

The Bible's Authority and Sufficiency

I. Where Does the Bible Come From?

A. Authority

B. Truly Inspired

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, NKJV)

The Greek word *theopneustos* is translated as “inspired” or “God-breathed” in various translations. What we have in the Bible are the very God-breathed words revealed to us by our Creator as holy men were guided by the Holy Spirit.

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:16–21, NKJV)

C. The Proof Is in the Pudding

The Bible was written by some 40 different human authors on 3 continents over at least 1,600 years, but it has one supernatural, consistent message from our Creator God

D. Verses to Consider

1. Genesis 1:1–3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 26, 29; John 1:1–5, 14
2. Exodus 4:22–23
3. Exodus 20:1–3
4. 1 Kings 16:12
5. Isaiah 10:24–26
6. Isaiah 40:8
7. Matthew 4:1–4
8. John 6:67–69
9. John 10:25–30
10. John 14:26–27
11. John 17:17
12. Acts 1:16
13. Romans 10:14–17
14. 1 Corinthians 2:13–16
15. 2 Timothy 3:14–17
16. Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18
17. 2 Peter 3:14–18
18. Revelation 2:1, 8

E. Questions to Consider

1. Before you were a believer, what did you believe about the origin or contents of the Bible?
2. What are some of the common objections to the authority of the Bible you have heard? How can you respond to such objections?
3. Why does it make sense to accept the Bible's claims of its own authority but not necessarily a claim of authority made by a person?
4. Read over these three points from our doctrinal statement on the Bible and discuss their content:
 - a. We believe "The Bible," is composed of the sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation and is God's revealed word to mankind (Numbers 12:6; Deuteronomy 29:29).
 - b. We believe this Word was "God breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16) as men were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21) and is therefore without error (Numbers 23:19) in the original manuscripts; and that we have today reliable representation of that original text.
 - c. We believe the minds of those who genuinely trust Christ for salvation can discern truth from Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:11-12; 14).
5. How has your view of the authority of the Bible influenced your spiritual life?
6. Why is it important to recognize that everybody, regardless of their religious beliefs, relies on faith when it comes to accepting their ultimate authority?
7. Skeptics often try to pit faith against reason/science. In light of Hebrews 11:1, 6, is it right to pit reason against faith?
8. Is the Bible unreasonable in its claims?
9. If you wanted to help someone see the Bible as the word of God, what book or resource would you want them to read?
10. What evidence from history, science, archaeology, or other fields have you used to support the Bible? Have you fallen into the trap of using these to prove the Bible as true? Why is this the wrong way to approach the issue?
11. Many books and movies like *The DaVinci Code* have popularized the idea that there were many gospels and other writings that were chosen at the Council of Nicaea to be included in the Bible while others were excluded (which is an utterly false claim). Listen to this passage from the Gospel of Peter about the tomb of Jesus and discuss the differences between it and the Bible:

When therefore those soldiers saw it, they awakened the centurion and the elders, for they too were close by keeping guard. And as they declared what things they had seen, again they saw three men come forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and a cross following them. And the heads of the two reached to heaven, but the head of him who was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, "You have preached to them that sleep." And a response was heard from the cross, "Yes."

12. What do we risk losing if we set aside the Bible as the ultimate authority in our lives?

13. What message do we communicate about the authority of Scripture if we are willing to bow to worldly authorities when the Bible speaks clearly on a matter?

14. Can you say that your level of obedience to the authority of Scripture is appropriate, or is there something that needs to change?

15. Do you think that trusting and obeying what the Bible says will ever lead you away from God's blessing?

16. What questions do you still have about the Bible's origin or history? Where can you go to get answers for those questions?

II. What Is the Bible Good For?

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is often misunderstood, especially by skeptics. But when we speak of sufficiency we draw the idea primarily from this passage:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:2-4, NKJV)

A. Misconceptions

B. Sufficient for the Church

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Colossians 2:8-10, NKJV)

C. Experience over Revelation?

D. Verses to Consider

1. Deuteronomy 29:29

2. Psalm 1:1-2

3. Psalm 119:1, 11, 105

4. Proverbs 30:5-6

5. John 6:67-71

6. Romans 12:1-2

7. Colossians 2:1-10

8. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

9. Hebrews 4:12-13

10. 2 Peter 1:2-4

11. James 1:18

12. Revelation 22:18-19

E. Questions to Consider

1. Have you had any misunderstandings about the meaning of the sufficiency of Scripture in the past? How has your understanding changed over time?
2. Read over these two points from our doctrinal statement on the Bible and discuss their content:
 - a. We believe divine revelation and inspiration have ceased (Revelation 22:18–19), but that illumination continues (John 14:26, 16:7; Romans 8:16) as the Holy Spirit reveals truth to God’s children (John 14:16–17).
 - b. We believe the scriptures are used by the Holy Spirit to communicate the truths to mankind that are necessary for salvation (Romans 10:14–17), the sufficient means by which we can understand God’s plan for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), and is the final authority in the believer’s life (John 8:31–32, 17:17).
3. Do you tend to seek out experiences to increase your faith or are you content with what God has already revealed in His Word?
4. If God spoke directly to you, how quickly would you obey? Is the same true when you read His commands in the Bible?
5. What message do we communicate about the sufficiency of Scripture if we are willing to bow to worldly philosophies when the Bible speaks clearly on a matter?
6. Do you ever feel intimidated by professional scientists or psychologists when it comes to understanding the natural world or providing counsel to someone struggling in life?
7. What does the Bible offer as a source of counsel that no other source can offer?
8. If the Bible gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness, what role do books, counsel from others, sermons, conferences, and other ways to learn play in our growth to be more like Jesus?
9. How has the Bible been sufficient for you as you have faced challenges in your life? As you have helped others struggling in life?
10. How is God’s wisdom shown in giving us a book with general principles to apply rather than an exhaustive list of rules for every situation?
11. What is your confidence level in the sufficiency of Scripture on a scale of 1–10? Is this different for certain areas of your life (parenting, money, education, joy, salvation, etc.)? What could help that level go up in certain areas?

Resources

Systematic Theology – Wayne Grudem
Biblical Doctrine – Wayne Grudem
New Answers Books – Answers in Genesis
Reasons We Believe – Nathan Busenitz
How People Change – Paul Tripp & Timothy Lane
The Discipline of Grace – Jerry Bridges