

**STUDY 1 OBJECTIVE :**

**TO DISCUSS THE RELEVANCE OF  
THE BIBLE TO THE CHRISTIAN**

***What does the Bible say about itself?***

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews has this to say about how God has spoken through the centuries of man's existence:

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us through His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2, *NKJ* throughout except as noted).

***The Old Testament***

The concept of various times and various ways is important. The written word was not always available, and from time to time God would reveal His thoughts to patriarchs like Abraham, Noah, etc through miraculous events. The book of Genesis records many of those early encounters between God and man. As time went on God would use various approaches to get man's attention (like the burning bush in Exodus 3:2), and would send messengers, such as Moses, Joshua, Deborah, etc. to bring His words to the people.

It appears that with the development of writing God began to use this medium to capture His message to us for posterity. He would inspire prophets and teachers to record what He wished to say to humankind. Unlike many of the sacred writings of other popular religions, the set of books called the Old Testament, which comprises the Scriptures before the birth of Christ, claims consistently to be the word of God. Jeremiah 1:9, Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11 & 13, Micah 1:1 and so many more passages indicate that the

prophets understood their recorded statements to be as if God Himself was speaking. In this way “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Paul refers to the Old Testament books as “the Holy Scriptures”, which have been given “by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:15-16).

***The New Testament***

This concept of inspiration is taken up by the New Testament writers. The New Testament is a collection of writings that claim, chiefly through association with those recognized as apostles before Acts 15, authority as Scripture. Note that the apostle Peter groups the epistles of Paul, “written according to the wisdom given to him”, with the “rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-16). After the death of those early apostles no book was written that was later accepted as part of what we now call the Bible.

The apostles, such as John and Peter, who walked with Christ, recorded the highlights of Jesus' ministry and teachings for us (1 John 1:1-4; John 21:24, 25). They were “eyewitnesses of His majesty” and had the “prophetic word confirmed” to them, and they have made known to us “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:16-19). Luke, a doctor and someone also regarded as a historian, collected stories from “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word” and wrote “an orderly account” so that we “may know the certainty of those things” in which we have been instructed (Luke 1:1-4).

Jesus said that it would be the Holy Spirit who would remind the apostles of the things He said (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit, just as He inspired the writers of the Old Testament, would inspire the apostles to compose their books and letters for us and He would guide them into all truth (John

15:27, 16:13). Scriptures represent for us a faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*The Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God*

Therefore the biblical claim is that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, a true and accurate record of God's revelation to humanity. They speak with divine authority. We can see that the Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament, showing what, as Hebrews says, God spoke by the prophets; and also the New Testament, revealing, again in reference to Hebrews 1:1-2, what God speaks to us by His Son (via the apostolic writings). Thus, through the words of Scripture, members of the household of God are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

**REFLECTION: Is the Bible consistent in claiming that it is the inspired word of God? What implication does this have for the believer?**

***What is the value of Scripture to the believer?***

*The Scriptures lead us to salvation through faith in Christ*

Both the Old and New Testaments describe the value of Scripture to the believer. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" proclaims the psalmist (Psalms 119:105). But to what way does the Word show us? This is taken up by Paul when he writes to the evangelist, Timothy. Note exactly what he says in 2 Timothy 3:15 from three different New Testament renditions:

"...the Holy Scriptures,  
which are able to make you

wise for salvation through  
faith which is in Christ  
Jesus." (*New King James*)

"...they have given you the  
wisdom to receive the  
salvation that comes from  
trusting in Christ Jesus"  
(*New Living Translation*)

"There's nothing like the  
written Word of God for  
showing you the way to  
salvation through faith in  
Christ Jesus" (*The Message*)

This key passage stresses that Scripture leads us to salvation through faith in Christ.

Jesus Himself explained that the Scriptures testified of Him. He explained that "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" concerning Him (Luke 24:44). Those Scriptures pointed to Christ as the Messiah. In the same chapter Luke records that Jesus met two disciples as they walked to a village called Emmaeus, and that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

In another passage, when being persecuted by the Jews who thought that adherence to Scripture was the way to eternal life, Jesus corrected them by saying, "You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life; but these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

Thus the primary purpose of Scripture is to point us to Jesus Christ that we may be saved and have eternal life.

*Scripture also sanctifies and equips us*

Scriptures lead us to salvation in Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures we are sanctified (John 17:17). Living our lives according to the truth of Scripture sets us apart.

Paul expounds further in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”

Scripture, which points us to Christ for salvation, also informs us of the teachings of Christ so that through the Spirit we can grow to be like Him. 2 John 9 explains that “whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God”, and Paul insists on our consenting to the “wholesome words” of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 6:3). Jesus asserted that believers who obey His words are like wise people who build their houses on a rock (Matthew 7:24).

Therefore not only is Scripture wise for salvation, but also it brings the believer towards spiritual maturity and equips her or him for the work of the Gospel. The Bible does not fail to deliver in any of these things. The Holy Scriptures are infallible and are foundational to the church in all matters of doctrine and godly living.

**REFLECTION:** What is the main purpose of the Scriptures? In addition, does Paul suggest two other reasons as to how the Bible profits the believer? Does the Bible indicate that it is meant to be a reference book for non spiritual subjects?

***Studying the Bible – a Christian discipline***

Studying the Bible is a fundamental Christian discipline that is well illustrated in the New Testament record.

The fair-minded Bereans “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily” to confirm their faith in Christ (Acts 17:11). The treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia was reading the book of Isaiah when Philip preached Jesus to him (Acts 8:26-39).

Timothy, who had known the Scriptures from childhood through the faith of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15), was reminded by Paul to explain correctly the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), and to “preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Paul tells Titus to instruct each elder to hold fast to “the faithful word he has been taught” (Titus 1:9). He also reminds the Romans that “we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

The Bible also warns us against relying on our own private interpretation of biblical passages (2 Peter 1:20), against twisting the Scriptures to our own destruction (2 Peter 3:16), and against becoming preoccupied with debates and battles about the meaning of words and with genealogies (Titus 3:9; 2 Timothy 2:14, 23). “The Word of God is not chained” by our presuppositions and manipulations (2 Timothy 2:9), rather it is “living and powerful” and “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

**REFLECTION:** Does the precedent of the NT discipline of Bible study suggest a practice for the Christian today? Can you think of ways in which the biblical passages have been twisted and manipulated? How do you let the Bible

## ***Back to Bible Study***

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discern the thoughts and intents of your heart?

### **CONCLUSION**

The Bible is relevant to the Christian because:

- it is the inspired word of God
- it leads the believer to salvation through faith in Christ
- it sanctifies the believer through the work of the Holy Spirit
- it brings the believer to spiritual maturity
- it equips the believer for the work of the Gospel

### **From the Statement of Beliefs of the Grace Communion International/ Worldwide Church of God (UK):**

#### **The Holy Scriptures**

<http://www.gci.org/aboutus/beliefs#Father>

“The Holy Scriptures are by God’s grace sanctified to serve as his inspired Word and faithful witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. They are the fully reliable record of God’s revelation to humanity culminating in his self-revelation in the incarnate Son. As such, the Holy Scriptures are foundational to the church and infallible in all matters of faith and salvation”.

(2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 5:39; 17:17)

#### **Additional reading material**

See list of articles at:

<http://www.gci.org/god>

Fee, Gordon D & Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 1981, 1993. USA: Zondervan.

Thompson, David L. *Bible Study That Works*. 1994. USA: Evangel Press.

### ***Next Study:***

***What God is like, and why it is significant to the believer***