

## **Institutes of Theology | Session 16**

### **Bibliology: Inspiration**

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As Lance has mentioned, we are setting the doctrine of bibliology this Fall and Tom kicked us off last time a couple of weeks ago by talking generally about revelation. God is a God who communicates with us. He has made Himself known to us and He has done so in two categories as Tom highlighted. General revelation, we see that in the first half of Psalm 19 with a scope that is universal. Everybody can see the world that God has made, the revelation that He gives, but that message is general as opposed to special revelation which is detailed in the second half of Psalm 19. A specific limited message and a primary aspect of that special revelation is God's revelation in the Scripture. And so we're really going to spend the rest of this semester focusing on that aspect of special revelation, God's communication to us about Himself through His Word, the Scripture, through the Bible.

Now, as we work through this over the rest of this semester, there's a variety of topics that come to mind and that theologians write about and think about when it comes to the doctrine of the Bible, of Scripture, of bibliology. One of those is just the various attributes of Scripture. There are a number of things that are true of God's Word. It is inspired. It has authority, it has clarity and sufficiency and necessity and relevancy and inherency. And so for the next several sessions, we're going to work through various ones of those attributes of Scripture. Other key topics related to Scripture are the canon of Scripture, what in fact is Scripture, What books should be included in our Bible? And Tom will teach on that later this semester. He will also teach on the preservation of Scripture. How do we know that the Scripture we have today is the same as what was written thousands of years ago, as well as the translation of Scripture? How do we have God's Word in our own language? So, we have a lot of rich truths to cover and tonight we're just going to begin with the first of those, the doctrine of inspiration, the fact that Scripture is the breath of God.

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I want you to turn with me to Jeremiah 36 as we begin. Jeremiah 36. I just want you to see an example of what we are going to talk about and unpack tonight. The reality that the Bible is both the words of human authors and yet in recording those words, the human authors were, in fact, communicating the exact words of God that He intended. Jeremiah 36 begins “In the fourth year of Jehoakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this Word came to Jeremiah from the Lord.” You see already God's communication to and ultimately through Himself messenger Jeremiah saying,

"Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah and concerning all the nations from the day I first spoke to you, from the day of Josiah, even to this day. Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them in order that every man will turn from his evil way. Then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin. 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 which He had spoken to him. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch saying, ‘I am restricted. I cannot go to the house of the Lord. So you go and read from the scroll which you have written at My dictation the words of the Lord to the people in the Lord's house on a fast day. And also you shall read them for all the peoples of Judah who come from their cities. Perhaps their supplication will come before the Lord and everyone will turn from his evil way. For great is the anger and wrath that the Lord has pronounced against this people.’

Baruch, the son of Neriah, did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him reading from the book, the words of the Lord in the Lord's house. In the fifth year of Jehoakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the Lord. Then Baruch read from the book the words of [who?] of Jeremiah. in the house of the Lord in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house to all the people. Then when Micaiah the son of Gemariah the son of Shaphan had heard all the words of the Lord from the book he went down to the king's house.”

So you see God communicating to Jeremiah that he is to write His words to the people Jeremiah; writes those words as any of us might write something. He chose to dictate it to somebody else. Maybe he didn't want to write it. Maybe he thought better as he was pacing and talking out loud. And those words when they were written could both rightly be described as the words of Jeremiah as this passage records. But they were also the words of the Lord. That is the reality that we have before us in the Bible. We have the words of human authors written in much the same way as you or I would write letters or record stories. And yet what we hold is not simply human words. It is in fact the breath of God, the words of God. We're going to unpack that more tonight, beginning with just a biblical definition of inspiration.

When we speak of the Bible being inspired, of the inspiration of the Scriptures, what do we mean? Well, there's really two key passages that speak to this. The first is second Timothy chapter 3 verse 16. You can turn over there with me if you'd like or it's up on the screen for you. It says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reprove, for correction, for training in righteousness." Paul is writing to Timothy, a pastor, and he's giving them lots of instruction related to the Word of God. Right before he's written this, he's reminded him that he himself, Timothy, had known the sacred writings, the Scriptures from the time he was young. and he's about to exhort him in chapter 4 to preach the word, to preach the Scriptures. But here he defines what is true of all Scripture. And he says all Scripture is inspired by God.

Now that word "inspired" in English is really not the most helpful English word for us to think about what he's communicating. "Inspired" can mean a lot of different things. Maybe you saw the sunset, and you were inspired by that. This word "inspired" really came from the Latin word that was used in the Latin Vulgate. You remember a guy named Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. It was the Bible for centuries, really the primary one. And when that was translated into English, the Latin word *inspirare* was translated into English, really transliterated, into inspired. It has more of an idea of to breathe into something. Literally, the Greek word is the *theopneustos*, which means "God-breathed." You see that probably in your margin note if you have a New American Standard that it is literally "God breathed." And I think this is so important for us to think about. You know, when we talk about the Bible being inspired, it's really that it was breathed out by God.

Put your hand in front of your mouth and say something to the person sitting next to you. You can talk in class. It's okay. What do you feel when you talk? You feel your breath being breathed out as you speak. That's the idea. All Scripture is inspired. It is breathed out by God. B.B. Warfield puts it this way. He says the Greek term has nothing to say of inspiring or of inspiration coming into something. It speaks only of inspiring or inspiration. That would sound worse though if we said, you know, we're talking about the inspiration of the Bible. That's not how that word has been used primarily. But what it says of Scripture, he says, is not that it is breathed into by God (God didn't take the Bible and kind of breathed some special life into it) or is the product of the divine breathing into its human authors but that it is breathed out by God. God breathed the product of the creative breath of God. Or Joel Beeke in his Reformed Systematic Theology says the adjective *theopneustos* describes not the Bible's action upon us—the Bible is “inspiring”—but God's action in making the Bible. The Bible is inspired. We'll talk more about what that means in a moment.

But a second key passage is second Peter 1:20-21. We just began studying second Peter on Sunday night if you if you were with us or you have gone back and listened. If you were, you probably are thankful Lance didn't pick a true false test instead gave you matching. But we'll get to this text. But Peter is highlighting the authority of God's Word and the authoritative message that comes through Himself messengers and he's contrasting the written word, the Scriptures with the experience that he had at the Mount of Transfiguration when he heard God speak. And he says in verse 19, “We have this prophetic word more sure to which you do well to pay attention.” And then verse 20, he says, "Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." This text makes clear there's a human authorship of the Bible, the prophecies that have been given. The Scriptures are a result of men speaking, but there is also a clear divine authorship. It was men moved by the Holy Spirit who spoke from God.

And so, as we think of this idea of those writers of Scripture being moved by the Holy Spirit such that what they have written for us is in fact the very words of God, how might we kind of summarize that? Let me give you a couple of succinct summaries that theologians have crafted. Charles Hodge in his systematic theology defines it this way. He says, "The common doctrine of

the church, what the church has historically believed is and ever has been that inspiration was the influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of Himself mind and will. They were in such a sense the organs of God that what they said God said.” Or consider what B.B. Warfield said early in the 20th century as he was defending this doctrine. He says, “Inspiration is that particular operation of God in the production of Scripture which takes effect at the very point of the writing of Scripture with the effect of giving to the resultant Scripture a specifically supernatural character and constituting it a divine as well as human book.”

Paul Enns, in his helpful summary textbook on theology, *Moody Handbook of Theology* says, "Inspiration may be defined as the Holy Spirit superintending over the writers so that while writing according to their own styles and personalities, the result was God's Word written, authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autographs." If you're reading *Biblical Doctrine*, you will get to this section and you will see how MacArthur and Mayhue define it as this. “God through His spirit inspired every word penned by the human authors in each of the 66 books of the Bible. In the original documents, i.e. the autographs, inspiration describes the process of divine causation behind the authorship of Scripture. It refers to the direct act of God on the human author that resulted in the creation of perfectly written revelation. It conveys the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit whereby He used the individual personality, language, style, and historical context of each writer to produce divinely authoritative writings.”

Those are all very helpful definitions of the doctrine of inspiration of what we recognize is true based on the teaching of God's Word about the Scriptures. But let's break it down a little bit and think about the key ideas that are included at least to some degree in each of those definitions or if not exactly in those definitions that are certainly a part of how we think of this doctrine. When we speak of the doctrine of inspiration, we are really thinking about the Bible's authorship and the marriage of both the divine authorship of the Bible and the human authorship of the Bible. We are recognizing that the Bible is God's word. Just like we read in Jeremiah 36 at the beginning, that scroll could be easily and truthfully referred to as this is the Word of the Lord. This is Yahweh's word. It is God's word. And yet at the same time the Bible, that scroll, could be referred to as Jeremiah's words. And so we speak of the divine authorship and there's a particular emphasis in Scripture that we saw in Second Peter on the role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration

of Scripture. And this is why the Bible is without error and authoritative and sufficient because it comes to us from God and it reflects all that is true of God.

And yet there's a human authorship to the Bible as well. God used real people, people with different personalities, with different education levels, with different styles of communication, people who spoke different languages. And He didn't override all that. He used the variety of people who wrote the Scripture in accordance with that. And so they are real human words, but because of the divine role, they are without any human error. This is vital that we understand. I love what William Shedd says about this. He says, "The human element in Scripture means that an inspired man in perceiving and conveying truth employs his own human mind, his own native language, the common figures of speech, and exhibits his own individual peculiarities." The Bible's filled with real people and their personalities coming through in what was written. but without misconception and error upon the subject of which he treats because his human mind is actuated and guided by the divine mind. So as we think of inspiration, we need to recognize we're speaking of the divine and human authorship of Scripture, but we're also need to think about the comprehensive scope of what we are saying. And then we'll talk a fair amount about this tonight.

But when we think of the inspiration of the Bible, we need to recognize that inspiration is plenary, or complete. The plenary inspiration of Scripture. Now that's not a word that was used routinely throughout church history. In fact, if you look at church history, for the vast majority of the church history, this doctrine was not debated. We'll look at some examples of that. It was just this is what was known to be true. And so as this doctrine came under attack more in the last couple hundred years, these terms have come to help define what the historic teaching of the church has been even though they maybe didn't use these words. And so when we speak of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, what we mean is the whole thing is inspired.

If you go to a conference, I was just at the Sing Conference in Nashville with some of our staff and they had plenary sessions. I don't know if they called them that because it's kind of a creative music conference, but if you go to a conference, there's plenary sessions and there's breakout sessions, right? What's the difference? Well, breakouts, various people go various places. Only part of the conference attendees are there. But the plenary sessions, everybody's all together,

right? So when we say the plenary inspiration of Scripture, we're saying that the whole thing is inspired. Everything is included in the inspiration of Scripture. That's 2 Timothy 3:16. All Scripture is inspired.

Now, you might say, well, did Paul really mean all Scripture? I mean, he was writing Second Timothy before the New Testament was even completed. So, how could he be referring to all Scripture? Well, it's true that not all of the New Testament had been written at the time, but Paul did mean all Scripture. He was including the New Testament in that. Back in 1 Timothy—go ahead and turn there—1 Timothy chapter 5, Paul's first letter to Timothy. He's speaking in verse 17 and 18 about elders and appropriate honor or compensation for them. And in verse 18, notice what he says. He says, "For the Scripture says, you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing, and the labor is worthy of his wages." And he's got quotes in both. He's quoting from two places. One of those is from Deuteronomy 25:4, the Old Testament. He's acknowledging that the book of Moses, the writings of Moses, were Scripture. And one of those is from the Gospel of Luke, Luke 10:7. And so he's acknowledging that the New Testament writings are also in that same category of Scripture.

You see this in 2 Peter 3 as well, where Peter refers to Paul's letters, and he refers to Paul's letters as the in the same category as the rest of Scripture. So the New Testament authors understood that the Old Testament was Scripture. We'll look more at that in a bit, but the New Testament as well. And so when we talk of the inspiration of Scripture, we are recognizing the entirety of the Bible, all that is Scripture is inspired by God. Now, this doesn't mean that everything in the Bible is true. Now, before you stone me or something, listen. You know, you think of what's recorded in the Bible, things like Satan talking to Eve and saying, "Has God really said, "And if you eat of this, you surely won't die." Is that true? Well, not in the sense that that we should listen and believe it. All of Job's counselors did not give helpful counsel, but it is true in the sense that it actually happened. Right?

So when we think of what the Bible records, it's all true in that it reflects reality. It's not all true in the sense that we should believe and do everything that is said in Scripture with rigidity. We need to understand some of it, God is speaking in a positive way or he's communicating what is true and authoritative. Some he's just recording for us what in fact happened. William Shedd says

this. He says, “The first position to be taken respecting the Bible is that all is inspired. The original autograph volume of inspiration was free from error. Again, this doesn't mean every sentence or proposition in Scripture contains a truth. The words of Satan to Eve were a falsehood, but those were actually spoken. They are recorded with infallible accuracy. Some of the reasonings and inferences of Job's friends were false, but they occurred as they were related by the inspired penmen.”

So everything in the Bible is inspired by God. It is an accurate record given to us by Him. Inspiration is plenary. But also, inspiration is verbal. It's verbal. It's not just that the whole thing is inspired, but it's also that all of the parts are inspired. When you look at the way that Christ and others viewed Scripture, you see that the very words of Scripture are inspired by God. He didn't just care about the general idea that was communicated—again, we'll talk a little more about that—but that the very words of God were recorded, the exact words that He intended. You see this in Jesus and the apostles making biblical arguments based on the specific words used in Scripture. For example, the specific words or wording used in Matthew chapter 22. Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, and they ask Him a question, and He refers to the psalm and the specific wording of My Lord and how that relates to Himself argument and what He is teaching them. It's even the fact of singular versus plural words that God used in in John 10:35. Jesus is speaking about the difference between “god” and “God's.” Galatians 3:16, Paul is arguing from what was recorded in the Old Testament where it says Himself “seed,” not “seeds,” referring to many. And so there was a confidence in what God had revealed that Christ and Paul and others had that was down to the singular or plural nature of a word. Jesus refers in Matthew 5 even to the individual letters being inspired. God did not just give generally what He wanted us to know down to the very minute detail of every word and letter is what God intended. This is what we mean when we say that inspiration is verbal down to the detail. It is what God intended to be communicated.

Now we do need to recognize this is true technically with regard to the original autographs. What do we mean by that? We mean the Scripture was written by the original authors thousands of years ago primarily in Hebrew or Greek also some in Aramaic. That's what the prophets and the apostles actually wrote. We're studying the letter of 2 Peter on Sunday nights. But Peter actually wrote one copy of that letter that was sent. It may have been copied and given to multiple churches, but there was one original autograph that was written. That's what was in fact inspired



by God. Now, next or later this semester, as I mentioned, Tom's going to talk about the preservation of Scripture. So, don't be worried thinking, "Uh-oh, only the original autographs are inspired. What we have, eh, it's not very uh no confidence in that!" That's not true at all. We have every confidence in what we have as God's word because God has not only inspired it, He has also preserved it.

Just briefly, Francis Turretin said this. He said, "We cannot readily believe that God who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired men would not take care of their entire preservation. If men use the utmost care diligently to preserve their words, especially if they of any importance, as for example, a testament, a will, or a contract, in order that it may not be corrupted, how much more must we suppose would God take care of His word, which He intended as a testament and seal of Himself covenant with us so that it might not be corrupted, especially when He could easily foresee and prevent such corruptions in order to establish the faith of His church. So technically God inspired the original autographs, what was actually written at the very beginning of the writing of those Scriptures, but He has preserved those so that we have confidence today that we do have in fact the Word of God.

He goes on to distinguish. He says, "Although we give to the Scriptures absolute integrity, we do not therefore think that the copyists and printers were inspired, but only that the providence of God watched over the copying of the sacred books, so that although many errors might have crept in, it has not so happened or they have not so crept into the manuscripts, but that they can be easily corrected by a collection of others or with the Scriptures themselves. Again, Tom will talk more about this in the coming months of how God has preserved Himself Word for us, but He has certainly done so.

The Chicago statement on biblical inerrancy written in the late 1970s—again when there was a raging battle about these issues in evangelicalism—said, "We affirm that inspiration strictly speaking applies to the autographic text of Scripture which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy." There's so much manuscript evidence. So many copies were made that scholars—who are smarter than most of us in this room—can go through those, and have gone through those, to discern what was the original manuscript what was in fact written and they can do so with great accuracy. "We further affirm

that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inherency invalid or irrelevant.” So technically speaking, we say the original autographs were inspired by God. But you and I can say with great confidence that this is the Word of God. You don't have to say, "Well, technically this is a preserved translation of the Word of God." No, we have confidence that this is in fact what God has revealed.

So God has spoken through human authors on the page in the pages of Scripture to give us Himself very word.

Now what are some common objections to this? Why do people deny—some deny—this truth? Most of the denials of this have arisen among those who would profess still to be followers of Christ—although not believing the Scriptures or embracing God's real authority in their life—as a denial of the supernatural or anything miraculous. As modernism has given rise to post-modernism and there has been a rejection of all things miraculous one of those things that has been rejected is the miraculous inspiration of Scripture. Obviously, you understand what we are describing is an amazing act of God. Nothing else is inspired in this way. God has done this in a miraculous way through Himself Holy Spirit. And if you deny that that's possible or that God could do such a thing, you will not affirm the doctrine of inspiration. But you have a lot of other issues about how to explain the world in which we live.

Some also look at the Bible and say there are some supposed historic or geographic or chronological discrepancies that make us say no this can't be the very words of God free from error in any sense. It is true that in some of the copies that have been made over the course of human history that there have been minute errors made such that it's there's a few places where which was the accurate number or something or errors of translation. Most of those are simply places where greater detail would resolve any apparent discrepancy.

If you had never been to the Midwest of the United States and I was having a conversation with you and I said, “You know, this last week I was in Tennessee for a conference.” And then later on in that conversation I said, "Yeah, it was a was a great time in Nashville." You might be inclined to say, "Hey, why are you lying to me? That's two different places. You said you were in

Tennessee and now you're saying you were in Nashville." And most of us would say, "Actually no, Nashville's in Tennessee." Same thing, just varying levels of detail. Well, unfortunately, we don't know all that was true of biblical geography. And so, it's possible that sometimes the Bible refers to "Tennessee" and sometimes to "Nashville" and we don't know that it actually fits together. And so, there's good reason for anytime we see something that's a supposed discrepancy.

Some also focus on supposed scientific errors. Obviously, the Bible, or we affirm the Bible, is true. And so sometimes when the Bible refers to something scientifically, it's using general or metaphoric language. Sometimes science is simply wrong. And we need to remember that the science is about theories and it's not about fact. This is what is in fact true. And at times throughout church history, there have been things that that interpretations of Scripture over time were not right. And science encouraged people to re-evaluate things that had been believed to be true from the Bible. But the Bible is true in every detail it speaks to, including science. Some point out supposed theological contradictions or maybe a change in how the New Testament quotes an Old Testament passage or those things. These we need to understand in context and recognize just like in English there are varying levels of quotation.

If I go home to my wife and I say Ally, my daughter said that she will be home at 10:00 tonight. Is my wife taking that as an exact quote that Ally specifically said, "Dad, I will be home at 10:00 tonight." Yeah. She's probably taking it as somehow Ally communicated to me that she would be home at 10 o'clock tonight. Maybe I asked her what time will you be home and she said 10 o'clock and I said Ally said she will be home at 10:00. Was I lying? No. I was using normal human language to communicate in a way that was true. And so the Bible does that as well. There are times where a New Testament author will say, "This is what the Old Testament said, but in a less than precise quote, but one that is very appropriate for the context."

So the Bible is true and consistent, and it communicates to us that it is God's Word through human authors. How did that come about? What is, secondly, the divine process of inspiration? How did God speak through human authors such that what we hold in our hands is His very words free from any error at all? Well, again, we saw the general principle in 1 Peter chapter 1 where it said, "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Now, there's some mystery here

that we can't fully understand, but this is a very helpful thing for us to think about and understand how God worked through the human authors to give us Scripture.

You know, when you see that men were moved by the Holy Spirit, again, we have some ideas in English of what that might mean. You know, you may be driving home tonight and one of your favorite love songs comes on the radio as you're going driving home towards your wife and you are moved that when you get home you see those dirty dishes, and you love your wife and so you start doing those dishes. That's not how the Holy Spirit moved men such they spoke from God. They weren't just, you know, seeing a rainbow and inspired to write something that was particularly insightful about God. This idea "moved" the word, one of the key Greek lexicons defines it this way. It's to carry from one place to another or to cause an entity to move from one position to another. So think of it more as when we move from one house to another, you are carrying all those things you are moving. You wish they could move themselves, but you are moving them from here to there. The Holy Spirit moved these men so that they arrived at the position where they would write exactly what God intended.

B.B. Warfield says, "This does not refer to mere guidance, but the prophet being taken up and carried from one place to another." Again, not literally. They weren't picked up and plopped down somewhere else, but the Spirit of God ensured that they ended up writing exactly what God intended. Now, He did not do this in a way that eliminated their personality or their style of writing or any of those things. He used those things to accomplish that purpose. Obviously, we believe and teach that the Scriptures emphasize both the sovereignty of God in salvation and human responsibility for responding. We believe that God works in His providence such that there is no stray molecule in the universe and yet people make real choices that affect their lives and that of others. This is like that. We affirm God's sovereign work through the Spirit of God and the responsibility of human authors such that what was written is in fact God's word.

MacArthur and Mayhue put it this way in the writing of Scripture. It was the prophet communicating God's Word through his pen. It was also the spirit moving continually to convey God's Word through the prophet. In the end result, that which was written was fully the words of the human authors in their language and style and from their personal perspectives. But note this carefully. It was under the direct superintendence of God by Himself spirit producing on the page

the very words of God. The ultimate product is the divine inspired, inherent, and authoritative words of God on every page of all 66 books of the Bible.

Now, how did God move these men so that they spoke the very words that God intends? And we can't unpack everything about this. The Scripture doesn't reveal that level of detail for us. And we can't say every in every instance this is how God did it. But let me give you just a couple of examples. Sometimes it was direct dictation. It was God saying, "Write this." You know, you think of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 where God didn't just say, "Write this." He wrote it. Gave it to him. Or Jeremiah 26:2 is an example of this. Revelation 2 where God is communicating to the apostle John and he says, "to the angel of the church" of at whatever city "write this." And John is writing as Christ is dictating. So sometimes it was direct dictation that the spirit used to move those men to write Himself words.

Sometimes it was miraculous revelation. You think of the Old Testament prophets and the visions that they saw or John in Revelation where he sees these things and he's writing describing what he has seen. God gave them those visions with the intent that they would communicate in written form what they had seen. Sometimes it was through historical research. You read the introduction to the book of Luke, and Luke records how he has carefully researched these things to write them down. The Spirit moved Luke to write through interviews with people and through gathering data such that he could write what in fact had taken place.

Sometimes it was Spirit-aided memory. John 14:26 refers to Christ or Christ is speaking to Himself disciples and He says, "The helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." How could they remember what Christ had said and write those things down for us in the Gospels? Well, it's because the Holy Spirit helped them and brought to mind things that were said.

Sometimes the Spirit moved men to write particular things simply through the godly wisdom that He had given them that they had acquired. Solomon, who sought God's wisdom, and God gave it to him, and we have the record of much of that wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Or sometimes it was through life experience. You think of the Psalms, so many written out of specific circumstances that God had brought the writer of that psalm through. And as they are living that circumstance and learning through that circumstance and wrestling through that circumstance,

they communicate what God intended for us to have as well. Or the book of Ecclesiastes, looking around and gaining understanding of the vanity of life by seeing all that's taking place over the course of life and recording that for us. So God used a variety of means and modes and we could add others in His providence to direct the writers of Scripture to write what in fact He desired for them to write, such that down to the very words that they used are the words that God intended.

You read book like 2 Peter. Peter had a different personality, different education level, different writing style than what you see when you read Paul. And God is pleased with that. And God intended that. He wanted that variety for us on the pages of Scripture. He used the variety of authors, the variety of circumstances, the variety of backgrounds, a variety of processes to give us what He in fact desired us to have. So we have the confidence that that it was God's work through the Holy Spirit and those that He had chosen to author Himself Scripture for us and Him working in various ways through the Holy Spirit to move those men such that when we see what was written, it's not a matter of our own interpretation. It's not even a matter of you know just what they intended, although they generally understood what they were writing, but not all the time that we have the result that this is God's Word to us it's what God intended that He communicate to us.

So I want to talk briefly be about the wrong views of inspiration before we get into more of the biblical evidence for it. But there's a variety of wrong views of inspiration. I'm not going to give you all those. If you're reading biblical doctrine, you'll read some of these and others there and there's others that have been addressed in other resources. But one wrong view of inspiration is what we could call the dictation theory. You think of someone who is dictating or like a medical transcriptionist and all they do is listen and type. There's not a lot of: "I guess I don't really know this, but I don't think there's a lot of thinking involved. It's more of just I'm listening and I'm typing what comes in." As I mentioned, there are times where God dictated things directly to the authors of Scripture. But that is not the primary reality that we see in Scripture. So this would be the view that God dictated all that was written and that the biblical authors were basically transcriptionists. This really ignores the variety of writing styles, vocabulary, etc. that we see throughout Scripture. So when we say men were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak from God, we don't mean that God was whispering in their ear everything that they were going to say, and

they just wrote it down. Again, we recognize there are times where God did say, "This is exactly what you're going to write down." But that was not true of the totality of the Scriptures.

A second wrong view is the partial, or the conceptual theory. We could split those, but they're related to one another. The partial theory is basically that spiritual truth is inspired, but not other geographic or scientific details. So God's primary intent in the Scriptures was to give us revelation about himself, spiritual truth. And so all that He inspired, but the rest of the details He kind of left to the human authors. And so there's other things that are maybe not accurate or there could be errors in those things even though the spiritual truth is in fact true. That's not what we see reflected in Scripture. The evidence of Scripture.

The conceptual theory related to that again kind of a partial idea is the fact that or the view that God gave ideas or concepts only and that the human authors filled in the details. So you see kind of a concept drawing there, like before the architect goes into all the details of the full building plans, they put together a concept that represents what it's ultimately going to be, but they don't necessarily get into all the specifics of the building. And so this is the idea that God gave the general ideas to the scriptural writers that they were going to write in general the concepts He intended but the specifics of what was written, the exact words that were used, and all the details were not inspired.

Obviously, these wrong views have an implication for how we think of the Bible. If somebody affirms the partial view, they're going to say, "Yeah, all the history, geography, all the scientific things, Genesis 1, what that says about creation, you know, nah, that's just what they thought at the time. Only the spiritual truth matters." No, we say every single word, every single phrase is inspired Scripture. The concept idea, if you say, "Well, God only gave concepts," you can back up from what the Scripture actually says. How far back you want to go to that concept that is in fact true and you make the Scripture say nothing or you can twist it to reflect what you think or what the culture around you thinks and so these are wrong views of inspiration although some would still say, "Yes, I affirm the Bible is God's Word," but what they really mean is not that all of the Bible; the Bible is not verbally and plenary inspired, it's not verbal plenary inspiration, it's a partial or conceptual theory.

A third wrong view is a natural theory that the authors were moved more by the world or other things but not by the Holy Spirit. This is more just, you know, the these were very religious guys. They were in tune with things that are true about God. And so they were more inspired like a songwriter is inspired. They just happen to be able to write things that are helpful. But there was no miraculous work of the Holy Spirit inspiring them. The neo-orthodox or post-modern theory; this is a rejection of propositional truth as we see around us in so many different ways. And so the emphasis on this is not on what is the truth that the Bible teaches. What is it that God has specifically revealed that is true about Himself and about His Son, about the Gospel, about us, about what is sin and what is not sin, and how we're to live. But that the emphasis is really on the experience, the subjective experience that one gets from the Scriptures rather than the objective truth about the Scripture.

Paul Enns puts it this way. He says, "The neo-orthodox view emphasizes that the Bible is not to be exactly equated with the Word of God because God does not speak in mere propositions. God does not reveal mere facts about Himself. He reveals Himself. The Bible is not the substance of the word of God, but rather the witness to the Word of God. It becomes the Word of God as the reader encounters Christ in his own subjective experience." So they would say you can read the Bible and kind of come away feeling a particular way and believing a particular thing and I can read the Bible and come away with a different feeling or a different perspective. And that's fine because it's really not about the objective truth. It's just about our experience in responding to that. Those are all false views of inspiration that fall short—in some cases woefully short—of what the Bible in fact actually claims and teaches.

So let's consider next the compelling evidence for inspiration. Why do we believe that the Bible is in fact inspired? We've looked at what it says about that doctrine in some key passages and what that means. But what does the rest of Scripture have to say as we think about the evidence? And let's start with the biblical evidence for that, the internal evidence, if you will, from the Bible itself. Why do we believe that the Bible is in fact inspired? The first reason is because of the definitive claims of the Bible. And if you spent any time at all reading your Bible, you understand that this book claims to be the Word of God. I think it was the MacArthur Bible Handbook mentioned that in the Old Testament alone, the human writers refer to their writings as the Word of God over 3,800 times. I did not go through and double-check the math on that, but



the point is you can hardly go any number of verses or pages without seeing some reference to the fact that this is the Word of God. "Thus says the Lord:" or God is clearly communicating here. The Bible assumes that it is the Word of God. And it says that repeatedly throughout its pages. Again, we won't take time to look at all 3,800 of them, but there are passages like Jeremiah 1:4, Romans 3:2 speaks of the Bible as the oracles of God. We could look at so many different passages.

So, the clear statements of Scripture are a huge part of why we believe the Bible to be inspired because it claims that for itself all over the place. If you reject the inspiration of the Bible, I have no idea why you would want to spend any time in this book because it claims all over the place to be God's Word. And so we in reading the Bible have to be honest that it claims to be God's Word to us. You also see this specifically in the New Testament author's view of the Old Testament. We already looked at a couple of passages where clearly Paul in 2 Timothy chapter 3 was including the Old Testament when he says that the Scripture is inspired by God. Second Peter chapter 2 where Peter was referring to the prophets and the prophecies of Scripture as being moved by God. The New Testament authors also routinely treat the Old Testament as Scripture. If you flip through an epistle, take for example the epistle of Romans and you look and you see those places where Paul is quoting from the Old Testament where it's kind of indented and all capital letters and you see them all over the place in your Bible. Why? Well, it's because they viewed the Old Testament as authoritative revelation from God. And so there's no doubt that the New Testament authors viewed the Old Testament as Scripture. They also viewed the New Testament as Scripture as we saw that they recognized—Peter recognized—Paul's writings and in that way and Paul recognized the other Gospel writers and others.

But we really affirm the Bible as inspired by God as God's words to us because of Jesus Christ's view of the Scripture. It really hinges on what does Christ teach is true about the Bible. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 5. (And Tom has a really good book on this, Jesus' High View of Scripture; and we'll get to this in in a few weeks, a few months probably.) Matthew 5. Notice what Jesus says in verse 17. He says, "Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." Law and prophets is just a summation of the Old Testament. That's what how Christ and so many of the New Testament writers refer to the entirety of the Old Testament. So Jesus is speaking about the entirety of the Old Testament. And

he says in verse 18, "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth shall pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished." Again, you see Christ affirming not only the words but the very letters of Scripture as being from God. "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same shall be called least in the kingdom. But whoever keeps and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." So Jesus made it clear at the outset of Himself ministry. "I did not come to do away with that. I am affirming the truth and the authority of the Old Testament."

Turn over to Matthew 22. This example of Christ's teaching a little more of a specific example. In Matthew 22 pick up in verse 29; well, back up to verse 23. "On that day it says some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned him," about seven brothers. Verse 25. "The first married and died, having no children, left his wives to his brother. The second, third, down to the seventh. Then the woman died. In the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?" They're trying to trap Jesus. Verse 29, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God? 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'" He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'"

Notice what Christ affirms there. He says in verse 29, "You have not understood the Scriptures." And He says in verse 31, "This is what was spoken by God." And then He quotes from the Old Testament in verse 32 as the argument for what is true regarding the resurrection. And so He says this quote is a part of the Scriptures. It's the Old Testament. It is the authoritative word of God. So Jesus clearly affirmed that the Old Testament is Scripture. It's God's word. If you profess to follow Christ, to believe Christ, that He is your Lord, you should have the same view of Scripture that He had and He wholeheartedly affirmed that the Old Testament though written by human authors. There are many times where He refers to the human authors, David or Moses, what but He affirmed it is, in fact, God's word.

Christ affirms the history of the Old Testament. And it's not just the theology of it. In Matthew 19:4 and 5, He refers to creation to Adam and Eve being made male and female. Christ clearly

affirmed the historicity of Genesis chapter 1. In Matthew 23:35, He refers to the murder of Abel when He says, “The blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah.” So He affirmed the historicity of Genesis 4. In chapter 24:37 He referred to the flood, the days of Noah. So Jesus believed that Genesis was an accurate account of the history of humanity, the beginnings of humanity. He affirmed that and so much more.

But Jesus didn't just affirm the Old Testament as Scripture. He also really pre-authenticated the writing of the New Testament through Himself apostles. Turn over to John and look at what Jesus says in John 14 verse 26. This is a verse I referred to earlier where He said to Himself disciples, verse 25, "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." This is not the “I'm cramming for a test” promise of Jesus. that the Spirit is going to bring to mind the things you heard in class or the definitions you read, and you'll get a 100 on your matching test because the Spirit's going to bring to mind remembrance. This is a promise to the apostles to His disciples to say the Spirit is going to come and He's going to teach you all things and bring to mind these things so that you can record them so you can write them. Look over at John 16 verse 12. He says, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. And all things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

Paul in in the letter to the Corinthians described this reality as well. The Spirit coming to bring to mind and to teach the truth of God. Jesus said, "This is what's going to happen. The Old Testament authoritative Scripture, the Spirit is coming. He's going to bring to mind these things and teach you, not speaking of all Christians, but of the apostles specifically, so that you can communicate. You can be those men moved by the Holy Spirit speaking on behalf of God. So the claims of the Bible, what it says about itself, what the New Testament authors say about the Old Testament and the New Testament, what Jesus Christ said about the Scriptures make it clear that the Bible is in fact God's word. It is breathed out from God, written by human authors.

It's not just the definitive claims of the Bible, though, it's also the unique nature of the Bible. We won't take a lot of time to develop this but think of the clear unity of Scripture written by so many authors over thousands of years and yet one unifying message. Again, different personalities, different contexts, different languages.

All of that is true through the human authors that God used. And yet, one divine author weaving one story through. If you were with us for the Bible survey last fall, you traced how the Scriptures with different books, different genres, different authors, yet have one message. They are moving from creation to the new creation of God redeeming a people for Himself through His Son. That is the message of the Scriptures. There is an incredible unity to this book. You know, you read any other human works and even you think of one author writing multiple works and they can't even be consistent with themselves. And yet God has given us the Bible written over thousands of years by numerous authors with an incredible unity. We also see this in its fulfilled prophecy. The fact that the scriptural prophecies have been fulfilled. You think of the prophecies relative to Christ and the fulfillment that came hundreds of years after those things were said would be true of Him as we saw in Christ's birth as we studied through Matthew. You think of other historic prophecies about the nation of Israel from the decree of Cyrus and others that were fulfilled that reflect the fact that this book is not just the writings of men. It is the writings of God. So the biblical evidence for the inspiration of Scripture is clear.

We also see historical evidence for the inspiration of Scripture. You know, think first about the martyrdom of the prophets and the apostles. Were the prophets received well generally by those to whom they proclaimed the message of God and those to whom they write? The answer is no. We'll get to Matthew 5 that speaks of being persecuted and how we can expect as Christians the same fate that those who spoke on behalf of God endured. The apostles who professed to speak on behalf of God, many of them were martyred for what they proclaimed. You know, they very much believed that they were speaking the Word of God. They were confident that this message "that I have to proclaim, I am not free to edit this message." You know, you think of most political figures in our day, how do they decide what they're going to say? They take a poll, and they say, "The majority of people think this. Now, I think this." The prophets and the apostles didn't do that. They had a clear message that they had received from God, and they were committed to proclaiming that message regardless of the outcome, even their own death. They

were willing to die for that truth. Again, is that definitive evidence? People have died for things that were wrong. But so many men who were willing to die on behalf of what they were proclaiming to be the Word of God. It is also the clear testimony of the church throughout history that this is in fact the Word of God.

We could have spent all night and all next week and then the time after that reading from different people in church history affirming the truth that we have studied and talked about tonight from the very early days the early church fathers. Clement of Rome speaking of Paul's letters to the church he said this, "You have searched the Scriptures which are true which were given by the Holy Spirit. Take up the epistle," he says, "of the blessed Paul the apostle. What did he first write to you in the 'beginning of the gospel?' Truly he wrote to you in the Spirit." Just like Paul said, Peter's words are Luke's words are Scripture and Peter said Paul's words are Scripture. And in the early days of the church, there was affirmation that what we have in the Scriptures is not just man's word, it is God's.

Gregory of Nissa: "The Scripture inspired by God as the apostle Paul calls it, is the Scripture of the Holy Spirit and its intention is the prophet of men." Again he is speaking of the early church. "Thus it is by the power of the spirit that the holy men who are under divine influence are inspired, and every Scripture is for this reason said to be inspired by God because it is the teaching of the divine breath." Augustine said, "Accordingly, He who has sent the prophets before His own descent also dispatched the apostles after His ascension. Therefore, when those disciples have written matters which He declared and spake to them, it ought not by any means to be said that He has written nothing Himself, since the truth is that Himself members have accomplished only what they became acquainted with by the repeated statements of the head. For all that He was minded to give for our perusal on the subject of His own doings and sayings, He commanded to be written by those disciples whom He thus used as if they were Himself own hands, affirming the inspiration of Scripture."

And this again has been the consistent testimony of the church even in the Reformation. Not a lot was written about the inspiration of Scripture. Not because they didn't think it was important, but because it was universally accepted; it was not something, it was not a hill they were battling on. Although some of the reformers did obviously make comments about it. Hinrich Bullinger said,

"The doctrine and writings of the prophets took not their beginnings of the prophets themselves as chief authors but were inspired from God out of heaven by the Holy Spirit of God. For it is God which dwelling by His Spirit in the minds of the prophets speaketh to us by their mouths." John Calvin in his commentary on 2 Timothy 3, "Moses and the prophets did not utter at random what we have received from their hand, but speaking at the suggestion of God, they boldly and fearlessly testified what was actually true, that it was the mouth of the Lord that spoke. We owe to the Scriptures the same reverence which we owe to God because it has proceeded from Him alone and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it." The Westminster Confession lists the 66 books of the Bible. And then it says this about them. "All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life, the authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, who is truth itself, the Author thereof. And therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God."

And so we see the evidence of the martyrdom of the prophets and apostles, the testimony of the church, but also the preservation of Scripture. As I mentioned, we will talk more about this later in the semester. But I if you think about what is it that you work to preserve, what do you keep, you know, from one year to the next? What do you have that's the oldest of things that you have preserved in your home? It's things that were significant or meant something to you. You know, I read the Tourettan quote earlier that if the Bible is inspired by God, if it's if it is indeed God's word, would God not also preserve it? And I think you could argue the other way. If God has so preserved the Bible, must it not be inspired by him? The fact that for thousands of years He has preserved this book for us is evidence that it is a unique and special book. That God would keep it for us so that we can know Him is evidence that He has spoken through it.

But it's not just the historical evidence and the biblical evidence. It's also the spiritual evidence. It's the authentication of the Spirit. Look at John chapter 10 verse 24 and following. John chapter 10. "The Jews," it says in verse 24, "gathered around Him and were saying to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.' And Jesus answered them and said, 'I told you and you do not believe.'" It's not My fault that you haven't gotten this. He says, "I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me, but you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." Then verse 27, He says, "My sheep

hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

My daughters have enjoyed doing a little game with me as their dad and others in our house. We have five girls and so they enjoy sitting me, or whoever's at our house, in a chair and they line up behind me, or whoever's in that chair, and they say something like, "Hi, Dad." where I can't see them and I have to guess which of my children is it that said that. And then the next one says, "Hi, Dad." And they try to sound like each other. And so far, I am a perfect 100% with my kids. I think they've given up on me. Now they enjoy, you know, other relatives or family members, those kinds of things. Why is that? Well, it's because I know my children's voice. I know who they are and I can recognize that voice. As a dad, my kids know my voice. You can be in a crowded room with a bunch of kids and if you say to your child, "Son, come here." They don't always respond because sometimes they don't want to respond, but they can pick out their dad's voice over every other voice. What's Christ saying? He's saying, "My sheep hear My voice. They know My voice."

Not saying that we have no need to be taught, no need for discernment, all kinds of things that the Scripture also says. But the reality is those who belong to Christ recognize His voice. And part of why the church has affirmed these books of the Bible and the Bible as God's Word is because we know His voice. We hear His voice, and we embrace that truth. 1 Corinthians 2:10 to 14 puts it this way. "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the Spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God." He's referring to how the apostles received through the Spirit what they would teach. And so God has revealed those through the Spirit. And he says verse 12, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." God, just as Christ promised, has given the Spirit. The Spirit has worked through the apostles to communicate spiritual truth that comes from God. And verse 14 says, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised."

An unbeliever reads this book, and they do not accept it as true. They don't accept it as being God's words. It doesn't make sense to them. They don't live in response to it. But the believer who God has given him a new heart embraces the truth of God's Word; embraces those things and as from the Lord and accepts them and lives in response to them. The Westminster confession puts it this way. It says, "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and revered esteem of the Holy Scripture and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, the full discovery it makes of the way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, of arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God."

You can look at history. You can look at the beauty of what it teaches, the unity of it, the fulfilled prophecy, all of those things that we've talked about. And all of those are abundant evidence to be the Word of God. Yet the confession says, "Notwithstanding our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." The ultimate persuasion is "My sheep hear My voice." And we recognize because of the Spirit of God in us the words of the Spirit of God through human authors that are in fact the Word of God. That's the authentication of the Spirit.

But the Spirit really does that through the transformation of our lives. I love what J.I. Packer says in his concise theology. He says, "God authenticates holy Scripture to us as His word, not by some mystical experience or secret information privately whispered into some inner ear. Not by divine or not by human argument alone, strong as this may be, nor by the church's testimony alone, impressive as this is when one looks back over 2,000 years. God does it rather by means of the searching light and transforming power whereby Scripture evidences itself to be divine. The impact of this light and power is itself the spirit's witness by and with the word in our heart." He's really saying what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 when he wrote to the church of the Thessalonians. And he said, "For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."



You see, what is the ultimate evidence for the reality that this book is God's word? That this is in fact the Word of God though written by human authors over thousands of years?

It is the transformation that this Word has produced in you and in me and in countless others who are in Christ; it is that this Word is living and active; that it accomplishes all that God intends for it to; that it has renewed your mind and transformed your life. And so we see the evidence of the reality of this book being the Word of God because it is the Word which performs its work in you who believe. It's not just what the Bible says about itself, although that is a part of the evidence. It's not just what we read about the Scriptures in the Scriptures, although that's a part of the evidence. It's not just the fact that the church for 2,000 years has affirmed exactly what we've talked about tonight, that God worked through human authors to write His infallible Word for us through the Holy Spirit. It's not just that the writers of Scripture died and were willing to die for their message. It's that we have seen God's Word transform lives and hearts. We've seen that in our own life, the impact of God's word. And so we recognize this is not the words of men. This is the Word of God which performs its work in you who believe. So there is biblical evidence, there is historic evidence and there is spiritual evidence. The Spirit testifying to us and transforming us through these words.

Lastly, let's just consider briefly the clear implications of Scripture. The clear implications of inspiration. The clear implications of inspiration. Why does it matter? What impact does it have for the Bible to be inspired by God; for it to be God's Word to us? Well, there are implications that we talked about last semester when it comes to interpreting the texts in the Bible. How we think about and interpret the Bible is shaped by the fact that it is inspired by God. We recognize that it is a divine book. It is God's word. And as a result of that, when we come to the Bible, we come to receive it as authoritative revelation. We'll spend more time next time thinking about the authority of the Bible. But because it is God's Word, we recognize it as revelation from God and as the authority for all we should think and believe and how we should live. We don't come to the Bible like you come to a Shakespeare play. Maybe to enjoy it, maybe to be critical of it, maybe to understand more about Shakespeare, maybe to benefit from it or just enjoy it. No, we come viewing it as authoritative revelation. We also interpret Scripture with Scripture. We talked about this as a key principle of hermeneutics for the Bible. Why do we do that? Why do we look at

what is in the book of James and say, "Well, let's also consider what's in the book of Romans." One was written by James, one was written by Paul, but all were written by God.

And so, there is one author, and we look from cover to cover to rightly understand. We interpret difficult passages with those that are clear. Why? Because God has said it all and He is consistent with Himself. And the truth of the Bible is consistent throughout. So it has a significant impact to interpret the Bible recognizing it's a divine book. But the Bible is also a human book. It is written by real people in real circumstances using real human language. And so when we interpret the Bible, we want to use an appropriate Bible translation. Again, we talked about that. The original autographs were in what? They were in Hebrew and Aramaic and Greek and most of us are not as good with Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek as we are in English. And so we need an English Bible, but we want one that is based clearly and closely on that original language, on the original manuscripts so that when we are reading and studying our Bible, we make sure we are in fact getting what those human authors wrote as inspired by God. The words matter and so we want a translation that reflects that to the best of our ability. It also is why we use the normal rules of language. God spoke through words, human words written by human authors. And so we want to interpret the Bible using the normal means of communication because that's how God chose to communicate to us. And so we don't look for deep hidden spiritual meaning. We look for what did those original authors write? Again, we recognize, as 1 Peter talks about, there were times where the prophets didn't fully understand all the implications of what they had written, but they did have an intended meaning that they were communicating. And we want to understand that meaning.

And it's why there's the importance of context as we interpret the Bible. Again, these are human authors writing to other people in specific contexts. And so, we want to understand those things. They wrote not in isolation. It's not like a fortune cookie where it's just some special message for us today. No, they wrote in context. And so, a book of the Bible has a flow to it. And we want to understand it in its context. So recognizing the Bible is inspired by God. It is a divine book written through humans. That's why we interpret the Bible the way that we do. But it's not just recognizing or how we interpret the Bible. It's also all the other attributes of Scripture. If tonight's message was not true, if the Bible was not inspired by God, this would be a short semester and really we wouldn't bother with the next four or whatever it is. But because the

Bible is inspired by God, because it's God's word, we recognize it has the characteristics of God. It is authoritative. It is our rule for faith and practice. It has clarity. God is a God who reveals Himself. And so if God has written these words, we would expect it's not to conceal Him from us. It's not so that only a select few can understand what God has revealed. He intends for it to be clear for us. The Bible is sufficient. If God has given us His word, we have confidence that He's given us all that He intends for us to have. And so, it speaks to the issues of life.

We also recognize its necessity. We have to have this book. God has given it to us. It is a precious resource for us. It's vitally important and it's relevant. It's God's Word to us. And so it speaks to the issues of life in a way that changes how we think and how we live. And it is inerrant, without error, because God is a God of truth. God is not a God who deceives. He is omniscient. He knows all. He is perfectly wise. And that is what is reflected in the Scripture. All that is true. Why? Because the Bible is inspired by God. Because men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. Because all Scripture is God-breathed. But it also has implications for prioritizing the Bible in our own lives. You may know we can't come to a study like this and think about these truths of how precious and valuable the Bible is and not reflect on how are we responding to the Bible. Again, most of you in this room, you probably could have matched up the definition of inspiration on that matching quiz, even if without coming tonight.

You've heard some of these things before. You've heard much of this before. You recognize that the Bible is God's Word. We affirm that without hesitation. And yet, if you're like me, we don't always live as though that is true. And so, let me just ask you how committed you are to reading the Bible. If you really believe and I really believe that this is God's Word to us that He has given it to us. Are we committed to saying, "Man, I want to understand, and I want to learn more. I want this to be my meditation day and night. I don't want these words as Joshua 1 says, 'To depart from my mouth.' I want to be reading this all the time so that I can be thinking about it all the time so that it is transforming my life." Are we saturating ourselves with God's word? It is the inspired Word of God. But are you committed as well to studying the Bible? And it's not just that we gain spiritual benefit from this book by osmosis. It's that God has communicated in specific words for us. Jesus argues based on singular and plural. Paul argues in that way as well. Are we looking intently at the Bible in that way? Studying it corporately. That's why we preach. Tom preaches slowly through books of the Bible. It's not just because he enjoys that pace. It's because

he believes that every word matters because God put it there. And we want to consider why do these matter? What is God saying through these details of Scripture? And so we don't just want to read all of it, although we do because it's all inspired. We want to focus on the details of it because every detail is inspired. And obviously we'll spend the rest of our life looking at the details and we will not exhaust those. There will be plenty of details left that we'll say, "Ah, we never got to those and we wish we had." But we want to give ourselves to studying the Bible individually and corporately as a church because the Bible is inspired by God.

And are you committed to believing the Bible? Are you committed to living in response to it? Back in Jeremiah 36 after Jeremiah had recorded that the writings of God and Baruch took them and gave them to the king. And you know what the king did with them? He sliced them off and he threw them into the fire. Why? He didn't like them. He didn't want to hear what it had to say. And so he rejected the words that God had given. And God said, "Hey, you can write another scroll." And so the response to the Word of God, are we moldable to it? Do we allow it to shape us? Do we embrace what is true? And are you committed to obeying the Bible? To not just thinking about what it says, but to living in light of that reality. You know, I hope tonight for all of us that it has just been a reminder of the precious nature of this book. What we hold in our hands day after day, Sunday after Sunday is a miracle that God through a bunch of normal humans, normal people with varying levels of education and background, giftedness in communication, various languages. The Holy Spirit moved through those men such that what we hold in our hands today is the very Word of God. May we live in light of that, obeying what God has revealed.

I just want to leave us tonight with 1 Thessalonians 2:13. That verse that I mentioned before where it says, "For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received the word which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." May we be men who accept this book not as the word of men. Not just good ideas to consider, helpful thoughts to think about, but for what it really is, the Word of God. And may the evidence for the reality that this is the Word of God be the work that it performs in you who believe. May the best evidence, the best argument that you could give to anybody in your life for why the Bible is God's word, is the reality of the difference it has made in you. That when somebody else says to you, "Why is the

Bible true?" That you can give them all kinds of reasons about what it claims and about how it describes this doctrine and the evidence for that in a variety of ways even beyond what we've gotten into tonight. But you can also say you can see that this Bible is not a normal book because of the impact that it has had on my life. You knew me before. you knew what I was like, and you see me now. And the difference that is produced is a result of the power of this book, God's word, which performs its work in you who believe. May that be true of each of us tonight as we go in the days and weeks ahead that we would live in light of the reality of this book. Not the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for our time together tonight. We thank You for the amazing miracle of the inspiration of Scripture. Thank You that by Your Holy Spirit over thousands of years with multiple authors, You moved so that men spoke, but what they spoke was not simply their words. It was Your words. Thank you that we hold in our hands a book that is your inspired revelation given to us. And Lord, we will study together this semester more of how precious it is. It's authority and sufficiency and clarity and relevancy. It is all of those things and more.

Lord, I pray that we would be reminded of how precious of a gift this is and that we would devote ourselves to knowing it, to proclaiming it, to living in light of it. Thank You that You have enabled us by Your work in our hearts and through Your Spirit to hear Your voice in the Scriptures. And so we thank You for our time tonight and we look forward to our continued study together this semester. We entrust our evening to You in Christ's name. Amen.