

Getting to Know Your Bible



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH

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The World's Most Precious Book

In Psalm 16.11, David wrote of God, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” There is a God. He is alive. In him we live and survive. From dust our God created man. He is our God, the great I AM. In Ephesians 1.3-6, the apostle Paul wrote,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

The Creator-God had a plan before he ever laid the foundation of the world. His plan involved us—human beings whom he created in his image (Gen 1.27). His will for us is that we would be holy and blameless, as he is holy and blameless (1 Pet 1.14-16). In love he determined to make a way available, despite our rebellion against him, whereby we could be adopted as sons and daughters into his family through the sacrifice of his own Son, Jesus the Christ.

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2.1-10)

I exist for the praise of God's glorious grace. You exist for the praise of God's glorious grace. He desires a relationship with each of us. He makes known to us the path of life. In his presence there is fullness of joy. At his right hand are pleasures forevermore.

God's Revelation of Himself to Mankind

God has powerfully revealed his magnificence to mankind via the creation of all things. Rebellious human beings ought to fearfully take note at each rising and setting of the sun.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Rom 1.18-20)

As David poetically wrote in Psalm 19.1-2,

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.

And yet, the physical creation around us can only tell us so much. There is a God who has created all things, but who is he? What is his nature? What about his character? Does he have any expectations of us? And how can we know if or when we have met them? Are there consequences for disobedience? Rewards for compliance? Is there a story and meaning behind our origin? Why are we here? What is life on this earth all about? What happens after we die?

The apostle Paul preached to the inhabitants of first-century Athens,

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for

‘In him we live and move and have our being’;

as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we are indeed his offspring.’” (Acts 17.24-28)

Paul did a great deal of preaching, from Jerusalem to Rome. But he is remembered most of all for what he wrote—thirteen books of what we refer to as the New Testament of the Bible. There is a God. He is alive. “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host” (Psa 33.6), but he has also provided a written revelation for all mankind—the means by which we can come to know him, follow him, and eventually live with him after death. “Your word,” the psalmist wrote, “is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psa 119.105). The B.I.B.L.E. could accurately be described as **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**.

Notice just a few of the ways that the words of God are described throughout the Bible.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the **sacred writings**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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 competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3.14-17)

“Sanctify them in the truth; **your word is truth.**” (John 17.17)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the **holy Scriptures**... (Rom 1.1-2)

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. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb 4.12-13)

Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to **the word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Phil 2.14-16)

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word that comes from the mouth of God.**” (Matt 4.4)

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can

extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** (Eph 6.16-17)

For whatever was written in former days was **written for our instruction**, that through endurance and through **the encouragement of the Scriptures** we might have hope. (Rom 15.4)

I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and **the word of God** abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2.14)

Let **the word of Christ** dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3.16)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling **the word of truth.** (2 Tim 2.15, NASB)

And we have something more sure, the **prophetic word**, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but **men spoke from God** as they were **carried along by the Holy Spirit.** (2 Pet 1.19-21)

The Bible is not simply a collection of human thoughts about God. The Bible represents the very words of God himself. Therefore, our reaction to and handling of this book ought to be like that of the men and women whom Paul wrote of in 1 Thessalonians 2.13.

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

If we truly desire insight into the deepest issues of existence—the character of God, the nature of humanity, God's intentions for the world, and where we go from here—no other source in the universe tells us so much, so accurately, as the written word of God.

Many Diverse Pieces, One Unified Book

We often refer to the Bible as one big book, but it's actually a collection of sixty-six different books broken down into two major sections—the Old and New Testaments. The sixty-six books could generally be grouped into a few basic categories.

Old Testament	New Testament
Law Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
History Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	History Acts of the Apostles
Poetry Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon	Letters Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude
Prophecy Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	Prophecy Revelation

These sixty-six books were written over a period of about 1,600 years—a span of roughly 40 generations—by 40 different authors, men from vastly differing walks of life. For example...

Moses was a prince of Egypt who became a wilderness shepherd.

Peter was a fisherman.

Amos was a herdsman.

Joshua was a military general.

Nehemiah was a cup bearer for the king of Persia.

Daniel was prime minister in the courts of Babylon.

Luke was a physician.

Solomon was a king and a philosopher.

Matthew was a tax collector.

Paul was a rabbi-in-training and a tentmaker.

These men wrote from vastly different places...

Moses, in the wilderness.
Jeremiah, in a dungeon.
Daniel, on a hillside and in a palace.
Paul, from prison.
Luke, while traveling.
John, in exile on the isle of Patmos.

Others, amidst the rigors of military campaigns.

They experienced times of war and times of peace. Some wrote from the heights of joy; others wrote from the depths of sorrow and despair. Some lived in Asia, others in Africa, and still others in Europe. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the New Testament in Aramaic and Greek. Hundreds of topics are covered—from the creation of all things to the complexity of human relationships; from the meaning of life to what can be expected after death.

The diversity of the Bible is remarkable—40 different authors over 1,600 years write 66 different books, from three different continents, in three different languages. And yet, there is astounding harmony and continuity, from Genesis to Revelation. Rather than an arbitrary book of random rules and incidental history, the greatest story ever told seamlessly unfolds from cover to cover. Paradise is lost in Genesis but is offered once again in Revelation. Mankind is banished from the Tree of Life in Genesis, but is beckoned to the Tree of Life with God in Revelation.

Imagine taking just ten authors—from one walk of life, of the same generation, living in one place, writing in a common language—and asking all ten to write a progressive account that harmonized and complimented its varying parts without any contradictions. The result would be a tangled mess of conflicting ideas and disjointed details.

There is only one explanation for the unity and cohesion of the Bible—one mind with one master plan. “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but **men spoke from God** as they were **carried along by the Holy Spirit**” (2 Pet 1.21). And what is that master plan? What is the Bible all about? Rescue. From Genesis to Revelation, God’s written revelation is all about God’s plan to rescue men and women from the ultimate problem of sin.

Our responsibility, therefore, is straightforward.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,
making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the
Lord is.

- Ephesians 5.15-17

Our responsibility is to discern and apply the truth as defined by our Creator. Even when it’s not convenient. Even when it contradicts our current manner of life. Even when we must admit that we are wrong. Even when we must make difficult changes. Our responsibility is to discern and apply the truth, because only the truth can set us free (John 8.32).

If you want to learn more about the Bible but have no clue where to start, this study is for you. If you know a great deal about the Bible but your relationship with the written word has grown stale, this study is for you. If you read the Bible regularly and are determined to grow in your understanding of and dedication to the will of God, this study is for you.

Questions for Growth and Discussion

1. When Paul used the phrase “sacred writings” in 2 Timothy 3.15, what did he mean?
2. What is meant in 2 Timothy 3.16 by “all Scripture is breathed out by God”?
3. In Romans 1.1-2, when Paul referenced “the holy Scriptures,” what did he mean?
4. How is the word of God “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”? (Heb 4.12)
5. Why would Paul describe God’s written revelation as “the word of life” in Philippians 2.16?
6. In what way is the word of God “the sword of the Spirit”? (Eph 6.17)
7. In your own words, what is the message of Romans 15.4?
8. Practically speaking, how does “the word of Christ” come to “dwell in us”? (Col 3.16)
9. Why is it vital that we learn how to “accurately handle” the word of truth? (2 Tim 2.15)
10. What is the message of 2 Peter 1.21? What are the implications if it is true?