

Basics of the Christian Faith
Lesson 1
The Holy Scriptures

You may want to begin the lesson by asking the class, “What is your favorite verse in the Bible? Or, “Who is your favorite character in the Bible?”

How important is Scripture?

Matthew 4.4: “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’

Scripture is very important. It is God’s revelation of himself to us. It provides us with the details of how he has interacted with humanity throughout history culminating in the Gospels. The Bible provides us with guidelines to live a full life as we submit to God’s will. God’s will is revealed to us in the Bible.

What does the Bible say about itself?

2 Tim 3.16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Luke 16.17: It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

John 10.35: If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?

What is the Bible? The Bible is God’s Word. It was written by men but inspired by and preserved by the Holy Spirit.

Mark 12.36: David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: ”“The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”” (Psalm 110.1).

Hebrews 1.1: In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

2 Peter 1.21: Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had

its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The above Scriptures are describing the OT. What about Jesus and the New Testament? The New Testament was not accepted until the 4th Century. We accept the NT as inspired because:

1. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would bring all things to their memories:
John 14.26 - But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.
2. The evaluation of the early church
 - a. Leaders often appealed to the agreement of the book with what they called “the rule of faith.” This meant that the teaching of the book followed the beliefs the church regarded as acceptable and correct.
 - b. The book had to demonstrate apostolicity. This meant that it had to have been written by an apostle or the associate of the apostles.
 - c. A test of universality. This required that the book be accepted by a broad geographical segment of the church.

Inspiration

- a. Breathing in, as of air into the lungs; inhaling, an inspirational influence; any stimulus to creative thought or action.
- b. The work of the Holy Spirit by which, through the instrumentality of the personality and literary talents of its human authors, He constituted the words of the Bible in all of its several parts as His written word to men and therefore of divine authority and without error in the autographs.

In the sense of 2 Tim. 3.16, it is God breathing *into*.

Do you agree or disagree with the statements about the inspiration of the scriptures:

1. The Bible is inspired where it does not contradict scientific facts.
2. The Bible is inspired like all the great books.
3. The Bible is inspired and is the trustworthy Word of God.
4. The Bible is inspired but not everything should be taken word for word.
5. The Bible is a book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts.

How durable is the Word of God?

1 Peter 1.23: - For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Look at Jer. 36.1-4. King Jehoakim burned a scroll containing the very words of God. God responded by telling Jeremiah, "Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up (Jer. 36.28).

Look at some reactions to God's word:

French philosopher Voltaire said in 1788, "One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." One hundred years later a Bible society was using his home to distribute Bibles. On the day Britain paid \$500,000 for the Codex Sinaiticus (an ancient, important copy of the Bible), Voltaire's first edition of his works sold for 11 cents.

The Clarity of Scripture: The Bible shows marvelous unity throughout. It was written by approximately forty writers in three languages. It includes all kinds of literary forms including history, poetry, biography, drama, exposition, letters, parables, prophecies, sermons, and stories. With all this diversity the Bible has a unique unity. Its primary theme is the redemption of man.

Definitions

Inerrancy: The Bible is without mistakes of fact or interpretation.

Infallibility: The Bible is trustworthy in what it teaches and promises.

What is the difference? What does that mean to us?

To what extent are you willing to commit yourself to the Bible as a trustworthy and authoritative guide for living your life?

- I will seek and follow God's will and way for my living by studying His Word daily.
- I will seek and follow God's will and way in major decisions of my life.
- I will follow God's Word unless it conflicts with what I want to do.
- I will not seek the counsel of God's Word as a guide for my living.

Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God for His Word and all those who gave their lives to make it possible for us to have it.

Suppose a friend tells you that he or she thinks the Bible is a good book; but, because it was written by men, it has many errors in it. Write an outline or summary of how you would defend the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Using the Bible Devotionally

Commit to reading your Bible and while doing so:

1. Prepare to communicate with the Master.
2. Listen to God speak to you as you read His Word.
3. Pray about what God has said to you.

Optional Discussion Questions

What is the hardest issue for you to deal with in accepting that the Bible is the Word of God?

How would you describe inspiration to someone who is completely unfamiliar with the concept?