**THE BIBLE**

**Part 1**

**LIFE-CHANGE OBJECTIVE**

* To deepen (or to form) your conviction that the Bible, as God’s Word, can be trusted more than your feelings, values, opinions, and culture.

**THREE IMPORTANT WORDS, THEIR DEFINITIONS, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

**REVELATION**

*Revelation* means that God has chosen to reveal his nature and his will to us through the Bible. The Bible was written so that God could show us what he is like and what he wants us to be like. An understanding of God comes solely through his decision to reveal himself to us.

**EZEKIEL 38:23**

“And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”

**INSPIRATION**

*Inspiration* is the process through which God gave us the Bible. God worked in the hearts of human writers to inspire them to write down his words. God’s words written through these people are perfect, infallible, and trustworthy.

**2 TIMOTHY 3:16 (NLT)**

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

**ILLUMINATION**

*Illumination* is the Holy Spirit’s work of bringing light to the words of the Bible as we read them. Illumination is the means by which we understand the Bible.

**LUKE 24:45**

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

In the next study we’ll focus on illumination, Now we’ll look at three important questions related to the revelation and inspiration of God’s Word.

**HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE CAME FROM GOD?**

**First: The external evidence says the Bible is a historical book**

* The number of manuscript copies and the short length of time between the original manuscripts and our first copies of the New Testament

*For the New Testament the evidence is overwhelming. There are 5,366 manuscripts to compare and draw information from, and some of those date from the second or third centuries. To put that in perspective, there are only 643 copies of Homer’s Iliad, and that is the most famous book of ancient Greece! No one doubts the existence of Julius Caesar’s Gallic Wars, but we only have 10 copies of it and the earliest of those was made 1000 years after it was written To have such an abundance of copies of the NEW Testament from dates within 70 years after their writing is amazing.*

* Norman Geisler

Why didn’t God allow us to have the original rather that relying on a number of copies? One possibility: WE would have worshipped an old document rather than reading and following his living Word.

* The extreme care with which the Scriptures were copied
* Confirmation of places and dates by archaeology

*Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.*

* William F. Albright

**Second: The internal evidence says the Bible is a unique book**

* The majority of the Bible is from eyewitness accounts
* The amazing agreement and consistency throughout the Bible

*The Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years in various places stretching all the way from Babylon to Rome. The human authors included over 40 persons from various stations of life: kings, peasants, poets, herdsmen, fishermen, scientists, farmers, priests, pastors, tentmakers and governors. It was written in a wilderness, a dungeon, inside palaces and prisons, on lonely islands, and in military battles. Yet it speaks with agreement and reliability on hundreds of controversial subjects. Yet it tells one story from beginning to end, God’s salvation of man through Jesus Christ. NO PERSON could have possibly conceived of or written such a work.*

* Josh McDowell

**What’s the Difference?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The Bible is translated from 24,000 copies of the New Testament alone, with millions of people having seen some of these copies. Those copies have been translated by thousands of scholars | The Book of Mormon is translated from a supposed single original that is claimed to have been seen and translated by one man: Joseph Smith (who was not an expert in languages). That original was “taken back.” There are no copies of that original. |
| The Bible was written by more than 40 different authors spanning over 50 generations and 3 continents. It speaks with agreement on all matters of faith and doctrine. | The Qu’ran is the writings and record of one man, Muhammad, in one place at one point in history. It differs at many points with the Old Testaments’ accounts of history. |
| The Bible provides God’s distinctive solution to man’s problem with sin and focuses on God’s work in actual, verifiable history. | Hindu scriptures claim all roads lead to the same place and the focus on stories of things that happened in the “celestial realms.” |

**Third: The personal evidence says the Bible is a powerful book**

* The Bible is the world’s best-selling book. Most people know that it was the first major book to be printed on a press (the Gutenberg Bible). The Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into more than 2,900 languages.
* Millions of lives have been changed through the truth of the Bible!
* Remember, personal testimony is just one of the four proofs that the Bible is God’s book.

**Fourth: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ said the Bible came from God**

1. Jesus recognized the Spirit as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**MATTHEW 22:43–44 (GNT)**

*“Why, then,” Jesus asked, “did the Spirit inspire David to call him ‘Lord’? David said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet.’”*

1. Jesus quoted the Bible as\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**MATTHEW *22:29***

*Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”*

**LUKE 11:28**

*He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”*

1. Jesus proclaimed its uniqueness.

**MATTHEW 5:18**

*“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”*

**JOHN 10:35 (NCV)**

*“Scripture is always true.”*

1. Jesus called it the “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**MARK 7:13**

*“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”*

1. Jesus believed that people and places in the Bible were real.

* He believed in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  (Matthew 22:40; 24:15).
* He believed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 17:26).
* He believed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 19:4).
* He believed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 10:15).
* He believed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 12:40).

**HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE THE RIGHT BOOKS?**

**The testimony of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Jesus recognized the Old Testament canon. The word canon refers to the list of books that are accepted as Scripture.

**LUKE 24:44**

*“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”*

* Peter recognized part of the New Testament canon.

**2 PETER 3:16 (NCV)**

Some things in Paul’s letters are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and weak in faith explain these things falsely. They also falsely explain the other Scriptures, but they are destroying themselves by doing this.

* Paul recognized the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ inspiration of the Old and New testaments in a single verse.

**1 TIMOTHY 5:18**

For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”

This is an amazing verse. In it Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4 in the Old Testament and from Luke 10:7 in the New Testament, and calls them both Scripture!

**The history of the church**

Books were included in the New Testament on the basis of three things:

1. The authority of an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The New Testament has eyewitness authority. Take the writers of the Gospels, for instance. Matthew was an apostle, Mark wrote down Peter’s remembrances, Luke was a friend of Paul, and John was an apostle.

1. The teaching of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. The confirmation of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Many people think that the New Testament books were chosen by a council of a few people. That is not true. A council did recognize the books of the New Testament (around 400 A.D.), but that was after the church had been using these books for 300 years. The council formally recognized the books in response to false teachers who were trying to add books to the Bible

**The power of God**

**ISAIAH 40:8**

*“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”*

Our assurance that we have the right books is a matter of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. God would not have allowed any part of what he had chosen to stand forever to be left out.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN WE SAY THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED?**

**Inspiration**

Inspiration does not mean simply that the writer felt enthusiastic, like Handel composing “The Messiah.” Nor does it mean that the writings are necessarily inspiring, like and uplifting poem. As a process, it refers to the writers and the writings being controlled by God. As a product, it refers to the writings only, as documents that are God’s message.

* NORMAN GEISLER

**Inspiration means God wrote the Bible through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**2 PETER 1:21 (NCV)**

No prophecy ever came from what a person wanted to say, but people led by the Holy Spirit spoke words from God**.**

**Inspiration means the Holy Spirit is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**ACTS 1:16**

“The Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David . . .”

***ACTS 28:25***

*“The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet . . .”*

**EZEKIEL 11:5**

*Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon me, and he told me to say …*

**Two important words to understand:**

***Verbal***: God inspired the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not just the ideas

(Matthew 5:18; 22:43-44 – Jesus based his argument on the single word “Lord”)

***Plenary*:** God inspired \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not just part

(2 Timothy 3:16)

**PSALM 18:30**

As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

*If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself.*

-AUGUSTINE

**Inspiration means God’s Word is to be our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**PSALM 119:9 (NLT)**

How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word.

**PSALM 33:4 (NLT)**

For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does.

* Understanding inspiration increases my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible.
* The truth behind inspiration is that I can trust his Word above my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Whenever there is a conflict between what the Bible says and the way I feel or what I’ve been taught or the opinions of others or what seems reasonable to me – whenever I have a difference of opinion with the Bible for any reason – the Bible is always right!

**How Should We Respond?**

The Bible shows us God. How should we respond to this book?

* With awe (Psalm 119:120)
* With delight (Psalm 1:2)
* With appreciation (Psalm 119:72)
* With praise (119:62)
* With joy (Psalm 119:111)
* With love (Psalm 119:47, 97)
* With obedience (Deuteronomy 5:32; James 1:22; John 14:15)

Use the versus above in your quiet time before the next session. Take a few moments not only to read the verse but also to do what it says. It’s amazing how our faith in God’s Word is increased through this simple step of telling God how we value his Word.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Take a moment to get to know each other better by filling in some o the following details of your person histories.

My Life Story

* Place I was born:
* Favorite subject in high school:
* One of my favorite TV shows growing up:
* The model and year of the first car I owned:
* My first job:
* My favorite candy bar as a kid:

1. Do you have a favorite verse or passage of book in the Bible?

What is it and why?

1. Tell about a time when the Bible had an impact in your life.
2. What difference does it make whether the Gospels – or the other books of the Bible - are historically reliable?
3. In your reading the Bible, what evidence have you seen that the Bible is both amazing and unique?
4. Give some examples of the struggle to
   * Trust God’s Word above your feelings.
   * Trust God’s Word above the values you’ve grown up with.
   * Trust God’s Word above your opinions.
   * Trust God’s Word above your culture.
5. How has this study helped you to see that trusting in the Bible as God’s Word is more than just a feeling we have? What truths have we looked at that are the most convincing to you of the wonder and reliability of the Bible?