



Firmly Grounded In Scripture

The Bible consisting of the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the complete written revelation of God's redemptive plan for humanity. Although written over approximately 1,500 years by prophets, kings, apostles, and other servants of God, the ultimate Author is God Himself. The apostle Paul writes that "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16), while Peter explains that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Old Testament records God's creation, His covenant relationship with Israel, His righteous standards, and His promises concerning the coming Messiah. From the earliest pages of Genesis, God's plan of redemption begins to unfold, with the promise that the seed of the woman would ultimately defeat the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Throughout the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, God progressively revealed His plan to send a Savior. Isaiah foretold the suffering Messiah who would bear the sins of many (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and countless other passages pointed forward to the coming of Christ. The New Testament reveals the fulfillment of those promises through the birth, life, death, resurrection, and future return of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself declared that the Scriptures testify about Him (John 5:39), and after His resurrection He explained to His disciples how Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms all spoke concerning Him (Luke 24:27, 44-47). John identifies Jesus as the eternal Word who became flesh (John 1:1-18), and Paul teaches that every promise of God finds its fulfillment in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible presents one unified message, God's eternal plan to redeem sinful mankind through His Son, Jesus Christ. Because every book contributes to that unified revelation, we must study both Testaments together to fully understand God's character, His purposes, and His plan of salvation.

Reading the Bible is essential, but reading it with understanding is even more critical because God's Word is the only infallible standard by which truth, righteousness, and sin are measured. The psalmist declares that God's Word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105), demonstrating that the Bible provides the guidance necessary for every aspect of life. The Bible clearly identifies what God calls sin. Romans 3:23 teaches that all people have sinned and fall short of God's glory, while 1 John 3:4 defines sin as lawlessness. Romans 6:23 reveals both the consequence of sin and God's gracious provision of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Because the Bible alone defines truth, we are never instructed to accept religious teaching without careful examination. Instead, we are commanded to "examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The Bereans provide a model worthy of imitation because they received Paul's teaching with eagerness while "examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Even the teaching of an apostle was measured against the written Word of God. James exhorts believers to prove themselves "doers of the

Word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22), reminding us that knowledge without obedience is spiritually dangerous. Furthermore, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us into all the truth (John 16:13), while Paul explains that spiritual truths are discerned through the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-16). Therefore, we have both the privilege and the responsibility to read the Bible personally, prayerfully asking the Holy Spirit for wisdom and revelation while comparing every sermon, lesson, book, podcast, and online message with the written Word of God. The Bible, not popular opinion, tradition, or personality, must always remain the final authority.

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness provides one of the clearest Biblical examples of why the Bible must be interpreted correctly and never taken out of context. Following His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness where Satan tempted Him after forty days of fasting (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). During each temptation, Satan attempted either to entice Jesus into disobedience or to misuse God's Word to accomplish his purpose. After tempting Jesus to turn stones into bread, Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, affirming that man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Satan then quoted Psalm 91 in an effort to persuade Jesus to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, suggesting that God was obligated to protect Him. Although Satan quoted Scripture, he distorted its intended application by removing it from its context and using it to justify testing God. Jesus immediately corrected this misuse of Scripture by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, declaring that God's people must not put the Lord to the test (Matthew 4:7). Finally, when Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship, Jesus responded with Deuteronomy 6:13, affirming that worship belongs to God alone (Matthew 4:10). Jesus answered every temptation with Bible verses that were properly understood, accurately interpreted, and faithfully applied. His example teaches us that Scripture must always interpret Scripture and that isolated verses must never be used to justify beliefs or practices contrary to the whole Word of God. The New Testament repeatedly warns that false teachers will distort Biblical truth. Paul wrote that a time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine but would accumulate teachers to satisfy their own desires because they have "itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Peter warned that false teachers would secretly introduce destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1) and that unstable people distort the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). Jesus Himself repeatedly warned us not to be deceived (Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24). These passages emphasize the necessity of diligently studying God's Word while depending upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom (James 1:5), so that we may recognize error, rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), and remain firmly established in sound doctrine.

For these reasons, we bear the personal responsibility of knowing God's Word and we must never surrender that responsibility to another person. God has graciously given pastors, teachers, elders, and faithful Bible instructors to equip us for ministry and maturity (Ephesians 4:11-16), and we should faithfully participate in the life of a sound, Bible believing church. Likewise, Bible studies, discipleship groups, and faithful teachers are invaluable gifts that strengthen and encourage the body of Christ. Yet no human teacher is infallible. Every message, sermon, lesson, and interpretation must be examined in light of Scripture, just as the Bereans examined Paul's teaching against the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Throughout history, numerous religious cults and false movements have arisen because people accepted teachings that departed from the clear teaching of God's Word. Whenever human authority replaces Biblical authority, deception soon

follows. Hebrews 4:12 teaches that the Word of God is living, active, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart, making the Bible our ultimate standard for discerning truth from error. For this reason, it is wise for all of us to own and regularly read a reliable printed Bible. Digital Bibles are extraordinary tools for study and convenience, but they depend upon technology that can fail because of dead batteries, damaged devices, software problems, or the absence of electricity or internet connectivity. A digital Bible can also be easily modified without our knowledge. A printed Bible remains permanently accessible and provides a stable reference for careful study, comparison, memorization, and reflection. Regardless of the format used, the central truth remains unchanged. We must personally know the Scriptures. In an age marked by increasing deception, moral confusion, and widespread Biblical illiteracy, there has never been a greater need for us to establish our lives upon the unchanging Word of God. Jesus taught that the wise man builds his house upon the rock by hearing and obeying His words (Matthew 7:24-27). Only those who are firmly grounded in God's Word will have access to the discernment necessary to recognize false doctrine, withstand deception, and remain faithful until Christ returns. No one can study the Bible for us, believe it for us, or obey it for us. We must read the Bible personally, ask for the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully submit to the truth that God has revealed in His inspired Word.

Study Questions:

1. Why is it important to understand that the Bible was written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)? How does this truth affect your confidence in the authority and reliability of the Bible?
2. Jesus said that the Scriptures testify about Him (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44-47). How do both the Old Testament and the New Testament reveal God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ?
3. Psalm 119:105 describes God's Word as "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." What practical steps can you take to make the Bible the primary guide for your daily decisions rather than relying on emotions, culture, or personal opinions?

4. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans for examining the Scriptures daily to verify what they were taught. How can you develop the same habit of comparing every sermon, podcast, book, or Bible study with the written Word of God?

5. Why is it dangerous to depend entirely on pastors, teachers, or Christian authors for your understanding of the Bible? What are the benefits of studying the Bible personally while still learning from faithful teachers (Ephesians 4:11-16)?

6. During His temptation in the wilderness, Satan quoted Scripture but applied it incorrectly (Matthew 4:1-11). What does this teach us about the importance of understanding the context and proper interpretation of God's Word?

7. Jesus answered every temptation by correctly applying Scripture. What principles can you learn from Christ's example that will help you interpret and apply the Bible faithfully in your own life?

8. Paul warned that people would accumulate teachers who tell them what they want to hear because they have "itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). What are some examples of teachings today that may appeal to people's desires rather than faithfully teaching God's Word?

9. Peter warned that false teachers would secretly introduce destructive heresies and that some people distort the Scriptures (2 Peter 2:1; 3:16). What are some warning signs that a teacher or ministry may be twisting the Bible rather than explaining it faithfully?

10. James teaches that we should be "doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22). In what areas of your life do you need to move beyond simply knowing Bible verses to consistently obeying them?

11. Hebrews 4:12 teaches that the Word of God is living, active, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. How does regular Bible reading expose areas where your thinking or behavior needs to change? Can you share a time when the Bible corrected or challenged you personally?

12. Looking honestly at your own spiritual life, is God's Word truly the foundation upon which you build your beliefs, decisions, and relationships? What specific changes can you make this week to become a more faithful student of the Bible and better equipped to recognize false teaching (Matthew 7:24-27)?