

***“The Secrets to Experiencing the
Power of God’s Word”***

**THE BILLY GRAHAM TRAINING CENTER
AT THE COVE**

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MINISTRIES

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word” **Session 1 -- I BELIEVE IN GOD**

Now, let me begin with an admission. I believe in God. There, I said it. I believe there’s a God who is in control of our universe. I believe there’s just one God. I believe He is a personal God and not just a force or a creation of man’s imagination. I believe God is there. But I also believe God is here, right here in this room.

Now when I say I believe in God, I mean I have faith that God exists. But my faith isn’t just a foolish hope. It isn’t something I cling to with nothing to support it. My faith has some anchors, some things that hold it tight and don’t allow me to wander from it.

Our Inner Sense Of God’s Existence

Let me tell you a story. Mampuru was an African tribal leader. He was named after a renowned king in his tribe. Mampuru was just a simple farmer. He had never met a missionary. He had never seen a Bible. No one had ever told him about God or God’s Son, Jesus. But Mampuru was a wise chief, and a wise man. He knew there had to be a God, a God he had never seen, but a God who could both send the rain and then create the rainbow. He knew there had to be a God who placed the stars in the sky and caused them to twinkle at night. There was something down deep inside of Mampuru that caused him to believe there just had to be a God.

The Apostle Paul speaks about this inner sense that Mampuru had. In the Book of **Romans, chapter 1, verse 21**, he writes about people just like Mampuru, people who have no knowledge of God that comes from others, but Paul says they “**knew God**” but they did not honor Him or worship Him. Even so, down deep inside they knew some kind of a God had to exist. And they knew right from wrong and that had to be because there is a God. We call this deep-seated sense our conscience.

In fact, Paul says the reason people did not worship God was not because they didn’t have a conscience or this inner sense of who He is and what He wants. They didn’t worship God because they chose not to worship Him; they chose to worship other things instead, things like idols of stone or wood, or credit cards and sex.

Romans 1, verse 25 Paul says they “**exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.**” Now he means they willingly took what their inner conscience told them about God and they squashed it, they suppressed it, they denied it and they chose to worship other things instead.

For people who refuse to believe there is a God, the Apostle Paul of the Bible says are being fooled by a lie from the devil, Satan himself. In fact, David in the Old Testament describes such people this way: he says, “**The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’**” (**Psalm 14:1**). They are denying what their inner sense of conscience is telling them and that is a foolish thing to do.

The World Around Us

There is no good explanation for the world around me without a divine Creator. That’s not to say that people haven’t tried to give explanations, they have. And, the vast majority of the world has embraces these explanations as truth. They are taught as fact in schools and treated as historical in museums.

But there are two problems with man’s explanations of how the world around us came into existence. Number 1, their explanations cannot be proven. And number 2, man’s explanations don’t last very long. New theories arise and suddenly people abandon the old theory for the new one.

Paul says of the people in his day, “**What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.**” That’s **Romans 1:19**. And what the apostle said back in the 1st century is true for you and me today. There are things that we all know about God because God has shown them to us—things like His power in a thunderstorm or even the beauty of a butterflies’ wings. We just have an inner sense that somebody bigger than you or I caused that to happen. God has shown Himself to us in the world around us.

Now again, in that first chapter of Paul’s letter to Roman, Paul says that while we can’t see God, we understand that He must exist because of “**the things that are made.**”

Since the creation of the world, **Romans 1:20**, mankind has been able to know there is a God because of all the things around us that God created.

In **Acts 14**, Luke tells us that Paul and Barnabas went on a journey to Asia Minor; today we call it Turkey. Luke says that in a town called Lystra, Paul was preaching to the people there when a crippled man came to him believing that Paul could heal him, and Paul did. Well, immediately all the people of Lystra began to shout, **“The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.”**

They thought Paul and Barnabas had to be gods because the crippled man was healed. But Paul quickly put an end to that. He shouted over the crowd, **“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them.”**

Paul did not want them worshipping him because he believed there was only one person worthy of our worship and that was God Himself. But Paul goes on to say that God **“Gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons,”** which to him were evidences that there must be a living God to do these things. That’s recorded in **Acts 14:15-17**.

Yes, I believe there is a God because of that inner sense within me that tells me God must exist. So did the Apostle Paul. But I also believe there is a God because of the rain from Heaven that makes the crops grow for the farmers. So did Paul.

So now we have two reasons to believe there is a God. Both of these reasons do not depend on a Bible or a missionary. They are true for every one of us. They are just as true for Mampuru, the African tribal chief, as they are for you and me.

When King David of ancient Israel was just a shepherd boy in the fields near Bethlehem, one night he looked up into the night sky and this is what he said, **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the great expanse of the heavens shows His handiwork.”** David believed God existed because he reasoned that no one could create such a vast space as the heavens without the help of an all-powerful and all-wise

God. Nature itself tells us that it's reasonable to believe that God exists. In fact, it tells us that it's foolish not to believe that God exists.

But some people don't recognize that God is real is because they choose not to. They choose to find their own often unsatisfactory explanations for the world around us and that inner sense of God within us. They don't believe there is a God, not because of a lack of evidence. They don't believe there is a God because of a lack of will. They choose not to believe.

There are much better reasons for believing that God exists, but these two do not depend on a missionary; they do not depend on a Bible. In these sessions we are focusing on "**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word.**" But there will be no experiencing the power of God's Word if we do not believe there is a God to create his word. So, this is where we start – with faith in the existence of God.

Let me lay out where we are headed this week together. Our topic is "**The Secret to Experiencing the Power of God's Word.**" Now, I'm guessing some of you came to this conference hoping to go home with kind of a spiritual Weight Watchers plan on how to get God's power in your life. If so, I'm sorry. You'll be disappointed.

Others may have come thinking there would be some mystical secrets revealed that I discovered by decoding the books in the Old or New Testament. No decoder ring. No mystical secrets. Those are for losers, not learners.

Rather, I want us to operate together this week under one premise and only one: The secrets to experiencing the power of God's Word are found only in God's Word. I am not here to lay some psychological or spiritual overlay on the Bible and force Scripture to fit was other sinful people and I have developed to unlock the power of God's Word.

Nor am I here to take God's Word and squeeze from it a recipe for extracting power from the Bible. That won't work either. My goal this week is to strengthen your belief that the secrets to experiencing the power of God's Word are found only in God's Word. Period.

It is my observation that beginning in the early 60s, the foundation of what made America great began to crumble and it has been crumbling at a more rapid pace each year since then. In 1962 prayer was banned from our public schools and the next year the Bible got kicked out. These events did not cause the downward spiral of our country but they were symptomatic of it.

They signaled the first time that the population of the U.S. had strayed so far from God and His Word that they could openly challenge both. A liberal Supreme Court may have spoken for the will of the people, but certainly not for the will of God.

The result of this decades' long downward spiral is the mess we find our Republic in today. But I am here as a Bible teacher, not a politician. I am not here to filibuster; I am here to provide God's answers to man's problem.

My role is not that of the politician but rather that of the prophet – to speak the truth of God to a world devoid of any foundation for the truth. And I know that teaching these days to you may seem like the wrong place to be doing this, but I'm convinced that it is not.

You are change agents. You are influencers. You may not see yourself as such, but you are. And the greatest gift I can give to you, the most important teaching I can provide for you this week is to strengthen your conviction that the Bible is the actual, verifiable Word of God. John wrote to the pastor at Sardis and said, **“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain.” (Revelation 3:2)**. After Jesus fed the 5,000 he told His disciples, **“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” (John 6:12)**.

In a world hurdling toward Hell, you are the fragments that remain, and I do not want any of you to be lost to the pressures of this present evil world.

So, our sessions will not provide any seven-point plans. There will be no cutesy phrases, charts, graphs or participation exercises. There will be truth and truth alone. There will just be the joy of discovering, or rediscovering, the joy of finding God in His Word.

And along the way you may gain confidence in your witness to others, your believe in the reliability of the Bible, and your intimacy with its author. All of those are good things. So, let's pray and dedicate our minds and hearts to the task before us. And let's ask God not just to bless us, but to reinvigorate us, to enliven us, to change us.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 2 -- HOW WE KNOW THERE IS A GOD

I want us to return to thinking about how we know there is a God. You know, Mampuru knew from the very simple ideas of seeing God’s hand in creation and knowing from his conscience that God had placed the ideas of right and wrong down deep inside of him. But there is much more we can think about when it comes to knowing there is a God and together we want to focus on that in this session. Let me begin with an honest admission.

We Can Only Know A Tiny Bit About God

Because we can know God, even as Mampuru did, without the aid of a Bible, pastor or missionary, we should expect to be able to know some things about Him. We must remember, however, that He is God and we are not. We can never fully understand God; if we could, we would be equal to Him and we are not. He is the Creator; we are His creations.

So because God is infinite, without limits, and we are not—there are limits to our knowledge, our experiences, our abilities—we should not expect to understand everything the Bible says about God. But don’t think that you can’t understand anything about God; you can. You and I just can never know everything there is to know about God.

Psalm 145:3 says, “Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness *is* unsearchable.” Now regarding understanding God, David says in Psalm 147:5, “Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding *is* infinite.” And again in Psalm 139:6, speaking of how amazing was God’s understanding of David, he writes: “*Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot *attain* it.”

Now, I’m sure David didn’t write these things to discourage us. He just wanted to remind us that we simply cannot know everything. If we could, we would be God ourselves, and we are not.

So, while we know something about God's love, His wisdom, His power, etc., but we can't know everything about God's love, and wisdom or power. Our knowledge of God is never exhaustive; it's never 100%, but that should not stop us from learning as much as we can about Him.

And never forget. What we're learning about God from the Bible is not just facts. We're getting to know God Himself. You may know some facts about the leader of your country, your president or prime minister, but do you know him or her personally?

See that's the difference. We aren't just gaining information about God; we're actually getting to know God personally, as a friend and family member. So, let's take a few minutes now and look at some **"The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word"** by nailing down that there really is a God who gave us His word.

Proofs That God Really Does Exist

You know, the Bible makes no attempt to prove that God exists. Scripture simply assumes that there is a God because the evidence for His existence is so overwhelming. In fact, the first verse of the Bible says, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."**

See the Bible spends no time at all proving there is a God. Instead, it begins by telling us of the wondrous activity of God in creation. The Bible speaks matter-of-factly about God; it presents Him as the divine Creator without any proof for His existence or even any discussion about His existence.

However, it's important that you, as a follower of Jesus Christ, be absolutely sure that you believe in God. Without the God of the Bible, none of the promises or commands of the Bible would be valid. So let's think together about some reasons why we believe there really is a God.

REASON #1. WE LIVE IN A “JUST RIGHT” WORLD

You know, the earth is God’s sanctuary of life. We live on a planet that is “just right” to sustain life. Now, you’re probably not a scientist and don’t understand everything about the earth. I’m not a scientist either, but there are many things we can observe around us that show we live in a “just right” world.

For example, Earth is the only planet that contains an atmosphere that can support human, animal, and plant life. No other planets that we know of can do that, just Earth. Our Earth is designed for life.

If gravity was slightly less, we would shoot off the planet into space. If it was slightly more, we would not be able to walk; our feet would be like lead. Also, the Earth is placed at a “just right” distance from the sun. If we were closer to the sun, we’d all burn up. If farther away, we’d freeze to death. The speed of Earth’s rotation on its axis, completing one turn every 24 hours, well that means that the sun warms the planet evenly.

Scientist and Astrophysicist Hugh Ross says there are over 50 scientific laws that are so necessary and so precise that without any one of them life could not exist. 50 of them, and you know what?? All 50 are exactly what the Earth has to sustain life. If you were to change any one of them ever so slightly, our world would collapse around us.

So think about it. Do you suppose all of this was just an accident? Did our distance from the sun just happen to be where we ended up after a big bang flung our planet from deep space? How likely would that be?

No, someone took great care in creating our earth and making certain that it was “just right” for us to live on. That someone can only be God. Even Cicero, the Roman philosopher and orator who lived in the century before the Lord Jesus, said: *“The celestial order and the beauty of the universe compel me to admit that there is some excellent and eternal Being, who deserves the respect and homage of men.”*

Well, look around you. There must be a God for things in your world to work as smoothly as they do. There's no room for doubt. God exists and you can know Him. Well, that's the first reason. We live in a "just right" world. Here's . . .

REASON #2. YOU CANNOT HAVE SUCH DESIGN WITHOUT A DESIGNER

You know for hundreds of years philosophers have argued that nothing of any complexity happens by chance, that anything that shows intricate design must have had an intelligent designer. One popular way to understand this was to consider the complexity of a pocket watch.

If you happened upon a watch lying on the ground, you would assume someone made it and it was simply dropped there; you would not assume that it assembled itself. This analogy dates back to Cicero, the Roman philosopher and statesman we mentioned a few minutes ago.

It was also used by René Descartes, the 17th century French philosopher who has been called the father of modern philosophy, and it was used by Voltaire, the French writer and philosopher who was the preeminent figure of the 18th century. Voltaire said, *"If a watch proves the existence of a watchmaker but the universe does not prove the existence of a great Architect, then I consent to be called a fool."*

You see the point of the watch analogy is that the world we live in is far too complex for it to have happened simply by unguided chance. There had to be someone of superior intelligence who designed our world so that everything could run so smoothly.

Mathematician and astronomer Fred Hoyle in his book *Evolution from Space* put it this way. The probability of evolution creating the living world by chance is like believing that *"...a tornado sweeping through a junk yard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials found in it."* Today this argument is called Intelligent Design, but I believe our world was created by more than just a superior intelligence; I believe that superior intelligence was God Himself. So now we have two reasons for believing in the existence of God. Let's look at a third.

REASON #3. GOD MUST EXIST OR HUMANS WOULD HAVE NO MORALITY

This is another reason we believe God exists. Every human culture, whether in the mountains of Tibet, the Serengeti of Tanzania, or the pampas of Argentina, every human culture has a moral law. This moral law, innate to the people of all parts of the world and throughout the ages of time, this law is part of who we are as human beings.

Such a moral law is found in the Jewish Ten Commandments, it's found in the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, and most especially it's found in the Christian New Testament. It doesn't matter who you are, where you live or even when you lived, we all have this inner code of right and wrong.

Now, just so we're clear, the moral code is not the same in every culture, but every culture has one. For example, some cultures allow a man to take more than one wife; other cultures forbid this and consider it immoral for a man to have many wives. Some cultures allow a person to kill to avenge the killing of a member of their tribe. Other cultures believe such punishment is to be done only by the government of their society.

So how do we explain a moral code that is so consistently present in all cultures and societies? How do we explain a sense of morality that governs the behavior of people in every part of the world? Where do these morals come from? If we believe that they just randomly grew by chance as we evolved from lower creatures, then morality has no objective basis and is just a happy by-product of evolution. I think the Bible provides a much, much better explanation.

If God exists, then we have found the source for objective morality, an inner code that helps people understand right and wrong. If God is a moral person and conducts Himself by a set of moral guidelines, then we have reason to believe that we who were created in the image of God would also be governed by a set of moral guidelines.

The fact that all cultures live by moral laws points to the existence of a Moral Lawgiver. Only God's existence and holy character can properly account for the objective morality found in every culture throughout every generation.

Well, there are people today who say we don't need God to be good or to do the right thing. But you know that presents a problem. If there is no God, who determines what is good? Our traditions and religions preserve what we understand to be good or evil, but who established good and separated it from evil in the first place?

When you look at a crooked tree branch, how do you know it is crooked, unless you also have a straight branch to compare it to? We can only understand the idea of crookedness if we understand the idea of straightness. And likewise, we can only understand the concept of evil if we understand the concept of good.

But if there is no God, then what is good? Without God, we are left to understand what is good by ourselves and the whole concept of being objective disappears entirely.

So, I believe God has to exist. There must be a God, because if there was no God, our world wouldn't be "just right" for us to live in. If there was no God, we could not account for the intricate design we find in the world around us. And if there was no God, there would be no morality, no idea of right or wrong, that every society possesses.

Now does that make sense to you? I hope so. It is completely reasonable. We believe God exists because the evidence says God has to exist. Okay, there's one final thing for us to think about and that's . . .

Even Proof In God Requires Faith In God

There's an old story about a family of mice that lived all their lives inside a large grand piano. Their whole world was that piano and their world was often filled with the music that came from it. Now at first, the mice were impressed with the music. They drew comfort from it and enjoyed it immensely.

They often wondered if there was someone who made the music, someone invisible to them, someone above and yet very close to them. Often they thought about the Great Pianist whom they could not see.

One day, however, a daring young mouse climbed up out of the piano, looked around, and quickly returned to the safety of the piano's sounding board. He announced to the

other mice that he had found the source of the music they heard and that they were going to have to revise all their old beliefs about music.

Wires were the secret; tightly stretched wires at various lengths vibrated and that's where the music came from. Just physical wires. Well, none but the more conservative mice, generally the older mice, would any longer believe that there was an Unseen Player making the music.

Later, other mice carried out similar explorations and provided additional details to their new explanation. Hammers were now the secret; many hammers were dancing up and down on the wires and they were the cause of the music.

Now theirs was a more complicated theory than the first, but it proved to them that they lived in a purely mechanical and mathematical world and no other explanation would be acceptable.

The idea of an Unseen Player was labeled a myth, and almost everyone abandoned it. Still, the pianist continued to play and the mice enjoyed the benefits of his music, even as they denied his existence.

Now, you understand the point of this legend. You and I live in a world that relies only on what we can see, to explain what we cannot understand. Since we cannot see God, many, many people today have assumed that He doesn't exist, just like the mice assumed there was no Unseen Pianist playing their piano.

But they were wrong, and our world is wrong today. God does exist, even if we cannot see Him. But with all the proof we have, you still must have faith that there is a God and that He is vitally interested in you, so interested that He spoke to you so you could discover *"The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word."*

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 3 -- HOW GOD SPEAKS TO US

So, let’s begin with the assumption that there is a God, even if we don’t know much about Him. How are we going to learn more about this God? How are we to become intimate with Him and enjoy His mercy and His unfailing love? How are we going to discover **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”**? God has a way.

When your friend comes to visit you, you enjoy talking with him. When you receive a text message on your phone, you like to respond to it. We talk with one another, both to exchange information, and simply because we enjoy talking with one another.

God enjoys talking with you. God has had a lot to say to men and women because He knows we need vital information about Him and about His plans for us. But He also just enjoys talking with us.

I know, there are some people who believe God is silent. He has nothing to say. But God has said much to us. The problem is not that God is silent. The problem is, we haven’t been listening.

As Christians, we believe God has revealed Himself to mankind in a variety of ways.

- To some He spoke directly, as you would speak to your friend.
- To others, He revealed Himself in visions and dreams.
- The Bible tells us that in the days that Jesus walked on this earth, God revealed Himself through His Son—Jesus.
- But today our major understanding of who God is, what He has promised us, what He expects from us, and what He has planned for us—all that comes from a single book, the Bible.

You shouldn’t be surprised that the God of Heaven has not been silent. God has communicated with men and women right from the days of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just think about this:

- The phrase “**And God said**” occurs 10 times in the first chapter of the Bible alone.
- It’s found 41 times in the Old Testament.
- But the similar phrase “**The LORD said**” is found in 202 verses in the Old Testament, and quoted 4 times in the New Testament.
- Now that doesn’t sound like God is silent to me. Does it to you?

It may surprise you how often, especially in the early days, God simply spoke to people. He just talked to them like I am talking with you. Let’s see what the Bible says.

Sometimes God Revealed His Will Through Visions Or Dreams

We have dreams when we are asleep. Sometimes in the Old Testament, God would reveal what He wanted people to know through a dream. Let’s see some examples.

In **Genesis 28:10-16**, Jacob dreamed of a ladder stretching up to Heaven with angels going up and down on the ladder. Now God used this dream to confirm to Jacob, that the land he was in would become the inheritance of His people, Israel, forever. So, when Jacob awakened from the dream he said, “**Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.**” Well, there it is. God came to Jacob and revealed Himself in a dream.

In **Genesis 40 and 41** the Pharaoh of Egypt had a series of dreams, and only Joseph was able to interpret them. Joseph deciphered God’s will through the dream. God told him to store up grain for seven years because a famine of seven years was coming. The Pharaoh did, and Joseph single-handedly saved Egypt and the neighboring countries from the famine. God revealed His will through a dream.

The same was true with Daniel many, many years later. Because of his faithfulness to God, Daniel was given “**understanding in all visions and dreams.**” That’s **Daniel 1:17**. And in **Daniel chapter 2**, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar couldn’t sleep, and had a dream. Daniel correctly interpreted God’s will as revealed through Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. **Daniel 2:28** records Daniel’s words. Listen to them: “**There**

is a God in heaven who reveals secrets.” Now this was proved through the king’s dream and Daniel’s correct interpretation.

God also revealed Himself through visions. While a dream occurs when someone is sleeping, a vision occurs while they are awake, anytime day or night. Visions came to people both in the day and night. For example: God revealed in a vision to Nathan the prophet that David would be king and establish a dynasty designed by God to endure forever. That’s found in **2 Samuel 7**, especially **verse 17**. The psalmist Ethan refers to this event in **Psalm 89** when he says, **“Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, and said: ‘I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him.’”** That’s **Psalm 89:19-20**.

And Jeremiah 23:15-17 warns against listening to the words of false prophets. Here’s what he says, **“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD.’”**

Do you remember when Moses’ sister Miriam and his brother Aaron questioned Moses’ leadership in the wilderness? Numbers 12:5-8 says, “Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then He said, ‘Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all My house. **I speak with him face to face.’”** Now don’t miss that. The LORD spoke face to face with Moses. That’s pretty amazing. God chose to talk to this man directly. But were you aware that . . .

Sometimes God Spoke Directly To People With An Audible Voice.

The Bible repeatedly shows how God chose to speak directly to people, even to talk with them as a friend talks with a friend. We just saw that with Moses. And equally remarkable is the significant variety of people throughout the Old Testament to whom God chose to speak directly. Now just think about this with me:

God spoke directly to Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3**.

He spoke directly to Noah in **Genesis 6**.

God spoke directly to Abraham and he heard God's voice in **Genesis 17**.

God spoke directly to Jacob in **Genesis 35**.

In **Exodus 3**, God spoke directly to Moses in the desert.

God spoke directly to Job in **Job 42** and was heard by him.

Now, I know what you're saying. All these men lived a long time ago, very early in the history of the mankind. How about some examples later in Israel's history? Okay.

God spoke to David, writer of Psalms and King of Israel, in **1 Chron. 14**. He also spoke directly to David's son, Solomon, in **1 Kings 3**.

God spoke directly to the prophet Hosea; that's recorded in **Hosea 1**.

And in addition to Hosea, the Bible also tells us that God's voice was heard by Elijah, Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Zechariah.

Now let me tell you a story that comes right from the Bible. A man named Jeroboam rallied 10 of the 12 tribes of Jacob in a tax revolt and they removed themselves from the kingdom God established with David. Jeroboam became king of the 10 tribes which we call the Northern Kingdom. But Jeroboam was a wicked king. He disobeyed God. He made idols and called them gods, and his people worshipped them. **1 Kings 14:9** says Jeroboam provoked God to anger.

One day Jeroboam's son Abijah became sick and was dying. Jeroboam wanted to know if his son would live or die, so he told his wife to disguise herself, wear an old dress, and make herself look like a common peasant woman. Jeroboam sent her to a prophet named Ahijah, in a little town just north of Jerusalem. He felt God would speak through Ahijah and tell him the truth about his son. So Jeroboam's wife came dressed as a common woman to the prophet.

Now listen to this: **1 Kings 14:6** says that when Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he said, **“Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another person? For I have been sent to you with bad news.”** Before she got to the door, Ahijah knew she was coming and who she was.

But there's something you should know about Ahijah. Ahijah was blind; he couldn't see because of his old age. And still, God revealed to Ahijah who was at his door and he delivered the bad news that, because of Jeroboam's sin, God would not allow any of his male children to live long enough to inherit his throne.

Why did I tell you that story? Because the very next verse, **verse 7** of **1 Kings 14** says **“Go, tell Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel’”** and then Ahijah delivered the message God told him to the King Jeroboam.

God spoke directly to the blind prophet, and what God said happened exactly as Ahijah told it to Jeroboam's wife. The child died before she could return home. **Verse 18** nails down the fact that God spoke directly to Ahijah; it says, **“They buried him [that's the child] and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet.”**

Did you notice, God spoke *through* Ahijah, and not just *to* him? What Ahijah told the king's wife was exactly what God told him to say. That's a common expression in the Old Testament. **1 Kings 16:34** mentions **“The word of the LORD, which He had spoken *through* Joshua the son of Nun.”** Catch the **“through”** Joshua. **2 Kings 14:25** mentions **“The word of the LORD God of Israel which He had spoken *through* His servant Jonah.”** Do you see a pattern developing here? Especially at

this period in history in the Old Testament, God chose to speak **“through”** His servants the prophets.

One more example. Zechariah was the name of a prophet who began prophesying as a young man in 520 BC. This was after Israel had been exiled from their homeland and they were permitted to return.

Now in his prophecy, chapter 7, Zechariah wrote these words, “Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying... Should you not have obeyed the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous?”

Unfortunately, the people of Israel were stubborn, and they refused to heed the prophets who warned them about their future captivity. **Zechariah 7:12** sums up what happened. **“They made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit *through* the former prophets.”**

Notice again how the LORD of hosts spoke to the people **“*through* the prophets.”** God chose to speak to people, who in turn announced to others what God revealed to them. So moved by God’s Spirit were these prophets, that while it was their voices the people heard, it was God’s words the people heard.

Again, you’ve probably noticed that these are all people found in the Old Testament, and there are more than these. So, did God speak directly, using His voice, to anyone in New Testament times? In my study, I’ve only been able to find one person in the NT that God used His voice to communicate audibly with, and that one person was when Paul was saved on the road to Damascus. **Acts 9:4** says Jesus spoke from Heaven and said, **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”**

Now with so many people hearing God’s voice in the Old Testament, you have to ask why no one did in the New Testament. I think the answer is simple. God uses various

means to communicate with men and women. In the Old Testament it was often through visions or dreams. Sometimes it was directly by God's voice.

But in the New Testament, God had a spokesman living on earth who could communicate in person what God wanted us to know. That spokesman...well, that's Jesus, God the Son, God in the flesh, God living among us.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 4 -- GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS SON

God often appeared to people in the Old Testament in a dream during the night or a vision anytime day or night. He’d reveal something to that person and then the dream or vision was over. At other times God chose to speak directly to someone, usually a prophet He had chosen to represent Him. That prophet would then repeat God’s message to the people.

But these were the methods God chose to speak to us a long, long time ago. They belong to history, not because they weren’t effective, but as God began to reveal more and more of Himself and His plan through the ages He used more specific, more precise ways of communicating to men and women. By the time we get to the New Testament, God chose to speak directly through His Son. So, let’s focus on . . .

Jesus: The Supreme Mouthpiece Of God

There’s an important difference between the prophets of the Old Testament as mouthpieces for God and the singular Mouthpiece of the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus was the voice of God in the flesh. **John 1:1-2** and then **verse 14**: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

What the Old Testament Jewish prophets revealed about God was only the preface to what Jesus would reveal about His Father in Heaven. Jesus is the ultimate, divine, perfect spokesman for God. **Hebrews 1:1-2** indicates that **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.”** Now you can’t get it much clearer than that, can you?

Jesus didn’t replace the Old Testament prophets; their revelations about God are just as much from God as what the Father revealed through His Son. And while there were

prophets in New Testament times and their messages also came directly from God, it's clear the primary spokesman for God was now His Son, Jesus.

So the need for prophets began to wane in the New Testament because God had a clearer voice, a divine prophet, God Himself.

But Jesus had only the Old Testament half of the Bible. Jesus had been taught the Law and the Prophets as a boy by Joseph. He often quoted these in His preaching. Jesus believed the Old Testament was inspired of God, and so did Paul and Peter, James and John and the other writers of the New Testament.

They believed God used human beings like Moses, Isaiah, David and others to write down the words He revealed **“through”** them. And they believed these prophets of old recorded accurately what God said through them.

But what about the New Testament? Why are the New Testament books included in the Bible? The Old Testament prophets and writers understood they were being used of God as His mouthpieces. But was that also true of the New Testament writers like Paul, and James, and Luke? Did they also believe they were the mouthpieces of God? Well, let's let the Bible answer that question.

There are at least two places in the New Testament where what was written by these New Testament writers was understood to be “Scripture”, that is, the words of God just like the words of the Old Testament prophets. In **2 Peter 3:15-16** the apostle Peter says, **“And consider *that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*”** Now did you catch that – **“the rest of the Scriptures”**?

Peter was placing the writings of the Apostle Paul, in fact all of Paul's 13 epistles, in the same category as **“the rest of the Scriptures,”** meaning the books of the Old Testament.

So Peter believed that Paul was just as inspired of God to write down what was on God's mind as Jeremiah was or as Moses was. Peter saw Paul's writings as Holy Scripture, the inspired word of God. Now that's really saying something.

But wait, there's more. In **1 Timothy chapter 5** and **verse 18**, the Apostle Paul is giving instructions to his young friend Timothy, about how the church should take care of those who teach God's Word to God's people. He says, **"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'"**

Now, you may not recognize either of the verses Paul is quoting here. The first one **"You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,"** well, that's taken from **Deuteronomy 25:4**. It was part of the laws that God gave to Old Testament Israel so they could live in peace and harmony with each other. But do you recognize the second quote: **"The laborer is worthy of his wages"?**

Actually, it's found nowhere in the Old Testament. Paul was quoting Scripture but not a Scripture found in any of the 39 books of the Old Testament. So where does this verse come from? It's a quotation taken from **Luke 10:7** in the New Testament. In fact, Paul is quoting the words of Jesus.

Did you see what Paul did here? He took a portion of a verse from the Old Testament, which all the Jews recognized as breathed-out of the mouth of God, and he linked it with words that were not from the Old Testament and said, **"For the Scripture says....."** What does that mean?

It means Paul understood what Jesus said was every bit as much the Word of God as what Moses wrote in the Book of Deuteronomy. That's pretty amazing.

These New Testament writers had a clear sense that what they were writing was equally the Word of God as was the Old Testament. What God said **"through"** them and what they wrote down under the personal direction of the Holy Spirit, was just as

much God's inspired revelation as what God said **"through"** Daniel and others in the Old Testament.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul as he begins his letter to the churches in Galatia, what is central Turkey today. "Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia." Now that's Galatians 1:1-2.

In that same letter Paul wrote, **"It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles."** That's found in **Galatians 1:15-16.**

And to the Thessalonians of northern Greece Paul wrote, **"We also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."** That's **1 Thessalonians 2:13.**

You really can't miss that, can you? Paul knew that what he wrote was a direct revelation from God. He was writing what God guided him to write, just as much as the Old Testament prophets were guided by God, to write what He had revealed to them.

As you can see, the list is getting long. The God of the Bible was not silent, not at all. Our God has certainly not been quiet. In fact, He has had plenty to say to all mankind. But finally, let's see that . . .

The Bible Is How God Speaks To Us Today

Now, you might say, the prophets are gone. They are. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven—so how do we hear from God today? What is God's chosen means of communicating what's on His mind to us? Well, let me answer the question clearly and directly. If you want to get to know God today, you need to get to know Him through His Word, the Holy Bible. You see, that's where God reveals Himself today.

To discover **"The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word"** we must read God's Word. God only wrote one book; I think He'd be pleased to have us read it.

The Bible is God's source of information about Himself. That's the only place where God claims to make Himself known to you. Not so much in visions or dreams. Visions and dreams were fine when there was no other way, but we now have the Bible – a much better way to know what's on God's mind.

The Apostle Peter, one of the men God used to write the Bible, said: **“We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16)**. Eyewitnesses are always better than visions, and much better than dreams. They are more reliable and they are more accountable for what they say.

Also, with the completion of the writing apostles like John and James, Peter and Paul, God no longer needed to make Himself known to us through prophets. The Apostle Paul said: **“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail.”** What he meant was their day will come to an end **(1 Corinthians 13:8)**. God used the prophets mightily in the past, both by speaking through them and by writing down a permanent record of what God had revealed to them. But with the completion of the New Testament, God no longer needed prophets to write what He revealed. God had revealed in His Word, the Bible, everything that He wished us to know, regarding His history and our salvation.

God may reveal something to someone today about Himself; God can do whatever He wants. But what He reveals now to an individual is not intended by God to be a part of His inspired Holy Word, the Bible. The Bible is complete. It needs no additions.

In fact, God will not allow any additions, because if suddenly He revealed more to someone today on an equal level with the Bible, it would mean that 2,000 years of Christians would have been robbed of all that God intended for us to know. No, God says, *“If you want to know about me, look for me in the pages of the only book I ever wrote – the Bible.”*

So, when you engage the Bible, when you read it or hear it read, you are actually engaging God. The Bible is alive. Its words are God's words. It's the only book that God claims as His own. The Bible is God speaking to you.

You know there was a monk in Germany named Martin Luther. He lived in the 16th century in Europe. While he served the Roman Catholic Church as a scholar and priest, he began to be uncomfortable with things happening in the church. He believed so strongly in the Word of God that he based everything he believed on it, and only on it. The church wasn't doing that, so Luther objected.

His efforts to reform his church ended up starting what we call "the Protestant Reformation." A common expression coming out of the Reformation was the Latin phrase *sola scriptura*. It means the Scripture alone. It reflected the belief of Luther and the other reformers that the Bible alone was the sole basis for our faith, not the Bible and other holy books, or the Bible and the traditions of the church or anything else.

Here's a statement by Martin Luther that illustrates his commitment to *sola scriptura*, the Bible alone. Luther said, *"God is everywhere. However, He does not want you to reach out for Him everywhere, but only in the Word. Reach out for it and you will grasp Him aright. Otherwise you are tempting God and setting up idolatry. That is why He has established a certain method for us. This teaches us how and where we are to look for Him and find Him, namely, in the Word."*

So if you want to get to know God, where should you look for Him? Men and women of faith in the Lord Jesus always say you should look for God in the pages of His Word. That's where He has spoken to us.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 5 -- WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

If you own a Bible, do you know why? What makes the Bible so special? Why have men and women given their lives to preserve it? Why have people learned a language that was not their own, just to translate the Bible into that new language? And why do we call it “The Holy Bible”? Those are questions that need answers.

We also call the Bible “God’s Word” or “The Word of God,” “the Scriptures” and sometimes “the Good Book.” What do all these names mean? That’s what we want to think about together in this session as we discover **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”**.

First of all let me tell you a story. A true story. You probably are familiar with the name David Livingstone. Dr. Livingstone was the famous Scottish pioneer missionary doctor and explorer of Africa.

He first began to explore the vast expanse of Africa in 1852. When David Livingstone started his trek across Africa he had 73 books in 3 packs, weighing 180 pounds.

And after his exploring party and he had gone about 300 miles, Livingstone knew he had to throw away some of the books because the men carrying them were becoming very tired.

As he continued on his journey his library grew smaller and smaller, until he had but just one book left—the only one that really mattered--his Bible. Now, that’s how important the Bible should be to us too. It alone is God’s Word. There is no other book like it.

The Bible Is The “Word Of God”

Now, think about what we mean when we talk about the “Word of God.” We imply that what is written in the Bible belongs to God. It is God’s Word to us, not our word. It’s God’s Word as opposed to someone else’s word. It carries the full weight and authority of the sovereign God of the universe. And that’s saying something.

Actually, when we say “the word of God” we can be talking about Jesus too. Just as the Bible is God’s Word in written form, Jesus is God’s Word in living form. Listen to these words from **John 1:1**. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”**

Now, Jesus is called the Word who became flesh. **John 1 verse 14** says, **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** Now, this can only possibly be referring to Jesus, the Word who became flesh and lived among men and women. Jesus is the Word of God, God’s living Word, just as the Bible is the Word of God, God’s written Word.

Now that’s a verse worth remembering. **“In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** Say it with me, **“In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** One more time. **“In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** It’s good that you and I remember some of these very short but powerful verses in the Bible. Memorizing God’s Word is a way of making it a part of you.

Well, let’s come back to thinking about God speaking to us. Anytime God spoke it was the word of God He spoke. In the very beginning, the very first chapter of the Bible, how God created the world and everything in it is described as God speaking. **“God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” “God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear’; and it was so.”**

Ten times in this first chapter **“God said”** is mentioned. That’s why the psalmist said, **“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6)**. God spoke the world into existence.

The Bible Is How God Communicates With Us

But the usual meaning when we talk about “the Word of God” is the Bible.

- As Jesus is the physical form of the Word of God, and God speaking to His prophets in the Old Testament is the oral form of His word, the Bible is the written form of God's Word.
- So when you read or hear the Bible, you are hearing from God.
- It's the way God communicates with us today.

So, what is the Bible? What is this book we call "The Word of God"?

The Bible Is A Revelation Of The Mind Of God

Simply put, the Bible is a revelation of the mind of God to the minds of men.

- It's a collection of writings, each book of which shows that the author was moved by God to write what he did.
- It's a sacred book, especially for Christians.
- It's the standard of what to believe and how to live for the Christian church.
- It's the authoritative rule of God by which all things are measured to determine their truthfulness and their validity. And...
- It's God's guideline for man's belief and our behavior.

The Bible isn't just one book but many books collected into a library. The Bible contains two major sections known as the Old Testament and the New Testament. There are 39 books in the Old Testament, but only 27 in the New Testament.

Let's focus on the Old Testament first.

- The Old Testament was written over a very long period of time – about 1,000 years.
- It was written in the language of the ancient Jewish people which is Hebrew, except for a few select portions which were written in Aramaic.
- Now Aramaic is a sister language of Hebrew and it's very, very similar.
- The Old Testament was written by as many as 31 different authors.
- We don't know for sure because in some of the books of the Old Testament the author is not named.
- We do know there were about 40 authors of the entire Bible.

- God used Jewish writers to pen the Old Testament books, of whom many were prophets.
- Some of the Old Testament books are history, like Exodus, the two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings.
- Others are prophecy, like Daniel, Ezekiel, Amos and Zechariah.
- Still others are poetry, such as the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.
- These various genres or types of literature reflect the diversity found in the Old Testament.

So why do we call the first two-thirds of the Bible the “Old” Testament and the last third the “New” Testament? Well, to begin with, not everyone does.

- Since Jewish people do not accept the New Testament as a part of their Hebrew Bible, they call the “Old Testament” the Tanakh [ta-nah’k].
- Tanakh is a made-up word with letters from the three sections of the Hebrew Bible: Torah (Teachings), [Nev-eem’] Nevi’im (Prophets), and [Too-veem’] K’tuvim (Writings)
- Now we Christians refer to this part of the Bible as the “Old” Testament because Jesus Christ initiated a “New” Testament.
- At the Last Supper He said, **“For this is My blood of the new covenant [or testament], which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).**

So the Law of Moses represented the covenant of the Old Testament, whereas the freedom of grace provided through Jesus’ death on the cross represents the covenant of the New Testament.

Paul, in comparing the old covenant with the new covenant, depicts Moses as wearing a veil over his face in God’s presence. We, however, in the new covenant come face to face with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He says, **“For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:14).**

So, the Old Testament begins at creation and records God's dealings with men and women, specifically with His chosen nation Israel, up until about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 31 predicts that God will establish a new covenant with Israel and that became a reality when God came to earth in the flesh, what we call the incarnation of Jesus Christ. More about that later in our studies.

Now, let's think for a few moments about the New Testament.

- There are 27 books in this second division of the Bible.
- The first four books are called the Gospels because they are the story of Jesus bringing the good news [*which is what the word gospel means*] that we can be saved from our sin because of Christ's death on the cross.
- The Gospels are the life and teachings of Jesus recorded by four different men, for four different audiences, reflecting four different emphases of the life of Jesus.
- Now after the story of Jesus' life, His death and His resurrection, the next book is Acts.
- This is a historical record of the church in the first century, accurately recorded by Luke who also wrote one of the Gospels.
- The Book of Acts begins with Jesus' rising up into Heaven at His ascension and the Holy Spirit coming down to empower Jesus' followers to spread the gospel all over the world and establish Christ's church.
- The rest of the Book of Acts tells the story of many men and women who served the Lord in building His Church – people like Peter and John, Stephen, Phillip, Barnabas, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila and of course the Apostle Paul.

After the narratives of the Gospels and the history of Acts, come the doctrinal portions of the New Testament.

- Now these represent the teachings of Christ set forth in a meaningful and understandable fashion.
- Paul authored 13 of these books which we call epistles because they were letters written to churches or individuals. Now that means Paul was moved by God to

write 24 percent of the New Testament, just like Moses wrote 24 percent of the Old Testament.

- Peter, James, John and Jude wrote the other epistles.
- Now we are not certain who wrote Hebrews. Some people think Paul did but I don't think that's the case. Some suggest Barnabas or Timothy, someone close to Paul. In fact, we simply don't know for sure.
- But the final book of the Bible is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It records the future; it's prophecy and was written down by John as God revealed the things to come to him.

So together, the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, make up the LORD's Library – the Bible, the Word of God, the revelation of God to us.

- If you want to know God, the Bible is where you'll learn how.
- If you want God's wisdom, you'll find it in the Bible.
- If you want to know God's ways, they're in the Bible too.
- And if you are struggling with knowing God's will, you'll discover clues to it in the pages of God's Word too.

John Burton, an 18th century Englishman, wrote a hymn about the Bible that pretty much sums up “**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word.**” Here's what he said:

*Holy Bible, book divine, precious treasure, thou art mine;
Mine to tell me whence I came; mine to teach me what I am.
Mine to chide me when I rove; mine to show a Savior's love;
Mine thou art to guide and guard; mine to punish or reward.
Mine to comfort in distress, suff'ring in this wilderness;
Mine to show, by living faith, man can triumph over death.
Mine to tell of joys to come, and the rebel sinner's doom;
O thou Holy Book divine, precious treasure, thou art mine.*

The Bible. It's God's letter to you; it's what He had on His mind that He wants you to know. It's the Holy Word of God. I think we should treat it with respect by engaging it often. God has something He wants to say to you today. Don't miss it by missing to hear Him in the Bible.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
**Session 6 -- HOW GOD REVEALED THE BIBLE TO THOSE WHO
WROTE IT**

Let’s talk about how God revealed the Bible to those who wrote it, how He protected them from writing something He didn’t intend, and how these ordinary men could be used of God to record exactly what was on His mind.

Now this is very, very important, because if the process of writing down what God revealed was flawed or imperfect in any way, mistakes could be made and you would not be able to trust what you learn from the Bible. Thank God the process wasn’t flawed and everything that God intended to be recorded is recorded in His Holy Word.

Alright, let’s focus on the three words we use to describe how God revealed His Word to those who wrote it down. They are: Inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility. Okay, those are pretty big words, but let’s investigate them so we all understand what they mean.

Inspiration

Inspiration is not natural; not just the genius of men. Inspiration is not mystical; not like being inspired to write a poem or song. It’s not conceptual; not just the thoughts but the actual words. Inspiration is not dictation; God didn’t dictate to the writers and like machines they recorded what He dictated. Inspiration doesn’t mean any of these things. So what does it mean? Well, let me begin with a . . .

Definition: inspiration is when the Holy Spirit took control of and enabled certain men to receive God’s special revelation, and to convey it by mouth or record it on parchment in their own language and in their own writing style.

Now, before we go any further, let’s think about some things inspiration does not mean. Inspiration doesn’t mean that Moses or Paul or any of the other men God used to write the Bible were simply using their natural abilities. They didn’t write what they wanted to write; they wrote what God wanted them to write.

Also Inspiration doesn't mean that Peter or David got up one morning and decided to write a letter or a psalm. They were not inspired as we might say today a poet or song writer is inspired to write something. This is a very different kind of inspiration.

And inspiration does not mean that God just gave Ezekiel or John a general idea of what He wanted to be written down and let them go to write whatever they wanted.

Finally, when we talk about inspiration and the Bible we are not talking about simple dictation. If God said to Micah, *"Listen closely, prophet Micah, and write down only the words that I dictate to you,"* well, that's not how it happened because the writing style for each of these Bible writers is different, indicating they were free to use their way of writing what God wanted them to write.

There are two passages of Scripture in the New Testament that speak directly to the inspiration of Scripture. Listen to what God's Word says about inspiration. **2 Peter 1:21, "Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"** Now that's a very important concept: **"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."**

Peter says they were **"moved"** by the Holy Spirit to write what God revealed to them. So, what does that mean? The word Peter chose in the Greek language in which he wrote his letter is a word that means to "bear" or to "carry."

It's like a mother who carries a child in her arms. The child wiggles, he or she doesn't know quite what to do, but his mother is taking him in the right direction, to the right place, where she wants him to go. She "carries" him.

That's what the Holy Spirit did with the holy men of God who wrote the Bible. They didn't know where to go with what they were writing, but the Holy Spirit "moved" them along, "carried" them in the way that God wanted their thoughts and their choice of words to go.

That's what it means to be moved by the Holy Spirit. These Bible writers wrote in their own way, but not their own ideas or concepts. All their words were managed by the

Holy Spirit so when the writer chose them so you can be sure that what they wrote down was exactly what God intended.

We call this “verbal” inspiration. It’s verbal because God revealed actual words to the Bible writers, not just thoughts or general concepts. Each word was inspired by God.

We also call this “plenary” inspiration. That means not just a few words were inspired by God but every word was. And, more than that, every word was equally inspired.

Let’s go to the second verse that helps us understand inspiration. The first one was written by the Apostle Peter; this one is written by the Apostle Paul.

2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Now this verse assures us that ALL scripture, every verse, every word, every part of Scripture, even those parts we may find hard to understand—ALL scripture is inspired by God. So the question for us is: *what does it mean that Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*

Well, the word Paul chose here for “inspiration” is made up of two smaller words and placed together to form one bigger word. Half of the bigger word is the word for God—*theos*.

The second half means to “breathe” or to “blow.” Literally it means God breathed hard or breathed out of His mouth by blowing. I know that sounds a bit strange, but think what Paul is saying.

All Scripture is breathed out of the mouth of God. It wasn’t a creation of the mind of the writer. It wasn’t a quotation from a human author. It was what God had in His mind, words that He breathed out of His mouth, guided by the Holy Spirit to enter the mind of the Bible writer and to record permanently what God wanted to reveal to us. Now, how amazing is that!

It’s important that we remember this verse too: **“All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God.”** The Bible clearly teaches that all Scripture, every part and every word of the Bible **“*is* given by inspiration of God.”**

And here's something you need to remember. This process of inspiration was true **only for the Bible** and not for any other holy book. It is not a process that is being repeated today. It's unique to the Holy Word of God.

Now, while other religions may claim that the founder of their religion received visions from his god, only in the religion of the Jews and Christians does God actually breathe out the words that He wants His holy men to write down.

Talking about inspiration leads us to the second key word in understanding how God revealed the Bible to us and that's . . .

Inerrancy

Inerrancy emphasizes the absence of error in the Bible. Inerrancy means the words written down by Bible writers were totally without error. This can only be said of the original writings of Scripture -- the pieces of parchment or other material that the words of God were written on the first time -- written by James or John or Jeremiah. We call these original copies of Scripture the "autographs" because they were created by the writers whose names are attached to them.

Eventually these original writings had to be duplicated so they could be sent to God's people living great distances away. While errors could creep into copies of the Bible, even that is unlikely. The process of copying the manuscripts was quite exact.

The scribe would read a sentence in the manuscript he was copying, repeat it aloud, and then write it. And after the scribe finished copying a particular book, he would count all of the words and letters in that book.

Then he checked the total against the count for the manuscript he was copying. By making these careful checks, he hoped to avoid any scribal errors.

So, if "**Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**" and if "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**" making the original copy of the Bible from the pens of the Bible writers perfect and without error, we should expect to find extreme accuracy in the copy of the Scriptures we have today.

Well, the final word that describes how carefully God transmitted what was on His mind to the minds of the writers of the Bible is the word . . .

Infallibility

Now infallibility is very similar to inerrancy. In fact, some people use these words interchangeably. But infallibility says that in the original writings, the Bible is not just without error, it is actually incapable of error.

If it is impossible for God to make a mistake, and God's Word is a written record of who God is, it's only logical that His Word must be incapable of error as well. Just think about it. How could a moral God let Moses write down His Word with errors and not correct Moses? That's just inconceivable.

So, we've looked at the three key words we use to describe how God revealed His Word to the men who wrote it down. These key words help us understand why we can trust everything we read in the Bible.

- The Bible is inspired by God – it was breathed out of his mouth.
- The Bible is inerrant – it has no errors in it at all.
- The Bible is infallible – the Bible is a written reflection of God and therefore cannot represent God and contain errors.

Now, here's what this means for you. If you have a Bible you can read, read it every day. It's God's letter to you. It tells you about Him and helps you become more intimate in your relationship with Him. **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word”** are all found in God's Word.

The person who fails to read the Bible fails to discover the secrets and also fails to experience the power of God's Word. Don't let that be you.

One of the most brilliant minds of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was that of Princeton Seminary professor Robert Dick Wilson. Wilson held several doctorates and during the first 15 years of his academic career he concentrated on learning ancient languages.

When he finished he had mastered 45 languages including every language that had any bearing on the Old Testament.

In the next 15 year period of his life, Wilson dedicated himself to studying the text of the Old Testament itself. He looked at every consonant in the Old Testament text—about one and a quarter million of them. He made a thorough scientific investigation of the Old Testament text, as compared to other writings of antiquity.

Wilson noticed that there are 29 pagan kings of various nations mentioned in the Bible. Now their names are also found in the writings of their own countries. The names of these kings consist of 195 consonants, but Wilson discovered that there are only two or three letters—of the entire 195—in which there is a question of spelling in the Bible.

By contrast, in the secular literature of the same period, the names of those rulers are frequently so garbled that you can scarcely identify the person.

So in response Robert Dick Wilson wrote, “I have come to the conviction that no man knows enough to attack the veracity of the Old Testament. Every time when anyone has been able to get together enough documentary ‘proofs’ to undertake an investigation, the biblical facts in the original text have victoriously met the test.”

Okay, we’ve seen the Old Testament writers, the New Testament writers and Jesus Himself—all of them trusted the Bible. Now, remember, these Old and New Testament writers were inspired by God and they knew it.

Remember the two verses we highlighted earlier in our study of the Bible? The two verses that best describe how God inspired these writers and how the Holy Spirit carried them along so what they wrote in their own language was exactly what God revealed to them to write.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 7 -- WHAT GIVES THE BIBLE AUTHORITY?

Let me tell you about three people who became kings or queens in their own country and by what authority they did so. In the early 19th century, Shaka Zulu reigned over Zululand in southern Africa. Shaka is credited with uniting several smaller tribes into the great Zulu Kingdom. His authority came from his conquests.

King Kamehameha did the same thing when he conquered the Hawaiian Islands and formally established the Kingdom of Hawai’i in 1810. His authority, well it came as a result of his accomplishments.

But in 1953, when Queen Elizabeth II ascended the British throne, and became queen and constitutional monarch of 16 Commonwealth Nations, she was barely 27 years old, and had conquered no tribes or accomplished anything that would distinguish her as the heir to the British throne.

So by what authority did she rule such a vast empire? Whose authority was it and why Elizabeth and not someone else? The answer is the rule of succession. Elizabeth was granddaughter of King George V and Queen Mary and eldest daughter of their son, George VI, who himself had ascended the throne in 1936.

Basically, she became queen after her father, because she was the oldest child of the king’s family. That’s the rule of succession.

I mention these historical facts because there is more than one road to authority. We’ve just seen three different roads to becoming a king or queen. When we talk about God’s Word—the Bible—having God’s authority, we have to think about what gives the Bible such authority.

How We Know God’s Authority Rests On God’s Word

How do we know God’s authority is on the Bible. Let’s begin by thinking together about some ways the Bible does **NOT** claim God’s authority in our lives.

The Bible doesn't claim authority because it is the all-time best seller. It is, but many books have topped the *New York Times* best-seller list. Sales do not create authority.

The Bible doesn't claim authority because it has been around for a long time. Other books are older than the Bible. *The Book of Kaqemna. A Treatise on Good Manners* was composed during the Third Egyptian Dynasty, about 3998-3969 B.C. Age alone does not guarantee authority.

God's Word isn't authoritative because Christians want it to be or because we believe it to be. After all, isn't that exactly what Muslims want for the Qur'an? They want the world to believe that the Qur'an is the holy book of God. Wishing it doesn't make it so.

So what does give the Bible its authority? Well, let's see . . .

#1. God's Word Reflects God's Character

The nature of God's Word perfectly reflects God's character. The qualities which describe and identify God also equally describe and identify every book of the Bible. This Bible is an extension of God Himself. Just as the books I've written reflect my thinking and my character, God's Book—the Bible—reflects what He thinks, what He feels, His desires and who He is, His character and His behavior.

If you fail to recognize the attributes of God, those character qualities that reveal who He is, you will also fail to recognize that the attributes of the Bible are identical to the attributes of God.

Let's think about some of those character qualities found both in God that we also find in His Holy Word.

A. God's words are perfect; they are without flaw: "**As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him**" (Psalm 18:30).

Did you notice the connection there? David recorded these words on the day the LORD God delivered him out of the hands of King Saul who was trying to kill him. That's why David describes God as his "**shield to all who trust in Him.**" David trusted God and he was delivered from Saul.

But there's more here. David immediately links that idea of God's perfection with the next one – **“the Word of the LORD is proven.”** God's Word possesses the same qualities as the one who breathed it out of His mouth. The Bible reflects the flawless character of God because God is the author.

B. As Heaven's God is exalted above all gods, so too His Word is exalted above all writings. Listen to this. **“I will praise You with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing praises to You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name”** (Psalm 138:1-2).

God's name is important to God because it reflects who He is, it reflects His character. That's why the third of God's 10 Commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai is, **“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”**

But God says that He respects His Word—the Bible—just as much as He respects His name. In fact, God wants us to respect His Word as much as He wants us to respect His name.

C. God is the most effective person in the universe and His words are equally as effective as He is. Listen to this. **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”** That's Isaiah 55:11.

God, as the Supreme Authority in the world He created, is to be obeyed; His words are the supreme authority that He spoke and are likewise to be obeyed: **“...Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”** (Luke 11:28).

God's Word carries the authority of God because His Word reflects the character of God. They're linked together again and again in Scripture and therefore are to be linked together in our understanding of the Christian faith. So, to **“Experience the Power of God's Word”** we must have faith in the authority of the Bible. Oh but there's something else that gives the Bible the authority of God.

#2. God's Actual Words Are Recorded In God's Word

Now, did you catch what I said? God's words, the things God said, are faithfully recorded in God's Word—the Bible. There are frequent claims in the Bible that all the words of Scripture are God's words, including the words spoken by God's prophets.

When a prophet spoke in God's name, indicating he was speaking with God's authority, every word he said had to be from God or he would be a false prophet and killed.

Listen to God's promise and warning in Deuteronomy 18:18-20. "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. . . . But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."

Jeremiah was a true prophet, a faithful prophet of the LORD God. Listen to his claim in Jeremiah 1:9. "Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth and the LORD said to me; Behold, I have put My words in your mouth." God's words were placed in Jeremiah's mouth, so that what the prophet said is actually what God said.

Remember, the Bible says that God spoke **"through"** the prophets. God was speaking *through* the voice of the prophet and what the prophets wrote down on a scroll were the words which God spoke through them. Let me give you a sample: **1 Kings 16:12, "Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet."**

Now think about it. If God can control what His prophets say by putting His words in their mouths, don't you think He can control what they write, putting His words on a scroll?

#3. God's Word Is Inseparably Identified With Jesus

God's Word is intimately and inseparably identified with the person of Christ. Christ is said to be the Word of God even before creation: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with**

God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” That’s **John 1** the first **3 verses** and **verse 14**.

Now there’s another powerful set of verses that stress that Jesus Christ is named the Word of God. **Revelation 19:11-13 and 16** tell us, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True. . . . He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. . . . And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**” The name of the one riding the white horse, closed in a robe dipped in blood is “*the Word of God.*”

Because God’s written Word is inseparably identified with God’s Living Word—Jesus Christ, to deny the authority of God’s written Word is to deny the authority of God’s Living Word.

#4. The Bible Was Received And Preached As God’s Authority.

Right from the beginning, the authority of God’s written word was confirmed by how it was received by its earliest audiences. In **Exodus 24:7** the people responded to the written word just as though the Lord was speaking: “**Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.’**”

You see, although Israel often sinned against God, they had no trouble in recognizing that God’s Word carried the same authority as God Himself.

The same is true in the New Testament. Paul commended the church at Thessalonica for having received the spoken Gospel as the Word of God. **1 Thessalonians 2:3-4** say, “**For our exhortation *did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.***”

And of course, the LORD Jesus always upheld the authority of the Scripture. When one man asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus directed him to the Word saying: **"What is written in the Law?" (Luke 10:26)**. If it was written in the Old Testament, it was held to be authoritative by Jesus.

When Jesus was 3 times tempted by Satan, he responded each time quoting Scripture: **"It is written..." (Matthew 4:1-11)**. Jesus believed in the authority of God's Word.

He also confirmed to His disciples that the writings of the Old Testament prophets carried the authority of God. Luke 18:31 records, **"Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.'"**

You've perhaps noticed that all the reasons I have given for why God claims authority for His Word have come from the Bible itself. There's a reason for that. We'll make it number 5 in our list of reasons to believe God has placed His full authority behind His Word. Here it is.

#5. The Words God Recorded In His Word Are Self-Attesting.

"Self-attesting" simply means that the words of the Bible attest to their own authority. So how can this be? Well, think with me.

If you appealed to the Supreme Court, and there was no place higher to appeal, no court above the Supreme Court, then what was ruled by the judges of that court would be self-attesting, they would testify to themselves because there is no higher court to appeal to.

That's the way it is with the Bible. If you wanted to prove that the Bible was the very Word of God, who would you go to for a judgment? Who would you appeal to? Would you appeal to your friends and ask them to judge whether or not what is found in the Bible is authoritative? Why would you? How do you know you can trust them?

Would you appeal to human logic to judge if the Bible is authoritative or not? Would you appoint a panel of judges to investigate and use their logic to determine what they

thought was authoritative and what was not? Have you seen the logic that is sometimes used by a panel of judges? Are you sure you want to trust that?

Would you appeal to the scientific community to prove that God's Word was either authoritative or not? What expertise would a scientist have in judging writings that go back thousands of years and have withstood the attacks of science all those years? Scientists tend to be honest people.

Now, to be fair, there are some Christians who hold to the authority of the Bible but they elevate other things to a position of authority with the Bible. Some examples would be The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While Mormons believe the Bible, they hold the writings of Joseph Smith, their prophet and founder, to be of equal authority, and often of more authority, than the Bible.

Perhaps you were raised a Catholic and attended a Roman Catholic church. You believed the Bible is God's Word. You believed it is authoritative. But your church also held the traditions and edicts of the Roman Catholic Church were of equal authority to the Bible, and sometimes even treated church tradition as more authoritative.

But when God's Word must share authority with a church, a speaker or interpreter, "another testament," or with any other holy book, it is no longer the unique Word of God. It's simply a religious text, one among many, either to be accepted or ignored.

Now, a word of caution; the written Word, the Bible, is not God; it is a revelation of God. We must be careful never to equate God and His Word. They are not the same.

God is not the Bible, and the Bible is not God, and therefore we must never worship the Bible, and we can never equate a love of God's Word with a love for God. Rather, the Bible has its origin in God.

The Bible is the expression of God's mind and His will. The Bible holds a unique place among religious and non-religious texts because it comes directly from God. Since it originates in God, the Bible's authority is related to the sovereign God's authority.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 8 -- HOW THE BIBLE DESCRIBES ITSELF

Have you ever wondered what the Bible has to say about itself? How does the Bible describe itself? If you want to know anything about the Bible, the place to go is the Bible itself. So what does the Bible say about itself. Think about these things with me.

#1. The Bible Says That It Is Necessary For A Godly Life.

You may remember back in our first session together we were talking about why we believe there is a God. Two things were mentioned. First, within each living human being is a deep-down sense that there must be a God. We call that our conscience and everyone has one.

But in addition we also have an outer revelation of God’s skill in creating the world around us. That’s creation. Everything in our world, when viewed through that inner sense we all have, screams at us and says, *“There is a God; look at all the good things He has made.”*

We call these two things—conscience and creation—general revelation. This kind of revelation is given to all men and women regardless of where they live, how old they are, whether they’re rich or poor. Buddhists can benefit from this kind of revelation. Muslims can enjoy general revelation. Even atheists, if they would admit it, know there must be a God who created our wonderful world.

But general revelation is not enough to know God fully. We need more than general revelation and, thank God, we have more. The Bible is God’s special revelation. It is His unique, one-of-a-kind communication of His promises, His plans, His expectations and His program for you and me. The Bible reveals to us things we would not otherwise know. Here are some examples

Without a Bible . . . We would not know that God is constantly thinking about us and plans to give us hope and a future – **Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”**

Without a Bible . . . We would not know that God is guiding all things that happen to us in life toward an end that is good for us, the very best for us – **Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”**

Without a Bible . . . We would not know that we could be forgiven by confessing our sin to God – **1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

Without a Bible . . . We would not know that our sin will catch up with us and we’ll be punished according to our sin, but God has a gift for us that takes all that away -- **Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Without a Bible . . . We would not know God loves us and sent His Son to die for us – **John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** You see, we wouldn’t know that without a Bible.

And without a Bible . . . We would not know that when we are weak and lonely and think all hope is gone, the LORD will renew our strength – **Isaiah 40:31, “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”**

You see, all these things, and hundreds more, we would never know if God had been silent and not revealed His Word to us. So let’s investigate what God’s Word says about God’s Word.

#2. The Bible Says That It’s Sufficient For All Our Spiritual Needs.

You know, the Bible has proven itself sufficient to meet every need of the human soul. Scripture is comprehensive; it contains everything necessary for your spiritual life. The Bible features divine principles that are the best guide for moral character and ethical conduct.

Listen to how the Word describes its own sufficiency for our spiritual needs: Colossians 1:9, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Then there’s 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, “**And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant”**”

And how about Colossians 3:16, “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.”

Look, the Bible doesn’t answer all of life’s questions. It wasn’t designed to do that. The Bible can give you hope when you are discouraged, but it can’t keep you warm on a cold night.

God’s Word can guide you on life’s journey so you live in a way that pleases God, but it’s not a GPS to help you find a store at the mall.

The Bible is, however, sufficient to help you with every spiritual need you will ever have. If you want to know how to beat back temptation in your life, the Bible has the answer. If you feel a crushing need to forgive someone, the Bible can help lift that burden.

If you want to know how to go to Heaven when you die, only the Bible has the answer. It is fully sufficient for all your spiritual needs. Time spent in reading and understanding God’s Word leads to understanding “**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word.**”

Okay, the Bible says about itself that it is necessary for us to live a godly life. It also says that it’s sufficient for all our spiritual needs. And, hey, that’s not all.

#3. The Bible Says It's The Source Of All Truth.

I remember crossing from West Berlin into East Berlin a number of times before the Berlin Wall came down in November of 1989. We would cross at the famous "Checkpoint Charlie."

As you may know, the Berlin Wall was a barrier constructed by the German Democratic Republic (Communist East Germany) starting in August 1961; it completely cut off West Berlin from surrounding East Germany and from East Berlin.

The crossing was always tense. East German soldiers would inspect our vehicle and ask us very pointed questions. Specifically, now listen to this, they would ask, *"Do you have any guns, drugs, or Bibles?"*

At the time, I thought that was a very strange thing to ask. What an interesting combination! The Communists of East Germany were fearful of guns, drugs and Bibles. Guns can kill the body. Drugs can distort the mind.

But the Bible is much more powerful than guns or drugs and the Communists knew it. The Bible can expose everything that is false and destroy everything that is not eternal.

But more than that, the Bible is the greatest threat to atheism. As the source of all truth, the Bible tells us the story of God's love and our salvation, it instills hope in the most desperate person; it enriches the lives of everyone who engages it consistently.

Its little wonder an atheistic government would fear the Bible's power, classify it with guns and drugs, and want to keep it out of the hands of their people. The Bible is truth unleashed on a world of falsehood.

When God descended to Mount Sinai to communicate with Moses, Exodus 34:5-6 say, **"Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.'"**

As Moses passed leadership to Joshua, he sang a song about God's goodness to Israel. A portion of that song says, **"For I proclaim the name of the LORD: ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He."** That's **Deuteronomy 32:3-4.**

You see, throughout the Bible, God is always characterized as a God of truth, a God who always tells the truth, a God who, according to **Titus 1:2**, cannot lie. It would be contrary to God's nature to tell a lie.

Satan is the antithesis of God. Satan can't help himself. Everything he says is a lie. He lies to you without even thinking about it.

Jesus had some harsh words for the Pharisees. He told them, "You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it." That's John 8:44.

Did you get the contrast? Satan lies every time. God never lies. You can rely on what God tells you, whether it comes from His mouth or from the pen of the men who recorded what came from His mouth. If God always tells the truth, God's Word must always tell the truth as well.

It would be unthinkable for God to allow Moses or Jeremiah or Peter or Paul to write something that God knew was a lie and not correct it on the spot. Thus, the Bible has to contain the truth.

But even more, it has to be the truth. It has to be the source of all truth because truth only becomes truth when it squares with the ultimate standard of truth and that is God and His Word.

So, when you hear the Bible read or read it for yourself, you know you are hearing the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

#4. Finally, The Bible Says It Is Clear And Understandable

I've heard many people, and you have too, who have said, *"I don't understand the Bible. It's too unclear; it's too difficult to read."* Okay. Let's be honest. Some passages of the Bible are more difficult to understand than others.

It is easier to understand the stories of the Gospel of John than it is the prophecies of Ezekiel. The laws of the Book of Leviticus are far more difficult to understand than, say, the Epistle to the Philippians.

But, that doesn't mean you can't understand the Bible. You can, just remember:

(1). Although some passages may at first seem difficult, the Bible was written so that all things necessary to become a Christian, to live as a Christian should live, and grow as a Christian should grow in the faith, all those things are clear.

(2). The more you read or have the Bible read to you, the more you understand.

It's like everything else in life. Each time you meet God in His Word you will get to know both God and His Word better. So, don't give up if the Bible seems difficult at first. It will get easier. And finally . . .

(3). The Bible promises you have the Holy Spirit as your teacher to help you understand. In [John 16:13](#), speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus promises, **"the Spirit of truth. . . will guide you into all truth."** Now, we'll learn more about this later. For now, though, let's say that verse together: **"The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth."** Say it with me: **"The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth."**

Once more: **"The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth."** You see, the Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit and through the truth of God's Word He leads you and me into all truth. Ask God to help you understand the Bible. He will; He has promised He will. And the Spirit of truth will help you too.

[Psalm 119:130](#) has always been a comfort. **"The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."** Now the "simple" are those who are

untrained. It's as if David is saying, *“Even if you are not trained in God’s Word, when you take it into your head and heart. it gives you understanding and light for your life.”*

So, what have we learned in this session? Well, we’ve learned that . . .

- God’s Word is absolutely necessary for us to know God and live as He desires.
- We’ve also learned that God’s Word is fully sufficient for all we need to know for our spiritual lives.
- And God’s Word is the source of and the standard for all truth; truth must match up with God’s Word or it is not truth.
- And God’s Word is clear and able to be understood if we work at it.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”

Session 9 -- HOW WE KNOW THE RIGHT BOOKS ARE IN THE BIBLE

Now we move on to one of the most difficult questions in our weeklong intensive study of the Bible. Many people have asked it, but people continue ask and maybe it’s a question that has come to your own mind as well: How can we be sure that the right books are in the Bible? That’s a very important question, but there’s an equally important answer.

In **2 Samuel 1**, David sings a sorrowful song because of the deaths of King Saul and especially Saul’s son, Jonathan, who was David’s best friend. **Verses 17 and 18** say, **“Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told *them* to teach the children of Judah *the Song of the Bow*; indeed *it is written in the Book of Jasher.*”**

We’re interested not as much in the Song of the Bow as much as we are the fact that this sorrowful song is written in the Book of Jasher. What is the Book of Jasher? This is not the only time this book is mentioned in the Bible.

There’s a Bible story about the sun standing still so Joshua and the armies of Israel could defeat their enemies the Amorites. **Joshua 10:13** says, **“So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. *Is this not written in the Book of Jasher?*”**

The Book of Jasher was an ancient Hebrew writing that is no longer in existence. And although we don’t know for sure, it was probably a national songbook containing songs praising the victories of Hebrew heroes. But why is the Book of Jasher not in the Bible? What happened to it?

Perhaps you know that there is an Old Testament Book named Ecclesiastes, but did you know there is also a book called Ecclesiasticus, also known as Sirach?

We enjoy reading the book of Ezra, but have you ever seen the books of 1 & 2 Esdras? You've heard of the Book of Esther, but how about the Book of Judith?

We have a book called Daniel because it follows the events of Daniel's life in exile. But there is also a Book of Tobit following the events of Tobit's life in exile. Why is Daniel in the Bible and Tobit not?

Did you know that some editions of the Bible have a Psalm 151? That's one more psalm than most Bibles have. Why is that? And why was this Psalm 151 not included in our Bibles?

There are literally dozens and dozens of writings in existence today that sound somewhat like the books of the Old or New Testament, and yet they're not included in either the Old or New Testament. Why? Well, the answer is all wrapped up in the word canon, C-A-N-O-N

What Is The "Canon" Of Scripture?

The word canon comes from the Greek word that means a "rule" or "measuring stick." Although the idea is likely Jewish, the term was first coined in reference to the Scripture by Christians.

The canon of Scripture is a list of books considered to be authoritative and rightly included in the Bible. The number of books included in the canon varies depending on the particular Christian religious group or tradition to which you belong.

For example, likely the Bible you have contains 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. But the Douay version of the Bible, which is used by most people in the Catholic tradition, includes 14 extra books in between the Old and New Testament.

Now, it's important to note that even in the Roman Catholic tradition these books were not included between the Old and New Testament until the year A.D. 1546. That is 29 years after the Protestant Reformation began.

If you're interested in what those books are called, here is a list of the extra books found in the Catholic version of the Bible: First Esdras, Second Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon (which are additions to the Book of Daniel), The Song of the Three Hebrew Children (also additions to Daniel), the Prayer of Manasseh, First Maccabees and Second Maccabees. Now some of these names you may recognize. Books like First and Second Maccabees are somewhat historical but others of the apocryphal books are extremely fanciful.

So, do these books belong in your Bible or not? Today writers of popular books often call these "The Lost Books of the Bible," but they weren't lost because we didn't know about them. They were lost because those who examined them to determine if they should be in the New Testament chose to lose them.

Often their faulty theology caused them to be discarded. They proved to be writings of human origin and not inspired by God. These were not written by holy men of God who were carried along by the Holy Spirit as they wrote. These writers had a different agenda, a different goal in mind. Let's talk about this.

There is a key verse in the Bible that helps us in understanding the process of receiving and recognizing any writing as being inspired by God. That verse is **Jude, verse 3**. It says that the Christian faith-- the doctrine and teaching that makes up what we Christians believe--**"was once for all delivered to the saints."**

Now, we can't precisely date when this tiny Book of Jude was written, but the content of the New Testament and the Christian faith was clearly fixed when it was written--as we saw there in **verse 3** which I just read – **"WAS** (past tense) **ONCE for ALL** (indicating finality) **delivered to the saints."**

That would imply that Jude was one of the later letters of the New Testament, perhaps in AD 67 or 68. Also in **verse 17, Jude** admonishes his readers and hearers to **"remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord**

Jesus Christ.” This would indicate that Jude was written after the time of Paul, Peter, James and John.

In fact, Jude seems to imply that his hearers have actually heard the words spoken by the apostles. Peter and Paul may already have been martyred by the time Jude wrote which is why he says, “Remember the words of the apostles.”

So by the time Jude wrote his little epistle, the writings of the apostles were already quite accepted by the Church as being inspired by God. Perhaps this is why Jude is placed where it is in our Bibles, the second to the last book.

By using the phrase **“Once for all delivered to the saints”** Jude is essentially saying that Scripture was given once for the benefit of all Christians throughout all ages, including today. So, based on Scripture itself, here’s what you need to know:

- there are no hidden or lost manuscripts of the Bible yet to be found;
- there are no secret books of the Bible known only to monks or religious hermits;
- and there are no people alive who have received some special revelation from God that is of equal value and authority to those books included in the Bible.

Who Decided Which Books Should Be Included In The Bible

Now, it’s time to talk about how the canon of Scripture, those books that are supposed to be included in your Bible, was chosen. First, let’s focus on:

The Formation Of The Canon

Determining which books floating about the Ancient Middle East deserved to be included in the Holy Bible was not a quick decision. God is the only authority who could decide which books should be included in the Book He wrote.

Jude gave us a hint that the 1st century church already had made up its mind about which books were inspired of God. But for church leaders to come to conclusions about which writings should be included in God’s Word, it was a long and careful process.

The process began about the year AD 140 after the birth of Christ. A list of acceptable Bible books was created in Rome by a man named Marcion.

But, there's a problem. Marcion was a heretic, so his list was not considered as authoritative by the early church. This did demonstrate, however, that the idea of forming a list of New Testament books began shortly after the last of the New Testament books was written.

By the end of the second century all but seven books (**Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, James, and Revelation**), were recognized as inspired by God. By the end of the fourth century all 27 books in our present canon were recognized by the churches of Western Europe.

By the year AD 500 the Eastern Church, representing the Greek and Russian Orthodox branch of the Church, had also accepted all the books in our present New Testament. So, that leads us to a tormenting question . . .

Who Decided What Books Should Be Included?

The correct answer is God decided. He inspired the authors He chose, and He chose which of their writings would be included in His Holy Book. We need to make a distinction between canonizing and collecting.

No church meeting, church council, or church official can pronounce a book worthy of being included in the Bible. Yet Christian men were responsible for collecting and preserving those books that are included in the Bible.

The Church only recognized what God had already decided – that there would be 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New.

As F. F. Bruce, a Scottish Christian scholar from the University of Manchester in England, noted: *“The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth.”*

Now remember, the word “canon” comes from a Greek word that means a “measuring reed” or “rule.” To be included in the canon of Scripture meant that any book had to measure up, it had to meet certain criteria, certain standards. Let’s think about what some of those standards would be.

What Criteria Determined Which Books Belong In The Bible?

What standard was used to determine which books belonged in the Bible and which didn’t? What was their measuring stick? Here are some of the guiding principles used by the early church to determine the canon of Scripture, which books were legitimately from God and which were not.

#1. Who wrote the book? This is the test of human AUTHORSHIP.

Was the book in question written by a legitimate agent of God like a prophet or apostle? Was it someone who could be closely identified with God. If so, perhaps it should be included in the Bible.

#2. Is the message of the book consistent with Scripture? This is the test of AGREEMENT.

Is what is said in the book in question consistent with what we already know about God from other books of the Bible? Does the book agree doctrinally with the teachings of other recognized canonical books. If so, it perhaps should be included in the Bible.

#3. Does the book exhibit the presence of God? This is the test of DEITY.

Does the book present information that relates to God or is it just a good story? You see this is what held up the Book of Esther from being included in the canon for a long, long time. Is the presence of God found in the pages of the book. If so, it perhaps should be included in the Bible.

#4. Is the book factually true? This is the test of AUTHENTICITY.

Is the material presented in the book borne out by the facts? Does the book present spiritual or philosophical arguments that cause us to suspect that it is factually incorrect. If it doesn't, well perhaps it should be included in the Bible.

#5. Does the book demand obedience? This is the test of AUTHORITY.

Is the book written in an authoritative way? Does it have that **“Thus saith the LORD”** character about it. If so, it perhaps should be included in the Bible.

#6. Has the book been widely accepted by all traditions of the Christian Church? This is the test of ACCEPTABILITY.

Did the early church accept these books? Did the Church Fathers, the leaders of the church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, did they accept these books? If so, it perhaps should be included in the Bible. And test . . .

#7. Is the content of the book compatible with Biblical holiness? This is the test of SPIRITUALITY.

Does the book exhibit such spiritual character that it is in harmony with the dignity and majesty of God? If so, it perhaps should be included in the Bible.

There were other criteria used as well, but these were the main tests to determine which books of Old and New Testament were inspired by God, which ones were breathed out by Him and authorized by God.

If you apply every one of these criteria to the 66 books of the Bible, each book meets or exceeds the criteria. That's why we Christians believe the Bible is accurate, sufficient, and complete. No new books are being added. No new revelations expected. In fact, the last verses of the last chapter, of the last book of the Bible—Revelation—give us this warning: **“If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this**

prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” That’s Revelation 22:18-19.

So, when it comes to getting to know God, **the Bible is all you have.** When it comes to knowing the plans and promises of God, **the Bible is all you have.** When it comes to knowing the truth of God, **the Bible is all you have.** When it comes to knowing the mind of God, **the Bible is all you have.** Fortunately, **the Bible is all you need.**

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 10 -- WHY I CAN TRUST MY BIBLE

In our study about “**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word**” we have now come to one of the most important issues we have to wrestle with. It’s the question of how you can be sure you can trust your Bible.

There are many people today who say the Bible is just a book of stories and myths. Others believe that scientific breakthroughs over the last hundred years have shown the Bible to be outdated and useless.

Others think there is no evidence that can validate the Bible, nothing that can provide a solid foundation for believing the Bible is true. To these people I simply say, “You need to catch up. The Bible isn’t out of date—you are.”

What are the reasons we can know that our Bible is true. There are many; we have time for only a few. I want to begin with . . .

#1. The Testimony Of The Old Testament

Many people of the Old Testament testify to the accuracy and correctness of the Bible. Moses, when called of God to lead the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage, balked at the idea. God questioned him, **“Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”** That’s **Exodus 4:11-12.**

God promised that as Moses spoke He would inform him, direct him, and keep him from error. Later God said to Moses, **“Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel”** (**Exodus 34:27**).

Now that word *tenor* in Hebrew refers to “blowing out of the mouth.” It is exceptionally similar to the meaning of God-breathed out or “inspiration” in the New Testament (**2 Timothy 3:16**). God told Moses the words he wrote down from God were breathed out of God’s mouth.

David also shows he believed that God had inspired him to write the words of God. **“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,”** David said, **“and His word was on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2).**

And when the prophet Jeremiah was called to prophesy for God, like Moses, he balked at the idea. His excuse was he was too young to be believed. But **Jeremiah 1:9** says, **“The LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: ‘Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.’”**

Now, there was no doubt in Jeremiah’s mind that when he spoke for God he was speaking the words of God. Many other Old Testament prophets had a similar feeling. **“The word of the LORD that came to Hosea.”**

That expression was not given just to Hosea; a similar one was given to Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The Old Testament writers clearly attest that what they said came from God and was true.

So the bottom line is that people whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament believed what they were told to write by God was actually the Word of God. But let’s look at additional reasons why we should trust our Bible.

#2. The Testimony Of The New Testament

The New Testament is no less impressive in its assertion that the Bible is the divine revelation of God. The Apostle Paul claimed that he spoke what was revealed to him by God. Paul said to the Corinthians, **“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”** That’s **1 Corinthians 2:12-13.**

The Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, **“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard**

from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Paul was fully aware that God was speaking His Word through him and other writers of Scripture. They were aware that what they wrote down under His inspiration was indeed the Holy Word of God, words that God intended to be included in Scripture. I have another one and it's really strong evidence. It's . . .

#3. The Testimony Of The Savior, Jesus Christ

If you aren't sure whether or not you can trust Peter or Paul, how about Jesus? Jesus trusted the Old Testament Scriptures explicitly, without reservation. He spent much of His short earthly life expounding the truths of the Old Testament. Listen to His very words: **“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18).**

Jesus was testifying to His belief that everything prophesied in the Old Testament would come to pass. Jesus said. **“The scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).** Jesus was testifying to His belief in the certainty and the permanence of the Word of God.

And again, words from the lips of Jesus Christ: **“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44).**

Jesus had absolutely no reservations about the truth or accuracy of the Old Testament. He accepted it as factual, exactly what God told the writers to record.

Now, if we choose **not** to accept the truthfulness of the Bible, we choose to stand against the LORD Jesus, God's own Son. Are you sure you want to deny what Jesus affirms as true? I don't think so.

Let's think about three additional witnesses to the believability of the Bible.

#4. The Testimony Of Fulfilled Prophecy

Now perhaps you've met people today who claim to be prophets of God. They say they are receiving visions or messages from God. Most of them are self-proclaimed prophets.

The Bible has much to say about false prophets because there were so many of them during the days of the Old Testament and New Testament.

How could you tell a false prophet from a true prophet of God? There are two great differences between them.

- (1) the Bible prophets were commissioned by God and were divinely led
- (2) in their prophecies. This isn't true for false prophets.
- (3) the prophecies of the biblical prophets always came true.

In Bible times, the penalty for missing a prophecy once was death. So the prophecies of the Bible prophets, unlike those today, all either have come to pass, are currently coming to pass, or they soon will come to pass.

So let's consider just one group of prophecies as an example. Take the prophecies in the Old Testament that relate specifically to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Approximately 352 of these specific prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus' life, His ministry and His death. Do you remember some of them? Well, let's refresh our memories.

1. The Messiah was to be a descendant of David (**2 Samuel 7:12-13**); *and Jesus was born of the house of David (Matthew 1:1)*;
2. Messiah would be born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14**); *Jesus was born of a virgin (Luke 1:35)*.
3. The Seed of the Woman (Eve) would crush the head of the Seed of the Serpent (**Genesis 3:15**); *Jesus crushed Satan's head at the cross (Hebrews 2:14)*.
4. Not a bone of the Messiah-Savior would be broken (**Psalms 34:20**); *none of Jesus' bones were broken during His crucifixion (John 19:31-36)*.

5. Messiah was prophesied to judge the world in righteousness (**Psalm 9:7-10**); and *Jesus claimed He would judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31)*.
6. Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced (**Psalm 22:16**); and as you well know, *Jesus' hands and feet were pierced with nails on the cross (John 19:34, 37)*
7. Messiah would die a violent death according to **Zechariah 13:7**; *Jesus died violently by being beaten, scourged and then crucified on a cross (Mark 14:27)*.

While these prophecies may be found in the Bible, their fulfillment is a part of history. Historical documents apart from the Bible attest to Jesus' death on the cross. Writers outside of the Bible mention Jesus being beaten and scourged, the piercing of his hands with nails, and many other things.

So these prophecies relate to the Bible, but their proof is attested by others outside of the Bible.

We've just looked at seven fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament. There are 345 more. Every prophecy that is fulfilled should make us aware that the Bible is accurate and it is certain. God doesn't predict things that He doesn't intend to come to pass.

Now, let's go in an entirely different direction – outside of the Bible. Is there any evidence that supports the validity of the Bible that is not at all connected with the Bible? Well, there certainly is. Consider with me:

#5 The Testimony Of Archaeology

Archaeology is the science of discovering evidence of ancient peoples and cultures. It usually means digging in the ground to unearth objects that teach us about ancient civilizations. **[Always marry an archaeologist]**

Archaeology does not attempt to prove the Bible to be true, but **NO archaeological discovery has ever proven the Bible not to be true, but plenty have proven it to be true**. Consider a just a few examples. Now I'll try to keep the details to a minimum because this is pretty scientific stuff.

- For many years critics scoffed at the idea a man named **Pontius Pilate** even existed. However, in 1961 an Italian archaeologist excavating at Caesarea uncovered a stone inscription with Pilate's name on it. The critics were silenced.
- In 1992 archaeologists discovered **the bones of Caiaphas**, the man who was the high priest who tried and convicted Jesus leading to the Savior's crucifixion. The critics were silenced.
- On July 21, 1993, at the ruins of Tel Dan, the northernmost city of biblical Israel, a stone inscription was found that mentioned the "**house of David**" proving the existence of David and his dynasty. The critics were silenced.

Other Bible names of people or places were challenged by skeptics saying there was no evidence apart from the Bible that any of these people or places ever existed. I don't want to get bogged down here, but let me give you some prime examples of archaeological discoveries that have proven the skeptics wrong:

- **The Cylinder of Nabonidus [Nab-o-nee'-dus]** confirms the existence of Belshazzar, known from the Book of Daniel.
- **The Cyrus Cylinder** records how this Persian king approached the freedom of religion for those nations he conquered. This reflects exactly what we read in the Books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.
- A stone called **the Mesha Stele** dating from 850 B.C. has a reference to King Omri of Israel on the stone.
- **The Taylor Prism** describes Assyrian King Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., just the way King Hezekiah mentions it in the Bible. In addition, the Greek Historian Herodotus also mentions this siege and confirms what we know from **Isaiah 33** and **36, 2 Kings 18:17** and **2 Chronicles 32:9**. That is pretty convincing evidence.

You don't have to remember any of these archaeological discoveries, but it is important that you know such discoveries exist, and they often validate the truthfulness of the Bible. And there are literally thousands of similar discoveries that give us good reason to trust our Bibles. We are one of the greatest proofs for the validity of the Bible. Think with me about . . .

#6. The Testimony Of The Changed Life

The Bible tells us that when we come to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, **“old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17)**. If the Bible can be trusted, when someone becomes a Christian, you should see a change in their life. Let me read to you some paragraphs from another true story.

At age 17, Clyde Thompson and two friends shot and killed two men in cold blood. He was sentenced to death in the electric chair, but the sentence was reversed. He was retried, and sentenced to death a second time.

At the age of 19, he was the youngest man ever placed on death row. But just six hours before he was scheduled to die, the governor commuted his sentence to life in prison. During his years of imprisonment, Thompson tried to escape four times. Twice he got into knife fights with fellow inmates and he killed both of them.

Finally the prison got tired of Clyde Thompson's repeated attempts to escape. He was placed in an old concrete building that had been used as a morgue. The prison put a steel door on it with a one foot square barred window in the door. All the light Thompson came through those bars.

After he was there two or three months, bored out of his mind, Clyde Thompson asked the guard if he would bring him a Bible. Thompson didn't believe the Bible; he just wanted something to read to keep from going insane in his solitary confinement.

But the more he read the more it convinced him that this was a book of truth. Eventually Thompson fell on his knees and tearfully repented of his sins. There in his horrible prison, Clyde Thompson was gloriously saved.

He began to write articles for Christian papers. He continued to study his Bible and even took a two-year Bible correspondence course. He began a Bible study in prison and he had 81 hardened criminals in that study.

He was finally released from the Texas State Prison in Huntsville, Texas after serving 28 years and two months. Clyde Thompson married and continued to work with released prisoners, counseling them and teaching them God's Word.

He was known as "The meanest man in Texas," but now he had a heart that was softened by reading God's Word. His life was dramatically and eternally changed. Clyde Thompson was living proof of the truth of God's Word."

Your story may not be as dramatic as Clyde's; I know mine isn't. But each of us whose lives have been changed by God's grace is proof that God's Word and only God's Word has the power to change lives for eternity. The Bible. It's God's Word. You can trust it.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 11 -- WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE ERRORS IN THE BIBLE?

Whenever I talk to other people about the Bible who do not share my faith in Christ Jesus, they almost always say to me, *“Well, what about all those errors in the Bible? I might be able to believe the Bible if it didn’t contradict itself so much?”* You know what my response is? I ask them, *“What errors?”* You know what their response is? Dead silence. So far I’ve never had anyone respond.

People are convinced the Bible is filled with errors because other people told them so. But when pushed to give an example, they can’t. Now, I admit. I shouldn’t get upset at that, but I do.

So we are going to focus on whether or not the copyists made mistakes when copies of the Scripture were made. I pray this session will be helpful to you and strengthen your faith. Let’s put our heads together and come to some conclusions about . . .

The Error-Free Autographs

Let’s begin with how errors may have crept into the copies of Scripture that we have. You’ve heard me talk about the original “autographs” of Scripture before. These were the first sheets of parchment or first scrolls on which the writers of the Bible wrote – men like Moses, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Zechariah, James, John, Paul, etc.

We call these the “autographs” of the Bible because the word means “self-writing”; these are the originals, these are to documents that these writers of the Bible produced.

Now it’s these writings that we Christians claim to be without error. These writings record what God revealed to man. The Holy Spirit carried that man along managing everything so that what was written down on parchment was exactly what God revealed to the writer.

There is no possibility of error here because God oversaw the whole process. If Obadiah or John made a mistake, the Holy Spirit of God would be ethically and morally

bound to correct it immediately. So it's these "autographs", these original writings by the hand of the author that we say are inspired, inerrant and infallible.

But we no longer have these writings. The "autographs" have been lost for nearly 2,000 years. It's probably good too, because people are prone to worship objects rather than worshipping God; and these original writings are not God, they are the words of God.

So even if the original writings are not available to us, we have thousands of copies of these "autographs" that we can examine to see if what has been handed down to us is accurate or not.

Think of it this way. For you who live in the United States of America, one of the founding documents of our country is the United States Constitution. It's housed in the National Archive Building in Washington, D.C. And since it is a valuable treasure it is kept in a carefully guarded fireproof vault.

But if this document should ever be destroyed, the U.S. government wouldn't collapse, because there are sufficient copies of the original Constitution for everyone to know what it said.

That's how it is with the Bible. There are sufficient copies of the original "autographs" for us to be certain what God said. So, let's think about it. . .

The Copies Of The Originals

Here's the question. Are there really enough copies of the Bible for us to know for sure what the originals said? Well, yes there are. In fact, the Bible is the best attested document of antiquity. That's important so I want to say it again.

There is no document of antiquity as well attested as the Bible. No ancient writing has more copies of the original than the Bible does. And the Bible leads the count of manuscript copies by a wide, wide margin.

Two criteria are used when determining the accuracy of an original document we no longer have. They are:

- 1) how many copies of the document are in existence; and
- 2) how close in time to the original can these copies be dated.

Let me say that a different way. We can be confident that we know what an original document said if we have plenty of copies of that original and if the copies we have were made near the date of the original.

So, let's compare the New Testament to other ancient writings. One of the most quoted historians of the past is Herodotus, a Greek historian who wrote between 480 and 425 B.C. Today we have only 8 copies of his book *History* and the earliest existing copy is dated 1350 years **after** Herodotus wrote.

You may not have known it but Julius Caesar, the Roman Emperor, wrote a book called *Gallic Wars*. We have 10 copies of Caesar's account of those wars, and the earliest existing copy is dated about 1,000 years after Caesar's lifetime. Put that on the sticky side of your mind.

Compare that with the New Testament. The earliest copies of the New Testament we have today are fragments of the Gospel of John written about 50 years after John's original "autograph." We have other copies of the New Testament too and they date to within 400 years after the time of their writing.

But think about this. Only 8 copies of Herodotus; 10 copies of Caesar. Do you know how many copies of the New Testament we have? Are you ready? 24,000. Yes, you heard me right: 24,000 copies, and they're all hundreds of years closer to the "autographs" than either Herodotus or Caesar.

Do you think we have enough manuscripts to check for accuracy? I think we do. So let's focus right in on those alleged . . .

Errors And Contradictions

This is another aching question that relates to these copies. Many critics say the copies are filled with errors and contradictions. Can that be true? Well let's investigate.

Because the printing press was not invented until more than a thousand years after the writing of the New Testament, it's possible that the scribes who copied these 24,000 copies of the New Testament documents could have made errors in the text. It's possible. We don't claim inerrancy for the copies, only for the originals, which we no longer have.

But think for a minute what the critics of the Bible mean when they say the Bible contains errors. Clearly copyists made some mistakes in writing numbers or other details. Let me give you an example.

In 2 Chronicles 9:24 some manuscripts say that King Solomon had 4,000 horse stalls for his 14,000 chariots. But in 1 Kings 4:26 other manuscripts put that number at 40,000 stalls.

Obviously Solomon didn't need 40,000 horse stalls for 14,000 chariots. The copyist who wrote 40,000 must have dozed off and just missed recording the accurate number.

This, however, brings us to an interesting observation about the number of so-called errors in the Bible. When a slip of this kind is made in a group of let's say 2,000 manuscripts, critics do not count it as one mistake but 2,000 mistakes. That's unfortunate because it means one error copied multiple times is counted as multiple errors.

But most errors thought to be in the Bible are not copyist's mistakes. In fact, they are not errors at all, but simple misunderstandings. Let me give you an example of that.

Do you know the story of Jesus healing a blind man in Jericho? Matthew actually records the healing of **two** blind men as Jesus was **leaving** Jericho. Luke, on the other hand, records the healing of only **one** blind man, and this he records as Jesus was **entering** Jericho. It must be a mistake, right? Hold on. Not so fast.

At the time of Jesus, there were actually two Jerichos. There was the Jericho of the Old Testament (**Joshua 6**). We all know about that one because of the walls coming down. But in the first century, about two miles southwest of that site, was the new Jericho built by Herod the Great.

Therefore, traveling toward Jerusalem, Jesus would first pass through the Old Testament Jericho first, and then, go through Herodian Jericho, the New Testament site.

Matthew apparently records Jesus healing two blind men as He left the Old Testament site, and Luke records Jesus healing blind Bartimaeus as He entered the Jericho of the New Testament. We need not jump to the conclusion that this was a contradiction. Just a little understanding of the geography of Jesus' day helps us realize that both accounts are accurate.

Now I could give other examples, but none of them should cause you any alarm about the Bible being filled with errors. It just isn't. It's the most accurate document from antiquity because God preserved it that way.

But how about some good news. This will really prove how accurate the Bible is. You may have heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were discovered in 1947 in caves on the NW corner of the Dead Sea in what was Jordan in 1947, but Israel today.

There were thousands of document fragments found in these caves including fragment copies of every Old Testament book but Esther. Now these fragments range in date from approximately 100 B.C. to A.D. 100.

Now the manuscripts from which your Old Testament Bible was translated date to around A.D. 1000. These Dead Sea Scrolls Old Testament manuscripts are about 1,000 years closer to the original writings of the OT. And here's the best news.

When your Bible is compared with these manuscripts a thousand years earlier, more than 95% of the text is identical, word for word. That's not just amazing, my friend, that is God preserving His Bible from error.

Well, I hope that excites you; I know it excites me. In fact, I'm so excited that I have to stop just to catch my breath. Please let me read a little poem to you. This has always meant a lot to me and I hope it means much to you. It's about the rock solid character of God's Word.

Critics may criticize it, doubters may doubt, scoffers may scoff, but the Word of God just takes all their jabs and hits and keeps going strong. That's what this poem is about. The Word of God is like an anvil in a blacksmith's shop. Listen to this.

*Last eve I paused before a blacksmith's door
and heard the anvil ring the vesper chime.
And looking in, I saw old hammers on the floor,
worn by the beating years of time.
"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, then with a twinkle in his eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out you know."
And so I thought, the anvil of God's word,
for ages skeptic blows have beat upon.
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,
the anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone!*

That's the way it is with the Bible and the hammers of its critics. The hammers are gone, but the Bible is unharmed. Well, I hope you enjoyed that.

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 12 -- HOW SHOULD I INTERPRET THE BIBLE?

You and I have been hard at work thinking about what makes the Bible so unique. There is just no book like it in the world. No book reveals so much about what’s on God’s heart, or what’s on His mind, as the Bible.

It’s the only book that reveals **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word.”** And we’ve come to a very important topic. How should we interpret the Bible? How are we to know that we have understood the Bible to say we have understood correctly?

You see, it’s one thing to know what the Bible says, it’s quite another to know what it means. Most people do not stray from the teaching of God’s Word in the content of the Bible—what’s in it; they stray from the teaching of God’s Word in how they interpret that content.

So we tackle the difficult question of how we should interpret the Bible correctly, the way the writers of the Bible intended. More importantly, the way God intended.

This is really at the heart of uncovering **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word.”** How do we mine the treasures of God’s Word and know we have discovered gold and not Pyrite, Fool’s Gold?

I have always followed several rules for understanding the Bible-- call them principles for correctly interpreting the Bible. Let me share them with you.

PRINCIPLE #1. If you want to understand the Bible correctly, always begin your study of the Word with prayer.

Of the Spirit of God the Son of God said, **“He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”** (John 14:26). The Apostle James promised in James 1:5, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** So ask the Spirit for insight into the passage or verse you wish to interpret.

1 Corinthians 2:10 speaks of things we wouldn't be able to understand by ourselves and says, **"God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God."** So ask the Spirit of God to help you both understand God's Word and how to apply it to your life. If you want to interpret God's Word correctly, begin with prayer, and ask God's Spirit to guide you.

PRINCIPLE #2. Generally, the Bible should be interpreted literally, exactly as it is written.

You notice I said "Generally." The Bible, like any other book, sometimes uses figures of speech and these require different rules of interpretation.

It's not uncommon for my teenage grandsons to say, "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse." Now I understand that that's hyperbole, it's just an exaggeration to make a point. They really can't eat a horse. Well, if you've seen them eat, maybe a little horse.

The Bible sometimes uses hyperbole too, like when John says in the last verse of his Gospel, **John 21:25, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."** Here John is using hyperbole to indicate that no one is like Jesus.

The Bible also uses other figures of speech which are not meant to be literal. One of these is a simile. Now a simile makes a comparison by using the word *like* or *as*. Solomon said to his beloved, **"Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep."** That's **Song of Solomon 4:2**.

That's not a very romantic thing to say to the girl of your dreams. But he meant it as a compliment. He was saying her teeth were white and smooth, like a shorn sheep.

In addition to a simile, a metaphor also makes a comparison, but it omits the *like* or the *as*. Solomon complimented his beloved by telling her, **"Your navel is a rounded goblet"** (**Song of Solomon 7:2**).

Now, I guess that's not as bad as likening her teeth to shorn sheep, but we must understand that Solomon used these figures of speech to describe something that was literal. It was just a poetic way of describing his beloved.

God wants you to understand your Bible, and you can. Take every word to mean what you ordinarily would think it means, unless the facts or the immediate context of the verse indicate it is not literal. Here's a good rule to remember: *"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense."* Okay, here's . . .

PRINCIPLE #3 in correctly understanding your Bible is to remember that the Bible is a progressive revelation of God.

That simply means that God did not reveal to us all at once what He wanted us to know. God didn't tell Abraham all that Peter understood, for example. He didn't reveal to Moses what He did to Paul.

Peter and Paul built on the understanding of God that Abraham and Moses had, but they gained more understanding because God continued to reveal things about Himself all the way through the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

That's what we mean by progressive revelation; God revealed Himself in stages, a little at a time, over many years. Even now we don't know everything there is to know about God.

So because God's revelation of Himself happened over time, the Old Testament is largely foundational truth. That means the books of the Old Testament lay the groundwork for the New Testament. The sacrifices made by the Jews of the Old Testament were the foundation for our understanding of Jesus' great sacrifice for us on the cross.

We can't adequately understand the meaning of the cross, of Jesus shedding His blood, of His death as a substitute for us, without knowing something about the sacrifices of the Old Testament.

That means the New Testament is largely fulfilled truth. As the Old Testament lays the foundation, the New Testament shows us what God intended to build on that foundation.

With the birth of Jesus Christ the promises of the Old Testament take on far greater meaning. With the death of Jesus Christ, the prophecies of the Old Testament take on far greater meaning.

Jesus didn't nullify the Law or the Prophets; He didn't prove them to be inadequate. Instead, He fulfilled the Law, He gave it value by showing how to keep the Law perfectly and He proved the prophets to be faithful spokesmen for God.

So, because God's revelation of Himself and His will was progressive, building over time, if you want the full truth, you must interpret the earlier passages of Scripture in light of the later ones. That way you'll be interpreting the Bible as God intended.

PRINCIPLE #4. Never interpret a Scripture text or verse in a way that contradicts the rest of Scripture.

When you find something in your Bible study that doesn't make sense, something that seems to be saying the opposite of what you've read elsewhere, you can assume that there is a reasonable explanation.

Remember, just because you don't have an explanation doesn't mean there isn't one. Your friends or other trusted person can help you find the correct interpretation of any passage.

The brilliant Christian scholar who taught at Oxford University in England and wrote many books defending the Christian faith, including the *Chronicles of Narnia*—of course I'm talking about C. S. Lewis—Lewis said, *"I take it as a first principle that we must not interpret any one part of Scripture so that it contradicts other parts."* Well, here's an example of what Lewis is talking about.

Philippians 2:12 says, **"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."** But the Bible clearly teaches that our salvation is the gift of God; we cannot work for our salvation because all our works are just like filthy rags. The Bible teaches that it's **"by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

So, which is correct? If we cannot work for our salvation, why are we told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? We cannot interpret one passage in a way that denies the other. So we have to look for a solution, and I think we have it.

It is true that we cannot work for our salvation, but **Philippians 2:12** isn't asking us to work **FOR** our salvation but to work **OUT** our salvation. That implies we already have God's salvation within us if we are to work it out. One translation says, "**Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.**" Now I think that's the meaning.

God saved us for specific purposes, one of which is to work hard to show the results of our salvation. God saved us to serve Him, to work for Him. If God didn't have work for you to do for Him, once you came to know Jesus as your Savior, why didn't God just take you home to Heaven? If Heaven is so great, and it is, and if God is so merciful, and He is, why leave us here after we are born again?

Well, **Ephesians 2:10** provides the answer. Right on the heels of **Ephesians 2:8-9**, which tell us that we cannot work for our salvation because it is all by God's amazing grace, Paul says this: "**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before-hand that we should walk in them.**"

That's the reason God saved us and leaves us here—to work hard to show the results of our salvation through good works that God has ordained for us.

So, as you can see, work FOR and work OUT are two very different things. You should never interpret any passage of Scripture in a way that contradicts another passage. God does not contradict Himself in His Word. We just need to apply this principle when we see something we don't understand, and look for an alternative way to understand the verse before us.

PRINCIPLE #5. Let Scripture Interpret Scripture.

By this I mean, take advantage of Scripture's interpretation of itself. You know, frequently the Bible will answer your questions if you simply look for the answers there. For example, the first verses of the Gospel of **John, chapter 6** record Jesus feeding the

5,000. And then **verse 5** says, “**Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Phillip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’**”

Now, in interpreting this passage you want to ask some questions, questions like why ask this question? Or why ask Phillip the question? Peter, Andrew, James and John, in fact, all the disciples were there. Why Phillip?

Well, I’ve read many commentators, people explaining the Bible, who have had suggestions why Jesus asked Phillip. One said that perhaps Phillip was standing next to Jesus. Another said that perhaps Jesus was responding to a question from Phillip that was not recorded by the Apostle John.

But this is why Principle 5 is so important to you. Sometimes you get an answer to your questions by doing something very simple: read a little further. In the very next verse, **verse 6**, John tells us why Jesus asked the question of Phillip. It says, “**But this He said to test him, for He Himself [Jesus] knew what He would do.**”

See, there’s the answer. We have let Scripture interpret itself. Unlike these commentators I mentioned, we read a little further and we took advantage of the Bible interpreting itself.

Well, we have two principles to go -- Principles numbers 6 and 7. Here’s:

PRINCIPLE #6. Remember the difference between interpretation and application.

God wrote each passage of the Bible and He had one and only one original meaning to each passage. While there’s only one true interpretation, people sometimes interpret the meaning of a passage differently. Often we don’t really know which interpretation is correct, but what we do know is only one can be right.

But a passage can have several applications. You and I can apply what God said in many ways even if there is only one original meaning to the verse. So if someone

applies a passage differently from the way you do, that doesn't mean you have interpreted it incorrectly. It simply means they have taken their interpretation and applied it in a situation different from how you have applied it.

So who is right? Well, in the interpretation, maybe neither of you is right, but both of you could be right in applying the meaning of a passage in different ways. We'll have to wait until we get to Heaven to know for sure which interpretation is correct. And that brings me to my last principle of interpretation.

PRINCIPLE #7. Be kind to those who disagree with you.

We are all members of the same body, the Body of Christ. Each member has a different function and that means each member brings a different perspective to the family of God. Christians differ.

Some are preoccupied with one doctrine, some with another. Let's be kind to one another when discussing our differences. Christians who differ in opinion from you are not the enemy; they are brothers and sisters in Christ, members of the same body. Satan is the enemy.

Keep these simple rules in mind and you will understand and interpret the Bible the way God intended. You'll also have a leg up on discovering **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word”**

“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”
Session 13 -- WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE?

The Bible is like a letter to you from God. It is a revelation of His mind to your mind. It is the only true source of information we have about God and everything that relates to God. Now, just think of the things the Bible teaches us about:

- Creation
- Redemption
- Salvation
- Spirituality
- God in History
- The Trinity—Father, Son & Holy Spirit
- The Family
- Heaven & Hell
- How to live for God

The list is almost endless. All that and so much more we learn from the Bible. So, how can you and I use the Bible in a way that honors God and benefits us and others? We want to think together about three ways you can use the Bible for your benefit and others. This is where you really discover **“The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word.”** Here they are . . .

#1. Use The Bible To Get To Know God

God is not a cold, distant, impersonal being somewhere out in space. God is warm, very personal, and easy to get to know, if you know how. But, getting to know God seems to have been an obstacle since the days of Adam and Eve. Job’s friend Elihu said, **“Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him” (Job 36:26)**. David also said, **Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable” (Psalm 145:1)**.

Even the Apostle Paul scratched his head when we wondered about our ability to get to know God. He said, **“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and**

knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out.” That’s Romans 11:33.

So as you can see, getting to know God might seem to be impossible, and it would be, without the Bible where God revealed Himself to us. So, if the task is difficult, how did God make it easier for us? How is it possible to get to know God? Let’s think about some ways. First...

We can know God through His Son—Jesus.

Someone has said that Jesus is God with skin. He is fully God, but He is also fully man. He is the God we can see. And now that He has returned to Heaven, He is the God we read about in the Bible. Jesus reminded His disciples and us that **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also” (John 14:6-7)**

So the best way to get to know God the Father is to get to know God the Son. Do you know God through His Son, Jesus? How well do you know Jesus?

We learn all about Him in God’s Word, but sometimes we neglect knowing him because we neglect the Word of God. So, get to know God by getting to know Jesus. Second,

We can also know God through His Word – the Bible.

If knowing Christ is the door to knowing God, what is the door to knowing Christ? Well the answer is the Bible. **“The Secret to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word”** is ultimately found in the power of God’s Word.

Again, listen to the very words of Jesus. **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word , , , and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me” (John 14:23-24).**

Now if Jesus were still present on earth today, walking among us, we could get to know the Father directly from Him. But He isn’t. He has returned to His Father in Heaven.

He did send the Holy Spirit of God to be with us today, so if we are to know God in this 21st century, we must get to know Him through the Holy Spirit.

But how does that work? How can the Holy Spirit help us to get to know God? Well, the Spirit has a textbook through which He teaches us. The Holy Spirit is our teacher and the Bible is His textbook. If knowing God is a priority in your life, knowing God's Word will also be a priority

We're thinking together about the value of discovering "**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God's Word**" in our lives. We get to know God through His Word.

But the Bible has value in the lives of other people as well, especially when we faithfully share God's Word with them. That leads me to the second way we can use the Bible, and it is this . . .

#2. Use The Bible To Lead Others To Christ

Here's a little secret every Christian should know. The better you know God's Word, the better you know God. And the better you know God, the better you'll be able to share Him with your friends, your neighbors and your family.

We are all called to be witnesses of God's grace in our lives, the grace He demonstrated when He provided Jesus as a sacrifice on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

So what's the relationship between knowing your Bible and witnessing to others? Simply this. The Bible provides the facts that you need to share with your friends so they can understand why having faith in God is necessary for salvation.

What are some of those facts? Well, here are a few.

- People need to know they are sinners and that's a problem.
- People need to know that God's wrath remains on all sin, including our sin, and their sin.

- People need to know that we cannot rid ourselves of the wrath of God, but the sacrifice of God's Son on the cross can.
- And people need to know that if they trust what Jesus accomplished on the cross to be all that God required in paying for our sin, and they turn from their sin and embrace Christ as their Savior, they will be saved from their sin.

There's much more to explaining salvation, of course, but these are some basic facts that need to be communicated to our friends and family, and they are all found in the Bible. So use the Bible to lead others to Christ.

Do you remember the Bible story of the demon-possessed man whom Jesus delivered when He sent the demons into the swine? It's recorded in **Mark 5**. Once the man was free of the demons, the man was so grateful he wanted to get into Jesus' boat and go with Him.

But do you remember what Jesus said to him? He said: **"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you."**

That is the simplest way to witness for your faith. Just go home and tell your friends what great things the Lord has done for you. Just tell them your story; It's your story; no one can argue with your story because it isn't their story. Use the Bible to witness to your friends and family. That's a second great way to find value in God's Word. And here's a third . . .

#3. Use The Bible To Grow To Spiritual Maturity

When you placed your faith in Christ as your Savior, you were only at the beginning of your spiritual journey, not at the end. You had just taken your first baby steps, but you had a long journey ahead of you.

The Apostle Peter told his friends, **"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."** That's **1 Peter 2:2**. But milk is for the young -- a young calf or buffalo or goat. Even the mother cow knows her calf needs more than milk to grow. And that's true for us as Christians too, isn't it?

We may start out with a light diet, but we can't grow to full stature with a light diet of milk. We need meat, fruit and vegetables as well. The good news is, spiritually speaking, we get all that and more from God's Word.

Remember when we looked at how God breathed out His Word and the Holy Spirit carried the Bible writers along so they recorded exactly what God wanted. One of the important verses was **2 Timothy 3:16**, **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."**

But you notice there's more to that verse than just **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."** Paul tells us that all this inspired Scripture and it **"is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."**

This God-breathed Scripture, Paul tells Timothy is profitable and here's where we get to **"The Secret to Experiencing the Power of God's Word"** The Bible is profitable to you for doctrine or teaching—teaching what the Bible says, what it means and how it applies to your life. Doctrine is a word that describes the beliefs we Christians hold about God and the Bible.

Paul also says the Scripture is profitable for **reproof**, that is for confronting those who misunderstand the meaning of the Bible. He says it is profitable for **correction** or for setting someone right who has wandered into false doctrine. And Paul says the Bible is profitable for **instruction**. That means it disciplines us in our faith; it schools us in the things of God; it makes us more like the Savior.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the famous British preacher of 19th century London, correctly noted this; he said, "Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the Book widens and deepens with our years." Ah, that's so true, isn't it?

It's true of me and I believe it's true of you as well. The Bible may be all we have to know what is on God's mind, but thank God, it's all we need. Everything God wanted us to know regarding Him, His salvation, His plans for our future, is recorded in the Bible.

Someone has said, “This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

“Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s character. Here paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of Hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.” As I said, I don’t know who wrote that, but I love what they said.

Well, I have talked with you through the subject of discovering “**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word.**” I have not given you some hot-shot spiritual principles to live by. You don’t need them; they’re all found in God’s Word.

I haven’t given you a three-point plan for experiencing the power of God’s Word. God gave no such plan. Besides, it may be a ten-point plan or a hundred-point plan. Whatever fits best in your life is what you will discover on your own in God’s Word, the Bible.

However, I do want to leave you with some truth you can grab hold of and run with. “**The Secrets to Experiencing the Power of God’s Word**” are all wrapped up in one word – “Engagement.”

To experience the power of God’s Word you must engage the Bible, and you must do it consistently. As you take in physical food on a daily, regular basis, to experience the power of God’s Word you must take in spiritual food on a daily, regular basis.

Whether you are anxious to engage God's Word often depends on your attitudes toward it. If you see the Bible as a dry, dusty old book that you know you ought to read but don't enjoy reading, likely you won't often engage it.

But if you see God's Word as the way God has chosen to communicate with you in the day and time. Then you eagerly want to engage the Bible to see what God has to say to you today. Remember, our God is not silent. He speaks to us through his Word, but you have to read it or hear it read to know what He wants to say.

Let's bow for a closing prayer and time of covenant.

I want to encourage you right here, right now, to make a personal covenant with God. Covenant with Him that you will be a consistent engager of the only Book He ever wrote. You may miss a day now and then, but you are covenanting with God that you want to hear from Him daily and you will meet Him in the pages of His Word.

Do it right now. Do it silently. Talk to Him and tell Him you are eager to hear from Him.

Then, pick a time of day that you will be least interrupted in your covenant of listening to God speak to you. Find that time. If you can't find it, make that time. Get rid of something else. Don't just squeeze God in. Show Him you mean business. Meet Him each day at that time.

Once you have established a time, covenant a place to meet Him. Sure, you can engage your Bible anywhere, but if you find your own nook to go to hear from Him, you are more likely to be consistent in meeting Him. So, get your Book; find a nook.

If you truly want to discover **“The Secret to Experiencing the Power of God's Word”** determine that each day you spend with Him, each time you read His Word, you will covenant to look for Him, His plans and His purposes in the passage you read. Covenant that you won't come to read His Word with a critical look, hoping to find some unresolved problem in the Bible.

Covenant that you won't come to read His Word with a curious look, looking for trivia with which to impress your friends. Covenant that you will come to read His Word with

a communicative look, a look in which you are expecting to hear from God – not audibly, but you are looking for Him in those Bible pages and not for something else.

This is your covenant with God, your promise to be a consistent engager of His Word. You are saying to God that you want to hear from Him. You want to engage in conversation with Him. You want to become more intimate with Him. You want to find Him daily in the pages of His Word. He'll meet you there. That's His covenant with you.

***Though the cover is worn, and the pages are torn,
and though places bear traces of tears;
yet more precious than gold is this book worn and old
that can shatter and scatter my fears.***