

THE BIBLE – God’s Word

- Is the Bible truly the inspired Word of God?
- What is the Purpose of the Bible?
- What makes the Bible so special?
- How can I better understand the Bible?



These and similar questions are answered in this topical booklet, specifically designed for those seeking to know more about God and looking for answers to some of the deeper questions of life and eternity.

THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

No other book in the history of mankind has affected the lives of men and women so deeply as the Bible. As the living and abiding Word of God it contains significant wisdom and relevance to us, expressed within the pages of the Canon of Scripture. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and the only book about which this claim can truly be made. It forms the basis of our understanding of the Christian faith.

The Bible is just as relevant today as it always has been. Even though it was completed more than eighteen centuries ago when the greater part of the world was uncivilised, there has been nothing that add to or subtract from the moral and spiritual truths contained within its pages. Today, we know no more about the origin of man, the nature of the soul, the problem of suffering, or the future destiny of man, than did those early Christians who were able to study God’s Word 1800 years ago. The teachings of the Bible are infinitely superior to the ideas of men. God declares in Isaiah:

***“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Is 55:8-9)***

For the Christian life to be effective it must be based on **faith**; and faith must be based on the **truth** and an understanding of the **nature** and **character** of **God**. The Bible, as God’s Word to mankind, is our source of knowledge about God and all things spiritual. As Christians, we have an obligation, to study it regularly and systematically.

The Purpose Of The Bible

God gave us the Bible so that we are able to understand His will and purpose for all things, whether spiritual or natural; and especially so that we can know His direction for our lives and the world in which we live.

We should read the Bible diligently, study it, believe what we read is true, and act upon what it reveals to us. It is the ultimate authority for our lives, and a foundation pillar of our Christian faith.

The Need For Revelation

Man by himself cannot, using his own ability - whether it be logic, intelligence, or any other form of analysis, come to an understanding of who God is.

Being finite, it is impossible for man to understand the infinite - the omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), and omnipresent (all present), God.

The only way we can understand our infinite God, is by Him showing, or revealing Himself, to us in ways our finite minds can understand.

**Our reference for truth must, therefore, be outside
ourselves - not made by us, nor originating in us**

If we could actually understand God with our own mental capabilities, then He would become restricted to the size of our mind, our wisdom, or our understanding.

Christianity is not man's groping blindly in the dark trying to find God; but God revealing Himself, through the person of Jesus Christ to mankind. Jesus is the divine revelation of God in physical form, and we are able to come to an understanding of who Jesus is by reading and studying the Bible.

TWO FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

1. The Bible is the Inspired Word of God

God obviously did not write the Bible with His own hand. It was written by men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, who recorded the revelations of God down through the centuries. These men had diverse backgrounds and levels of education and experience – from kings and prophets to fishermen and tax collectors.

The harmony of purpose and direction in the Bible's contents is such a significant literary feat that it would have been impossible for its writers to compose it without divine inspiration. The men responsible for compiling the Scriptures, many centuries ago, were also inspired in what they chose to include or exclude. The Bible is God's written Word to man, giving him instruction and counsel in every conceivable area of life. It is the ultimate book of absolute truth.

2. The Bible is the Infallible Word of God

Infallible means that it lacks error. It is a book of absolute truth - the only such book available to man on the earth today. God inspired around 40 different writers over a period exceeding 1,600 years to compile the Bible, which is actually a library of 66 books (39 Old Testament; 27 New Testament). It contains a wealth of infallible revelation, brought to us through fallible men, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

THE MAKE-UP OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is not simply one book, but a library of 66 different books, all bound together in one volume consisting of two main divisions:

- ♦ **The Old Testament** is the covenant God made with his people, Israel, before Jesus.
- ♦ **The New Testament** is the new covenant made possible to the whole of mankind through Jesus.

The content of the New Testament consists of the revelation of God's new covenant with man through the recorded words of Jesus Christ and his followers. It is comprised of 27 distinct pieces of writing, by 9 authors (8 if Paul wrote Hebrews). These documents were written over a span of about 50 years, from AD45, at the earliest, to around AD100.

The four Gospels themselves are a unique account of the life of Christ, written to specific audiences of the time. Each author had a different vantage point from which to write, and a different set of people to write to.

- ♦ **Matthew** was written to the Jews, and presents Jesus as Messiah.
- ♦ **Mark** was written to the Romans, and presents Jesus as the conquering King.
- ♦ **Luke** was written to the Greeks, presenting Jesus as the Perfect Man.
- ♦ **John** was written to the Church; presents the truth of Jesus' Deity.

USING THE BIBLE

Many sects, cults and 'alternative religions' use some part of the Bible to justify their often strange and misleading doctrines. The problem is that they use Scriptures out of context with the true original meaning of the text, and often re-word the Bible to suit their own peculiar beliefs. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses use the *Watchtower Bible*, which you will find has been modified, and is quite different from the one we know as the Holy Scriptures. Others add additional books to 'complete' what is lacking in the Word of God (such as the Mormon *Book of Moroni*).

When formulating doctrine it is important to ascertain what the whole Bible says about a matter. This means researching all that the Scriptures say, and thoroughly checking and cross-checking the facts. Taking one verse and making major decisions for your life, without first identifying whether that verse has been correctly interpreted,

can lead to serious disappointment and confusion, and can potentially lead you into error.

As you read the Bible, keep a notebook and pen beside you, and make notes on all the things you don't understand. Then ask someone in the church who has some maturity in the Lord to answer your questions and explain any confusing Scriptures to you.

The Bible teaches that it is our own individual responsibility to seek out truth:

“Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Prov 23:23)

“Now these Jews 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” (Acts 17:11)

Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 2:15 should also be applied in our lives:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15)

In 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12, we see how important it is to have a love for the truth. We are to walk in truth and reject all falsehood. There is no greater truth than to know and understand God's Word, the Bible, and to spend time studying, meditating, praying and seeking after the truth it contains. All we need to know about life, love, fulfilment, destiny and hope are found in the pages of this marvellous, infallible, and divinely inspired book.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Three things are essential to understanding the Bible:

1. Ask God to guide you and reveal His truth to you.
2. Read and study the Bible regularly and carefully, with a heart willing to hear what God may be saying to you personally.
3. Seek out teaching and instruction in the ways of God by becoming part of the local family of God (church), and learn from mature, inspired and balanced ministry.

