

THE BIBLE—YOU CAN BELIEVE IT

TEACHING GUIDE

Biblical Authority in the Twenty-First Century

A BAPTIST DOCTRINE AND HERITAGE STUDY FOR LIFE TODAY

Larry Shotwell

BAPTISTWAYPRESS®

Dallas, Texas

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About This Teaching Guide

The teaching plans in this teaching guide are designed for teaching *The Bible—You Can Believe It*, one of a series of studies on Baptist doctrine and heritage that BAPTISTWAY PRESS®, the publishing arm of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, is producing annually.

The Writer

Larry Shotwell, the writer of *The Bible—You Can Believe It: Teaching Guide*, is pastor's visitation assistant at First Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas. He is a veteran writer of teaching plans and many other materials. He served formerly as manager of the Adult Sunday School Program Section at LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, Tennessee.

How to Use This Teaching Guide

This teaching guide is designed to assist leaders who guide the study of *The Bible—You Can Believe It*. The suggestions in this guide assume that every participant will have a copy of the book to use in preparation and during the sessions. Since the book contains a greater amount of material than can be presented in the class sessions, participants need to study assigned chapter(s) prior to each session and can continue to study the material in the future.

Study Options

Decide the best schedule for your church situation. Consider the following suggestions:

- Sunday night worship service for eight weeks
- Wednesday night prayer service for eight weeks
- Both Sunday and Wednesday nights for four weeks
- Study period prior to Sunday night worship for eight weeks
- Other short-term training opportunities

The basic sessions are designed for thirty-five minute periods but can be expanded by using the additional suggestions. Thirty-five minutes seems most appropriate for use during Sunday and Wednesday night. Lecture is the primary teaching method used in the basic plan, but other large-group methods are used as needed. The additional suggestions can be used when the schedule allows fifty-five to sixty minutes or when the learning group is small enough to use other teaching methods.

Eight sessions are provided. Since some sessions include the study of two chapters in the book, participants can be encouraged to do more reading before and after these sessions. Every chapter in the book is significant and could stand alone, but eight sessions probably will meet the needs of most churches.

Session Design

Each session (except session eight) is divided into the following four major parts with numbered steps:

- *Introduce the study*—A three- to four-minute idea to help participants relate to the material to be studied.
- *Guide the study*—A thirty-minute procedure that leads learners to investigate and summarize the significant content to be studied.
- *Prepare for the next study*—A one- to two-minute assignment that encourages participants to read and study the chapters to be considered during the next study.
- *Additional suggestions*—Procedures and questions that can be used to expand the basic teaching plan from thirty-five to sixty minutes.

Session Preparation

Read the entire book prior to the study. Knowing the direction and content of the book helps the leader (you) avoid dealing with material that will be studied in a subsequent session. Preview this teaching guide to allow enough time to prepare materials for each session.

Prepare visuals as suggested for each session. PowerPoint® presentations could be developed if you have the equipment, but overhead cels, marker boards, posters, and other visuals can be used as well.¹ Remember that learners retain more when they both see and hear

information. Reading and underlining material in a book also create visual impressions and cause people to think about the content.

Although the steps in the session plans suggest actions you will take, effective learning always is from the perspective of what the participants will be doing. That is why your actions instruct learners to engage in learning activities such as listening, reading, looking, writing, thinking, answering questions, etc.

No teaching plan will fit every leader. Take the ideas given in this guide and use them to develop your own teaching plans. These ideas are provided to make your planning easier.

Notes

1. Consult the BAPTISTWAY PRESS® website—www.baptistwaypress.org—in the section for *The Bible—You Can Believe It* for information on PowerPoint® presentations prepared for this study. Handouts, scripts, and similar items for use in the class session are also available in this section at www.baptistwaypress.org.

SESSION *One*

Introduction and Chapter 1, The Bible Is God's Book

Introduce the Study

1. Provide copies of *The Bible—You Can Believe It* to participants. The text could be given or sold, but people who pay for all or a portion of the cost of a book seem to be more motivated to study it. Ideally each person will have a copy, but married couples might prefer to share.
2. Refer to the comments in “Introduction” about the changes in our nation and culture. Ask everyone to scan the paragraph beginning with “Baptists in America came of age in an era of objective truth . . .” plus the following two paragraphs. Suggest that people look around the room to observe the different generations represented in this study. Point out that this book will help Baptists answer the question, *How can Baptists explain and defend our commitment to biblical authority in this new century?*

Guide the Study

3. Refer to the title of chapter one, “The Bible Is God’s Book.” Ask everyone to look at the *Baptist Faith and Message* article about the Scriptures, under the heading “The Nature of God’s Word,” and

to read it in unison. Using PowerPoint®, overhead cels, marker board, or posters, present a brief lecture on the following ideas, using information under “The Nature of God’s Word” as a resource:

- a. Written by men divinely inspired
 - b. The record of God’s revelation of Himself to man
 - c. Salvation for its end
 - d. Truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter
 - e. True center of Christian union
 - f. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.
4. Review the four freedoms Baptists embrace as stated by Walter Shurden under the heading “What Baptists Distinctively Believe.” Briefly clarify why Baptists have stood throughout history for the conviction, “no creed but Scripture.”
 5. Enlist a good reader who will play the role of Dr. Hugh Wamble, or use a recording of the script using a tape or CD player. Another idea is to display the script using PowerPoint® or overhead cels (see www.baptistwaypress.org for a printed copy of this script). Introduce Dr. Wamble as a highly respected church historian and Baptist seminary professor who published a research article on the subject of Baptists and biblical authority in 1963. Ask the class to listen to a brief portion of Dr. Wamble’s research that he discovered when studying Baptist confessions of faith going back to 1610.

Dr. Wamble: With few exceptions . . . Baptist confessions specify that religion is the area of the Scripture’s authority. They do not claim for it authority and infallibility in other areas, nor do they claim that man is able to understand Scripture fully. This authority is authenticated by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit bears witness by and with the word in our hearts. Biblical authority relates to salvation and all matters of faith and practice.

Primary authority rests with the New Testament. The earliest Baptist confession (1610) says that the proper Christian doctrine

for the government of Christ's spiritual kingdom, "so much as is needful for us to salvation," is written "in the Scripture of the New Testament, whereto we apply whatsoever we find in the canonical book of the Old Testament."

The authority of Scripture means, therefore, that all religious beliefs and practices, whatever they may be and wherever they may be found, must stand under judgment of Scripture.¹

6. Thank Dr. Wamble for sharing his thoughts. Then use the material in the book to clarify meanings and thoughts. Ask the class to underline significant ideas given in the quotations from E. Y. Mullins, W. T. Conner, Millard J. Erickson, Stanley Grenz, and Russell Dilday under the heading "Statements by Baptist Theologians."
7. Summarize the session by using the following ideas:
 - a. People today need a clear understanding of biblical authority.
 - b. The 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* presents a meaningful description of the nature of God's word.
 - c. Baptists embrace Bible freedom, soul freedom, church freedom, and religious freedom.
 - d. Baptists have no creed but Scripture.
 - e. Biblical authority relates to salvation and matters of faith and practice.
 - f. Biblical authority rests first with the New Testament and is preeminent in the area of religion.

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Point out that the next session will consider chapters two and three. Encourage participants to study these two chapters as preparation for the next session. Give a brief preview of the content of both chapters and indicate the importance of everyone being present for the study. Remind class members who anticipate

being out of town that they can keep up with the study by reading the assigned material as well as chapter four and five, which are to be studied in the third session.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. Since believers can interpret Scriptures for themselves, why is there so much agreement in interpretation?
2. What are some differences between creeds and confessions of faith, like *The Baptist Faith and Message* (1963 edition)?
3. What are some brief definitions of Bible freedom, soul freedom, church freedom, and religious freedom?
4. How are some freedoms that Baptists embrace being challenged in our society today?

Pre-test or Post-test

Distribute the following true-false test to the class at the beginning of the period to stimulate interest in the session or at the end of the session to test knowledge (download a copy of this test from www.baptistwaypress.org). Assure everyone that no one else will see the answers. After the test is completed, provide the correct answers: 1-F, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-T. Lead a discussion on why these statements are true or false.

True or False

- ___ 1. Baptists believe that only people who have been trained in a seminary can interpret Scriptures correctly.
- ___ 2. God's Spirit is a sufficient guide to help believers understand the truth God inspired.

-
- ___ 3. The 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* is a statement of faith that all Baptists accept.
 - ___ 4. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.
 - ___ 5. Baptists are generally known as *people of the Book*.

Notes

1. Adapted from *The Bible—You Can Believe It* (Dallas, Texas: BAPTISTWAY PRESS, 2005), chapter one.

SESSION *Two*

Chapter 2, The Bible Is a Book for All, Not Just a Few, and Chapter 3, The Bible Is a Trustworthy Book

Introduce the Study

1. Project on a screen or distribute the following on a handout (download from www.baptistwaypress.org; see suggestion about different-colored paper in “Additional Ideas”) to class members as they arrive:

Don't Just Sit There; Think About Something

Look at the section in chapter two of *The Bible—You Can Believe It* under the heading, “The Illness.” Work alone or talk to a person near you to compose a one-sentence answer to this question: *Why did early believers struggle with understanding Christian ideas and concepts?*

2. Point out that since this session will be on material in chapters two and three, we need to get into the content quickly. Invite two or three volunteers to share their responses to the assigned question. If the group is large, invite the volunteers to come to the microphone.

Guide the Study

3. Using PowerPoint®, an overhead cel, marker board, or posters, present a brief lecture giving the history of pastoral and church control as outlined below (use information in the study book under the heading, “The Diagnosis”):
 - Ignatius—A.D. 110
 - Irenaeus—A.D. 200
 - Cyprian of Carthage—A.D. 250
 - Constantine—A.D. 312
4. Ask the class to look at the section in the study book titled “Defending the Diagnosis,” and underline the four reasons the church authority model has appeal even today. Continue by asking everyone to underline the three problems in the study book section “The Trouble with the Cure.”
5. Lecture briefly on the idea that perhaps the way to prevent interpretive errors is to invite more of God’s people to read and understand the Bible. Present Martin Luther’s six principles for Bible study under the heading “Trying Another Diagnosis.” Project the principles using PowerPoint® or overhead cels. An alternative suggestion is to ask the class to read the six principles in the book and select at least two of them that have special meaning for them. (There are no correct and incorrect answers.) Ask two or three volunteers to share why they feel positive about the principles they selected.
6. Lead the class to look at chapter three as the thoughts of Aristotle are reviewed (see under the heading “The Contradictory History of Contradictions”). Point out how much people in the Western world have been influenced by his logic and why some people use these ideas to prove the Bible is contradictory. Choose three or four examples from the remainder of chapter three to show how apparent contradictions are explained due to misunderstandings of the context, the author’s intentions, or errors by

copyists. Encourage the class to examine the other examples in the book at a later time.

7. Summarize the session by reading paragraphs one, two, and three from “Conclusion” in chapter two and then the “Conclusion” in chapter three.

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Assign chapters four and five to be studied prior to the next session. Point out that these two chapters will affirm further one’s belief in the authenticity of the Bible. Since some of the material to be study might be unfamiliar to the average reader, encourage the class to give special attention to preparation.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some examples in Baptist life today that suggest the practice of the clergy—church authority model?
2. What changes might occur in adult Sunday School classes if teachers and members really believed that every believer could interpret God’s word?
3. Why would evangelism be enhanced if every member could share the message of the Bible?
4. How can the study of ways to understand apparent contradictions strengthen one’s confidence in the Scripture?
5. What are some suggestions that will help believers relate to people who do not accept the Bible as trustworthy?

Study of Contradictions

Since there are too many examples in chapter three of apparent contradictions to study in class, divide the class into assignment groups. One way to designate groups is to print the handout suggested in step 1 on different-colored paper. Assign a different apparent contradiction to each group for study. If the class is small, groups could gather to discuss the assignment, or participants could find another person with the same colored paper with whom to share thoughts. If the class is large, individuals could study the assignment alone and then confer with a person sitting close by. Suggest a time limit for study and discussion as needed.

SESSION *Three*

Chapter 4, The Bible Is Confirmed by Internal Evidence, and Chapter 5, The Bible Is Confirmed by External Evidence

Introduce the Study

1. Bring to class five or six artificial and real fruits or flowers. Hold up one item at a time and ask the class to guess whether it is real or artificial. After the activity, refer to the quote in *The Bible—You Can Believe It* from novelist Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. Point out that some people do not believe the Bible is authentic. Pose the question, *Is the Bible a flawed book, or is there enough evidence to show that it is really God’s word?*
2. Display an outline of the content in chapters four and five, and give a brief overview of the material to be studied during the session. Due to the large amount of material and because some of the content will be difficult to remember, point out the need to summarize the evidence presented. Ask the participants to underline significant sentences and paragraphs in their book. Here is the outline to display:
 - I. Internal: Biblical Authority and Manuscript Evidence (Chapter Four)
 - A. How the Bible Was Created
 - B. Getting as Close as Possible
 - C. Why So Many Versions?
 - D. What Questions Remain?

- II. External: Biblical Authority and Non-Biblical Evidence (Chapter Five)
 - A. Non-Christian Evidence for Jesus
 - B. Early Christian Records
 - C. Archaeological Evidence for the Bible
 - D. Fulfilled Prophecy

Guide the Study

3. Refer to chapter four under the heading, “How the Bible Was Created.” Explain how papyrus was made and why we do not have any original writings today. Ask everyone to underline the three original languages of the Bible: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Read the last paragraph under the heading, “How the Bible Was Created,” which comes just prior to the next section, titled “Getting as Close as Possible.”
4. Refer to the section in chapter four titled “Getting as Close as Possible.” Point out the importance of the work of textual critics and the advantages that textual critics have related to the Bible over other ancient literature. Review the reasons unintentional errors were made and why scribes might have intentionally changed some texts. Lecture briefly on how textual critics use available manuscripts to determine the most correct translations and how the Dead Sea Scrolls verified the accuracy of the manuscripts. Read the last paragraph in this section, “Getting as Close as Possible,” which comes just prior to the next section, titled “Why So Many Versions?”
5. Refer to the section in chapter four titled “Why So Many Versions?” Explain why contemporary translations and paraphrases differ from the King James Version and how these translations are helpful in understanding the Bible. Point out the purposes of various contemporary versions.

6. Select a few important facts from chapter five in the sections under the headings “Non-Christian Evidence for Jesus” and “Early Christian Records.” Then show how archaeological evidence and fulfilled prophecy verify the authenticity of the Bible. Encourage the class to use the material given in this chapter for future study.
7. Summarize the session by presenting the following facts using PowerPoint®, overhead cels, or a poster:
 - (1) Although original manuscripts of the Bible do not exist, both internal and external evidences verify the authenticity of the Bible.
 - (2) Translations of the Bible that are closer to the original manuscripts can be made because of the work of textual critics.
 - (3) Due to the work of Bible scholars, we have a Bible that is trustworthy in every matter of faith and practice.
 - (4) Contemporary translations can get closer to the original manuscripts because of more recent discoveries.
 - (5) Non-biblical evidence verifies the existence of Jesus and early Christians.
 - (6) Archaeological discoveries support the truth of the Bible.
 - (7) Fulfilled biblical prophecy is an evidence of the Bible’s authenticity.

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Encourage the class to study chapter six prior to session four. Announce that anyone who will be absent at the next session also will need to study chapters seven and eight for session five.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the most significant evidence you would select concerning the authenticity of the Bible? Why?
2. Why do you believe Jesus was a real person?
3. What do you do when you find a Bible passage with a footnote that the passage is not in the oldest and best manuscripts?

Multiple-Choice Activity

(A copy can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org.)
Check all of the answers you believe to be true.

1. Papyrus
 - a. is a paper-like material made from reeds.
 - b. is a product you can purchase at a local department store.
 - c. was used for most or all of the original books of the Bible.
 - d. was used because it would not deteriorate.
2. The Bible
 - a. was written originally in English.
 - b. is a product of human beings.
 - c. was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
 - d. is trustworthy in every matter of faith and practice.
3. Textual critics
 - a. are enemies of the Bible.

- b. can help provide more reliable translations.
- c. are looking for errors that discredit the Bible.

4. Contemporary translations of the Bible

- a. are not as reliable as the King James Version.
- b. are designed to confuse the reader.
- c. use the latest discoveries to get closer to the original text of the Bible.
- d. serve various audiences and needs.

5. Gentile and Jewish historical records

- a. make only a few references about Jesus.
- b. are not helpful because of their secular nature.
- c. help verify that Jesus was a real person in history.

6. Archaeology

- a. is tedious work that is a waste of time and money.
- b. helps authenticate what the Bible says.
- c. has shown that the Bible is not true.

7. Biblical prophecy

- a. is no more reliable than secular predictions.
- b. is fulfilled by Jesus as the Messiah.
- c. helps to prove that Jesus was sent from God.
- d. helps to verify that the Bible is true.

SESSION *Four*

Chapter 6, The Bible Is the Book God Meant Us to Have

Introduce the Study

1. Ask the class to think about ways things are measured or ways decisions are made to decide whether something is genuine or true. List the following on a visual:

Weight

Length

Paintings

Diseases

Old Documents

Drugs

Mathematical equations

Principles

Books of the Bible

Allow participants to volunteer their thoughts about all of the items except the books of the Bible. Point out that this session will deal with the criteria for deciding which writings were inspired by God and how these writings were included in the Bible.

Guide the Study

2. Define the word *canon*. Read various definitions from a good dictionary, giving emphasis to the root idea provided in the study book, *The Bible—You Can Believe It*. A yardstick could be used as a visual object to help define the meaning. Display the following outline on a screen, poster, or marker board:
 - The Hebrew Scriptures
 - The New Testament
 - The Apocrypha
3. Present a brief lecture on the Hebrew Scriptures, using the material in the section of chapter six titled “How the Hebrew Scriptures Came to Be.” Give special attention to the concluding paragraphs in that section. Encourage the class to underline in their books significant ideas you emphasize. Following the lecture, encourage those who have Bibles with them to compare the table of contents in the Old Testament to the listing of books in the Hebrew Scriptures. You could provide this list on a visual or handout for people who do not have a Bible with them.
4. Call attention to the second outline point, “The New Testament.” Read the quote from Justin the Martyr describing Christian worship in the second century, under the heading “How the New Testament Joined the Old.” Point out that by the mid-second century, Christians were using a set of writings that reflected Christian theology. Then say, *Let’s listen to a first-hand report on why these writings came to be.* (The following monologue could be presented by a person who is dressed in first-century costume or as a recording while a picture of the Apostle John is projected on a screen. If enlisting a person to play the role is not possible, you could read the monologue or use the content as a lecture. A copy of the monologue is provided at www.baptistwaypress.org.)

Hello. My name is John. I had the privilege of being a follower of Jesus and walking with him while he was on the earth. Thank you for

inviting me to share with you today. Most of us who knew Jesus personally are concerned that his words and deeds will be lost to future generations. That's why Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote about what Jesus did and said. Some of our fellow Christians also wrote their friends to help them know how to follow Jesus better. Too, some wrote churches to suggest ways to overcome some of the problems the churches are having. We cherish these writings and share them with other believers and churches.

As I got older, God's Spirit impressed me to share the things I had heard and seen with my own eyes, which I had looked at and my hands had touched. I guess people who live to be old want to pass on their thoughts and feelings. I want my writings to be helpful to people who seek knowledge about Jesus and want to know how to treat other people as Jesus taught us. I also wrote to some believers who are being persecuted and need to be encouraged to believe that God will be victorious in the end and will be with them in their sufferings. Perhaps my writings also will be helpful to people in the future.

5. Review the material in the section titled "Why these books?" Ask everyone to underline the four criteria developed for accepting a book as inspired and give examples of why writings were accepted or refused. Emphasize that the process was *bottom up* rather than *top down* and that the church councils codified what believers had already come to accept and use as the word of God.
6. Lecture briefly on the Apocrypha and why some accept these writings as scriptural and others reject them. Use information under the heading "What About the Apocrypha?"
7. Summarize the session by reading the quote from New Testament scholar William Barclay: "To study the Canon of Scripture is not to come away with a lesser view of Scripture, but with a far greater view, for it is to see the unanswerable power of the word of God in action in the minds and hearts of men and women."

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Assign chapters seven and eight to be studied before the next session. Emphasize that special attention will be given to chapter eight during the session. Both chapters are challenging and need careful study before coming to the class.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What Old Testament book is the most meaningful to you and why?
2. What New Testament book is the most meaningful to you and why?
3. What significant fact about the canon of Scripture encourages you most to believe that the Bible is inspired?
4. If people really believe the Bible is the word of God, what changes will it make in how they study it? What differences would this belief make in your Sunday School class? What differences would this belief make for you?

Research Reports

Enlist three people who can use the internet or the library to prepare a two- or three-minute report on the following historical figures: Justin the Martyr; Eusebius; and Athanasius. Call for the reports as needed to add information to the session.

SESSION *Five*

Chapter 7, The Bible Tells of God's Miraculous Acts, and Chapter 8, The Bible Is an Attractive Book

Introduce the Study

1. Use the material about Thomas Jefferson at the beginning of chapter seven to introduce the session. Point out that the content in chapters seven and eight is concerned with two philosophies that challenge the authority of the Bible. Chapter seven deals with the differences between naturalists and supernaturalists and whether miracles are possible. Chapter eight deals with postmodern thinkers who question whether truth is objective and believe that truth and morals are relative and subjective. Because of the large amount of material and the brief time of the session, much of the content will need to be used as a resource for personal study.

Guide the Study

2. Prior to the session, enlist some good readers who will read the information provided. (A copy of the material to be read can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org.) Invite these readers to come to the front of the class. Reader 1 should stand on

one side, and Readers 2, 3, 4, and 5 should stand on the opposite side.

Reader 1. I believe in supernatural events. The Bible reports many miracles in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus' ministry was validated in large part by the miracles he performed. When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus whether he were really the Messiah, the messengers reported that Jesus cured people of diseases, sickness, evil spirits, and blindness.

Early Christians understood the significance of miracles for Jesus' divinity and his movement. Without the possibility of miracles, the whole purpose of the Christian faith is defeated. In fact, salvation is itself a miracle of the highest magnitude. To deny the supernatural is to deny the divine authority of Scripture and the transforming faith Scripture reveals and promotes.

Reader 2. I do not believe in the supernatural. In fact, I think miracles are impossible because if there is a God, God must be immutable—unchangeable—to be God. God would not change the laws of his own creation. Miracles change the laws of nature, and so miracles are impossible.

Reader 3. I am skeptical about miracles. Miracles are usually seen only by one or two people who might not be very intelligent or educated. I just believe miracles are implausible.

Reader 4. I question miracles because they cannot be validated by scientific evidence. Science operates according to certain laws. I cannot accept anything that is not supported by repeatable evidence that tests a theory.

Reader 5. I believe that miracles are outdated. People who believe in miracles are superstitious and naive. Maybe such things happened in the past, but that day is over. Besides, the miracles in the Bible happened before we understood science as we do now.

3. Take a few minutes to review the material presented by the readers. Then present a brief lecture from the information in chapter seven under the heading "Where You Get On Is Where You Get Off," using the following outline:

- a. Those who have never experienced miracles are by definition unqualified to pass judgment on their existence or nature.
- b. Miracles are more probable than improbable.
- c. Miracles are part of that dimension of experience that is not susceptible to scientific verification.

As the lecture is given, ask everyone to underline these ideas in the text.

4. Using PowerPoint® or overhead cels, introduce postmodernism by using the information in chapter eight. Summarize the progression of thought presented in the text from people who began to question objective truth. List the names and at least one thought from each person similar to the following:

- Descartes (1596–1650): Rationalism = truth comes from reason.
- John Locke (1636–1704): Everything you know, your senses told you.
- David Hume (1711–1776): All knowledge is based on subjective personal experiences.
- Immanuel Kant (1724–1804): Your senses furnish the raw data that your mind organizes into knowledge.
- Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900): All truth is derived in the same way: we create abstract principles from particular experiences. But these abstract principles are subjective, personal, and non-binding.
- Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834): Biblical texts are not objective truth but the reflections of their author's experiences.

Point out that these ideas cause many people today to believe that truth is subjective and ethics are personal. Some people believe that spirituality is personal and subjective. They say all roads lead up the same mountain, or it doesn't matter

what you believe as long as you're sincere and tolerant of the beliefs of others.

5. Select some significant statements from the section in chapter eight titled "A Christian Response." Read these statements and encourage the class to underline them.
6. Summarize the session by briefly reviewing the thoughts from both chapters. Point out that whether we agree or disagree with these views, the fact remains that many people today reject the supernatural and objective truth. Use the thoughts in chapter eight under the heading "Conclusion: Remembering Our Future" to present a strategy for relating to today's skeptics. Read or present a lecture using the last four paragraphs from chapter eight, beginning with "Our ministry strategies. . . ."

Prepare for the Next Study

7. Encourage everyone to read and study chapter nine before the next session.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some miracles that class members have experienced?
2. What are some practical ways our church could relate to people who are skeptical about the Bible?
3. What changes might be needed in our church to reach out to postmodern thinkers?

Agree—Disagree Discussion

Distribute the handout below to participants and allow them to complete it. After sufficient time, lead a discussion based on their thinking. (Download a copy of the handout from www.baptistway-press.org.) If a handout is not practical, place placards around the room as follows: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Not Sure,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.” Ask class members to move to locations in the room based on their feelings about the statements you read. After they have made their decisions, ask them to tell why.

Agree—Disagree

Mark each statement based on your understanding.

1. Rules are okay for children, but adults can decide for themselves what is right and wrong.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Scientific facts and biblical truths sometime conflict with each other.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. The best way to influence postmodern thinkers is to tell them what the Bible says.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. What is true for me might not be true for you.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. The bottom line is that you cannot be absolutely certain about anything.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Religion is a personal matter and should not be shared with other people.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

SESSION

Six

Chapter 9, The Bible Is an Inspired Book

Introduce the Study

1. Call attention to the first paragraph in chapter nine of the study book about Claude Pepper and why descriptive words used about the Bible might be misunderstood by some people. Transition into the study by commenting on the large number of Bibles sold each year. Ask the class to indicate the number of Bibles they own. Start with ten or more copies, then five to nine, etc.

Guide the Study

2. In advance, prepare slips of paper with the suggested Bible verses that are listed under the heading, “What the Bible calls itself.” Number the assignments in the order the verses are to be read. Provide the entire text of the passages in order to save class time (download from www.baptistwaypress.org). Distribute these verses to effective readers, and ask them to read the assigned passage at the appropriate time. Lecture briefly about “Holy Bible,” using information under the heading “What the Bible calls itself.” Then ask readers to present the assigned passages.

3. Using PowerPoint®, overhead cels, or marker board, present an illustrated lecture on the meaning of inspiration. Review the theories of inspiration and thoughts of early Christians regarding beliefs about the authoritative nature of Scripture (see the information in chapter nine under the headings “Relating the divine and the human” and “Those closest to the text”).
4. Introduce the word *inerrancy*, and inform the class about “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.” Ask the class to read the list of the most common definitions (see under the heading “The Bible and Inerrancy”). After sufficient time for reading, lecture briefly on why the definitions and the ways the term is qualified by adherents can cause confusion and misunderstanding.
5. Review the information under the heading “Inerrancy and history” by presenting thoughts from Harold Lindsell, Francis Turretin, and Mark Noll. Ask the class to look at the Bible passages under the heading “Bible passages and inerrancy” and to underline key thoughts as these passages are discussed. Point out the thinking of Aristotle and why his logic is not useful in theology (see under the heading “The origins of inerrancy”).
6. Summarize the session by reviewing the subheads under the headings “God’s Word on God’s Word” and “The Bible on Inerrancy.” Then read aloud the first two sentences under the heading “Conclusion,” as follows: “So what’s the best way to describe biblical authority? The best way is the way the Bible describes itself: as the ‘inspired’ word of God.”

Prepare for the Next Study

7. Ask everyone to study chapter ten before coming to the next study. Chapter ten is part one of two chapters designed to help class members interpret the Bible more accurately. The material in chapters ten and eleven is designed to help Bible students prepare for effective Bible study, discover guidelines that apply to

every passage in Scripture, and explore principles that relate to specific sections of God’s word.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What is your favorite Bible translation? Why?
2. Which theory of inspiration best describes your belief about how God inspired the Bible?
3. Since the term *inerrancy* seems to be difficult to define, what other words or phrases can be used to describe the truth of the Bible?

Post-Test

Use the post-test as a review of the ideas presented in chapter nine. Hand each participant a copy of the test and allow time for it to be completed (a copy is available at www.baptistwaypress.org). Tell everyone that the test will not be graded and no one else will see the answers. After completion, ask volunteers to share their answers. Lead a discussion based on the responses after each question.

Post-Test

Select the best word or phrase to fill in the blanks in the sentences.

1. The word “holy” means _____.
 - (1) Inerrant
 - (2) Truthful
 - (3) Set apart
 - (4) Complete

2. The Bible is inspired because it is _____.
 - (1) Different
 - (2) God-breathed
 - (3) Correct
 - (4) Hard to understand

3. The first Christians were convinced of the _____.
_____.
 - (1) Dictation theory of inspiration
 - (2) Inerrancy of Scripture
 - (3) Divine, authoritative nature of Scripture

4. The law of contradiction is based on the thinking of _____.
 - (1) Socrates
 - (2) Origen
 - (3) Aristotle
 - (4) Paul

5. Baptist confessions of faith characterize Scripture as _____.
_____.
 - (1) Truth without mixture of error
 - (2) Inerrant
 - (3) True in matters of science
 - (4) Best translated in the King James Version

SESSION *Seven*

Chapter 10, The Bible Is a Practical Book

Introduce the Study

1. Ask the class to look at the last two paragraphs in the introductory section of chapter ten as you read or summarize the content. Point out that this session is part one of the study of “Biblical Authority and the Study of God’s Word.” This session will answer this question: *How can I prepare for effective Bible study?*

Guide the Study

2. Define *hermeneutics* by using PowerPoint®, an overhead cel, or marker board with the following information: “Biblical hermeneutics is the field of study that identifies necessary rules and guidelines for Bible study.”
3. In advance, distribute the following assignments to three good readers who will present ideas for personal preparation (a copy is available at www.baptistwaypress.org):

- (1) *Meet God personally.* “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Paul does not mean that an unconverted person can understand nothing in the Bible. Rather, he teaches that we cannot “accept” or “understand” the spiritual applications of Scripture unless the Holy Spirit guides us to such interpretation.
 - (2) *Be willing to work hard.* Paul challenged Timothy, his young apprentice in the ministry, “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13). “Devote yourself” translates a Greek term that requires previous, private preparations. Like any area of intellectual investigation, understanding and applying the Scriptures requires personal work.
 - (3) *Obey what you discover.* The Bible is not meant to inform our minds as much as it intends to change our lives. Jesus said, “If any one chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:17). Obedience leads to relationship. Faith is required. We must position ourselves to receive what God wants to give by grace.
4. Present a lecture using the content under “Guiding Presuppositions.” Illustrate the lecture using PowerPoint®, overheads, or posters. If posters are used, ask three people to come to the front of the room to hold up a poster as the presupposition is presented. Organize the lecture by using the subheads in this section, as follows:
- Believe that you can understand Scripture
 - Use the New Testament to interpret the Old
 - Make the Bible its own commentary
- Ask the class members to underline important statements in the study book as the lecture is presented. Give special

attention to the third presupposition and the five principles emerging from it. You will want to display these five principles. (See the summary at the end of the section, “Guiding Presuppositions.”)

5. Ask the class to look at the four subheads under “Background Questions.” Point out that these four questions need to be asked about each Bible text to be studied. Review the different kinds of literature found in the Bible as listed under the subhead, “What kind of literature is this?” In advance, ask four people to come to the front of the room to present the following information (a copy is available at www.baptistwaypress.org). Introduce these monologues as examples of background information related to the Book of Revelation.

- (1) My name is John. I was one of the twelve apostles who traveled with Jesus. In my old age, I was exiled to the island of Patmos because I testified to God’s word and to the testimony of Jesus. While I was on Patmos, God gave me a special revelation and asked me to write down what I saw and learned.
- (2) Hi! I live in Ephesus. The Romans have been in control of our lives for a long time, but recently they have been persecuting those of us who are Christians because we will not say, “Caesar is Lord.” We know that only Jesus is Lord, and so we refuse to bow down to an earthly ruler. We recently have received a special writing from our friend, John. John’s writing encouraged the believers when we read it, but we had to send it on to our brothers and sisters in the other churches mentioned.
- (3) I live in Pergamum. It is tough here because the Romans continue to put pressure on Christians to affirm that Caesar is Lord. After we had read John’s writing that was delivered to us, we rejoiced because John told us that no matter how bad things get, Jesus will be victorious. John encouraged us to continue to be faithful in spite of persecution. He told us

that even if we were killed because of our faith, we would be rewarded in heaven.

- (4) I am a resident of Philadelphia. We recently received a letter from our friend John. The writing was strange to some of the believers, but the rest of us understood what John was saying. He wrote in a kind of code language that many of us knew. We were able to interpret what John said to other believers. Of course, we sent the letter on to other believers.
6. Summarize this session by referring to the information under the heading “Conclusion.” Ask class members to review the summary and ask questions as needed.

Prepare for the Next Study

7. Remind everyone to study chapter eleven before coming to the next study. Chapter eleven is part two of two chapters designed to help class members interpret the Bible more accurately.

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some reasons for differing biblical interpretations?
2. What are some practical plans class members have used to read and study the Bible?
3. What are some Bible study resources that will aid biblical interpretation?

Testimonies

Distribute pencils and a blank sheet of paper to class members. Ask them to write a brief paragraph about a passage of Scripture that has special meaning. Encourage them to include in the paragraph some reasons this passage is meaningful. After a few minutes of writing, invite volunteers to read their paragraphs as a personal testimony about the Bible.

SESSION

Eight

Chapter 11,

The Bible Is a Relevant Book

Introduce the Study

1. Use PowerPoint®, overhead projection, or an outline on a marker board to review the basic background questions discussed in the previous session (under the heading “Background Questions” in chapter ten) and to present the fourfold approach to Bible study summarized at the end of the introduction in chapter eleven (Grammatical, Historical, Theological, Practical).
2. Refer the group to the first paragraph under the heading “Grammatical Principles,” and call attention to this statement: “Baptists believe that the Bible is intended for all believers, and that each believer is his or her own priest before God.” Ask everyone to underline this thought in the text.

Guide the Study

3. Display copies of a Bible dictionary, concordance, Bible encyclopedia, Bible handbook, and one or more commentaries. Include in the display copies of Sunday School lesson curriculum materials for members and teachers. Lecture briefly about the purpose

of each of these resources and how each can be helpful in Bible study.

4. Use PowerPoint®, overhead projection, or a marker board to present the grammatical principles. Include the information given under the subheads “Word study,” “Sentence structure,” “Literary type,” and “Context.” Ask the class members to select and underline at least one example under each of the outline points to reinforce the idea presented.
5. Display a map set as you present the historical principles. Use the map to point out the distances between Judah and Perath, and between Nazareth and Bethlehem. Ask the class to look at the examples under the subhead “Social context.” Ask them to share examples in our society that adults understand but children and youth might not understand, like phonographs, typewriters, drive-in movies, etc.
6. Present the information under the heading “Theological Principles” by reviewing the ideas given under the subheads “Scripture interprets Scripture” and “General theological concepts.” Refer to the Scripture passages that are explained (James 3; Romans 12). Then perhaps select one or two other passages of Scripture to give as examples, such as John 1:1–14 and 1 Corinthians 15:1–11. Ask, *What theological ideas are taught in this passage?*
7. Use PowerPoint®, overhead projection, or a marker board to present the five steps to take in applying the Bible practically (see under “Practical Principles”). After the five steps have been discussed, review one or two recent Sunday School lessons, and emphasize how the lessons suggest practical applications. (If you use BAPTISTWAY® Bible study materials, point out the Study Aim and Question to Explore in the *Study Guide*, and Encourage Application in the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* as ways to help Bible students make one or more applications.)

8. Summarize the study by reviewing the fourfold approach to Bible study.

Conclude the Study

9. Distribute a handout to class members, and ask them to take a minute or two to consider how this study will help them understand the Bible better in the future (a copy of this handout can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org).

Toward More Effective Bible Study

Write some ways this study can help you study the Bible more effectively. Keep this handout in your Bible as a reminder of your commitment.

As a result of this study I will

Additional Ideas

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some websites class members have found helpful in Bible study?
2. What is the most significant concept you learned about the Bible during this study?
3. How has this study changed your feelings or thoughts about the Bible?

Post-Test

Use the post-test with your class to help participants review what they have learned. A copy is available at www.baptistwaypress.org. Give participants time to complete it, and then review the answers with them.

Post-Test

This test will help measure what you remember about this study. The test is for your eyes only, and you will not have to share your answers unless you volunteer. Select the best response from the choices to complete the sentences.

1. The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and _____.
 - (1) is too hard to understand
 - (2) always gives true scientific information
 - (3) is the record of God's revelation of himself to humankind
 - (4) needs a preacher to interpret it
2. Baptist believe that our sole authority for faith and practice _____.
 - (1) is the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement
 - (2) is the Scriptures themselves
 - (3) comes from scholars who teach in seminaries
 - (4) is whatever each Baptist believes
3. We cannot translate the original manuscripts of the Bible because _____.
 - (1) we do not have any.
 - (2) we do not understand the original languages
 - (3) they are too faded to read
4. Textual critics are scholars _____.
 - (1) who are trying to prove the Bible is not true
 - (2) who teach wrong doctrine
 - (3) who try to persuade people that the Bible is not inerrant
 - (4) who devote themselves to studying ancient copies of the Bible to try to provide the most reliable translations

5. Archaeologists are people who enjoy digging up old objects, _____.
 - (1) but their work doesn't amount to a hill of beans
 - (2) and their excavations have verified many Scriptural references
 - (3) but they work to prove the Bible is not true
6. The canon _____.
 - (1) describes a straight rod used as a rule
 - (2) is a large gun
 - (3) of the Old and New Testaments was decided on by a church council
7. Believing in miracles today _____.
 - (1) cannot be justified because of scientific evidence
 - (2) is naive because critics have proved miracles were impossible
 - (3) is an affirmation of the worldview that accepts the category of the supernatural
8. Postmodernism presents a challenge for Christianity _____.
 - (1) that is similar to the culture the first Christians faced
 - (2) that is too difficult to overcome
 - (3) that needs to be ignored
9. Inerrancy is a word that _____.
 - (1) describes the belief of the only people who accept the Bible as true
 - (2) has several definitions
 - (3) describes how Baptists have traditionally explained inspiration
 - (4) the Bible uses to describe itself
10. Hermeneutics _____.
 - (1) is practical only for preachers and seminary teachers
 - (2) is a study of the original manuscripts of the Bible
 - (3) is the study of a message or principles of interpretation

How to Order More Bible Study Materials

It's easy! Just fill in the following information. For additional Bible study materials, see www.baptistwaypress.org or get a complete order form of available materials by calling 1-866-249-1799 or e-mailing baptistway@bgct.org.

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