are going to talk about the Bible and we are going to see what the Bible says about itself. This might be a strange approach, but it makes sense when you consider the very nature of what the Bible claims to be. The Bible claims to be the final authority for everything we believe and do. So there is no higher authority to which it can or need appeal.

There are many scientific, medical, social, geographical, historical, and personal reasons to believe the Bible, yet the greatest proof for why we should believe the Bible is the Bible itself.

The Bible is like a lion that needs no defending. No person ever needs to worry about the Bible's ability to be truthful, authoritative, or stand up under attack.

Some men have found apparent contradictions, yet no one has ever been able to explain:

- The fulfilment of hundreds of prophecies in the Bible.
- The scientific knowledge and accuracy of the Bible well before its time.
- The ability of the Bible to know the thoughts and intents of the human heart.
- The lives that have been changed by the Bible.

In this study, we will look at seven things about the Bible. We will see that the Bible...1) is a book of books; 2) is the Word of God; 3) is inspired; 4) is infinitely profitable; 5) is sufficient for all we need; 6) has been and will be preserved; and 7) points to Jesus. We will finish our study by considering what these truths about the Bible mean for us.

KEY VERSE: 2 Timothy 3:16 *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*

BOOKS TO MEMORISE: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

CHAPTERS TO READ: John 1-7

1. THE BIBLE IS A BOOK OF BOOKS.

The word 'Bible' comes from the Greek word 'biblos' (book) or 'biblia' (books).

The Bible is actually made up of 66 different books: 39 in the Old Testament; 27 in the New Testament.

The books of the Bible as we have them today are arranged primarily by literary genre and secondarily by chronology.

The Old Testament contains:

5 books of law - Genesis to Deuteronomy (Called the Pentateuch; Written by Moses.)

12 books of history - from the death of Moses until 400 years before Christ

5 books of poetry - Hebrew poetry that is not just rhyming poetry as we might think, but other types of poetry

5 major prophets - called 'major' because their message is longer

12 minor prophets - not minor in their message but minor in length

NOTE: Another way the Old Testament books can be arranged and the way Jesus and the Jews (see Luke 24:44) would have arranged them were by:

Law - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Prophets - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel & the Minor Prophets

Psalms (or Writings) = Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, & Chronicles

The New Testament contains:

4 gospel records - looking at the life of Christ from various angles

1 historical book - Acts

9 epistles (formal letters) of Paul to churches - Romans through 2 Thessalonians

4 epistles (formal letters) of Paul to pastors/friends - 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

9 general letters - written by other authors including Revelation

The Bible is one complete book.

Though the Bible is comprised of 66 individual books there is a reason we often refer and have it bound all in one book.

Because the Bible has one main author, God the Holy Spirit, there is an incredible unity, agreement, and harmony throughout the Bible.

Taken as a whole, the Bible communicates one united story.

2. THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

2 Peter 1:16–21

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. 19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 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.

v.16 The Apostle Peter wanted his readers to know that he was not following some made-up story. Instead, he and others were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty.

v.17-18 One very significant event in Peter's life was Jesus' 'transfiguration', when the honour and glory of Jesus were revealed to Peter, James and John, and when the voice of God the Father said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. (Compare Matthew 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.)

v.19 But, Peter tells us there is something that is more reliable than even eyewitness testimony, something that we should listen to like a light that shines in a dark place. We should keep listening to it until Jesus returns. (The dawning of day is referring to the return of Christ. Compare Romans 13:12; Revelation 22:16.)

v.20 Before Jesus Christ returns we need to know that no part of the Bible is of any private interpretation (someone's own thoughts or opinions).

v.21 The Bible came by the will of man, but holy men of God spake (and wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The Bible has many human authors.

Holy men like Peter (about 40 of them). Men from all different walks of life: kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, generals, doctors, tax collectors. Men who live on three different continents - Africa, Asia, Europe

The Bible has one Divine author - the Holy Ghost (Spirit).

He moved them along. He guided them in what to say. He often used their experiences, knowledge, and language abilities, but he was not limited to it. He could give them insight and knowledge so that they wrote without error and with incredible unity.

The thing that makes the various books of the Bible part of the Bible is not that men decided but the fact that each book possesses an authority that comes directly from God.

When the early churches made the canon (list) of the books that now are in our Bible they were only recognising what is already there present - the mark of the Holy Spirit of God.

We can rightly call the Bible 'the Word of God'.

It came to us from God as He moved men to write His Word on His behalf. We will see more of this under the next point.

3. THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED.

2 Timothy 3:13–16

¹³ But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. ¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; ¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

v.13 In this chapter, Paul the Apostle is speaking to Timothy about the spiritual dangers of the last times. One major danger Paul foresaw was the fact that there would be more and more deception.

v.14-15 In light of this, he exhorts Timothy to stick with the things he has been taught and to remember those who taught him. The things he had been taught from a child were the 'holy scriptures' (holy writings).

v.16 These scriptures are the key to avoiding deception because **all of them** have been 'given by inspiration of God' which means they are 'God-breathed'. They came from the very mouth ('breath') of God! As the human authors wrote, God was speaking through them.

2 Samuel 23:1–2

¹ Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, And the man who was raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, ² The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, And his word was in my tongue.

4. THE BIBLE IS INFINITELY PROFITABLE.

2 Timothy 3:15–16

¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Here some of the ways the Bible profits us:

1. Salvation (v.15) - Showing us how to be right with God

One of the greatest benefits of the Bible is that it 'makes us wise unto salvation'.

The Bible tells of God's perfect creation that was marred by sin. But then it tells of the coming of Christ Jesus, God's chosen Saviour.

He came, died, was buried, and rose again and all who have faith in Him will be saved from their sin.

2. Doctrine (v.16) - Telling us what is true and false

Doctrine = belief or teaching

Doctrine can be true or false. Some doctrines are called 'doctrines of devils (demons)' (2 Timothy 4:1). Other doctrine is called 'sound (healthy)' (2 Timothy 4:3).

The only way to know what is true and what is false - what is right and what is wrong - is to measure it by the standard - the Bible.

It is easy to be wrong, so we need to keep reading, searching, and studying the Scriptures.

John 5:39

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Acts 17:11

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

3. Reproof (v.16) - Rebuking us when we sin

4. Correction (v.16) - Correcting us when we are in error

5. Instruction in righteousness (v.17) - Teaching us how to grow up in the ways of Godly living

5. THE BIBLE IS SUFFICIENT FOR ALL WE NEED.

2 Timothy 3:17

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Many people respect the Bible, but few lean on it for everything.

But here we are told that..

- through the Scripture,
- 'the man of God' (anyone who seeks to serve God and others)
- will be 'perfect' (completed),
- 'thoroughly furnished' (equipped with every necessary component for a task).

Paul knew that because Timothy had the Word, he had all he needed.

The same is true for us. The Word is all we need.

Acts 20:32

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

6. THE BIBLE HAS BEEN AND WILL BE PRESERVED.

Psalm 12:6–7

⁶ The words of the Lord are pure words: As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. ⁷ Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Much doubt has been cast upon the Bible by those who say:

‘The Bible has been changed over the years.’

‘If the Bible has been changed, can we really trust it?’

NOTE: It’s interesting how there does not tend to be the same scepticism over other historical writings such as those about people like Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great.

The same God who can create the world and inspire His Word can also protect it and keep it for every generation.

Isaiah 40:8

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: But the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Matthew 24:35

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Matthew 24:35

If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

7. THE BIBLE POINTS TO JESUS.

Luke 24:25–27

²⁵ Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ²⁶ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

The Bible is not just a book about abstract ideas or rules and regulations. It is primarily about one person - Jesus Christ.

The lives of many other men and women are mentioned in the Bible, but their lives only serve to highlight how much they needed Jesus (and how much we need Jesus).

There were many men and women that God greatly used, but they all had their weaknesses and none of them measured up in any way to Jesus.

Everything in the Bible points to Jesus. He is the point of the whole story.

Acts 28:23

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

When we read the Bible, we should look for Jesus. We should look for man’s failure and God’s grace. We should ask, ‘Where is Jesus in all of this?’

WHY DOES THE BIBLE MATTER?

The fact that we have an inspired, preserved, sufficient, and authoritative Word of God means...

There is a God.

How else would we get such an amazing book? From the very beginning, His existence is assumed.

God wants a relationship with us.

From the very beginning, God walked and talked with man and ever since that time God has been seeking for men. He seeks for us even when we don't seek for Him.

The God of the Bible is one of love and grace even though we have sinned against Him.

From the beginning, God provided a means of salvation to sinful man, a sacrifice that pictures the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the lamb of God who "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

We can know God, know how to be saved, and know what to believe and how to live.

The Bible is far more than a history book, a philosophy book, a relationship book, or a theological book; it is a revelatory book. The Bible is how God reveals Himself to us.

Hebrews 1:1-3

¹ God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ² Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; ³ Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

God wants to know you. He gave His Son, the living Word, as the ultimate expression of Himself. And He gave the written Word as the impeccable record of the life of His Son.

Based on this, we should...

1. Come to know God through faith in Jesus as recorded in the Word.

2. Come to know God more through His inspired writings.

3. Mix what we read with faith.

Hebrews 4:2

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.

4. Submit our lives to God's Word.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

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.

5. Study the Bible carefully so we correctly understand it.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

6. Proclaim the teachings of the Bible and watch God bless it.

Mark 16:20

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

7. Join a church that makes preaching and teaching the Word of God the priority.

It should be the priority for everything - the services, the small groups, the youth and children's ministries and in their personal lives.

Psalms 19:7-11

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: And in keeping of them there is great reward.