



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Why Study the Bible?

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As we begin a new year of Bible Studies in the Capitol, I believe it might be wise to start off by addressing a foundational question: Why should we study the Bible? After all, there are so many important things to do, and so many pressing concerns. What difference can Bible study make?

One passage in the Bible that answers this question is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“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 3:16-17¹

This sentence declares three bold truths about the Bible.

1. IT IS INSPIRED BY GOD

All Scripture is inspired by God ...

A more literal translation of this phrase, as found in some Bible translations, is “All scripture is God-breathed.”² The unmistakable claim of the biblical authors is that they, though mere men, were directed in precisely what to write by the one true and living God Himself. Consider how the apostle Peter describes this:

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” 2 Peter 1:20-21

Though Peter may have had the Old Testament in mind when he wrote this, we see in another passage that he also regarded the writings of the Apostle Paul, his contemporary

who wrote much of the New Testament, as holy Scripture. (2 Peter 3:14-16)

In fact, the Bible repeatedly, in many hundreds of places in both the Old and New Testaments, refers to itself as the very “Word of God.”

2. IT IS INERRANT

All Scripture is inspired by God ...

Notice, it says *all*, and not just “some.” When we speak of the Bible as being inspired, we do not mean merely that portions of it were spiritually influenced. Rather, we mean that every word of the original writing was truly authored by the one true and living God, and is therefore, completely accurate and without error (inerrant, infallible).³

Jesus himself taught this. Notice what he said in Matthew 5:18:

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” Matthew 5:18

The word translated “smallest letter” here is the Greek *iota*, which is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. Since Jesus usually spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew, this may actually refer to the Hebrew letter “yod,” which is the smallest Hebrew letter, resembling our comma.⁴ The word *Stroke* here is from the Greek *keraiia*, which refers to the hook, horn, or projection on a single letter.⁵ It is as if someone speaking English today said that “every dot on every “i” and every cross on every “t” can be trusted. So, Jesus, taught that the Bible is letter-for-letter correct and completely trustworthy.

But, people often ask me, aren’t some parts of the Bible written using parables, metaphors, or other figures of speech that require interpretation? The answer is yes. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 different books written by dozens of authors on different continents over a span of thousands

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS @ 7:30 A.M., ASSEMBLY RULES CONFERENCE ROOM (3171)

STAFF/LOBBYISTS: WEDNESDAYS @ 12:00 NOON, ROOM 125

CALIFORNIA

Why Study the Bible? (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

of years. Anyone seeking to understand a portion of the Bible would do well to first consider who wrote it, when it was written, who it was originally written to, what writing style was used (historical, poetic, epistolary, apocalyptic, etc...), in addition to investigating the language, cultural background, and context to the fullest extent possible. None of this is easy, and it all takes time. However, by doing so, even a little bit, and carefully applying basic hermeneutical principles (hermeneutics = the art and science of Bible interpretation), we find that even more complex parts of the Bible are generally understandable. Though some of its teachings were originally written to address particular situations that no longer exist today, we can still draw timeless truths from every page of God's word.

A t-shirt read, "This life is a test. It is only a test. Had this been an actual life, you would have received information as to what to do and where to go." In a world where it seems that so little can be known for sure, it is incredibly comforting to know that our Maker has given us a trustworthy and reliable guide for living.

JESUS TAUGHT THAT THE BIBLE IS LETTER-FOR-LETTER CORRECT AND COMPLETELY TRUSTWORTHY.

3. IT IS PROFITABLE

“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.”

This passage shows that it is *profitable* for many things, including *teaching* us everything that God wants us to know, *reproving* us (refuting error and convicting us of sin), *correcting* us (setting us on the right course), and *training* us in *righteousness* (instruction in how to live).⁶ In short, if we read, study, rightly understand, and apply the Bible, we will be blessed and grow in amazing ways!

What could be more important? We are not on this earth just to pass time – God has a *good work* for each of us to do! Perhaps that work is tied to your job in the Capitol community. Through Bible study, you can be *equipped*

(literally, fully supplied, completely outfitted) for this good work.

CONCLUSION:

My family and I attended church every Sunday as a child. At a certain point in the service each week, the priest would read from the Bible. When he finished, he would say “This is the word of the Lord,” upon which most people around me would mumble the prescribed response, “Thanks be to God.” When I was a teenager, something suddenly clicked in my mind one Sunday. I looked at the mostly bored crowd seated around me, and thought to myself, “What in the world are we doing here?” If the Bible really is the Word of God, as this man up front says, then we should be extremely interested in it, because it must be the most amazing and important thing in the world. And if it is not really the word of the Lord, why are we even wasting our time listening to it?” I still believe this reasoning makes a lot of sense. By God's providence, someone at that same church soon gave me a New Testament in modern English. As I began to read it and study it for myself, I was amazed at how meaningful its teachings were, and I was in awe of how God repeatedly seemed to speak right to my heart through it. This experience has been repeated in my life countless times since then.

Other books claim to be from God, but I dare say that only one can hold up to careful scrutiny. I encourage you to take time out to join us in studying through a portion of it this year. (See the bottom of Side 1 for Bible Study times and locations.) If you do, and sincerely seek to know the truth, you will find that it is all it claims to be.

¹ Scripture taken from the New American Standard Bible®, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

² *Theopneustos*. The *New International Version*, for example.

³ Theologians sometimes refer to this as “verbal plenary inspiration.” This is to be distinguished from what is often called “neo-orthodoxy,” the untenable view that the Bible contains or reveals truth, but is not word-for-word accurate.

⁴ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1993)

⁵ Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Zondervan, 1980), D.A. Carson, *Matthew* in *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1984).

⁶ Rienecker