

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SCRIPTURE

We believe the Bible is both God's love letter to us and His instruction manual for life. Our lives and ministry will be guided by the teaching of Scripture.

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme and final authority on all matters upon which it teaches. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture or error in the original manuscripts. The Bible is infallible, inerrant, and absolute truth. Where it speaks we listen and obey.

No other writings are vested with such divine authority.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

INSPIRATION: Literally means God-breathed. God has brought to all men a Word from Himself through man.

THREE ELEMENTS OF INSPIRATION:

THE WRITER:

When a man wrote, it wasn't just a man writing his own thoughts, but the Spirit of God was working within that man, communicating to his spirit the things he was to write. Most of the time the writer understood what he was writing because of his own personal walk with God. Other times he wrote beyond his own comprehension.

2 Peter 1:20-21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

THE CHURCH:

The next miracle in inspiration is that those whom the Spirit of God had entered were now given the discernment of the Spirit. God spoke to their spirit and affirmed to them which writings were Spirit-inspired. They then canonized them. They officially affirmed them to be Scripture.

2 Peter 3:16

"His letters contain some things that are hard to understand which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other scriptures..."

THE INDIVIDUAL:

The miracle is that as any individual reads the Scriptures or hears them being taught and preached, God's Holy Spirit will enter his heart and affirm to him that these words are not words such as are in any other book; that these are the words of God. And by that, one may become wise unto salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

THE USEFULNESS OF SCRIPTURE:

1. It draws people to salvation and develops faith.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2. It reveals our thoughts and attitudes of our heart.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

3. It guides our life in Christian living.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4. It equips believers for every good work.

5. The Bible is useful for ministers to help others.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, ... I give you this charge: ² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction

THE APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE:

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

MEDITATION QUESTIONS:

Do my actions show that I truly believe the Scriptures are essential for Christian living?

How often do I open the Scriptures to hear from God?

If I am not currently doing so, will I change my lifestyle to include reading the Scriptures regularly?

HOW TO BEGIN SPENDING TIME WITH GOD IN HIS WORD

Things you need:

- A solitary place
- Your Bible.
- A Journal (could be a spiral notebook)
- A pen
- A note pad (for jotting down thoughts that might distract you)

Commit to spending a set amount of time with the Lord.

Start with 10 minutes if you are new to this idea.

Turn off cell phone.

(nothing's going on in this world that can't wait a few minutes for you to respond)

Use The **S O A P** guide:

Scriptures:

Read a passage until you come to a spiritual insight.
You may want to write the Scripture in your journal.

Observation: (ask questions)

What was the writer saying to the people he was writing?
What does this passage say to me?
How can I use this passage in my life?

Application:

Ask God to guide you to know what He wants you to do with this insight.
Write out your insight.
Place yourself in the midst of the Scripture.
I.e. John 3 16: "For God so love the world (me)....."

Prayer:

Pray the Scriptures back to God.
Ask God to help you to learn and obey His word.

Write down your thoughts as God impresses you.

Share what God is teaching you with others.

Canonization of the Bible:

The term “canon” is used to describe the books that are divinely inspired and therefore belong in the Bible. The difficulty in determining the biblical canon is that the Bible does not give us a list of the books that belong in the Bible. Determining the canon was a process conducted first by Jewish rabbis and scholars and later by early Christians. Ultimately, it was God who decided what books belonged in the biblical canon. A book of Scripture belonged in the canon from the moment God inspired its writing. It was simply a matter of God’s convincing His human followers which books should be included in the Bible.

Compared to the New Testament, there was very little controversy over the canon of the Old Testament. Hebrew believers recognized God’s messengers and accepted their writings as inspired of God. While there was undeniably some debate in regards to the Old Testament canon, by A.D. 250 there was nearly universal agreement on the canon of Hebrew Scripture. The only issue that remained was the Apocrypha, with some debate and discussion continuing today. The vast majority of Hebrew scholars considered the Apocrypha to be good historical and religious documents, but not on the same level as the Hebrew Scriptures.

For the New Testament, the process of the recognition and collection began in the first centuries of the Christian church. Very early on, some of the New Testament books were being recognized. Paul considered Luke’s writings to be as authoritative as the Old Testament (1 Timothy 5:18; see also Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7). Peter recognized Paul’s writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). Some of the books of the New Testament were being circulated among the churches (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Clement of Rome mentioned at least eight New Testament books (A.D. 95). Ignatius of Antioch acknowledged about seven books (A.D. 115). Polycarp, a disciple of John the apostle, acknowledged 15 books (A.D. 108). Later, Irenaeus mentioned 21 books (A.D. 185). Hippolytus recognized 22 books (A.D. 170-235). The New Testament books receiving the most controversy were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, and 3 John.

The first “canon” was the Muratorian Canon, which was compiled in A.D. 170. The Muratorian Canon included all of the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and 3 John. In A.D. 363, the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament (along with the Apocrypha) and the 27 books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) also affirmed the same 27 books as authoritative.

The councils followed something similar to the following principles to determine whether a New Testament book was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit: 1) Was the author an apostle or have a close connection with an apostle? 2) Is the book being accepted by the body of Christ at large? 3) Did the book contain consistency of doctrine and orthodox teaching? 4) Did the book bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit? Again, it is crucial to remember that the church did not determine the canon. No early church council decided on the canon. It was God, and God alone, who determined which books belonged in the Bible. It was simply a matter of God’s imparting to His followers what He had already decided. The human process of collecting the books of the Bible was flawed, but God, in His sovereignty, and despite our ignorance and stubbornness, brought the early church to the recognition of the books He had inspired.