

Q Is the Bible God's infallible Word?

A Yes, the Holy Bible, or Scriptures, is God's perfect, flawless Word.

Q What do the Scriptures teach us?

A The Scriptures teach us who God is, who we are, and why we need a Savior.

"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." **2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." **HEBREWS 4:12**

THEOLOGY: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The Bible is not a single book, but a library of sixty-six books by which the Holy Spirit bears witness to God's salvation plan through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The word *scripture* means 'writings' and these form the Christian's authoritative standard for faith and practice. The Bible is called the Word of God because the human authors did not write their opinions, but were inspired by the Holy Spirit. The word inspiration means "*God-breathed*" (**2 Timothy 3:16**) and speaks to the process of how we received the Scriptures. Just as we expel our breath, God's truth was revealed through human writers in their own style and personality. We know God cannot lie or cause falsehood; therefore, we rightly conclude God's Word is true and trustworthy. We declare the Scriptures to be inerrant, 'free from error', without mistakes as God originally revealed them.

APPLICATION: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Good Interpretation— Man doesn't give the Bible meaning; man studies to uncover the meaning God has preserved. Careful Biblical interpretation is essential to discover what God has revealed. Human study skills under the Spirit's illumination together lead to Biblical accuracy so error and heresy are avoided.

Clear Understanding— The Bible contains difficult passages. We would be foolish and arrogant to think we can understand the mind of God in all things, but the Scriptures are understandable. We use Scripture to interpret Scripture so we do not read our assumptions into the text. For those with ears to hear, Scripture contains all that man needs for life and salvation.

So What?— *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).* Every Christian should commit to diligently study the Bible. Over time, you will become more and more familiar with God's story. There is no book more important than the Bible - spend your life learning and loving it!



"God's inspired Word is true."

- Does the man appear to be strong or weak?
- What do the dove and the horn represent?

FURTHER STUDY

R. C. Sproul, *The Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), 21.

We usually think of the Bible as one large book. In reality, it is a small library of sixty-six individual books. Together these books comprise what we call the canon of sacred Scripture. The term canon is derived from a Greek word that means "measuring rod", "standard", or "norm". Historically, the Bible has been the authoritative rule for faith and practice in the church.

J.I Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993) 3, 4.

From one standpoint, the Scriptures (Scriptures means "writings") are faithful testimony of the godly to the God whom they loved and served; from another standpoint, through unique exercise of divine overruling in their composition, they are God's own testimony and teaching in human form. The church calls these writings the Word of God because their authorship and contents are both divine.

Decisive assurance that Scripture is from God and consists entirely of his wisdom and truth comes from Jesus Christ and his apostles, who taught in his name. Jesus, God incarnate, viewed his Bible (our Old Testament) as his heavenly Father's written instruction, which no less than others must obey.

FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

Wayne Gruden, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 34, 35.

In the New Testament, a number of passages indicate that all of the Old Testament writings are thought of as God's words. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (NIV). Here "scripture" (Gk. *graphe*) must refer to the Old Testament written scripture, for that is what the word *graphe* must refer to in every one of its fifty-one occurrences in the New Testament. Furthermore, the "sacred writings" of the Old Testament are what Paul has just referred to in verse 15.

Paul affirms here that all of the Old Testament writings are *theopneustos*, "breathed out by God". Since it is writings that are said to be "breathed out", this breathing must be understood as a metaphor for speaking the words of Scripture. This verse thus states in brief form what was evident in many Old Testament passages: The Old Testament writings are regarded as God's Word in written form. For every word of the Old Testament, God is the one who spoke (and still speaks) it, although God used human agents to write down these words.

FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

But if Paul meant only the Old Testament writings when he spoke of all "scripture" as God-breathed in 2 Timothy 3:16, how can this verse apply to the New Testament writings as well? Does it say anything about the character of the New Testament writings? To answer that question, we must realize that the Greek word *graphe* ("scripture") was a technical term for the New Testament writers and had a very specialized meaning. Even though it is used fifty-one times in the New Testament, in every one of those instances it refers to the Old Testament writings, not to any other words or writings outside the canon of Scripture. Thus, everything that belonged in the category "scripture" had the character of being "God-breathed": its words were God's very words.

But at two places in the New Testament we see New Testament writings also being called "scripture" along with the Old Testament writings. In 2 Peter 3: 15-16, Peter says, "Our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures."

FURTHER STUDY (CONT.)

Here Peter shows not only an awareness of the existence of written epistles from Paul, but also a clear willingness to classify, "all of his [Paul's] letters" with "the other scriptures." This is an indication that very early in the history of the church all of Paul's epistles were considered to be God's written words in the same sense as the Old Testament texts were.

Similarly, in I Timothy 5:18, Paul writes, "For the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" The first quotation is from Deuteronomy 25:4, but the second occurs nowhere in the Old Testament. It is rather a quotation from Luke 10:7. Paul here quotes Jesus' words as found in Luke's gospel and calls them "scripture".

These two passages together indicate that during that time of the writing of the New Testament documents there was an awareness that additions were being made to this special category of writings called "scripture," writings that had the character of being God's very words. Thus, once we establish that a New Testament writing belongs to the special category "scripture," we are correct in applying 2 Timothy 3:16 to that writing as well, and saying that that writing also has the characteristic Paul attributes to "all scripture": It is "God-breathed," and all its words are the very words of God.

Is there further evidence that the New Testament writers thought of their own writings (not just the Old Testament) as the words of God? In some cases, there is. In 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul says, "If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord."