

# TREK 201

## Core Christian Beliefs

### **LESSON 1 –THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE AND REVELATON (BIBLIOLOGY AND REVELATION)**

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

TREK is a Discipleship Ministry of Rockpointe Church

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## Introduction: The Bible and Revelation

Knowing God is the most important thing in life (1 John 4:7-8). How can we know God? God created us primarily for relationship with Himself. How can we know who He is? We cannot know God unless He reveals Himself to us. Emil Brunner reminds us, “**through God alone can God be known.**” We know God and have fellowship with Him because He has revealed Himself. A common Greek word for “reveal” is *apokalyptō*. It expresses the idea of uncovering what was concealed. God took initiative to reveal Himself. Revelation then is God’s work and is God-centered.

How did God reveal Himself? He has done this in general revelation (the world) and special revelation (the Word of God). General revelation is God’s communication of Himself to all persons at all times and in all places through the world of nature. Special revelation is God’s communications of Himself through the Word (Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ).

**DISCUSS:** Why do we need God to reveal Himself to us? Why can’t we figure this out on our own? (Deut 29:29)

Because of our sinful nature, our intellect and reasoning is perverted by sin (Rom 1:21-32) so we need an authoritative revelation of religious truth. Without it, we’d sink into a moral and spiritual abyss. There is no way we could understand God or His love without His divine help. Our sinful nature drives us from God not toward Him. The Bible says, as sinners, we make God our enemy (Rom 5:8,10). We like Adam and Eve try to hide from Him not race toward Him.

### GENERAL REVELATION

General revelation of God is available to all man, not expressed in words (non-propositional) or specific actions, but in creation, conscience, and history.

General Revelation is knowledge of God that can be perceived by all mankind.

- It is universal (Rom 1:18-20)
- Available throughout all creation (Ps 19:1-6)
- Available to all men, although they may not understand it. (Acts 14:17; Acts 17:27; Rom 1:20;).

General Revelation is seen in God’s preservation of the world (Col 1:13; Heb 1:3) and in his providence (Matt 5:45; Acts 17:24-28; Rom 8:28).

**READ Ps 19:1-6 and Rom 1:19-20.** What do we learn about God?

**READ Rom 2:14-15.** What does this passage tell us how we learn of God’s moral standards?

General revelation also encompasses rational arguments for the existence of God. Through observing the natural world, natural theology attempts to prove God's

existence, define God's attributes, or derive correct doctrine based solely from human reason. Theologians and philosophers have proposed five major arguments:

1. *Cosmological Argument* (Cause and effect). The universe is the effect of a greater cause, an intelligent Creator. The universe cannot create itself or come from nothing, therefore must have come from something else. God then, is the single uncaused cause.
2. *Teleological Argument* (Order/Intelligent Design). The universe displays an amazing amount of order in its chaos. But even more, it exhibits design which necessitates a Designer.
3. *Anthropological Argument* (Humanity reflects deity) – Man's extraordinary abilities, superiority over creation, and his "mannishness" (Schaeffer) reflect a greater personal Creator. Some stress man's rational abilities, while others see the relationships with the Trinity as key to man's personality.
4. *Moral Argument* (Common Morality) – All men have some sense of right and wrong and some set of common code. Man's sense of morality reflects the divine image of a moral God.
5. *Ontological Argument* (God's definition requires existence) – Anselm first set forth this powerful and difficult argument. It argues that the definition of God as the greatest of beings necessitates His existence. 1) The idea of a thing is greater if it exists in reality, than if only in the mind. 2) Man conceives the greatest being – God. 3) For the idea to exist in the mind as "greatest" it must exist in reality or not be the greatest.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL REVELATION;

- How does the following statement address concerns about those who might never hear the Gospel: All people have *some* knowledge that God exists, *some* knowledge of His character, and *some* knowledge of His moral standards?
- What does general revelation tell us about a personal knowledge of God as a loving Father who redeems His people and establishes covenants with them?
- How does the knowledge of God which all humans have (if they do not suppress it) bring them to the conclusion that they are guilty in relationship to God?

#### SPECIAL REVELATION

Special revelation is God's self disclosure which He provided in His historical supernatural activities, in the Bible, and definitively in Jesus Christ. (Heb 1:1-2). Special revelation is primarily redemptive and personal. Within time and space God has acted and spoken to redeem the human race from sin. In the Bible God revealed Himself in many different ways:

1. Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 18; Heb. 1:1-3; Acts 9:4-6)
2. The Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 4:4ff)
3. Theophany (Ex. 24:9; 22:18-22; Num. 12:8; 14:14)

4. Divine Voice or Writing (Gen. 3:9-19; Dan. 5:5; Luke 3:33; 4:22)
5. Miracles (10 Egyptian Plagues; 2 Kings 6:6; the Resurrection)
6. Angels (Dan. 9:20-21; Luke 2:10-11; Rev. 1:1)
7. Satan and Demons (Gen. 3:1-5; Matt. 4:3-9; Luke 8:28)
8. Prophets and Prophecy (Elijah; Joel 2; 1 Cor 14:1; Eph. 3:5)
9. Visions (Isa. 1:1; 6:1; Ez. 1:3; Zech. 1:8; Acts 10:3)
10. Trances (Acts 10:10; 22:17)
11. Dreams (Gen. 20:3, 6; 31:11, 24, 40-41)
12. Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Deut 22:8)
13. Lots (Pr. 16:22; Acts 1:21-26)
14. Direct inspiration (Creation account in Gen. 1-3)
15. Divine dictation (10 Commandments; Deut. 9:10)
16. Spirit's Guidance (Acts 20:22; 1 Cor. 7:12, 25)
17. Holy Spirit's voice (Acts 8:29; 13:2)
18. Church decisions (Acts 6:1-7; 15:19-29)
19. History (war, Num. 21:14; Josh 10:13; Ez. 25:7; Mic. 6:5)
20. Natural Phenomenon (rain, drought, Gen. 7:4; 1 Kings 7:1; Jam. 5:7; Rev. 8:7)

Today, the Bible is the source of God's special revelation. In the written word we can identify God, know and understand something about Him, His will, and His work, and point others to Him. The Bible is of crucial importance. Through the Bible the Spirit witnesses to individuals of God's grace and the need of faith response (Eph 2:8-10). In the Bible we learn of God's redemption of sinners in Christ Jesus (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim 1:15). Our faith response to God's Word and acts, recorded and interpreted by the prophets and apostles, calls for us to embrace whatever is taught in Holy Scripture. The following seven statements summarize what we believe about the Bible.

### **What we believe about the Bible**

1. Scripture claims for itself to be divine Scripture – God's authoritative Word (Mt.15:6; Rom.3:2; 1Pt. 1:23; Heb. 4:12)
2. The Bible is Inspired (God-breathed): (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Mt. 5:17-18; 22:43; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 3:16)
3. The Bible is Authoritative: (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2; Jn. 17:17)
4. The Bible in the original autographs are inerrant: (Ps. 19:7; 119:89; Mt. 5:18)
5. The Bible is Infallible: (Jn. 10:35; Is. 40:8; 55:11; Mt. 15:3-6)
6. The Bible is reliable: (Mt. 5:17-18)
7. The Bible is trustworthy: (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

These statements raise some important questions we need to explore:

- How do we know the Bible is from God?
- Do we have the right books?
- Why should I believe/obey the Scriptures?
- Who can understand the Bible?
- Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think and to do?

## INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE: HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD?

What do we mean when we say the Bible is inspired (2 Tim 3:16 NASB)? It is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which resulted in their writings being an accurate record of the revelation of God and actually being the Word of God. Before we jump into talking about inspiration, let's define three key words:

- **REVELATION:** This is God's manifestation of Himself. God reveals. He pulls back the veil to uncover what has previously been unknown. (Deut 29:29)
- **INSPIRATION:** As mentioned above it is the guidance of Holy Spirit enabling messengers to deliver/record in a trustworthy manner spiritual truths in revelation from God (2 Tim 3:16, NASB).
- **ILLUMINATION:** This is insight into spiritual truths provided by Holy Spirit that enables us to grasp and apply Biblical truth (John 14:26). We'll talk more about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in another lesson.

The Bible itself claims to be of divine origin.

- 2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV) “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.” Peter affirms that the prophecies of the Old Testament were not produced by man's will but by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) “ 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.” The Bible is “God-spined” or “God breathed”. The Bible is divinely produced. In v 17, Paul affirms the Bible's value. It builds us to maturity and equips us for anything God wants/commands us to do. It is our complete “tool box” for Christian living.
- “Thus says the Lord” appears 417 times in the ESV. (Ex 5:1; Isa 66:1; Jer 2:2). You would not be surprised most comes from the prophets.
- “The Word of the Lord” appears 261 times in the ESV. It came to Abraham (Gen 15:1,4), Samuel (1 Sam 15:10), Solomon (1 Kings 6:11), Elijah (1 Kings 18:1), Isaiah (Isa 38:4), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4) and Ezekiel (Eze 1:3).

All these passages give a united testimony that the Bible originated from God and is His message to humanity. But how did God get it to the human writers? Two of the most prominent theories are:

- **Dynamic.** This theory emphasizes the combination of divine and human elements in the process of inspiration and of the writing of the Bible. The Holy Spirit directed the writer to the thoughts or concepts he should have and allowed the writer's own distinctive personality to come into play in the choice of words and expressions all the while making sure the message was recorded in a trustworthy manner.
- **Plenary Verbal.** This theory suggests the personality and experience of the writer were by-passed. The Holy Spirit was so involved He gave the writers the exact words God wanted to use at that point. (Some would suggest the Holy Spirit dictated the words; others who hold to this theory would not be so strong to

use the word dictation). This view does not account for the writing style differences.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT INSPIRATION

- What difference does it make if we believe only parts of the Bible are inspired from God?
- What is the difference in saying the Bible is inspired than saying C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia is inspired?
- The Bible was written so long ago in seemingly such a time of limited knowledge and low tech. Do you fear modern technology will uncover some scientific or historical fact that will contradict the Bible?

#### **CANON OF THE BIBLE – DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT BOOKS?**

The fact of the inspiration of the Bible as God's special revelation to man naturally leads to the question (since many other religious books were written during both the Old and New Testament periods) do we have the right books. What particular books are canonical, that is, what books are inspired and should be recognized as a part of God's authoritative revelation? The word canon is used to describe those books recognized as inspired of God. Literally, it means (a) a straight rod or bar; (b) a measuring rule as a ruler used by masons and carpenters; then (c) a rule or standard for testing straightness. The term came to be applied to the decisions of the Councils as rules by which to live. It is important to note that religious councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired, rather they simply recognized that which God had inspired.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT CANON**

The original copies of the Old Testament were written from the time of Moses (c. 1450 B.C.) to the time of Malachi (435-400 B.C.). Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we did not possess copies of the Old Testament earlier than around 895 A.D. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, they gave us a Hebrew text from the second to first century B.C. of all but one of the books (Esther) of the Old Testament. This was of the greatest importance, for it provided a much earlier check on the accuracy of the Masoretic text, which has now proved to be extremely accurate. The Masoretes were Jewish scholars who copied, edited, and distributed the Hebrew Old Testament between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. The Old Testament Canon consists of 39 books in a threefold division: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

#### **NEW TESTAMENT CANON**

James was most likely the first NT book written (between 45-50 A.D) some twenty years after the ascension of Christ. Revelation was the last book written (about 90-95 A.D). Because the apostles, by virtue of their apostolic office, had authority to write words of Scripture, the authentic written teachings of the apostles were accepted by the early church as part of the canon of Scripture. Then most of the New Testament in the canon

is because of direct authorship by the apostles. Five books- Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews, and Jude- were not written by apostles. Mark, Luke, and Acts were accepted probably because of the close association of Mark with the apostle Peter, and of Luke (the author of Luke-Acts) with the apostle Paul. Similarly, Jude apparently was accepted by virtue of the author's connection with James (see Jude 1) and the fact that he was the brother of Jesus. Hebrews, first assumed, but later rejected, to be written by Paul, was accepted due to its the intrinsic qualities of the book itself and early readers as well as believers today conclude its ultimate author can only have been God himself. Most scholars today concede the human author remains anonymous.

In terms of how and when the early Church Fathers declared canonical the accepted Holy Scriptures already in circulation, their principle criteria were:

**Antiquity:** Did the letters or writings belong to the apostolic age? Before 100AD? Could the author be identified and attested by living witnesses or disciples of the author (Luke 1:2-3)? Were the writers Apostles directly called to minister with and eyewitnesses of Jesus?

**Catholicity:** Are the letters widely circulated and enjoyed among the largest and closest regions of Palestine from the earliest days of authorship? Thus, Catholicity denotes the universal character of the letters and how they speak to the plurality of Churches, self-attesting to their own authority as God-inspired and useful for every New Testament Church.

**Orthodoxy:** Does the content of each letter reveal an inspirational character about itself, as having been inspired and illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit as it attests to the nature of God, His Church and the doctrine(s) by which men are to live holy lives?

Hence, the letters or books of the Bible were recognized and declared "canonical" only because they were *already* widely used and employed as Holy Scripture for three hundred years before any canonical tests were applied.

**Criteria for canonization-** Col 4:16; 1 Thes. 4:15

1. Apostolic or prophetic authorship (2 Pet. 1:20-21; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; 1 Jn. 4:6)
2. Acceptance and circulation among the early church
3. Internal consistency – Unity of message: evidence of inspiration & authority
4. Historical accuracy – Uniformity w/ O.T.
5. Reflects spiritual attestation – Claims for itself divine inspiration as Scripture

In 367 A.D. a letter written by Athanasius contained an exact list of the twenty-seven New Testament books we have today. Thirty years later, in 397 A.D, the Council of Carthage, representing the churches in the western part of the Mediterranean world, recognized the already accepted books of Scripture which met the tests of canonicity. 66 Books recognized = our modern Bible.

## OTHER WRITINGS DURING BIBLICAL TIMES

There were other writings especially between 300 BC and 100 AD. The most familiar is called the Apocrypha which is found in Catholic Bibles (Douay Version) but not those used by Protestants. These books were never accepted by the Jews as Scripture. Jerome in his Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (completed in 404 A. D.) gave support to their inclusion, even though Jerome himself said they were not “books of the canon” but merely “books of the church” that were helpful and useful for believers. The wide use of the Latin Vulgate in the following centuries guaranteed their continued accessibility, but the fact that they had no Hebrew original behind them, and their exclusion from the Jewish canon, as well as the lack of their citation in the New Testament, led many to view them with suspicion or to reject their authority. It was not until 1546, at the Council of Trent, that the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the Apocrypha to be part of the canon. The Apocrypha includes some specific Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory and prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:39-46), and salvation by works (almsgiving – Tobit 12:9).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CANON:

- Why is it important to your Christian life to know which writings are God’s words and which are not?
- How would your Christian life be different if God’s words were contained not only in the Bible but also in the official declarations of the church throughout history?
- Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and members of other cults have claimed present-day revelations from God that they count equal to the Bible in authority. What reasons can you give to indicate the claims are false?

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE: WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE/OBEY THE SCRIPTURES?

Why should I believe/obey the Scriptures? How do we know that the Bible is God’s Word and a book of authority? All the words in Scripture are God’s words. This is what the Bible claims for itself. The Bible is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16) and gets its truth, authority, power, holy character from God himself. As we read the Bible, we become convinced that the Bible is God’s Word (2 Pet 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit speaks in and through the words of the Bible to our hearts and gives us an inner assurance that these are the words of God speaking to us. Listen to what Paul writes: “When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths. <sup>14</sup> But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can’t understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.” 1 Corinthians 2:13–14 (NLT)

The technical term that declares the Bible is true, authoritative and does not contain error is called inerrancy (Prov 30:5; Ps 18:30; Rev 22:6). The doctrine of inerrancy



means that the Bible is entirely truthful and reliable in all that it affirms in its original manuscripts. The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. You may also hear the Bible described as infallible. Often infallible and inerrancy are used interchangeably. Although there are some fine line differences both suggest the same about the Bible.

Because God is the ultimate author of the Bible (2 Tim 3:16) , and because God is always perfectly truthful (Tit 1:2), it follows that his Word is completely truthful as well. Inerrancy does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact there is to know about any one subject, but it affirms that what it does say about any subject is true. Inerrancy applies only to the first or original copies of the biblical documents. None of these exist. We only have copies. “What is the use, then, of placing so great importance on a doctrine that applies only to manuscripts that no one has? In reply to this objection, it may first be stated that for over 99 percent of the words of the Bible, we know what the original manuscript said. Even for many of the verses where there are textual variants (that is, different words in different ancient copies of the same verse), the correct decision is often quite clear, and there are really very few places where the textual variant is both difficult to evaluate and significant in determining the meaning. In the small percentage of cases where there is significant uncertainty about what the original text said, the general sense of the sentence is usually quite clear from the context.” Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE:

- If you want to persuade someone that the Bible is God’s Word, what do you want that person to read more than any other piece of literature?
- Who would try to make people want to disbelieve/disobey something in Scripture?
- Do you know of any proven fact in all of history that has shown something in the Bible to be false?
- Can you say that when you read the Bible you hear the voice of God speaking to you in a way that is true of no other book?

#### THE CLARITY OF THE BIBLE: WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly? The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it. The Bible itself acknowledges that some passages of Scripture are “hard to understand” (2 Pet 3:15-16), referring to some aspects of Paul’s letters). In general, however, with the illumination of the Spirit (2 Tim 2:7) the teaching of the Bible is clear to all who seek understanding with the goal of knowing and obeying God. Norman Geisler said it this way: “not everything but the essential teaching. In the Bible the main things are plain things and the plain things are main things.”

What evidence do we have this is the case?

- “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.” Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (ESV). Moses was telling the people they were to teach God’s commands to their children. This command carries the expectancy they could understand it.
- God’s Word is said to “make wise the simple” (Ps 19:7; 2 Tim 3:15). God expected that all of his people would know and be able to talk about his Word, with proper application to ordinary situations in life.
- Most of the New Testament epistles are written to entire congregations not to church leaders. (1 Cor 1:2, Gal 1:2).
- The New Testament states that the ability to understand Scripture rightly is more a moral and spiritual than intellectual ability (2 Cor 3:14-16, James 1:5-6).

One way to avoid misunderstanding of Scripture is to apply principles of interpretation. See Appendix A, Five Rules for Interpretation and Appendix B, Process for Understanding Scripture.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT CLARITY:

- If the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture is true, why does there seem to be so much disagreement among Christians about the teaching of the Bible?
- What would happen to the church if most believers gave up reading the Bible for themselves and only listened to Bible teachers or read books about the Bible?
- Church leaders at the time of Martin Luther said they wanted to keep the Bible in Latin to prevent the common people from reading it and then misinterpreting it. What do you think about that idea?
- What comes to your mind when you hear about a new translation being published?

#### **THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE: IS THE BIBLE ENOUGH FOR KNOWING WHAT GOD WANTS US TO THINK AND TO DO?**

Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do? Does the Bible provide all that we need in order to know God truly and personally, and everything we need Him to tell us in order for us to live an abundant, godly life? READ: Ps 19:7-9; 2 Tim 3:15. In 2 Tim 3:16-17, Paul says that God’s word reveals enough so that we are able to know, trust, and obey him. The Bible commands that nothing should be taken away or added which indicates its sufficiency (Deut 4:2; Rev 22:18-19). Norman Geisler addressed the sufficiency of the Bible this way: “Nothing more, nothing less and nothing else. Is all that is necessary for faith and practice.”

As believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should be encouraged that God has provided all that we need in order to know Him and live as He intends. We should not fear that He has withheld something we might need Him to say in order for us to know how to please

Him, or that He will have to somehow supplement his Word with new instructions for some new situation that arises in our high tech world.

We then should be encouraged that the Bible is sufficient as we try to discover what God would have us to think (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to do (in a particular situation). Because the Bible is sufficient, God does not require us to believe anything about Himself or His redemptive work that is not found in Scripture. Since the Bible is sufficient, nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication. We can live the Christian life knowing that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

- In your Christian journey to deepen your relationship with God, how much emphasis have you placed on reading the Bible itself and how much on reading other Christian books?
- In seeking to know God's will for your daily life, what is the relative emphasis you have put on reading Scripture itself and on reading other Christian books?
- If the Bible contains everything we need God to tell us for obeying him perfectly, what is the role of the following in helping us to find God's will for ourselves: advice from others; sermons or Bible classes; our consciences; our feelings; the leading of the Holy Spirit as we sense him prompting our inward desires and subjective impressions; changes in circumstances?

#### CONCLUSION

Review these summary thoughts.

#### **Basic Assumptions for Evangelical-Biblical Theology:**

1. Christian theology derives its knowledge –first, from the Bible.
2. There are normative rules for the normal, plain interpretation of Scripture which should dictate every reading & application.
3. The New Testament, as the complete record of God's revelation takes priority in Scripture, allowing for a more complete understanding and fulfillment of God's divine plan. (O.T. & N.T. testify to Jesus as Lord: Lk.24:27; Jn. 5:39; Acts 13:27; 1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 4:23-24; Heb. 1:1-40)

As we approach God's Word and the theology drawn from it, we note:

1. The Holy Spirit is our Guide and Teacher for all spiritual knowledge (John 14:26; 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:9-3:2)
2. The carnal mind, the lost soul, and the flesh-filled Christian cannot appraise (learn or judge) the spiritual things of God or His Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1-2)
3. The task of the Spirit is to illuminate our mind and spirit – to the end that we glorify Christ (Jn. 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3)

The most convincing reason to believe that the Bible is inspired, inerrant, clear, and sufficient is because this is what Jesus believed. His teaching assumed that the OT was the authoritative Word of his Father: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17–18 (ESV).

Jesus took Scripture to be the authoritative Word of God (Luke 24:27) upon which He based his entire life. Those who follow Christ are called to treat Scripture (OT and NT) in the same way. For Christians, the Bible is a source of great delight and joy. God is to be diligently sought in his Word (1 Pet 2:2) . The Word of God is a precious treasure that deserves to be studied, meditated upon, and obeyed.

The Proverb writer says it well: “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.” Proverbs 2:1–5 (ESV)

**APPENDIX A**  
**Dr. Matthew Harding**

**5 BASIC RULES FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION**

1. The Bible can never be made to say (today) what it never meant. (Discover who the audience was and the original author's intention to his audience)
2. Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Let the clearer sections of Scripture clarify more difficult sections of Scripture.
3. The rule of totality stands! What does the *whole* counsel of God's Word speak to the one theme, issue, problem, or context. (Though there are different contexts, settings, cultural cues, and authors, there can be no contradiction of truth. The Holy Spirit is the Author & He nor His message is schizophrenic)<sup>2</sup> *Peter 1:21*
4. Scripture is only rightly understood within the text's immediate context. What is the point of the whole chapter that the text is situated?
5. Rely first and foremost on the Holy Spirit to guide you to understanding of the texts of Scripture. *John 16:13-14*
  - A. What does the text say? = Plain and literal meaning
  - B. What did the text mean to original audience? Intention
  - C. How does the text APPLY to me today?

The Text = ONE meaning, but *many* applications

**3 GUIDES TO DISCOVERING THE MEANING OF DIFFICULT TEXTS**

1. Many texts highlight a **direct command**, admonition, or conditional appeal within a cultural and **local** context; a direct and **specific application** in a local church. (**The How/Method**)
2. The text then reveals a **Universal Principle** which reflects the Divine ideal. (**Spiritual/Warrant**) Thus, the universal principle applies to all people, of all cultures, of all time while the biblical cultural context may only apply to that local church setting (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:2-16)
3. Many texts contain an **Axiomatic Truth** = Self-evident claim about God/ Divine Ideal. This theological absolute is the basis for the warrant and the application of Truth.

APPENDIX B

PROCESS FOR UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

(from THE THEOLOGICAL PROGRAM  
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