



NextStep 102: Core Beliefs of the Christian Faith



Week #1 – The Bible¹

Key Concepts:

- The Bible as God's Words in Written Form
- The Canon of Scripture
- The Authority of Scripture
- The Inerrancy of Scripture

The Bible as God's Words in Written Form

What does the phrase "the Word of God" mean?

- 1) "The Word of God" as a **person**: Jesus Christ.
- 2) "The Word of God" as **speech** by God.
 - a. God's decrees – a word of God that causes something to happen.
 - b. God's words of personal address – God communicates with people on Earth.
 - c. God's words as speech through human lips – God speaks through prophets.
 - d. God's words in written form – the **Bible**.

The Canon of Scripture

- 1) The canon of scripture is the list of all the **books** that belong in the Bible.
- 2) The Old Testament canon began with the **Ten Commandments**.
 - a. Additional words of **God** were added to the Old Testament canon until Malachi around **435 B.C.** The closing of the Old Testament canon was supported by:
 - i. 1 Maccabees,
 - ii. Josephus,
 - iii. Rabbinic literature,
 - iv. Qumran community.

¹ Much of the material in these notes is taken directly from Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, 1994.

- 3) **The Apocrypha** is the collection of books included in the canon of scripture by the Roman Catholic Church but **not** included in the canon by Protestants (from the Greek word apocrypha, “things that are **hidden**”).
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church officially declared the Apocrypha as part of the canon (except 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh) at the Council of **Trent** in 1546. The Council of Trent was the RCC’s response to the teachings of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation.
 - b. The writings of the Apocrypha should **not** be regarded as part of Scripture.

- 4) **The New Testament canon** began with the writings of the **apostles**.
 - a. The apostles were empowered by the **Holy Spirit** to recall accurately the words and deeds of Jesus and to interpret them rightly for subsequent generations.
 - b. Those who held the office of apostle in the early church had the same authority as Old Testament **prophets**, an authority to speak and write words that are God’s very own words.
 - c. The absolute divine authority of some New Testament books not written by apostles was affirmed by living **apostles**.
 - d. An exact list of the **twenty-seven** New Testament books was accepted by churches in the West at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

The Authority of Scripture

- 1) **Words Written in Scripture are God’s Words.**
 - a. The Old Testament makes frequent claims, “Thus says the **Lord**.”
 - b. In the Old Testament, God speaks *through* the **prophet**; therefore, what the prophet says in God’s name, God says.
 - c. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul writes, “All scripture is **inspired** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NASB).
 “Inspired by God” = *theopneustos*, or “breathed out by God,” which is a metaphor for speaking the words of scripture.
 - d. In the New Testament, the apostle Peter writes concerning the prophecy of scripture, “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the **Holy Spirit** spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21, NASB).

- 2) **Believing or Obeying the Words of Scripture is to Believe or Obey God.**
 - a. Jesus rebukes His disciples for not **believing** the Old Testament scriptures (*Luke 24:25*).
 - b. Believers in Christ are to **obey** the disciples' words (*John 15:20*).
 - c. Not **obeying** Paul's writings was to make oneself liable to church discipline (*2 Thessalonians 3:14*).
 - d. The LORD delights in those who **tremble** at His word (*Isaiah 66:2*).

- 3) **Scripture is Truth.**
 - a. God **cannot** lie (*Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18*); lying is against His character; therefore, God's words can be trusted.
 - b. In the Old Testament, David declares, "O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are **truth**" (*2 Samuel 7:28*).
 - c. When the Psalmist writes, "Every word of God is tested" (*Proverbs 30:5, NASB*), he means, "every word of God proves **true**."
 - d. In His prayer to His Father, Jesus prays, "Sanctify them in the **truth**; Your word is **truth**" (*John 17:17*).

- 4) **Scripture is the Final Authority.**
 - a. Note the difference between "true" and "truth" in *John 17:17*. God's Word itself is truth! Scripture is the final **authority**!
 - b. The final form in which Scripture remains authoritative is its **written** form.
 - c. Believers in Christ must not look to experience, popular authors, popular speakers, healers or anything other than written Scripture as the absolute **authority**. We have God's final authoritative words written in the Bible!

The Inerrancy of Scripture

- 1) **Definition of inerrancy:** "Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."²
 - a. Inerrancy concerns **truthfulness**, not the degree of precision with which events are reported. Therefore, the Bible can use ordinary language of everyday speech and remain inerrant.
 - b. Loose quotations are permitted as long as the **content** of what is quoted is true.
 - c. Unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions are permitted since they do not affect the **truthfulness** of the statement.

² Ibid., 90.

2) Current Challenges to Inerrancy.

- a. **Some say the Bible is only authoritative for “faith and practice.”** They accept the infallibility of scripture, that is that scripture is not able to lead us astray in matters of faith and practice, but they deny inerrancy. This position is flawed because the Bible says that all of it is **God-breathed**, profitable, pure, perfect and true. Every detail of the Bible is authoritative.
- b. **Some say the word “inerrancy” is a poor term; it isn’t in the Bible.** Who cares? Key Christian theological distinctive must not only be expressed by words found in the Bible (eg., Trinity).
The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) published the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” in 1978 which defines what most evangelicals mean by inerrancy.
- c. **Some say we have no inerrant manuscripts; therefore, the Bible we have is not inerrant.** They say the autographs, or **original** copies of a biblical document, could be inerrant, but not our current Bibles. Baloney! Scholars know what over 99 percent of the original manuscripts said. Where there are **textual** variants; *different words in different ancient copies of the same verse*; the correct decision is often clear.

3) Problems with Denying Inerrancy.

- a. We begin to wonder if we can really **trust** God.
- b. We make our own human minds a higher standard of **truth** than God’s word.
- c. We deny **doctrines** taught in the Bible.

Key Terms:

Apocrypha
Apostle
Canon

Absolute authority
God-breathed
Inspiration
Scripture

Autograph
ICBI
Inerrant
Infallible
Textual variant

Key Verses:

Psalm 1:1-2
Joshua 1:8
Hebrews 1:1-2
2 Timothy 3:16
2 Peter 1:20-21

Scripture Memory:

“All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NASB).

Homework Assignment #1:

- 1) Know definitions for Key Terms on page 4.
- 2) Memorize 2 Timothy 3:16.
- 3) Compare the TBC Position Paper on “The Bible” with Article I – The Scriptures of the Dallas Theological Seminary Doctrinal Statement. Note similarities and differences, if any, between the two documents.
- 4) Answer the following questions:
 - a. What verses could you reference to argue that words written in scripture are God’s words?
 - b. What verses could you reference to argue that God cannot lie or speak falsely?
 - c. Why should believers in Christ believe the Bible is inerrant?
 - d. Why should believers in Christ obey the Bible?
- 5) Review class notes.

Next Week: The Trinity.

Topic: THE BIBLE

What We Believe:

We believe that:

- the Bible is the written Word of God, the supreme authority over the human conscience and the Church. We deny that Church creeds or declarations have authority greater than or equal to that of the Bible.
- the Bible is God's revelation to man. While God has revealed Himself partially in creation (Romans 1:20) and personally in His son Jesus Christ John 14:9. He has revealed Himself most fully in the Scriptures.
- the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration. We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.
- in His work of inspiration God used the distinctive literary styles and personalities of the writers He prepared. We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.
- inspiration guaranteed the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, so that it is true and trustworthy in all the matters it addresses. We deny that there is any distortion or falsehood in Scripture, or that it is reliable on issues of religion and redemption but not those of history and science.
- the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Word of God, assuring believers of its truth. We deny that this witness of the Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.
- the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatical-historical-literary exegesis, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We deny the legitimacy of any critical treatment of the text that leads to discounting its teaching or rejecting its claims to authorship.
- the Bible is God's personal letter to man identifying sin, revealing salvation, and supplying the believer with all the guidance needed to live a godly life. We strongly urge every believer to read, memorize, and study Scripture in order to grow closer to the God who has revealed Himself in His Word.

Dallas Theological Seminary, *Doctrinal Statement*

Article I — THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which we understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that holy men of God "were moved by the Holy Spirit" to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings—historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic—as appeared in the original manuscripts. We believe that the whole Bible in the originals is therefore without error. We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him. We also believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction (Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2–3; 18:28; 26:22–23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).³

³ <http://www.dts.edu/about/doctrinalstatement/>