

## *Week Two:*

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# What Does the Bible Say About Itself?

Last week we examined the *Who?* of Bible reading. *Who* is equipped to read and understand God's Word? Because the Bible is no ordinary book, the key to reading and understanding it is knowing the Author.

Although organized religion is quick to hard sell the Bible, people understand God's Word through relationship. If you and Jesus are just nodding acquaintances from church—you do your thing, He does His, and you're crossing your fingers about judgment day—don't count on the Bible being an easy Book to handle. If you know Jesus—if He is your Lord and Savior—you'll be able to understand His Word because His Spirit dwells in you. It will take time and effort, but it will work.

This week we'll turn our attention to another W—*What?*

*What* does the Bible say about itself? *What* makes this perpetual best-seller unique among all other books? *What* are some of the claims it makes? As we work through the deep portion of this week's study, we'll unearth some answers to these questions.

If you've studied much in this past, you'll be familiar with many of these texts and answers. Tight "book answers" from isolated texts, however, will not always satisfy the searching soul. Memorizing 2 Timothy 3:16-17 may not be enough to deeply convince you that God's Word is inspired. As we read God's Word widely, though, and immerse ourselves in it we begin to see that its truth self-authenticates.

In reading widely, you'll see how everything holds together and attests to itself which is utterly amazing in a document involving about 40 human authors over a time period of at least 1,500 years.

The Bible did not drop down out of the sky, 66 books bound and ready to go. Like other books, it is a work of man, but unlike any other book it is not *merely* a work of man. The Bible is 100% the work of man and 100% the work of God. Let's take a look at some of what it says about itself.

## Deep . . .

### *Context:*

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy shortly before his death at the hands of Rome. From the context, we know the “you” being addressed is Timothy.

**READ:** 2 Timothy 3:14-17

- 14 *You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,*
- 15 *and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*
- 16 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*
- 17 *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

### *Questions:*

What does Paul instruct Timothy to do in verses 14-15?

What did he know from childhood?

What words or phrases in these verses 14-17 refer to God’s Word?  
(If you’re marking the text, circle both occurrences.)

What three-word phrase does Paul use to describe God's Word in verse 16?

## LOOKING DEEPER

*Theopneustos*—θεόπνευστος—the compound Greek word translated “inspired” literally means “God-breathed.”

What benefits does Paul say come from God's Word?

(Underline the statements following the references to God's Word and use those to make a simple list to answer the question.)

How much of Scripture does Paul say is inspired and profitable? Why is this significant?

What affect will it have on the person who belongs to God?

### *Context:*

The disciple Peter who witnessed first-hand Jesus' life and ministry writes one of the New Testament letters termed a General Epistle because it was not addressed to a specific church congregation.

**READ:** 2 Peter 1:20-21

- 20 *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,*
- 21 *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

### *Questions:*

According to Peter, what does *not* characterize "prophecy of Scripture"?

What does characterize "prophecy of Scripture"?

In simple language, how did the authors of the Bible write the Bible?

What authority does that imply in our lives?

### *Context:*

Psalm 119 is a 22-stanza, 176-line acrostic poem that declares what God's Word is and does. This week we're only going to look at one of the stanzas. The psalm is often thought to be the work of David though scholars are divided on this topic. Whoever the psalmist is, his heart for God and His Word certainly resembles David's.

**READ:** Psalm 119:97-104

- 97    *O how I love Your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.*
- 98    *Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,  
For they are ever mine.*
- 99    *I have more insight than all my teachers,  
For Your testimonies are my meditation.*
- 100   *I understand more than the aged,  
Because I have observed Your precepts.*
- 101   *I have restrained my feet from every evil way,  
That I may keep Your word.*
- 102   *I have not turned aside from Your ordinances,  
For You Yourself have taught me.*
- 103   *How sweet are Your words to my taste!  
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*
- 104   *From Your precepts I get understanding;  
Therefore I hate every false way.*

### *Questions:*

What can we learn about the psalmist from the text?

(If you're marking the text, circling the pronoun "I" will help you thoroughly answer this question.)

What synonyms does the psalmist use for God's Word?

(You should find one in each verse.)

Looking at those synonyms, what is the psalmist's attitude toward God's Word?

What benefits does God's Word bring to the psalmist?

Which of those benefits could you use today?

## WIDE . . .

I hope that the wide readings we're doing will ignite a desire in you to read through your Bible this coming year. So as you do the wide reading, keep track of where you've been by simply making a check mark by the books you've read in the Table of Contents in your Bible. I'm all for starting a read-through in December to give myself a head start and a little forward momentum heading into January. After all, where is it written that January 1 is the kick-off day for Bible reading? It isn't!

### *Wide Readings . . .*

**READ:** (or start reading!) Genesis

If you're newer to Bible reading, then go ahead and settle into Genesis for your wide reading. It's filled with accounts of the beginnings of God's dealings with men. If you find yourself getting hung up on genealogies (there aren't too many) just skim over them until the narrative picks back up. They're important but don't let them buck you off the Bible-reading horse. You can pick them up another time reading through.

OR

**READ:** 1 Samuel

Many people have tried and failed to read through the Bible so often that they're experts in Genesis and little else. If that's you, I'd like to invite you to begin reading 1 Samuel this week. This piece of narrative will take you through 2 Kings, so read as long or as short as you'd like.

OR

**READ:** a Biblical book of your choosing

This study is all about joy in the Word at Christmas time! If you choose something else, though, how about making it a complete book of the Bible as opposed to bits and pieces here and there. Deal?

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