

Copyright © 2024 Adam Joel Street

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

TRAINING BELIEVERS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE
AT MADISON AVE BAPTIST CHURCH,
GOLDSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Adam Joel Street
December 2024

APPROVAL SHEET

TRAINING BELIEVERS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE
AT MADISON AVE BAPTIST CHURCH,
GOLDSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

Adam Joel Street

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: Stephen J. Wellum

Second Reader: Gregg R. Allison

Defense Date: August 22, 2024

I dedicate this project to my wife, Michelle, and our children, Autumn, Taylor, Nicholas, and Nathan, who have sacrificed much along the way. Without your support, I would not have finished this work. You are all a blessing from God and bring me much joy.

To the glory of God and for his bride, the church, I do commit this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	4
Purpose	6
Goals	7
Research Methodology.....	7
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations.....	8
Conclusion	10
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR TRAINING BELIEVERS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE.....	11
Scripture Is Trustworthy in All Areas (2 Pet 1:17–21).....	12
Scripture Is Necessary to Sustain the Christian Life and Progress in Spiritual Maturity (Ps 1:1–6).....	18
Scripture Is Sufficient for Equipping Believers to Live Out Their Christian Faith (2 (Tim 3:14–17)	26
Conclusion	35
3. HISTORICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE	36
The High View of Scriptural Authority in Church History	37
Apostolic View of Scripture	38

Chapter	Page
Patristic View of Scripture.....	39
Reformation View of Scripture.....	42
Enlightenment and Liberal Theology’s Negative Impact on Scripture.....	46
Enlightenment Thinkers and Thought	46
Biblical and Historical Criticism	49
Darwinism and the Bible	51
Inerrancy and Hermeneutical Methods in Relation to Scripture.....	53
Fundamentals and the Rise of Evangelicals	54
Battle for Inerrancy and the Chicago Statement.....	57
Hermeneutical Methods That Promote a High View of Scripture.....	60
Conclusion	63
4. DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	64
Preparation Phase.....	64
Target Audience	64
Writing the Curriculum.....	65
Evaluation of the Curriculum	65
Promotion	66
Implementation Phase	66
Doctrine of Scripture Pre-Survey	67
Teaching Format	67
Additional Class Resources	68
Doctrine of Scripture Post-Survey.....	69
Content Overview	69
Session 1: The Necessity of Scripture	70
Session 2: The Inspiration of Scripture.....	70
Session 3: The Inerrancy of Scripture.....	71
Session 4: The Sufficiency of Scripture	72

Chapter	Page
Session 5: The Clarity of Scripture.....	73
Session 6: Reading Scripture Correctly.....	74
Conclusion	75
5. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT	76
Evaluation of the Project’s Purpose	76
Evaluation of the Project’s Goals.....	78
Strengths of the Project	79
Weaknesses of the Project.....	81
What I Would Do Differently.....	82
Theological Reflections	83
Personal Reflections.....	85
Conclusion	87
 Appendix	
1. CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC.....	88
2. DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE ASSESSMENT SURVEY	90
3. T-TEST RESULTS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	93
4. T-TEST RESULTS FOR AUTHORITY/PRACTICE.....	94
5. THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY	95
6. DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE TEACHING CURRICULUM	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	133

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. “The Doctrine of Scripture” session, main idea, and key Scriptures	69
A1. <i>T</i> -test for knowledge and understanding	93
A2. <i>T</i> -test for authority/practice	94

PREFACE

I would like to thank the wonderful congregation of Madison Ave Baptist Church for calling me as your pastor and placing your trust in me to shepherd you. I also want to acknowledge how grateful I am that the church allowed me the time and energy to finish this project, and their support along the way. I would like to thank my faculty supervisor, Dr. Wellum, for all the wisdom, guidance, and grace provided through this process. A special thank you to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and its faculty, for pouring into to my life your wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual gifts during my educational journey. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Michelle. You have been my biggest support throughout every step of this journey and my partner in ministry. Without you this would not be possible. The greatest titles I will ever hold are those of husband and father. I pray the fruits of this study continue to bear at MABC for many years to come.

Adam Joel Street

Goldsboro, North Carolina

December 2024

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Bible must be the ultimate authority in the life of the local church as well as the individual believer. The Scriptures themselves are the revelation of who God is, what his desire for creation is, and his work of redemption for sinners. The body of Christ cannot thrive or even function properly without being committed to the teachings of God's Word. Second Timothy 2:16–17 states, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."¹ Paul makes it clear in this epistle that the Scriptures are foundational in the life of the church and commands the submission of all believers. In the church where I serve as pastor, there has been a lack of recognition of the Bible's authority due to a weak view of the Scriptures. Because of this problem, I developed a six-week teaching curriculum specifically focused on the doctrine of Scripture. This ministry project intended to increase the congregation's understanding of the doctrine of Scripture.

Context

The ministry project took place at Madison Ave Baptist Church (MABC) in Goldsboro, North Carolina. The church is currently engaged in a revitalization process and is being built again from "the ground up." MABC has been hemorrhaging membership over the last few decades as it became identified as a more moderate/liberal congregation and as its older members began passing away. However, the church itself does have several strengths.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

First, it has a welcoming environment. The demographic makeup of Goldsboro is diverse in ethnicity and socioeconomics. MABC has done an excellent job at greeting guests warmly and making them feel welcome in worship. Additionally, the congregation does a fantastic job in doing follow-up contact whenever a visitor is present. This level of personal care has compelled many of first-time guests to return to the church because they felt loved and like their presence was treasured. MABC has excelled in extending fellowship and friendship to every individual that comes through the door.

A second strength of the congregation is their generosity. The church is made up primarily of older members retired and on a fixed income. However, the congregation is always faithful in their giving of tithes and offerings, as well as special campaigns such as the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong Offerings. Additionally, whenever a family is in need or a member facing financial hardship, the church has never failed to come together to be the hands and feet of Christ and help. There were several instances during the COVID-19 pandemic that individuals took it upon themselves to meet the needs of a member out of their own finances.

A final strength of MABC is its children's department. In the last three years the children's ministry has been restarted and is growing rapidly. This has been a great ministry opportunity for outreach into the community as well as providing members with places to serve. Additionally, the children's department has increased the congregation's awareness that they need to look to the future and beyond the walls of the church, and get back to doing the work of the kingdom.

While MABC has many strengths, it also suffers from many weaknesses. First, the congregation suffers from a strong opposition to change and making adjustments that would improve ministry. The church has struggled with strong opinions over altering the music and the order of service. Additionally, members are hesitant about new methods of ministry that they are not familiar with, and often participation is very low when these

ministries are introduced. Because of this opposition, the church has been in a state of stagnation and has struggled to move forward in the revitalization process.

A second weakness of MABC is an unwillingness to commit to service and outreach. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers understandably were in short supply. However, now that the church has returned to operating normally, many are no longer interested in serving. Older members feel they have “put their time in,” and someone else should step up and serve. On the other end of the spectrum, younger members are so committed to other activities in their lives that they have no time to give in serving at the church. Because of this obstacle, the church has struggled to keep essential entities of the church functioning and recruiting volunteers has become almost an impossible task.

The final and most prolific weakness from which MABC suffers is an anemic view of biblical authority. Through the process of revitalization, it has become increasingly clear that the church has been unable to engage with the changing culture in a biblical way that is sound and historically Christian. Much of this problem stems from the previous pastoral leadership and the neglect of doctrinal teaching. At no time in the memory of the current congregation did the previous pastors deal with subjects such as sanctity of life, sexual sins, church discipline, or shaping of a biblical worldview. Instead, the previous leaders preached “safe sermons” about being a good person in the community and showing the love of God to others. Naturally, this omission has led to a lack of doctrinal maturity in the congregation. Questions about the “words of Paul” versus the “words of Jesus” are commonplace. Additionally, some members have struggled with the secularization of the culture around them and how to respond biblically. Members have expressed their confusion on issues related to the LGBTQIA+ community and what the Scriptures teach. If MABC is going to be successful in the revitalization process, then it must return to being a confessional congregation. When biblical authority is held as the standard by which the

church operates and in the personal lives of the members, MABC will become a sound Southern Baptist Church again.

Rationale

The lack of strength in the area of biblical authority is one of great concern for MABC. The church needs to be led through a robust process of teaching on the doctrine of Scripture to increase knowledge and strengthen MABC's view of biblical authority. If this problem is not corrected, then the church will not be able to continue functioning as Christ intended. One specific ramification of this problem is that MABC will be weak doctrinally and in its convictions. Second, the church will not be able to carry out the Great Commission that God ordained it to accomplish. Third, the church will have a distorted view of who God is and His purposes for them. Fourth, members will not have good discernment to make biblical decisions. Finally, if this problem persists, then MABC will not have the ability to train the next generation, and families will suffer.

The first theological reason for this project is that a low view of Scripture leads to false doctrine. Believers are supposed to be sound in their faith and know what they believe. Knowledge must come from a source, and that source is the Bible. However, if the people are unsure if certain parts of the Scripture are from God or just "Paul's opinion," then how can they be sure of what to believe. One member of MABC expressed that if the Bible was still being written today, then it would be vastly different and less oppressive to women. This of course is a direct undercutting of inerrancy and inspiration. As 2 Timothy 3:16 states, all of Scripture is inspired, and no part is more valuable than others. Additionally, Christians are called to press on to maturity, and one way to do so is by studying the Bible (1 Pet 2:2). If a church does not have complete faith in the book they are supposed to be studying, then neglecting the Scriptures will be common.

A second theological reason why this project is needed is that a low view of Scripture often leads to failure to carry out the Great Commission. Jesus left the church to evangelize, taking the message of the cross to all nations and making disciples (Matt

28:19). This is the primary task of every New Testament church. In a 2022 Gallup poll, only 29 percent of Americans believed that the Bible is the literal Word of God. Furthermore, a record high of 29 percent of Americans now believe “the Bible is a collection of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man.”² If those who are commissioned are not compelled by Scripture’s authority, then the Great Commission is doomed to fail. How can a church rightly preach the gospel if it does not fully trust the message? How can a congregation go and make disciples when they themselves are not being discipled by the Word of God? A church that does not have confidence in its message cannot go out and proclaim it to a skeptical world.

A third theological reason for this project is that the church’s view of God will become distorted. The only reason humanity knows anything about God is because He has revealed it in his Word. If a congregation does not affirm that the Word is authoritative, then the picture of God can be malleable and marred by man. In some instances, at MABC, congregants have stated that they do not think God literally called for the death of sinners and enemies because He is so loving. This is further evidence of distorting the biblical picture of who God is. When the whole counsel of God is not understood and believed, then the Bible becomes “man-centered” and is held to human standards. As 2 Timothy 4:3 states, “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.” This problem inevitably leads to a distorted, watered-down version of the gospel where repentance is not required.

Not only are there theological reasons demonstrating the need for this project, but there are practical ones as well. The first practical reason is that of a lack of discernment in applying the Scriptures to everyday life. By studying God’s Word and holding fast to it, believers can live faithfully in a secular and hostile culture. Part of that

² “Fewer in U.S. Now See Bible as Literal Word of God,” Gallup, July 6, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/394262/fewer-bible-literal-word-god.aspx>.

living comes in daily decision making and application of the Bible. If individuals do not have a firm grasp of what the Scriptures teach, then they are left to their own judgment, or “how they feel.” This has manifested itself at MABC, when the church attempted to pass the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BFM). Some in the congregation felt that article XVIII, which defines marriage between a woman and a man, might come across as unloving. The reason for this pushback was that some present in the congregation had close ties to the LGBTQIA+ community. However, not once was any Scripture given in support of the argument, but only how people “felt.” This problem will also manifest itself outside the church, as believers will naturally begin not basing their personal and ethical decisions on biblical principles, but rather on their own experiences.

A second and final practical reason for this project is that of failing to train the next generation. As stated previously, MABC is an older church whose members are slowly passing away. New members are beginning to join and there is a children’s department full of young people ready to be discipled. However, what will the church teach them? If those who are the leaders and teachers have a weak view of the authority of the Bible, how then can they train up the future church? Young people are leaving the church in increasing numbers, the more secular the culture becomes. If the children are going to become strong disciples of Christ, then they must be grounded in the Scriptures. Additionally, parents need to be in a church where there is strong biblical authority. As the primary disciplers in their children’s lives (Deut 6:7), they need a robust biblically-committed congregation to come alongside and equip them to lead their families. If the church is not sound in its doctrine, in knowing who God is, and in discernment and fulfilling the Great Commission, then that congregation will fail the parents. All this stems from the Bible being the authority in the life of the church.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase understanding of the doctrine of Scripture to strengthen confidence in biblical authority at Madison Ave Baptist Church.

Goals

To reach the desired purpose of this ministry project, several goals were necessary.

1. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and how it relates to contemporary situations and issues.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum that covers the doctrine of Scripture.
3. The third goal was to equip members in their understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and increase their confidence in biblical authority by teaching the curriculum.

Within these goals a specific research methodology was created that measured the successful completion of these three ministry goals. The methodology for this ministry project is described in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of the three goals. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and how it relates to contemporary situations and issues. This goal was measured by administering the Doctrine of Scripture Assessment (DOSA), which evaluated participants' current understanding of the doctrine of Scripture.³ This goal was considered successfully met when the participants completed the survey and it had been analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the doctrinal knowledge of Scripture among members of MABC.

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum that covers the doctrine of Scripture. The curriculum provided some real-world contemporary scenarios to which this knowledge could be applied. This goal was measured by an expert panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and

³ See appendix 2. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

applicability of the curriculum.⁴ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to equip members in their understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and increase their confidence in biblical authority by teaching the curriculum. This goal was measured by administering the DOSA again as a post-survey to evaluate the participants' level of knowledge and confidence in biblical authority, specifically in regard to the doctrine of Scripture. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

To assist the reader, the following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Doctrine of Scripture. According to Wayne Grudem, the term doctrine refers to “what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.”⁵ Taking that definition and applying it to Scripture, then, an appropriate definition for this project would be: what the whole Bible teaches today about the sixty-six books of the Bible comprising both the Old and New Testaments.

Biblical authority. Biblical authority is an absolute surrender to the text of Scripture. For the purposes of this project, the following definition from Grudem is used: “All the words in Scripture are God’s in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”⁶ This definition is helpful because it fuses together obedience to God with adherence to the Scriptures themselves.

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 6.

⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 62.

Inerrancy. The term inerrancy, according to John Frame, means “simply freedom from errors or untruths.”⁷ The definition of inerrancy applied to Scripture then would be, the Scriptures are without error and do not contain anything untrue.

Inspiration. The term inspiration means that God is the ultimate author of the Bible. Although human agents were used, God so superintended his Word that the writers were carried along and guided so that the end result in what was penned was the very word from God’s mouth.⁸

Sufficiency. The term sufficiency means that “Scripture contains the divine words needed for any aspect of life.”⁹ This is an excellent definition put forth by Frame in that no area of life is untouched by the Scriptures.

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the number of participants was unable to be predicted. To mitigate this limitation, a large invitation to members was extended well beyond what was needed for the six-week session. Second, the accuracy of the surveys were dependent upon the willingness of participants to be honest about their understanding of the doctrine of Scripture. To mitigate this limitation, participants were told that their responses would be anonymous, and four-digit numbers were used to compare participant surveys rather than names.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, participants were members who attend at least 75 percent of the time in order to focus on members who are active and regularly participate in the life of MABC. Second, participant data was disregarded for those who did not finish the six-week sessions. This was necessary to ensure the continuity of the data collected.

⁷ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 597.

⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 169.

⁹ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 618.

Conclusion

God has chosen to reveal himself through the holy Scriptures, therefore man has the responsibility to listen and obey. Biblical authority must be present in the life of the local church and can only be understood rightly when a correct view of the doctrine of Scripture is adopted. This project intends to increase the knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture to provide a more robust view of biblical authority to the context in which it will be implemented. Chapter 2 of this project focuses on Scriptures that are essential to the doctrine of Scripture in the life of the believer. Chapter 3 will focus on the degradation of a high view of Scripture over time and the current theological and hermeneutical trends to recover it.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR TRAINING BELIEVERS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

“But he answered, ‘it is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” This was the response that Jesus gave to the devil in Matthew 4:4 after being in the wilderness for forty days without food. What makes this scenario so interesting is that Jesus did not “cast out” the devil. He did not perform some sort of exorcism or command him to leave, as he did the man possessed with a “legion” of demons. Rather, Jesus, the Creator who had all authority to do so, used the Scriptures to combat the evil one with great effect. Instead of some cosmic battle with signs and wonders, Jesus draws from the arsenal of the Old Testament Scriptures. By doing this, he is demonstrating three things: the Scriptures are authoritative, sufficient, and the source of life for the maturing believer. Bread was the temptation Satan put in front of the creator because his body was craving a physical food source. However, Jesus rebukes Satan and demonstrates that bread cannot sustain and give life the way that the Scriptures themselves can.

This interaction between Jesus and the devil answers some fundamental questions for Christians throughout all time periods: What is our moral compass? What do we use as the bedrock of our belief and our decision making? What is the final authority on things? The answer to these questions, of course, as demonstrated by Jesus, is the Scriptures. Both the text of the Old and New Testaments comprise the foundation for Christian living and maturity in Christ. A church cannot long survive without a strong commitment to them, nor can the individual believer. However, to make such a claim, the Scriptures must be trustworthy and seen as authoritative in the life of a Christian. This

chapter will be an exegesis of three key passages that demonstrate that Scripture can be trusted, it is the source of life, and it is able to equip believers for every good work. An examination of these texts will prove that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the foundation upon which believers can build their life upon.

Scripture Is Trustworthy in All Areas (2 Pet 1:17–21)

In 2 Peter, the apostle is writing to Christians that seem to be particularly troubled by false teachers. Additionally, it seems that these believers are familiar with some of Paul’s epistles and teachings.¹ In verses 17–21 of the first chapter, Peter deals directly with these false teachers’ claims about the Scriptures and the apostolic witness. The apostle is reminding believers to live in a godly manner because Christ has equipped them to do so and will be returning soon. As a way of validating this claim and refuting the false teachers’ attacks on the apostolic authority, Peter offers the event of the transfiguration as key evidence.² In verses 17–18, the apostle begins to tell how he and the other disciples experienced this historical event. The transfiguration was not only witnessed by the eyes of the apostles, but it was heard audibly as well. As Jesus was “receiving honor and glory” (v. 17), the voice that spoke on the mountain was from the source of all glory, namely, God the Father.³ This testimony from heaven was direct communication, rather than through a prophet or vision, and was not simply some reverberation of sound. Michael Green explains, “God spoke to Christ directly instead of through the *bat kol*, or the ‘daughter of a voice,’ which resembled the process of divination and was vastly

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, and Jude*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 25.

² Michael E. Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 18 (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2015), 68.

³ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 203.

inferior to revelatory prophecy.”⁴ This divine means of communication is further evidenced by the use of the first person pronoun ἐγώ by God the Father to announce the approval of his Son. By describing the transfiguration and his own presence during the event, Peter is proving the apostolic witness carries divine authority. This authority is not something that is made up or “cleverly devised myths” (v. 16), but was an actual historical fact. Danny Akin writes, “Christianity is lashed to the eyewitness testimony of those who had a complete knowledge of the historical Jesus.”⁵ The witness of this event gave credibility to the apostles’ teaching about the future coming of Christ, or the παρουσία. Thus, what the apostles taught could be trusted with the authority of Christ, and was confirmed by the Father in heaven.

In verse 19, Peter offers another validation of the apostolic teaching, in pointing to the Scriptures or the “prophetic word.” He uses the word βέβαιος, or “more fully confirmed,” to describe the source and stability of this authority. The phrase “prophetic word” in this text refers specifically to the Old Testament Scriptures rather than an event like the transfiguration.⁶ This statement brings up a question: is Peter saying that the Scriptures are more reliable than the eyewitness of the transfiguration? To pit these two proofs of authority against one another seems to be contradictory and contrary to the apostle’s purpose. While there is some disagreement on the intended meaning, Tom Schreiner offers this analysis:

A decision is difficult, but it is preferable to conclude that the transfiguration renders more certain the interpretation of the prophetic word. The word *bebaioteron* should be taken in context as signifying a comparison, so that the transfiguration provides confirmation of the interpretation of the prophetic word. The transfiguration, then, is not conceived as more or less reliable than the prophetic word. It provides a confirmatory interpretation of that word, and this interpretation was granted to Peter

⁴ Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 223.

⁵ Jim Shaddix and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in 2 Peter and Jude*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: Holman, 2018), 42.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 319.

and the other apostles. The transfiguration shows that the promise of the Lord's coming should be taken literally and cannot be dismissed as a "spiritual truth." The advantage of this interpretation is that it holds tightly together the prophetic word and the transfiguration without identifying the transfiguration as the prophetic word.⁷

Because of what the apostles witnessed at the transfiguration, the Word of God is even more trustworthy. All of the promises and references to Jesus's first advent had come to pass and gave authority as well as trustworthiness to the Scriptures. In the same way, the apostle Paul states a similar claim in his letter to the Corinthians: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1 Cor 15:3–5). The entirety of Christ's work on earth was fully confirmed by the Scriptures and gave confirmation to their trustworthiness. It is because of his confidence in this prophetic Word that Peter urges his readers to pay close attention to its message.

The Scriptures are described by the apostle not only as trustworthy but as a means of illumination. The prophetic Word is described as a light or torch (λύχνος) to show the way while in the "murky" place. The murky place Peter refers to is the present world in which all believers live. Though the church lives in a "dark place" of this temporal sin cursed world, it has been given a blazing torch to see how to live and to reveal the sinfulness in each believer's life.⁸ This means that the Scriptures provide both a solid path for Christians to follow and also the ability to see that path.

In addition to revealing adequately the pathway for the believer and providing guidance in the present world, the Scriptures point to a future event. Peter admonishes his readers to pay attention to the Word "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (v. 19). The day (ἡμέρα) described in the text must be the second coming of Christ. Schreiner notes, "The day here is almost certainly the day of the Lord. In the Old

⁷ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 320.

⁸ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 72.

Testament the day of the Lord is a day of judgment and salvation, when those who oppose God will be punished and those who love him will be delivered.”⁹ Peter’s point is that believers are to hold on to the torch of God’s Word that shines brightly in this present dark age as long as they are in it. However, when the “day dawns,” or the fullness of the eschaton arrives, then a greater light will be available.¹⁰

When this complete and full illumination occurs, it will be because the “morning star rises” in the hearts of believers. Richard Bauckham notes, “Almost all commentators agree there is here an allusion to Numbers 24:17 ‘a star shall rise out of Jacob’ which was already interpreted messianically in Judaism.”¹¹ Peter is deliberately tying together what the Old Testament Scriptures said about the eschatological age with the second coming of Christ, which gives further weight to his argument that the event of the transfiguration “more fully confirmed” the prophetic word, and demonstrated the consistency of the Scriptures. The “star,” which is Christ, rises in the hearts of his people and will give them the full revelation of what they only see in part now. The “lamp” of Scripture that is so desperately needed in this temporal age will be set aside for the greater light that rises in their hearts. Bauckham again writes, “When Christians experience that full revelation at the Parousia of Jesus Christ, it will be like the daylight which dispels all the darkness of the night, and Jesus Christ himself will be like the morning star whose rising signals the dawn.”¹²

In verse 20, Peter shifts from the function of Scripture, to the source from which it originated. The apostle uses the expression “knowing this first of all” or the

⁹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 321.

¹⁰ The “greater light available” will be the very presence of God, in which believers will eternally dwell. In the eschatological age, sin, which hinders the Christian (both in obedience and illumination of God’s Word) in this present age will be completely removed. Thus, in the eschaton, the hindering darkness will be absent, and the believer will have complete illumination.

¹¹ Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50 (Waco, TX: Word, 2005), 266.

¹² Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 226.

primary thing to remember, is the means by which Scripture was given. A difficulty arises in the apostle's use of the phrase "no prophecy comes from one's own interpretation." The word ἐπίλυσις is used, meaning to "untie or loose."¹³ Douglas Moo explains that the term was often used to "denote the explanation of mysterious events, visions and sayings."¹⁴ One could argue that Peter is stating that no Scripture is to be understood by an individual's private interpretation, but rather what the church determines it means.¹⁵ However, given the context of verse 21, the apostle is arguing that the Scriptures are not to be interpreted according to an individual's preference or desire. Bauckham notes, "In true prophecy this interpretation is not the prophet's own explanation of his vision, but an inspired, God-given interpretation."¹⁶ This explanation is reinforced in verse 21.

Peter's use of the word γάρ at the beginning of this verse connects his previous statements that "no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man" (v. 21). To refute the claim that the apostles were the source of their own teachings, Peter asserted that no Scripture ever originated from man. Thomas Schreiner writes, "By definition, prophecy is a divine work and cannot be attributed to the ingenuity or native gifts of human being. Positively, prophecy hails from God himself."¹⁷ In contrast to Peter's negative declaration about the origin of Scripture, he explains where it has its true source. Although God himself is the author of the divine message given to creation, this passage teaches that he used instruments to accomplish it. The Bible did not just fall out of heaven, nor was it just uttered from the sky and believed.

¹³ Edwin A. Blum, *1 & 2 Peter*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 275.

¹⁴ Moo, *2 Peter, and Jude*, 78.

¹⁵ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 74.

¹⁶ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 230.

¹⁷ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

Peter notes that God used human beings to accomplish this supernatural work. The question then is, how? Did God just dictate the words and the authors wrote them down like an earthly secretary? Did God use his creation as mindless participants that he possessed and forced to create markings on paper without any mental participation from the author? Neither of these options seem to line up with what this passage of Scripture is teaching. Peter states, “Men spoke from God as they were carried along” (v. 21). The phrase “carried along” makes use of the present passive participle of φέρω and is used to describe a ship carried along by the wind. Gene Green describes it this way: “The prophets raised their sails, so to speak (they were obedient and receptive), and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction he wished. Men Spoke: God Spoke. Any proper doctrine of Scripture will not neglect this truth.”¹⁸ This explanation is often referred to as the *verbal plenary theory of inspiration*.

The verbal plenary view asserts that Scripture has a dual authorship in that God superintended the work of men as they wrote it. Robert Plummer notes, “While the authors of the Bible wrote as thinking, feeling human beings, God so mysteriously superintended the process that every word written was also the exact word he wanted to be written free from all error.”¹⁹ Peter in this case was referencing the Old Testament prophets, but by extension this statement also applies to the New Testament.²⁰

These verses attest the authority and authenticity of the Scriptures in the lives of Christians who read and obey them. Believers do not need to wonder about how they should live and on what moral authority they should make decisions. The holy words given to humanity in both the Old and New Testaments give light, guide, and transform the believer. The Scriptures are divine in origin and are therefore absolute and inerrant.

¹⁸ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 76.

¹⁹ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 32.

²⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 325.

Timothy Paul Jones explains, “The Bible in its entirety is the Creator’s message to his creature, the king’s edict to his citizens, and the Spirit’s tool for transforming his people. Church traditions, creeds and confessions of faith can be useful, but they can never claim authority equal to God’s inspired Word.”²¹ Albert Mohler offers the following insight on the authority of Scripture:

An affirmation of the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible has stood at the center of evangelical faith as long as there have been Christians known as evangelicals. The Reformation itself was born out of a declaration of the supreme authority of the Bible and absolute confidence in its truthfulness. In affirming that the Bible, as a whole and in its parts, contains nothing but God-breathed truth, evangelicals have simply affirmed what the Church universal had affirmed for well over a millennium—when the Bible speaks, God speaks.²²

Without an affirmation and strong commitment to the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, there can be no authoritative teaching for the believer, nor a way for them to hear God speak.²³ It is to that trustworthy written word that Christians can build their lives with confidence upon, waiting until the return of Christ and the “morning star rises in their hearts.”

Scripture Is Necessary to Sustain the Christian Life and Progress in Spiritual Maturity (Ps 1:1–6)

In the book of Psalms, the very first chapter has a great deal to say about the entire Psalter as a whole. James Montgomery Boice, commenting on Psalm 1:1–6 states, “The first Psalm is among the best known, if not the best known Psalm in the entire Psalter, and rightly so, for it stands as a magnificent gateway to this extraordinary ancient collection of Hebrew religious verse.”²⁴ Boice is correct in that Psalm 1 sets the stage for the rest of the book by dividing humanity into two distinct groups: the wicked and the

²¹ Timothy P. Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015), 13.

²² R. Albert Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy,” in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. J. Merrick and Stephen Garrett, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 29.

²³ Mohler, “When the Bible Speaks,” 31.

²⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, paperback ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 1:14.

righteous. Divergent “ways” are presented in this text as a means of living one’s life; the fruit of those choices are also revealed. In many ways this passage naturally flows into chapter 2, comprising one overarching theme. When read together with Psalm 2, one can easily see the “synergy” of the two.²⁵ The Psalm is written in a way that distinctly represents Hebrew parallelism at its finest. Dan McCartney writes, “Parallelism occurs where two or more lines of approximately equal in length (in number of syllables) and similar grammatical structure, deal with the same subject. The second line provides a bit more information or a different direction than the first line, either by addition, contrast, or specification.”²⁶

Psalm 1:1 begins with the word בָּרֵךְ, meaning “blessed.” In very much the same way as the beatitudes found in the Gospels, this section advises and encourages individuals on living in a way that brings glory to God. Verse 1 pronounces these blessings in three waves, each building upon the other with intensity, while at the same time demonstrating a contrast to be avoided.²⁷ To begin, the blessed one does not “walk in the counsel of the wicked.” The blessed man is seen as going about his way in life and avoiding taking advice and counsel from those who are wicked. The wicked, or רָשָׁע, refers to one who is guilty and sins against God. Second, the blessed man is to refrain from “standing in the way of sinners.” If the individual was already taking counsel from sinners, then he has progressed to the point of standing and dwelling in the presence of those who are habitually wicked. In a sense, this person has become tolerant of their behavior and ungodly advice.

²⁵ James M. Hamilton, *Psalms*, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 1:89.

²⁶ Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 230.

²⁷ Tremper Longman, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vols. 15–16 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 56.

The third blessing that is pronounced is given for the blessed man to “refrain from sitting in the seat of scoffers.” Scoffers, or שׂוֹמֵר, refers to someone who is not just an unbelieving sinner, but one who openly mocks the things of God. Therefore, to join and “sit” with these scoffers would, as Allen Ross suggests, “signify joining in collusion with the scorners and being identified with them.”²⁸ The progression is clear from the text; first they walk, second they stand, and finally they are found sitting. The whole scenario is a metaphor for the way one moves from an intrigue of sin to becoming like an apostate individual. Ross again explains, “The point of this threefold intensification is to show that if people at first take their spiritual guidance from unbelievers instead of God, they will gradually begin living like the world and become more entangled in it.”²⁹ Interestingly, this metaphor for a way of living is also found in the Torah. In referring to the law and statutes of the Lord, Deuteronomy 6:7 states, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

While verse 1 speaks of what an individual must abstain from to enjoy the status of being “blessed,” verse 2 reveals what he must be doing; namely, meditating on the law of the Lord both day and night. The “law,” arguably, could refer to the whole Pentateuch or the Ten Commandments, along with the 613 other laws observed by Israel. However, this term most likely refers to the entirety of the Old Testament Scriptures.³⁰ The word “meditate” is הִתְהַלֵּךְ, which means to murmur or mutter. This description, however, means more than just repeating phrases in one’s mind or with their mouth. Donald Whitney defines biblical meditation in this way: “Deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application and

²⁸ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 187.

²⁹ Ross, *Psalms*, 189.

³⁰ Boice, *Psalms*, 1:16.

prayer.”³¹ The activity of meditation was not meant to be limited to a single event, but rather is a continual reflection upon the Scriptures throughout the day.³² By engaging in this activity the blessed man will receive his delight or chief desire in life. James Hamilton notes that the phrase “his delight” could refer to “his Torah” or his own personal copy: “If this is the case, the psalmists perhaps assumes that the blessed man is Israel’s king, that he has obeyed Yahweh’s Deuteronomy 17:18–19 instruction to copy the Torah in his own hand, and that his delight is in *his* Torah, that is the copy he made for himself.”³³ Ultimately David, Solomon, and every king that reigned, failed in this assignment of being a perfect godly example because of their sinfulness. Even those who the Israelites would have considered “good kings” who followed the Lord, were still unable to be the example people were supposed to follow. Only in the person of Jesus Christ does one find a righteous king who kept the law, did not sin, and was a perfect example for believers to follow. Those who love and are disciples of Jesus will receive great delight from being immersed daily and continually in his Word.

The text continues to tell the reader that meditation is not only the source of satisfaction but yields fruitful results as well. The psalmist describes one who meditates as a tree planted by streams of water. This imagery would not be unfamiliar to the people of God, as the simile of the vine or tree was often used in the Old Testament referring to the nation of Israel.³⁴ In this passage, the tree planted represents the believer, and the stream is the ever constant and lifegiving source of the Word of God. It is this source that

³¹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 48.

³² Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1991), 55.

³³ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:94.

³⁴ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:94.

both sustains and nourishes life.³⁵ Similarly in John 4:14, Jesus is speaking with the Samaritan woman about the “living water,” and makes this statement, “The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” In this passage, Jesus was teaching that one’s spiritual sustenance does not come from a well in the ground, but from God. As a result of being connected to this constant water source, inevitably the tree in this passage “bears fruit in its season” and “does not wither” (v. 3). Since the tree has all the necessary components for life, it is compelled to produce exactly what it was designed for. The believer in Christ operates the same way; being connected daily to the Word of God, growing in maturity, and producing good fruit.

In Galatians, Paul gives a list of these fruits of the spirit: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (5:23) Ross writes, “If a tree is alive and being watered, it will show the proper growth; likewise, if true believers are in the word they will produce righteousness.”³⁶ The growing Christian will have no fear of drying up or withering because their roots are deep and well-watered. This illustration would have been familiar to those living in the Palestinian semi-tropical climate, where the heat and drought of summer often made foliage die prematurely.³⁷ The green leaf and fruit are both an indication to all who pass by that the tree, or the believer, is alive, healthy, flourishing, and a blessing to those in its path. This “Edenic imagery” is applied to the righteous man, pointing back to a time when humanity enjoyed the fullness of being in God’s presence and blessing.³⁸

As a capstone to the benefits that come from being immersed in the Word of God, the psalmist makes the statement, “In all that he does he prospers” (Ps 1:3). The

³⁵ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 50.

³⁶ Ross, *Psalms*, 190.

³⁷ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 105.

³⁸ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:97.

word for prosper in this verse is פָּרַח, which means to advance or be successful. This proclamation by the Psalmist, however, should not be taken as a promise to be successful in the areas of monetary gain or career advancement. Being successful or prospering in all that one does is directly tethered to the image of the well-watered fruit producing tree. As believers are steeped in the Word of God, they will make wise choices based on Scripture and be able to handle difficult events in their lives. Though, this does not mean that one cannot be blessed in material ways as well by obedience to the Scriptures. As Allen Ross points out, “This is not a blanket statement promising unlimited success; the context itself restricts the application.”³⁹ As an example of this principle at work, one can observe what happened in the life of Joseph at the end of Genesis. Here was a man that was sold into slavery yet prospered in his master’s house. He was thrown into prison, yet God gave him favor and some sort of authority with the prison guard. Finally, Joseph rises to the chief political position in Egypt under the pharaoh, all the while being faithful to the Word of the Lord (Gen 37; 39-41).⁴⁰ Psalm 1:3 communicates that the one who is in the Word has a prosperous life that is blessed and fruitful. Artur Weiser describes it in this way: “The true meaning and value of life is to be found not in success as such but in the joyous and unshakeable trust in God which cannot be broken, and the only way which leads to that goal is precisely the obedience rendered by faith.”⁴¹

The next verse makes a sharp contrast to the previous description of living with the statement, “the wicked are not so” (Ps 1:4). In this simple pronouncement, the reader is alerted that everything that was a characteristic or benefit of the blessed man, cannot be true for the wicked. For the one who is not blessed, there is no constant source of life, no fruit being yielded, and no green flourishing as the righteous has enjoyed. The use of the term “wicked” returns the reader to the very first verse of the Psalm. This is the kind of

³⁹ Ross, *Psalms*, 191.

⁴⁰ Longman, *Psalms*, 57.

⁴¹ Weiser, *The Psalms*, 106.

individual the believer should avoid getting counsel and wisdom from because they are not delighting in God's Word.⁴²

As the Psalmist unpacks his contrast of the wicked, he changes the word picture from the beautiful green tree to one of dried up chaff being blown away. Boice describes the psalmist's metaphor: "The threshing floors of Palestine are on hills that catch the best breezes. Grain is brought to them, is crushed by animals or by threshing instruments that are drawn over it, then is pitched high into the air where the wind blows the chaff away. The chaff is scattered or burned, and it is what the psalmist says those who live wickedly are like."⁴³ Unlike the thriving believer, the wicked, or chaff, is worthless, futile, empty, and only good for destruction. The chaff by nature is temporary and cannot endure the way that the fruitful tree does. Boice explains, "However strong the standing of the sinners might seem, however lofty the seat of scoffers be set, their leaves will wither and they will be "like chaff, which the wind drives away."⁴⁴ This theme was also employed by John the Baptist when describing the coming of the long awaited Messiah who would "clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt 3:12). The implication is clear that those who are not finding their delight in God's Word, the wicked, are destined for judgement.

Indeed, the very next verse (Ps 1:5) states that the "wicked will not stand in the judgment." However, this brings up an interesting question: when does this judgment take place? While certainly the retribution principle⁴⁵ can be applied to the status of the

⁴² Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:96.

⁴³ Boice, *Psalms*, 1:18.

⁴⁴ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, paperback reprint (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), 99.

⁴⁵ The Retribution Principle can be summed up in two two-part affirmations: (1) the righteous will prosper, and the wicked will suffer, and (2) those who prosper are righteous, while those who suffer are wicked. The first of these affirmations is generally supported in Psalms and throughout Scripture (cf. Ps 1). Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 432.

unrighteous as seen in the phrase “the wicked are not so,” the text seems to indicate this is an eschatological judgment that occurs later.⁴⁶ The word “stand,” or קום, is often translated to “rise or rise up.” The inability of the unrighteous to “rise” in the judgment refers to those who are unable to stand before God in a justified status. Because of their own wickedness, the judgment will not go well for them.⁴⁷ This point is further emphasized in the next phrase about sinners not being able to stand in the congregation of the righteous. While the word “congregation” could certainly refer to earthly gatherings of worship, the context suggests that this too describes the final judgment. At the time of Christ’s return to earth, he will separate those that are pronounced righteous from the wicked and cast them into eternal judgment. This eschatological sorting is seen clearly in the parable of the wheat and the tares found in Matthew 13:36–43. Jesus states that after the wicked are bound and thrown into the fire of judgment, “then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (v. 43). The congregation in Psalm 1 seems to fit this description well as they have now been separated from the ones unable to stand before the righteous judge and are left alone as a testimony to the glory and work of God in redeeming them.

In the final verse of this passage, the psalmist provides a concise capstone and summation of the previous verses and indeed the entire psalter. Tremper Longman that the “way” of the righteous is contrasted against the “way” of the wicked in that “wisdom literature recognizes that everyone is walking on a path or way.”⁴⁸ The Psalmist indicates that the way of the righteous is one known by God. This statement seems to indicate an intimate knowledge and watchful protection for one as they are traveling on the path. Hamilton writes, “Yahweh knows the ‘way of the righteous’ because he is the one who has instructed them in the Torah, the one who has caused them to delight in it, and who

⁴⁶ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:97.

⁴⁷ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:97.

⁴⁸ Longman, *Psalms*, 58.

has walked with them down it.”⁴⁹ This picture becomes clear as the path of the wicked is revealed to be one of destruction. The righteous will safely reach their destination because they are following and being cared for by God, while the wicked who are on their own path will only perish. Ross states,

By drawing a contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, the psalmist instructs believers not to live the way the world lives, not to take spiritual, moral, or ethical advice from unbelievers, and not join them in their profane enterprises; rather, believers must study the Word of God in order to live an untarnished and productive life for God, and that life will be evidence of a living faith that will see them through the judgement when God judges the wicked.⁵⁰

Psalms 1:1–6 demonstrates that the believer must root themselves and meditate in the Scriptures alone. Whitney asserts, “Meditation opens the soil of the soul and lets the water of God’s Word percolate in deeply.”⁵¹ The believer is designed to grow, bear fruit, and withstand hardships and trials that occur in this life. The Psalmist affirms that this only occurs through being in the world of God. Indeed, this immersion into the pages of Scriptures brings joy to the blessed man as he travels along the path God has for him.

Scripture Is Sufficient for Equipping Believers to Live Out Their Christian Faith (2 Tim 3:14–17)

In 2 Timothy, Paul is writing to his young protégé and pastor of the Ephesian church. The apostle, knowing his time is short and his ministry is almost complete, uses this occasion to strengthen and encourage his friend to continue on. In chapter 3 of this epistle, Paul advises Timothy in how to avoid the trap of false teachings and how to deal with teachers. In the first thirteen verses, the seasoned apostle describes the nature of those who have always opposed the truth of God and his messenger. Paul calls these teachers “evil people and imposters” (v. 13) who will continue deceiving others, getting progressively worse, and being deceived themselves. Paul admonishes Timothy to be

⁴⁹ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:98.

⁵⁰ Ross, *Psalms*, 194.

⁵¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 50.

completely different from these individuals by employing the phrase, “But as for you.” This is the same attention-getting device used earlier in 2 Timothy 3:10, when Paul instructed the young pastor to follow his example rather than those who oppose the truth of the gospel.⁵² The next verses are a strategy for Timothy to be prepared with, employ, and take courage during staunch opposition.⁵³

To begin, Paul admonishes Timothy to continue in what he is already doing. The word used is μένω, meaning “remain,” and is an imperative strongly given by the apostle for Timothy to be steadfast in “what” he has learned.⁵⁴ The subject of Timothy’s learning most certainly referred to sound doctrine that was rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the apostolic teachings, as Paul alludes to in verse 15. In addition to remaining in what he had learned from others, Timothy is also called to continue in what he himself had become “convinced of.” This goes beyond receiving information from teachers and learning, and advances into the area of personal conviction. Not only has Timothy been a good student, but he has conviction about it.⁵⁵ Patrick Fairbairn explains, “Paul’s point is that Timothy has intellectually understood the essentials of the faith and has also subjectively become convinced of and committed to the truth of what he has learned.”⁵⁶ Verse 14 ends with an additional qualifier of why it is important for the young pastor to continue as he has been doing. In the phrase “knowing from whom you learned it,” the word, “whom” or τίς, takes on the plural form, denoting more than one source.

⁵² Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 303.

⁵³ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 425.

⁵⁴ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 563.

⁵⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 214.

⁵⁶ Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 376.

The apostle probably has himself in mind as well as Timothy's mother and grandmother who were very influential in Timothy's spiritual life.⁵⁷ This additional familial training seems to be at least one of the additional sources Paul is referring to in this verse and is supported in the next one as well.

In verse 15, the apostle continues his admonishment of Timothy's pattern of steadfastness by drawing from the young man's past. Paul states that Timothy has been acquainted with the "sacred writings" from childhood. The sacred writings, or *ιερός γράμμα*, is the same term used by Josephus to describe the text of the Old Testament Scriptures.⁵⁸ Timothy had been immersed these sacred writings since the early days of his life. This is confirmed by Paul's use of the term *βρέφος*, which can refer to an infant or baby. Additionally, this statement would coincide with the command for parents to teach their children the Scriptures, found in Deuteronomy 6:7. Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin write, "Parents normally begin instructing children in the Scriptures from their fifth year."⁵⁹ Again, in conjunction with verse 13, the early training in the sacred writings was most likely given to Timothy by his mother and his grandmother (1 Tim 1:5) since his father was a Gentile according to Acts 16:1. An additional and prominent reason Paul points out for Timothy to remain steadfast in the Scriptures is that they lead one to salvation. The apostle denotes that the Scriptures are able to make one "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 15). The Scriptures provide the knowledge and illumination of who Christ is and leads one to faith in him. Donald Guthrie notes, "Thus, faith is not faith 'in faith, but in a person: Christ Jesus."⁶⁰ Paul's point is that the Scriptures have the ability and

⁵⁷ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 233.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston, new updated ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 280.

⁵⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 233.

⁶⁰ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 216.

power to lead a person to salvation, unlike the impotence of the false teachers' promises.⁶¹ Again, Paul is most certainly referring to the Old Testament texts Timothy was familiar with in understanding who Christ is. Jesus himself demonstrated how one could clearly find texts written about him in the Old Testament when the gospel writer Luke stated, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). In addition to the sacred writings Timothy was trained in, Paul would have certainly meant the gospel accounts of Christ as well when describing the young pastor's biblical conviction. William D. Mounce writes, "The message of salvation began in the Old Testament, has been fulfilled in the gospel, and this is what Timothy is to preach (2 Tim 4:2)."⁶²

In verse 16, Paul makes one of the most important statements in all of Scripture. Indeed, as Walter Liefeld states, "verses 16–17 are the strongest statement in the Bible about itself."⁶³ The phrase "God breathed" is an interesting one that appears only in this text of the Bible. A combination of θεός (God) and πνέω (to blow or breathe out) is an attributive adjective that modifies and limits the subject, in this case, "Scripture."⁶⁴ The inspiration of Scripture then, correctly understood, is not akin to observing nature or hearing a piece of music and becoming "inspired" to produce something. Rather, inspiration itself is a creative act of God. Liefeld explains, "Thus, before God spoke ('breathed out'), scripture did not exist, but as a result of his speaking (breathing out), Scripture came into existence."⁶⁵ By "coining" this phrase (God breathed), the apostle is

⁶¹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 305.

⁶² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 565.

⁶³ Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 279.

⁶⁴ Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 280.

⁶⁵ John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 122.

pointing to the authority that the Scriptures possess themselves.⁶⁶ This tremendous statement gives solidarity to the inerrancy, infallibility, and trustworthiness to the Bible. Because its origin is from God, it ought always to be obeyed. As the Westminster Confession of Faith (1.4) states, “The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore, it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.” John Frame writes, “Divine authorship is the ultimate reason why scripture is authoritative.”⁶⁷ Additionally, as Mounce notes, “θεόπνευστος should be taken in the passive sense and read—‘is inspired’ rather than as active, or ‘scripture emits God’s breath.’”⁶⁸ In addition, Risto Saarinen states, “Almost all the church fathers understood the word in its passive sense.”⁶⁹

The phrase “all Scripture,” although having a central role in the doctrine of inspiration for centuries, does have some unique hermeneutical challenges.⁷⁰ The word *πᾶσα* has the possibility of being translated as “all” or “every.” While this may not seem to be a point of contention, when the next word, *γραφῆ*, is introduced, the determination between “all” or “every” is significant. This noun *γραφῆ*, which means “to write,” refers to the Scriptures, or as Paul alluded to earlier, the sacred writings of the Old Testament.⁷¹ However, in addition to the Old Testament, this term is also used to describe the New Testament Gospels and the Epistles as well.

⁶⁶ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 307.

⁶⁷ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 165.

⁶⁸ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

⁶⁹ Risto Saarinen, *Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (New York: Baker, 2020), 156.

⁷⁰ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 565.

⁷¹ Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 120.

In 1 Timothy 5:17–18, Paul states, “The Scripture says . . . the laborer is worthy of his wage.” Wayne Grudem notes, “The laborer deserves his wage is found nowhere in the Old Testament. It does occur, however, in Luke 10:7 (with exactly the same words in the Greek.) So here we have Paul apparently quoting a portion of Luke’s gospel and calling it Scripture.”⁷² Additionally, 2 Peter 3:15–16 uses the same word in describing the Epistles of Paul that were being abused as well as the “other Scriptures.” Again, Grudem points out, “Peter classified Paul’s writings with the “other Scriptures (meaning the Old Testament Scriptures). Paul’s writings are therefore considered to be worthy of the title “Scripture” and thus worthy of inclusion in the cannon.”⁷³ With this distinction in mind, the Scriptures that are “inspired” or God breathed depend wholly upon the proper translation of the word *πᾶσα*. If the correct meaning is “every,” then the verse could read, “Every Scripture inspired by God,” as the New Revised Standard Version translates it. However, this rendering begs the question: Which Scriptures are “inspired” and which are not? Is it only the first five books of the Old Testament? Does it include the Wisdom Books and the Prophets? Are the Gospel accounts included or the letters of Paul and the other apostles? Again, this translation can lead to confusion over the authority of the Scriptures and what exactly God expects his people to follow and obey. A solution is difficult since both meanings can be accurate. Feinberg describes it this way:

Whether one renders *pasa* as “all” or “every,” this word means that the qualities attributed to the things *pasa* modifies, i.e., *graphe*, are qualities possessed by every single part of the *graphe*. That is, Paul affirms that every single verse of Scripture possesses equal qualities he will mention. The word *pasa* in this verse is a major reason why evangelicals believe in the *plenary* (full, total) inspiration of Scripture.⁷⁴

⁷² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 49.

⁷³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 49.

⁷⁴ Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 120.

Therefore, all of what is considered to be Scripture has been “God breathed” and carries equal weight and authority. This leaves nothing out in the cannon, as Philip Towner indicates, “the scope is extensive.”⁷⁵ It should also be noted that there is disagreement over where to place the word “is” within the text. “Given the whole verse, the missing verb is *esti* (“is”); the apostle expects readers to supply it as they read.”⁷⁶ If *ἐστὶ* is placed between *γραφή* and *θεόπνευστος*, then the sentence would read “All God breathed and profitable Scripture is for doctrine.” This placement would imply a distinction that only some Scriptures are God-breathed, while others are simply “profitable.” However, if *ἐστὶ* is placed after *θεόπνευστος*, the text reads “All Scripture is God breathed and profitable for doctrine.” This option is a more natural reading of the text and demonstrates that all Scriptures carries the authority of God’s decree.⁷⁷ In this way, the Scriptures themselves are self-attesting. As Grudem notes, “they cannot be “proved” to be God’s words by appeal to any higher authority. For if an appeal to some higher authority (say, historical accuracy or logical consistency) were used to prove that the Bible is God’s Word, the Bible itself would not be our highest or absolute authority.”⁷⁸

A second aspect about Scripture that Paul points out to Timothy is that of its practical and equipping nature. The word *ὠφέλιμος* is used by the apostle to denote the profitability or value of these writings. The usefulness of the Scriptures for Timothy is grounded in the fact that they are authoritative because they originate with God. Towner notes, “The statement on divine authority of every text of Scripture is really preliminary to the main topic of the verse that comes in the second predicate adjective. Inspiration is, in a sense, a platform in the argument about Scripture’s usefulness.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 306.

⁷⁶ Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 121.

⁷⁷ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 569.

⁷⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 68.

⁷⁹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 307.

Paul unfolds four practical elements that the Scriptures will aide Timothy and every believer in as they live out their faith. Each of the terms used by Paul is prefaced by the word *πρός*, or “for.” By doing this, the apostle is enumerating the individual importance of each item listed.⁸⁰ The first of these practical tools is that of *διδασκαλία*, or teaching. Teaching is also listed as one of the spiritual gifts given to believers making up the body of Christ (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28). Additionally, the term is listed as a qualification of an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:2. As a pastor, Timothy would be expected to teach systematically and with excellence the truth of God’s Word and correct doctrine. This would have been especially helpful to the young pastor as he dealt with false teachings. Lea and Griffin note, “Because of the prominence of heresy among his readers, Paul emphasized the importance of sound teaching.”⁸¹ The second practical use of Scripture listed is “for rebuke.” According to Towner, *ἐλεγχος* is a negative term that “covers a range of activities all related to the process of making someone aware of sin, which begins with the educative act designed to produce self-awareness of sin.”⁸² This instruction would have been particularly useful to Timothy as he was dealing the fallout of incorrect doctrine and those affected by it. Yarborough notes that the term “rebuke” is also listed in the pastoral duties of Titus in 1:9, 13; 2:15, as well as to Timothy.⁸³ The third practical use for the Scriptures listed is that of “correction.” While *ἐλεγχος* carries with it a negative connotation, *ἐπανόρθωσις* is positive in nature and meaning. “To correct” carries with it the idea of restoration of an error, whether it be sinful behavior or doctrinal practice.⁸⁴ Timothy’s ultimate goal for using church discipline was to restore the erring brother after repentance occurred. It should also be noted that *ἐπανόρθωσις* appears only here in the entire New

⁸⁰ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 307.

⁸¹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.

⁸² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 308.

⁸³ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 431.

⁸⁴ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

Testament.⁸⁵ The final practical tool Paul lists in this passage is that of “training in righteousness.” Training or *παιδεία*, is not found frequently in the New Testament, but does occur “over one hundred times in the LXX, especially in the wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs) and the prophets, (notably Jeremiah).”⁸⁶ It carries the idea of discipline and education, especially in the case of parents teaching their children the Scriptures.⁸⁷ Training in the Scriptures will produce righteousness not only in Timothy’s life but in his congregation as well. Yarborough asserts, “Scripture is a primary resource for inculcating the acts and habits that will reflect God’s own character (his “righteousness”) in relationships with his people.”⁸⁸

As a means of placing a capstone on Paul’s list of practical uses, he reveals the ultimate goal of them all: “That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” The term for man is *ἄνθρωπος*, and is certainly directed at Timothy, but is also applicable to all believers.⁸⁹ When one is immersed, trained in, and correctly applying the Scripture, he is complete or competent in them as the term *ἄρτιος* denotes. Guthrie writes, “The Word conveys the sense of being thoroughly prepared to face any situation.”⁹⁰ In addition to being competent in the Scriptures, Timothy will be equipped (*ἐξαρτίζω*) for every good work. This “good work” could apply to a range of ministerial activities or tasks that God called the young pastor to do. Towner adds, “As Paul has confronted obstinate challenges to or outright denials of his authority by means of applications of the OT text, so too must Timothy with confidence and skill.”⁹¹ This in turn would apply to all

⁸⁵ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 570.

⁸⁶ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 431.

⁸⁷ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

⁸⁸ Yarborough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 431.

⁸⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 571.

⁹⁰ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 216.

⁹¹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 309.

believers, living out their faith in the context of the local church and in the secular world as well.

Second Timothy 3:14–17 demonstrates that the Scriptures are essential for the Christian life. Believers will face many challenges as they are called to live out their faith before a lost world, and the Bible will prepare them to do so. Additionally, the local church has and will continue to face trials, problems, and divisions. It is to the Scriptures that leadership and the congregation as a whole must turn to, in order to respond effectively and maintain their mission. In both cases there must be an understanding that the Scriptures are directly from the mouth of God and carry the highest authority. Without a firm grasp of this reality, the believer will not be prepared and equipped to be a light in a dark world.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that Scripture must be the foundation upon which believers build their lives. An examination of the three representative texts (although more could be chosen—2 Pet 1:17–21; Ps 1:1–6; 2 Tim 3:14–17) have proven that the pages of Scripture are indeed trustworthy because they come directly from God, who is the creator and authority over all. Because of this authority and trustworthiness that is invested in the Bible, Christians can grow, mature, and be equipped for any situation they may face in this life. Additionally, the local church can have confidence and guidance to carry out the mission of the gospel, knowing that what they are doing is what God desires. The next chapter will focus on historical and practical issues related to the doctrine of Scripture. Specifically, chapter 3 will examine how over time a historically high view of Scripture diminished during the twentieth century, and the concerted efforts to recover it.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL FOUNDATIONS
FOR TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Besides this there are other very good reasons why the consent of the church should not be denied its due weight. Since the publication of Scripture, age after age agreed to obey it steadfastly and harmoniously. By countless wondrous means Satan with the whole world has tried either to oppress it or overturn it, to obscure and obliterate it utterly from the memory of men-yet, like the palm, it has risen ever higher and has remained unassailable.¹

These words were written by the great reformer, John Calvin, and perfectly describe human history in regard to the Scriptures. As one examines mankind's chronicles throughout time, there are those who obediently submitted themselves to the Word of God and grew in their Christian walk. These individuals cherished the value of the Scriptures and recognized that they were not just the words of mere men but were God-breathed commands from the creator. Conversely, there have also been those who rejected the Scriptures outright or sought to diminish their authority both inside and outside the church. These individuals do not accept the full weight of the Scriptures and their binding authority on all of creation. Nevertheless, as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah states, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever" (40:8).

This chapter will examine how the view of Scripture has changed over the centuries. The chapter will demonstrate that Christians traditionally held to a high view of Scripture and to the authority of the Bible. However, this historical view was tragically diminished beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This trajectory resulted in a surge of liberal theology and other threats to scriptural authority. In response to this new "low view of Scripture," there was a resurgence and recommitment to biblical

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics 21, 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.8.12.

inerrancy during the last half of the twentieth century, and a return to the position of Scripture. Additionally, this resurgence was propelled by proper hermeneutical methods that promoted a correct reading of Scripture. By examining how the Bible was viewed over these periods of time, believers will be able to see the historic position and responsibility of Christians to elevate the authority of the Scriptures and maintain its position.

The High View of Scriptural Authority in Church History

When examining the scriptural view of early Christians, one must begin with Jesus himself and those who followed him during his earthly ministry. As Timothy Paul Jones notes, “As Christians, we take our canonical cues from Jesus and his apostles.”² So what did Christ and the apostles think about the Scriptures? By the time of Jesus’s incarnation, there was already an established three-part canon of the Hebrew Bible: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.³ Jesus states in Luke 24:44, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Luke continues, “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). In this account Jesus was teaching his disciples that the Old Testament Scripture was trustworthy, pointed to his work, and was authenticated by his bodily presence. Additionally, Jesus often stated the phrase, “It is written” when referring to the Old Testament. In each of these occasions, Christ was pointing to the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures carried an authority that was greater than any tradition or opinion that had been given by teachers.

² Timothy P. Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015), 59.

³ For further discussion of the Old Testament Canon, see Stephen Dempster, “The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 181–202.

Apostolic View of Scripture

In addition to affirming the authority of the Old Testament, Jesus also bestowed a similar affirmation upon the apostles. In John 14–16, Jesus promises that after his departure, the Holy Spirit will arrive to “teach them all things,” as well as bring this teaching to their remembrance as needed. Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would speak with authority and power, and the apostles were to bear witness of this to others. This authority manifested itself in preaching, teaching, and the writing of New Testament documents. These ancient writings, composed after the ascension of Jesus, were just as authoritative as the Old Testament. As the apostle Paul noted in Ephesians 2:19–20, the church itself and the historic Christian faith rest upon the teachings of Christ and the apostles.

As noted in the previous chapter, Peter regarded the epistles of Paul to be authoritative as well, and even called them Scripture or *γραφή*. Michael Kruger notes, “Given that 2 Peter begins with a very clear claim to apostolic authority (1:1), there is little reason to think its readers would have seen it as any less authoritative than Paul’s letters (particularly given Peter’s status in early Christianity).”⁴ In addition to this recognition of scriptural authority based upon authorship was the expectation of transmission and obedience. First Thessalonians states, “I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers” (5:27). Likewise, Colossians contains similar expectations about being read publicly in gatherings of worship (4:16). Finally, this admonition is found in John’s apocalypse: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near” (Rev 1:3). Clearly, the apostles expected their writings to be equal with the Old Testament, to be read in gathered worship, and to be obeyed. This affirmation is also clearly seen in 1 Thessalonians 2. In this passage, the apostle Paul was praising the church of Thessalonica for their willingness to recognize that the message

⁴ Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 204.

they heard was divine in nature and origin. In verse 13, Paul wrote, “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.” Michael Kruger provides a summary insight of how ancient believers thought: “Our earliest Christian writings portray the apostles as having the very authority of Christ Himself.”⁵

Patristic View of Scripture

After the apostles passed from the scene of history, the church was then guided by a group of men that would be later known as the church fathers. Some of these early leaders were disciples of the apostles themselves and believed the Scriptures held the highest authority for Christians. Clement, a bishop of Rome near the end of the first century, affirms that the New Testament was to be obeyed and respected just as the other Scriptures. In 1 Clement he writes, “The apostles received the Gospel for us from the lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ was sent from God. The Christ is therefore from God and the apostles from Christ” (1 Clem 42:1–2). Additionally, he adds, “Take up the epistle of that blessed apostle, Paul. To be sure he sent you a letter in the spirit concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos” (1 Clem 47:1–3). Michael Kruger notes, “Such statements leave little doubt that he (Clement) would have regarded apostolic writings as poising the very authority of Christ Himself.”⁶

In addition to the writings of Clement, the church has the witness of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John.⁷ As noted by Kruger, Polycarp affirmed the authority of the Scriptures several times in his letter to the Philippians. Referring to the Pauline epistles, he stated, “If you carefully peer into them, you will be able to be built up

⁵ Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 67.

⁶ Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 198.

⁷ Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 193.

in the faith that was given you” (Phil 3:2).⁸ As a bishop writing to this group of believers, Polycarp was admonishing the church to read the epistles and apply them so that they might grow in their faith. In the same letter he states, “As it is written in these Scriptures, ‘Be angry and do not sin and do not let the sun go down on your anger’” (Phil 12:1). This statement comes directly from Ephesians 4:26, which is rooted in Psalm 4:4. This citation is important because it indicates that Polycarp held that the apostolic writings were worthy of the title of Scripture and ought to be deeply embedded in the lives of all believers.⁹

Moving into the second century, one of the most profound voices of the church was that of the apologist known as Justin Martyr. Justin also held to the view that the Scriptures were powerful and profitable for Christian growth. Quoting from Justin’s work, *The Dialogue Trypho*, Kruger provides insight into Justin’s convictions: “I shall prove to you as you stand, that we have not believed empty fables, or words without any foundation, but words filled with the Spirit of God, and big with power, and flourishing with Grace”¹⁰ (Dial 9.1). Additionally, Justin stated in reference to the Scriptures, “for they possess a terrible power in themselves, and are sufficient to inspire those who turn aside from the path of rectitude with awe; while the sweetest rest is afforded those who make a diligent practice of them”¹¹ (Dial 8.2). Justin indeed believed the Scriptures were to be central in the lives of Christians, and that could be seen clearly in what he instructed concerning the worship service. Alan Kreider writes, “According to Justin, the community’s weekly worship begins with the reading of ‘the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets.’”¹² This reading was followed by an exposition of the

⁸ Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 194.

⁹ Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 195.

¹⁰ Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 132.

¹¹ Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 132.

¹² Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 192.

Scriptures by the “president of the community” and an admonishment to follow the teachings of them.¹³ Kreider notes, “According to Justin, in the *dia logu* (talk) the president exposit the Scriptures so that the believers will imitate them, allowing the Bible to shape their habitus and behavior.”¹⁴

As a final example of the patristic era’s view of Scripture, one must consider Augustine. Born in AD 354, this African bishop is acclaimed as the greatest among the church fathers, leaving over one hundred books, five hundred sermons, and two hundred letters for Christians to read and study.¹⁵ In one of his letters to Jerome,¹⁶ Augustine affirms that he, like the other church fathers, held to a high view of Scripture: “The fact that the truth of the Divine Scriptures, so necessary for building up our faith, has been handed down to our memory not on the authority of any chance writers, but of the apostles themselves, and has been received with the sanction of the highest canonical authority.”¹⁷ Augustine himself was a staunch defender of the inerrancy of the Scriptures and made them the focal point of his teaching. Regarding the education of Christian doctrine, he writes, “The student who fears God, earnestly seeks his will in the Holy Scriptures.”¹⁸ While some might disagree that Augustine held to the “modern definition” of inerrancy, there can be no doubt he believed the Scriptures were without error. In the same letter to Jerome, he writes,

¹³ David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 47.

¹⁴ Kreider, *The Patient Ferment*, 192.

¹⁵ Earle Edwin Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 139.

¹⁶ Jerome was also a Church Father, and his greatest work was translating the Latin version of the Bible from the Greek Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible. This work (The Vulgate) was completed in AD 405 and became widely used as the only official Bible of the Roman Catholic church until recent times. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 137.

¹⁷ Augustine, *Letter 82*, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons, in *The Fathers of the Church: St. Augustine: Letters*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1951), 394.

¹⁸ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 68.

I have learned to give respect and honor to the canonical books of Scripture. Regarding these books alone, I most firmly believe that their authors were completely free from error. If in these writings I am confused by anything which appears to me opposed to the truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it.¹⁹

Reformation View of Scripture

The Reformation was a time of returning to the authority of Scripture. The medieval period that preceded it was fraught with many problems and had marred the church. With the increase of wealth and the appointment of an emperor in AD 800, the church had become interlocked with the state and was an integral part of the “Holy Roman Empire.”²⁰ Another problem that faced the church was that of tradition versus Scripture. While Scripture had always been the highest authority for the believer, the church had adopted a position of what has often been called Tradition 2. Matthew Barrett notes, “This view holds that Scripture is not sufficient in and of itself, nor the sole infallible authority and source of divine revelation. Scripture must now share the stage with church tradition, its equal in many respects.”²¹ Due to these problems and other abuses of authority within the church, the stage was set for some type of revival and return to the Scriptures. It should also be noted that just before the Reformation, there was a period known as the Renaissance. This era (1350–1650) took place in Europe and was driven by a rediscovery of treasures from the Classical past.²² For Christians during this period, the “treasure to rediscover” was a return to the original Greek text in which the New Testament was written.²³

¹⁹ Augustine, *Letters*, 394.

²⁰ Timothy P. Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, rev. ed. (Torrance, CA: Rose, 2009), 68.

²¹ Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone—The Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters*, Five Solas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 46.

²² Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 252.

²³ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 105.

The name most associated with the Reformation period and a return to scriptural authority was Martin Luther. While teaching at Wittenberg, Germany, he began studying the original languages of the Bible. During this period he became convinced that the only true authority could be found in the Scriptures alone.²⁴ Church historian Earl Cairns notes, “From that time on, *sola Fide*, or justification by faith, *sola Scriptura*, the idea that the Scriptures are the only authority for sinful people in seeking salvation, and *sola Sacerdos*, the priesthood of the believers became the main points in his theological system.”²⁵ It was at this point on October 31, 1517, that Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of Castle Church, condemning the practices and abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther was condemned by papal leaders and summoned to appear before a council meeting called the Diet of Worms. When asked to recant what he had written or believed, he stated, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God, help me.”²⁶ These examples were certainly not the only instances of Luther affirming the authority of Scripture. When referring to the church fathers in his treatise, *The Misuse of the Mass* (1521), Luther wrote, “[They] have erred, as men will; therefore I am ready to trust them only when they give me evidence for their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred.”²⁷ As Matthew Barrett notes, “Luther did not use the term inerrancy in his writings or in debate, yet the concept is present throughout his thinking on the matter. If Scripture is not inerrant, then *sola Scriptura* is without a foundation.”²⁸

A second reformer to consider regarding the authority of Scripture is Huldrych Zwingli. Originally a Swiss priest, Zwingli became discontent with the abuses of

²⁴ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 282.

²⁵ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 282.

²⁶ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 109.

²⁷ Martin Luther, *The Misuse of the Mass*, 1521, quoted in Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 40.

²⁸ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 40.

indulgences²⁹ within the Roman Catholic Church. On January 29, 1523, Zwingli challenged a well-known Catholic theologian named Johannes Fabri to a debate over his (Zwingli) *Sixty-Seven Articles*, or “confession of faith.” In this debate the issue of biblical authority became the main focal point.³⁰ Zwingli appealed to Scripture and claimed that it alone was not only free from error but carried the highest authority.³¹

From his famous sermon *The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God*, Zwingli stated,

When I was younger, I gave myself overmuch to human teaching, like others of my day, and when about seven or eight years ago I undertook to devote myself entirely to the Scriptures. I was always prevented by philosophy and theology. But eventually I came to the point where led by the Word and Spirit of God I saw the need to set aside all these things and to learn the doctrine of God direct from his own Word.³²

Commenting on this sermon, Daniel Augsburger writes, “In this passage, Zwingli expresses several ideas of great importance for him and the reformed tradition. First, he holds to a radical concept of *sola Scriptura*, with a frank and a thoroughgoing contempt for teachings that are of human origin.”³³ Clearly, Zwingli believed they were above error and were divine in origin.

A final Reformer to examine regarding scriptural authority is John Calvin. Considered by some to be the “greatest of the Reformers,” he was a French theologian that began his journey as a “wondering student” of humanistic and legal studies.³⁴ After being introduced to Protestant theology sometime around 1533, Calvin adopted the ideas

²⁹ Cairns writes, “Indulgences were created to free one from the satisfaction normally necessary in the sacrament of penance, by his emphasis on the availability of the extra merits of Christ and the saints.” Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 232.

³⁰ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 53.

³¹ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 53.

³² Daniel A. Augsburger, “Huldrych Zwingli and the Reformed Tradition,” *Andrews University Press* 23, no. 3 (1985): 228.

³³ Augsburger, “Huldrych Zwingli,” 228.

³⁴ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 302.

of the Reformation and called for a similar movement as Luther did in Germany.³⁵ This angered the French authorities and forced the young theologian to leave the University of Paris for Basel, Switzerland. In this exile Calvin wrote his greatest work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which was the first systematic summary of Protestant theology.³⁶ Commenting on the authority of Scripture, he wrote, “Thus the highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it.”³⁷ By this statement Calvin was affirming that Scripture’s greatest authority was in its divine origin of God. On the necessity of Scripture he also wrote,

Now daily oracles are not sent from heaven, for it pleased the Lord to hallow his truth to everlasting remembrance in the Scriptures alone [cf. John 5:39]. Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard. This matter is very well worth treating more fully and weighing more carefully.³⁸

Like Luther, Calvin held to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* and believed the Bible to be above any church decree or confession of faith. In Calvin’s assessment the church was under the Scripture’s authority and tradition was never to be equal to or exceed it. In affirming truth he wrote, “But such wranglers are neatly refuted by just one word of the apostle. He testifies that the church is ‘built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles’ [Eph. 2:20]. If the teaching of the prophets is the foundation, this must have had authority before the church began to exist.”³⁹ Beyond doubt, Calvin, as well as the other Reformers mentioned, held to the highest view of scriptural authority. In their minds, the church had no greater guide but the inerrant, inspired, infallible Word of God.

This survey of Christian history is by no means exhaustive or indicative of every single believer during the past two thousand years. This section provided examples of

³⁵ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 302.

³⁶ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 111.

³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.7.4.

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.7.1.

³⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.7.2.

prominent teachers, theologians, and church leaders as they relate to the issue of scriptural authority. Although a summation, this survey does show adequately that there has been a consistently high view of Scripture held by believers over the course of church history. This view of Scripture is perhaps best summarized by great seventeenth century Puritan and theologian John Owen: “Thus is it [Scripture] from God—entirely from him. As to the doctrine contained in it, and the words wherein that doctrine is delivered, it is wholly his; What that speaks, he speaks himself. He speaks in it and by it; and so, it is vested with all the moral authority of God over his creatures.”⁴⁰

Enlightenment and Liberal Theology’s Negative Impact on Scripture

As noted in the previous section, the historical view of the church and believers was that Scripture held the highest authority in all matters. While this pattern was sustained for much of church history, the seventeenth to the twentieth century saw a dramatic shift in biblical authority. This low view of Scripture, however, did not suddenly appear when the date changed on the calendar. Rather several factors led to this view being adopted. To understand why scriptural authority was so negatively impacted during this period, it is necessary to examine events and influences that preceded it.

Enlightenment Thinkers and Thought

The Enlightenment period (1560–1780) was a dramatic shift in humanity’s thinking and reason from previous generations. As Russ Bush and Tom Nettles state, “Christianity had dominated the earlier centuries (that was now being called the Dark Ages). As men became ‘enlightened,’ said the philosophers, reason would gradually liberate their minds. The supernaturalist and authoritative mentality of earlier centuries

⁴⁰ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 186.

rapidly gave way to a more scientific (naturalistic) and individualistic way of thinking.”⁴¹ One of the most pivotal figures from this period was René Descartes (1596–1650). Often referred to as the father of “modern philosophy,” Descartes defined reality in terms that could be clearly observed rather than what was probable⁴² Author and theologian Stephen Wellum states,

Instead of starting with God as the groundwork for his philosophy, Descartes stripped away all of his beliefs about God, the world and the self. He was left with only one truth that he could not doubt; he existed as a thinking subject. From that starting point, then, Descartes’ famous cogito ergo sum (“I think, therefore I am”) served as the foundation for building knowledge in every field.⁴³

This perspective, as Wellum observes, radically changed humanity’s view from the divine to the self as the center of knowledge and reality.

Another prominent figure of the Enlightenment period was Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Like Descartes, Kant grounded all knowledge and reality around what a human being could experience. Wellum describes his approach: “The human mind is not equipped to grapple with anything beyond the range of the immediate experience and attempts to do so inevitably results in irresolvable contradictions and antinomies.”⁴⁴ The things that were “beyond the range of immediate experience” became known as “noumena data,” juxtaposed to the “phenomena” that man can experience. This approach would naturally exclude God since man cannot experience him with his senses.⁴⁵ Cairns notes, “There is no place for Christ, the God-man, in Kant’s system. Man with his free will and his immanent sense of what is right becomes the creator of a religion in which he develops

⁴¹ L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. and expanded ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 163.

⁴² Millard J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise & Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 51.

⁴³ Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 50.

⁴⁴ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 51.

⁴⁵ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 419.

the morality inherent in himself.”⁴⁶ This logic naturally extended to the Scriptures and their authority. The area of theology was not the only one to feel the shockwaves of Kant’s proposals. Bush and Nettles write, “This ‘critical,’ or ‘analytical,’ approach to truth and knowledge resulted in the destruction of time-honored principles not only in religion but in political, social, and scientific thought as well. For Kant, Criticism and analysis were the first steps toward true enlightenment.”⁴⁷

Shortly after the impact of Kant, another intellectual of the Enlightenment, Fredrick Schleiermacher (1768–1834), rose to prominence. As Stanley J. Grenz and Roger Olson note, “He is to Christian theology what Newton is to physics, what Freud is to psychology, and what Darwin is to biology. That is to say, he may not be the absolute authority, but he was a trailblazer and trendsetter, the one thinker subsequent theologians cannot ignore.”⁴⁸ Schleiermacher was not concerned with creeds or historical facts, such as the Resurrection of Jesus, but instead man’s emotions or feelings as the focus of religious experience.⁴⁹ This meant humanity was freed from the historical revelation of Scripture, and the religious experience was subject to one’s cultivated “dependance upon God.” Because of this view, he is often referred to as the “founder of liberal theology.”⁵⁰ Roger Olson explains, “Something new appeared with Schleiermacher. What he birthed was a new species, not authentic Christianity. Later liberals stand on Schleiermacher’s shoulders or, to change metaphors, follow in the path he carved out.”⁵¹ From these early roots of the Enlightenment one can easily see how historic Christianity was subverted

⁴⁶ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 419.

⁴⁷ Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 164.

⁴⁸ Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, paperback ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 39.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 155.

⁵⁰ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 420.

⁵¹ Roger E. Olson, *Against Liberal Theology: Putting the Brakes on Progressive Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 19.

while man's reason was elevated. Where Christianity and Scripture were at odds with human rationale, Christianity was accommodated, and not man's reason. Speaking of liberal theologians, Olson again notes, "What stands out about all of them is their commitment to reconstructing Christian beliefs in terms of modernity, the largely secular western zeitgeist ('spirit of the age') growing out of the enlightenment and the scientific revolution."⁵² At this point the divide between the historical bedrock in which Scriptures were anchored was becoming separated from the "religious experience of Christianity." According to this viewpoint, the Bible, then, becomes more of a record of the human action and reflection of an experience with God. J. I. Packer comments regarding this belief: "Scripture must be viewed, not as a divinely given revelation, but as a by-product of the religious experience of the Hebrews; a record not so much of what God has said and done as of what some men thought He had said and done."⁵³

Biblical and Historical Criticism

As a result of Schleiermacher's new focus away from the historical revelation of the Scriptures, a process emerged known as "Biblical Criticism." This was a method used to reconstruct sources that the biblical authors might have used in writing the text.⁵⁴ However, the credibility of the Scriptures and their accuracy was questioned and rejected in the process of investigation. Wellum states, "For the first time since Constantine, Christian doctrine was derided openly during the Enlightenment."⁵⁵ The first real critical examinations of the Scriptures were aimed at the Gospels in the later part of the eighteenth century and struck at the heart of their authenticity. Wellum continues, "These "enlightened" hermeneutics began to criticize the reliability of the Gospels, focusing on

⁵² Olson, *Against Liberal Theology*, 21.

⁵³ J. I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles* (Grand Rapids W. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 149.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 157.

⁵⁵ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 55.

difficulties with the miracle stories and questioning the fulfillment of prophecies, how the New Testament authors used the Old Testament, and discrepancies in the Gospels.”⁵⁶

At the same time biblical criticism was gaining traction, the historical critical method began to emerge. Scholars began subjecting the Scriptures to historical and critical analysis. Wellum writes, “Taken as a whole, the historical-critical method functions on the basis of three Enlightenment principles: (1) the principle of methodological doubt; (2) the principle of analogy; and (3) the principle of correlation.”⁵⁷ One major proponent of this method was a German theologian named Ernst Troeltsch (1864–1923). Contrasting the traditional view of Scripture against the new historical critical method, he writes,

This method is fundamentally and absolutely opposed to the historical method. Its essential characteristic is the possession of an authority that avoids the overall interconnectedness of history, analogy with other historical events, and everything historical criticism has to say along with the uncertainty of its results. It wants to bind men to individual historical facts that claim to dissolve all historical analogies. It can contrive this binding power because its facts are different from all normal history and can neither be established nor shaken by criticism. Rather they are conformed by a miraculous tradition and inner seal of verification in the heart.⁵⁸

With a denial of historical accuracy and miracles of the Bible, a movement began within academics to separate the Jesus of Christianity from the “historical Jesus.” This movement developed into the “quest for the historical Jesus.”⁵⁹ In this view, the historical Jesus was not the Son of God, but rather a doer of good deeds and teacher of ethics as well as social justice. Cairns notes, “Some theologians who adopt critical views of the New Testament, consider that the essence of the gospel is in the ethical teachings of Jesus and that Paul changed the simple ethical religion of Jesus into a redemptive religion.”⁶⁰ Since the Scriptures were men’s ideas about who Jesus was, or what they

⁵⁶ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 55.

⁵⁷ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 58.

⁵⁸ Ernst Troeltsch, “On the Historical and Dogmatic Methods in Theology (1898),” trans. Jack Forstman, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1913), 2:728–53.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 157.

⁶⁰ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 422.

themselves believed about their experience with God, then the Scriptures could contain error and were therefore not the ultimate authority over man. Instead, it was man who now demanded that the Scriptures conform to his analysis and standards. Combined, these efforts reduced the Bible to the same status as any other piece of literature, but with even more skepticism.

Darwinism and the Bible

Another factor that greatly diminished the high view of Scripture can be attributed to Charles Darwin (1809–1882). Darwin, who did not have an academic degree in biology but, ironically, in theology, became enthralled with naturalism.⁶¹ While on a five-year sea voyage, he noted changes in certain animal species and plant life in the South Pacific Islands. Concluding that these changes occurred from one generation to the next, he theorized that this long generational change could explain how man was formed first from molecules and then into a complex organism.⁶² In 1859, he published his *Origin of Species* explaining his theory of evolution and findings. Additionally, Darwin applied these principles to human beings directly in his work, *The Descent of Man*. In this publication he made the case that humanity has a common ancestral link with animal species.⁶³ Interestingly enough, naturalistic evolution was not an invention in the nineteenth century but could be found even in the ancient world. Bush and Nettles write, “Modern Darwinism is scarcely different in its basic worldview from the cosmology of the pre–Socratic Greeks. If anything, the Greeks were more dynamic, less mechanical, and more open to the possible divinity of the universe than was Darwin.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Naturalism is the view that the “natural” universe, the universe of matter and energy, is all there really is. This rules out God, so naturalism is atheistic. It rules out other spiritual beings as well as God, so naturalism is materialistic. Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 814.

⁶² Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 173.

⁶³ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 422.

⁶⁴ Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 174.

Despite the leap back into paganism, the “modern and enlightened man” found Darwin’s conclusions very appealing and began being adopted by intellectuals and even biblical scholars. This new view applied to God and the Bible, reduced them to only by-products of man’s religious conscious and his quest for truth.⁶⁵ As this naturalistic theology worked its way through biblical scholarship, the history presented in the Bible became, as Bush and Nettles state, “radically evolutionary.”⁶⁶

As with biblical criticism, the Scriptures were analyzed against this new standard. To hold to a view of a young creation, the sun standing still, a virgin birth, and Jesus’s resurrection were considered outlandish according to the modern standards of science.⁶⁷ This change, however, was not limited to the miracles of the Bible but the composition of the text itself. Whereas before the Old and New Testament’s were interpreted as a whole, they were now separated according to man’s progressive journey as he sought truth. The Old Testament was seen as outdated and primitive, whereas the New Testament was more advanced.⁶⁸ In the same manner as biblical criticism, Jesus was reduced to a moral and ethical teacher, and the New Testament reflected those teachings. Bush and Nettles state, “The cross could no longer be viewed as a substitutionary, blood sacrifice. Rather for modern Christians the cross of Christ should be reinterpreted as a significant, moral example of self-giving love.”⁶⁹ As Schleiermacher had proposed, Christianity was becoming more about an experience with God, even if what

⁶⁵ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 423.

⁶⁶ Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 174.

⁶⁷ Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 175.

⁶⁸ Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 175.

⁶⁹ Bush and Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, 175.

the Scriptures said was not true. This theological mindset would later fully develop into what became known as the social gospel⁷⁰ during the twentieth century.

Thus, due to the influence of Enlightenment principles and thinkers, Darwinism, biblical criticism, and liberal theology, the view of Scripture at the beginning of the twentieth century was very low. Man had become the authority on all things and even the God-breathed Scriptures were to be subjected to his analysis and opinion. Because of liberal theology, the low view of Scripture flourished, and many denominations succumbed to the spirit of the age. This, however, was not the historical Christianity that believers had held for centuries. J. Gresham Machen explains, “Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life. Liberalism on the other hand is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men.”⁷¹ If biblical Christianity was to be recovered, then a high view of Scripture had to be restored to its place of preeminence.

Inerrancy and Hermeneutical Methods in Relation to Scripture

While the diminishment of scriptural authority was driven by the academic community, the view certainly did not stay there. As noted in the previous section, liberal churches began drifting away from the historic tenets of Christianity. Instead of the standard of truth grounded in Scripture, the believer’s subjective experience was exalted above all. Instead of the unchanging message of the text guiding truth, the reader and his or her reason was the ultimate authority. As this mindset became more prevalent among people, believing Christians in the spirit of the Reformers of old sought to reclaim the high view of Scripture that had eroded.

⁷⁰ The term “social gospel,” with its present association with theologically liberal, moderately reformist Protestant social thought, came into use about 1900 to describe the Protestant effort to apply biblical principles to the growing problems of the emerging urban-industrial America during the decades between the Civil War and World War I. Equally significant in the unfolding identity of Protestant social Christianity in the progressive era were the large-scale defections from historic Christian orthodoxy that resulted from developments in the science and biblical studies. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1118.

⁷¹ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (n.p.: Ichthus, 2020), 83.

Fundamentals and the Rise of Evangelicals

As the twentieth century began to dawn, conservative believers were poised to meet the challenge of liberal theology. Timothy Paul Jones notes,

One of the wisest and most balanced responses to the modern age arose at a Bible conference in Niagara, New York. There, several conservative believers in Jesus Christ listed five truths that are basic (or, “fundamental”) to the Christian faith. These five truths were: Jesus was uniquely divine, He was born of a virgin, He died as a sacrifice for sin, He will come again, and the Scriptures contain no errors; the Bible is “inerrant.”⁷²

Between the years of 1910 and 1915, a group of conservative authors published a twelve-volume set expanding on these tenants called, *The Fundamentals*.⁷³ Believers holding to these five basic tenants of the Christian faith were dubbed “fundamentalists.” One of these authors, B. B. Warfield, was a staunch defender of the authority of Scripture. He comments on the influence of the Holy Spirit’s work in writing the Bible: “That it is such an influence as makes the words written under its guidance, the words of God; by which is meant to be affirmed an absolute infallibility, admitting no degrees whatsoever extending to the very word, and to all the words. So that every part of Holy Writ is thus held alike infallible true in all tis statements, of whatever kind.”⁷⁴ As a result of his work and others, in 1910, the Presbyterian Church USA required all candidates to adhere to these beliefs before ordination. This new policy was used as a vetting process to safeguard against liberal candidates who agreed to standards and then taught the opposite once in a pastorate.⁷⁵

In response to the growing number of “fundamentalists, liberals launched a counterattack in the form of a sermon. In 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of New York City First Presbyterian Church, delivered a message entitled “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” Fosdick used the text of Acts 5 where the Pharisees were

⁷² Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 162.

⁷³ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 110.

⁷⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R 2020), 420.

⁷⁵ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 111.

persecuting the apostles by their legalistic standards in contrast with the gospel of Christ. Eric C. Smith writes, “Fosdick naturally cast his own modernist party in the role of Peter and John, leaving the fundamentalists to play the Pharisees: cranky, obstructionist, and obsessed with doctrine.”⁷⁶ Fosdick’s goal was to promote tolerance of beliefs instead of rigidly adhering to core doctrines of the Scriptures as being a requisite for service or a measure of orthodoxy. This sermon permeated its way through the Presbyterian Church and other mainline denominations and generated battles between fundamentalist and modernist for years to come.⁷⁷ It became clear as time passed that modernist had the upper hand as leading seminaries of the mainline denominations were controlled by modernist. These defeats lead to a unique development among fundamentalists as a whole. Grenz and Olson note, “Many conservatives withdrew from the mainline denominations and formed alternative ecclesiastical structures, Bible colleges and seminaries.”⁷⁸ While this separation did preserve doctrinal purity, it allowed for liberalism to flourish in mainline denominations⁷⁹ and further removed conservative Christians from society and the public square.

Though the “fundamentalist” seemed defeated and labeled as banished from society, the concern for reclaiming the authority of Scripture continued to grow. This appetite for a return to biblical authority opened the door for a new group of believers to emerge in the mid-twentieth century. Christian theologians and thinkers who took up the charge of defending classical protestant orthodoxy became known as “evangelicals.” Chad Owen Brand defines evangelicalism as a “movement within generally North American and British circles that emphasize the classic Protestant doctrines of the authority and

⁷⁶ Eric C. Smith, “1922: Northern Baptist Lose Their Confession,” *Southern Seminary Magazine* 90, no. 2 (2022): 29.

⁷⁷ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 111.

⁷⁸ Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 287.

⁷⁹ Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 287.

reliability of Scripture, the triune God, and the historical second coming of Christ, and which promotes the need for fervent evangelism, a conversion experience and a life of discipleship before God.”⁸⁰ These believers were similar to fundamentalists but unique as well, especially when it came to the public square. Grenz and Olson explain, “Evangelicals have generally defended the same basic theological system as fundamentalists. Rather, the chief point of difference is one of spirit or mood. In contrast to the separatistic, nonengagement stance that fundamentalism had come to adopt, evangelicals sought to enter into discussion with contemporary theology.”⁸¹

In this new era of evangelicalism, one voice became a rallying call for Christians to not only believe but to make intelligent theological arguments and to articulate them well. Carl F. Henry, a doctoral graduate of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, devoted his life to writing and defending the theological tenants of the historic Christian faith. Chief among these was the doctrine of Scripture. Henry states, “The doctrine of the Bible controls all other doctrines of the Christian faith.”⁸² In relation to the commitment of the Scriptures, he believed that the Bible is divinely inspired as well as inerrant. Grenz and Olson note, “He saw these two dimensions of the doctrine of Scripture intimately related. Inspiration asserts that God is the ultimate author of Scripture, with the result that the divine revelation in the Bible is free from error.”⁸³ Thinkers like Henry gave new fervor to conservative Christians to affirm the authority of Scripture and its inerrancy. This renewed commitment, however, would not go unanswered by modernist liberal theologians.

⁸⁰ Chad Owen Brand, “Defining Evangelicalism,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 283.

⁸¹ Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 288.

⁸² Carl F. H. Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 138.

⁸³ Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 293.

Battle for Inerrancy and the Chicago Statement

One of the greatest champions and hopes for evangelicals in the mid-twentieth century was Fuller Theological Seminary, in Pasadena, California. Founded in 1947, this institution promised to be a middle road between those in the fundamentalist camp and modernist liberals.⁸⁴ As Matthew Barrett notes, “Ockenga (the first president of the school) recruited standout professors: Carl F. H. Henry, Everett Harrison, Wilbur Smith, and Harold Lindsell made up the first faculty and drew in students.”⁸⁵ In addition to these evangelical professors, the seminary boasted one major asset that made it stand out among institutions of the period—it held to inerrancy. George Marsden writes, “Fullers’ founding statement on Scripture read: ‘The books which form the canon of the Old and New Testaments as originally given are plenary inspired and free from all error in the part. These books constitute the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.’”⁸⁶ It should also be noted that another major defender of biblical inerrancy was formed during this time, known as the Evangelical Theological Society.⁸⁷ This group of pastors, scholars, and educators stood alongside Fuller in its defense of inerrancy and was key in reclaiming the high view of Scripture. With this commitment to biblical authority and a solid faculty behind it, Fuller Seminary seemed poised to be a staunch bulwark against the erosion of the high view of Scripture. However, this vision was shattered in the 1960s as the school began to change its views regarding the inerrancy of Scripture. Professors believed that the term was too rigid and could not be applied to the Bible. Daniel Fuller, professor of hermeneutics at the school, stated that there were “errors

⁸⁴ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 68.

⁸⁵ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 118.

⁸⁶ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 113.

⁸⁷ The Evangelical Theological Society was formed in 1949, and played a major role in bringing about the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 486.

which cannot be explained by the original autographs. It is simply not historically feasible to say that these errors would disappear if we had the autographs.”⁸⁸

To maintain the seminary’s status as an “evangelical” school, professors Jack Rodgers and Donald McKim, sought to redefine the meaning of infallibility and explain away inerrancy. According to the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, which is not a theological work, the term “inerrant” means: “1. Incapable of erring; infallible. 2. Containing no errors. Likewise, the term infallible means: 1. Incapable of erring. 2. Incapable of failing; certain. 3. (Roman Catholic) Incapable of error in expounding doctrine on faith or morals.”⁸⁹ While both terms share basically the same meaning, it seems that Rogers and McKim wanted to zero in on the third range of meaning in what has been described as “limited infallibility.”⁹⁰ It should be noted that this range of meaning is used within the context of Roman Catholicism and often refers to both the Scriptures and the deliverance of the pope or *ex cathedra*.⁹¹

Rogers and McKim sought to re-define infallibility in regard to Scripture to only refer to matters of salvation and ethical/ moral living. They argued that the historic position of the church was that God had “accommodated” revelation to human beings for them to be able to comprehend it. In doing so, God allowed various errors, and that extended to science, history, and even doctrinal matters.⁹² John D. Woodbridge writes in critique of their proposal: “They argued that the biblical authors wrote infallibly on matters of faith and practice, but they could and did err on occasion in statements that touched upon scientific, geographical, and historical matters, as judged by modern standards of

⁸⁸ Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 119.

⁸⁹ *American Heritage College Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 695.

⁹⁰ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 109.

⁹¹ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 168.

⁹² Jack Bartlett Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 10.

measurement.”⁹³ Additionally, the two professors, contended that the inerrancy of Scripture was an invention by Protestant scholasticism in the seventeenth and nineteenth century, and that these scholars were reading it back into Scripture.⁹⁴ Woodbridge along with other conservatives, argued that Rogers and McKim were reading liberal scholars like Karl Barth back into the reformers and the church fathers by their approach.⁹⁵ In doing so, Rogers and McKim were subjecting the text to academic standards in which the Bible and other ancient documents were never intended to meet.

As a continued attack on the authority of Scripture, a group of over three hundred evangelicals came together to address the issue in what became known as the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. This group crossed various denominational lines and had as its objective to make a public and bold statement regarding the inerrancy of the Scriptures.⁹⁶ The result of this meeting was a document that was produced in 1978 called the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. From this statement, one find these words about the Bible: “Being wholly and verbally God given, Scripture is without error or fault in all of its teaching, no less about what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual’s lives.”

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was pivotal in outlining what evangelicals meant when they said the Bible was “without error.” Timothy Paul Jones notes that, according to this statement, “Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and

⁹³ John D. Woodbridge and Kenneth S. Kantzer, *Biblical Authority: Infallibility and Inerrancy in the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 20.

⁹⁴ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 121.

⁹⁵ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 122.

⁹⁶ Barrett, *God’s Word Alone*, 127.

achieving that measure of focused truth which its authors aimed.”⁹⁷ This coming together of evangelical authors, scholars, and pastors was a major step in restoring the high view of the Scriptures among biblical scholars and those in the pew on Sundays.

Hermeneutical Methods That Promote a High View of Scripture

Although a commitment to inerrancy was pivotal in the quest to restore the high view of Scripture, a proper interpretation of the Bible was necessary as well. While liberal theologians focused on the morality of Christian Scriptures and interpreting them through the modern context, proper hermeneutics focuses on the original intended meaning of the text, in its historical and canonical setting. While the discipline of hermeneutics, or interpretation of the Bible, covers many topics, at least two major faucets directly affect the proper reading of Scripture. These two areas are the grammatical-historical method, and the canonical reading of Scripture as a whole.

The first of these areas, the grammatical-historical method, focuses on authorial intent, the original audience of the text, and any cultural elements that may be touched on by the text.⁹⁸ This means that the interpreter has the responsibility to carefully study the time period and customs of the day, be acquainted with the biblical writer, and grasp to whom and why he was writing. Many New Testament documents were occasional letters written to specific churches, whereas others, were composed for general circulation among believers. In becoming familiar with these tenets, the interpreter can determine the proper meaning that God wanted to communicate. This method elevates the text and recognizes that God sovereignly superintended these documents, and they are ultimately from him. Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays explain, “If you believe the Bible is God’s revelatory word to you and that the Scriptures function as communication from God to you, you should

⁹⁷ Jones, *Christian History Made Easy*, 179.

⁹⁸ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 100.

interpret the Bible by looking for meaning that God, the author, intended. Your interpretive question should be: What is the meaning God intended in this text.”⁹⁹

The second part of the historical-grammatical approach deals with the language the biblical text was written in and its unique mechanics. While the Old Testament was written in Hebrew/Aramaic, the New Testament was composed in Koine Greek. This poses a challenge to the modern interpreter since most Bibles are printed today in only one language for the ease of readability. This again means the interpreter must understand which original language he is dealing with and the context in which it was written. Robert Plummer notes, “All languages have cultural elements and assumed historical backgrounds that cannot be expressed with the same number of words or exactly parallel grammatical constructions. Thus, there is a need for additional study, explanation, and interpretation of a text.”¹⁰⁰ The text and original language should be studied by words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to understand the grammatical/syntactical context of the passage.¹⁰¹ Although this part of the historical grammatical method deals primarily with the mechanics of language, the purpose is the same. In both cases the underlying factor is to discover the original intended meaning of the biblical text and apply that meaning to the reader, no matter the modern context. This method does not begin with the reader as the center, but rather the text and elevating its position to be discovered and obeyed. Duvall and Hays state, “When we study the Bible, we are looking for the meaning God intended.”

A second and major tenet of correct interpretation and restoring the high view of Scriptures is that of reading canonically. While the Bible is composed of sixty-six books and contains the Old and New Testament, it is a book with one message. Jones writes, “The sixty six books of Scripture intertwine to tell a single glorious story of God’s creation,

⁹⁹ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 178.

¹⁰⁰ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 81.

¹⁰¹ Richard Alan Fuhr, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 25.

humanity's sin and God's provision for the redemption of his people through Jesus Christ."¹⁰² No matter what testament is being studied, no matter the book or passage of the Bible, God is unfolding an overarching metanarrative across time. This reading canonically or metanarrative approach elevates the importance of discovering the original meaning of the Scriptures. Unlike liberal theology, which is only concerned with isolated passages that speak to moral and social issues, reading Scripture as a whole disciplines the interpreter to understand the context of what he is reading and applying. This manifests itself in considering if the passage is part of the Old Testament covenant with Israel, or part of the new one. Is this passage written as a historical narrative of events or is it a letter sent out for a particular occasion? The biblical framework offers four major movements to be studied: creation, fall, redemption, and inauguration/consumption.¹⁰³ In each one of these eras God is revealing his plan to redeem mankind from their sin and to restore the right relationship that was enjoyed in the Garden.

At the center of these questions is the hinge point of all redemptive history—the person and work of Jesus Christ. Everything that is read in the Scriptures must be interpreted in light of his incarnation or in the aftermath of it. Without a Christological interpretation, believers cannot make correct application of the Scriptures. Graeme Goldsworthy writes, “Because Christ is the fixed point of reference for theology, we are concerned with how the text relates to Christ and how we relate to Christ. Jesus Christ is the link between every part of the Bible and ourselves.”¹⁰⁴ In light of a Christological understanding of Scripture, Wellum offers the following exposition on the metanarrative of Scripture:

As the first major part of the biblical storyline, creation establishes a unique theistic, eschatological, typological framework for the identification of Christ. As the second

¹⁰² Jones, *How We Got the Bible*, 20.

¹⁰³ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 127.

¹⁰⁴ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 71–72.

major part of the biblical metanarrative, the fall forges a tension into the interpretative framework established by the creation. As the third major part of the biblical metanarrative, redemption resolves the tension forged into the interpretive framework by the fall of humanity. As the fourth major part of the biblical metanarrative, inauguration-consummation adds a distinctive feature to the eschatological aspect of the interpretive framework by bridging from “this present age” into the “age to come.”¹⁰⁵

When the Bible (as a whole) is understood as the continuous unfolding of God’s revelation it elevates the text to the highest position possible. The words, phrases, and paragraphs are not a conglomeration of man’s thoughts or ideas, but they are divine. If these Scriptures are “God breathed,” then they demand to be applied and obeyed in the believer’s life. The grammatical-historical method and the metanarrative of Scripture is not exhaustive of proper hermeneutic. However, these two methods do reflect a shift in scholarship and biblical interpretation that occurred to restore a high view of the Scriptures once again.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how the historical view of Scripture changed over the centuries. Christians historically held to a very high view of the authority of the Bible. However, due to Enlightenment thinking and modern critical methods, a low view of Scripture began to emerge in secular and biblical scholarship. This effect diminished the credibility of Christianity, and especially the Bible, during the twentieth century. As a result of a low view of Scripture, groups of believers who held to historical Christianity began to promote and restore the high view of the Bible once again. This recommitment was driven by a commitment to inerrancy of the Scriptures and proper hermeneutical methods that centered on the author’s intent and the redemptive focus of the whole Bible. This chapter along with the exegesis of the passages in chapter 2 lay the foundation for the doctrine of Scripture to be taught and explained in the local church.

¹⁰⁵ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 133–34.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

After establishing the biblical basis for the project and the historical and theological underpinnings of the doctrine of Scripture, the next step was teaching the curriculum. This chapter details the process that was taken to achieve the step of teaching the doctrine of Scripture at MABC. The chapter will be divided into three parts that took place. First, the preparation phase will describe the target audience, writing the curriculum and evaluating it, and recruitment of participants. The implementation phase of the project will detail the DOSA pre-survey and post-survey¹ and the format of the teaching sessions. The final section of this chapter will be devoted to content overview and will provide the reader with a brief synopsis of each lesson.

Preparation Phase

The preparation phase included selecting the target audience in which to implement the project, writing and evaluation of the curriculum, and recruitment of participants for the teaching sessions.

Target Audience

The purpose of this project was to increase understanding of the doctrine of Scripture to strengthen confidence in biblical authority at Madison Ave Baptist Church. Therefore, the target audience of the project was members who attended services at least 75 percent of the time. Although a general invitation went out to the church, as will be detailed later in this section, only those with a high attendance record were included in

¹ See appendix 2.

the study. Since the congregation is under eighty people, this distinction was easily discerned by me as the pastor. As noted in chapter 1, the church is made up of a majority of retired individuals, with a mixture of some younger parishioners. No distinction of age requirement was established in the recruitment of participants other than they had to be at least eighteen years old.

Writing the Curriculum

The preparation of the curriculum took place over the course of three months leading up to the teaching sessions. Before the writing phase began, several resources were consulted and studied in preparation. Among those the most helpful included were Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, Timothy Paul Jones's *How We Got the Bible*, John S. Feinberg's *Light in a Dark Place*, and Matthew Barrett's *God's Word Alone*.² In addition to these resources, chapters 2 and 3 of this project were consulted. The curriculum was broken up into six sessions all pertaining to the doctrine of Scripture. These included the necessity of Scripture, inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency, clarity, and reading Scripture correctly. Participants were provided with fill-in-the blank style class notes. Within these notes, each lesson contained the teaching material, key Scriptures related to the topic, group questions to stimulate thought, a summary/concluding paragraph and final discussion questions to help aid in the learning process.

Evaluation of Curriculum

Upon completion, the curriculum was sent to an expert panel for evaluation. The three individuals that served on this panel were selected due to their educational levels as well as pastoral experience. The first of these was Keith Hudson, DMin, who serves as

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020); Timothy Paul Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (Torrance, CA: Rose 2015); John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018); Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone—the Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters*, Five Solas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

the Associational Ministry Strategist for the Baptist association of which the church is a member. The second individual was Nick Smith, DMin, who serves in western North Carolina and has over twenty years of pastoral experience. The third and final member of the panel was John Randolph, ThM, a local pastor in the area who is familiar with MABC's history. In addition to receiving the teaching material, each member was sent the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric.³ This tool was used to ensure each lesson was biblically accurate, contained an adequate scope of the subject, a clear pedagogy, and was practical in nature. If the panel noted that any criterion was not met, then a re-write would have been required to ensure it met these specifications. Upon receiving approval and meeting the requirements of the rubric, the teaching sessions were ready to be implemented in the church body.

Promotion

Since the project targeted MABC members, advertisement and recruitment were done within this context. For at least two weeks prior to the start date, seminars were advertised in church video announcements, the Sunday bulletin, and the monthly newsletter. In conjunction with these forms of media I gave a personal invitation from the pulpit after each sermon during the time of announcements. Additionally, a few days before the first class began, an electronic phone message was sent to members reminding them of the upcoming seminars. While the class was designed specifically for MABC members, anyone was welcome to participate in the sessions. However, if the participant was not a member, they were not allowed to take the pre- and post-surveys.

Implementation Phase

The implementation phase of this project included the assessment of the congregation's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture through use of the DOSA pre-

³ See appendix 1.

survey. Participants were required to attend a weekly seminar for the next six weeks as the curriculum was taught in one-hour blocks. Finally, a DOSA post-survey was given to each participant to measure any growth that occurred over the course of the six weeks teaching sessions.

Doctrine of Scripture Pre-Survey

The Doctrine of Scripture Assessment pre-survey was given to each participant with instructions to complete it without help from other individuals in the class.⁴ The survey consisted of fifteen statements that required responses based on a six-point Likert scale. These responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In addition to the fifteen questions, three written responses were asked of the participants. Before beginning the survey, each person was asked to provide a four-digit ID number for their paper. This allowed the class members to remain anonymous in their responses and help mitigate dishonest answers. Additionally, participants were instructed to use the same pin number for the post-survey at the end of the six-week training session. Ample time was given to the participants to complete the survey before any teaching began. The pre-surveys were given out and completed on February 28, 2024.

Teaching Format

The teaching sessions began on Wednesday, February 28, 2024. When I first began planning the seminars, I considered implementing them on a Sunday morning during the Sunday school hour. This decision was based on the fact that there was built-in childcare, and more members attend this service than at any other time during the week. However, as I began writing the curriculum, it was clear that some lessons could not be constrained to the forty-five-minute time window of the Sunday school hour. Therefore, I chose to hold the sessions during the weekly Wednesday night Bible study time of 6:30–7:30 p.m. The mid-week Bible study hour was already well established and had more

⁴ See appendix 2.

flexibility if the sessions went over the usual time frame. Additionally, childcare was also provided to participants that chose to take advantage of it. A final reason for selecting this time was that these sessions might also encourage members to attend the Bible study that previously had not been.

Before each session began, participants were provided with fill-in-the-blank notes and a pen. Additionally, a summary of the previous lesson was given to improve recall and show consistency between sessions. The format of teaching was lecture style with moments of discussion built in. Within the notes were group and discussion questions in which participants had the opportunity to respond and create dialogue. This was especially helpful in the learning process because it generated additional responses and dialogue beyond the written material while at the same time providing clarity of it. During one session a debate emerged on the inerrancy of Scripture. One participant was vehemently opposed to the idea of this attribute of Scripture and voiced his concerns during the discussion time. This time of debate generated conversations during the week between participants and on Sunday mornings as well.

Additional Class Resources

In addition to the fill-in-the-blank notes, each participant was given a copy of The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.⁵ This resource was especially helpful during the session on the inerrancy of Scripture and helped the participants have a better understanding of the conflict over scriptural authority in the twentieth century. Class members were encouraged to read the statement after the session ended, along with the class notes for improved comprehension of the subject. It was my hope that after examining the document and completing the teaching session that these members would support a churchwide adoption of the Chicago Statement. This was mentioned when the handout was provided for participants to consider and will hopefully be pursued later.

⁵ See appendix 5.

Doctrine of Scripture Post-Survey

The post-survey was given to participants at the conclusion of the last teaching session on April 3, 2024. As with the pre-survey, members were instructed to use the same four-digit pen and complete the instrument without help from others. The post-survey given was the same as the pre-survey that was provided six weeks earlier. As with the first survey, ample time was given to complete the instrument and I was available to provide any clarification that was needed. After participants finished their surveys, they were placed in a large envelope to be examined and compared with the pre-survey data.

Content Overview

This section contains a synopsis of each lesson that was taught on the doctrine of Scripture at MABC. Participants were taught each lesson in one hour blocks, once a week for six weeks. The subject order was chosen to build upon the principles of the previous lesson and to prepare for the next one. Table 1 serves as a brief visual aid to the content and order of sessions that were taught.

Table 1. “The Doctrine of Scripture” session, main idea, and key Scriptures

Session	Title	Main Idea	Key Scriptures
1	The Necessity of Scripture	We cannot know salvation or how to obey God apart from the Bible.	Psalms 1; Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:14–16
2	The Inspiration of Scripture	The 66 books of the Bible vary God’s authority and can be trusted.	2 Peter 1:17–21; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 3:15–16
3	The Inerrancy of Scripture	Scripture is without error and must be obeyed.	Hebrews 6:17–18; Titus 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17–21; 2 Timothy 3:14–17
4	The Sufficiency of Scripture	Scripture is sufficient to point to salvation, Christian maturity, and is sufficiently transmitted	2 Timothy 3:14–17; Luke 24:27; Romans 10:14–16; Ephesians 2:10
5	The Clarity of Scripture	The Bible can be read, understood, and obeyed by any believer	Deut. 6:6–7; Psalm 119:105 & 130; 2 Peter 1:19
6	Reading Scripture Correctly	The Bible can be interpreted but requires using proper hermeneutical principles	Luke 24:27; 2 Timothy 2:15

Session 1: The Necessity of Scripture

The first session of this project was on the necessity of Scripture. I began with this topic so participants could see why they needed the Bible to know who God is and the salvation he provides. Key Scriptures for this section included Psalm 1, Matthew 4:4, and Romans 10:14–16. The session began with understanding the key differences between God’s general revelation to all people and special revelation that is for the believer. Participants were taught that God can be known as creator through nature and their conscience which bears the image of God. However, only through the Scripture can one know God’s plan of salvation and redemption for his people. In this discussion, the many ways God revealed himself in Scripture were examined, such as theophanies, dreams, visions, angels, direct speech, and mighty acts. While these are considered special revelation, the Scriptures are the most common way believers are to experience and learn about God.

Once this truth was established, the session shifted focus toward the life of the believer. Using Psalm 1 as a blueprint, participants were able to see how the Bible is absolutely necessary to grow and maintain the Christian life. The Scriptures are a source of spiritual nourishment and provide knowledge of the way a believer should walk before the Lord. If Christians are engaging in the Scriptures regularly, they will grow and produce the spiritual fruit described in Galatians 5:23 and be effective in their Christian walk. Immersion in the Scriptures also enables the believer to make wise decisions in contemporary life, as well as avoid sinful situations.

Session 2: The Inspiration of Scripture

Session 2 was on the inspiration of Scripture. This lesson focused on the source of the Bible’s authority, and its uniqueness as a written text. Key Scriptures for this session included 2 Peter 1:17–21, 2 Peter 3:15–16, and 2 Timothy 3:14–17. Participants examined how the text of 2 Timothy 3:16 states that every line of Scripture is “God breathed out” and has its divine origin from him. Understanding this foundational truth

was vital to establishing the authority of the Bible in the life of believers. This means that if the Scriptures are disobeyed, then so is God.

To fully understand how Scripture was given, participants were taught about the verbal plenary view of inspiration. Even though the Bible has God for its author, human writers were used in the process. Examining the “dual nature” of Scripture helped participants understand how God superintended the writing process to produce the text that was intended. This part of the session also generated fruitful discussion about the “red letter words” contained in some modern Bibles. Understanding that all of God’s Word is equally inspired cemented the idea that there is no difference between “Paul’s words” and “Jesus’ words.”

A final topic that was covered under inspiration was that of the canon of Scripture. Affirming that all Scripture is inspired also requires recognizing that the sixty-six books of the Bible are indeed the ones intended to be there. The Old Testament canon was well established by the time of Jesus. He and his apostles also referred to the three-part division of the Hebrew canon at various times in the Gospels. Likewise, the New Testament documents were recognized by the early church and could be traced to an eyewitness of Christ or a close associate of the witness. In addition to recognition of the canon, this section also included reasons why the Apocrypha and the “lost gospels” were not included as Scripture.

Session 3: The Inerrancy of Scripture

Session 3 focused on teaching the inerrancy of Scripture. Key texts for this lesson were Hebrews 6:17–18, Titus 1:2;2, 2 Peter 1:17–21, and 2 Timothy 3:14–17. This session was a great follow up to the one on inspiration in that participants were able to see that even though God used human beings in the writing process, the Bible contains no errors. Several “problem texts” were examined that are often used to “prove” biblical errors. Even though the Bible is a divine document, it still makes use of “loose terminology” when referring to common events (i.e., the sun rose) or estimates when

reporting large numbers. Additionally, the four gospels were discussed in respect to their harmony, yet unique perspectives and writing styles. As a way of demonstrating this, participants were asked to listen to a story and write down the details as best as they could. While some students wrote numerous facts, others only gave a summation or bullet points. The information they all recorded was accurate, but some chose to provide more details than others. This exercise was helpful in conveying the harmony of the gospels as well as each writer's choice in the material they compiled.

In addition to understanding the inerrancy of Scripture, the term “infallibility” was examined. The term, which means unable to err, was used by many in church history to describe the trustworthiness of the Bible. This word and its connotation were used by the church until the twentieth century. It was at this time that an attempt was made to limit infallibility to only matters of faith and practice by liberal theologians. Participants examined the rise of fundamentalism and the “battle for the Bible” during the mid-twentieth century. During the session, each student was given a copy of The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. This handout helped participants understand the importance of affirming inerrancy. Finally, discussion questions engaged the participants to consider, if the Bible contains errors, then what parts or doctrines can be trusted and what cannot? These questions demonstrated the “slippery slope” of denying inerrancy and its fatal effects on the church.

Session 4: The Sufficiency of Scripture

Session 4 of the teaching material focused on the sufficiency of Scripture. Key texts for this lesson were 2 Timothy 3:14–17, Luke 24:27, Romans 10:14–16, and Ephesians 2:10. Sufficiency of Scripture communicates that the Bible contains everything needed to understand salvation and obey God. Since the Bible is God's special revelation, several passages from the New Testament were examined to illustrate this point. As the session continued, participants were able to see that one of the major functions of the Bible is to equip the church and each individual believer for service in God's kingdom.

While other Christian material is helpful, it is Scripture that has the authority to teach, correct, reproof, and train in how to live righteously. In saying the Bible contains everything for living that one needs, it must be clarified that it does not touch on every subject of life (i.e., how many electrons are in an atom).

The second part of this session focused on the sufficiency in copying Scripture. While the issue of inerrancy provides the foundation for an error-free Bible, naturally one begins to wonder if the human beings who made copies erred in the process. The subject of textual variants was discussed at length by many participants as well as the stability of the New Testament. One helpful teaching aide was considering just how many New Testament manuscripts are available today for examination. Understanding that there are more surviving manuscripts than any other ancient document provided greater confidence that the Bible was sufficiently transmitted over thousands of years. Knowing that the Bible the participants owned was indeed what God intended, helped cement understanding about this attribute of Scripture.

Session 5: The Clarity of Scripture

Session 5 of this project focused on the clarity of Scripture. Key passages for this lesson included Deuteronomy 6:6–7, Psalm 119:105, and 2 Peter 1:19. To read and obey the Bible, it must foremost be understood. This was one of the arguments that rose from the Protestant Reformation in the declaration of *sola Scriptura*. In addition to the example being given of the Catholic church's view, participants examined theological liberalism's claim on interpretation of Scripture. If the Bible is not clear enough to interpret and understand, then no dogmatic claims can be made about doctrine or ethics/morality. The meaning can just be changed to fit the situation or current cultural standards. The Bible was given as God's Word to all men at all times, to seek the truth and understand the salvation he has given. During this session, participants examined several passages of Scripture that declared the Bible was meant to be read, and even read aloud to others.

For Scripture to be understood clearly by the reader, several factors are required. The Bible is not an instruction manual but is to be studied carefully over time to understand its message. Additionally, an unbeliever cannot rightly comprehend the Bible in the way a Christian is able. Scripture clearly affirms that the “natural man” cannot comprehend the things of God without being transformed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12–14). A third factor in understanding the Bible is humility of attitude. Though one can interpret correctly, one’s understanding as finite humans will never be perfect. Participants seemed to identify with this tenant easily and even engaged in discussion about difficult passages they had encountered. Furthermore, students from the class gave specific example texts they had clashed over with more liberal theologians.

Session 6: Reading Scripture Correctly

Session 6 of the project focused on reading Scripture correctly. While the previous lessons were actual attributes of Scripture, this session centered on using proper methods of interpretation. The Bible is a book comprised of sixty-six individual works, containing at least three languages, and was derived from a culture thousands of years ago. For the twenty-first century believer to grasp the message of the Bible, correct methods of hermeneutical interpretation must be implemented. Participants were taught the difference between the modern “reader response” approach to the Scriptures versus the more historical, authorial intent of the Bible. This foundation helped students understand the message of the Scriptures was not subjective but rooted in the original meaning. To discover what that message was, a study of the historical context and grammar of the original language needs to be exercised as well. At least two example passages were given for students to examine and employ some of these methods in a limited sense.

Another factor in reading Scripture correctly is to understand the genre of literature one is reading. Knowing the difference between a historical narrative, and wisdom/poetry literature makes a key difference in how to interpret and apply the passage or book being studied. This was especially helpful for discussion on apocalyptic

literature verses historical narrative. Many participants had always viewed the book of Revelation and Daniel as purely historical narrative.

A final point taught in this session was reading canonically for the “big picture.” As stated previously, the Bible is not just one book but is a library of sixty-six books. Though many different authors with different backgrounds were used by God to produce the Scriptures, the Bible has one central continuous message. During this time, participants learned the biblical framework metanarrative of Scripture, which included creation, the fall, redemption, and consummation. Understanding this master storyline of the Bible helped participants grasp how the Scripture “fits together.” When these methods are implemented in study, proper interpretation and application of the Scripture can be employed.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to increase understanding of the doctrine of Scripture to strengthen confidence in biblical authority at Madison Ave Baptist Church. To implement this strategy, I developed a six-week teaching session that I taught at the church. The sessions were approved by an expert panel of three members to ensure they were ready to be taught. After recruiting church members over the course of several weeks, the sessions began with a pre-survey to assess knowledge. At the conclusion of the six-week training, a post-survey was given to measure the growth that had occurred within the group. Chapter 5 of this project will detail the data results of these tests and demonstrate where there was and was not a significant change. Additionally, the chapter will also be devoted to evaluating the project’s purpose and goals, as well as my own reflections and future recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter will provide data analysis and evaluation of the project implemented at Madison Ave Baptist Church. To accomplish this statement, I will first evaluate the project's purpose and goals. As part of this process, I will provide a comparison of the pre- and post-surveys using a *t*-test, as well as examining the three written responses from the surveys. Next, I will provide my insights into the strengths and weaknesses of this project and what I would have done differently. Finally, I will provide my own theological and personal reflections concerning this project and end with a conclusion.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this ministry project was to increase the understanding of the doctrine of Scripture to strengthen confidence in biblical authority at MABC. To accomplish this purpose, a pre- and post-survey on the doctrine of Scripture were measured by a *t*-test to evaluate if a positive change occurred. Each survey contained fifteen statements based on a six-point Likert scale as well as three written response questions. When the data was analyzed from the surveys, the results were mixed. Although a single survey was administered to the group, the statements fell into two categories. Statements 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, and 15 were targeted at assessing knowledge and understanding. Statements 1, 4, 9, 11, and 13, however, were centered around practice. This required that the raw data be split into two *t*-tests. When the data was analyzed, there was a statistically significant difference ($t_{(14)} = -8.805, p < .0001$)¹ in knowledge and

¹ See appendix 3.

understanding on the doctrine of Scripture training sessions. However, there was no significant change ($t_{(14)} = 1, p = 0.1671$)² in authority and practice on the doctrine of Scripture training sessions.

In addition to the fifteen statements, three additional written responses were included in the surveys. While each participant was unique in how they answered the questions, certain patterns were visible from the results. The first question was, an acquaintance asks why you allow an ancient document that was written by men, to guide your daily decisions. What 3 reasons would you give in response? In the pre-survey, the consensus answers were that “the Bible is God’s Word, it proves there is a Creator, and it is still relevant today.” However, in the post-survey, the consensus was, “Scripture is inspired by God, it was written by men who were eyewitnesses, but God guided them.” These answers demonstrate that there was an increase in the knowledge of the plenary verbal view of the inspiration of Scripture.

The second response question given on the survey was, a Christian friend is openly engaging in an issue of sin that is clearly condemned in Scripture. Would you be more inclined to spare their feelings and affirm their behavior, or to point them to what the Bible teaches on this matter? In both the pre-and post-surveys, the consensus from participants was that they would indeed point the friend to the Scriptures in regard to their behavior. Many added that they would do it in a kind, loving, and humble way, in hopes of repentance. This question showed no increase or growth in the participants, as their answers on the post-survey mirrored the pre survey.

The third response question given on the survey was, if you were to provide someone proof from the Scriptures for the Bible’s authority, what verses would you list as a response? In the pre-survey, most participants either left this question blank or listed John 3:16 as their answer. However, two outliers listed text that dealt with scriptural

² See appendix 4.

authority such as 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 2 Peter 1:21. The results were mixed in the post-survey. The top answer was still either John 3:16 or nothing at all. However, as with the pre-survey, there were outliers. Three participants provided Scripture references that pertained to the doctrine of Scripture and its authority, showing a slight increase in participants' knowledge. These Scriptures included 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 2 Peter 1:21.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This project had three goals that needed to be achieved to be successful. The first of these goals was to assess the current understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and how it relates to contemporary situations and issues. The first goal was accomplished successfully by administering the Doctrine of Scripture Assessment Survey (DOSAS).³ Each of the fifteen participants were given this survey to assess their current level of understanding and how it related to contemporary situations and issues. The survey consisted of fifteen statements the participants had to respond to, as well as three open-ended written questions. This survey was conducted in the first week of class before any of the material was covered.

The second goal of this project was to develop a six-week curriculum that focused on the doctrine of Scripture. This goal was met when an expert panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁴ For this goal to be met successfully, the evaluation criterion had to meet or exceed a score of 90 percent or a revision was necessary. All three members of the expert panel rated the material higher than the 90 percent benchmark, so no further revisions were needed.

The third and final goal of this project was to equip members in their understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and increase their confidence in biblical

³ See appendix 2.

⁴ See appendix 1.

authority by teaching the curriculum. The third goal was partially met by equipping members in their understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and their confidence in biblical authority, by teaching the curriculum. The teaching sessions were attended by fifteen members of MABC. All participants were given fill-in-the blank style notes to follow along with the lectures. In addition, the sessions contained built in discussion times and questions for the group to provide input. After the six-week period of instruction had ended, participant answers from the pre-survey were compared and analyzed with the ones from the post-survey. As stated previously, the results of the *t*-test varied. In the area of knowledge and understanding, participants demonstrated a significant change, ($t_{(14)} = -8.805, p < .0001$).⁵ However, in the category of authority and practice, there was no significant change, ($t_{(14)} = 1, p = 0.1671$).⁶

Strengths of the Project

This project contained several strengths that made it successful. The was the subject of the project itself. When the pre-surveys were examined, they revealed just how anemic the church was in their knowledge and practice of the doctrine of Scripture. As previously stated in chapter 1, this weak view has led to doctrinal immaturity and an inability to engage a secular culture. As Western society continues to abandon the foundations of biblical Christianity, the need to affirm biblical authority is even more urgent. I was encouraged to see the participants grow in this area over the course of the six-week study and to recognize the importance of this subject. Furthermore, as MABC is still engaging in church revitalization, the doctrine of Scripture is key in rebuilding. As the church seeks to reach younger families and disciple the next generation, this subject must form the foundation of that goal. A focus on biblical authority strengthens the future church at MABC.

⁵ See appendix 3.

⁶ See appendix 4.

A second strength of this project was the curriculum. The material covered in each lesson engaged the participants as well as educated them. Many participants commented on the material and expressed that it was intellectually stimulating as well as informative. The built in discussion questions provided great times for feedback, clarification, and difference of opinion. Additionally, each lesson was designed to build upon the previous one, culminating in the final session: Reading Scripture Correctly. Finally, the curriculum was saturated with Scripture references. This demonstrated that it was not just my opinion as the teacher or what scholars thought, but the teaching material was rooted in the Bible for its authority.

A third strength of this project was the historical aspect of the doctrine of Scripture. While chapter 2 of this project focused on the biblical and exegetical foundations of the project, chapter 3 primarily focused on its historical foundations. By examining church history from the perspective of biblical authority, one can easily see that Christians have held to that position historically. This was especially helpful during the teaching sessions, in that several quotations from early church fathers and later reformers were examined supporting the Scripture's authority. Another helpful part of the historical focus was the "battle for the Bible" during the mid-twentieth century. Many participants remembered the controversy that ensued during this period of history, but did not fully comprehend its ramifications at the time. By explaining the sequence of events that led to a return to biblical authority, students were able to see why inerrancy matters.

A fourth and final strength of this project was the format of the teaching seminars. As stated previously, the sessions were taught in a lecture style format and with fill-in-the-blank notes. However, the classes were not rigid or formal, but more casual in nature. Questions and comments were encouraged throughout the teaching sessions, even if it was not at a designated point such as the "group question time." This informal setting allowed conversation to flourish as I covered the material and aided in the learning process. At the same time, as dialogue was flowing, I was able to gain more insight into the

participants' beliefs and practices on the doctrine of Scripture. In one case especially, a member spoke very passionately about why he disagreed with inerrancy and did not hold to it. While the pre-survey had revealed a great deal about the participants' stance on the issue, these open dialogue moments were even more insightful in many ways.

Weaknesses of the Project

While the project did contain several strengths, there were weaknesses present as well. The first weakness was the pre- and post-survey. The survey itself was successful in assessing participants' current knowledge and practice but was somewhat confusing. Several students commented that a few questions were unclear and made their decisions difficult when completing the surveys. At least two participants stated that when they were unsure of how to answer, they "just picked the middle box to be safe." This lack of precision almost certainly affected the analysis of the data, but since the responses were anonymous, there was no means of correction. A final problem with the survey was that participants sometimes left the open-ended questions blank. While this did not affect the Likert scale measurements, it was desirable for all the surveys to be completed in full.

A second weakness of this project was the day and time of the week the sessions were held. My goal was to have as many regular church members as possible to attend the seminars, however, there were only fifteen participants. I believe this was because the sessions were held during the regular Wednesday night Bible study hour, which has always been poorly attended. The only other time available with regular childcare was during the Sunday School hour that is held weekly before each worship service. It is possible that attendance would have increased with this option, but due to the forty-five-minute time limit, I chose not to offer the sessions during this period. Because of the low participation rate, I did not feel that the project was as successful as it could have been. If the church is going to grow in their understanding of God's Word and in the doctrine of Scripture, they must be present for instruction.

A third and final weakness of this project was the brevity of the teaching sessions. While each lesson was biblically sound and clearly communicated the doctrine of Scripture, a six-week training session is not adequate. MABC suffers from a weak view on the authority of the Bible that was caused by decades of insufficient teaching and training. While the six-week project did show significant change in some areas, this problem will require years of solid and faithful instruction. Even after being the pastor for five years and teaching in this manner on a weekly basis, the surveys clarified that a great deal of change still needs to occur. The authority of Scripture must be regularly affirmed from the pulpit, in the Sunday School classroom, and during Wednesday night Bible studies, if there is going to be significant and lasting change at MABC.

What I Would Do Differently

Upon reflection of this project and its components, if given the chance I would have done some things differently. The first thing to change would be the methodology for assessing participants' knowledge. The survey was based on a six-point Likert scale with three open-ended questions. However, as stated previously, dialogue during the teaching session seemed to provide a clearer assessment of participants' knowledge and practice. In addition to the survey questions, I believe individual interviews would have added depth to the study. Each participant could have been asked a series of open-ended questions and would not have felt pressured to answer within a time limit. Since the sample group was only fifteen people, this interview process could have been completed with relative ease before the first teaching session was held. In retrospect, a mixed method approach would have yielded more comprehensive results.

Another aspect I would have done differently in this project is in the preparation of participants. In the weeks leading up to the first session I advertised the classes in various media and from the pulpit. However, I still got the impression that some members did not understand what it was and why they should care about attending. In retrospect, I would have preached a brief sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture using texts such

as 2 Peter 1:16–21, 2 Timothy 3:14–17, and Psalm 1. I believe that having walked through an exposition of these passages would have strengthened the teaching sessions and prepared the students better for them. In addition to preaching these texts, I would have provided insert cards in the weekly bulletin that allowed congregants to “ask more about this topic” and then turn in after the service. This not only would have been a fantastic aid in writing the curriculum but would have generated much more interest in the teaching sessions as well.

A final change I would have implemented in this project is the assignment of a book. While the teaching sessions were adequate in their scope and sound in theology, they were only once a week. This opens the possibility that the students only thought about this subject for about an hour on Wednesday nights. With the addition of reading material, participants would have been engaging in the subject during the week as well. To ensure this process I would have assigned certain sections or chapters each week for the students to read. Considering these factors, I most likely would have assigned *Why Should I Trust the Bible* by Timothy Paul Jones as a class text. This book is brief and could have easily been completed in the duration of six weeks. Additionally, the text deals directly with aspects of the doctrine of Scripture and in some cases provides more needed details. A final reason I would have selected this book is that while it is intellectually stimulating, the writing style is not “over the readers heads” and can be comprehended by lay people. The addition of a book would have given great strength not only to material retention but also to increasing knowledge.

Theological Reflections

Engaging in the study and teaching of the doctrine of Scripture has been both challenging and fruitful. The Word of God is central to a church’s health and vitality, as well as for the believer. Stephen Wellum writes, “Scripture is our final, sufficient, and magisterial authority for our knowledge of God, self, and the world. It is the ‘ruling rule’

(*norma normas*) for all of our theological formulations and our life as the church.”⁷ In each passing day culture is becoming more secular and attacking the foundations of Christianity. This of course includes the authority and credibility of the Bible. As a pastor, there is a special charge to guard the truth of God’s Word and to teach it to the people, or it will be lost. As 2 Kings 22:8 illustrates, “Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord.’” The word of God can be lost even when it is physically present among God’s people. Biblical teaching and obedience must be in a sense recovered by each generation as man’s natural inclination is to abandon it and go his own way (Isa 53:6)

Another important aspect of researching this topic was the historical component. I have always had an interest in church history and observing how God used people and events to accomplish his purpose. As stated previously, however, I had never traced the authority of Scripture through the lens of church history. Understanding that biblical authority has always been a core belief of Christians throughout history was truly a blessing and a strengthening factor. Many believers in the church (proper) have been deceived into thinking this was a twentieth-century issue developed by radical fundamentalists. Though when one examines the historical record, testimony of great men of faith, church fathers, and the reformers, the picture becomes quite clear. The Bible and its authority have always been foundational to Christian teaching and practice. As the author of Hebrews writes, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1) When the church stands for biblical authority, believers are indeed among good company.

A final theological highlight related to the doctrine of Scripture is evangelism. As stated in chapter 1 of this project, MABC is a declining church that is returning to a

⁷ Stephen J. Wellum, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *From Canon to Concept* (Brentwood, TN: B & H, 2024), 225.

more biblical model. As part of this process, the church has begun to reach beyond its four walls and into the neighborhood where it stands. This task, though, requires a healthy conviction of the doctrine of Scripture. Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:19 to go and make disciples and to teach them what he had commanded. If only parts of the Bible are authoritative, then how can believers be sure what to teach? How can the church train disciples if there is doubt about the teaching material? Furthermore, how can anyone be sure that Jesus even said these things or understand his intended meaning? Is there really any point in reaching others if believers are not confident in that message? The church that will not take a stand for the Word of God is doomed to die and cannot even attempt the Great Commission. Evangelism and discipleship are foundational in the New Testament church, but without the full weight and authority of Scripture these foundations will crumble.

Personal Reflections

The Scriptures have always been important and foundational to my life. I was raised in a Christian home, and had a grandfather who was a pastor. From an early age I was taught the inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of the Bible. Growing up in the 1980s and 1990s, the battle for inerrancy and biblical authority was “white hot.” It was the central issue for churches and even became a deciding factor for many pastors on whether to attend an SBC seminary. I am thankful for those men who stood for the Bible and transformed seminaries to places where the Bible is taught, and its authority is upheld. Today, writing this project almost thirty to forty years later, there is no less urgency on this topic. As a pastor, I see our church constantly under the attacks of secular culture to undermine and discredit the Scriptures. The Bible tells that this is to be expected and is normal. However, what is abnormal and heartbreaking is when those within the church do not hold to biblical authority. Many Christians and whole denominations have cast aside what the Scripture teaches and embraced the morality and thought of the day. This is a sickness within the church that must be remedied with urgency. The only way to cure this illness is steadily

and faithfully exegeting the Scriptures and training believers in the doctrine of Scripture. As the pastor of a church whose previous pastors failed to do so, I feel the weight of this task, but embrace it joyfully.

When I think about the things I will pass on to my children, a love for the Word of God is at the very top of the list. They are growing up in a very different world than I and their mother did. They live in a world where ethics are determined by the individual and biblical morality is disappearing. It is the greatest privilege and challenge of a Christian parent to train their children in the Scriptures and to affirm its authority in their lives. Paul, alluding to Timothy's parent's taking on this responsibility in 2 Timothy 3:15, wrote, "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." I have accomplished many milestones in my life, both educational and ministerial. I am a pastor of a Southern Baptist church, which is the greatest job on the earth in my opinion. After I finish this degree, I will have two undergraduate degrees and two graduate level ones. However, if I do not train my children in the Scriptures and cultivate a love of God in their lives, I have failed at all things. My prayer is that this study on the doctrine of Scripture will not only strengthen the church where I serve but will have a great impact upon those who live in my own household as well.

When I began this project and even the DMin program, I thought my knowledge about Scripture was adequate. I did not think I was the most intelligent scholar of my generation by any means, but I felt competent in my knowledge and ability to research a subject and write about it. I have been in ministry for over twenty years and engaging in educational endeavors along the way. I do not believe I was overconfident in my ability to take on doctoral work, but I was not intimidated by it either. Over the course of this study, I have learned many things, but one major component is humility. The research and months required to complete this project were greater than I could have imagined. I was unprepared for the task ahead of me and spent much time in prayer and contemplating if I wanted to

finish or give up. When I look back on all the time spent in research and writing this project, I understand two realities. The first is that it has been the most comprehensive and exhausting educational endeavor I have ever accomplished. I fully acknowledge that without the supernatural strength of the Holy Spirit and the support of my family it would not have been possible. The second reality I have observed is that my project is not the definitive work on the doctrine of Scripture. While studying, compiling, and writing, I understood that there was a vast amount of material that I could not include, nor even devote time to reading. Doctoral work is rich with many resources and avenues to explore, and my project is only a small part of the larger picture. This drove me to a place of humility, understanding that even though I will obtain a doctorate, I am still just a learner like the rest of those who are called by the name of Christ. I still have much to learn and have only begun to understand the richness of God's Word.

Conclusion

The Doctor of Ministry program has been life changing for me. To be able to study at the doctoral level has been challenging, enriching, and humbling. Each seminar I took equipped me better as a pastor and servant of Christ. The project itself has been to this date the greatest written work I have ever accomplished. My family has supported me along the way, and I have been able to share the fruits of my studies with them as well as with our church. Scripture must be the foundation of the local church and it must guide believers in their daily life. To be faithful, servants of Christ must understand that every word of the Bible carries the full weight of God's divine speech. Believers must hold the line on biblical authority. Truly our battle shout must be *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος*.

APPENDIX 1

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBERIC

The following rubric was used by the expert panel to evaluate the doctrine of Scripture curriculum.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the doctrine of Scripture.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better understand the doctrine of Scripture.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 2

DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The following survey was used to assess the current knowledge of the participants in the doctrine of Scripture and was compared with a post-survey at the end of the teaching sessions.¹

¹ This survey was influenced from a survey composed by Nathan David Cecil, “Equipping Members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia for Personal Bible Intake” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 83–85.

Doctrine of Scripture Assessment Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to engage in is designed specifically to assess your current knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture. Adam Street is conducting the research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. This research is being conducted under the direction of the Professional Doctoral Studies office at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and all answers/responses provided will be held strictly confidential and that at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in the survey/inventory/assessment is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By completing the survey and/or checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Personal ID# (4-digit) _____

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

Directions: Respond to the following statement by placing a check mark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

The scale is as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,
 AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1. The Bible is the absolute authority in my life on all matters.						
2. The Bible is sacred Scripture, but it does contain some errors.						
3. There is a difference in the actual words that Jesus spoke, and the Epistles Paul wrote.						
4. The Bible contains everything that is needed for any aspect of human life.						
5. My political stance on issues outweighs my convictions in Scripture on the same issues.						
6. If the Bible was being written today, it would be more inclusive, especially to women in ministry.						
7. Every line of Scripture is God breathed.						
8. The Bible's greatest evidence for authenticity comes from the Scriptures themselves.						
9. To disobey or disbelieve the Bible is to disbelieve or disobey God						
10. The Bible is the thoughts and opinions of the men who wrote it.						
11. A Christian can still grow in their faith with little to no interaction with Scripture.						
12. A person can be saved without hearing the message from the Scriptures						
13. If someone's feelings may be hurt, we should not be so strict about what the Scriptures teach.						

Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. The Bible was written so long ago that it isn't as applicable as it was originally						
15. The primary purpose of the Scriptures is to teach us how to be good moral people.						

Directions: Please provide a written response to the following questions:

16. An acquaintance asks why you allow an ancient document that was written by men, to guide your daily decisions. What 3 reasons would you give in response?

17. A Christian friend is openly engaging in an issue of sin that is clearly condemned in Scripture. Would you be more inclined to spare their feelings and affirm their behavior, or to point them to what the Bible teaches on this matter?

18. If you were to provide someone proof from the Scriptures for the Bible's authority, what verses would you list as a response?

APPENDIX 3

T-TEST RESULTS FOR KNOWLEDGE
AND UNDERSTANDING

Table A1. *T*-test for knowledge and understanding

	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	50.93333333	58.13333333
Variance	32.92380952	36.83809524
Observations	15	15
Pearson Correlation	0.85759676	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	14	
t stat	- 8.805592628	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00000022030561	
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.40611E-07	
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	

APPENDIX 4

T-TEST RESULTS FOR AUTHORITY/PRACTICE

Table A2. *T*-test for authority/practice

	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	28.73333333	28.33333333
Variance	2.638095238	3.238095238
Observations	15	15
Pearson Correlation	0.594680264	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	14	
t stat	1	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.167140972	
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.334281943	
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	

APPENDIX 5

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was given to each participant during session 3 in order to understand the struggle over inerrancy during the mid twentieth century.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

1978

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that Statement be given credal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from those who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God. We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human service.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation. We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation within the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration. We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude of fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is ground in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

APPENDIX 6

DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE TEACHING CURRICULUM

The following teaching curriculum on the Doctrine of Scripture was taught at Madison Ave Baptist Church. Each participant was given a copy of these notes to follow along and increase retention of the material.

The Necessity of Scripture

Session #1

Key Scriptures: Psalm 1, Matthew 4:4, Romans 10:14-16

Group Questions:- Why do we need the Bible at all?- What does it benefit anyone?

I. Can we know God at all?

A. God is knowable to all human being through General Revelation

- This is revelation that comes to all people in the world (generally) and can be observed in nature, conscience, and morality.
- Apart from God revealing Himself to us, we would not know anything about who He is or His nature.

Psalm 19:1-4 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

- God is not only revealed in nature (as creator), but in the Morality and conscience of human beings.

Romans 2:14-15 *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.*

- When man knows the difference between what is right and wrong, he demonstrates knowledge of the creator within his decisions.
- This knowledge of God cannot save, but is enough to condemn us for our sins

Romans 1:20 ²⁰ *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

B. Saving knowledge of God comes through Special Revelation

- We need more than just nature- We cannot know Jesus through fishing and hunting, or long walks on the beach.
- These are God's words addressed to human beings.
- **Examples:**
 - Theophanies (Gen 12:7, 32:24)
 - Dreams and Visions (Gen 28:12-16, 41:1-7)
 - Angels (Dan 9:20-21)
 - Direct Speech (Exodus 33:11)
 - Miracles/ Mighty Acts/ Events (Mark 2:10-12)
 - Christ Himself (Hebrews 1:1-2)
 - Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17)

*While all of these are examples of God speaking directly to certain people, the Scriptures are the most **common** way that we experience and should seek to learn from.

Exodus 31:18 ¹⁸ *And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.*

- Apart from the message communicated in the Scriptures, no one can be saved.

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Romans 10:14-16 ¹³ *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*

Discussion Questions:

- How does this affect your view of how you approach witnessing to an unbeliever?
- How does the statement, "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words." Compare with what the Scriptures say?
- Does this challenge you to memorize Scripture?

II. The Necessity of Scripture for a Christian. (Psalm 1)

A. Source of Wisdom that leads to life.

Group Question: If we are to follow Jesus and mature in our walk, how are we supposed to know what to do?

- The Word of God is the way to know the will of God and how we should conduct ourselves.
- Two ways are contrasted- the way of the Righteous and the way of the Wicked.
- The righteous man is blessed because he does not find his counsel in the wicked, but rather meditating on the **Scriptures**.
 - Notice the Progression
 - He walks.
 - He stands (stops)
 - He sits down among them.
- This leads to ruin and perishing (vs 6)
- The righteous however delight in the Law of God and meditate on it day and night for sustenance.
 - Not an eastern meditation- but a filling of the mind with and turning it over.
- **Vs 3** Tells us that if the believer meditates on the Word, he will prosper.
 - This is not a blanket statement for worldly success, and financial prosperity.
 - It means that one's life will be blessed by God, and he will make good, Godly **decisions**.
 - **Ex-** Life of Joseph in Genesis

B. Source of maintaining and producing spiritual maturity

Matthew 4:4 *But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

- When Jesus was tempted with bread after 40 days, he responded to the devil that it was the Scriptures themselves that gave true life and sustenance.
- The Psalmist uses imagery to convey this in the picture of a tree.

- A tree planted by the water has a constant source of life- that prevents it from withering -as much vegetation did in Israel's dry climate.
- The Bible is the source of life that the tree (the believer) draws from
 - One who is constantly in the word and meditating on it (vs 2) will not wither away and die.
 - In contrast (Vs 4)- the one who does not is like chaff that dries up, blows away and is good for nothing but the fire.

John 4:13-14 ¹³ *Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'*

- The One who is connected to the source, also matures and produces fruit (vs 3)
- As believers we will have signs of **life** and produce spiritual fruit
 - Love, Joy, Peace, patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-control (**Galatians 5:23**)
- Apart from the Scriptures, we will be malnourished and not able to grow into maturity.

1 Peter 2:2 ² *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*

III. **Conclusion/ Summary:** Apart from the Scriptures, we are not able to know Jesus as Savior, or to grow up into Him. It is an absolute necessity for the believer to be immersed in the word of God, to grow up, maintain spiritual sustenance and make Godly wise decisions.

Discussion Questions:

- How does this make you think about your own habit of meditating on the Scriptures?
- If someone said, they don't read the Bible, but they have a good relationship with God and know how to live- What would you say?
- How can we communicate these truths to the next generation?

The Inspiration of Scripture

Session #2

Key Scriptures: 2 Peter 1:17-21, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, and 2 Peter 3:15-16

I. Just a Book or Something Else

A. Defining Inspiration

- To state that the Bible is inspired does not refer to being moved by a piece of music or art.
 - (Ex- “I was moved to paint this picture, or go hiking, or dance- I was inspired”
- The word inspiration comes from **2 Timothy 3:16** “All Scripture is breathed out by God.”
 - A combination of *theos* (God) and *pne* (to blow or breathe out)
- “Thus, before God spoke (‘breathed out’), scripture did not exist, but as a result of his speaking (breathing out), scripture came into existence.” - Walter Liefield, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. The NIV Application Commentary Series.
- “When the Bible speaks, God speaks.” - R. Albert Mohler, *Five Views on Inerrancy*.

B. Authority

- Because the Scriptures have a divine origin, they carry the ultimate authority.
- To obey them is to obey God. To disobey them, is to disobey God
 - This is why we cannot change, compromise, or ignore the Scriptures, no matter what the culture does, nor our denomination.

Possible Objection!- Are there any sources outside the Scriptures that we can use to measure the Authority of Scripture. (i.e. What scholarly sources can we appeal to for authenticating scriptural authority?)

- While there is excellent scholarship about the manuscript and their integrity, as well as historical record- The Bible is its **own authority**.
- There is not a higher source than God's very words.
 - (The higher source would be greater than God)
- Thus, all decisions, and guiding principles of the church or the believer, must come from the Scriptures, since it carries more authority than any other document (even bylaws and church covenant)

C. How Inspiration works with Human Authors

- If God breathed out the Scriptures, how then does that work with human writers??
- The author of Ephesians is God, but it is also Paul. The author of Matthew is God, but it is also Matthew.....Again how can this be?
- The Scriptures have **dual** authorship.
- This does *not mean* that God used men as mindless robots- where he spoke and they had no role except moving a pen.
- Scripture was not dictated (divine secretary).

2 Peter 1:20-21 ²⁰ *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.* ²¹ *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

- “Carried along”- φέρω, is a nautical term used to describe a ship carried along by the wind.
- “The prophets raised their sails, so to speak (they were obedient and receptive), and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction he wished. Men Spoke: God Spoke.”
NT Scholar, Gene Green.

- This is what is referred to as **Verbal** Plenary Inspiration.
- God used the writing skills, personality, and feelings of the writer in the process, but **superintended**, it to produce exactly what he wanted (supernatural process)
- Thus, the Scriptures were written with the pen of man, but came from the mouth of God and are divine and authoritative.

Group Question: Do the words of Jesus (those in red) carry the same authority as Paul’s epistles? How about the Old Testament compared to the words of Jesus?

C. Qualifying Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God^l may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

- πᾶσα (all) is comprehensive and leaves nothing out.

***Compare these passages.**

1 Timothy 5:17-18 *For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”*

- This passage is a quotation from **Luke 10:7** (spoken by Jesus)
- Paul is stating that these words from the Gospel account are Scripture.

2 Peter 3:15-16 “¹⁵ *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

- The Apostle Peter is referring to Paul’s Epistles and compares them to “other Scriptures.”- meaning those of the **Old Testament**.
- This means that Peter and the other apostles recognized that Paul’s Epistles carried the same authority as the OT and Jesus’ words.
- This solidifies the fact that ALL verses of Scripture are indeed authoritative and God Breathed out and must be obeyed

Group Questions: Are the books that we have in our Bible all inspired? How did they get there and how do I know these are the ones we are supposed to obey?

II. An Inspired Canon (canon means measuring reed)

A. OT Canon Recognition

- At least 200 years before Christ, the Jewish people recognized which books belonged as sacred Scripture and which ones did not.
- The arrangement of the Hebrew Bible included:
 - **The Law** (first five books)
 - **The Prophets** (Major and Minor, as well as history like Kings, Samuel, Chronicles)
 - **The Writings** (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon)
- This was the canon of Scripture that Jesus would have used, and He recognized as authoritative.

Luke 24:44⁴⁴ *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”*

Group Question: What about *the Apocrypha*? – the books written in between the testaments?

- The Jewish People never recognized these books as Scripture equal to the Law, writings and Prophets.
- Judas Maccabeus (from the book of Maccabees) wrote that he lived during the time that the prophets had ceased to appear. 1 Maccabees 9:27
- Jesus and His disciples never quoted the Apocryphal books.

B. NT Canon Recognition

- The New Testament Canon was determined by who wrote the books.

- **Criteria:** The books had to have been written by an **eyewitness** of Jesus, or a close **associate** of an eyewitness

***Adapted from: Why Should I Trust the Bible – Timothy Paul Jones**

- **Matthew-** Apostle and eyewitness of Jesus
- **Mark-** Traveling companion of Peter (apostle and eyewitness) and secretary.
- **Luke-**Traveling companion of Paul (apostle and eyewitness)
- **John-** Apostle and eyewitness
- **Acts-** Traveling companion of Paul (apostle and eyewitness)
- **Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, , 1&2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon-** Apostle and eyewitness
- **Hebrews-** Received by early Christians as a writing of Paul, or a close associate.
- **1&2 Peter-** Apostle and eyewitness
- **1 John-** Apostle and eyewitness
- **2&3 John -**Apostle John, or (John the Elder) and eyewitness of the Resurrection
- **Revelation-** Apostle (John) and eyewitness

*All of these books were written within the lifetime of the apostolic era, where eyewitness could verify authenticity or refute a counterfeit- and were circulated among churches.

- While we don't have the original manuscripts, because time has disintegrated them, we do find this list of books appearing as early as the second century.
- Muratorian Fragment – Document that affirms 22 of the 27 New Testament books. (2nd century)
- Athanasius also listed all of the 27 NT books we have in a pastoral “Easter Letter.” (4th century)

Group Question:- What about the Lost Gospels and other books?? (Gospel of Thomas, of Peter, Mary, etc.)

- These were all written much later than our 27 books.
- No evidence exists that they are linked with an eyewitness or close associate.

- Contain some really bizarre stories that do not agree with the rest of Scripture.
 - **Gospel of Peter-** Features a walking, talking cross.
 - **Gospel of Thomas-** Jesus says that he will turn Mary into a man, because females are not worthy of life.
 - **Infancy Gospels-** Feature Jesus as a mischievous child that seeks revenge, curses and kill other children out of spite.

III. Conclusion/ Summary: The 66 books that we have are trustworthy and carry the full authority of God Himself. God superintended the writing process of many authors, in 3 different languages, over many centuries to produce exactly what He intended for us to have. To disobey the Scriptures is to disobey God. To obey them is to Obey God

Discussion Questions:

- We claim to believe the Bible, but do we really affirm its authority?
- How does knowing God’s Word is the absolute authority, affect how we stand politically or personally?
- Would Scripture be different if it was written today??

Further Reading:

Timothy P. Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (2015), Ch. 2-5

Timothy P. Jones, *Why Should I Trust the Bible* (2019).

The Inerrancy of Scripture

Session #3

Key Scriptures: Hebrews 6:17-18, Titus 1:2, 2 Peter 1:17-21, 2 Timothy 3:14-17

I. A Matter of Divine Importance

A. Understanding Terminology

- Inerrancy means that the Scriptures are without **error** and do not contain anything untrue.
- This means that every word, verse, and subject that the Bible mentions, or touches on is absolutely true.

Group Questions: How can we be certain? How can we know that the Bible is without errors?

- Our surety is based in the **character** of God above all other factors.

Hebrews 6: 17-19 ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.”

Titus 1:12 ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.

- If all Scripture is God-breathed (**2 Timothy 3:14-17**) and finds its origin in Him, → He cannot lie → Scripture cannot lie or err in any way.

Group Question: What about those Human beings that God used? He is perfect and cannot lie, but they are not perfect and can lie.

B. Test Cases of Textual “errors”

Gen 32:31 ³¹ *The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.*

- The sun does not set or rise- yet from an earth dwellers perspective it seems to. Even our weathermen today use this loose terminology.

2 Samuel 8:13 ¹³ *And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.*

- The biblical author was making an estimate, not giving an exact head count- We use rounded numbers all the time today.

Luke 4:3-8 Vs Matthew 4:3-8

- In Matthews account- the devil offers (1) bread, (2) Temple and (3) to worship him. In that order
- In Lukes account- the devil offers (1) bread, (2) to worship him, and (3) Temple. In that order.

What do we do with this?

- This is an example of one writer (Luke) arranging the material thematically, and another (Matthew) arranging chronologically.
- It is important to understand how ancient writers operated- they did not use **modern** standards of western civilization.
- Ancient readers would have thought it strange if both accounts matched word for word- and the gospel would have thought to be fraudulent. (remember they were eyewitness accounts)

***4 Gospels Exercise**

For this you will take a sheet of paper and write down the details as best you can as I recount a story about my life, and then we will compare.

- It is of vast importance to not put modern printing standards upon the Scriptures, because they were written in a different **context**.

C. Revisiting the Verbal Plenary

- The writers that God used to write the Bible were sinful.
- They were prone to mistakes just like us, and cannot be trusted on their own to produce the Scriptures without error.

- God Superintended the process to give us the Scriptures.

2 Peter 1:20-21 ²⁰ *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.* ²¹ *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

- God used the pens and personalities, and the feebleness of human authors to produce something perfect- that was very good.
- Remember all Scripture is God-breathed- and if it originates from God, though he used men in the process- it is perfect.

* What do we believe about the character of God.- Is he trustworthy or not?

II. Infallibility, History, and Denying Inerrancy

Group Question: Have Christians always believed the Bible was without error- or is this recent?

A. A Testimony from the Past (survey)

- Throughout history, the church has affirmed that the Bible was 100% without error and could be **trusted**.
- **First Century- Clement of Rome-** “You have searched the Scriptures, which are true and given by the Holy Spirit. You know that nothing unrighteous or counterfeit is written within them.
- **Second Century- Justin Martyr-** “I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another.”
- **Third Century- Tertullian of Carthage-** “The statement of Holy Scripture will never contradict the truth.”
- **Fourth Century- Athanasius of Alexandria-** “It is the opinion of some that the Scriptures do not agree or that God who gave them is false. But there is no disagreement at all. Far from it! The Father , who is truth, cannot lie!
- **Fifth Century- Augustine of Hippo-** “I have learned to give respect and honor to the Canonical books of Scripture. Regarding

these books alone, I most firmly believe that their authors were completely free from error.”

B. A Seismic Shift

- A high view of Scripture, continued until the age of **Enlightenment** (1560-1780)
 - Shift to man’s reason and wisdom above all else
- Shortly afterward (19th century) Biblical and Higher Criticism emerged-
 - Here the Scriptures were divorced from the divine, and reliability was criticized as well as accusations of error.
- Another factor was Darwinism (the theory of evolution) 19th cent.
 - Man was not a product of the divine and everything came about from natural processes.
- Out of this came skepticism for the Bible and Liberal Christianity that focused on an experience with God (feelings) above the biblical truth or accuracy.

C. Christians Battle for the Bible

- In response to this degrading of scripture a group of Christian conservatives sought to make a stand.
- At the *Niagara Bible Conference* (1875-1897) these believers hammered out 5 basic truths for the faith called the **fundamentals**
 - Jesus was divine
 - Jesus was born of a virgin
 - Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin
 - Jesus will come again
 - The scriptures contain no errors; the Bible is inerrant.
- Those who held to this were called “fundamentalist.”
- Ultimately, they did not overcome the rot in academia and the liberalism in the Church and were branded as outsiders- and they retreated from society
 - In the mid twentieth century a new group emerged that held to the fundamentals but where engaged with the culture – they were called Evangelicals

- This group began a rallying cry for the return to Scripture and upheld the high view of Scripture

D. The Liberals Strike back/ Infallibility and the Chicago Statement

- Up until the mid-twentieth century, the church had primarily used the term- Infallible to describe the Bible.
- Infallibility- Latin for *unable to deceive, or not liable to err*.
 - Fuller Seminary (1947) held to this view and was even in their founding statement
 - In the 1960s two professors (Rogers and McKim sought to redefine the meaning of Infallibility and explain away inerrancy as a new fundamentalist doctrine
 - They argued that the Bible was only without error when it came to matters of Faith-
 - This reduced the Scriptures authority to salvation/ ethical and moral living- and the Bible erred in regard to science, history and even doctrinal matters
- In response to the continued attacks on the authority of Scripture, a group of over 300 evangelicals came together and drafted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy 1978

* Part of the Preface from the Chicago Statement

- “Being wholly and verbally God given, Scripture is without error or fault in all of its teaching, no less about what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, that in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual’s lives.”

Group Questions: Is this something we should really be concerned about? Is it worth fighting for?

E. Effects of Denying Inerrancy

- **We really cannot trust anything God said.**
 - If God has not been truthful in the minor matters, has He been in the major ones like salvation in Jesus alone?
 - **Gen 3:1-** “ *Did God really say.....*”

- **We make ourselves and our minds a higher standard of truth that God’s Word.**
 - **Gen 3:4-5** “⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil

- **If the Bible is wrong in minor details, it must be in some of its doctrines as well**
 - What doctrines are true?- Jesus’ virgin birth? Substitutionary atonement? The resurrection? The return of Christ? How can we ever truly put our faith in God??
 - How can we determine what is sin and what is not-what is moral or immoral? What is the standard?

III. **Conclusion/Summary:** Inerrancy is truly worth of our concern and defending its validity. Without it, we are left with no security, no faith, and left wondering..... “Did God really say.....?”

Further Reading:

Timothy P. Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (2015) Chapter 1.

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (2020) Chapter 5.

*****All participants will receive a copy of the entire Chicago Statement*

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Session #4

Key Scriptures: 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Luke 24:27, Romans 10:14-16, Ephesians 2:10

I. Is it Enough?

A. Defining Terms

- Often these questions arise in the discussion of the Bible:
 - Is it enough to teach us about God? Can we really get what we need from an ancient text, or should we seek some “experience” beyond? Does it provide guidance in this situation?
- These questions have to do with whether or not the Scriptures are **Sufficient**.
- **Sufficiency of Scripture** can be defined this way: “Scripture contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly and for obeying Him perfectly.” - Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.
 - Related to this issue is the fact that God has preserved his word sufficiently over centuries of copying so that we can trust our modern Bibles.

B. Sufficient in Knowledge of God and Salvation

2 Timothy 3:14-15 “¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Luke 24:27 “²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Romans 10:14-16 “¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

- Revisiting the Necessity of Scripture - no salvation can occur apart from the communication of God's Word.
- The Scriptures in themselves contain all that we need to know about how to be saved through Jesus.
 - This was one of the points of the Reformation: -"Scripture **Alone.**"

C. **Sufficient for Equipping the Believer to live out their faith and serve God.**

- Just as **Psalm 1** teaches: (see notes on session #1) The Scriptures are necessary to maintain life and produce spiritual fruit.
- We are created to bring God glory, to obey Him, and to serve with our gifts.

Ephesians 2:10 ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

- The Scriptures along with the Holy Spirit, provide the means by which we do this and **train** others.

***Examining 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ¹⁶ *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*

- **Teaching-** Training others in sound doctrine that handles God's divine word correctly.
- **Rebuke-**Educative act that makes someone aware of their sin to begin the process of repentance.
- **Correction:-** Act of restoring someone from an error-sinful or doctrinal. Church discipline tool
- **Training in Righteousness-** Carries the idea of parents disciplining and educating their children. This naturally extends to adults in the church as well.
- **Complete, equipped for every good work** -"Lacking nothing"- mature .Thoroughly prepared and equipped to

serve in a range of ministries. Complete to live out the Christian life.

- Without the Scriptures, a believer cannot sufficiently live out their faith and grow.

D. Sufficient in its comprehensive teaching on various subjects

- The Scriptures can be studied as a whole to determine what God has commanded on certain subjects.
 - Marriage, raising children, church discipline, the resurrection, Heaven, disagreements between believers ... etc.
- This does not mean that the Bible speaks about every subject in the whole of creation, or that it will be explicitly specific about your situation.
 - **Ex:** How to calculate how many electrons are in an atom, or which college should my child go to?
- The Bible does provide wisdom and teaches believers how to use good **discernment** in everyday decisions.

Group Questions: If the Bible is sufficient- why then did God continue to add to it? Did the OT saints not have what was sufficient, since it was before the NT?

E. Sufficient in Each Stage of Redemptive History

Hebrews 1:1 “*1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,*”

- Revelation was progressive in the Bible (given over a period of 1,500 years spanning three languages)
- At each stage of redemptive history, God’s people had what they **needed** to follow him and be thoroughly equipped.
 - Israel had the Pentateuch (first 5 books) at Moses death.
 - Time of Jesus, the apostles had the complete OT.
 - Christians now have the OT and NT
- The Word of God is sufficient and has always been for God’s people in any moment of history.

- This means we should never add to it- or equate anything else to its authority. (Book of Mormon, Apocrypha “lost gospels”)

II. Sufficiently Transmitted

Group Questions: Ok so the original manuscripts were error free (inerrant) but surely the copies could be wrong or distorted- right?- What do you think?

A. Copies, copies, copies

- 15th century- Gutenberg Printing Press- made possible mass printing on a large scale and rapidly.
- Prior to this invention, handwritten copying was the most common.
- This means for most of human history, the Bible was hand copied over and over.

Group Questions: Do think this could be a legitimate argument for errors in the Bible or to disregard some of its teachings?

- Hand copied texts are remarkably accurate, and God used this process to sufficiently preserve His Word to us today.
- The New Testament documents were written within the lifetime of the eyewitness of the events.

B. Agreement and Stability

- In 1947 the discovery of the **Dead Sea** Scrolls – demonstrated just how accurately the OT was copied.
 - One scroll from Isaiah predated the birth of Christ by 200 years.
- For the NT, we have an enormous amount of manuscripts to examine going all the way back to the second century AD. (over 5,000)
 - No other ancient document comes close to having this many copies.
- When comparing these manuscripts, the NT is more stable than any other ancient document in history. (more than

Plato's writings or Homer) over 90 percent accuracy in reconstructing.

- In both of these cases, it demonstrates that we can trust that the Bible we have in our hands is what God intended for us to have- and sufficiently got it to us.

III. **Conclusion/ Summary:** The Scriptures are sufficient for knowledge of salvation. They are sufficient for Christian growth and maturity and have been sufficiently transmitted to us today. Finally, they have no equal or tradition that can aide or take away from them.

Discussion Questions:

- What would you say to someone who claims to be a believer but never reads the Bible?
- Is it right to say, "The Bible is not enough, I need signs and wonders to help me grow in faith?" Why?
- Should we equate "lost books of the Bible," or the Book of Mormon with the Bible?

Further Readings:

Timothy P. Jones, *Why Should I Trust the Bible* (2019) appendix.

John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place* (2018) Chapter 18.

The Clarity of Scripture

Session #5

Key Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Psalm 119:105, 2 Peter 1:19

Group Questions: Is the Bible difficult to understand? Can it be understood?

I. Clarity and the Need for it

A. Defining it

- Clarity of Scripture means that “the Bible is written in such a way that it is able to be understood, but right understanding requires time, effort, the use of ordinary means, a willingness to obey, and the help of the Holy Spirit; and our understanding will remain imperfect in this lifetime.” - Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.
- God has so communicated the Scriptures that He has not left us to guess or wonder what His will is or what He wants or thinks.
 - This means that God expects His word to be **heard**, **understood**, and **obeyed**.
 - The Bible is not given in a code or heavenly dialect- but is expressed in human language, so His creatures can interact with it and know Him.

Group Question: Why does this subject matter to us at all?

1. **If the Bible is not clear enough to be read and understood, then no one can make decisive statements about what it says.**
 - This is the charge of *theological liberalism*- numerous conflicting meanings.
 - No absolute truths or biblical ethics
 - One can always argue- that is not the “only interpretation.”

2. **If the Bible is not clear enough to be read and understood by anyone, then only the “elite scholars” or someone else can determine meaning.**

- This is the argument of the Roman Catholic Church
- Task of interpreting lies with the bishops and the Pope of Rome- not believers.
 - Believers are forced to rely on the church’s interpretation to understand Scripture- and cannot question it.
- Reason why the reformers rebelled against it- *Sola Scriptura*
- Reason why there was such persecution over translating the Bible into English.

*God’s Word is given to all of His people to understand, learn from, and obey- and should be accessible to them.

B. Biblical Expectations of Clarity

***OT Examples**

Deut. 6:6-7 “⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Psalm 119: 130 & 105 “*The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. -Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*”

- The OT affirms that God expected the Israelites would be able to understand what he commanded, to obey it, and to find wisdom within it.
- Israel’s God could be heard, but not seen- pagan nations worshipped gods that could be seen (idols) but had no voice.

***NT Examples**

- Jesus assumed that people could read and understand God’s Word clearly and challenge them with it on many occasions.
 - “Have you not *read* what David did...?” **Matt 12:3**
 - “Have you not *read* the Law?” **Matt 12:25**

- “Have you not *read* what was said to you by God?” **Matt 22:31**
- “And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken!*” **Luke 24:25**

2 Peter 1:19 ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

- The New Testament authors expected their letters to be circulated among the churches to be read, understood and obeyed.

1 Timothy 4:13 ¹³ *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*”

1 Thessalonians 5:27 ²⁷ *I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.*

2 Corinthians 1:13 ¹³ *For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand*

Rev 1:3 ³ *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.*”

- This does not mean that some passages and or books of the Bible are not difficult to understand.

2 Peter 3:15-16 ¹⁵ *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*”

II. Requirements for the reader to understand the Scriptures

A. Time and Effort are required in order to understand the Bible correctly.

- The Bible itself commands believers to study and meditate on the Word of God over a period of time.

Psalms 1:2 *“but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Ezra 7:10 ¹⁰ *For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

2 Timothy 2:15 ^{“15} *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

- This involves understanding that the Bible was originally written in ancient languages and not our own.
- This means making use of tools available to us today (commentaries, dictionaries, Bible survey books)
- Reading through slowly and repeatedly

B . A Regenerated Heart is required in order to understand the Bible Correctly

- Even with all the tools and methods to interpret the Bible, it is impossible for an unbeliever to fully understand it.
- Man cannot use his reason alone to discern the Scriptures.
- Along with a new heart, the Holy Spirit provides illumination.

1 Cor 2:14 ^{“14} *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned*

John 14:26 ^{“26} *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

1 Cor 2:12 ^{“12} *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*

C . Humility is required in order to understand the Bible Correctly

- Although we can use the right methods and tools- and arrive at the correct interpretation- we are finite
- Our understanding is not complete in this life.
- Therefore, we need other faithful believers to keep us accountable and to study the Scriptures alongside us.
- We must be on guard against perverting the Scriptures by others and ourselves.

1 Cor 13:12 ^{“12} *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

III. Conclusion/ Summary: The Bible has been given by God to be heard, read, and obeyed by His people. He has given it in such a way that it is understandable to everyone who has been regenerated. Even though there are difficult passages and cultural/ historical differences, we can interpret its message with effort, time, and humility.

IV. Discussion Questions:

- How have difficult passages, and or books affected your personal Bible reading? What tools have been helpful?
- Are you more apt to not engage in some subjects because they may be hard to understand?
- By understanding the Bible can be understood clearly, how does this affect the “that’s your interpretation argument?”

Further Readings:

Matthew Barrett, *God’s Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (2016) 302-331.

John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (2010) 201-209.

Reading Scripture Correctly

Session #6

Key Scriptures: Luke 24:27, 2 Timothy 2:15

I. A Matter of Interpretation

A. Who controls meaning?

- There are two opposite methods of determining the meaning of a text.
- The first is called reader **response**
 - What does this mean to you?
 - How do you interpret it?
 - Flexible and subject to change depending on who reads the text.
 - Multiple meanings- no one true meaning
 - How the academic world approaches literature, art, music, and even some history.
- The other is called **authorial** intent
 - This means that the author determines the meaning of the text.
 - What the author meant to the original audience is most important.
 - Text has one meaning, but many applications.
 - Requires closer study about the author and the context.
 - Since God is the ultimate author of all Scripture- the question to ask is “*What meaning does God intend to communicate through this text.*”

Group Question: Since the authors are not alive to ask, how do we go about knowing what they meant when they wrote the text?

II. Using the Grammatical Historical Method

A. Author and Cultural Background

- We live in a different time and culture than when the Bible was written.
- We must acquaint ourselves with who the author was, who his audience was, and any important cultural detail that may shed light on the text.

*Examples

Acts 22:27-29 ²⁷ So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” ²⁸ The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” ²⁹ So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

- **Author:** Luke- traveling companion of Paul
- **Purpose:** To give an historical account of what happened in the early church
- **Cultural Details:** It was illegal to beat and imprison a Roman Citizen- especially without a trial.

1 John 5:13 ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

- **Author:** The Apostle John- eyewitness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
- **Purpose:** Occasional letter to strengthen the church against false teaching and give assurance
- **Cultural Details:** A group called the Gnostics were leading Christians astray by saying Jesus was not divine, and that they alone possessed the secret knowledge of God’s Kingdom and eternal life.

B . Understanding Language and Literary Genre

- The Bible comes to us in English, but it was written in three different languages over thousands of years.
 - Hebrew
 - Aramaic
 - Koine Greek
- All languages have nuanced and assumed cultural backgrounds attached to them.
- This means that the interpreter must take into account each word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph of the Biblical text to do careful Exegesis. (Bible Interpretation)
 - **Example:** English has one word of Love- Greek has three!

- Along with distinct language, we must understand the use of symbolism, metaphor, and even hyperbolic usage in the Bible
 - **Example:** John 10:9- “⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.
 - Jesus is not a literal door but is using this type of language to make a point.
 - **Example: Matt 5:29** “²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.
 - This is not a command to self-mutilate, but remove sin that makes you stumble.
- When we study the Bible, we must consider what kind of Genre is being studied as well.
- **Types:**
 - **Historical Narrative-** (Gospels, Genesis, Exodus, Acts)- Tells us what happened.
 - **Poetry/ Wisdom** (-Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon)- Shows believers relating to God and the way of living in covenant.
 - **Prophecy-** (Major and Minor Prophets)- proclaims a specific message from God- sometimes about future events (singular or deeper meaning)
 - **Epistles-** (Paul’s letters, Peter and John’s letters, Hebrews, Jude)- occasional letter written to a group of believers for a specific purpose.
 - **Apocalyptic-** (Daniel and Revelation)- Unveiling what God has planned for the future and end times- Uses symbolism and strange language.
- The type of literature used does not change the inerrancy or inspiration of Scripture but is to be studied differently.

III. Reading Canonically “Big Picture.”

A . Reading the Whole Story

- Although the Bible is one single book, it is also a library of 66 books.
- These books can be studied individually but need to be in light of the entire story of the Bible.
- Books, passages, and individual verses will never contradict one another, even if they pose difficulty understanding.
- We need to ask “Am I reading out of the Old Covenant with Israel? Or am I reading out of the New Covenant after the work of Christ?”
- Consider the Biblical framework and storyline of Scripture:
 - Creation
 - Fall
 - Redemption
 - Inauguration/ Consummation

“The sixty six books of Scripture intertwine to tell a single glorious story of God’s creation, humanity’s sin and God’s provision for the redemption of His people through Jesus Christ.” -Timothy Paul Jones, *How we got the Bible*, .

B . The Central Hinge of all History and the Bible is Jesus

- Everything in the Old Testament looks forwards and shadows the coming of Christ.
- Everything in the New Testament showcases and looks back in application to the work of Christ.
- Jesus Christ is the central figure and focus of all Scripture.

Gen 3:15: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*

Galatians 4:47: *“⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*

“Because Christ is the fixed point of reference for theology, we are concerned with how the text relates to Christ and how we relate to Christ. Jesus Christ is the link between every part of the Bible and ourselves.”

- Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*.

- The job of the reader/ interpreter is to understand the message of the Bible as it was first given (in its original context), identify the timeless theological truth, and then apply that to contemporary life.

IV. **Conclusion/ Summary:** God’s Word can be interpreted and read correctly, but it requires work and understanding of the biblical world, languages and genre. The Scripture should always be studied as one continuous message that points to Jesus Christ, and only then can proper application be made to the contemporary church.

Further Readings:

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying God’s Word* (2005), Ch. 6,7,10

Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (2010), Ch. 14,17, 21-27.

Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (2002), Ch. 7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- American Heritage College Dictionary*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- Augsburger, Daniel A. "Huldrych Zwingli and the Reformed Tradition." *Andrews University Press* 23, no. 3 (1985): 227–42.
- Augustine. St. Augustine: *Letters 1-82*. Translated by Sister Wilfrid Parsons. The Fathers of the Church. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1951.
- . *On Christian Teaching*. Translated by R. P. H. Green. Oxford: Oxford University, 2008.
- Barrett, Matthew. *God's Word Alone—the Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters*. Five Solas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 50. Waco, TX: Word, 2005.
- Blum, Edwin A. *1 & 2 Peter*. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Hebrews through Revelation*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein, 209–89. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.
- Boice, James Montgomery. *Psalms*. Vol. 1. Paperback ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Brand, Chad Owen. "Defining Evangelicalism." In *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, edited by Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, 281–304. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Bush, L. Russ, and Tom J. Nettles. *Baptists and the Bible*. Rev. and exp. ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999.
- Cairns, Earle Edwin. *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. 3rd rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. Edited by John T. McNeil. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Library of Christian Classics 21 and 22. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.
- Carson, D. A., ed. *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Davids, Peter H. *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006.

- Dempster, Stephen G. "The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment." In *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, edited by D. A. Carson, 181–203. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Dockery, David S. *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Elwell, Walter A., ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- . *Truth or Consequences: The Promise & Perils of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Erickson, Millard J., Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, eds. *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Fairbairn, Patrick. *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956.
- Feinberg, John S. *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. *John Owen on the Christian Life*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Theology of Lordship 4. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010.
- Fuhr, Richard Alan. *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology*. Nashville: B & H, 2016.
- Gallup. "Fewer in U.S. Now See Bible as Literal Word of God." July 6, 2022. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/394262/fewer-bible-literal-word-god.aspx>.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Green, Gene. *Jude and 2 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Green, Michael E. *2 Peter and Jude*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 18. Nottingham, England: IVP, 2015.
- Grenz, Stanley J., and Roger E. Olson. *20th Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*. Paperback ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.

- Guthrie, Donald. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 14. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Hamilton, James M. *Psalms*. 2 vols. Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021.
- Henry, Carl F. H. *Frontiers in Modern Theology*. Chicago: Moody, 1972.
- Hill, Andrew E., and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Jones, Timothy Paul. *Christian History Made Easy*. Rev. ed. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2009.
- . *How We Got the Bible*. Torrance, CA: Rose, 2015.
- . *Why Should I Trust the Bible*. Fearn, Scotland: Geanies, 2019.
- Josephus. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Translated by William Whiston. New updated ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987.
- Keel, Othmar. *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*. Paperback reprint. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017.
- Keil, Carl Friedrich, and Franz Delitzsch. *The Pentateuch*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Kreider, Alan. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.
- Kruger, Michael J. *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- . *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013.
- Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. New American Commentary, vol. 34. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.
- Liefeld, Walter L. *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Longman, Tremper, III. *Psalms*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vols. 15–16. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014.
- Luther, Martin. *The Misuse of the Mass*. Quoted in *God's Word Alone—the Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters* by Matthew Barrett. Five Solas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Machen, J. Gresham. *Christianity and Liberalism*. Warrendale, PA: Ichthus, 2020.
- Marsden, George M. *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- McCartney, Dan, and Charles Clayton. *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. 2nd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002.

- Merrick, J., and Stephen Garrett, eds. *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Mohler, Albert R. “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy.” In *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, edited by J. Merrick and Stephen Garrett, 29–58. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Moo, Douglas J. *2 Peter, and Jude*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.
- Olson, Roger E. *Against Liberal Theology: Putting the Brakes on Progressive Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022.
- Packer, J. I. “*Fundamentalism*” and the Word of God: *Some Evangelical Principles*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995.
- Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. 40 Questions. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.
- Rogers, Jack Bartlett, and Donald K. McKim. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Ross, Allen P. *A Commentary on the Psalms*. Kregel Exegetical Library. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.
- Saarinen, Risto. *Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. New York: Baker, 2020.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *1, 2 Peter, Jude*. New American Commentary, vol. 37. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003.
- Shaddix, Jim, and Daniel L. Akin. *Exalting Jesus in 2 Peter and Jude*. Christ-Centered Exposition. Nashville: Holman, 2018.
- Smith, Eric C. “1922: Northern Baptist Lose Their Confession.” *Southern Seminary Magazine* 90, no. 2 (2022): 27–31.
- Towner, Philip H. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. New International Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. “On the Historical and Dogmatic Methods in Theology (1898).” Translated by Jack Forstman. In *Gesammelte Schriften*, 728–53. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1913.
- VanGemerem, William A. *Psalms*. In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, 3–880. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.
- Warfield, Benjamin B. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2020.

- Weiser, Artur. *The Psalms: A Commentary*. Translated by Herbert Hartwell. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962.
- Wellum, Stephen J. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 1, *From Canon to Concept*. Brentwood, TN: B & H, 2024.
- . *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997.
- Woodbridge, John D., and Kenneth S. Kantzer. *Biblical Authority: Infallibility and Inerrancy in the Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.
- Yarbrough, Robert W. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018.

ABSTRACT

TRAINING BELIEVERS IN THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE AT MADISON AVE BAPTIST CHURCH, GOLDSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

Adam Joel Street, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

This project was developed with the purpose and goal of increasing the understanding of the doctrine of Scripture to strengthen confidence in biblical authority at Madison Ave Baptist Church. As part of the teaching process, a six-week curriculum will be developed, reviewed by an expert panel, implemented, and then studied for effectiveness. Chapter 1 deals with the ministry context, the rationale for the project, purpose and goals, method of research as well as delimitations and limitations. Chapter 2 argues for the trustworthiness, necessity, and sufficiency of Scripture. All these components are essential for a foundational and robust view of the doctrine of Scripture. Chapter 3 argues that historic Christianity has always held a high view of Scripture even though during the twentieth century a low view of the Bible became popular. Additionally, this chapter presents recent theological and hermeneutical methods to recover this high view of Scripture. Chapter 4 will detail the six-week teaching sessions and implementation. Chapter 5 contains an overall evaluation of the project's effectiveness, as well as reflections for further improvement.

VITA

Adam Joel Street

EDUCATION

AA, Fruitland Baptist Bible College, 2004

BA, North Greenville University, 2008

MACE, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Youth Minister Intern, Campfield Memorial Baptist Church, Ellenboro, North Carolina, 2002–2003

Senior Pastor, Clifton Second Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 2007–2010

Associate Pastor of Family Discipleship, Enon Baptist Church, East Bend, North Carolina, 2012–2017

Associate Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, London, Kentucky, 2018–2019

Senior Pastor, Madison Ave Baptist Church, Goldsboro, North Carolina, 2019–