



## LESSON SEVEN: THE WORD

### FACILITATOR NOTE

This is a foundational lesson which discusses the Bible. The intent is to emphasize that the Bible, though written/recorded by men, is truly authored by God Himself, and that God has given us His message (the Bible) so that we might come to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ. These notes are a suggested guide to keep the discussion on course. Feel free to adapt either in advance or in class if you think that it would be fruitful to the discussion. Your feedback is welcomed.

### PRAYER

Spend time in prayer with the class. Allow for requests and center your prayer on this lesson.

### FOCUS

Many people today believe that the Bible is just a historical book written by various men, replete with stories -- many of them myths -- that were recorded to teach important lessons and provide encouragement and inspiration. This lesson focuses on two key facts: first, the Bible is, in fact, God's message to mankind, written through men (prophets and apostles) by the Spirit of God; and second, the Bible is the final/only authority for matters of faith and practice because in it (the Scriptures), God reveals Himself, His purposes, and His plan of redemption for all people through Jesus Christ.

**Memory Verse:** <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3: 16-17)

- Our family believes in *the Bible* – God's message His Holy Word (Scripture):
  - We believe God inspired the original writings of the 66 books of the Bible and those original writings were without error (inerrant) (Mark 12:36; John 14:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
  - Our family confirms the Bible as the final authority for all matters of faith and practice as it reveals God, God's vision, God's purposes, and God's good news for all people (Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; Romans 15:4; Hebrews 4:12)



## LESSON

### I. AMONG ALL THE BOOKS EVER WRITTEN, THE BIBLE IS UNIQUE

#### A. Unique in its composition/continuity

1. Consists of 66 books, 39 comprising the OT, 27 comprising the NT, and written over a time period that spans about 1500 years
2. Written by over 40 authors from widely varying walks of life
  - a) Kings, military leaders, philosophers, peasants, shepherds, fishermen, tax collectors, scholars, poets, musicians, statesmen
  - b) Specific examples: Moses, David, Solomon, Amos, Joshua, Nehemiah, Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Luke, Peter, Matthew, Paul
3. Written in a variety of places/environments including the wilderness (Moses), dungeons/prisons (Jeremiah, Paul), palaces (Daniel), while traveling (Luke), while alone in exile (John)
4. Written during varying moods – the heights of joy, the depths of sorrow/despair, during times of certainty and conviction, during times of confusion and doubt, during times of war, during times of peace (e.g. Psalms alone covers all these moods)
5. Written on three continents (Africa, Asia, Europe)
6. Written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek)
7. Written in a variety of literary styles including
  - a) Historical Narrative
  - b) Moral instruction
  - c) Poetry
  - d) Song
  - e) Romance
  - f) Satire (e.g. Isaiah 40:19-20; 1 Kings 18:27)
  - g) Personal correspondence
  - h) Memoirs
  - i) Biography / Autobiography
  - j) Law
  - k) Prophecy
  - l) Parable
  - m) Allegory
8. Addresses a huge number of always-relevant subjects and hot topics such as sex, marriage, divorce and remarriage, adultery, homosexuality, obedience to authority, lying and truth-telling, character development, parenting, finances/money, the nature of God, revelation of God)

#### B. Unique in its circulation

1. The Bible is the most copied book (in whole or in part) in history
2. It has sold more copies than any other book (quantity in the billions)



- a) Top-selling books (on the order of one hundred million each) after the Bible include Don Quixote, the Chinese Language dictionary, A Tale of Two Cities, The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, And Then There Were None.

**C. Unique in its translation**

1. It has been translated into over 2200 languages, far exceeding any other book
2. Translation languages cover over 90 percent of the world's population
3. No other book in history has been translated, retranslated and paraphrased more

**D. Unique in its persistence/survival**

1. Persistence through time – originally written on perishable materials (first papyrus, then parchment), it was copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the printing press was invented, yet it has never faced extinction and the reliability of its transmission has been well established by research (see Section II below)
2. Persistence through persecution – many have tried to ban, burn and outlaw the Bible, from the ancient Roman emperors (e.g. Diocletian in A.D. 303), Hitler during World War II (his hatred of Jews and the Hebrew Bible are well known) to modern day North Korea under Kim Jung Un where Christians are being persecuted/tortured.
3. (Mark 13:31) *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*

**E. Unique in its teachings**

1. Its coverage of the ancient history of Israel is unparalleled. First Samuel to 2 Chronicles alone details about five centuries of history
2. Its prophetic content is unmatched.
  - a) It is the only work ever produced in which can be found a large body of detailed predictive prophecies relating to individual nations, to Israel, to certain cities, and to the coming of One person (the Messiah) all of which were fulfilled precisely as predicted many years prior.
  - b) By comparison:
    - (1) Islam cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth
    - (2) There is no real specific prophecy of a great historic event to come in the distant future, nor any prophecy of a Savior of the human race that will arise, in all of Greek or Latin literature

## **II. THE BIBLE AS IT WAS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN ANTIQUITY HAS BEEN FAITHFULLY MAINTAINED AND WE HAVE IT TODAY**

**A. Historical Accuracy of the OT and NT books is uncanny, far beyond any other document from antiquity, as established by many studies**

1. The OT has been shown to be historically reliable per:



- a) The textual transmission techniques of the Jews (i.e., the accuracy of the copying process down through history)
  - (1) Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) discovery confirmed transmission accuracy. Prior to the find, the oldest complete Hebrew manuscripts were from A.D. 900 on. The DSS Isaiah scroll dated to 125B.C. and yet was nearly identical, demonstrating only 5% variation (mostly in spelling) – there was no change to the message.
  - b) Hard evidence (e.g. city walls, pottery) uncovered through archaeology
  - c) Extra-biblical documentary evidence (e.g. tablets, manuscripts) also uncovered through archaeology
  - d) NT confirmation of the OT; i.e., if you accept that the NT is reliable, the NT itself, via Jesus' words and those of NT writers like John and Paul who quote the OT profusely, declares that the OT is reliable
2. The NT has been shown to be historically reliable per:
  - a) Documentary evidence
    - (1) The number of Greek manuscripts is overwhelming – over 5600
      - (a) The next closest document of antiquity is Homer's Illiad for which we have about 640 copies
      - (b) Variations in the Greek manuscripts are very minor, mostly in the spelling of words, and sometimes, word choices. The message is preserved/identical and there are NO doctrines in jeopardy due to these variations.
    - (2) There are a staggering number of manuscripts in other languages including between 8000 and 10000 in Latin, and another 8000 in Ethiopic, Slavic and Armenian
      - (a) comparisons between different versions show little deviation and point to a common original source
      - (b) the existence of so many translations clearly indicates the NT was considered crucially important by many peoples/cultures
    - (3) Lectionaries employed by the early church – an arrangement of lessons from the Gospels and Epistles which were read at services and on special occasions – support the accuracy of the NT manuscripts
    - (4) The writings of the Early Church Fathers imply that the NT is reliable
      - (a) The 27 books of the NT are referenced often in their writings (e.g. commentaries) which shows that these 27 books existed and were considered authentic and authoritative (and thus, said to be part of the *Canon*)



- (b) The volume of quotations from the NT is so large and widespread that if no manuscripts of the NT were extant, the NT could still be reproduced from their writings.
- (c) Note: The Early Church Fathers were ancient, Christian theologians who lived within a few generations of the Apostles; some of the more prominent include Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian
- (5) Additional books (e.g. The Gospel of Thomas), written later in time than the 27 books, were excluded from the Canon because
  - (a) They did not have apostolic authority, i.e., they were not written by apostles who were eyewitnesses or by followers of apostles
  - (b) They did not conform to the teachings and traditions that the church already recognized as normative
  - (c) They did not have continuous acceptance and usage by the church at large
  - (d) Note: The church at large was not confused about which books were inspired/authoritative; books were included in the Canon because they had already been recognized as such. The books excluded from the Canon were those which Christians already knew were dubious and thus, the books more or less excluded themselves. The Canon was *discovered* rather than *decreed*.
- b) Corroborating Evidence (extra-biblical)
  - (1) Many of the events documented by the NT are corroborated by the writings of early *non-Christians* including Josephus (Pharisee and Jewish historian), Tacitus (Roman historian), Suetonius (chief secretary to Emperor Hadrian), Thallus, as quoted by Julius Africanus, Pliny the Younger (Roman author and administrator, associate of Emperor Trajan)
  - (2) Note that non-Christian writers would not be sympathetic to Christianity, and indeed, some would be considered adverse witnesses (e.g. Emperor Trajan, who persecuted Christians)
- c) Hard evidence from archaeology (e.g. NT coins, The Pilate Inscription)

## **B. References for the Historical Reliability and Accuracy of the Bible**

1. Numerous studies of the Bible, both OT and NT have been done and a mountain of evidence affirming its reliability/accuracy has been amassed. See the following excellent references (and their own provided references):



- a) McDowell, Josh. *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999. ISBN 0-7852-4219-8
- b) Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. ISBN 0-310-20930-7

### III. WE BELIEVE GOD INSPIRED THE ORIGINAL WRITINGS OF THE 66 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, I. E., GOD IS THE TRUE AUTHOR OF THE BIBLE

#### A. God's Spirit inspired/guided production of the OT Scriptures (39 books)

1. (Mark 12:35-37) *While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?"<sup>36</sup> David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:
    - a) "The Lord said to my Lord:  
"Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet."*
2. <sup>37</sup>David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with delight.
3. (Acts 1:15-16) *In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)<sup>16</sup> and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.*
4. (2 Timothy 3:14-17) *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,<sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
5. (2 Peter 1:20-21) *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.<sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*
6. (1 Peter 1:10-12) *Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,<sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.<sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.*



- a) **Note:** The Spirit that guided the OT prophets in their predictions of the Messiah's suffering also animated the apostles to preach the gospel message preserved for us in the NT.

**B. God's Spirit inspired/guided production of the NT Scriptures**

1. (John 14:26) *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
  2. (John 16:12-15) *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup>But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. <sup>15</sup>All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."*
  3. (1 Corinthians 2:12-13) *What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup>This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.*
  4. (2 Peter 3:15-16) *Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. <sup>16</sup>He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*
- a) **Note:** Peter says that Paul's writings are Scripture

**IV. OUR FAMILY CONFIRMS THE BIBLE AS THE FINAL AUTHORITY ON ALL MATTERS OF FAITH AND PRACTICE AS IT REVEALS GOD, GOD'S VISION, GOD'S PURPOSES AND GOD'S GOOD NEWS FOR ALL PEOPLE**

**A. God's Word will endure forever; it remains in force per His will**

1. (Isaiah 40:8) *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.*
2. (Matthew 5:17-18) *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. <sup>18</sup>For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*
3. (Matthew 24:35) *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*

**B. God's Word will accomplish its intended purpose, it will not fail**

1. (Isaiah 55:10-11) *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall my word be that goes out*



*from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

**C. God's Word is convicting**

1. (Hebrews 4:12-13) *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* <sup>13</sup> *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

**D. God's Word was given to instruct/direct us, to provide encouragement**

1. (Romans 15:4) *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*
2. (Psalm 119:105) *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

**E. God wants/expects you to study His Word and put it into practice**

1. (2 Timothy 2:15) *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*
  - a) Note: A person must study God's word to fulfill this instruction. The KJV even translated this verse as, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
2. (Joshua 1:7-8) *Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.* <sup>8</sup> *Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*
3. (Hosea 4:6) *my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.*
4. (Hebrews 5:11-13) *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.* <sup>12</sup> *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!* <sup>13</sup> *Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.* <sup>14</sup> *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*
5. (Matthew 7:24-27) *Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.* <sup>25</sup> *The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.* <sup>26</sup> *But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his*



house on sand.<sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

6. (James 1:22-25) *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*<sup>23</sup> *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*<sup>25</sup> *But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

## REFLECTION

- Jesus said in His prayer to the Father (John 17:3), “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”
  - You can certainly know all about God (know lots of facts) and yet not know Him; is the converse true, that is, can you know Him without knowing about Him?
  - How do you come to know God?
- What are some practical things you can/should do to grow in your knowledge of God?
- (2 Peter 3:18) *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

## PRAYER

**NEXT WEEK: SIN**