

# ADVANCED BIBLICAL COURSE



**A | D | V | A | N | C | E | D**  
**B | I | B | L | I | C | A | L      C | O | U | R | S | E**  
*The Word of God*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Every person has a basis of authority on which he thinks and acts. For the Christian, the “Ultimate Authority” to which he appeals is the Bible – the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

- ◆ An External Absolute Authority is necessary because: -
  - Each man is basically rebellious and wants to build his own kingdom and make his own rules.
  - Man is influenced by others around him and adjusts his values and standards accordingly.
  - The Bible alone has the answers for the problems faced by the world today.
- ◆ Other Authorities to which people appeal are: -
  - Reason – “It doesn’t make sense so I can’t believe or accept it!” However, reason was affected by the fall. It is often speculative, unaware of all the facts and no more than wishful thinking.
  - Feeling – “If it feels good and/or right, it is fine...”
  - Oneself – “There is no absolute authority” thus making oneself the authority.
  - Existentialism – Culture, circumstances, conditions, etc. determine what one does.
  - Tradition – “We have always done it this way.”
  - “Church” – It is what the Church (Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy) says that goes.
  - Extra biblical writings – Koran, Joseph Smith (the founder of Mormons), etc. but also at times Christian writers, leaders or teachers.

The Word of God is our only basis of authority. *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

## **I THE UNIQUENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD**

Unique – “of which there is only one, unequaled, having no like or equal or parallel; remarkable, unusual.” (Oxford Dictionary)

This section is extracted from Josh McDowell’s book “Evidence that Demands a Verdict.” For a more detailed account, please refer to that book. The Bible is the book “different from all others.”

### **A. UNIQUE IN ITS CONTINUITY**

- ◆ Written over a 1,500 year period
- ◆ Written over 40 generations
- ◆ Written by over 40 authors from every walk of life
- ◆ Written in different places
- ◆ Written at different times
- ◆ Written during different moods
- ◆ Written on three continents: Asia, Africa, Europe
- ◆ Written in three languages: Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek
- ◆ Authors wrote on hundreds of controversial subjects, e.g., sin, with complete harmony from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: “God’s redemption of man.”

### **B. UNIQUE IN ITS CIRCULATION**

The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history. The first major book printed was the Bible in approximately 1450.

### **C. UNIQUE IN ITS TRANSLATION**

The Bible was one of the first major books translated – the Septuagint, approximately 250 B.C. It has been translated and paraphrased more than any other book in existence.

### **D. UNIQUE IN ITS SURVIVAL**

- ◆ The Bible has stood the test of time.

Until the fifteenth century (when the printing press was invented) every manuscript was copied and recopied by hand on material that perishes. In spite of these difficulties, the Bible has not diminished in its style, correctness nor existence. The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any other book or writings.

◆ The Bible has survived through persecution.

No other book has been attacked as much as the Bible. In 303 A.D., Diocletian ordered Christians to stop worshipping and to destroy the Scriptures. Possession of the Scriptures meant execution. 25 years later, Constantine had 50 copies of the Bible prepared at the expense of the government.

◆ The Bible has survived through criticism.

The Bible has constantly been criticised. In spite of that, more people trust, read and love the Bible today than any other time in history. Critics have said that Moses couldn't have written the Pentateuch because there was no alphabet but it has been discovered that there were five written languages dating back to Abraham.

## **E. UNIQUE IN ITS TEACHINGS**

◆ Prophecy.

25% of the Bible when written was prophetic. In fulfillment of these prophecies (long after they were spoken and written) cities were destroyed; Jesus Christ, the Messiah was born, the Jewish people were scattered and resettled in their own land, etc.

◆ Personalities.

The Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters. Some of the writers expose their own sins. The Bible tells it like it is. Biographies often cover up failings and gloss over life.

## **F. UNIQUE IN ITS INFLUENCE ON LITERATURE**

Much more literature has been written about the Bible than about any other book. The Bible is often quoted in other writings.

Josh McDowell concludes that the above does not prove the Bible to be God's Word but it does prove that it is unique ("different from all others; having no like or equal") - "Evidence That Demands a Verdict," page 24.

## **II THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES**

### **A. THE MEANING OF INSPIRATION**

The Greek word, translated, 'inspired' is 'Theopneustos' and means 'God-breathed.' It occurs only once in the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16)

When attempting to describe what is meant by ‘inspiration,’ it needs to be borne in mind that the exact nature, mode and limitations of inspiration are not clearly defined in Scripture itself, but are alluded to. (2 Chronicles 15:1; Matthew 22:43 & 2 Peter 1:21)

Many definitions have been offered in order to explain what is understood by the term ‘inspiration.’ The following elements need to be noted: -

- ◆ Inspiration is a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on certain individuals, chosen from all walks of life, so that the Scriptures should be as close to the many facets of human life as possible.
- ◆ Inspiration relates to a product – the Scriptures. While one may speak of the ‘writers’ as inspired, inspiration primarily refers to the ‘specific works’ of those writers. They were especially inspired to write that which had been spoken by God Himself. These men probably wrote other works which would not be classified as ‘inspired.’
- ◆ Inspiration involves the sovereign selection of God in choosing men as His vessels to speak and write. God ‘oversees’ that speaking and writing.
- ◆ Inspiration is concerned with the trustworthiness of written documents and implies that they are of such a nature that their readers will not be deceived.
- ◆ Inspiration does not imply ‘mechanical dictation.’ The human writers thought processes and personalities were not superseded. Each writer of the Bible has his own literary style. Each reflects the language patterns of his culture. Each uses language that reveals his education and background.
- ◆ Inspiration implies that the product was, in its original manuscripts, accurate and without error. The doctrine of inspiration guarantees that the writings themselves, as they came from the author’s pens, reliably communicate the message God intended to share.

From the above definitions, it can be concluded that: “Inspiration is a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on men, chosen by God, who enabled them to record God’s special revelation in a trustworthy manner so that their writings, under the superintendence of God, constitute the Word of God in verbal form.”

## **B. ERRONEOUS VIEWS ABOUT INSPIRATION**

- ◆ The Bible was written by people who were religious geniuses – people who had a high degree of religious insight. The Bible is great religious literature reflecting the spiritual experiences of the Hebrew people.
- ◆ The Bible ‘contains’ the Word of God. Not all of it is inspired and accurate.

- ◆ The Bible ‘becomes’ the Word of God. Only those passages which speak to one personally are inspired. This view is conveyed by those who say “I’m not going to do it because I haven’t been convicted yet.” This is the Neo-Orthodox view holding that the Bible is a record or witness of the revelation of God rather than being the revelation of God. (Karl Barth)
- ◆ Only those parts which agree with man’s ‘religious consciousness’ can be considered as the Word of God. Nothing should be accepted as inspired merely because it occurs in the Bible (Schleiermacher’s view). This means that man decides what belongs in Christianity. If part of the Bible agrees with his opinions, he accepts it; if it disagrees, he is free to throw it out. This is the Liberal view.

### C. THE EVIDENCE OF INSPIRATION

- ◆ There are many prophecies which have been fulfilled to the letter.

- Concerning Christ

Event	Prophecy	Fulfillment
Place of Christ’s birth	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Christ born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18
Triumphal entry into Jerusalem	Zechariah 9:9	Mark 11:7-9
Betrayed by a friend	Psalm 41:9	Mark 14:10
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15
Christ silent before His accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:12-14
Mocked and insulted	Psalm 22:6-8	Matthew 17:39-40
Pierced His hands and feet	Psalm 22:16	John 20:27
Soldiers cast lots for His coat	Psalm 22:18	Mark 15:24
His resurrection	Psalm 16:10	Matthew 28:9
His ascension	Psalm 68:18	Luke 24:50-51

- Concerning Christ

Many unique prophecies regarding both the scattering abroad of Israel’s people and the historically unique assembling again of the Jews into a nation and state in 1948 have been fulfilled.

- ◆ Jesus Christ and others accepted the Bible as inspired by God (already dealt with in the previous sections). There are over 3,800 references within Scripture to “*God said*” or “*the Lord said,*” etc.

- ◆ There is a wealth of historical and archeological evidence in favour of the reliability and accuracy of the Bible.

### **III THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE**

The conservative evangelical's answer to the question "Is the Bible accurate and fully truthful in all of its teachings?" is an emphatic "yes!" To accept the Authority and Inspiration of the Scriptures logically entails that the inerrancy of the Bible be accepted. The church has historically held to the inerrancy of the Bible. Jesus, Paul and others regard and employed details of the Scriptures as authoritative. Because Christ's attitude toward Scripture was one of total trust, we hold to its inerrancy. Even the selection of details within the text are viewed as completely inspired.

"If the biblical writers erred in one particular, we have no assurance they did not err in many more."  
- Pinnock, C.H.; "Biblical Revelation," page 73.

#### **A. DEFINING INERRANCY**

Inerrant inspiration of the Bible means simply that God by His Spirit so guided the writers of Scripture that their words fully teach the truth and never teach what is false.

Some principles need to be noted. These will enable us to define inerrancy more specifically and to remove some of the difficulties.

- ◆ Inerrancy pertains to what is affirmed or asserted rather than what is merely reported. The Bible reports false statements made by ungodly persons. The presence of these statements in the Bible does not mean they are true; it only guarantees that they are correctly reported (e.g. the recorded speeches of liars in the book of Job).
- ◆ The truthfulness of the Scriptures must be judged in terms of what the statements meant in the cultural setting in which they were expressed. We should judge the Bible in terms of the forms and standards of its own culture. For example, the Hebrew expression for 'son' describes a broader field of relationships than does the English word. It may refer to a grandson or a descendant in an indefinite sense. The names parents chose for their children also carried a special meaning which is rarely true today. When we speak of inerrancy, we mean that what the Bible affirms is fully true in terms of the culture of its time.
- ◆ The Bible's assertions are fully true when judged in accordance with the purpose for which they were written. The intended purpose of the writing needs to be considered. For example, approximations are often found in the Bible and thus there is no real conflict

between the statements, in Numbers 25:9 that 24,000 died by the plague and Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 10:8 that 23,000 died. Both are approximations and for the purpose involved, both are adequate and therefore may be regarded as true.

- ◆ Reports of historical events and scientific matters are written in accordance with how they appear to the eye. This is the ordinary practice in any kind of popular (as opposed to technical) writing; for example, the matter of the sun rising, the four corners of the earth, etc. Biblical reports make no effort to be scientifically exact; they do not attempt to theorise over what actually occurred when the walls of Jericho fell, or the Jordan River was stopped. There is no effort in the use of such expressions to convey scientific information on cosmology. Inerrancy is unaffected by them.
- ◆ Often Scripture contains duplicate or parallel accounts of the same event or sermon in which different details occur, a different standpoint is adopted, or a different mode of description is employed. But inerrancy does not require standardisation of all such accounts and there is no reason why we should jump to the conclusion that the truth has been violated because differences exist. It may well be, if everything were known, that all the apparent discrepancies would disappear. Difficulties and apparent contradictions do exist in the Bible. But there is sufficient evidence to establish the basic truthfulness of Scripture and to suggest that the difficulties which exist are not sufficient to warrant abandonment of the principle of infallibility or inerrancy. "In a world in which there are so many erroneous conceptions and so many opinions, the Bible is a sure source of guidance. For when correctly interpreted, it can be fully relied upon in all that it teaches. It is a sure, dependable and trustworthy authority." - M.J. Erickson "Christian Theology" page 240.

## **B. SOME SUPPOSED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE**

- ◆ 1 Kings 6 – Gives the period between Exodus and the beginning of the Temple at 480 years; actually according to history it was 573 years. The difference of 93 years is exactly the period of the Captivity under the Judges and not reckoned in the Jewish history. Years spent away from God are lost years, wasted and not reckoned with the Lord.
- ◆ 1 Samuel 6:19 – Says God smote 50,070 for looking into the Ark of the Covenant; Josephus the historian says that only 70 people were smitten. Probably both are correct; God may have killed 70 people outright on the spot and the 50,000 later or as a consequence of this incident.
- ◆ John 1:18 – "*No man hath seen God at any time.*"  
Exodus 24:10 – "*And they saw the God of Israel.*"

Actually, both statements are true. They did not see God for He is Spirit, but they saw a physical reflection of God. When I look in the mirror I see a reflection of my face, but I have never seen my face as others see it.

- ◆ Numbers 25:9 – “24,000 died in the plague.”

1 Corinthians 10:8 – “23,000 fell in one day.”

23,000 is the number that fell in one day and 24,000 the total number that died.

- ◆ 2 Samuel 24:24 – “David paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor.”

1 Chronicles 21:25 – “David paid 600 shekels of gold.”

There are two distinct transactions; first David bought the threshing floor for 50 shekels and later bought the whole farm (estate) for 600 shekels.

- ◆ Isaiah 40:28 – “God never gets tired and never needs rest.”

Exodus 31:17 – “God created the world in six days and rested and was refreshed on the seventh day.”

It does not say that God rested because He was tired; God does not get tired. God rested the seventh day to appreciate that which He had created.

- ◆ Acts 1:9-12 – “Jesus ascended from Mount Olivet.”

Luke 24:50, 51 – “Jesus ascended from Bethany.”

Both are correct, for Bethany is a place on the side of Mount Olivet.

- ◆ 1 Timothy 6:16 – “God dwells in light.”

1 Kings 8:12 – “God dwells in thick darkness.”

Both are true, for God is omnipresent; dwelling everywhere.

- ◆ Acts 9:7 – Paul’s companions heard the voice.

Acts 22:9 & 26:14 – Paul’s companions did not hear the voice.

Other apparent contradictions are as easily explained – the Bible is inerrant!

#### **IV UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE**

The Bible is written revelation from God to man. To assert that God would offer man a revelation incapable of being understood does not make sense. The Bible is an unveiling by God for information that, apart from His communications, would have remained hidden. It follows that if God’s intention is to unveil, the Bible cannot be obscure or impossible for us to understand. It is intended for every age and for people of every race and social standing and type of education.

A proper understanding of the Scriptures is dependent on: -

- ◆ the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit and

- ◆ the interpreting work of the reader.

## A. ILLUMINATION

The same Holy Spirit Who inspired the writers of old to write the Scriptures must be trusted and relied upon to make clear the truth of the Written Revelation. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us all things and bring to our remembrance all that Jesus himself had taught, (John 14:26). The Christian has been promised that the Bible (God's Written Word) would be illumined to him, (John 16:12-15 & 1 Corinthians 2:9 & 3:2). The unbeliever, on the other hand, does not experience the illuminating ministry of the Spirit since he is blinded to the truth of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). He is able to learn about the facts of the Bible, but he considers what he knows as foolishness.

## B. INTERPRETATION

The basic principle of interpretation is to interpret plainly. Normally, one will take the Bible words in their ordinary sense, as plain talk.

- ◆ Understand what each word, phrase, statement, question means in its normal grammatically historical sense. What did the author mean? Why did he use that particular word? What did the first readers (or hearers) understand by it?
- ◆ Always read the context in which a verse or passage appears – this throws light on its meaning. Most parts of the Bible are written in units of thought. Scripture is not lists of unrelated ideas. There is a definite train of thought and to understand a particular verse, one needs to see how it fits into the whole.
- ◆ Recognise the progress of revelation. The Bible was written over a period of about 1,600 years. The New Testament adds much that was not revealed in the old. What God revealed as binding in one period may be rescinded in another, for example: the prohibition of eating pork, once binding on God's people, has been lifted today. (1 Timothy 4:3)
- ◆ Recognise the important divisions of the Bible. Besides the difference between the Old and New Testaments, the Bible also uses different kinds of writings – historical, poetic, prophetic. Figures of speech are used.
- ◆ Read the Bible intelligently. Stop to consider and ponder what is said. Don't jump to conclusions e.g. Mark 10:21.
- ◆ Re-read the Bible expectantly. Realise that it is God who has given us the Bible and that he meets us in its pages. Expect God to touch your heart and your mind and be open to what God's Spirit wants you to learn.

### C. EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE

The Bible is not only to be understood but it is to be experienced. God did not share His Word with man simply to give information. God gave His Word to bring man into a transforming relationship with Himself. The Word of God needs to be applied to one's heart and life. The Word needs to be read with faith – it's a personal document from God to His dear child. The Bible needs to be read with openness – allowing God the Father to communicate with His child in whatever area He chooses to do so or in whatever area man may have a need. The Scriptures need to be read with a readiness to respond. What God speaks to the reader, he must be willing and ready to apply what God instructs. This is done because of one's love and commitment to the Father through his relationship with Jesus Christ.

## V THE WORD OF GOD

### 2 TIMOTHY 3:16, the authority for our beliefs and conduct

- ◆ There are other authorities, which are not reliable
- ◆ Tradition
- ◆ Reason
- ◆ Feelings
- ◆ Other writings

### 2 TIMOTHY 3:17

The Word equips for good works. Shows us: -

- ◆ who God is
- ◆ His Requirements and Standards
- ◆ how He works with me
- ◆ His ways of doing things
- ◆ Jesus – the Living Word
- ◆ to love Him
- ◆ a spiritual image
- ◆ if it fades, so does love

### HEBREWS 4:12

The Word reflects us – we see ourselves in the characters of the Word. The Word exposes us – our thoughts and intentions.

JEREMIAH 23:29

The Word purges us as a fire. The Word breaks down hard and wrong ideas like a hammer breaks rock.

PSALM 119:97, 100

The Word gives insight and understanding

- ◆ of how we are to live
- ◆ Kingdom Rules and Principles
- ◆ of dangers and pitfalls
- ◆ the devil and the pitfalls he engineers if we let Him

PSALM 119:105

*“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”* The Word – “a lamp to my feet.”

- ◆ to expose: -
  - the immediate path (i.e. where I am and can walk)
  - Philosophies of Men
  - Standards of Men
- ◆ The Word – “a light to my path” ahead - guidance and God’s will for my life.

PSALM 119:52

*“I remember Your ancient laws, O Lord and I find comfort in them.”* The Word – a means of comfort.

PSALM 119:92-93

*“Helps us through affliction, preserves our lives.”* The Word – a means of renewal and refreshment.

PSALM 119:11

*“I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”* The Word – a means of protection.

ROMANS 10:17

*“... Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.”*  
The Word – a catalyst to build faith.

### 1 TIMOTHY 4:6

The Word – a means to nourish spiritual life, also in ACTS 20:32, “*and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up.*”

### EPHESIANS 6:17

“*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*” The Word – a spiritual weapon.

### 1 PETER 1:25, 2:2

- ◆ “*But the Word of the Lord stands forever.*”
- ◆ “*.... Crave pure Spiritual Milk*”

The Word – we must desire and love it.

### 2 TIMOTHY 2:15

“*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of Truth.*” The Word – we must read and study it.

### JOSHUA 1:8

“*Be careful to obey the law... Do not turn from it, that you may be successful wherever you go... your mouth... day and night... do everything written in it... prosperous and successful*” The Word – we must confess and meditate on it.

### PSALM 1:1-3

*1:1 “Blessed is the man...but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of living water, which yields its fruits in season and whose leaf does not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”* The results are a happy, successful and fruitful life.