

Bibliology:

The study and doctrine of
God's Written Word

Introduction:

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is more important or foundational than the doctrine of the Bible itself (Bibliology). The Bible's witness to itself is that it is God's very Word, His revelation recorded for us of His character, work and intention, past, present and future. Therefore, we believe it to be our final authority for belief and practice.

Think about it, our understanding of God and everything He created, including mankind and the salvation He offers us in Jesus is all very much dependent on how much we know and believe what the Bible says, "*faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*" Romans 10:17.

We need to recognize that the doctrine of bibliology (the doctrine of the Scriptures) is a vital and fundamental doctrine. In fact, so important is this truth, one of the battle cries of the reformers was *sola Scriptura*, "Scripture only." What this meant for the reformers was that the church should not preach, teach, command, or practice anything contrary to the written Scriptures of the Bible.

A. What is the Bible?

Our English term *bible* is from the Greek word *biblion*, which means "book" or "roll."

Another term used for the Bible is the word, "Scripture," from the Greek *graph*, meaning "a writing, that which is written".

Physically – A collection of individual writings

- The Bible is really not one book, but a library of 66 individual books with a unified theme.
- Written by 40 different writers over a period of approximately 1500 years.
- These writings were combined into one volume we call the Bible.
- It has two major divisions or parts: the old covenant (or agreement) and the new covenant (or agreement) commonly called the Old and New Testaments.
- The writings cover everything from mandates given by God, to history, poetry, and prophecy, as well as letters to individuals and groups of believers.

Spiritually – The very words and absolute Truth of God.

1) The Bible is Spiritual.

- The Bible is not simply a physical volume speaking to the mind but it is a spiritual book speaking to the heart and spirit of the hearers.

John 6:63; Numbers 23

2) The Bible is alive

- The Bible is much more than words on a page. It is alive and has the ability to instruct, and inform, to encourage and convict, to bring life and pronounce death to hearers.

Hebrew 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 4:2-4; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

B. How Did We Get the Bible?

1) Revelation - from God to us.

- Definition: God communicating to man information and insight man would otherwise not know.

Deuteronomy 29:29

- God has revealed Himself primarily in the person of Jesus Christ, the Living Word, and in the Bible, the Written Word.

a) The Bible as Special Revelation

- God is the Source of all revelation but in this case we are speaking of the 66 individual written books of the Bible

- i) **General revelation** is that which reveals God by what may be seen and observed in creation or nature.

Romans 1:20

- ii) The Bible is unique as Special and Specific revelation.
Exodus 24:12; Jeremiah 30:2; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Revelation 1:11, 19

b) Jesus as the ultimate Special Revelation

- Jesus the Living Word has revealed God perfectly.
John 1:14; John 14:9-10; John 6:68

c) And the recorded history of Jesus.

- The Old Testament is “Christ concealed.”
- The New Testament is “Christ revealed.” **Luke 24:27; John 20:30-31**

2) Illumination and Inspiration - by the working of the Holy Spirit

- A definition: God moving in the heart and mind of human authors in such a way that they in turn are moved to speak and write His thoughts, works, and intentions without error.
2 Peter 1:19; Psalm 119:105

3) Inerrancy and Reliability – In keeping with God’s character

- Since we believe the Bible is God’s word, we believe the Bible is without error in its original written languages.
Matthew 4:4, 5:17-18, 22:29; John 10:35, 17:17

4) Transmission and Recording – by the diligence of godly men

- A definition: God using illuminated and inspired individuals with their own personalities, to compose and record His words without error.
- Transmission describes the ancient process of copying Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to preserve them for future generation and to distribute them for greater use.
2 Peter 1:19-21

a) Early writing materials:

- A variety of tools were used, including stylus, chisel, quill, pen, and ink.

b) A variety of materials were used:

- Stone
Exodus 24:12; Deuteronomy 5:22; Joshua 8:31,32
- Papyrus - made by pressing and gluing two layers of split papyrus reeds to form a sheet.
2 John 12; Revelation 5:1
- Animal skins
2 Timothy 4:13

c) Early copying:

- During the Old Testament era, the only copies of the scriptures were kept at the temple. During the New Testament era the Masoretic scribes (A.D. 500-1000) in charge of the Old Testament manuscript copying used a very meticulous system of transcription and had a deep reverence for the text. God used their almost obsessive respect for the text to preserve the text’s accuracy.

5) Canonicity - The Rule of Scripture

- A definition: The term “canon” comes from the Hebrew word *qaneh*, a rod, and the Greek word *kanon*, reed. Both signified a devise or standard for measuring. In this case the Bible is the standard or rule.
- By the time Jesus was born the Old Testament books we have were already accepted as authoritative “canon” or the rule.

- a) The NT Canon was not so much the process to select worthy writings for the church, as much as that widely accepted first century writings were the Canon for the church. The commonly accepted writings **were** the rule for information about Jesus and the Christian's lives and practices as they follow Him.

"One thing must be emphatically stated. 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 (rule) because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and general apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa — at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397 — but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of those communities." F.F. Bruce on the Canon

- b) A problem had arisen in the 1st century of false teachers and false writings appearing. (2 Peter 2:1-2). Determining what writings were true and authoritative became essential for the church.
- c) Criteria for NT acceptance:
- i) Written by an apostle in the strict sense of being one of the 12 and an eyewitness of Jesus. **Acts 1:21-26**
 - ii) Written by a close associate of an apostle. (Like Luke and Mark or Jude and James, half brothers of Jesus)
 - iii) Were true to and in harmony with existing, accepted, and authoritative writings.

C. Why is the Bible Important?

- **Because the Bible tells us about God and His love for us.**
- **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."
- **Because everything we need to know about our faith and life in Jesus is found within its pages. Romans 15:4**
- **The Bible tells us the Good News of Jesus restoring all things to the Glory of the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:19-20**
- **The Bible with all its various writers and lengthy time span** tells us one unified story: God's plan of redemption for a broken world and fallen man through faith in the work of Jesus our Savior. **1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:7**

It tells us about creation and life beginning with God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
Genesis 1:1

It tells us about the glorious beginning of humankind. "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Mankind when they were created."
Genesis 5:2

It gives faith an object to latch on to. "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."
Romans 10:17

It makes us clean. "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."
John 15:3

It is truth that changes us. "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."
John 17:17

It makes us fruitful. "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."
Psalms 1:3 (John 15:1-4)

It completes us. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
2 Timothy 3:16-17

It gives light in the darkness and a path to walk. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."
Psalms 119:105

It is our sword to do battle. “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
Ephesian 6:17

It is food to eat and seed to sow. “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there,
But waters the earth, And makes it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 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.” **Isaiah 55:10-11 (Luke 8:11-15)**

And so much more!

D. What Should Our Response Be to the Bible?

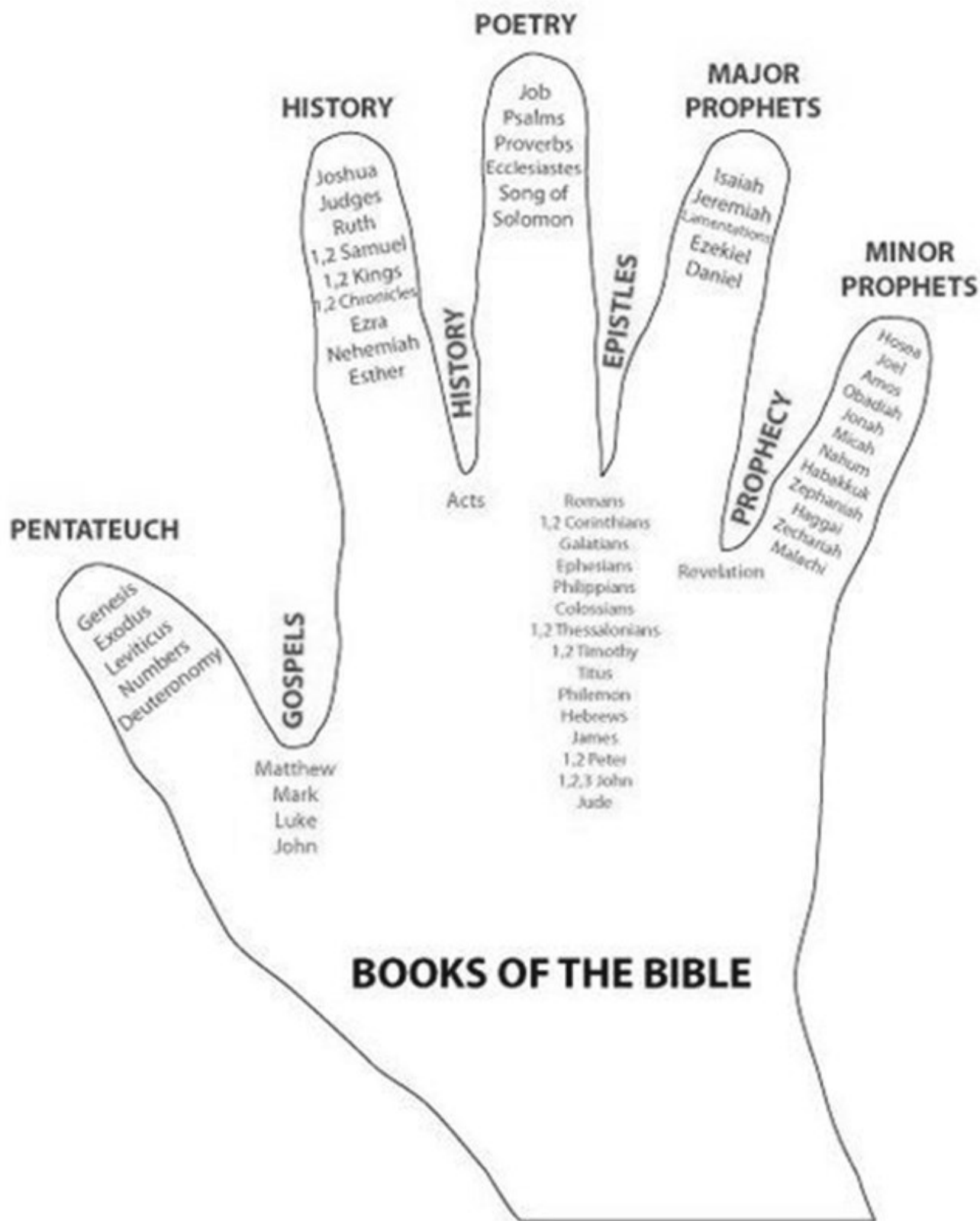
- Make the Bible and its truth your final authority concerning your faith and your walk as a follower of Jesus.
- **Be aware** that study about the Bible cannot take the place of Bible study.
- a) **Read it daily!** “Give us today our daily bread.” **Matthew 6:11**
- b) **Meditate on it!** “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”
Psalm 1:2
- c) **Apply it!** “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” James 1:22-24

Understanding the Bible

- A. The Bible is God's message for us. It is a big volume and can be difficult. It is helpful to get a bird's eye view of the Bible in order to fully understand the microscopic view. In other words, get the big picture before you look at the smaller pieces.
- The Bible has only **1 author**, God, but **40 writers**.
 - The Bible was written over a period of **1500-2000 years**
 - The **Whole Bible** has 66 books and **2 main divisions**:
 1. **The Old Testament**, which has 39 books and 5 main parts.
 2. **The New Testament**, which has 27 books and 4 main parts.
- B. **Testament simply means agreement, contract or covenant.** So we have **God's old agreement** with mankind and **God's new agreement** with mankind. God wants to have a meaningful relationship with us and this relationship is based on agreements.
- In the past before Jesus came, we had the **old agreement** or **Old Testament** that was based on the Ten Commandments (the law) and our ability to keep them.
 - **Our attempts to keep the law. What we must do = Our effort and works, which are never good enough.**
 - Now as a result of Jesus, we have a **new agreement** or **New Testament** that is based on Jesus and what He accomplished by His sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead.
 - **Our faith in Jesus. What Jesus did for us = God's work and grace, which is perfectly enough.**
- C. **There are five specific writing styles in the Bible:**
- **Prophecy, Poetry, Parables, Narratives** (stories), and **Epistles** (letters)
 - All of the bible writings can be categorized into one of these five styles.
- D. **New Testament writers and the books they wrote are as follows:**
- Paul, wrote 13 perhaps 14 (often with a helper e.g.: Sosthenes, Timothy & Silvanus,) Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and possibly Hebrews
 - John wrote 5 - Gospel by John, 1,2 & 3 John, Revelation
 - Luke wrote 2 - Gospel by Luke, Acts
 - Peter wrote 2 - 1 & 2 Peter
 - Mark wrote 1 - Gospel by Mark
- E. **The chapter and verse numbers** that are seen in the books of the bible were added much later to help find our way around. Think of them as **helpful addresses**.
- F. **A good form of bible study** is to simply read a passage or chapter and try to determine the meaning: What is the writer trying to say to us? This is called Inductive study. You can use the inductive tools of observation, correlation, interpretation and application to help draw accurate conclusions.
1. **Observation:** Asks the questions Who, What, When, Where, and Why?
 2. **Correlation:** Are there other bible passages that help clarify or add insight?
 3. **Interpretation:** Ask what does it mean?
 4. **Application:** How does or should this apply to me and my life?

Interesting Bible Facts

- The Old and New Testaments were first translated into English by the priest/scholar John Wycliffe, between 1380-82, from the Latin Vulgate.
- The first translation of the Old and New Testaments from Hebrew and Greek was by William Tyndale between 1525-1530. Tyndale was inspired by the Protestant reformers and in particular Martin Luther.
- Both Wycliffe and Tyndale were persecuted and considered heretics for their translation work. Wycliffe died in 1382 but his body was exhumed and burned in 1415. Tyndale was executed for his translation work 1536.
- The Bible was given chapter divisions by Stephen Langton in the 12th century and divided into verses by Robert Stephanus in 1551.
- In 1560 italics were first utilized in the translations to indicate words used which were not found in the original translation.
- The whole Bible, divided into chapters and verses, first appeared in 1560, known as the Geneva Bible.
- The Bible is the most translated book in the world with 3384 translations.
- The Bible has sold more copies than any other book with over 5 billion sold.
- There are about 350 direct quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament.
- The Old Testament was written in Hebrew.
- The New Testament was written in Greek.
- The Old Testament is a story of God preparing a people for the Messiah.
- The New Testament is the Story of the Messiah preparing a people for God.
- The only acceptable interpretation of any Scripture is the interpretation that God intends and gives it.
2 Peter 1:20-21



BIBLE TRANSLATION GUIDE

WORD-FOR-WORD

Formal Equivalence

MEANING-FOR-MEANING

Closest Natural Equivalence

THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT

Functional Equivalence

PARAPHRASE

Retelling

NASB

ESV

KJV

NKJV

TRB

GW

CSB

NIV

NLT

NIRV

CEV

MSG

CSB Christian Standard Bible

CEV Contemporary English Version

ESV English Standard Version

GW GOD'S WORD Translation

KJV King James Version

MSG The Message

NASB New American Standard Bible

NIRV New International Reader's Version

NIV New International Version

NKJV New King James Version

NLT New Living Translation

TRB The Readable Bible

ABBC recommends a word-for-word translation for study. A thought-for-thought or a paraphrase is fine for reading.