

Foundations: Bible Truths For Christian Growth

## Chapter 5: The Word of God

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Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995.



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## Foundations: Bible Truths for Christian Growth

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*To say that the Bible is important is an understatement. Indeed, it is central to every part of Christianity. But why is it important? From where did it come? How can you understand it? How does it apply to you?*

*The answers to these questions are vital to your continued spiritual growth. As the title to this lesson states, the Bible is “God’s communication to you.” You need to learn to understand the Bible and apply it to your every-day life, and there is no better place to learn about it than from the Bible itself. Let’s dig in!*

### Inspiration of Scripture

**2 Timothy 3:16** is the key passage on the inspiration of the Bible. The beginning part of the verse teaches that the Bible is *inspired*. The Greek word which is translated as “*inspired by God*” literally means “God-breathed.” The inspiration of the Bible refers to the process by which God “breathed out” the words of Scripture through human instruments—the writers. The result is that the Bible is God’s Word, not merely man’s words.

### Trombones and Trombonists

When a musician plays a trombone, he blows air through it. The trombone affects the sound, making it different from that of a trumpet or tuba. Yet, the trombone is not credited with creating the music. The talent and creativity belong to the musician; the music is essentially his. Audiences applaud trombonists, not trombones. The musician *breathes* through his instrument to create his music. Similarly, God *breathed through* holy men. They were but instruments which He used to accomplish His purpose. The Bible is much more than the words of men—it is the Word of God!

Some people teach that the Bible merely *contains* the Word of God. Use **2 Timothy 3:16** to discover what is wrong with that statement. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Note: Many people believe that there is only one English version of the Bible that is inspired. That belief is not grounded in Scripture.)*

How could the Bible be God's Word when it was actually put to paper and ink by men? **2 Peter 1:20–21** tells us. What does verse 20 teach about the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

The statement “no prophecy of the Scripture is a matter of one's interpretation” means that Scripture did not *originate* with men. The writers of Scripture did not write their own (private) opinions; they wrote God's Word.

What does verse 21 teach about the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

Scripture writers didn't write of their own volition (*will*). Rather, they were *borne along*\* (“moved”) by the Holy Spirit. They picked up pens to write, but the words were God's.

*\*Acts 27:15 uses the same word for a ship being driven by wind. Just as wind fills a sail and drives a ship, God's Spirit filled and “drove” the writers of Scripture.*

Because the Bible is the Word of God, it is without error—a teaching referred to as the *inerrancy of Scripture*. In **John 17:17** Jesus states that God's Word is \_\_\_\_\_. It is impossible for God to *breathe out* falsehood or error.

The Bible further teaches that Scripture is absolutely reliable.

What does Jesus say about the Bible in **John 10:35b**? \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus is even more specific in **Matthew 5:18**. Read it. The *letter* or *stroke* (what the KJV calls *jot* and *tittle*) Jesus referred to are the smallest parts of Hebrew letters. The *tittle* is the very slight corner which makes two Hebrew letters differ.

Jesus' statement was similar to the modern phrase “the dot of an ‘i’ and the cross of a ‘t.’” What was His point? \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 5:18 teaches the following two essential aspects of inspiration:

1. The very **WORDS** of Scripture are God-breathed and inerrant. (This is referred to as *verbal inspiration*.)
2. The **ENTIRETY** of Scripture is God-breathed and inerrant. (This is referred to as *plenary* or *full inspiration*.)

## Benefits of Scripture

We learned from **2 Timothy 3:16** that the Bible is *inspired*. The verse goes on to say that the Bible is “profitable”—it is a benefit to those who read it. According to the last part of this verse, with what four areas does the Bible help?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (what *is* right)

*This word specifically refers to the Bible as a teacher.*

2. \_\_\_\_\_ (what is *not* right)

*This word refers to a strong rebuke. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to prick our consciences about our sin. Scripture exposes to us our sinfulness.*

3. \_\_\_\_\_ (how to *get* right)

*This word is used of setting a broken bone or straightening a crooked spine. Scripture gives spiritual mending—it sets us right again.*

4. \_\_\_\_\_ (how to *stay* right)

*This word is used of child-training. As parent to child, the Bible trains and disciplines us, bringing us to spiritual maturity.*

It is obvious that the Bible is helpful, but with what specific areas does it help?

1. **The Bible is essential for salvation.**

What does **2 Timothy 3:15b** say that Scripture is able to do? \_\_\_\_\_

Were it not for Scripture, we would not know our lost condition, much less that Jesus died to provide our salvation.

How is saving faith developed in non-believers according to **Romans 10:17**? \_\_\_\_\_

What does **Romans 1:16** say that the Bible is “the power of God... \_\_\_\_\_.”

2. **The Bible is essential for Christian growth.**

Scripture paints a vivid picture when it says that you are “born again” at the point of salvation. You are a Christian, but you are only a baby Christian. You need to grow!

**1 Peter 2:2** describes the process of spiritual growth. From what do babies get nourished? \_\_\_\_\_

As a baby Christian, what is your *spiritual milk*?

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(See Job 23:12 and Hebrews 5:13–14)*

How often do babies eat? \_\_\_\_\_

What would happen if a baby didn’t eat? \_\_\_\_\_

What does this passage teach regarding your “feeding” on Scripture? How often do you need it? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(See 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and Acts 20:32)*

3. **The Bible is essential for godly living.**

The writer of **Psalm 119:9** asked a question that every Christian struggles with: *how can I be clean from sin?*

What is his answer at the end of the verse? \_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 119:11** is very similar. Explain it in your own words.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He prayed for His disciples and all future Christians, as recorded in **John 17**. One request was that we would be “sanctified” (*made holy*). How are Christians sanctified according to **John 17:17**? \_\_\_\_\_

Many Christians say they want to grow, yet they never spend time studying God's Word. Scripture is clear: there can be no growth and no godliness apart from consistent, disciplined Bible study.

#### 4. The Bible is essential for knowing God intimately.

Remember, the Bible is not merely a book; it is God's word. It is God's self-revelation...what He has chosen to tell us about Himself. In the words of A. W. Tozer, *"The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts."*<sup>11</sup>

Jesus tells us in **John 5:39** that the Bible—even the Old Testament, written before His physical birth—"testified" of Him. To know God personally and intimately, you need to study about Him in His Word. In the Christian classic, *Evening by Evening*, C.H. Spurgeon said the following about John 5:39: *"No more powerful motive can be urged upon Bible readers than this: he who finds Jesus finds life, heaven, all things. Happy [is] he who, searching his Bible, discovers his Savior."*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982), p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Evening by Evening, or Readings at Eventide for the Family or the Closet* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1861), p. 161. This work is sometimes combined with his other work *Morning by Morning* and published under the title *Morning and Evening*.

#### Think of Scripture as an Autobiography...

The main topic of Scripture is a Person, not a program. Scripture teaches us about sin and salvation. It addresses relationships with spouses, employers, children, servants and persecutors. It is filled with both good and bad examples. It tells us what God expects. It brims with promises. Yet, the Bible is first and foremost an autobiography. It is God's revelation of Himself. When you read it, don't just look for commands, promises and examples...look for God and what He's like!

#### Sufficiency of Scripture

For years, Bible-believers have stated that "the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice." However, many men and churches teach that the Bible is a good starting place, but must be supplemented by tradition, psychology, etc.

**2 Peter 1:3–4** teaches that God has given us "everything pertaining to life and godliness." What do these verses say about the sufficiency of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_

We looked at **2 Timothy 3:16** in our discussion about *inspiration*. Verse 17 goes on to say that the Bible will make Christians spiritually mature ("adequate") and fully prepared ("equipped") for ministry. Based on the fact that Scripture can do all of those things, what "charge" does Paul give to the young pastor, Timothy, in **2 Timothy 4:2**? \_\_\_\_\_

Sadly, many preachers today seem to preach anything *but* the Bible. There is a reason for that. **2 Timothy 4:3–4** says that people will eventually refuse to hear the Bible. What will they want instead? \_\_\_\_\_

Although the Bible is thought by many to be antiquated or out of touch, Scripture teaches that God’s Word alone contains everything we need to know about how to live. Christians from the city of Berea were commended for their attitude toward the Bible and Bible teachers.

How did they respond to the preaching of God’s Word (**Acts 17:10–11**)? \_\_\_\_\_

Pastors are only helpful to the extent that they direct people to Scripture. Indeed, *this book* is only helpful to the extent that it points you to Scripture. Your faith and convictions must rest securely on Scripture, not hearsay or opinion. The Bible alone is “God–breathed” and therefore is both helpful and sufficient.

## Application of Scripture

Now that you know your need for Scripture, let’s be very practical: How do you go about Bible study? **Joshua 1:8** gives a three–step process.

1. **Read it**—“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth” (Joshua 1:8a).

What are some excuses that Christians (yourself included) give for not reading Scripture consistently?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you refute those excuses from Joshua 1:8?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Deuteronomy 6:6–9** is a similar passage. According to these verses, when and how often should you place yourself under the influence of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reading Scripture with understanding is not easy. You need help! **1 Corinthians 2:14** teaches that the unsaved (“natural”) man cannot and will not “accept the things of the Spirit of God” (Scripture). Why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

By contrast, the Christian (“he who is spiritual”) is able to discern (“appraise”) Scripture (v.15). Why? Because through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he has \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 16).

As a Christian, you have the Author of Scripture living in you, helping you to understand and apply what it means!

*(Note: The ministry whereby the Holy Spirit helps you to understand Scripture is called illumination. It will be covered in Chapter 9.)*

Write out the prayer uttered in **Psalm 119:18** and explain it. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*“Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer.”*  
**C.H. Spurgeon** <sup>13</sup>

2. **Think about it**—“but you shall meditate on it day and night” (Joshua 1:8b).

Meditation in Scripture is not thoughtlessness. Rather, it is thinking about Scripture with an emphasis on personal application.

**“Hmmm....”**

The Hebrew word which is translated as “meditate” in Joshua 1:8 literally means to *moan* or *mutter*. It communicates the idea of deep thought, as though someone were muttering to himself under his breath, so consumed in his concentration that he is oblivious to those around him. God commands you to meditate—to think about the Word, especially regarding its application to your life (see Psalm 1:1–2 and 119: 97, 99).

Included in meditation is Scripture memory. You cannot always carry a Bible, but you can carry portions of it in your memory. Read **Psalm 119:11** again and explain how it addresses Scripture memory. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. **Obey it**—“that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it...” (Joshua 1:8c). Here is

<sup>13</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (reprint, Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), p. 42.

the most difficult step of the three, yet the most important. Reading the Bible is good, but doing it must follow directly on its heels. You must apply what you read in Scripture to your everyday life! **James 1:22–25** discuss two different kinds of people. Who are they and what is the difference between them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Obedience to Scripture demands a difficult thing: *change*. You must be ready to begin doing things the Bible commands and stop doing things the Bible forbids. This process of change has a final goal: that you should become more and more like Jesus Christ (see **2 Corinthians 3:18**).

*“The Holy Spirit of God uses the Holy Word of God to make me more like the Holy Son of God.”*  
**Ken Collier**  
The Wilds Christian Camp

Your goal for every time you read the Bible should be to *change* in order to be more pleasing to God! Stewart Custer, a godly Bible teacher and scholar, writes, “*What is in the Bible is not there just to give you historical background or theological precision; it’s there to make you what you should be and to mold your understanding of Scripture, so that it may mold your character and transform you into the kind of person that God wants you to be.*”<sup>14</sup>

**Joshua 1:8** does not end with a command, but with a promise. If you read, apply, and obey the Bible, you

<sup>14</sup> Stewart Custer, “Biblical Balance” in *Balance*, vol. 20, No. 4, p. 2.

will be rewarded with spiritual prosperity and success! Get busy!

*Let's review what we've learned:*

- The Bible is **inspired**—it is God's Word, not man's word. It is therefore without error.
- The Bible is **profitable**—it tells you what you need to know about life and eternity.
- The Bible is **sufficient**—it is our only rule for faith and practice. It needs no supplement.
- The Bible must be **applied**—read it, think about it, and obey it. The goal of Bible study is change to Christlikeness.

**Scripture Memory**

**2 Timothy 3:16**

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

**1 Peter 2:2**

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

**Psalms 119:18**

Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.

**Check Your Progress**

What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this Bible study? Why are they important?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions to measure your understanding of the Word of God:

1. What is meant by the following terms:

- Inspiration* (p. 78) \_\_\_\_\_
- Inerrancy* (p. 79) \_\_\_\_\_
- Sufficiency* (p. 84–85) \_\_\_\_\_
- Illumination* (p. 86) \_\_\_\_\_
- Meditation* (p. 87–87) \_\_\_\_\_
- Application* (p. 85–88) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What three steps of Bible study are found in Joshua 1:8? (p. 85–87) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the goal of your personal Bible study?  
(p. 88) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What can you do to begin to benefit from your own  
study of God's Word? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Check off the following verses only when you can  
say them from memory:

- 2 Timothy 3:16       Psalm 119:18
- 1 Peter 2:2

Do you believe that you know this material well  
enough to teach it to someone else? \_\_\_\_\_ If not,  
review it until you do!