

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

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At Harvest City Church we believe that Scripture, the Bible, is the authoritative Word of God and that it is the ultimate source and authority to find out what we can know about God and His dealings with mankind. Our faith and life as Christians must be based upon God's Word, and scripture is where we obtain this. There are many other sources that at times would seek to claim the authority to speak for God, such as church authorities, gifted men, words of prophecy and other philosophies we find in the world, but unless they match what the Scriptures say we should not accept them as truth or obey them.

"The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."

All the words in Scripture are _____ words.

- The Bible claims this for itself. Throughout the Old Testament the phrase "*Thus says the Lord*" appears many times, making clear that the words that follow next should be taken as God's words. If these words were later proved to be false the prophet would be discredited, as a prophecy can only be true if it is proven to be correct. (Deuteronomy 18:18-20)
- Whilst not all of the OT is _____ we can see the same principle of recording God's words in other situations. (2 Kings 23:2-3)
- The New Testament also confirms that the OT Scriptures were the true words of God. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Peter also makes clear that Scripture did not just arise from men, but it comes from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- In the NT we also see other writings described as Scripture, such as _____ writing about Paul's letters (2 Peter 3:15-16). Paul also claimed that his writings were from the Lord. (1 Corinthians 14:37)
- We also have Jesus's promise to His disciples to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into the truth, which would include recording the gospels correctly. (John 16:13)

We can also have assurance that Scripture is God's word through our experience of it with the help of the Holy Spirit. When you read the Bible and God speaks to you through it, this is a demonstration that it is not just the words of men but God's word (John 10:27).

The fact that the Bible itself attests to its being God's word means that we cannot test it against a higher authority because it is the highest authority. This is not a problem unique to the Bible as any other authority that claims to be supreme can only test itself against itself. The only way to know whether the Scriptures are God's word is to read them and use them in one's life; then their power and truthfulness can be revealed. God's word is there to be used: it may contain interesting history, lovely poetry and fascinating biography, but ultimately it is a tool to be used by Christians to get to know God better.

God did not _____ the Scriptures to the writers. The Bible contains a variety of literary forms, and some of these are visions or prophecies where God did dictate the actual words, but other books consist of history, biographical accounts or poetry. These were written by men using their own words and understanding, but God was behind their writing, and He used the skills and experience of the writers to produce the Scriptures, even if He did not actually dictate the words that they wrote.

To disbelieve or disobey any Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey _____.

- If Scripture is the word of God then it logically follows that to disbelieve or disobey Scripture is to do the same to God. Jesus Himself admonished people for not believing what was written in the Scripture, the same admonishment must apply to us if we do the same. (Luke 24:25)
- The apostle Peter encourages us to remember what Scripture says. (2 Peter 3:2)
- Effective _____ needs to be based upon the Scriptures because it is the Scriptures themselves that have power, not the words of men themselves. We need to apply the Scriptures to our lives so that the power inherent in the word of God can work in our lives, and we obviously need to believe and obey the words of God for this to happen.
- We need to read and examine the Scriptures ourselves, and seek to understand the context of Scripture and make sure we are not misquoting them. We should also make sure that when the Scriptures are quoted, they are quoted in context (Psalm 53:1)

Truthfulness of Scripture

- God cannot lie or speak falsely. This is part of God's eternal nature, and it is not only that God does not lie, He is incapable of doing so. (Hebrews 6:18)
- Because of this fact we can trust that all of the words in Scripture are completely true (Proverbs 30:5)
- God's words are thus the _____ of truth. Jesus states this when he prayed for his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: *"Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth"* John 17:17. Notice that Jesus did not use the adjective "true", but instead uses the noun "truth". This signifies that what God says in the scripture is not just true, as many facts are, but it is "the truth". What the Bible says is the ultimate standard of truth, the yardstick we should use to judge what is true and what is false.
- This means that we cannot adopt the philosophy current in the world today of pluralism, that there is no absolute truth or right and wrong, it all depends on personal belief or opinions. The Bible makes plain that what God says is the truth; everything that disagrees with the word of God is falsehood.
- No new fact or discovery can _____ the Bible. God knows all facts and any new facts that are discovered were known by Him from before creation, so cannot contradict the truth. This may require men to re-examine what the Bible actually says at times.

Inerrancy of Scripture

- The inerrancy, (or infallibility), of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.
- The Scriptures can be inerrant and yet use _____ of everyday speech, and not use language such as scientific terms.
- Scripture can use free quotations and still be inerrant; it does not require exact quotations.
- Scripture can use uncommon grammatical constructions and still be inerrant.
- Although the first or original copies of scriptural documents do not survive it is possible to be sure of their content for 99% of the Bible. Although people will quote "problems" with the Bible it has been under scrutiny for the last two millennia and has not found to be wanting.
- If we believe that the Bible is in error, we are putting ourselves in a position of not being able to trust God: if His word can be false in one instance how can it be trusted in any other instance? We are also making our human minds a higher standard of truth than God's word. This is a very dangerous situation, as modern history clearly demonstrates.

Written Scripture is our final authority

- The written form of Scripture is the _____ version. God instructed Moses to write the Ten Commandments, and the prophets to write their prophecies. Paul is talking about the written Scriptures when he states that they are inspired by God. (2 Timothy 3:16)
- Memory is a fickle thing, so we write things down to remember them. God had the Scriptures written down for the same reason, so that they cannot be added to, embellished or reduced. We should ensure that we do not try to add to them, or reduce them, as this will lead us into error.
- Many of the cults that are around do just this, either by using the Bible but adding other texts to it, or changing parts of the Bible to suit their _____.
- It is a privilege that God gave the Scriptures to us; we should try and ensure that we use them as He intended.

"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. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NLT)