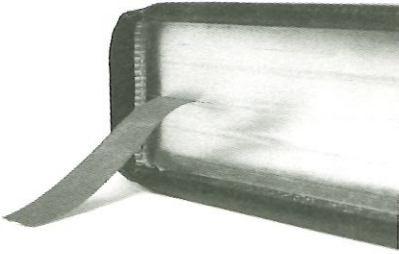


Inspiration of Scripture



Topic

Inspiration of Scripture

Theme

God Himself is the source of every word of Scripture.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will confidently trust the Bible.

Materials

- Resource 2
- Visual 2
- Handout 1

Scripture Focus

Matt. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:2–4, 20, 21

Summary

This lesson will help the student understand inspiration, the foundational truth for approaching the Bible. The Bible is revelation in writing, absolutely accurate from beginning to end.

Outline

I. Definition of Inspiration

II. Explanation of Inspiration

- The Scriptures are God-breathed
- The Scriptures had human writers
- The Scriptures are God's Word to humanity

III. Extent of Inspiration

- The original manuscripts are inspired
- The words are inspired
- The whole text of Scripture is inspired

Memory Verse

"Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).

GETTING STARTED

I'm Inspired

ASK: What are common uses of the word inspired?

ASK: What have you been inspired to do lately?

To be *inspired to do or say something* does not capture the meaning of the word in relation to the Bible. This lesson will cover the inspiration of Scripture and the subsequent trustworthiness of the Bible.

Inspirational Sayings

Display the inspirational sayings (visual 2).

ASK: What, if anything, do these sayings inspire you to do?

ASK: How have inspirational sayings affected your life? (Q2)

Unfortunately, some people read the Bible as if it were a book of inspirational sayings. It is far more, for the Bible is God's inspired Word. It is more than motivational; it is powerfully transformational. This lesson will cover the topic of the *inspiration* of Scripture and the Bible's subsequent trustworthiness.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Definition of Inspiration

The Greek word *theopneustos*, translated *inspiration*, literally means *God-breathed*. If you have ever said, *Don't breathe a word about this!* then you understand the relationship between the breath and the word. The English word *inspiration* comes to us from the Latin word *inspirare*, which means *to breathe in*. The Latin word is used as the translation of the Greek word in the old Latin Bible (the Vulgate) in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 and 2 Peter 1:21, two key passages that support the doctrine of inspiration.

When we speak of the doctrine of inspiration, we mean that the Scriptures came directly from God. He breathed them out. True, the Scriptures are inspiring, but that is not what *God-breathed* means. The *source* of the Scriptures, not their *effect*, will be our focus.

Inspiration may be defined as *God's superintendence of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs* (Charles Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1972], 38).

II. Explanation of Inspiration

A. The Scriptures are God-breathed

Who told you to do that? is a question that seeks an authority to justify be-

havior. If the questioner respects the authority that authorized the action, then the one being questioned is absolved. The inspiration of the Scriptures places the Bible's authority with its author: God.

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21. **ASK:** What do we learn from these passages about what Scripture is not? (Q3) *Scripture is not a product of human imagination or reasoning.*

ASK: What do we learn from these passages about what Scripture is? (Q4) *The very words of God as communicated by the Holy Spirit to specific people.*

Since God authored the Bible, we should expect it to reflect His perfect character and therefore be free from error. The Bible is not the product of human ingenuity or abilities. If it were, man's ideas would taint it and cause it to be self-contradictory. The Bible came from the mouth of God. Over two thousand times in the Old Testament, the prophets attest, *Thus saith the Lord*. The Scriptures are God's own words of truth. The writings reflect the authority of His words.

B. The Scriptures had human writers

You need to read only one of Paul's letters and the book of James to understand that the writers' styles are reflected in their writings. Yet both letters are equally inspired by God and designed to help us become like our Savior.

ASK: How does the fact that human writers put their personalities into the Scriptures affect your trust in the Bible's accuracy? (Q5)

ASK: Who gave writers like Paul and James their personalities? (Q6) *God.*

ASK: How does knowing God gave specific personalities to human writers help you trust the Bible even though the writers' personalities were reflected in their writings? (Q7)

Recognizing writers' personalities within Scripture does not diminish the divine nature of God's Word. The Holy Spirit was still the source of all of God's Word. To be sure, the human writers were not robots or transcription machines. Yet the writers' personalities did not taint or lessen the pure quality of the Scriptures. When we think about it, the presence of the writers' personalities in the inspired Word is a testament to God's sovereignty. He gave the writers the personalities that would reflect exactly the style of writing God wanted in the parts of Scripture that they wrote.

Peter laid a foundation for truth: *No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation* (2 Pet. 1:20, 21). The Bible is not merely a compilation of the teachings of wise men who collaborated to produce a literary work. The Scriptures are not merely the result of *the will of man*. Peter insisted that we understand this concept. He placed highest priority on this concept with his words *knowing this first* (1:20).

The Holy Spirit arranged for the writing of the Word. He did this as He *moved* the writers of the Word. The word *moved* in verse 21 is not a precise literary term. The other New Testament use of the term occurs in Acts 27:15, which tells about Paul's

ship being driven along by the wind of a storm. The wind determined the direction and destination of the ship. However, the passengers could still move around within the ship, moving between decks and cabins. This occurrence may illustrate the way the Spirit used the personalities of the individual writers of Scripture. Their writing styles differed, yet the outcome was the inspired Word of God.

C. The Scriptures are God's Word to humanity

The Bible is essentially a relational book, not a book of abstract ideas. God used writing to bring His relational message to the human race He created. There are many questions the Bible does not address; it is not an encyclopedia. God never intended to use the Bible to answer all of mankind's questions.

ASK: What questions does the Bible not address? (Q8) *Science questions such as, What does an atom consist of? and medical questions such as, How are diseases cured?*

ASK: How do the subjects addressed in the Bible point to what is really important in life? (Q9) *The Bible's focus on the work of redemption shows that humanity's greatest need is to be reconciled to God.*

The Bible addresses people's greatest needs. We cannot rightfully wish for more instruction or long for more direction from God. He has already told us all we need to know.

READ: 2 Peter 1:2–4. **ASK:** How does God's Word fit into the picture of having all things that pertain to life and godliness? (Q10) *We learn about God and all He has to offer through His Word.*

All we need to live a life pleasing to God is found in God's Word. It even tells us what we are to do when we don't understand how to live it out. According to James 1:5, God will grant our requests for wisdom.

God's inspired Word is our way to know God. But just carrying a Bible around would not help us know God. He expects us to interact with His inspired Word and go to it as a means of building a relationship with Him.

OBJECT LESSON: Have the learners form groups of three to five. Distribute to each group a set of cut apart puzzle pieces (handout 1 on resource CD). Give each group two minutes to connect the pieces to form words. After two minutes, ask the groups to share the words they were able to form with the pieces. Then distribute to each group a copy of the puzzle pieces that have not been cut apart. Each group should be able to use the uncut example to spell out the word LIFE.

The Bible is God's message to mankind on how to live pleasing to Him. God expects people to follow His directions in putting the pieces of life together.

III. Extent of Inspiration

A. The original manuscripts are inspired

Inspiration applies to the autographs of the Bible. The term *autographs* refers to the original manuscripts of the Bible. For instance, the letter to the Romans, which Tertius penned as Paul dictated to him, was the autograph of Romans (Rom. 16:22). There was a time when David put pen to papyrus and wrote out Psalm 23. In reference to Paul's own writings, Paul asserted that what he wrote was from the Spirit and thus inspired. He wrote, *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual* (1 Cor. 2:13). None of the autographs survived. In a way it is a good thing—if people had them, they would probably worship them.

Inspiration does not pertain to copies of the autographs. However, that is not a problem. We can trust our Bibles because God has promised to preserve His Word (1 Pet. 1:25). Considering our Lord's words in Matthew 5:18, we should expect God to do exactly that: *Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*. The Lord Jesus didn't say how God would preserve His Word. Yet looking back on the last two thousand years, we find some amazing methods.

We have grown so accustomed to having printed books, copy machines, and computers that we should pause to remember that they are relatively recent inventions. In the days before the printing press, any copy of a literary work was a hand copy, or manuscript. The Masoretes were Jewish copyists who exemplified the care that was used in hand-copying the Word of God. They counted letters and words to be sure that the copied document matched the original exactly.

Was this process effective? Judge by this: until the 1950s, the *oldest* Hebrew Old Testament available to us was a copy from around AD 900. Since Malachi was written around 400 BC, our best copy was over 1,300 years old. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided us with Hebrew manuscripts that dated to the second century BC. These manuscripts, over one thousand years older than the ones already available to us, contained virtually no major differences from the ones we had. All variances were minor and understandable, considering the human element of copying copious letters and words.

The New Testament manuscripts show similar accuracy. Thousands of copies of all or part of the New Testament are available to us. These include very old papyrus segments and fairly well-preserved vellum (animal skin) copies. A fragment of the Gospel of John was found in Egypt, dated to around AD 125. Since John probably wrote his works late in his life, in as little as thirty years after their writing, his Gospel found its way to Egypt. Complete New Testament manuscripts can be dated to the fourth century. There are even early translations of the New Testament from the second century.

As scholars compare these many different manuscripts, they find the same situation as with the Old Testament; that is, the New Testament has been marvelously preserved for us. Our God wants us to know His Word, and He has assured that possibility by preserving His Word for us.

There is no need to worry that we have lost something or that God's Word has become corrupted since the days of the originals. In essence, we can speak of our Bible today as being inspired because it is an accurate representation of the inspired originals.

Lesson five gives a little more information on the Masoretes' work.

B. The words are inspired

The individual words of Scripture are inspired, not just the concepts or ideas that lie behind the words. It would seem almost unnecessary to make this point, given what 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 teach us. After all, concepts can be expressed only through words. God could not impress a concept on the mind of a prophet; He would have to use words to communicate the concept.

Nowhere does the Bible urge believers to know the general ideas of God's revelation or to give attention to the basic ideas that God taught. We are to know the very words of God. The prophet Moses exhorted Israel to heed *the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you* (Deut. 6:1). He insisted that the commandments be on their hearts (6:6). Near the end of Deuteronomy, God is even more pointed about the Israelites' responsibility to heed His specific words.

READ: Deuteronomy 30:15, 16. **ASK:** How important was it for the Israelites to know the very words of God's commands, statutes, and judgments? (Q11)
The livelihood of Israel depended on the Israelites' knowing, trusting, and keeping the very words of God.

The New Testament motivates us to hold a similar regard for the Bible's specific words. For example, in Galatians 3:16 Paul made a point based on the difference between the singular and plural use of the word *seed* in the Genesis record of God's promises to Abraham (Gen. 13:15; 17:8). God holds us accountable for exactly what He has said.

Even the smallest letter and the least pen stroke of Scripture is inspired (Matt. 5:17, 18). Jesus came to fulfill (or bring to completion) the promises that God made in the Law and the Prophets. *The Law and the Prophets* was an expression the Jews used for the Old Testament. Jesus promised to fulfill all of them, even down to the smallest letter and the least stroke of a pen. In other words, He would fulfill the promises completely and precisely.

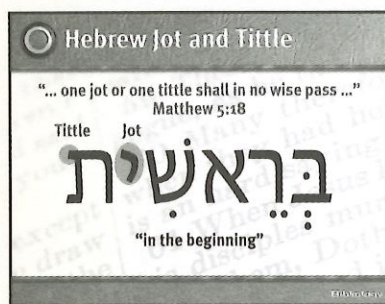
RESOURCE: Display resource 2. Point out the jot and the tittle.

The smallest letter, the *yod*, looks somewhat like an English apostrophe. It makes the sound of a Y. The smallest part of a letter would be the pen stroke that differentiates similar letters. The bit of ink that makes the difference between a C and a G in English letters could illustrate this distinction. Our Lord's point for His disciples becomes clear: God inspired even the smallest parts of His Word, and He plans to bring His Word to completion.

C. The whole text of Scripture is inspired

Conferences commonly include *plenary* sessions. In plenary sessions, all the participants in the conference gather in one place. *Plenary inspiration* refers to the inspiration of the whole text of Scripture.

READ: Genesis 1:1; 10:4; John 3:16, 17; 2 Timothy 4:20. **ASK:** Which of these passages would you deem most important? Why? (Q12)



ASK: Which of these passages does not seem important? Why? (Q13)

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. **ASK:** According to these verses, how inspired are each of the passages we read? (Q14) *All of the passages are equally inspired.*

No matter how trivial passages may seem, all of them are as inspired as more important passages (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). *Scripture* refers to God's Word. In the times of the New Testament, the term originally applied to the Old Testament. However, God was inspiring more writings. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul offered two quotations from Scripture. The first comes from Deuteronomy 25:4, and the second comes from Luke 10:7. Paul recognized Luke's Gospel as Scripture. Even in the early days of the church, the apostles recognized the inspired quality of God's Word given through them. Thus Paul reminded Timothy that there are no degrees of inspiration or parts of the Bible that are anything less than *God-breathed*. The gospel of John is just as inspired as the details and genealogies of Leviticus and Numbers.

Because it is inspired, all of Scripture is worthy of careful study. Based on plenary inspiration, we ought to study the whole of the Word of God. Some portions are easier to understand, as Peter indicated (2 Pet. 3:16). However, all of Scripture has value because God wrote it and designed it for our growth in grace and knowledge of Christ.

The implications of verbal plenary inspiration are vast. We have possession of a book that is God's revelation. We can have confidence that all of it is of divine origin. This should motivate us to study, for we can know God and His will for our lives with certainty.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Acting on Trust

Because of inspiration, we can have confidence that we are trusting in and living by the truth. That is why the psalmist could declare so forcefully, *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts* (Ps. 119:98–100).

ASK: How have you responded to the trustworthiness of God's Word? (Q15)

ASK: How should we respond to the trustworthiness of God's Word? (Q16)

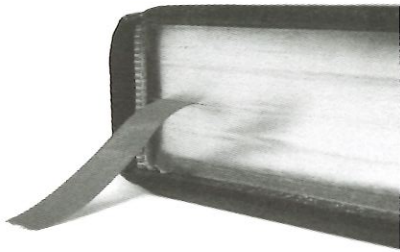
We should read, study, memorize, obey, respect, cherish, and share it.

My Anchor Holds

In a world where bluster can seem more important than substance, knowledge that the Bible is divine authority is a source of both comfort and strength.

ASK: How has confidence in God's Word helped you during a difficult time? (Q17)

ASK: What current circumstances in your life are you better able to face because of your confidence in God's Word? (Q18)



Inerrancy and Infallibility

Topic

Inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture

Theme

God's inspiration of the Scriptures ensures that they are inerrant and infallible.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will state his confidence in the inerrancy of Scripture and will humbly submit to its authority in his life.

Materials

- Resource 3

Scripture Focus

Ps. 19:7–12; Prov. 21:1; 30:5; Luke 24:13–35; John 17:17; 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 1:2; 2 Peter 1:16

Summary

This lesson defines inerrancy and infallibility, underscores their importance, and then addresses arguments for a qualified view of inerrancy. The goal is for learners to understand that all of the Bible is inerrant and infallible and that its historical portions record real history. Any claim that the Bible's history is anything but a record of actual events is false.

Outline

I. Definitions

- A. Inerrancy
- B. Infallibility

II. Importance

- A. Inerrancy and authority
- B. Inerrancy and interpretation

III. Debate

- A. Arguments for qualified inerrancy
 - 1. Based on language
 - 2. Based on content
- B. Answers to qualified inerrancy advocates
- C. Ambitions of qualified inerrancy advocates

Memory Verse

*"Every word of God is pure:
he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"
(Proverbs 30:5).*