

**Basic Truths for Young Believers**  
**Stark Road Gospel Hall**  
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## **The Bible**

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private origin, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).*

### **I. Basic Statements and Definitions**

1. **The Revelation of the Bible.** God revealed the Bible to man. The Bible claims to be the Word of God over 3,000 times. It does not claim merely to contain words *about* God, but to record *the very words of God Himself*. *Text: Hebrews 3:7.* Here the writer quotes the words of David in Psalm 95, and tells us that they are actually the words of the Holy Spirit.
2. **The Inspiration of the Bible.** God Himself breathed out every one of the Bible's words. Men, of course, were also involved in writing the Bible, but God was over it all. Although He used human authors to record His truth, and even allowed their personalities and viewpoints to shine through, God oversaw every letter of every word that they wrote. He guided the writers along, providing them with truth and keeping them from error. *Texts: 2 Timothy 3:16.* All Scripture is "inspired," which literally means "God-breathed." "Inspired" actually makes the breath move in the wrong direction: The word does not mean that God breathed something *into* the writers, but that the words of the Bible are spoken by the breath of God. What men penned was in fact spoken by the breath of the Holy Spirit. **2 Peter 1:21.** God saw to it that when men wrote down His revelation, they did so without error.
3. **The Illumination of the Bible.** The Holy Spirit must enable people to understand and embrace the truth of Scripture. *Text: 1 Corinthians 2:12.* The Holy Spirit knows the things of God because He is God. He is the author of the Bible, and only He can enlighten us to its spiritual meaning.
4. **The Inerrancy of the Bible.** By claiming to be God's Word, the Bible is claiming to be perfect. Since God is perfect, and since He Himself is behind every word of the Bible, the Bible must be perfectly free from error. And it is the perfection of the Bible—the fact that it cannot be wrong—that allows us to depend on its teachings for our eternal destinies with total confidence. *Text: John 10:35. The Scripture cannot be broken.*
5. **The Authority of the Bible.** God is the author of the Bible, and has given it to us to direct our belief and behavior. Our ideas about God and our conduct should be measured, tested, and where necessary corrected and enlarged, by consulting the Bible. God has chosen to exercise His authority over us through His written Word. *Text: Revelation 2 & 3.* The written Word is the instrument of Christ's lordship over the churches.
6. **The Infallibility of the Bible.** The Scripture cannot mislead, deceive, or disappoint. *Text: 2 Timothy 3:17.* All of Scripture is profitable and capable of equipping us for faith and good works. See also Psalm 119:1-16; Acts 24:10-16; Romans 15:1-6.
7. **The Christology of the Bible.** Because the Bible is about God and His salvation, it is preeminently about the Son of God, our Savior. *Text: Luke 24:25-27.* Here, the Lord Jesus gently rebuked the disciples for not believing all that the prophets had spoken. Notice that He did not rebuke them for failing to believe the women and the other disciples. The issue for Christ was the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. Then we read that Jesus showed them

what the OT prophesied regarding Him. The entire Bible centers on Christ. Commit yourself to finding Christ in all the Scriptures. See also Matthew 26:17-30.

## II. The Logic of Inerrancy

1. The Lord Jesus Christ staked the truth of His claims on the prediction that He would rise from the dead three days after He died.
2. The facts of history prove that He did rise from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the best-attested event in ancient times. Any fair person who reviews the compelling historical evidence for the resurrection must admit that it actually happened; only those who have a preconceived bias against the possibility of miracles would fail to be convinced.
3. Christ's resurrection validated everything He had taught, including His own identity as God the Son.
4. Since He is God, Christ cannot make even a single mistake. He speaks with ultimate authority. Thus what He said about the Bible must be true.
5. Jesus said that the Old Testament Scriptures were the Word of God (Matthew 15:6; 21:42). He said that the words of the Bible were true (John 17:7), and that even the individual letters making up the words would stand forever (Matthew 5:18). The whole book was free from error and indestructible (Matthew 15:6; 22:31; John 10:35). When the Lord spoke of the truth of Scripture, He wasn't just referring to spiritual truths. He regarded every historical and scientific statement as reliable too. He believed, for instance, in the stories of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:1-6), the great Flood (Matthew 24:37), and Jonah and the giant fish (Matthew 12:39). The testimony of Christ confirms the truth of the Bible.
6. Since the Bible is God's Word, we can trust it without reservation. God wrote it to make us "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). Thus the Bible focuses on God's Son, the Lord Jesus, who came to deliver us from eternal punishment and to give us eternal life. Having an infallible Book gives us great confidence and great peace of mind. If we trust the Lord Jesus to save us, we can rest on His promise to us: "Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent me has everlasting life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

## III. The Structure of Scripture

### **I. Two Major divisions: Old Testament and New Testament (66 books)**

- A. Old Testament.** 39 books composed by 28 authors over a period of about 2,000 years. The OT begins with creation and tells the story of the Jewish people up to the time of Christ.
- B. New Testament.** 27 books composed by 9 authors over a period of less than 100 years. The NT records the birth of the Lord Jesus, His life, ministry, death, and resurrection. It continues with the ministry His disciples carried on after He returned to heaven.

## **The Nine Historical Periods of the Old Testament**

### **1. Creation**

*Book:* **Genesis 1-11**  
*Main figure:* **Adam**, the first man  
*Message:* The creation of the world and man, and early events. Adam was created by God, but he sinned, and destroyed God's original plan for man.

## 2. Patriarchs

*Book:* **Genesis 12-50**

*Main figure:* **Abraham**, the first patriarch

*Message:* The birth of the Hebrew people through the family of the patriarchs, covering a period of 200 years. God chose Abraham to “father” a people to represent God in the world.

## 3. Exodus

*Books:* **Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**

*Main figure:* **Moses**, the leader of the exodus

*Message:* The exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. Moses delivers the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt, and then gives them the law.

## 4. Conquest

*Book:* **Joshua**

*Main figure:* **Joshua**, the leader of Israel’s army

*Message:* The conquest of the Promised Land by the Hebrew people after their journey through the Sinai wilderness.

## 5. Judges

*Books:* **Judges, Ruth**

*Main figure:* **Samson**, the most famous judge

*Message:* A four hundred year period during which Israel was led by rulers called judges.

## 6. Kingdom

*Books:* **1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings**

*Main figure:* **David**, the greatest OT king

*Message:* A four hundred-year period during which Israel was ruled by kings. Early in this period a civil war split the ten northern tribes (called Israel) from the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin (called Judah, after the larger tribe). The northern tribes were later carried away into exile by Assyria, never to return. The southern kingdom carried on, led by a succession of mostly unrighteous kings. God eventually judged Judah for her sins by sending her into exile in Babylon.

## 7. Exile

*Books:* Chiefly recorded by the prophetic books: **Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel**

*Main figures:* **Ezekiel** and **Daniel** (in Babylon); **Jeremiah** (still in Jerusalem)

*Message:* A seventy year period during which Judah is exiled in Babylon. The prophets gave leadership and encouraged faithfulness among the exiles during this time.

## 8. Return

*Books:* **Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther**

*Main figure:* **Ezra**, the central return leader

*Message:* The return of the exiled Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city.

## 9. Silence

*Books:* None

*Major figure:* **Pharisees**

*Events:* A four hundred year period between the close of the OT and the beginning of the NT. The Pharisees entombed most of the Jews in legalism, yet a faithful remnant remained to keep the messianic hope alive.

### **A. Old Testament.** The OT contains three kinds of books:

- 1. Historical.** The first 17 books (Genesis through Esther). The historical books divide into two separate accounts, the Primary History and the Secondary History. Each account reads as a continuous story from book to book. The Primary History begins with Genesis and ends with 2 Kings. The Secondary History begins with 1 Chronicles and ends with Esther. The Secondary History reviews the events of the Primary History with certain amplifications and emphases.
- 2. Poetic.** The middle 5 books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon). The poetic books were written throughout the same time period described by the historical books:

Job. Written at the time of the events in Genesis

Psalms. Written at the time of 2 Samuel / 1 Chronicles

Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. The time of 1 Kings / 2 Chronicles

- 3. Prophetic.** The final 17 books (Isaiah through Malachi). The prophetic books were also written in the time period described by the historical books. Most of the prophetic books correspond to 2 Kings / 2 Chronicles:

<u>Pre-Exile:</u>	To Israel:	Hosea, Amos
	To Judah:	Habakkuk, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, Lamentations
	To Assyria:	Jonah, Nahum
	To Edom:	Obadiah
<u>Exile:</u>	From Babylon:	Ezekiel and Daniel
<u>Post Exile:</u>	To Jerusalem:	Haggai and Zechariah (at the time of Ezra / Esther), Malachi (at the time of Nehemiah)

## **The Three Eras of the New Testament**

### **1. The Gospels**

*Books:* **Matthew, Mark, Luke, John**  
*Main figure:* **Jesus** the Messiah  
*Message:* Christ came to fulfill the OT prophecies of a Savior.

### **2. The Church in Jerusalem**

*Book:* **Acts 1-12**  
*Main figure:* **Peter**, the leader of the Twelve  
*Message:* The basic pattern of preaching, conversion, baptism, and reception to a local assembly

### **3. Missionary outreach to the world**

*Book:* **Acts 13-28**  
*Main figure:* **Paul**, the apostle to the Gentiles

*Message:* Paul carries the gospel and the pattern of the church throughout the Gentile world.

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**B. New Testament.** The NT contains three kinds of books:

1. **Historical.** The first five books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts.
2. **Letters of Paul.** Thirteen letters written to churches and individuals.
  - a. Nine to churches: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
  - b. Four to individuals: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
3. **General letters.** Nine letters by five authors: Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John; Jude, Revelation

#### **IV. The Interpretation of Scripture**

Proper understanding of the Bible requires careful, diligent study (2 Timothy 2:15). When the Lord Jesus “explained” the Scripture to the disciples (Luke 24:27), He was *interpreting* the Scripture. Luke uses *hermeneuo*, from which we derive “hermeneutics,” the science of biblical interpretation. As Christ opened their minds to understand the Scripture, so the Holy Spirit does for us today (1 Corinthians 2:12).

##### **Basic principles:**

1. **Take the literal sense.** “When the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense.” Although we read the Bible with greater care and respect than we afford other books, we still treat the language for what it is--plain language. We allow for all similes, metaphors, and even allegories where the Scripture uses these literary forms, but we do not seek mystical, obscure, or encoded meanings from the plain words of the text.
2. **Remember the “analogy of Scripture.”** Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter (1 Corinthians 2:13). Each verse in the Bible is illuminated by all the other verses, and contradicted by none of them. Not only must your understanding of a given passage suit that passage, but it also must agree with the entire Bible.
3. **Respect the objectivity of truth.** Every verse in the Bible has one and only one meaning, although it may have many applications and implications. The applications and implications, however, depend entirely on understanding the interpretation. (The fact that many prophetic statements have multiple fulfillments does not contradict this principle, because each fulfillment is an objective meaning.)
4. **Interpret the implicit by the explicit and the obscure by the clear.** For example, the Epistles interpret the historical narratives and stories of the Gospels and Acts--not the other way around. Building doctrine from events and stories alone is dangerous. We must have a Biblical basis for every inference we draw.
5. **Carefully determine word meanings.** If a word seems unclear, it is often helpful to see how the Spirit uses the same word elsewhere in the Bible. Remember, however, that the precise meaning of a word is mostly determined by the context in which it is found.
6. **Be careful with parables.** Always look for the *main point* of the story. Don’t allegorize every detail unless the passage tells you to.

There are three major methods of interpretation used today. The classical method, used by Bible-believing Christians, is the *grammatical-historical* method. This method strives to discover the original meaning of the texts by studying the historical situation in which the events took place and were written. This method seeks to bridge the gap between the time Scripture was written and when it is being interpreted. It is a common-sense approach that only presupposes that God said what He meant and meant what He said, that truth is objective and knowable, that God meant the Scripture to be understood. Proper interpretation thus demands that we have an understanding of the historical and cultural setting of each passage. See Psalm 119:25-40.

The second method, which developed among eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evolutionary scholars, is the *religious-historical* method. It assumes that religion, like everything else, is evolving from the simple to the complex. This school brings the evolutionary presuppositions to Scripture and denies that the Bible means what it says. In fact, these scholars assume deceit on the part of the Bible's editors (the pot calling the kettle black.) For instance, when the Bible says that Abraham worshiped one God, they contend that that cannot be true. Monotheism, they say, cannot have evolved so early in history. They dishonestly impose their evolutionary grid on history against all proof to the contrary. Setting aside the plain meaning of the Bible's statements, the religious-historical scholar instead forces the text to fit his overarching, satanic theory. In the end, the religious-historical method makes the Scriptures irrelevant.

The third approach, which developed in the twentieth-century under the impact of existential philosophy, is the *existential* method. This method says that God speaks through the Bible to each person directly, regardless of what the text really says and what it meant when it was written. It is an entirely subjective and relativistic method that denies all absolutes and abiding principles. It is analogous to liberal politicians twisting the words of the U. S. Constitution to support their pre-planned agenda, while completely ignoring original intent of the framers and the existence of abiding natural law. The existential method is a danger for us today, for relativism and subjectivism are creeping into evangelical churches everywhere. Sadly, many well-meaning Christians use this approach without realizing that their relativism blasphemes God. The whole charismatic movement, for instance, is based is subjective relativism.

But while subjectivism is dangerous as a methodology, we still must read the Scripture as people personally and passionately involved with what we are reading. Though we reject existentialism, we must read *existentially*--as if the Bible were personally addressed to us. Although the interpretation of a verse may not include us, the applications and implications of the verse always do. In Genesis 22, for instance, we must ask what Abraham and Isaac were feeling. Do we not better understand what God was doing with them, and what He is doing in our own lives, by putting ourselves in their shoes? This is a critical part of meditation and study. Cf notes on Lv 10:3.

## **V. The Preservation and Translation of Scripture**

God has committed Himself to preserve His Word through time (Matthew 5:18). Though none of the first hand-written documents survives today, the doctrine of inspiration is still valid, because there are very few places where biblical manuscripts dispute with each other. No other book in history has been copied as often or as carefully as the Bible. Ancient Hebrew scribes spoke each word aloud as they made copies, and kept count of every letter and word on every page. Scholars Westcott and Hort assure us that only one letter in 1,580 in the OT is even open to question, and that, of course, is too small a percentage to affect the sense of any passage.

There are almost 5,000 ancient Greek manuscripts of the NT in existence. Even without these, sufficient quotations of the Scripture exist in writings from the first four centuries to reconstruct all but 11 verses of the entire NT. Less than one word in a thousand is in question.

Christ and His apostles granted legitimacy to using a translation of the Bible by generally quoting from the Greek "Septuagint" version rather than the original Hebrew version. God has blessed us with a number of dependable English translations today. The distinction between paraphrase and translation is useful only in the extreme cases. All translations must resort to a degree of paraphrase--the question is to what degree.

**King James Version (1611)**

**New King James Version (1982)**

*Accuracy:* good  
*Beauty:* excellent  
*Clarity:* often unsatisfactory

*Accuracy:* excellent  
*Beauty:* good  
*Clarity:* good

**New American Standard Bible (1971)**

**Living Bible (1971)**

*Accuracy:* excellent  
*Beauty:* fair  
*Clarity:* good

*Accuracy:* poor  
*Beauty:* fair  
*Clarity:* excellent

**New International Version (1978)**

*Accuracy:* good  
*Beauty:* fair  
*Clarity:* excellent

Since no translation is perfect, it is clearly best to read from more than one. The King James Version is still preferred for public reading by most conservative Christians, although the New King James and New American Standard are also suitable. The NKJV and NAS are the best versions for serious study. The NIV is very helpful, but should always be compared with a stricter translation when exploring the fine points of a passage. Although the LB is too loose for serious study, it makes the OT books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles highly readable.

Tribute of the English Revised Version (1881) to the King James Version:

We have had to study this great version carefully and minutely, line by line; and the longer we have engaged upon it the more we have learned to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and, we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythms.