



God's Word Guides Us

Lesson Overview

The Bible is God's Word. We study it by observing the text and asking Who? What? When? Where? Why? The Bible is good for doctrine—teaching God's truths; reproof—showing us our sin; correction—learning to turn from sin and do what is right; and training in righteousness—learning how to please God.

Key Passages

2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21; Titus 1:2;
Hebrews 6:13–18

What You Will Learn

- The roles of God and men in writing the Bible.
- The four ways God's Word guides us according to Scripture.

Memory Verse

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, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

God has revealed Himself to us in the words of the Bible—His only written revelation to man. We are called to study diligently what has been revealed and apply it to the way we live our lives. Within the pages of Scripture, we find many exhortations to use what God has revealed in a way that honors Him. We also know that as we trust in the Lord with all our heart, and do not lean on our own understanding, He will direct our steps through the wisdom of His Holy Word (Proverbs 3:5–6).

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul stated, “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is the inspired (“breathed out”) Word of God, transmitted not by the will of man, but through holy men of God as they were directed by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21). These men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote without error all that God instructed. It is the only inerrant, infallible Word of God, and we can trust it to guide us in all things.

How does it guide us? Paul tells us that it is useful for doctrine—teaching Christian truth; reproof—telling us when we are wrong;

correction—showing us how to correct our wrong actions; and training in righteousness—teaching us how to obey God (2 Timothy 3:16–17). These are the general guidelines—they are expounded on again and again throughout the Bible.

God has spoken to reveal His plan for history, His purpose for mankind, and His will for us. More than 2,000 times the Old Testament states, “Thus says the Lord,” or something similar, claiming that God Himself is the author. In the New Testament we observe that Jesus preached the Word of God (Luke 5:1), the early church preached the Word of God (Acts 4:31), the Word of God was preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1), and Paul preached the Word of God throughout all of his missionary journeys (Acts 13:5, 18:11, 19:10).

The Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), given to us by God Himself—to teach us the principles of our faith, to reveal our sin, to show us how to deal with sin, to instruct us how to live in a manner that pleases Him, and ultimately, to reveal to us how we can be redeemed into everlasting life through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Historical/Apologetics Background

Many people chide Christians for reading the Bible literally. The Bible contains many different types of literature, but all of

them communicate God’s truth to us. When we say we take the Bible literally, we really mean that we take it in the sense that it was

written. Some sections of Scripture are meant to be read as historical accounts, while others are poetic.

The process of understanding what Scripture says is called *hermeneutics*—the process of trying to understand what the Bible means. Learning proper hermeneutics opens a whole new world of truth found in the Bible. There are many different schools of biblical interpretation. These range from liberal approaches (mystical interpretation, naturalistic interpretation, etc.) to the more conservative approach we'll be using (where ideas are considered in context and Scripture is used to interpret Scripture). This second, more conservative method may be new to you. It is often referred to as the grammatical-historical method of interpretation because it takes into account the grammar and context of the passage as well as the historical and cultural setting of the author and the original hearers. We will call it the inductive Bible study method.

As we seek to understand what God has said, we should not import our own ideas into Scripture but rather allow Scripture to inform and evaluate our ideas. Drawing ideas out of the text is called *exegesis* (*ex-* meaning "out of"), while adding our ideas into the text is called *eisegesis* (*eis-* meaning "into").

Take Genesis 1 for example. If we simply read that chapter as it is plainly written, we would conclude that God created the universe in six normal days—an accurate exegesis. On the other hand, if we consider that same text by starting with a belief in

evolutionary processes occurring over millions of years, we might be tempted instead to interpret those "days" as long ages. In that case, we would engage in eisegesis since we imported the idea of long ages into the text—a practice which can lead to the dangers of compromise and distorted conclusions.

In order to properly exegete a passage, we include three essential components in an inductive Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application. These steps can be subdivided in various ways, but we will stick to three basic parts to teach the process.

To **observe**, we simply ask *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions about the study passage. For example, who is the author writing to? What words are repeated or emphasized in the passage? When was this written? Where is the event taking place? What type of literature is being used (history, poetry, parable, etc.)? What is the main point of the passage?

By taking time to observe the text, we become familiar with the important words, commands, and main themes that are present. Once we are familiar with the passage, we are ready to interpret what we have read.

To **interpret**, we look at the passage in light of what the rest of the Bible has to say on the same topic. We may identify cross references, cultural considerations, specific word meanings, context, commentaries, or parallel passages that tell of the same account or provide the same idea. We should be careful during



Impossible for God?

Complete the Impossible for God? worksheet.

Take notes as you study the following passage.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

Define these terms:

Teaching/Doctrine –

Reproof –

Correction –

Training in righteousness –



God's Word in the Real World

1. It is likely that you know people who doubt the truth of the Bible. They might say things like, “We can’t trust the Bible; it was simply written by men.” How would you go about discussing this idea with them?

the interpretation stage because there is always the danger of trying to read our own ideas into the text.

After we have observed what the text says and interpreted the key ideas, the next step is to **apply** the Word to daily life. Scripture is full of God's commands to believers to apply what He has communicated—we are to be doers of the Word, not just hearers (James 1:21-24).

Ultimately, Scripture is to be the source of truth in our lives. Evangelical tradition is built on the belief that every Christian can read and understand God's Word. The fancy term for this idea is the *perspicuity of Scripture*. The Reformers fought to make the Bible available in the

language of the people so all could personally read, study, and learn from it. This was highly condemned at the time, and many lost their lives in the process of defending the truth that God's Word is for everyone.

Having the Word of God so available is a privilege that many in the world still do not have. As Christians we should be grateful for our Bibles and take advantage of the availability, while being diligent to read, study, and handle the Word carefully as we use it to direct our lives and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.

Studying God's Word

Is anything impossible for God?

Take notes as you study the following passages.

2 Peter 1:19–21

Psalms 119:105

2. Is it wise to leave the Bible out of the discussion about the Bible?
3. As we look to apply the four uses of Scripture we discussed, think about your personal devotion time or family Scripture reading. How could you put these four guiding principles into practice?

Prayer Requests
