

e ssentials

Faith in One Accord

1) We Believe The Scriptures—Part 2

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. Last week we began with the question, why do we believe the Scripture to be an essential to the Christian faith?

i. Though we may think that this is a given, 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 and that is not always the case.

ii. *But we believe in the authority and the essentiality of God's Word, the Scripture.*

D. If you recall, 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.

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

- E. God's spoken Word and written Word are tied to His relationship with humanity who are made in His image, for God took the initiative and personalized His words to humanity in written format what we call the Bible. Remember that our One living God is a personal Being.

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 is essential for God is the author who inspired men by the Holy Spirit to write both the Old Testament and New Testament, and it is not of human origin because it is God-breathed.
- B. If you recall, 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.
 - i. Remember the analogy of a tandem bicycle. Both riders work in tandem or work together to move the bike as one.
 - ii. 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—unfolding His plan of redemption, pointing to the only person for our salvation—Jesus the Son of God.
 - iii. 1st Corinthians 15:3 (CSB)² says, "*For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*"
 - iv. 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.
 - v. We have to remember that the Scriptures reveal the human condition of our sin and the need to be redeemed from sin. And Jesus is the answer to our sinful fallen condition.

² CSB—Christian Standard Bible (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020).

4) TRANSITION

- A. So, let's look at the remaining points as to why the Scriptures is essential to our faith in Jesus Christ. What we will look at tonight:
 - i. The Reliability of God's Word.
 - ii. How To Approach the Bible.
 - iii. The Purpose of the Bible.
 - iv. Trusting our Modern Translations of the Bible.
 - v. And lastly Trusting the Promises of God and His Word.

TEACHING

I. The Reliability of God's Word.

- A. The word *reliable* means trustworthy or truthful. The Bible cannot be both divinely inspired and untrustworthy.
- B. Since God's Word is reliable due to His divine infinite nature, we can place our reliance on His divine attributes and integrity of the Word.
 - 1. The written Scripture we possess today translated from the original language of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek is deemed infallible—devoid of anything wrong or misleading. Therefore, we trust the reliability of God's written Word.
- C. Also, since God's divine character is infallible which includes the truthfulness of His Word, we can say with confidence that His words are inerrant having no errors or deceit.
 - 1. As God cannot go against His holy divine nature, He is without error or mistake, hence, the inerrancy of Scripture is exempt from errors or mistakes.
 - a). If God went against just one of His divine attributes like His infallibility, He then ceases to be God.

2. Hebrews 6:17-18b (NLT)—"*[17] God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. [18] So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie.*"

II. How to Approach the Scripture?

- A. Since the Scripture is God's divine infallible Word, how do we approach the Bible? When we open the Bible, we do it daily with reverence, humility, prayerfully and with expectancy.
 1. This portion of our study is about application. We're not going to go into the principles of how to study the Bible.
 2. That is a whole different topic yet an important one for another time.
- B. However, what we want to do is more than just read the Scriptures; we want to engage with the Scriptures because it is the inspired and life giving Word of God. Philippians 2:16 (NLT)—"*Hold firmly to the word of life.*"³
 1. It is through the Scriptures that we know the character and person of our One Living God of creation.
 2. It is through God's Word that we see His desire to save humanity from the power of sin who are made in His image.
 3. It is through the Bible that we learn to discern what is true and what is false, especially in guarding ourselves from false teachers and false teachings.
 4. It is through the Word of God that has the transformative power to change us and make us more Christ-like.
 5. Hebrews 4:12-13 (NLT) says, "*[12] For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*"

³ NLT, Tyndale House Publishers, Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015)

[13] Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable."

a). D. L. Moody once said—*"The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."*⁴ PRAY--> READ--> APPLY-->
CHANGED LIVES.

C. Now, one thing we question is where to begin when reading God's Word, and this may take planning.

D. Though we want to make our reading of the Scripture as intentional as possible, it's not the *quantity* of our time, but the *quality* of our time in the Scripture—that is important!

E. Senior Pastor Colin Smith of The Orchard Evangelical Free Church suggest you have a plan:⁵



1. **PICK A TIME:** Pick a time of day when you would like to spend time reading the Bible. It could be early morning, before your spouse or kids get up when the house is yours and all is quiet. It could be during your lunch break at work. Or even at night before you go to bed. Try to read every day to get into the discipline of regularly feasting on God's Word.

2. **PICK A PLACE:** Find a comfortable spot (but not too comfortable!) in which to read: a favorite armchair, the couch, your desk, the kitchen table. If you often read in the same place at the same time, you will find this will become your favorite (and most sacred) space.

3. **PICK SOME TOOLS:** Set up your chosen place so you have everything you may want at-hand: a pen, highlighters, your journal, and your coffee (of course). But remember you do not need anything but an open Bible.

F. Pastor Colin also advises to start slow—*"Start by reading small portions of the Bible at first: a long passage or one chapter a day. Read for about 10-15 minutes. Don't*

⁴ Bruce B. Barton et al., *Hebrews, Life Application Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 55.

⁵ <https://openthebible.org/article/want-read-the-bible/#:~:text=Start%20by%20reading%20small%20portions,Savor%20each%20word%2C%20each%20phrase.>

overwhelm yourself by reading an entire book in one sitting (at least not just yet). Savor each word, each phrase. Take time to think about what you read. Meditate on it. Even write about it. Journaling is a wonderful way to express your thoughts, feelings, prayers, and praises. And don't forget to find the application in what you read: whether it is a promise to claim, a warning to heed, a command to follow. Spirit-led application is what transforms your sinfulness to one of sanctification, and ultimately conforms you into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28)."⁶

G. Here is another effective approach to the Bible. Pastor John Hwang, lead pastor of ChristPoint City Church in Huntington Beach, California, suggest the "5-5-5" principle.

1. *"One thing I tell young people is this: if you can dedicate 15 minutes a day—aim for "5-5-5." What does "5-5-5" stand for? 5 minutes of Scripture, 5 minutes of prayer, and 5 minutes of journaling. And people say, 'well 15 minutes a day!?' That's nothing.' I'd rather have someone give 15 minutes a day than no minutes a day...You will discover that time becomes more manageable and those 15 minutes will grow into more."*⁷

H. But once you are settled down with the time and place to read the Scripture, you must first begin with prayer before you even open your Bible. *Praying before reading the Word of God will help settle our hearts and minds before our Lord—and ask the Holy Spirit to lead through His Word.*

1. In his book, *Before You Open Your Bible*, Pastor Matt Smethurst said this about approaching God's Word—"The most important things in life should never be glossed over or simply assumed. I am convinced that a prayerless approach to God's Word is a major reason for the low-level dissatisfaction that hums beneath the surface of our lives. We rob ourselves of joy and peace when we fail to pray. Indeed, approaching Scripture apart from prayer is one of the most counterproductive things we do. **For prayerless Christianity is powerless Christianity.**"⁸
2. From Psalms 119:9-16—" [9] *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. [10] With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! [11] I have stored up your word in*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ John Hwang, <https://subsplash.com/goldrivercalvarychapel/media/mi/+tkdkksr> —Gold River Calvary Chapel Bible Workshop 2023, Session 2: Practical Approach to Reading & Studying the Bible.

⁸ Matt Smethurst, *Before You Open Your Bible: Nine Heart Postures For Approaching God's Word*, p. 6-7, Publisher 10Publishing, 2019.

my heart, that I might not sin against you. [12] Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! [13] With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. [14] In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. [15] I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. [16] I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."

- I. Question? What are we to pray before we open God's Word? Here's something I came across that may help⁹:
 1. *Pray* that your heart is *open* to God's Word (Psalm 119:18). Allow Him through the Holy Spirit to teach you. We're walking by faith.
 2. *Pray* to God that your heart will be *changed* from reading God's Word (1st John 1:9; 2nd Corinthians 5:17).
 3. *Pray* that God *teaches* us His way (Psalm 27:11).
 4. *Pray* to God that you may *gain wisdom*. We don't read the Bible only to gain knowledge and understanding, but that our lives are changed, and we are becoming more Christ-like (Prov. 1:7; 2 Co. 5:17; James 1:5).
 5. *Pray* to God after reading His Word which leads to *worship and adoration*.

- J. In his book, *Lectures to My Students*, 19th century Bible theologian and preacher, Charles Spurgeon said, "*Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer...The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to him and enlists him in our cause.*"¹⁰

III. The Purpose of God's Word

- A. God's Word serves many purposes, but it is paramount for our salvation in Christ Jesus. 2nd Timothy 3:15 says, "*[15] You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.*"

⁹ <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/prayers-to-pray-over-your-bible-reading.html>

¹⁰ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2022).

1. Along with the Holy Spirit, the Scripture is needed for our salvation. In Romans 10:13-17 the apostle Paul writes, "[13] *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" [14] *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" [16] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" [17] So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

- B. Because God is full of grace and love who in His divine nature is infallible and inerrant, He desires that as followers of Jesus Christ, we through Scripture will know His purposes in our lives.

- C. Therefore, the Scriptures is profitable in at least four ways for our spiritual growth.
 1. Let's look at 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 again—"*[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). The Bible is *profitable* for right teaching or belief (orthodoxy) that leads to right living or conduct (orthopraxy).
 - b). The Word of God is *profitable* for reproof which means conviction. To rebuke sin and confront false teachings unapologetically.
 - c). The Scriptures is *profitable* for correction bringing understanding and application of God's Word when it is taught well.
 - d). God's Word is *profitable* for instruction for it trains us in righteousness, knowing what is right from wrong that we may please and glorify our God.

 2. And why is the Bible profitable for followers of Jesus? Verse 17—because "*God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work*" (NLT).

- D. Before we move on, it should be noted that when Jesus was in the wilderness and was tempted by Satan (Mark 4:1-11), Jesus used Scripture to show the effectiveness of Scripture in fighting against temptation and Satan's schemes.
1. Three times Jesus, the Word, the physical manifestation of God's Word used God's Word against Satan, our adversary, saying—*"It is written...it is written...it is written."*
 2. *"Jesus resisted Satan (see Eph. 6:11, 13, 14; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9), then He defeated Satan with consistent, meaningful use of the Scriptures (see Eph. 6:17)."*¹¹
 3. *"The Bible is a book that is not merely for reading. It is a book for studying so that it can be applied. Otherwise, it is like swallowing food without chewing and then spitting it back out again—no nutritional value is gained by it. The Bible is God's Word. As such, it is as binding as the laws of nature. We can ignore it, but we do so to our own detriment, just as we would if we ignored the law of gravity. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough just how important the Bible is to our lives. Studying the Bible can be compared to mining for gold. If we make little effort and merely 'sift through the pebbles in a stream,' we will only find a little gold dust. But the more we make an effort to really dig into it, the more reward we will gain for our effort."*¹²

IV. Trusting Our Modern Translations of the Bible

- A. Here is a question you might have asked yourself—can we trust our modern translations of the Bible?
1. Yes, modern Bible translations are generally reliable with the help of a committee of God fearing scholars using original texts, linguistic expertise, and historical context to ensure accuracy as they maintain fidelity to the biblical manuscripts, providing trustworthy access to God's Word in contemporary language.

¹¹ Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, and H. Wayne House, *The Nelson Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1997), Mt 4:10.

¹² <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-read-Bible.html>

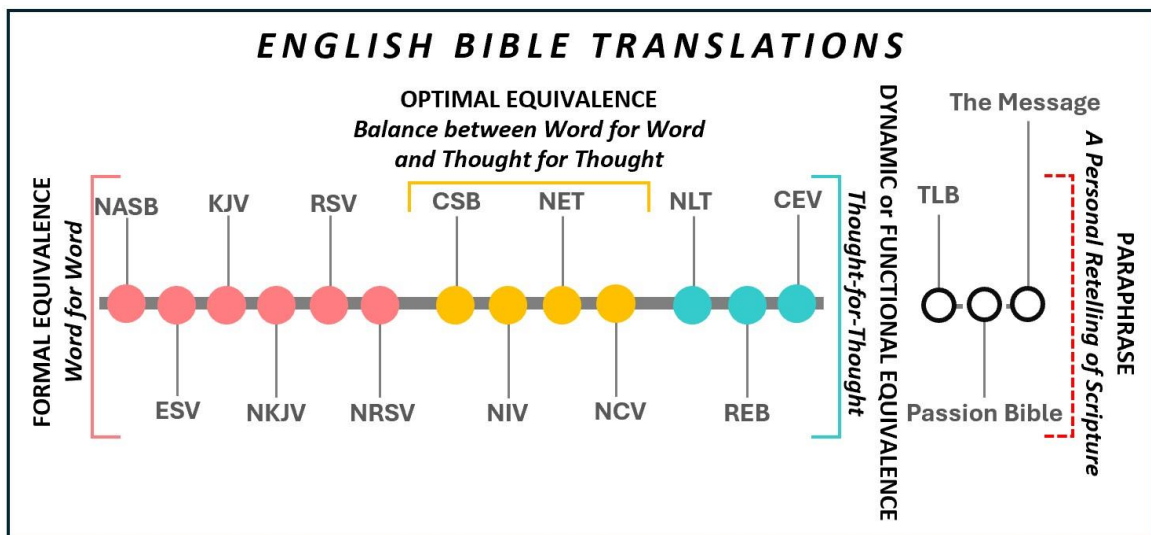
- B. But this is important to understand—our modern translations are not *"a translation of a translation of a translation."* This is factually incorrect.
1. And here's a side note: Homer's Iliad, which is one of the oldest manuscripts have over 1,700 original copies in existence. And it was compiled some 400 years later.
 2. The New Testament, however, has over 5,500 original copies or fragments, and the entire Bible was completed before the end of the 1st century 90-95 A.D with the last Book of Revelation—within the 60 years of Jesus's death and resurrection.
 - a). Consider the timeline: the New Testament manuscripts, completed within approximately 60 years after Jesus's ascension, boast close to 6,000 copies. In contrast, the Iliad, with over 1,700 manuscripts, was compiled approximately 400 years after.
 - b). This highlights the remarkable abundance of New Testament manuscripts relative to the shorter period and contemporaneous authors involved. So, yes—we can rely on the translation of the Bible we have today.
 3. But here is *the fact*—All modern translation of the Bible whether in English or other languages goes back to the ORIGINAL LANGUAGES of the text —Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek—that have been found from the first century A.D.
- C. As for what types of English based translations we have, there are at least three types of translations:
1. First we have the *Formal Equivalence*—often called "word-for-word" (or "literal") translation,
 - a). It proceeds in seeking as nearly as possible to preserve the structure of the original language.
 - (i) **Examples:** NASB (*New American Standard Bible*) ESV (*English Standard Bible*) KJV (*King James Bible*) NKJV (*New King James Bible*) RSV (*Revised Standard Version*) NRSV (*New (Revised Standard Version)*).

2. Next we have the *Dynamic or Functional Equivalence*—often called “thought-for-thought” translation.
 - a). It proceeds to extract and convey the ancient text's meaning for contemporary impact, maintaining the original's influence on readers giving a high degree of clarity and readability, especially in places where the original is difficult to render word for word.
 - (i) Examples: NLT (*New Living Translation*) REB (*Revised English Bible*) CEV (*Contemporary English Version*).
3. And then we have the *Optimal Equivalence (without getting too technical)*—is basically finding the *balance* between the *Formal Equivalence (word for word) whenever possible* and the *Dynamic Equivalence (thought for thought) when necessary*.
 - a). The goal here in using both methods of *Formal and Dynamic Equivalence* is to emphasize the significance of maintaining the form of the source text and prioritizing natural expression in the target language, therefore, the optimal equivalence excels in creating translations that are both faithful and clear.
 - (i) Examples: CSB (*Christian Standard Bible*) NIV (*New International Version*) NET (*New English Translation*) NCV (*New Century Version*)
4. We also have what is called a *Paraphrase*. However, a paraphrase and a translation are *not* the same. They can help explain difficult words or phrases that sound strange to the modern reader.
 - a). Calvary Chapel pastor and theologian, Don Stewart pointed out that “*Though many people think a paraphrase is the same thing as a translation, this is not the case. While a translation attempts to tell the reader what the original text says, a paraphrase attempts to tell the reader what the passage means. Therefore, a paraphrase is more of a commentary on the text of Scripture than it is an accurate rendering of*

what the text actually says. Thus, the difference between a paraphrase and translation must be understood."¹³

- b). He concludes by stating that *"While paraphrases can be helpful in understanding the meaning of the text, there are dangers with using them. For one thing, the person paraphrasing may not understand the correct meaning of a certain word or phrase and consequently inserts something into the biblical story that was not meant to be there. Thus, a paraphrase should only be used alongside a genuine translation. It should never be used by itself when one is studying or reading the Bible"*¹⁴ A good tool would be a Parallel Bible.

- (i) Examples: TLB (*The Living Bible*), *The Message*, (*The Good News Bible for Modern Man*), *The Passion Bible*).¹⁵



5. Finally, there are translations that Christians should avoid such as the Jehovah Witness's New World Translation.

- a). The uniqueness of this heretical translation is that the anonymous translating committee has taken God's Word and altered it to conform to their false belief which denies Jesus's deity as well as His substitutionary atonement for our sins.

¹³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/bible-translations/question2-what-is-a-paraphrase.cfm

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *These English based Bibles were chosen for the purpose of this graph. There are over 60 English language Bible versions that can be found at Biblegateway.com.*

6. Consider this—translators have the upmost responsibility to translate from the original language (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) to our language based on *what God says* so that believers in Christ may understand Him, grow in our relationship with Him and fulfill His purposes in our lives.

- D. Now, here's something to consider that we may have never thought of when it comes to Bible translations—*"Bible translation is often the first step in the fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission, to teach the gospel all over the world (Matt 28:18–20). It is itself a form of teaching. Like all teaching, it has great potential for the edification of people. As in all teaching, there are dangers in translation to be avoided. Translators must be reminded that it is their work to reproduce, as much as possible, the authentic word of God and not to corrupt that word by their own mistakes, by adding to the meaning, by subtracting from it, or by otherwise distorting it. Despite such dangers, it is encouraging to remember God's promise, that the preaching and teaching of the gospel, of which translation is a part, will by God's grace succeed in bringing people of all tongues and tribes to Jesus, to the glory of God."*¹⁶

- E. And as a side note, what we need to grasp and appreciate is that the Bible we own, regardless of what translation we have, there were those since the 1300s who had risked their lives through persecution, torture, and death, and for some today living as fugitives to get God's Word into the language of the common people.

- F. And now to our final point...

V. Trusting the Promises of God and His Word

- A. Trust is something we do every day. In fact, everyone here has exercised a level of trust at this very moment.

- B. How many of you did a close forensic, careful examination of the chair you are now sitting in? Absolutely no one!
 1. You came into this room trusting that the chair you picked would do what the chair was designed to do—hold your body weight as you enjoyed tonight's dinner, sang worship songs and sat through tonight's message. You trusted in the integrity and faithfulness of the chair you now sit on.

¹⁶ John Frame, "Bible Translation," in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

2. But we know that God is more than a chair, for we can trust God's integrity and faithfulness of the promises of His Word.
- C. The word *trust* means to comfort, to strengthen. From the Webster's 1828 American Dictionary, trust is defined as *"Confidence; a reliance or resting of the mind on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship or other sound principle of another person."*¹⁷ And for us that person is Jesus.
1. Hebrew 10:23 says, *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."*
 - a). NLT—*"Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise."*
 2. Psalm 28:7 (CSB)—*"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. Therefore, my heart celebrates, and I give thanks to him with my song."*
 - a). Charles Spurgeon made three points on Psalm 28:7 when we trust in God's Word:¹⁸
 - (i) *"The LORD is my strength and my shield"*—Our assured possession IS the Lord Himself.
 - (ii) Next, *"My heart trusts in him, and I am helped."*—Our personal experience is IN trusting the Lord.
 - (iii) Finally, *"Therefore my heart celebrates, and I give thanks to him with my song."*—Our personal emotion and celebration is BECAUSE of the Lord.
 - b). Deuteronomy 7:9 (NIV)¹⁹—*"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."*

¹⁷ Noah Webster, *Noah Webster's First Edition of An American Dictionary of the English Language*. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 2006).

¹⁸ Spurgeon, *The Spurgeon Study Bible: Notes* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 714.

¹⁹ NIV—*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. In closing, our God is faithful and His promises found in the Scripture we now possess can be unequivocally trusted!
1. 2nd Corinthians 1:20—*"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."*
- B. The Bible is *more* than:
1. A manual to navigate life this side of heaven.
 2. God's love letter to humanity.
 3. Or a rulebook of dos and don'ts for righteous living.
 4. We believe the Scripture, which is the inerrant and infallible Word of God, to be essential to our Christian faith because it is God's *personal revelation* for all humankind.
 - a). God chose to reveal His divine character, His grace and goodness, His holiness and love, His sovereign purposes as we grow in our sanctification with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit through a written format humanity can personally possess, the Bible, which is alive and will work in all followers of Christ Jesus.
 - b). Moreover, the Scripture is essential to our faith, for it points us to Jesus, through whom we attain forgiveness of our sins and have eternal life.
 - c). The Scripture is God's inspired Word that revealed His redemptive plan of salvation the transformative power of Christ's atonement on the Cross of Calvary.
 5. 1st Thessalonians 2:13—*"Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe."*

C. Therefore, 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!