

Doctrine - The Bible

Sign Title: The Bible

September 26, 2010

Good morning! It is good to see everyone. My name is Kurt. We are in the second week of our series on “Doctrine” where we are learning the big rocks of our faith. Last week we began by looking at God. We studied God’s inner essence, we studied the Trinity. We learned how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, relate to one another. The relationship between them is defined by love. This morning we move from how God relates within himself to the primary way God relates with us, that is through His Word, the Bible.

This morning, we will answer questions about the Bible and there are more questions covered in the *digging deeper* section of your small group worksheet. Let’s begin.

What is the Bible?

The word *Scripture* means “writing.” The word *Bible* means “books.” The Bible is a collection of sacred writings or sacred books. When we say *Holy Bible*, we are talking about a book filled with the books that God divinely inspired and sovereignly collected.

The Bible is organized by books.

The Bible is not just one book but it is a library of books. If you try to read through it in chronological order, you will get confused. That is because the Bible is a collection of 66 books, and those books are not put together in historical order, they’re put together by type of literature. So the law books, which are the first five books of the Old Testament, are put together. The poetic and wisdom

literature and Psalms are put together. The biographies of Jesus' life are put together. The New Testament letters are put together. When we pick up the Bible we are picking up a small library. Just like a library has common book types put together, so does the Bible.

If anyone is curious, there are Bibles put together in chronological order, like F. Lagard Bruce's The Narrated Bible. They are great for chronological reading and following the story line of the Bible.

In this library of 66 books, called the Bible, there are 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. They are written over approximately 1,500 years by roughly 40 different authors. We know most of the authors of the books, but some authors, like the book of Hebrews, are unknown. The Old Testament books were written primarily in Hebrews, but there is a little Aramaic. The New Testament books were written in the language of the first century called, Koine Greek, that means common Greek. The letters were written from Africa, Europe, and Asia so this is a multicultural book.

The Bible is organized by chapters and verses.

When you pick up the Bible, you find the books are divided into chapters. There are 1,189 chapters and they were inserted in the 1200's by some scholars. They did that for the same reason your house has a number on it. They are addresses to help you find things. So the chapter divisions in our Bible are not from God, they were added later. They were so helpful that verse divisions were added to the Bible in the 1500's. There are 31,173 verses in the Bible.

The Bible is divided into two testaments.

Another way the Bible is organized is its division into two sections called the Old and New Testaments. The old leads up to the birth of Christ, the new takes it from Jesus Christ forward. The title “Old Testament” is unfortunate because old sounds outdated, archaic and irrelevant. Many people avoid the Old Testament because they see it as outdated. That is unfortunate, because avoiding the Old Testament strips you of about $\frac{3}{4}$ of God’s Word.

Where did this Old Testament and New Testament division come from? The first person to speak of the Old and New Testaments was an early church father named Origen. He lived in the second and into the third century. He went to Jeremiah 31, where it talks about the old and the new covenants, and he applied those terms to the Bible. That was not necessarily bad. It just gives the unfortunate impression that the old is outdated and the new is fresh and sporty, which is not the truth. Jesus read, loved and studied the Old Testament, so should we.

The Old Testament books were originally written on something called papyrus, which was paper made out of reeds. The New Testament books were originally written on something called parchments, which are prepared animal skins. While there is a division between the Old and New Testaments, if you give it a serious look, you will find the connection between them is tightly stitched together.

For example, it is almost impossible to pick up a New Testament book and start reading without almost immediately hitting an idea, phrase or person from

the Old Testament. Take the books of Revelation as an example. That book freaks most of us out because it is hard to understand. The reason it makes no sense to us is that it contains several hundred references and thousands of allusions to the Old Testament. If you don't read the book of Revelation with a good pair of Old Testament glasses on, you will think it is all about being *Left Behind*.

What does the Bible say about itself?

This is an important question. If the Bible doesn't claim to be the Word of God, if it doesn't claim to be trustworthy and true, then for us to claim it is the trustworthy Word of God, is just downright foolish. Let me give you a few examples of what the Bible claims for itself.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; Psalm 19:7 (ESV)

The Scriptures, are perfect. Every word of God is perfect. We are not perfect, but God's Word's are.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105 (ESV)

Psalm 119 is one of the longest explanations of the helpfulness, perfection and truthfulness of the Scriptures. It is a great analogy. It is like being lost in the woods at night on your way to the outhouse while at summer camp. You are tripping over every root and stumbling over every rock... until you turn on a flashlight so you can see. This book is the flashlight for us as we stumble through life. Are you stumbling right now? Here is your flashlight.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (ESV)

Jesus says that this word is truth. If you listen to the news they are always talking about *the spin* the news media puts on everything. This Word is truth, it is spin free!

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22 (ESV)

The Scriptures say God's Word is to be obeyed. Plenty of people read the Bible but go off and do their own thing. The words of this book are not like the words of a newspaper. They are not just armchair opinion on life but they are God's very words. They are to be obeyed because they are from God and He loves us.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

The Bible is the way God speaks to us. There are many people who would love to hear from God. This book is the way he speaks. When God speaks through this book He cuts to the root of our heart through these words. You will hear from God when you open and read this book. This book is the way he guides and directs.

Who wrote the Bible?

There is combined divine and human authorship.

To answer this question, you need to know this is a unique partnership in Scripture between God, who is the divine author, and men, who are the human authors. In saying this, I am not saying the human authors were in some kind of catatonic state when they wrote Scripture; rather, God used the human authors personality, education, observations and experiences, when he inspired them, to

write down an absolutely trustworthy and perfect record of what God wanted to say. So the Bible is exactly what God wanted to say, but it was said with the education, style and experiences of the human authors God used to say it.

Sometimes Old Testament authors would sit down and they would literally write on a long scroll their book of the Bible. Other times, they would speak and a trained scribe would write it down, a little like a court stenographer. For example...

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord that he had spoken to him. Jeremiah 36:4 (ESV)

The Old Testament authors were aware they wrote for God.

Furthermore, the Old Testament prophets were fully aware they spoke on behalf of God. More than 200 times the Old Testament prophets said, “*Thus sayeth the Lord,*” and then they would say what the Lord told them to speak. If you take phrases similar to “*Thus sayeth the Lord*” and add them together; 3,800 times the Old Testament prophets claimed they were speaking God’s Words.

The New Testament authors were aware they wrote for God.

When we move to the New Testament, we find the New Testament sees itself as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. There are at least 300 direct Old Testament quotations in the New Testament and over 4,000 allusions that refer back to Old Testament times, places, and images. This absolutely threads the two testaments together as one revelation of God.

The New Testament claims the Old Testament was words about Christ.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the

Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:10–12 (ESV)

The first thing I want us to notice is the Old Testament is about the coming grace of God. The Old Testament prophets wrote about the coming of Jesus. They didn't understand everything about it, but they knew he was coming.

Second, notice Peter says, *it was revealed to them*. The Bible is God's revelation to us about himself, it is not speculation about what men think God is like, it is revelation from God about himself.

Just as the Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament prophets and revealed the coming of Christ to them, the Holy Spirit empowered and inspired the New Testament apostles to proclaim the same message about salvation by grace alone in Jesus Christ. This is something the angels have been trying to figure out for years.

So just like the Old Testament was written by human authors that God used to say exactly what he wanted to say, the New Testament was written the same way.

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. 1 Corinthians 2:13 (ESV)

If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 14:37 (ESV)

So in both the Old Testament and the New, God's Holy Spirit inspired the authors for them to write exactly what God wanted said, without error. Maybe an analogy would help. This word inspired is a sailing term and it refers to the wind

filling the sails of a boat carrying it where the wind wants it to go. While the sailors try to sail the ship, the wind moves it where it wants the ship to go. That is a little bit of a picture of what inspiration is like. The human authors are doing the writing in their own language, style, education and culture but God is carrying them along where he wants their writing to go.

This is called verbal plenary inspiration.

There is a doctrine which summarizes what we are talking about. It is called the doctrine of *verbal plenary inspiration*. It is also called the doctrine of inerrancy. This is a doctrine that historically, most Christians have believed. Unfortunately, today it is under attack on many fronts. At Faith EFC, it is important for you to know that we believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. We always have and always will. What we mean by this is that we believe the *very words, not just the concepts* of the Bible are inspired of God. Why do we believe this?

In Matthew 5:18, Jesus says...

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 5:18 (ESV)

Not the dotting of an “i” or the crossing of a “t” will fail to be accomplished from God’s Word. We believe the words of Scripture were given to us flawlessly and without error. Incidentally, this is the same view Jesus had. Jesus argued for the existence of life after death based on the tense of one Old Testament verb.

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” Matthew 22:32 (ESV)

Obviously, Jesus believed the Words of the Bible were perfectly accurate, even in the verb tenses.

We also believe in the plenary inspiration of Scripture. By plenary, we mean the whole Bible is the word of God, not just part of it. There are not parts of it we don't believe, don't like or don't teach.

A modern day example of a denomination that doesn't believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture is the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America). This is what has led to the ordination of homosexuals and the acceptance of homosexuality in the denomination, even though the Bible clearly says homosexuality is sin in our sexual lives. Let me quote for you from the ELCA web site to show you what I mean about their beliefs.

we sometimes conclude either that the writer's culture or personal experience (e.g., subordination of women or keeping of slaves) seems to have prompted his missing what God was saying or doing, or that God now is saying or doing something new.¹

They believe they have the authority to cut out what they don't like from Scripture. We don't believe we have that authority.

"Every word of God is flawless;... Proverbs 30:5 (NIV)

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 competent, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

So we believe in verbal inspiration, which means we believe the words of the Bible are exactly what God wanted to say and we believe in plenary inspiration. By that we mean that we believe all of the Bible is from God.

The Bible is not just information, it is how God produces transformation.

¹ <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/The-Bible.aspx>

Let me explain 2 Timothy 3:16 a little more. It says all Scripture is profitable. It's helpful. It's useful. It's not just true in the way a phone book is true. It is true in the way that it comes from someone who cares about you, who loves you, who interacts with you, who counsels you and comforts you, encourages you and confronts you. This book is how God speaks to us.

In your life, you need the Bible for every good work. The Bible speaks on sexuality, work, worship, friendship, marriage, parenting, money. In principle, it speaks to everyone on everything. God will use this book to speak into your life on all things that really matter because he loves you and he wants to help you.

Another example of divine inspiration is 2 Peter 1:20-21

knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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. 2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)

This means people didn't just make things up and put them in the Bible. They didn't create ideas and write them down. They wrote down exactly what God wanted them to write down. As we said earlier, that doesn't mean they understood the significance of everything they wrote down. When the Old Testament says Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver and buried in a rich man's tomb, the Old Testament prophets didn't know the full significance of what they wrote, only God did.

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, 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. 2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV)

This is very, very important. Some people think the guys who wrote the New Testament had no idea they were writing the Bible and it was only hundreds of years later when the church gathered books together they decided to make the apostles letters into Scripture. I don't think so.

Peter makes this enormous claim. Paul's letters are not just letters that are helpful, they're Scripture, just like Genesis, Exodus, Isaiah and the Psalms. Just as the Old Testament books are Scripture, Paul's letters are Scripture.

The Bible is our highest authority - Solo Scriptura vs. Sola Scriptura

In the days of the Protestant reformation, this led to a doctrine called Sola Scriptura. That means that Scripture is our highest authority. At Faith EFC, we believe the Scriptures are the highest authority for our life. It is the Supreme court of final appeal. We are a Bible preaching, Bible trusting, Bible believing church because the Bible is our highest authority. To illustrate how this works, let me distinguish between Sola Scriptura and Solo Scriptura.

Solo Scriptura means Scripture alone is the authority. We don't believe that. For example, the Scriptures do not tell you how to perform surgery, how to change your spark plugs or how to catch a fly ball. We can find information on that elsewhere. Science and technology can help us learn a lot about the way the world works and if we were a Solo Scriptura church, we would ignore science and technology to just study the Bible and guess at everything else.

We are a Sola Scriptura church. That means we believe science and technology can help us answer many questions about life, but the sciences are always lower courts in our life, not the supreme court of our life. We learn a lot

from science, but when something from the lower court of science violates the ruling of the higher court of the Bible, we go with the higher courts ruling.

For example, you go to high school and they teach you drafting, Spanish, math and biology. Do we study and learn from books on those things? Of course! But when the biology teacher tells you that your grandmother was a monkey that wore combat boots (OK, maybe she didn't wear the boots.) and that God doesn't exist, that Adam and Eve were not real historical people, you remember biology class is a lower court. The supreme court of the Bible has already ruled on those issues. We are not a random chance of evolutionary development. We are a special creative act of God and God loves us so much that his son became a man in Jesus Christ to die for us and forgive our sins. The higher court has ruled. That is Sola Scriptura.

Conclusion - Live a Biblical Life

As I close, I want to tell you what the Bible means to me. I grew up in a Christian home and received Christ when I was very young. Even though I went to church, my life wasn't any different until sixth grade. While riding my bicycle home from school, I was hit by a car and bruised my brain. I was in a coma and at one point my parents were told I wouldn't survive. (By the way, I did make it.) While recovering in the hospital, I pulled a Gideon's Bible out of the night stand and began reading it. It was amazing. It seemed like God wrote the words in that Bible directly to me. I began highlighting the little Bible. God was pulling verses off the page and sticking them to my heart like Post-It notes.

Since sixth grade, I have continued to study the Bible, sometimes more seriously than others but it has never become a story that is old. Literally every week, I learn something new about God and his amazing love for us from it. I can truly say, I do not regret one moment of reading God's Word. Ignoring God's Words has always hurt me, listening to them on a daily basis has always helped me. The more I learn about God, the more I want to know him. So like many of you, I am living a life where I sin and fail God, repent of my sins and cling to my forgiveness through Christ. I get up and keep stumbling after Jesus, one day at a time.

But as I look back on my life, I know God and every good thing I have in my life can be traced back to this book. This book showed me the darkness of my sin but that forgiveness could be mine through Christ. God's Word in this book gave me hope on the days my life fell apart. This book taught me how to live wisely on earth to lay up treasure in heaven. This book is everything.

When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness he said, "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." He said, the words of this book for the health of our soul are more important than nourishment or any food for our body.

This week, I want to encourage you to feast on this book. Make a plan to open it every day and say, "Lord, I need a word from you for my heart this morning." Remember the words of Jesus, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."



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