

How We Got Our Bible

By John J. Yeo

Scripture to Memorize *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* 2 Timothy 3:16–17

Session Goal Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and why the Bible was preserved and passed down to our generation.

It’s in the Book A speaker at a conference asked a room full of attendees to guess what he was thinking. He gave them a moment to guess. Then he said, “I was doing the backstroke in the Indian Ocean.” Although the crowd laughed, the reality was that the crowd could never have guessed the specifics of what he was thinking unless he told them.

When it comes to God, we have the same sort of issue. Unless God reveals Himself to us, we cannot know who He is and what He is like or what He has done.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 16–17 Verse 16. All Scripture. This phrase refers specifically to the Old Testament. But including the New Testament in “all Scripture” is proper since the New Testament speaks of its own divinely inspired nature (see 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Peter 3:15–16).

Verse 16. inspired by God. This phrase can be translated “breathed out by God.” As we exhale, we articulate sounds with our mouths in order to communicate. Likewise, the Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the Bible and is, therefore, the ultimate Author of Scripture. Because the Bible is inspired by God, it possesses divine authority.

Verse 16. profitable for teaching. The Bible explains God’s objective truth. Objective truth is different from subjective opinion. Objective truth is factual and rooted in reality unaffected by a person’s emotions or opinions (see Psalm 119:160 and John 17:17). Subjective opinion, however, is based on how an individual thinks and feels about an issue. **for reproof.** Scripture rebukes us when we sin. **for correction.** Scripture shows us how to make changes and do what is right. **for training in righteousness.** Scripture shows us how to live upright lives pleasing to God.

Verse 17. the man of God. The apostle Paul encouraged a young man named Timothy to devote himself to the Word of God so he would be ready to fulfill his calling as a pastor. **may be adequate.** Timothy’s training was to be based on knowing the Word of God and living according to its teachings. The word “adequate” can be translated “complete.” **equipped for every good work.** In the Greek this phrase refers to a worker who is so well suited for a job that the worker is able to complete “every good work.”

Discussion Question From what you now know about 2 Timothy 3:16–17, what is the doctrine of “divine revelation,” and why is it important?

Read 2 Peter 1:20–21 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 20–21 Verse 20. no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation. The apostle Peter declared that the words of the Bible did not arise from human guesswork or theorizing.

Verse 21. for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. The Scriptures were initiated by God. **but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.** The words of Scripture were written by men who were moved by or carried along by the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean those who wrote the Bible were mindless robots who wrote via dictation. God used their personalities, investigations, and cultural perspectives (see Luke 1:1–4). At the same time, God still ensured that His Word was written in the words He intended. God protected the authors from introducing error into the original manuscripts of Scripture. This is known as the doctrine of inerrancy, which says the Bible is without error or falsehood.

Discussion Question 2 Peter 1:20–21 has two negative statements and one positive one. What are they, and what do they communicate regarding the origin and inerrancy of the Bible?

Read Galatians 1:11–12 out loud.

Studying the Passage, v. 11 Verse 11. the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. According to Paul, the gospel of Jesus Christ did not have its origins in man or any human-invented traditions. Rather, the gospel was preached and disseminated by Paul because it was given by God. **Verse 12. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.** Paul clearly denies that he had received the message of the gospel from any human source but that it was explicitly revealed to him by Jesus Christ Himself.

The word *revelation* is defined as something that was previously unknown that has now been unveiled. This divinely revealed Word was, therefore, preserved and transmitted to our generation because it was meant to be preached and believed by Christians in all ages.

In fact, God inspired men who were prophets to record the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 18:15–20) and apostles to write the New Testament (see Ephesians 3:5 and 2 Peter 3:5). The thirty-nine Old Testament books were written from about 1500 BC to 400 BC, and the twenty-seven New Testament books were written from around AD 45 to 100. Altogether the Bible was written by more than forty authors over a period of approximately sixteen hundred years. The Bible was accurately copied by trained scribes who developed techniques that would produce faithful copies of God's Word.

Discussion Questions Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; and 1 Corinthians 15:3 out loud. What principle is Paul communicating? Why is it important to pass down sound teaching to the next generation?

At Home: Nail It Down Second Timothy 3:16–17 teaches that all Scripture is inspired by God. God is the ultimate Author of the Scriptures while the men He chose to write are secondary agents. However, these men were not mindless robots who were recording God's words by dictation. The Bible is clear that God used their personalities, investigations, and cultural backgrounds to compose His Word.

Second Peter 1:21 declares that these men were "moved by the Holy Spirit" as they "spoke from God." As the Holy Spirit inspired them, He gave them the words He wanted them to write. He also protected them from introducing error into the original manuscripts. This important teaching is known as inerrancy. Psalm 12:6 says, "The words of the LORD are pure words," and John 17:17 declares, "Your word is truth."

The Bible's concept of truth, however, does not entail exacting precision as in a story you might see on the nightly news. When the Bible says there were four thousand men, this number was likely a round number and not the specific number of men who were present (see Matthew 15:38 and Mark 8:9). The fact that about four thousand men were present is still true even though it is not exact. Inerrancy means that all the Bible declares are truthful words and not intended to deceive or lie to us. This makes sense because God cannot lie (see Titus 1:2) and He is Truth itself (see John 14:6, 17).

Galatians 1:11–12 reveals that Paul preached the gospel to people because it was given to him by Jesus Christ. That gospel was not the figment of any human's imagination. This divinely inspired and revealed Word was to be spread to all people in all places throughout all generations. The goal was that people might have salvation and become Christ's disciples ("learners") who are taught everything Jesus commanded them (Matthew 28:18–20 and Mark 16:15). Because He has preserved His Word to our generation, we are blessed to know how God wants us to think, what God wants us to say, and what God wants us to do.