

What's the worth of reading?

- More people are reading today than in the past 100 years and the substance of our reading is increasingly cheap.
- Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) argued that we have become a people of entertainment. Our culture is no longer fueled by an appetite for knowledge, truth, and the good of our neighbor, but is now fueled by an appetite for self-pleasure.
- Our generation likes the physical book, not mainly for its communication within, but what it communicates about us. Jessica Pressman calls this *bookishness*. It is the tendency toward “exploring and demonstrating love for the book as symbol, art form, and artefact. Rather than receptacles of knowledge or literature, books are becoming objects of aesthetic desire in their own right.”¹
- Two critical evaluation questions:



How many hours a day (or week) do you read?

What do you normally read and why do you read it?

Not all reading is the same.

- Mortimer Adler said, “A book that can do no more than amuse or entertain you may be a pleasant diversion for an idle hour, but you must not expect to get anything but amusement from it.”
- Good books reward you, and the best books will reward you most of all. The best books do two things, “You learn more than how to read better, you also learn more about life. You become wiser. Not just more knowledgeable.”²
- Joseph Stalin said that authors are “engineers of the soul.”
- “As a man thinketh in his heart, so that he is.”

DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE: What's the worth of reading the Bible?

- The word “Bible” comes from the Greek word *Biblia*, meaning “books.” The Bible is a collection of books (66). There is no other book more printed in human history than this book. There is no book more translated than this book (over 3,200 languages and increasing every year).
- The Self-Attestation of Scripture (Internal Witness) - The Bible's authority is established on its own internal witness. Rather than needing external witnesses or human reason, the Bible testifies that is the divine address to humanity.
- The orthodox Christian faith throughout history has professed, “What Scripture says; God says.” It is not surprising that when a church softens its views on Scripture, or an individual softens his or her views on Scripture, faithfulness to Christ will inevitably soften.

¹ Wessie Du Toit, “The Future of Reading” *First Things*, June 24, 2025. www.firstthings.com.

² Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1972), 330-331.

The Inspiration of Scripture

- Inspiration means that the Bible is “breathed out” by God himself.
- The revelation and the record of that revelation are immediately and supernaturally inspired by the Holy Spirit through historical men who were active participants and instruments in the process.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “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.”

*The authority of the Holy Scripture...
Depends not upon the testimony of any
man or church, but wholly upon God
(who is truth itself), the author thereof;
and therefore it is to be received,
because it is the Word of God.*

– The Westminster Confession of Faith

- God has seen fit to communicate to us solely through Scripture.

Dual Authorship

2 Peter 1:21 “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

- These chosen men set down (prophesized) God's revealed word in written form were directly inspired, “carried along” by the Holy Spirit.
- This is a unique communion between the divine and the human in that these writers were moved in the formation of God's message. Consider the prophets of the Old Testament who were under “the hand” or “the strong hand” of the Lord (2 Kgs 3:15; Ezek 1:3; 3:14; 33:33; 37:1).
- This means that when a writer communicates words on a page you are communing with the mind of that writer. In Scripture your communion is not only with the writer of that particular book but also, and more importantly, with God himself.
- This is the dual authorship of Scripture originates in the mind of God and is breathed out through the activities of men whom God chose. The primary author is God and therefore reflects his attributes of perfection, truthfulness, goodness, wisdom, and clarity. For example, since God cannot lie (Heb 6:18; Num 23:19), and since God has spoken to us through his word, we can confidently say that his Word is without error (inerrant) and cannot error (infallible) even with the passing of time over the transmission of Scripture.
- Scripture bears the marks of human authorship, wherein different genres, styles, languages, grammatical preferences, and even personality traits shine through.
- The Bible validates itself and reveals its own divinity. There is no higher court of authority that we can go. It is its own authority because it self-attests to this divinely inspired authority. It needs nothing outside of itself.

The Clarity of Scripture

- God speaks in his word and everything he has said, he means. He intends that meaning to be understood. This is the covenantal nature of who God is, who reveals himself to his image-bearers clearly through his word.
- “[God’s] covenantal words are not ambiguous but clear and straightforward– so straightforward that one’s response to them is a matter of life and death.”³

Joshua 24:15 “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

- God’s word is not obscure. He is not leaving us to guess what he thinks, but rather, he has given his own words to communicate his will to his people.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10-11)

- There is no canyon of distance between God and his Word. What God originates in his words will accomplish its intent, and that intent will be understood for the matters upon which it addresses: History, creation, sin, salvation, illumination, all the things that pertain to union with Christ and his church.

John 17:17 “Sanctify them in your truth, your word is truth.”

- God’s word is intended to be taught, instructed. It is “designed for the classroom.”

“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deut. 6:6-7; see also Deut 30:11-14)

“How precious is your steadfast love, oh God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; In your light do we see light.” (Ps 26:7-9)

The Holy Spirit...has generously and advantageously planned Holy Scripture in such a way that in the easier passage He relieves our hunger; in the more obscure He drives away our pride. Practically nothing is dug out from these obscure texts which is not discovered to be said very plainly in another place.

- Augustine of Hippo

³ Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 302.

- This does not mean that everything written in the Scripture is easily understood. Peter comments that some of the things Paul wrote about in his letters are hard to understand (2 Pet 3:16).
- The wisdom of Scripture directs us to assume that the problem with a tough text does not rest in God or God's word.
- Remember "Scripture interprets Scripture"

The Sufficiency of Scripture

- All things that are necessary for our salvation, for our sanctification, and the Christian life lived out in obedience to God for his glory, is found in the word of God alone. Since God's word is the supreme authoritative word, the Scriptures provide us with all that we need. We do not look elsewhere.
- If there is any church council that concludes on a matter, it is only to summarize that which is already written in God's word. It should not be to add to God's council in his word.

Deut 4:2 "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you."

Deut 12:32 "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it" (see *also*, Deut 8:3)

Gal 1:8-9 "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one 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 you received, let him be accursed."

1 Cor 4:6 "I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another."

2 Peter 1:3-4 "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

Rev 22:18-19 "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."

- As you read God's word, you can have confidence that what you need to live from day to day is clearly and sufficiently laid down for you in the Bible.

Sola Scriptura

- At the heart of the Reformation was a battle for the very doctrine of Scripture and the interpretation of it. The simple question is “Says who?” Who is the final authority? Is it God’s word, or is it more than that?
- The reformers developed an articulation of doctrine known as *Sola Scriptura*. They argued that it was the church in Rome who denied Scriptures’ sufficiency in her elevation of tradition alongside Scripture. To say that both *Scriptura* and *traditio* is of equal authority is a departure from the very words of *Scriptura*.
- We have received an abundance of confessional articulations from the 16th and 17th centuries to emphasize *Sola Scriptura*, but the WCF articulates this well.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) articulates this well:

The whole council of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the spirit, or traditions of men (2 Tim 3:15-17; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thess 2:2). Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word (John 6:45; 1 Cor 2:9-12) and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed (1 Cor 11:13-14; 14:26, 40).

- This does not mean that everything will be explicitly stated everywhere in Scripture, and that some matters are not directly addressed by God's word, but all matters of the doctrines of the faith are addressed directly or indirectly by Scripture.
- We can understand God's word because it teaches for itself that the Holy Spirit sufficiently teaches us the things that are contained within it by faith.
- Finally, we are not to deny general revelation. Scripture does teach us that general knowledge of certain things are common to all men, but it does teach us that as we explore and develop these studies, we are to do it in light of the truths that would apply to such an exercise of study (Rom 1:20).