



WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

A study on what the Bible teaches about itself.

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Introduction

The Bible has held a central role in Christian faith and practice for centuries. From their very beginning, God's people have been dependent upon God's Word. Today the Bible is available in countless languages, translations, and formats—readily available for the vast majority of people to read.

And yet, many of us have not actually studied what the Bible says about *itself*. We may read our Bibles and believe our Bibles but we haven't stopped to think about the very nature of the Bible that we are reading. We haven't pondered the question, *what is the Bible?*

This study seeks to help us answer that question. By looking at what the Bible says about itself we hope to be able to see more clearly for ourselves the nature of the Scriptures. There are many, many good books on the nature of the Bible, but this study limits itself to specific passages of Scripture.¹ From these passages we will look at Bible background, Bible characteristics, and Bible reading. There are eight sessions total:

1. The Origin of the Bible
2. The Authority of the Bible
3. The Inerrancy of the Bible
4. The Clarity of the Bible
5. The Necessity of the Bible
6. The Sufficiency of the Bible
7. The Testimony to the Bible
8. The Focus of the Bible

Each of these sessions will shine light on the Bible so that we can read it with confidence and faith, because it is a most precious gift from God.

¹ Those wanting further study should check out *The Doctrine of the Word of God* by John Frame, *Taking God at His Word*, by Kevin DeYoung, *A Peculiar Glory* and *Reading the Bible Supernaturally* by John Piper, just to name a few

Session 1: The Origin of the Bible

The Bible is both the Word of God and written by men.

Read: 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.

Discuss:

- What does it mean that Scripture is “breathed out by God”?
- How does this shape the way that we view the Scriptures?

Read: 2 Peter 1:19–21

¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Discuss:

- According to this passage, how did the Scriptures come into being?
- Why is it significant that the Scriptures have both a human and a divine nature to them?

Read: Luke 24:25–27

²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ

should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Discuss:

- The Hebrew Bible of Jesus' time was divided into three parts: *the Law*, *the Prophets*, and *the Writings*. In verse 27 Jesus teaches from Moses (the Law) and the Prophets. What can we learn about how Jesus viewed the Old Testament from these verses?

Read: Mark 12:35–37

³⁵ And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, " 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet." ' ³⁷ David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" And the great throng heard him gladly.

Discuss:

- In verse 36 Jesus cites David's words in Psalm 110 (the Writings). What can we learn about how Jesus viewed the Old Testament from these verses?

Read: 2 Peter 3:15–16

¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Discuss:

- In verse 15 the Apostle Peter references the writings of the Apostle Paul. How does Peter view Paul's writings?
 - Can we infer anything about the way that the Apostolic writings of the New Testament were viewed in their own day?
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Reflection:

- Why does it matter that the Scriptures are "God's Word"?
- Why does it matter that the Scriptures are also "human words"?
- How should we view the different books of the Bible in terms of authority? Is the New Testament more authoritative than the Old Testament?
- How do these verses comfort, convict, or challenge you in the way you live your life?

Summary: The Origin of the Bible

The Bible has both a human nature and a divine nature to it. It was produced by men who spoke (or wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This means that the different books of the Bible have the different personalities of their human authors and came about in very human ways. However, because the ultimate author of the Scriptures is God, the Bible is not merely human words and doesn't carry with it merely human authority. It is the very Word of God and therefore carries with it divine authority. We see this in how Jesus himself viewed the Old Testament Scriptures—quoting them and teaching from them to prove his point because he believed in their authority. And we see this in how the early church viewed the New Testament books as they were being written—Peter categorizes Paul's writings as Scripture.

Session 2: The Authority of the Bible

The Bible carries God's authority with it.

Read: John 7:16–18

¹⁶ So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸ The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

Discuss:

- Where does the authority of Jesus' words come from in this passage?
- Verse 18 says that "the one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory." What does this mean and how does this help us to properly relate to Scriptures?

Read: John 12:44–50

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

Discuss:

- Where does the authority of Jesus' words come from in this passage?
- Why does it matter where Jesus' words come from?
- What happens to the one who rejects Jesus' words? Why is this the case?

Read: Jeremiah 14:14–15

¹⁴ And the LORD said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. ¹⁵ Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, 'Sword and famine shall not come upon this land': By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed.

Discuss:

- How do we know that the false prophets are prophesying lies?
- How is the false prophecy described in this passage?
- What does this reveal about the nature and authority of true prophecy (including the Scriptures)?

Read: Mark 7:9–13

⁹ And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ¹¹ But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" ' (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Discuss:

- According to this passage how should Scripture and tradition relate to one another?
- What is the consequence when we elevate our tradition to the level of Scriptural authority?

Read: Matthew 28:18–20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Discuss

- How does the authority of Jesus relate to what Christians are called to teach others?
 - Why do you think this is significant?
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Reflection:

- What does it practically look like to recognize the authority of the Scriptures?
- How does the authority of the Scriptures affect the way that we read passages that are emotionally difficult or culturally hard for us to understand?
- What are ways that we can elevate our own tradition and negate the authority of the Scriptures?

Summary: The Authority of the Bible

The biblical authors assume that their words are authoritative because they are God's Words. God's words are connected with God's very position as the one who is over all and therefore the words of God carry with them God's authority. And this makes a difference in how we view other human words. Prophets that do not come from God or speak God's words are false prophets. Furthermore, God's words are the sole authority—they are over human tradition and when we elevate tradition as "equally authoritative" we actually make void the Word of God (Mark 7:13).

Session 3: The Inerrancy of the Bible

The Bible is without errors or mistakes.

Read: Psalm 19:7–9

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.

Discuss:

- How does this passage describe the law of the Lord (God's Word revealed in the Law)? How does this help us to see the inerrancy (without error) of the Bible?
- According to this passage, why does the character of the law of the Lord matter for those who read it?

Read: Numbers 23:19

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Discuss:

- Last session we saw that the authority of the Bible is grounded in God's authority, since it is God's Word. What does Numbers 23:19 teach us about the inerrancy of the Bible?

Read: Hebrews 6:17–18

¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

- What does this passage teach us about the connection between who God is and what God says?
- According to this passage, what is the practical application of the inerrancy of the Bible (i.e. how does it help us)?

Read: John 10:33–36

³³ The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came— and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Discuss:

- How would you describe Jesus' view of the inerrancy of the Bible in this passage?
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Reflection:

- If the Bible contained errors and was not fully true, what would that reveal about God?
- How does the inerrancy of the Bible relate to the authority of the Bible?

- What are ways that the inerrancy of the Bible shapes the way that we live as Christians?

Summary: The Inerrancy of the Bible

When we say that the Bible is inerrant we mean that it is fully true and without errors in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek that it was written. This doesn't mean that translations of the Bible like the ESV, NIV, or KJV are without errors, but that they are reliable translations of original manuscripts.

Like the authority of the Bible, the inerrancy of the Bible is grounded in the character of God. If the Bible is God's Word, then it bears the mark of God's characteristic truthfulness, since it is impossible for God to lie. And this has incredibly practical relevance for our lives because it means that we can *trust* the Bible.

Session 4: The Clarity of the Bible

The Bible is able to be understood.

Read: Deuteronomy 6:4–9

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Discuss:

- According to this passage, what are we supposed to do with the Word of God?
- What does the command to teach God's Word to our children assume about the clarity (the understandability) of the Bible?

Read: Matthew 12:1–8

¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” ³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy,

and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Discuss:

- What observations can you make about the clarity of Scripture from this passage?
- What does Jesus' question to the Pharisees imply about his expectation for how they would be able to understand the Scriptures?

Read: Matthew 23:23–24

²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Discuss:

- What was wrong with the way that the Pharisees were reading and obeying the Scriptures?
- What does Jesus' emphasis on "the weightier matters of the law" reveal to us about the things God makes clear in his Word?

Read: 2 Peter 3:15–16

¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Discuss:

- We saw earlier in session 1, that Peter views Paul's writing as one of the Scriptures. What does this passage teach us about the clarity of Scriptures?
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Reflection:

- Saying that Scripture is clear (able to be understood) doesn't mean that all parts of Scripture are *equally* clear. Why is this helpful to maintain?
- What would it look like if the Bible were *unclear*? What difference would this make upon our lives?
- What does the fact that God reveals himself to us in intelligible speech teach us about God's character?
- What are ways that you personally can grow in understanding and interpreting the Bible?

Summary: The Clarity of the Bible

The clarity of the Bible is important because it means that we can understand the meaning in the text. God reveals himself in intelligible speech so that we can understand him and relate to him.

However, just because the Bible is clear and intelligible, doesn't mean that all things in the Bible are equally clear. However, the main things of Scripture that are to lead to our understanding God and his gospel are clearly taught in the Bible. Scripture is able to be interpreted and understood by both children and scholars.

One implication of this is that education—especially learning how to read and reason—is a key aspect of Christian discipleship. We should grow in our ability to understand grammar and logic because these are tools that God has given us to see him clearly in his Word.

Session 5: The Necessity of the Bible

The Bible is needed in order to know God savingly.

Read: Psalm 19:1–4

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Discuss:

- If the heavens declare the glory above, then why do you think we need to have the Bible? What does the Bible reveal that the creation doesn't?

Read: Romans 1:18–21

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Discuss:

- How do unbelievers respond God's general revelation in creation?
- What effect does the knowledge of God through the creation of the world have upon human beings?

Read: Romans 10:11–15

¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 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!"

Discuss:

- What do we need to hear in order to be saved? How does this relate to the necessity of the Bible?
- What does this passage assume about the need for more than just God's revelation of himself in creation?

Read: 1 Peter 1:22–25

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Discuss:

- According to this passage, what is the means through which we are born again?
- How does this help us to understand the necessity of the Bible?

Read: John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Discuss:

- What do Jesus' words teach us about how we are sanctified (i.e. made holy)?
 - How does that help us to understand the necessity of the Bible?
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Reflection:

- What things do we need the Bible for? In what ways is the Bible essential for Christians?
- What does the necessity of the Bible teach us about the need for Bible translation in the mission of the church?
- If the Bible is necessary for salvation and sanctification, what role should the Bible play in evangelism and in discipleship? How should we use the Scriptures for these things?

Summary: The Necessity of the Bible

God speaks through both creation and the Bible. However, God's revelation in creation is not enough for someone to be saved. In fact, unbelievers will take the revelation of God in creation—the clear things they know—and suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

This is why we need the Bible to teach us the way of salvation. It is through the Bible that we understand who God is, what God has done through Jesus, and how we can be saved from our sins. Not only that, the Bible is the means through which we are both born again and through which we grow in holiness.

Session 6: The Sufficiency of the Bible

The Bible contains all the words of God that we need.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:14–17

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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.

Discuss:

- According to this passage, what does the Scripture do for believers? What is Scripture sufficient (i.e. enough) for?
- How does Scripture equip the man of God for every good work? What does this say about the need for other non-Scriptural forms of equipping?
- How does the sufficiency of Scripture relate to the inspiration of Scripture (that it is God-breathed)?

Read: Proverbs 30:5–6

⁵ Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶ Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Discuss:

- What does it mean to add to God's words? How do you think this relates to the Scriptures?
- How does the sufficiency of Scripture relate to the inerrancy of Scripture (that every word proves true)?

Read: 2 Peter 1:3-4

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Discuss:

- According to this passage what are God's promises (found in the Scriptures) sufficient for?
- What effect does the knowledge of God through his Word have upon believers' lives?

Read: Hebrews 1:1-4

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Discuss:

- How does God's speaking to us by Jesus relate to the Bible?
- How are revelation and redemption connected in this passage? How does that help us understand the completion of redemption (Jesus sitting down) relate to the sufficiency of the Bible?

Reflection:

- We know that the Bible doesn't teach us particular skills to do in different jobs (nursing, construction, mathematics, etc.). Why does this not contradict the sufficiency of Scripture?
- How does the sufficiency of the Bible relate to other revelatory gifts like prophecy?
- How does the sufficiency of the Bible relate to seeking God's will?

Summary: The Sufficiency of the Bible

When we say that the Bible is sufficient, we don't mean that the Bible is all that we need for every discipline. Rather, we mean that the Bible contains all the words of God that we need in order to know him and glorify him in every area of our lives. The Bible doesn't teach us construction, nursing, or mathematics but it does teach us how to glorify and obey God in construction, nursing, and mathematics. In that way, it is enough. Scripture equips us for every good work in every discipline.

This also doesn't mean that God can't or doesn't still speak today. But it does mean that what God has spoken is enough for his church to be built up into maturity of Christ. He has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him in his Word. This should keep us from craving additional revelation—like prophecy or an audible voice from the Lord—and instead drive us back to see what God has already said in his Word.

Session 7: The Testimony to the Bible

The Holy Spirit enables us to embrace the truth of the Scriptures.

Read: 1 Corinthians 2:8–16

⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this [the wisdom of God], for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Discuss:

- In verse 8 Paul says that the rulers of this age were not able to understand the wisdom of God. Why is this the case?
- According to verse 11–12, how are Christians able to understand the things that are given by God?
- How does the mind of Christ in verse 16 relate to the Spirit of God in the rest of the passage?

- How is the work of the Holy Spirit in this passage connected to the Bible? Why is this important for how we approach the Bible?

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:12–18

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Discuss:

- According to this passage, why do unbelieving Israelites not receive Christ as he is presented in the old covenant Scriptures?
- According to verse 18, how are we able to view the truth of the Scriptures with “unveiled face”?
- What is the connection between Moses being read (vs. 15) and beholding the glory of the Lord (vs. 18)?

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:4–6

⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Discuss:

- Why are unbelievers unable to see the light of the gospel? What does this mean?
- How are believers able to see the light of the gospel? How does this affect the way that we approach the Scriptures?

Read: Hebrews 4:12–13

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Discuss:

- From what we've seen so far, why is the Bible living and active?
 - How does this passage help us know how we should approach the Bible?
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Reflection:

- How should the knowledge that the Holy Spirit enables us to embrace the truth of Scriptures shape that we approach the Bible for ourselves?
- How does this knowledge shape the way that we do evangelism?
- How does the Spirit's testimony to the Bible relate to what we have already seen in the clarity of the Bible? Does this mean that the Bible is not clear?

Summary: The Testimony to the Bible

If the Bible is God's inerrant, clear, necessary, and sufficient Word, then we should wonder why not all people believe the truth of the Bible. The reason is because we cannot embrace the truth as truth on our own.

This doesn't mean that the truth cannot be understood. The clarity of Scriptures remind us that we can understand what the Bible says. But it is one thing to understand and another to *love what the Bible says*. This is where we need the Holy Spirit.

Our own sinful hearts and our enemy, Satan, blind us from embracing the truth of Scripture. But God in his grace enables us to love this truth by the work of his Holy Spirit. This means that we should not trust in our own ability when we read the Bible but should pray for the Spirit's help. And when we do evangelism we can preach boldly and yet accurately knowing that we won't reason someone to see Jesus for who he is: *it is the Spirit who removes the veil of blindness*.

Session 8: The Focus of the Bible

The Bible points to Jesus as its central focus.

Read: John 5:39–47

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. ⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

Discuss:

- According to the passage, how were the Pharisees (who Jesus was speaking to) reading the Bible wrongly?
- How does Moses serve as a witness to Jesus? What does this teach us about one of the purposes of the Law of Moses?

Read: Luke 24:25–27

²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Discuss:

- Why does Jesus rebuke his disciples? What does this reveal to us about the Old Testament?
- In session one we saw that the Hebrew Old Testament was broken up into three sections: *law, prophets, and psalms*. Why is it significant that Jesus mentions "Moses and all the Prophets"?

Read: Matthew 5:17–18

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Discuss:

- Why does Jesus say that he will not abolish the Law or the Prophets? What does this mean?
- How is Jesus able to fulfill the Law and the Prophets? What does that reveal about the focus of the Old Testament?

Read: 2 Corinthians 1:19–22

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. 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. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Discuss:

- What does it mean that "all the promises of God find their Yes" in Jesus?

- What does this passage teach us about the focus of the Scriptures?
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Reflection:

- Practically speaking, what are some ways that we can see Jesus as we read our Bibles—especially the Old Testament?
- How does knowing God's work in Jesus is the focus of the Bible help us engage with the Bible in the right way?

Summary: The Focus of the Bible

The Bible points to Jesus as its central focus. To read the Bible in a way that fails to see him is to read the Bible wrongly. This doesn't mean that every passage in the Scripture has direct prophetic links to him, but his person and work gives the final meaning to all the Scriptures. He is their fulfillment and all the promises of God find their "Yes" in him.

Reading the Bible with a clear understanding of what God has done in Christ keeps us from approaching the Bible as simply a book of rules or as ancient history. Instead, it helps us to see who God is, who we are, and what God has purposed for us in Jesus. The heart of God is seen in Jesus Christ. And therefore, the focus of God's Word is on Jesus Christ. We read the Bible to see, love, and glorify him.

