

e ssentials

Faith in One Accord

1) We Believe The Scriptures—Part 1

2) INTRODUCTION—

A. Our support Scripture text for this lesson is 2 Timothy 3:16-17—

*"[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*¹

B. What we believe...

"We believe the Scriptures (The Bible) of the Old and New Testament are verbally inspired by God, and inerrant and infallible in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority" (GRCC Statement of Faith).

C. Now, a question you might be asking yourself is, why do we believe the Scripture to be an essential to the Christians faith?

D. I came across a writing from a well-known Christian apologist who stated that the Scripture was not an essential to the Christian faith because it should be a given.

- i. He wrote, *"Sometimes people add the Scriptures. You've got to believe that the Bible is inspired. That is not essential doctrine, although I would consider the authority of Scripture is a functional necessity because without it none of the other*

¹ All Scripture from the ESV—English Standard Version, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)) unless noted.

*truth could be affirmed or asserted with confidence. Once you get rid of the authority of Scripture, the other ones fall one by one like dominoes."*²

- ii. However, the problem about the Bible not being an essential to the Christian faith is that we assume that *everyone* believes that the Bible is *the inspired* Word of God.
 - iii. There are those (even some Christians) who *do not believe* that the Bible is inspired by God but is strictly of human origin. *But we believe in the authority and the essentiality of God's Word, the Scripture.*
- E. Now, one of the things that sets Christianity apart from other religious faiths is that the God of Christianity is a God who desires to make Himself known to humanity.
- i. And one way He makes Himself known is through the Scriptures, the spoken word of God written in book format.
 - ii. In Genesis chapter 1, the words "*God said*" is mentioned at least ten times. As God was creating our world, the power of His word brought creation into existence. His words brought forth life.
- F. God's spoken words are tied to His relationship with humanity who were made in His image, and God commanded Adam (God's spoken Word), "*[16] You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*" —Genesis 2:16-17.
- G. Later in the Book of Exodus, God revealed Himself not only through spoken words but through written words, in what we call the Ten Commandments.

² <https://www.str.org/w/essential-christian-doctrines>

- i. Exodus 32:16 says, *"The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets."* Here God personalized His words to humanity in written format.

- H. Furthermore, God's Word was also both spoken and written down in human form through people such as prophets, poets, kings, disciples and apostles—ALL authors from the Old and New Testament (which makes up the complete Bible) were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - i. In 2nd Peter 1:21 (NIV)³, Peter affirmed that *"For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

 - I. Noted theologian, J. I. Packer once said, *"What Scripture says, God says; for, in a manner comparable only to the deeper mystery of the Incarnation, the Bible is both fully human and fully divine. So, all its manifold contents—histories, prophecies, poems, songs, wisdom writings, sermons, statistics, letters, and whatever else—should be received as from God, and all that Bible writers teach should be revered as God's authoritative instruction. Christians should be grateful to God for the gift of his written Word, and conscientious in basing their faith and life entirely and exclusively upon it. Otherwise, we cannot ever honor or please him as he calls us to do."*⁴

3) KEY POINT

- A. The Scripture is God's divine revelation in human form making its content divine and supernatural in nature yet accessible to humanity.
 - i. The Scripture itself is essential because it is God-breathed. Not one jot or tittle will be changed.

³ NIV—The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

⁴ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 5.

- ii. God and the writers in both Old and New Testament, as inspired by the Spirit, placed the essentiality of Scripture.
- B. Furthermore, the ultimate assurance and approval of Scripture is Jesus Christ Himself who taught and quoted from the Old Testament.
- i. Additionally, the disciples and apostles taught that Jesus was *the* fulfillment of the Old Testament which inspired them through the Holy Spirit the writings of the New Testament comprising books on the life and ministry of Jesus.
 - ii. This includes the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the historical and biographical Book of Acts, and the letters of the apostles like Peter, James, John, the apostle Paul, and one unknown author of the Book of Hebrews.
 - iii. In 2nd Peter 3:15-16, the apostle Peter even recognized Paul's letters (which makes up about half of the New Testament writings) as authoritative and divine in nature including the wisdom God gave to Paul which was accepted as part of Scripture.
- C. Moreover, as we read the Scripture from Genesis through Revelation, it unfolds God's plan of redemption, pointing to the only person for our salvation—Jesus the Son of God.
- i. The Scripture is essential to our Christian faith for it reveals that Jesus died on the cross for humanity's sin, and through His atoning sacrificial death we through faith in Jesus can receive forgiveness of our sins and have eternal life.

4) TRANSITION

- A. So, let's look into the importance of Scripture, and why it is essential to our faith in Jesus Christ. Here are eight points to consider:
- i. What is Scripture or the Bible?

- ii. Why does the Bible or the Protestant Bible have 66 Books?
- iii. The Bible as The Divine Word of God.
- iv. The Reliability of God's Word.
- v. How To Approach the Bible.
- vi. The Purpose of the Bible.
- vii. Trusting our Modern Translations of the Bible.
- viii. And lastly Trusting the Promises of God and His Word.

TEACHING

I. What is Scripture or The Bible?

- A. One of the foremost in translating the Bible into different languages from around the world is the vital ministry of the Wycliffe Bible Translators⁵ whose vision is for a world where everyone can know Jesus through the Bible.
- B. Their mission Scripture text is from Acts 2:11 (NIV)—*"We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"*
 - 1. From the Wycliffe Bible Translators UK website:
 - a). 1 in 5 people are still waiting for the Bible in their own language.
 - b). 7,388 languages are spoken in the world.

⁵ <https://wycliffe.org.uk/story/record-breaking-year>

- c). 724 languages have a full Bible (both OT and NT).
 - d). 1,617 languages have the complete New Testament.
 - e). 3,266 languages have work in progress.
2. Therefore, it is more than a cliché to say that the Bible is the greatest selling literature in the world, but God desires that every tongue and nation possess His Word in written form.
3. God's Word the Scripture is life. Philippians 2:16 (NLT)⁶—"*Hold firmly to the word of life.*"
- C. The word *scripture* in Greek means writings. The word BIBLE comes from the Latin meaning "book," a fitting name, since the Bible is the book for all people, for all time. It's a book like no other, in a class by itself.⁷
- D. Scripture has many alternative names. For the purpose of this teaching, we will use Scripture, the Bible, the Word of God or God's Word interchangeably.
- E. The Bible is comprised of 66 individual distinct books which make up one complete book written by about forty different authors in a period of about 1500 years.
- 1. These authors are from all walks of life—like prophets, a doctor, kings, priests, government officials, a former Pharisee and murderer, fishermen, apostles, disciples, poets, shepherds, warriors, and one unknown writer of the Book of Hebrews.

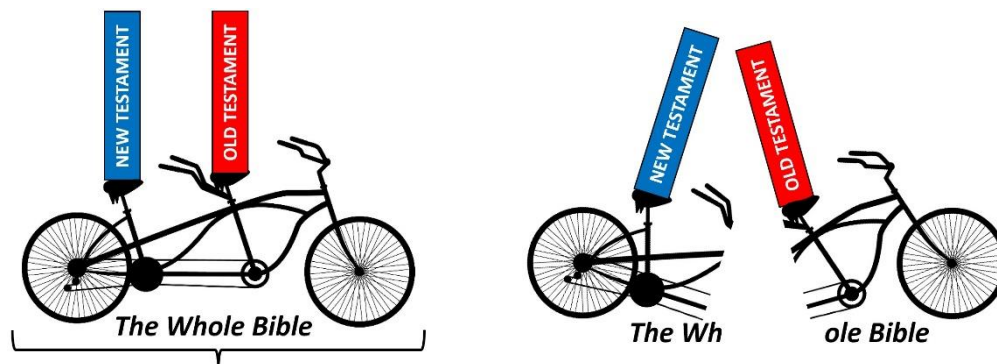
⁶ NLT—New Living Bible (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015).

⁷ <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-the-Bible.html>

2. All the authors of the Bible were God's ordained spokesperson. Jeremiah 1:9 (CSB)⁸—*"Then the LORD reached out his hand, touched my mouth, and told me: I have now filled your mouth with my words"*

F. The Word of God is divided into two main parts that makes up the whole Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. It was Augustine who described the relationship between the Old and New Testaments this way: *"The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed."*
2. In other words, both the Old Testament and New Testament can never ever be separated nor are they to be treated as opposite of one another for they work in tandem as one complete book with each other.



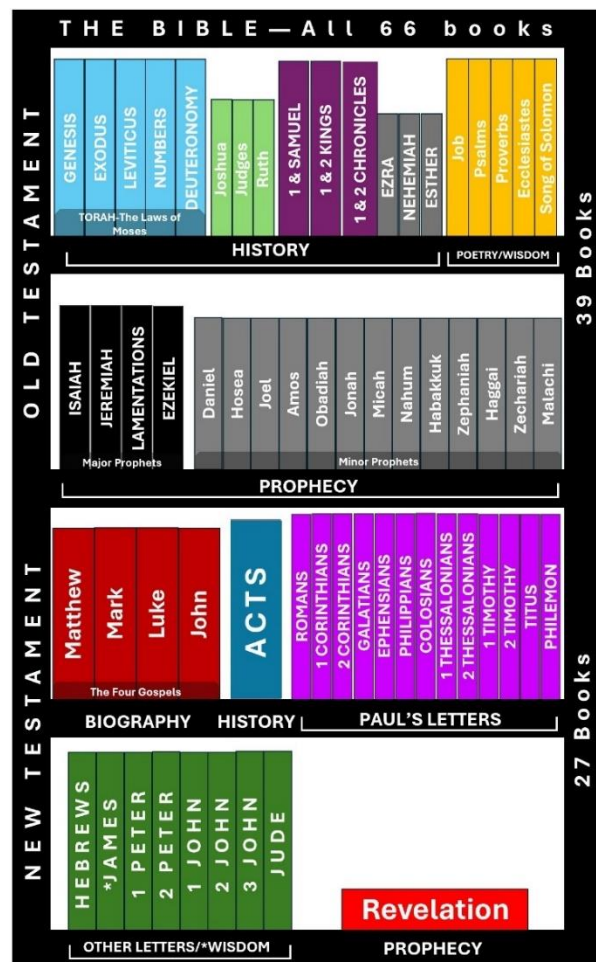
- a). Think of a tandem bicycle. Both riders work in tandem or work together to move the bike in motion as one.
- b). The Bible is the same way. The Old Testament and the New Testament work in tandem together as one cohesive complete book, the Bible, for it is the inspired Word of God!

⁸ CSB—Christian Standard Bible (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020).

- (i) We cannot accept just the New Testament and reject the Old Testament, nor are we to accept just the Old Testament and reject the New Testament. To do either is to not have the Bible, the whole counsel of God. We don't get to choose one over the other.
 - (ii) You either accept the entirety of the Bible (both Old Testament and New Testament) or you don't.
- c). Furthermore, the Old Testament promised the coming Messiah which was fulfilled in the New Testament in the person of Jesus Christ.

d). *"For it is one continuance narrative of God's saving plan of redemption because humanity was made in His image."*⁹

G. One of the wonderful aspects about how God desires to connect with us is by using different genres or literary forms to communicate to us in human terms by men during the course of human history, the Bible, where God's Word shows us our human fallen condition and the hope that points to Jesus.



⁹ <https://openthebible.org/article/want-know-jesus-more-read-old-testament/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20new%20is%20in%20the,be%20separated%20from%20one%20another.>

H. In Hebrews 1:1 (CSB)—*"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways."* Different ways or various forms include different literary genres.

1. *"One of the most important aspects of the human side of the Bible is that, in order to communicate his word to all human conditions, God chose to use almost every available kind of communication: narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry of all kinds, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalypses."*¹⁰
 - a). Some of the literary devices the Holy Spirit inspired human writers to use may overlap. For example: The five books of the Bible, the Torah, is both historical and biographical; the Psalms can be a collection of songs as well as collections of prayers and prophecy; the book of Daniel is both history as well as prophecy; the book of Acts is both history (addressing the birth and growth of the church) as well as biographical (the life of Paul).
 - b). All these literary forms are for our benefit so that we may understand God's creative ways of speaking to us through His written Word. `
2. *"Second Peter 1:21 says that " 'men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.' Using today's terminology, the Bible's managing editor was the Holy Spirit of God. God put the mark of His authorship on each of the 66 books of the Bible, no matter what the literary genre. God 'breathed' the written words (2 Timothy 3:16–17)."*¹¹

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Fourth Edition.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 26.

¹¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-literature.html>

II. Why Does The Protestant Bible Have Sixty-Six Books?

- A. The Protestant Bible only has 66 books (39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament) unlike the Catholic Bible (which contains additional books called the Apocrypha¹²).
- B. The question we must ask is, who determined that 66 books make up the entire Bible?
1. Consider 2nd Timothy 3:16-17—"*[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*"
 - a). From the NLT—"*[16] All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. [17] God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*"
 2. Firstly, all Scripture is inspired by God, therefore, it was God himself who determined who should write the whole Bible, hence, determined that there would be 66 books.
- C. Later on, God allowed different church councils throughout church history, from the early church (all early church writers were contemporaries of each other) all the way through the Reformation period to canonize the 66 books of the Bible that we have today.
- D. The late F. F. Bruce (1910-1990), who was renown as *the* dean of evangelical Biblical scholars wrote that the word *canon* means "*the list of books contained in Scripture,*

¹² Though the Apocrypha contain additional books accepted by Catholic traditions offering historical and religious insight, it is not included in the Hebrew Bible or the Protestant Bible, and is not accepted as God's inspired Word.

the list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the sacred writings of a worshipping community. In a Christian context, we might define the word as 'the list of the writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of the divine revelation.'"¹³ This was a work of the Holy Spirit.

1. He continued to write, *"The word 'canon' has come into our language (through Latin) from the Greek word kanōn. In Greek it meant a rod, especially a straight rod used as a rule; from this usage comes the other meaning which the word commonly bears in English—'rule' or 'standard'...But a straight rod used as a rule might be marked in units of length (like a modern ruler marked in inches or centimetres); from this practice the Greek word kanōn came to be used of the series of such marks, and hence to be used in the general sense of 'series' or 'list'. It is this last usage that underlies the term 'the canon of Scripture.'"*¹⁴
2. Furthermore, Professor Bruce stated— *"Before the word 'canon' came to be used in the sense of 'list', it was used in another sense by the church—in the phrase 'the rule of faith' or 'the rule of truth'. In the earlier Christian centuries this was a summary of Christian teaching, believed to reproduce what the apostles themselves taught, by which any system of doctrine offered for Christian acceptance, or any interpretation of biblical writings, was to be assessed. But when once the limits of holy scripture came to be generally agreed upon, holy scripture itself came to be regarded as the rule of faith. While the 'canon' of scripture means the list of books accepted as holy scripture, the other sense of 'canon'—rule or standard—has rubbed off on this one, so that the 'canon' of scripture is understood to be the list of books which are acknowledged to be, in a unique sense, the rule of belief and practice."*¹⁵

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 16–17.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 16–17.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 18.

3. This is why 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 is such an essential verse for followers of Jesus to remember, for God's divinely inspired Word guided godly men to write and later canonize the Bible as the standard by which we live by faith.
- E. Therefore, *"The church did not create the Canon but merely recognized the books that bore the marks of canonicity and were therefore authoritative within the church. The marks of canonicity included: (1) apostolic authorship or endorsement, (2) being recognized as authoritative within the early church, and (3) being in harmony with the books that were undoubtedly part of the Canon."*¹⁶
1. In his book, *God Has Spoken*, J. I. Packer writes, *"The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity by His work of creation, and similarly he gave us the New Testament canon by inspiring the individual books that make it up."*¹⁷
- F. So, the canon or the list of books that make up our Bible was God's providential way in communicating Himself to humanity.

III. The Bible Is The Divine Word Of God

- A. Scripture is the divine Word of God. Again, the late theologian J. I. Packard once wrote, *"Christianity is the true worship and service of the true God, humankind's Creator and Redeemer. It is a religion that rests on revelation: nobody would know the truth about God, or be able to relate to him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make himself known. But God has so acted, and the sixty-six books of the Bible, thirty-nine written before Christ came and twenty-seven after, are together the record, interpretation, expression, and embodiment of his self-disclosure. God and godliness are the Bible's uniting themes."*¹⁸

¹⁶ R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 23-24.

¹⁷ J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton), 81.

¹⁸ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 3.

B. 2nd Timothy 3:16 says, *"All Scripture is breathed out by God."* From the NKJV—*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."*

1. *"Paul emphasizes the preeminence of all Scripture. Given by inspiration is literally "God-breathed." In this verse, Paul teaches that God was actively involved in the revelation of His truth to the apostles and prophets, who wrote it down. The Author of the Bible is God Himself. Thus, Scripture is true in all that affirms and is completely authoritative (see 1 Pet. 1:20, 21)."*¹⁹

2. *"God, through the Holy Spirit, used human authors to write what He revealed in the Bible. They were not mere copyists or transcribers. The Holy Spirit guided and controlled the writers of Scripture, who used their own vocabularies and styles but wrote only what the Holy Spirit intended. This is true only of the original manuscripts, not the copies or translations. Although the original manuscripts have been lost to us, God has preserved the biblical text to a remarkable degree."*²⁰

C. Because the Bible is the divine Word of God, it is unique and exceptional above all books in the whole world. Therefore, the Bible we possess is not of human origin. By faith we believe the Scriptures is of a supernatural divine origin from our One living God.

1. *"The Bible is the word of God regardless of one's opinion of it. Merely believing it doesn't make it true. Disbelieving it doesn't make it untrue. Throughout the entire book are intimations of the Bible's claim to a supernatural origin."*²¹

2. Secular human writers can inspire and move us from their writings. But the Bible have prophetic words that have been accurately fulfilled like the coming

¹⁹ Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), 2 Ti 3:16.

²⁰ <https://www.moodybible.org/beliefs/inspiration-and-inerrancy-bible/#fn6>

²¹ Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Westmont, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 78.

conquest and exile of the Israelites and their eventual return to Jerusalem which was a factual historic event centuries before it happened; many cultures after the Flood during Noah's time share of a major global flood that took place; the coming of Messiah Jesus was prophesied in Scripture as humanity's Redeemer which since the Garden of Eden all through Jewish history and their writings by the Prophets in the Old Testament, as well as archeological finds that prove the historical aspect of human events and God's prophetic words.

- a). But more importantly, we believe by faith and by personal experience that the entire writings of God's inspired Word from Genesis to Revelation has the transforming power to change us.
 - b). Other books of human origin might make the same claim yet have their spiritual limitations and shortcomings and doesn't offer eternal life.
 - (i) But God's Word has the power to save souls, change hearts, transform minds and the ability to live free from the bondage of sin.
 - (ii) We believe the Scriptures to be essential because for those in Christ Jesus it has personally changed our lives and continues to influence our lives.
3. The origin and power of God's Word is not a human thing—it's a God thing! The Protestant Bible is spiritual and supernatural in origin. You either believe by faith in Christ Jesus that the Bible we possess today to be inspired by our Triune-God or you don't. There is no middle ground!
4. Isaiah 40:6-8 says, *"[6] A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. [7] The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the*

people are grass. [8] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

D. I didn't intend to make this a two-parter but we will end here and continue the remaining points next week. However, before we go—consider this data that came out in 2022 from researchers the Barna Group and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University of the lack of basic biblical beliefs among Christian pastors across all U.S. denominations²²:

1. *"An earlier report from the American Worldview Inventory 2022 showed that just 37% of Christian pastors have a biblical worldview, with the predominant worldview among pastors (62%) being syncretism, a hybrid mixture of disparate worldview elements blended into a customized philosophy of life."*
2. *"According to [this latest report](#), the widespread absence of biblical worldview among American pastors is resulting in eroding beliefs in areas as basic as salvation through Jesus Christ, the nature of God, the sinful condition of human beings, and the existence of objective truth."*
3. *"Because pastors teach what they believe, many churches are becoming centers of syncretism and secular thought...Perhaps without even realizing it, thousands of pastors have become leaders of a movement away from God."*
4. *"With so many churches and their pastors in the culture's grip, rather than fervently committed to serving God and teaching His word," Barna explained, "you can clearly see why most church-going Christians are being more influenced by the culture than the culture is being influenced by America's Christians." Oh, it gets worse!*

²² <https://www.arizonachristian.edu/2022/08/30/basic-biblical-beliefs-lacking-among-most-pastors-in-all-u-s-denominations/#:~:text=An%20earlier%20report%20from%20the,a%20customized%20philosophy%20of%20life.>

5. *"Although 41% of senior and lead pastors have a biblical worldview (the highest among all pastoral positions), unexpectedly substantial proportions hold beliefs that are in conflict with the Bible on a range of teachings."*
6. Specifically, the report found that one-third or more of senior pastors believe:
 - a). Sexual relations between two unmarried people who believe they love each other is morally acceptable.
 - b). Determining moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time.
 - c). The Holy Spirit is not a living entity, but is a symbol of God's power, presence, or purity.
 - d). Having faith matters more than which faith you have.
 - e). Reincarnation is a real possibility. No resurrection!?
 - f). A person who is generally good, or does enough good things for others, can earn a place in Heaven.
 - g). The Bible is ambiguous in its teaching about abortion, enabling you to make a strong argument either for or against abortion based on biblical principles.
- E. So, if God's Word is not what it claims to be, then it is all a lie and we make God a liar.
 1. But because God's Word is based on His divine attributes like His infallibility and inerrancy it does have the power to transform lives and give hope and peace.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. In closing, the Scripture is essential to the Christian faith and is relevant to culture and society because it plays a crucial role in salvation, serving as God's inspired Word that reveals His love, grace, and redemption through Jesus Christ. The Scripture points to Jesus.
1. The Bible guides believers in understanding the path to salvation, offering wisdom and eternal truths. Through faith in Jesus, as conveyed in the Bible, individuals find forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life, securing their relationship with God made in His image as a people reconciled to Him .
 2. In Mark 13:31 (CSB) Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*
 - a). Look at it this way, trying to make the Bible relevant to bend to the culture while sacrificing the truth of God's Word will pass away. That's a disservice and a disrespect to God's Word. It shows a lack of trust and faith in the transforming power of God's written Word.
 - b). However, the Bible is forever-eternally relevant and it is the culture and society that needs to bend to the authority of Scripture for God's Word will never pass away and has the transforming power to change the souls of sinners.
 3. Therefore, the Scripture *is* essential to our Christian faith. You cannot be a Christian and reject the written Word of God, the Bible.
- B. We will continue our study of the Scriptures next week. So, until then, this is what we believe...

"We believe the Scriptures (The Bible) of the Old and New Testament are verbally inspired by God, and inerrant and infallible in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority" (GRCC Statement of Faith).

To God Be The Glory Forever and Ever. Amen!