

# GIVE Me The BIBLE



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# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

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## **JUNE 7 – INSPIRED**

All Scripture is God-breathed and may truly be called God's Word. Men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. We can trust the Word of God because we know it finds its source in God Himself.

## **JUNE 14 – TRUSTWORTHY**

How do we know the word of God came to us in a form that was like the original? What about all those variants in Scripture? In this lesson we'll see how God's word is true to its origin and is utterly trustworthy.

## **JUNE 21 – ALL-SUFFICIENT**

God gave to us in the Bible all things that pertain to life and godliness, and we are not lacking anything that teaches us how to live and how to have eternal life. Because the word is all-sufficient, there is no need to change it in any way.

## **JUNE 28 – AUTHORITATIVE**

Since Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth and His words recorded in Scripture will judge us in the last day, we know the Bible has authority over us in this life. We need to hear and to obey the revealed word of God.

## Inspired

When the Bible speaks of being inspired, it means that it was breathed out by God. Today we're going to explore the inspiration of the Bible. We search the Bible because we know that the Bible provides the one true and trustworthy source of God's wisdom and instructions. We go to the Word of God because it's the only way to eternal life. Some modern-day prophets claim God spoke to them, but they offer no proof of inspiration. We can, however, trust the Bible.

Occasionally someone speaks of a book being inspirational, meaning the book had a positive impact on their thinking and lives. I love inspirational books like *Tom Sawyer* or Greg Tidwell's new book, *The Effective Edge*. You pick them up and they're so good you can't put them down. You read them with a smile and appreciation. But being inspirational isn't the same as being inspired of God. While one can learn a whole lot from an inspirational book, in the end it's still coming from a human being. But when the Bible speaks of being inspired, it means that it came from God Himself; that God breathed it out to us and for us.

One of my teachers and a translator of the New Testament, Hugo McCord, said, "The Bible was given by inspiration of God as the Holy Spirit worked within select men, revealing to them the thoughts of God and enabling them to use the appropriate words to communicate divine truth without error. God put the Holy Spirit into the writers of the Bible and, through Him, guided them in the writing of the Bible. Thus, 'inspiration' may be defined as the process by which God breathed His Spirit into men, enabling them to receive and to communicate divine truth without error. Oh, the Bible is God speaking!" Brother McCord is right! We must pay attention to God's Word.

Our reading today comes from 2 Peter 1:16-21. "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'— and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

If we wish to understand the idea of inspiration, we must go to the Scriptures themselves. The Bible actually has a lot to say about inspiration. There are three passages in the New Testament that are especially valuable.

First, Paul said, "these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (I Corinthians 2:10-13). Paul here argues that what he taught came from God through the Holy Spirit, not through human wisdom. He didn't borrow these things from the worldly religions or the Jewish rabbis; the Holy Spirit himself was their source.

Second, Paul said, “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 3:16-17). When Paul says “all Scripture,” he unquestionably is referring to the Old Testament, but not exclusively. Paul had earlier given a definition of Scripture that included passages in the New Testament.

Paul wrote, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages’” (1 Timothy 5:18). In this passage Paul quoted from both the Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7), and he called both of them Scripture. While Paul spoke of the “sacred writings” or “Holy Scriptures” in 2 Timothy 3:15, referring to what Timothy learned as a child, Paul speaks of “all” Scripture in chapter 3 verse 16. The use of the word “all” suggests that Paul understood clearly that there was more to the inspired Scriptures than merely the Old Testament. Paul said what he wrote came from God and had God’s authority. He told the Corinthians that “the things that I am writing to you are a command of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Third, Peter said, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Prophecy didn’t come by an act of human will, but men of God spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them. The phrase “of one’s own interpretation” doesn’t refer to how men today interpret or understand Scripture, but how the prophets delivered it. While false prophets set forth their own ideas, the Holy Spirit moved the men of God to speak what He wanted to be said.

The Lord God spoke through men not only with their words but also through their lives. One can hardly read the Psalms without also wanting to look closely into the life of David. One can hardly read the book of Philippians about joy and not remember how Paul was imprisoned. One can hardly read of Hosea’s struggles with an unfaithful wife and not see how God was revealing His own heart and His own love to an unfaithful Israel. God moved and spoke through His servants.

The Old Testament repeatedly claims to be from God. God told Moses in Exodus 34:27 to write the commandments of the Lord in a book. The Old Testament repeats hundreds of times such expressions as “The Lord says,” or “thus says the Lord,” or “the word of God came saying....” Jesus called the Law of Moses the “word of God” in Matthew 15:6. Scholars estimate that there are over 2,600 such claims that Scripture is God’s Word.

David said, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). God said to Isaiah, “I have put My words in your mouth” (Isaiah 51:6). The Lord told Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1:7), and “Because you have spoken this word, Behold (that is God speaking), I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them” (Jeremiah 5:14). God made His will known by testifying through the prophets according to 2 Chronicles 24:20. The clear testimony of the prophets and the writers of the New Testament was that the teaching of the Old Testament came from God.

While the Old Testament sometimes designates a human speaker or author to a passage, the New Testament attributes those same words to God. For instance, Psalm 2:1-2 is attributed to David, but Peter claimed that this verse came “by the Holy Spirit” in Acts 5:25-26. What the psalmist said in Psalm 95:7, the Hebrew writer says the same verse came by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 3:7. What the sons of Korah wrote in Psalm 45:6 and an unknown Psalmist said in

Psalm 102:25-27, the New Testament attributes these things to God in the book of Hebrews 1:8-12. God speaks through Scripture, so that one may easily recognize that whatever the Scripture instruct us, the Lord is actually behind those instructions.

The New Testament views the entire Old Testament as “the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). Christ and his apostles quote Old Testament texts, not merely as what Moses, David or Isaiah said, but also as what God said through these men. The idea of God speaking and the idea of Scripture are interchangeable in the Bible. For instance, Paul refers to God’s verbal promise to Abraham as words which the Scripture spoke to him in Galatians 3:8. This shows how completely Paul equated the statements of Scripture with the utterances of God.

The New Testament likewise claims inspiration for itself. Jesus claimed that His words were not His own but came from His Father in John 7:16-17. Jesus explained, “For I did not speak on My own initiative (that is, I did not think it up on my own), but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me” (John 12:49-50).

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would inspire their messages and would defend them before authorities (Luke 12:11-12); also, the Spirit would teach them what to speak and remind them of Jesus’ words (John 14:26); and the Spirit of truth would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit’s function was to reveal to the apostles the truth that was given to Him by the Father.

When Paul wrote to the various churches, he argued that what he wrote was indeed “the commandment of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:13). Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians because they “received the word of God which you heard from us, and you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe” (I Thessalonians 2:13). In Galatians 1:11-12 Paul said, “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.”

We should look at Scripture the way that Jesus did. When Jesus relied solely upon the Hebrew Scriptures as the basis of authority for those under the Law, He looked at them as God’s Word. Christ never referred to extra-Biblical literature, those books of the day, but He candidly rejected the Jewish traditions that contradicted the Scripture in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. He didn’t want those traditions. For Jesus Scripture is enduring. When Jesus says, “It is written,” He means that what has been written is still written and still in force. Jesus shows the enduring nature of Scripture with such statements as: “Have you not read...?” (Matthew 21:16; or Mark 12:10), or “You do err, not knowing the Scriptures” (Matthew 22:29). What God said through Moses and the prophets was still true even hundreds of years later in the days of Jesus Christ.

Jesus believed every part of Scripture is worthy of our accepting. In Luke 24:44-45 He speaks of the law and the prophets and the writings. In Matthew 23:34-36, the Lord speaks of the first and the last martyrs in the Bible (that is “from Abel to Zechariah”). This is a reference from Genesis to Chronicles, the first and last books of the Hebrew Bible.

When Jesus interpreted Scripture, he commonly used the literal method (according to Matthew 12:40), considering the events of the Old Testament, like Jonah being in the belly of the great fish for three days, so he would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

He looked at those things as historical. Jesus used the punishment of Lot's wife as a means to warn his disciples not to turn back (Luke 17:32). There is simply no evidence that He ever regarded the creation, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, or any other story of the Bible as some myth or a fable.

Jesus said in John 18:37, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." What does Jesus have to gain by dealing with myths or fables? Nothing! But He has a great deal to lose by presenting inventions of men as fact. Jesus frequently corrected erroneous religious teaching when he found it. He was indeed committed to the truth. What did He have to say about the authenticity of the Genesis account of creation, of the flood, of Jonah's big fish, or of Daniel's writing of the book of Daniel? Surely, he was aware of these things. Jesus underscores the truthfulness of the Genesis account of creation when He referred to the "beginning" of creation as the time when a man and a woman were created and joined together by God in marriage. Jesus said, "But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:6-9). By quoting from Genesis, Jesus acknowledged its authority and truthfulness. By using the words "What God has joined together..." He recognized God to be the author of these Genesis writings.

For Jesus, all Scripture is utterly true and trustworthy. He said, "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Jesus is arguing that Scripture is both authoritative and reliable. If the Son of God, who has lived through all eternity and witnessed all the events of the Old Testament, regards them as true and utterly trustworthy, what need have we of further witnesses? We too can believe every word of every sentence of every verse of every chapter of every book is inspired of God and utterly trustworthy.

Whether the Bible arose from men alone or whether God inspired it is perhaps the most crucial question of our time. Some are asking whether the Bible is verbally inspired and whether it is inerrant. Some believe the Bible to be inspired of God, but say it contains flaws and contradictions. They say the Bible is infallible in its essential message pertaining to our salvation, but contains mistakes in its details. If the Bible is merely human, arising from myths and legends, it has no authority in our lives and should be granted no greater honor than any other ancient literature. On the other hand, if the Bible is from the one true and living God as it claims, then it possesses unconditional, divine authority over us.

Since the Bible is from God and accurately transmitted to us, then we may surely trust every letter of every word, every word of every sentence, every sentence of every verse, every verse of every chapter, and every chapter of every book. We regard its promises to be true, its commands to us to be binding, its approved examples as a light to our path, its implications to be truth indeed, and its warnings and admonitions to be taken to heart. This is no ordinary book, the Bible; there is none like it in all history. It is God's Word!

Why do I believe the Bible? Because it accurately predicts the future in the most specific terms. The prophecies of the Messiah, the Lord's prediction of His own death and resurrection, and the Lord's prediction of the fall of Jerusalem provide unquestionable evidence that the words of Scripture come from God Himself. No other book in all history has so many specific prophecies that have come to be true. And only God can see the future, and only God could give us this book. Oh, give me the Bible, because it is inspired of God!

## Trustworthy

Are the words we have today in Scripture really what came from the prophets and the apostles? Can we trust the Bible to tell us the truth? Today we'll explore the trustworthy nature of the Scriptures. From the days of Moses, more than 3000 years ago, we have copies of the sacred Scriptures given to us by God. No book in all of ancient literature has been as preserved, as revered, or as translated as has the Holy Bible. Moses wrote, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). The Bible is a book of truth, wisdom, commandments, and promises. When God gave us this book He knew just what we needed to live as His children and to have eternal life.

Jesus promised those who believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). By saying this, Jesus assured us that we could truly know what the will of God is for our lives and those truths would set us free from sin and from the lies of the world. His insistence that freedom came from abiding in His word causes us to ask if we can rely on the texts of the Old Testament and the New Testament as we have them today.

Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." We can trust the Scriptures because we can trust God and the Lord Jesus. God loves us and has always given us the spiritual guidance and wisdom that we need. We need His truth, His wisdom, His laws, and His promises. We are utterly thankful for the Bible.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 1. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish."

We can have confidence that both the Old and the New Testaments are God's sacred writings. We can be confident that what we possess today is what the prophets and the apostles wrote by inspiration thousands of years ago. The Bible is sacred, and those who wrote and copied the sacred Scriptures with great care gave us what was originally written through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest reason that we can trust the Old Testament comes from the Lord Jesus Himself. He trusted the sacred writings as the authoritative and unbreakable Word of God. In Matthew 4 the Lord Jesus faced down the devil three times with quotations from the Old Testament, from the book of Deuteronomy, saying, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4-7, and also in verse 10). Jesus regarded what was written by the authority of God as true and binding. He trusted its truths so strongly that He refused to violate Scripture and yield to temptation. Again, the Lord Jesus said, "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). When challenged by the Jews, Jesus pointed to the Scriptures written hundreds of years before. He 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 5:39-40). Because Jesus regarded the Scriptures as the sole standard

of spiritual truth He told the Sadducees, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). Jesus implied that the Scriptures are inerrant and authoritative.

He placed Scripture above the traditions of men in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. There was nothing in His mind more important than the need for men to hear and obey the written Word of God. In every instance where Jesus cited the Old Testament He regarded it as utterly true. For these reasons we can stand with Jesus and hold to the accuracy and the unchanging character of the Old Testament.

In his book, *Can I Trust My Bible*, Old Testament scholar R. Laird Harris affirmed that, “We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 BC ... indeed, it would be rash skepticism now to deny that we have our Old Testament in a form that’s very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity.” Again, Sir Frederic Kenyon said, “the Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that what he holds in it is the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.”

Some are questioning whether we’ll ever be able to know what the Lord Jesus said or what any biblical author actually wrote. In the book *Five Gospels*, skeptic Robert Funk said, “Even careful copyists make mistakes, as every proofreader knows. So we will never be able to claim certain knowledge of exactly what the original text of any biblical writing was.” Bart Ehrman, a skeptic, more recently challenged our ability to know what the Scriptures actually are. In his book, *Misquoting Jesus*, Bart Ehrman argued that the textual variants make knowing what the Bible actually says impossible. But these skeptics are not looking at all the facts. We can know what the New Testament says. In fact, we have a trustworthy New Testament. It is the most well-attested book of all ancient literature; there is none like it!

Sir Frederic Kenyon, an authority on ancient manuscripts, summed up the status of the New Testament this way, “It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: Especially is this the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities.” This scholar said, “this can be said of no other ancient book in the world.”

Daniel Wallace, a biblical scholar noted, “If someone were to destroy all those manuscripts, we would not be left without a witness because the church fathers wrote commentaries on the New Testament. To date, more than one million quotations of the New Testament by the fathers have been recorded.” Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman agree. They said, “If all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, [the patristic quotations, that is of the early church fathers] would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.”

Wallace reflected on how many manuscripts we have from the first few centuries after the completion of the New Testament. He looked at the facts and his conclusion is truly startling! Today we have as many as 12 manuscripts from the second century, 64 from the third, and 48 from the fourth—a total of 124 manuscripts within 300 years of the completion of the New Testament. Most of these are fragmentary, but the whole New Testament text is found in this collection multiple times. If you add all the other manuscripts of the New Testament from later days we now



have over 5800 manuscripts! We also have thousands of Latin, Coptic and Syriac versions of the New Testament.

How does the average Greek or Latin author stack up? If we are comparing the same time period—300 years after it was first composed—the average classical Latin or Greek author has no literary remains. More than that, if we compare all the manuscripts of a particular classical author, regardless of when they were written, the total would still average at less than 20 and probably less than a dozen—and they would all be coming much more than three centuries later. In terms of existing manuscripts, the New Testament textual critic is confronted with an embarrassment of riches. If we have doubts about what the autographic New Testament said, those doubts would have to be multiplied a hundredfold for the average classical Latin or Greek author. When we compare the New Testament manuscripts to the very best that the classical world has to offer, the New Testament manuscripts still stand high above the rest. The New Testament is by far the best attested work of Greek or Latin literature from the ancient world! That is fact!

Someone asks, “Well what about all those textual variants?” You may have read where someone says there are thousands of variants in the New Testament. Scholars count as a textual variant any place that there is a variation in spelling, wording, word order, or the omitting or adding of words. Scholars count even the most trivial changes. Even when all the manuscripts agree, if one manuscript differs in the slightest way, this counts as a textual variant.

**Note 1** Daniel B. Wallace, a scholar of the New Testament again said, “The best estimate is that there are between 300,000 and 400,000 textual variants among the manuscripts. Yet there are only about 140,000 words in the NT. That means that there is an average of between two and three variants for every word in the Greek New Testament (that’s what some would say).” This might perplex some, but raw statistics do not always tell the whole story. Wallace noted, “Now if this were the only piece of data, it would discourage anyone from attempting to recover the wording of the original. But there is more to this story.”

**Note 2** While the original New Testament does indeed contain only about 140,000 Greek words, we must multiply this, many in part, and some in whole, by the number of manuscripts. Currently, we possess 5,814 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament! Wallace reports that the average Greek New Testament manuscript is over 450 pages long. “Now altogether there are more than 2.6 million pages of texts, leaving hundreds of witnesses for every book of the New Testament.” When seen this way, that means there would only be at most only one error for every six and a half pages. Let’s remember that all the Greek New Testament manuscripts were copied by hand, predating Gutenberg’s press, which was first used in 1439.

Let’s say that we had fifty people in a room and we asked them to copy one book of the Bible, Matthew, by hand. Could you write out by hand the whole book without any mistakes of any kind? But if we have fifty people copying the same book, they wouldn’t likely make the same mistake at the same place, unless one of them copied that mistake from the other. If we compared all the fifty copies, we could easily spot where someone varied from all the others in spelling, or whether they varied in word order, or in omitting or in adding something. In such a case we would know the 49 copies were correct and the one made a mistake.

Professor Jack Lewis of Harding University, one of my own teachers, said, “While recognizing variants in manuscripts, scholars are reasonably well agreed on what the reading of the bulk of the New Testament should be. The major doctrines of the New Testament about God, Christ, and the church are not based on textually disputed passages. The major duties of man toward God and his fellowman are not solely laid out in textually disputed passages. The questions of which we speak

are not new in the church; they have been under debate for centuries; they need not be disturbing to faith.” You can trust the Bible to be the words that God intended for us to know, to believe, and to obey.

New Testament specialist Daniel Wallace, notes that although there are about 300,000 individual variations of the text of the New Testament, this number is very misleading. Most of the differences are completely inconsequential--spelling errors, inverted phrases and the like. A side by side comparison between the two main text families (the Majority Text and the modern critical text) shows agreement in a full 98 percent of the time. Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to vigorous textual criticism. That means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt. That's about 400 words, and none of those affects any significant doctrine.

Greek scholar, D. A. Carson sums, it up: “The purity of the text is of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be true, and nothing that we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants.” Even a skeptic like Bart Ehrman has had to admit that, “most scribes, no doubt, tried to do a faithful job in making sure that the text they reproduced was the same text that they inherited.”

Someone may ask, “Well Phil, why are you discussing this?” Occasionally some article comes out in a major magazine that suggests the Bible is full of mistakes. This information misleads many to dismiss the Bible as if it weren't true. But, there simply is no other book in all of ancient literature that is as copied, as correct, and as trustworthy as the Bible! Because the Bible is God's sacred word, those who copied it revered it as the very word of God. They copied it because they knew how important it was for us all to know the will of God. You can trust your Bible to be from God and to teach what God wills for you to know about life and about eternity. Since the Bible is trustworthy, shouldn't you believe its teaching, follow its commands, and accept its promises?

From the beginning God has always provided for us what we needed. The Lord Jesus knew how badly we needed to know the will of the Father. The Lord said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). God has kept this promise. We have the Bible more abundantly available today than ever. Through the centuries authorities have tried burning manuscripts, but the Bible survives. Some have done everything in their power to keep the Bible from being translated, but the Bible survives and is now completely translated into 531 languages; there's another 2,883 languages that have at least some portion of the Bible. Americans especially have access to the Bible. Eighty-eight percent of the American households own at least one copy, with most owning multiple copies. The average is 4.4. The words of Jesus have not passed away, and they will stand longer than heaven or earth.

The Word of God is available and trustworthy, now what will you do with it? Will you study God's Word or ignore it? Will you hear its precious promises or close your ears? The Bible will only nourish and bless you when you study and meditate on its teaching, and its instructions, and its promises. Psalm 1:1-2 says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

To become a Christian, study the gospel of Jesus Christ found in the New Testament, believe in the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Christ Jesus. One is baptized into Christ by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Do it today!

## All-Sufficient

God gave us every spiritual truth that we need in the Scriptures to live godly lives and get to heaven. Today we'll study the all-sufficiency of the Bible. Because God is holy, we can regard every word that comes from God as sacred. Because our holy God knows everything and is all wise, we can consider the Word of God as wiser than anything that comes from man. Because God is holy, wise, and loving, we know that every word that comes from God is for our best interest. Because God has the words of eternal life, and because we love Him, we must listen and obey His Words carefully.

Many in the world do not like what the Bible teaches. Some in the religious world imagine that they can improve on Biblical faith and provide a Christianity that is more pleasing to the world; so they twist the Scriptures to make them say what they want rather than listen to what God actually says. Others in the world believe that Christians ought to change their moral standards so that the world can, without shame, feel free to practice things that the Bible calls sin. But the idea of changing God's eternal teaching in any way must offend God and disturb anyone who loves Him.

The Lord Jesus said "It's written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). We need to pay much closer attention to the Word of God because we need every word that comes from His mouth. God hasn't forgotten anything or neglected to tell us anything that we need to know to live holy lives, to function as the church, or to get to heaven. We aren't lacking anything; and our Bible can guide us into all the truth! Are you reading your Bible?

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Galatians, dealing with the one true gospel. "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:6-9).

The Bible clearly reveals that from the time of Moses, God wanted His wisdom, His instructions, and His promises to be written down and preserved for later generations. Exodus 24:4 says, "Moses then wrote down all the words of the Lord," and this book was preserved in the Ark of the Covenant according to Deuteronomy 31:26. God commanded Moses that every seven years "you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 31:11-13).

This law was vitally important to the Lord. God commanded, "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor shall you take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). Again, Moses wrote, "You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deuteronomy 5:32). A third time God said, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. (Deuteronomy

12:32). God wanted His instructions to be obeyed just as He gave them without any changes at all. So settled was the word that God gave that Solomon said, "Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6).

We know that Joshua "made a covenant with the people... And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God" according to Joshua 24:25-26. We know that "Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in a book and placed it before the LORD" (1 Samuel 10:25). God told Isaiah to "go, write it on a tablet before them, And inscribe it on a scroll, That it may serve in the time to come, As a witness forever" (Isaiah 30:8). We know that Ezra "set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (Ezra 7:20).

The New Testament uses the phrase "It is written" over 90 times. They stressed the authority of the written Word of God. In Matthew 22:29 Jesus rebuked the Sadducees because they did not know "the Scriptures nor the power of God." God undoubtedly intended from the very beginning that His Words and deeds should be preserved in Scripture. What God writes is not just written on paper with ink, but stands written for all people in all places for all time.

God has never allowed men to tamper with or to edit His written words. Paul told the Corinthians that they "were not to go beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Later, Paul said it's disgraceful and underhanded "to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word" (2 Corinthians 4:2). When some Jewish leaders tried to pervert the gospel, Paul said they were accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). When some false teachers tried to change the doctrine that Christ came in the flesh, John said, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). When people tamper with or edit the teaching of God, they cannot expect to remain in the favor or grace of God.

At the end of the book of Revelation, John warned against anyone tampering with that particular book. Revelation 22:18-19 says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." Of course, what is true of the book of Revelation is also true of every book of the New Testament. We must not add to or take away anything from what God has caused to be written. The Bible doesn't need to be re-written or edited; it needs to be reread!

Why would God forbid adding to or taking away from His Scriptures? It is because God's message is complete and final. It says everything that God intended to say; and so to change Scripture in any way challenges God's wisdom and His authority. Changing God's Word to suit our culture, or rewriting God's laws to please ourselves, is an act of utter rebellion and it dishonors God. Changing God's teaching or His moral laws says men are smarter and wiser than God, that they know better than He knows. That's presumptuous.

The Lord Jesus promised the apostles, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). They not only had the privilege of hearing the voice of Jesus, they also had the Holy Spirit to remind them of the Lord's teaching.

Again, Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his

own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:12-13). The Lord Jesus knew the apostles would face many problems and would need guidance into all the truth. Jesus didn't withhold any truth; the Spirit guided them into all the truth. If they received all the truth, then no more truth would come in other centuries. They received every truth needed by the church to live as God would have them live and to have eternal life.

The apostle Peter said, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3). Peter never imagined that they were cheated out of some spiritual truth that they could only find outside the Scriptures in some human tradition or in some feeling that they think came directly from the Holy Spirit. He never taught that our culture's values trump whatever God said long ago. No, he saw that everything that we need can be found in the Bible.

Paul also understood the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. He wrote to the young preacher Timothy, "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 complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Paul didn't point Timothy to later-day prophets, to church councils, or to cultural trends that would correct the teaching of the Lord. He told Timothy to look to Scripture. We must do the same. The Scriptures can make us wise to salvation; they are God-breathed and profitable. We aren't lacking anything when we possess the Scriptures. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these [Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." They wanted to know what was true!

Paul said the Scriptures are profitable for teaching. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path." Christianity is built on teaching or doctrine. The Lord Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). Only the truth can set us free. Acts 2:42 says that the early church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." That teaching is preserved for us in the New Testament.

Paul urged Timothy, "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, you entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Paul was interested in perpetuating what had already been taught, not in looking to some later day church canon or supposed prophecy.

Second, the Scriptures are profitable for reproof. Scripture teaches us convincingly what is right and wrong and it rebukes us for our sins. The psalmist cried out, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The answer is, "by guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart, I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:9-11). Reproof leads to repentance. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways.

Reproof gives a need for the third thing that is to be profitable in Scripture, and that is correction. The Scriptures move us to repent and correct our wrongs and to leave false teachings

for the truth. In the book of Acts, chapter 18 introduces us to a Jew named Apollos who was an eloquent preacher, but he was only acquainted with the baptism of John and did not know about baptism into Christ. Acts 18:26 says “that he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” When Apollos learned the truth, he didn't get angry at Priscilla and Aquila for their correction. When we're corrected, we shouldn't get angry but should humbly change and thank God for the truth. Repentance brings healing to our souls, and that is why repentance is so very important.

Fourth, Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. The instructions of the New Testament and the examples found in Scripture train us how to love and care for others, to serve and worship God, to evangelize, to restore the fallen, and to be the church that Jesus loves. It teaches us how to live godly lives and how to go to heaven. It teaches us to be like Jesus. We need the examples of the New Testament to guide us in doing good to others. In Scripture we learn how to forgive, how to be patient, how to endure hardship, and how to serve.

The gospel message is all-sufficient for all time. We must preach the gospel that the apostles preached in the first century. First Peter 1:22-25 says, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, do it for a sincere brotherly love, and love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” Psalm 119:160 says, “The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” We need to believe the Word of God, that it is sufficient and teaches us all that we need to know.

The same gospel that purified souls in the first century will purify souls today. There's only one imperishable seed planted in the hearts of people causing them to be born again into Christ. That seed existed in the first century and will last until the end of time. If we corrupt or change that seed, it won't produce a truly born again person. It will produce something else outside the truth. Our souls are purified by obedience to the truth of the Lord's gospel, not by obedience to a gospel that's reconfigured to suit some human tradition or our culture.

Hebrews 2:1-3 says, “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” God hasn't called us to follow our feelings or to be like those who surround us; He has called us to obedience to His inspired and all-sufficient word. Second Corinthians 10:18 says, “For it's not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.” Are you paying close attention to God's Holy Word?

The New Testament teaches us all that we need to know to become a Christian and to live the Christian life. We can know the truth and be saved. To become a Christian believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is God's Son. Repent of every sin, turn to what is right. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Be baptized into Christ, immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you're baptized, God forgives your sins; He adds you to His church; and you become a child of God. After you become a Christian, stay close to God by living faithfully and by abiding in the words of Jesus.

## Authoritative

When God gave us the Bible, did He speak with authority over our lives? Today, we're going to explore the authoritative nature of the Bible. We look to God, our Creator, for life and for every blessing. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." We owe God our love, our respect, our obedience for all that He's done for us. That's why we must take the Bible seriously.

From the beginning of our lives, we're accountable for our actions. Children are accountable to their parents, students to their teachers, and citizens to the civil authority. When we broke the rules, we faced the consequences whether we liked it or not. Human nature seems to have this rebellious streak that doesn't like rules or laws. We don't want anyone telling us what to do. All of history tells of man's relentless rebellion to authority. From the beginning, people have craved their own way and set aside the will of God. We all struggle in the war between our desires and our duties, between right and wrong.

The Bible provides God's written commandments. In words that were passed down through the centuries, we find His spiritual and moral laws. God spoke with authority when they were written, and they still have God's authority behind them today. What God said, He said to all people in all places for all time. Time cannot change them; our culture can ignore them but cannot erase them. People can rebel and refuse to hear God's commandments, but God will have the last say in the matter. God is still God, still Creator, and still Judge.

Our reading today comes from the words of the Lord Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall" (Matthew 7:24-27). Jesus spoke these words to be heard. God is the authority! He has all authority and is the ultimate authority above all others. When God speaks, no one can overrule Him. Without His consent no one has any authority. He has all authority because He is our Maker, our Creator. He gave us life and provides every blessing that we enjoy. As our Maker He has every right to have complete control over our lives and our souls.

God gave all authority to Jesus Christ. John 3:35 says, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand." The authority of Jesus cannot be removed, edited, or annulled. No one can overrule the Lord Jesus. He is our Creator; He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Paul said that God "raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23). Jesus is the only head of His church, and there can be no other.

People can ignore and rebel against the Lord Jesus in the present, but the time will come when no one can ignore Jesus. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God has highly exalted

him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Regardless of what we think today, one day we will face the Lord Jesus, and that will be on Judgment Day. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due him for what he’s done in the body, whether good or evil.” You cannot escape this appointment; you can’t delay it, no matter who you are. Those who are right with God will long for the judgment, and those who are not right with God will dread it.

The Lord Jesus, on Judgment Day, will judge us all by His teaching. He said, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day” (John 12:48). There is a last day, a day of reckoning and judgment, on which the Lord, the righteous judge, will bless the righteous, but He’ll condemn the unrighteous. Hebrews 4:12-13 says, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

On the last day, the Lord will judge us by His Words (John 12:48). According to Matthew 23:34 Jesus sent forth prophets, wise men, and scribes with His message, with His Words. The scribes were there to write down the teaching of Jesus that it might be preserved for all time. At the great white throne on Judgment Day, the Lord will consult what the Holy Spirit moved men to write in the Scriptures. We will be judged by what is written in God’s books. Revelation 20:12 says, “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. And then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.” What the Lord said in the first century, His Words, will judge us on the last day. God will have the last word on every spiritual and moral matter. Only God will decide what is right and wrong, and He will judge us by His written words, found in the books.

We won’t be judged by what people think, by oral traditions of the early church fathers, by opinion polls, by the councils or the ancient creeds of men, or by some man-made document. The last and final words that judge our souls and decide our eternal destiny are the same words that Jesus spoke in the first century. We will be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament that the scribes wrote down. For this reason we need to know what the Bible says, don’t we?

Wouldn’t it be sad to face judgment and not know what God said, or not know about the grace of God? Wouldn’t it be sad to face judgment and never know that the gospel of Christ could have saved us and given us eternal life? The Lord Jesus said, “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and he loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:25-26). If the Lord Jesus has the final say about your soul and your destiny, shouldn’t you focus your attention on Him? If His Words are going to judge you on the last day, what advantage would you have by being ashamed of what He taught?

Some think challenging the authority of God in large matters is rebellious, but we shouldn’t fear to challenge the Lord in smaller things. The Lord Jesus, however, wants us to



“observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). James argued, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty” (James 2:10-12). We can’t pick and choose which commandments of God matter and which don’t. We’re not judges of God’s commandments; God’s commandments are judges of us!

Martin Luther understood this and he recognized that every commandment of God mattered. He said, “Well, if I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I’m not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”

Some think the Bible is too old or too strict or needs changing. Some politicians think Christians ought to change our religion to permit their political agendas. But there is no changing of the Bible. What it said when it was written is what it will say on the last day! The Lord Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). It’s foolish to think that we can edit out God’s moral law or rewrite His doctrine. There is but one gospel, and Paul said, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one that we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one that you received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8-9). God will not permit anyone to change what He’s taught; and our task is to abide in the words Jesus spoke.

The Lord Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (Jesus then says), Then I’ll declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, (depart from Me) you who practice lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:21-23). It’s not talking religion or doing religious things that make us right with God. A true Christian is one that hears and does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

The many people who said, “Lord, Lord,” truly thought they were right with God. When He rejected them, they argued with Him. They thought they were acting in His name. You can imagine how shocked they were to find out that they were rejected and lost. These were religious people who talked and acted like good, religious people; but Jesus refused to let them enter heaven because they did not follow God’s teaching. They were lawless and ignored what God taught. They did what they wanted and taught what they liked. They followed what they thought was popular; but they do the will of God. They were never right with God to begin with. They were religious but not righteous! They were spiritual, but not obedient. Lawless people are not interested in pleasing the Lord by keeping His commandments; they’re interested in their own ways.

What about you? How do you measure up with the written word of God? Even if you think you’re better than somebody else, how do you measure up with the Scriptures, with the authentic, true, genuine teaching of Jesus? We might justify ourselves, but will God justify us? Paul said, “For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted.

It's the Lord who judges me. And therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. And then each one will receive his commendation from God" (1 Corinthians 4:4-5). The Pharisees thought they were righteous but stood condemned. They added many oral traditions to the Law of God. When people change the gospel or any of God's instructions to the church, they too will find themselves at odds with God. They may think they're right with God, but find that they're really in spiritual jeopardy.

Why does all this matter? It's simple and clear: when people challenge God by disobeying His commandments, they condemn themselves. When they obey God, they enjoy His promises. God told a rebellious Israel, "Come now, let's reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. And if you're willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 1:18-20). This principle, from Isaiah's words, is still true. You cannot live in rebellion to God and expect God to bless you eternally. You cannot ignore or rewrite His words to suit yourself and imagine that God approves of it. God's Word is settled in heaven; it's God's final authority and cannot be broken or undone. Isn't it better to obey the Lord than to presume that you can do what you want and everything is okay? Obey the Lord!

God is the Creator, and we are the created. Occasionally people contradict God's word and say, "I don't believe ... (then they'll mention some sinful behavior)... I don't believe that's wrong." They're expressing their judgment. But in matters spiritual and moral, people's feelings aren't the final authority. We will be judged by what God has written in His books. What God has said matters. So we ask, what say the Scriptures? Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." You are indeed accountable for your actions, your words, your thoughts, and your choices. God will have the last say and really the only say about matters of right and wrong.

If you love God, you want to keep His commandments. You want to please Him. You'll pay attention to God's Words so you know the truth. You would rather follow God's truth, even if it's difficult and unpopular, and go to heaven than to join the world in sin and lose your soul. It's better to search out God's will from the Scriptures than presume what somebody thinks is so. Respecting God means being careful and diligent to obey His Words.

To become a Christian, put your faith in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. What Peter told the people at Pentecost is what we need to obey. He said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Why not do what God says today to become a Christian. Don't assume that you're saved; be sure of it by hearing what the Scripture says.