

Trustworthy

Clear

Enough



THE BIBLE

IS...

Introduction

“I don’t believe in doctrine,” someone might say, “I just believe everyone should be allowed to believe whatever they want.”

But what *is* doctrine? It’s a body of information we must take on the basis of faith—which there may be evidence for, but which ultimately can’t be proven, but which we stake our life on, and which we think is worth promoting and telling others. So to say the above statement is in effect to live by a certain doctrine, for (1) it’s based on a belief that there’s no “one way” to live by; but you can’t prove God doesn’t exist; (2) it’s a belief you will likely stake your life on because it would govern your daily decisions and how you relate to others; and (3) it would therefore be a belief you would want others to know and believe too (“I believe *everyone* should be allowed...”). It’s therefore impossible to live a life without believing or following *some sort* of doctrine.¹ The question therefore needs to be, “*Which doctrine* will I choose to live by?”

The Christian doctrine of Scripture is in some ways an introduction to the Christian faith because the Bible itself makes the assertion: “faith comes from hearing the message” (Romans 10:17). This “message” is the good news about Jesus, which we encounter in the Bible. Remarkably, the Bible teaches us that the one God who created all things has chosen to reveal himself in words once spoken, and now written down, so that we can know him. This statement has far reaching consequences. Indeed, according to author Peter Jensen:

The Bible asserts that knowing God *is the goal or purpose of human existence*—not just knowing that he exists or what he is like, but entering into a personal relationship with him. [...] The biblical message is the disclosure of one person to another—of God to us.²

In the Bible, therefore, we don’t just encounter a body of information *about* a person, like say an autobiography, but in the words of the Bible we encounter God himself.

The Bible and Jesus

The apostle John opens his biographical account of Jesus with a cosmic description of Jesus as the very Word of God in human form (John 1:1-14). Jesus himself said he was sent by God to disclose to us the reality of his existence and our need to be reconciled to him (e.g. Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32). To his heavenly Father, Jesus prayed: “This is eternal life: that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). In other words, according to Jesus, God has made himself known so that we can know him and what he offers us: eternal life. How? “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” says Jesus. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Furthermore, Jesus authenticated these claims by rising from the dead. Theologian Michael Horton writes, “Since he has certified his claims by his resurrection, Jesus’ view of Scripture must also be our view.”³ If Jesus trusted Scripture even to the point of giving his life in order to fulfil it, not only is it worth our consideration, but delving into its message promises nothing less than the life Jesus gives us.

¹ Timothy Keller, “The Doctrine of the Word”: <https://www.bethinking.org/bible/the-doctrine-of-the-word>

² Peter Jensen, *The Life of Faith: An introduction to Christian doctrine*, 9 (emphasis added).

³ Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core doctrines for Christian disciples*, 52.

The Bible and History

According to Lifeway Research, “The Bible has the most surviving copies of any ancient document, to put its text to the test for variants or for corruption. There are around 24,000 manuscripts from all over the ancient world, some as early as the second century,” and even if we were to destroy all the ancient manuscripts we have today, we could still reconstruct the text of the Bible with accuracy because of more than one million quotations from Christians in the second to fourth centuries.⁴

The Bible is a collection of ancient documents, written over the course of 1100 years or so, by a diversity of authors, from peasants to prophets, from priests to kings, from physicians to fishermen. Yet, its overall unified message testifies to the existence of one God who created all things and is on a mission to make all things new (Revelation 21:5). There is no document *at all like* the Bible.

Inspiration and Authority

“God speaks in the words of the Bible in such a manner as to remove all doubt as to its divine origin, character and authority.”⁵ This resource will take somewhat of a shortcut in our study of the Christian doctrine of Scripture and work from one key guiding principle in our approach. We will take on face value that the Bible is the very Word of God and therefore authoritative. In other words, Scripture claims that it is the product of God speaking through human authors and therefore itself carries the authority of God (e.g. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21). For knowing that God has spoken in the lives of real people, and that he has overseen the recording of his words, and given his stamp of approval, leads us with confidence to open it, explore it and seek to understand it, knowing that it is trustworthy, clear and enough for us to know God and live in this world in such a way that enables us to trust, obey, enjoy and worship him with confidence. What the apostle Paul wrote of his Jewish contemporaries, Christians can affirm with even greater confidence: in the Scriptures we possess nothing less than “the very words of God” (Romans 3:2). From this foundation we are well equipped to build a biblical understanding of Scripture and how it helps us to know God and the way he has called us to live.

This Resource: Format and Function

There are many places in the Bible we could turn to help us grasp the trustworthiness, clarity and sufficiency of the Bible. Without trying to do too much in a three week series, each week’s study will raise questions to get us thinking personally, culturally and hopefully aid and encourage our approach to the study each week. The historic Christian doctrine of Scripture is such a big topic (which you would expect from four millennia of revelation, thought, reflection and discussion!), but it is also deeply personal, practical and purposeful because the God of

⁴ Mary Jo Sharp, “3 Reasons Why the Bible Can Be Trusted”: <https://research.lifeway.com/2018/09/07/3-reasons-why-the-bible-can-be-trusted/#:~:text=The%20Bible%20has%20the%20most,early%20as%20the%20second%20century.>

⁵ Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A handbook of Christian belief*, 40.

Scripture is deeply personal, purposeful and practical too. He wants us to know him and live in such a way so as to worship him with joy.

The study notes for each week will be broken into three parts in which we'll be led to question our culture, clear the confusion often held about the particular part of the doctrine, and then finally connect with the Word. You'll also find some other passages which relate to the topic at hand. You'll then be led through discussion in your group under three headings. You'll be encouraged to (1) *Let in the word*, as you stop to consider a question or two which helps to bridge the world of everyday life with the world of Scripture; (2) *Learn the word*, as you read the focus passage of the Bible and talk about it together; and (3) *Live the word*, as you prayerfully consider what particular steps you could take in light of what you've read and discussed together.

But of course, how can we truly live the word without loving the Lord who has revealed himself to us in it? So to help you love the word, you'll also find a prayer based on a verse from **Psalm 119**, the longest poem in the Bible which is, perhaps unsurprisingly, an extended appreciation of Scripture itself. As you read and pray, let it speak through you and to you and in turn shape your reading and prayers.

As you begin to delve into God's Word, I pray that God would reveal more of himself to you, and that he may lead you not only to understand his Word (and therefore him) more and more, but that his Spirit may grow in you a deeper love for him through a deeper love of his Word.

Dan Allan

Pastor

Bobbin Head Anglican Church

Outline

Sunday Date	Study	Passage
11 June 2023	The Bible is Trustworthy	2 Corinthians 4:1-6
18 June 2023	The Bible is Clear	Psalms 119:105-112, 129-136
25 June 2023	The Bible is Enough	2 Timothy 3:10-17

Recommended Resources

If you would like to explore the Christian doctrine of Scripture a little more, I recommend checking out the respective chapters in the following books:

Peter Jensen, *The Life of Faith: An introduction to Christian doctrine*
Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core doctrines for Christian disciples*
Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A handbook of Christian belief*
J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*

Study One | The Bible is Trustworthy

1. Questioning our Culture

In a world of fake news, political spin and where subjective, personal experience reigns via social media, blogs and short videos, can we trust what we read? Or are we left to tread water on our own in a sea of opinion, subject to the likes or disapproval of others? How can we know what is really *true*, if indeed (so we're told) truth exists at all? Little wonder the modern Western mind is awash with uncertainty and anxiety as each person is left to the impossible task of obeying their own ambitions and trusting in their own wisdom. One day we will learn, if we haven't already, that the worst judge of all is the self.

2. Clearing the Confusion

Thankfully, the God of the Bible reveals what is ultimately true so that we may confidently rest, not in our own ability to determine reality, but in his revelation of what is real, true and therefore trustworthy. In short, *he* is. The more we read Scripture, the more we find ourselves gripped by its truth.

The Bible is God's interpretive tool for us to understand ourselves, our world, and above all: God, because "what we think about God is the most important thing about us."⁶ What we know about God invariably impacts upon every other aspect of our existence. Even the atheist is forced to consider their worldview in reference to God when they confess they don't believe *in God*.

When it comes to discussing the truth or trustworthiness of the Bible, Christians have used two key terms: **infallibility** and **inerrancy**. Both logically flow from the Bible's assertion that "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). Holding to the infallibility of Scripture means seeing it as perfect; not free from limited human perception or apparent paradox, but complete according to God's perfect intentions. Holding to the inerrancy of Scripture means believing the Bible contains no errors in the original ancient manuscripts, the historical foundations from which we derive our modern day English translations.⁷

3. Connecting with the Word: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

The trustworthiness of the Bible resonates from this week's passage, for the message of the gospel, found in the pages of the Bible, so transformed the apostle Paul and in turn gave him quiet confidence that as he went about sharing it with others, they too would come to see just how trustworthy and transformative it really is.

The apostle Paul was irreversibly transformed when he encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31). Previously a persecutor of Jesus' followers, Paul once pursued and prosecuted people who simply professed that a man called Jesus had risen from the dead. How could a man so hell-bent on persecuting what was then a religious minority, all

⁶ A. W. Tozer

⁷ For example, the New International Version, Christian Standard Bible and English Standard Version, to name but a few.

of a sudden turn his life around—almost overnight it would seem, and join the very group of people in their mission to testify to the same risen Lord?

There are many sides to an answer for this question. Paul himself describes this transformation in terms of God breaking into the darkness of the human heart with the life-giving light of the gospel, which is the message that “displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (v 4).

Because he was so transformed, he embarked on the same mission to share the same gospel with others. The trustworthiness of the Bible resounds from this passage, not just because it transformed Paul’s life, but because here we also read of his method for sharing the same gospel with others. No need for secrecy. No need for deception. No need for distortion (v 2).

On the contrary, all Paul says he is committed to is “setting forth the truth plainly” (v 3). He knew all he needed to do is make this message, which we now have preserved in the pages of the Bible, available, accessible to people, and to explain it. How many marketing campaigns could say they could commend themselves to people’s consciences in the sight of God? But through these apparently ordinary means God promises to perform his extraordinary work.

Sounds simple, but by no means was it easy. Paul knew he had enemies who opposed his mission. Perhaps he recalled his own journey and what his life was like before he encountered Jesus. But his enemies weren’t just people like who Paul once was, whose sight was “veiled”, like other Pharisees of his day. The great enemy was “the god of this age” (v 4). He “blinded the minds” of all who didn’t consider this gospel trustworthy. He knew everyone’s greatest problem was that they couldn’t see Jesus for who he is. But knowing this didn’t change Paul’s tactic. Instead it grounded him in the mission, not to promote himself but to preach “Jesus Christ as Lord” (v 5). In other words, the risen Jesus who confronted Paul on the Damascus Road now reigns as King and rules as Lord over all creation. How does Paul know this? No doubt he read the eyewitness accounts⁸ which circulated at the time telling of Jesus’ power to command the seas, cast out evil spirits and even raise the dead. So he would gladly go on serving the Lord in this way.

And as he would embark on this mission to “preach Jesus Christ as Lord,” he could see that the very God who first caused the light to shine into the darkness of his once barren world, would go on shining the light of his revelation into the darkness of the human heart and give “the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ” (v 6). Recognising and responding rightly to Jesus is not the result of human effort or endeavour, but is the direct result of the creative power of the living God.

And Paul says this mission, this “ministry,”⁹ was given to him “by the mercy of God” (v 1); a gracious gift and therefore a privilege to not only be transformed by this message but to be a vehicle through which others will be so changed by it as well.

⁸ Which we call the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

⁹ “Ministry” just means service, which speaks to the public service Christians consider sharing the gospel to be.

Not only is God's Word trustworthy to inform us. God's Word is trustworthy to transform us as we give ourselves to know and live in its life-giving light.

Other Passages

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Matthew 7:24-27

A Prayer

Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path. **Psalm 119:105**

*Lord of life,
Shine the light of your word into the darkness of my life,
so I might see the glory of Jesus
and walk joyfully in the light of your life-giving word.
In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Let in the word...

1. How can we know any information is trustworthy? What evidence do we look for?

The trustworthiness of the Bible resounds in Paul's own experience and method of ministry.

Learn the word...

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

2. 2 Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul. Read the extraordinary account of his conversion in Acts 9:1-31. What thematic connections stand out to you between these two passages?
3. Why did the apostle Paul consider "the gospel" trustworthy?
4. What tactics did Paul "renounce" as he went about preaching the gospel? What impact would employing these tactics have had on his "ministry" if he did (v 1)?
5. What tactics did Paul then employ? How does this give us confidence in the message Paul preached?

6. How does Paul summarise the message which he preached? Why would this be such an apt summary?

7. Why do you think Paul called what he and his apostolic team did a “ministry”? (Hint: “ministry” just means “service”)

8. What cosmic connection did Paul believe took place as he simply went around preaching “Jesus Christ as Lord”? Extracting from this very passage, how would Paul say he came to believe this?

Live the word...

9. Do you share the same conviction Paul had for the power and significance of the gospel of Jesus? If yes, what has encouraged you in your belief? If not, what questions or concerns still remain? How might you or others help you to address these?

Study Two | The Bible is Clear

1. Questioning our Culture

We are confused about many things in our world today, from what to believe about just about anything, to our very own sexuality; from public discourse to our private lives, confusion reigns. One feeder is the sheer number of conflicting voices. It seems as if everyone is fighting for air time, and usually to contradict the values and opinions of another. No wonder we're more anxious than we've ever been. Surely, there must be clarity somewhere!

It is a real blessing from God to know he has communicated to us in a way that is clear and able to be understood.

2. Clearing the Confusion

To say the Bible is clear, however, is not equal to saying it is easy to understand, for even the apostle Peter confesses in his letter to the church that the apostle Paul's letters can at times be difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). The clarity of Scripture is rather to say God has revealed himself in such a way that we can know with confidence who he is and how he wants us to respond to him. He hasn't left us to wonder, speculate or merely opine on matters as significant as our everyday human lives. The Bible says every human being is special, created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27-28): designed by the careful attention of a creator and with a specific purpose to know him. He hasn't left us in the dark but has shone the light of his Word into the darkest places so that we might know who we really are, what we're really like, and what he's really done for us.

This aspect of the Christian doctrine of Scripture has historically been referred to as the **perspicuity** of Scripture. Holding to the perspicuity of Scripture is to see the Bible as accessible and understandable, not entirely nor equally by every level of intellect (for knowing it isn't merely an intellectual exercise!), but nevertheless readable enough for anyone to grasp so that they might know the God of Scripture and the salvation he offers. Another term often used in discussion about the clarity of Scripture is **hermeneutics**, which is the art and science of interpreting the Bible well. Of course, as we learnt last week, good hermeneutics wouldn't be possible unless the God who reveals himself in his Word makes it possible through the agency and power of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We actually caught a glimpse of the clarity of the Bible in last week's study, when the apostle Paul expressly determined to "set forth the truth plainly," confident that as he did so, God would exercise his creative power by shining the light of his Word into the darkness of human hearts so they could see his glory in Jesus.

3. Connecting with the Word: Psalm 119:105-112, 129-136

The clarity of Scripture gloriously shines throughout the 119th Psalm, as we read of the poet's testimony to the benefit of knowing, internalising and living according to God's Word. Bible commentator Tremper Longman provides a helpful introduction to Psalm 119:

Psalm 119 is most notable for its length [...] and for the fact that it is an acrostic. The psalm is composed of twenty-two stanzas of eight verses. Each of the eight verses of a stanza start with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet, as the poet works his way from the beginning (*aleph*) to the end (*taw*). The acrostic form gives a sense of completion and totality, and to be sure, by the end of the psalm, one feels that the poet has indeed fully covered his subject.¹⁰

Throughout the psalm, the poet describes God's Word using eight different Hebrew words: "law", "statute", "precept", "decree", "command", "judgement", "word" and "promise". These terms not only describe what the Bible is, but they tell us something of what the Bible *does*.

God's Word *reveals* the righteousness of God to us through his laws, and in so doing, teaches us the difference between right and wrong (v 130). But more than that, God's Word *instructs* us to obey and follow God's law. Of course, it doesn't take long for us to realise we are entirely incapable of obeying God's law. Who could say they even come close to obeying, for example, Deuteronomy 6:4-6? With piercing clarity, God's Word exposes the sinfulness of our hearts as our lives are laid bare before the One to whom we must finally give account (Hebrews 4:12-13).

It would be entirely proper for God's Word to stop there, but by his mercy (Romans 12:1-2) God has made *promises* to us of blessing, forgiveness and everlasting life (Psalm 119:107, 132, 135). He has finally fulfilled—and will one day bring to completion—his promises to us in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20; c.f. Revelation 21:5-7). As "the Word made flesh" Jesus embodied perfectly the life that delights in God's Word. He came as "the light of the world," with the promise that "whoever believes in me will never walk in darkness but have the light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus came as the light who revealed the Father to us and showed us the way to enjoy life with him (John 10:10).

God's Word according to Psalm 119 therefore *empowers* us to respond to God by faith (c.f. Romans 10:5-13). The poet reflects on this by way of describing the benefits of God's Word. Primarily, it "gives light" (Psalm 119:105, 130). We all know the benefit even the dimmest light can bring to a darkened room or pathway. Not only does it reveal where we are, but it shows us the way ahead so that we might tread the path before us with confidence. It can be, for this very reason, our "heritage" and "joy" (v 111). So impacted by its light, we want others to experience its illuminating power.

The clarity of Scripture, therefore, means more than its accessibility. The unique transformative power of the Bible shines the light of truth into the darkness of our lives and gives us clarity to see not only who God is, but who we are and what it means to live as God's creatures.

Other passages

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

Matthew 11:25-30

John 8:12

¹⁰ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentary), 407.

Acts 17:11

Romans 10:5-13

Hebrews 4:12-13

2 Peter 3:15-16

A Prayer

You are good, and what you do is good;
teach me your decrees. **Psalm 119:68**

*Gracious Lord,
Give clarity to my thoughts,
conviction to my heart,
and strength to my will,
to know you better and to love you more,
for the glory of the risen Lord Jesus. Amen.*

Let in the word...

1. Share a time when you found it hard to know the way ahead, whether literally on a journey, or metaphorically through a season in your life. How did you feel? How did you know you took the best “next step” (if you think you did)?

The Bible often claims to give us light to know how to live. One such example is the following passage.

Learn the word...

Read Psalm 119:105-112

2. This psalm, like the vast majority of psalms, is a prayer to God. Why might that in itself be significant?
3. In what ways might God’s Word be “a lamp” or “a light”? What do you think the metaphor is getting at?
4. How does the poet respond to God’s Word?
5. How do you think the writer of Psalm 119 came to their conclusion about the benefits of God’s Word?

Read Psalm 119:129-136

6. What is the poet's motivation for obeying God's Word?
7. The poet is convinced that knowing God's Word will keep any sin from ruling over him (v 133). Why might this be the case? How do you think he came to this conclusion?
8. What is the ultimate goal of the poet's life (indicated by the lines that begin with "that..." (vv 106, 134)? Why do you think that is?
9. Read John 8:12. In what ways does Jesus fulfil the "light" metaphor, for us?

Live the word...

10. Share about the ways you've honestly found God's Word to be harder to read, understand and obey. Pray for each other, that you might experience the blessing of clarity through a deeper knowledge and love for God's Word.
11. Share a verse from the Bible which you've found to be particularly illuminating for your own life. What encouragement did you find in it?

Study Three | The Bible is Enough

1. Questioning our Culture

The advent of the internet has not only brought incalculable blessing, with knowledge that was previously only available for the wealthy or elite, now at the fingertips of anyone with a smartphone, tablet or computer. The internet has also ushered in a new age of information overload. Nearly every decision we make has the potential to paralyse us with a cereal aisle of possibilities. For example, we no longer need to book an appointment with our local GP; we can now consult Dr Google (not recommended, by the way). There we'll be alerted to all the potentially alarming possibilities. Of greater practical value, however, is to know *enough of the right information* than to know *all the possibilities*. Are you exhausted by all the sources of information yet?

In all our searching, when it comes to knowing whether God exists, and what that God may be like, it is all the more important that we don't just know all the possibilities, but that we have enough of the right information. When Jesus rose from the dead he authenticated his claims about his own identity and the nature of God (Matthew 28:16-20). The preservation of these claims through eyewitness testimony, which we find in the pages of the New Testament, was more than sufficient to spark and fuel a new movement known as "the Way" (Acts 9:2), or Christianity, as we have it today. In other words, the Church exists today because of the proclamation and preservation of God's Word. Christianity is unique because its teaching didn't originate from within a community of disciples, or from any one person. Its teaching originated from Jesus, was recorded by his disciples, and gave birth to a new community whose foundations rest on their Saviour and Lord.

2. Clearing the Confusion

This aspect of the doctrine of Scripture is historically termed the **sufficiency** of Scripture. Sufficient, however, doesn't mean exhaustive. The sixth *Article of Religion* puts it this way:

Holy Scripture containeth all things *necessary to salvation*: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.¹¹

Therefore, to believe Scripture is sufficient is not to say Christians believe Scripture is the *only* source of authoritative information. The **Wesleyan Quadrilateral** is a helpful tool which illustrates the four main sources of authoritative information we encounter in the world:

¹¹ From the *Articles of Religion* (1562), in *Common Prayer: Resources for gospel-shaped gatherings* (2012), 151.

Scripture	Reason
Tradition	Experience

Although each of these influences come to us with a *degree of authority*, Scripture is *the primary authority* to which the other three are held accountable. This derives from a biblical understanding of the nature of Scripture, as spoken, preserved and communicated to us by God himself. In fact, to reflect this difference, we might adjust the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to look a little more like this:

Scripture		
Reason	Tradition	Experience

All other sources of authoritative information submit to Scripture, not because the Bible will contain information on the given subject (e.g. it makes no mention of the blue whale), but because all of life comes from God and therefore relates to God (Revelation 4:11). We therefore submit all areas of our knowledge to him (2 Corinthians 10:5). What Scripture says indeed *relates to everything*, but it does not (and need not) have something to say *about everything*.

The Bible is enough, therefore, to know God through Jesus Christ, to live in such a way as to enjoy the benefits of his salvation, and to engage in this world as an act of joyful worship.

3. Connecting with the Word: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

In 2 Timothy we find the last words of the apostle Paul to his ministry apprentice. Throughout the letter Paul sums up many key aspects of the Christian life. In this short passage Paul helps Timothy understand the nature of Scripture, the extent of its authority and its purpose for the Christian believer.

Paul reminds Timothy, firstly, of his own example (v 10), and the ongoing reality of persecution for the person who wants to “live a godly life in Christ Jesus” (vv 11-13). The exclusive claims of Jesus not only bring clarity and comfort for all who believe, but confront all who prefer to live according to their own agendas. By contrast, the agenda for Jesus’ disciple is to learn what we have become convinced of: the way of “salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” becoming convinced of its credibility through study and the example and teaching of others (vv 14-15).

Then comes Paul’s momentous and memorable statement in verses 16-17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

First of all, “*all* Scripture is God-breathed.” Both the Old and New Testaments.¹² Note the difference between our modern understanding of “inspired” and the word the apostle here uses, “God-breathed.”

It is not that God breathes into the prophets and apostles, the way we speak loosely of great poets or other geniuses being “inspired.” Nor is it that the Spirit breathes into the Scriptures, making them holy and useful when he sees fit. Rather, the words of the prophets and apostles are exhaled –as God’s own speech to us.¹³

The source and nature of Scripture give rise to its practical benefit. It teaches us about God so that we his creatures can know him. It rebukes by exposing our folly, self-centeredness and lack of attention to God. It corrects us by showing us the right way to live. And it trains us to continue on the path of righteousness so that we might enjoy the benefits of God’s gift of salvation described here in terms of “every good work” (c.f. Philippians 2:12-13).

In summary, note the nature of Scripture: “God-breathed.” Note the extent of Scripture’s helpfulness: “*all* Scripture,” “for every good work.” In other words, want to know God and how he wants us to live? We may encounter many helpful resources and many wise people along the way. *We need not, however, turn anywhere else but the Bible.*

Other passages

Psalms 19

Isaiah 55:6-13

Matthew 4:4 (Deuteronomy 8:2)

Matthew 24:35

Luke 24:27

Romans 11:33-36

Colossians 1:15-17

¹² A helpful and visually engaging resource to aid investigating the historical reliability of the Bible is *Tim Challies & Josh Byers, A Visual Theology Guide to the Bible: Seeing and knowing God’s Word.*

¹³ Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core doctrines for Christian disciples*, 54.

A Prayer

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. **Psalm 119:18**

*Heavenly Father,
Give me power through your Spirit,
to know you better,
and to grasp the greatness of your love,
that I may walk in a manner worthy of Christ. Amen.*

Let in the word...

1. Have you ever experienced “analysis paralysis” (felt paralysed by all the options)? What were you trying to decide? Did you find all the information helpful or less so?

Better than knowing all the options is to know enough of the right information. Not just practical advice for life, but helpful when it comes to knowing and seeking God.

Learn the word...

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17

2. How does the apostle Paul expect Timothy to learn about living as “a servant of God”?
3. How would paying attention to Paul’s life, and the example of others, help Timothy in this regard?
4. What do you think about the promise of verse 12? Why do you think this is the case?
5. Timothy learnt “from infancy” the Holy Scriptures (v 15). What’s the difference between indoctrination and discipleship? How do we avoid the one and pursue the other with a clear conscience?
6. What does Paul say is the ultimate origin of “all Scripture”? What do you think leads him to make this claim?
7. What does it mean for Scripture to “make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”?

8. How do we demonstrate the usefulness of Scripture?
9. What's the ultimate purpose of the Bible according to this passage?

Live the word...

10. Someone might say, "I don't need church or other Christians. I can read the Bible for myself." With reference to this passage, in what way are they right? And in what way are they mistaken?
11. Does the notion of Scripture "thoroughly equipping us for every good work" resonate with your experience? Why/why not?
12. What "good work" have you seen Scripture equip you to do in your life? Encourage one another with words of personal testimony.