



connect  
church

# How to read the Bible for all it's worth

Week 2 – How is the Bible formed?

*For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come  
knowledge and understanding.*

*Proverbs 2:6*



This week focuses in on how the Bible was put together. You will learn who played a major role in writing the Bible. We will also discuss if the Bible was inspired by God or was it just a collection of historical facts, stories, poems, fables and legends that have been penned by historians throughout the ages.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> week also will look at the following:

- Discussion around 2 Tim 3:16 – What does ‘inspiration / inspired’ really mean?
- Barriers to hearing from God
- Literary styles in the Bible
- Translations – which one should I use?

### What the Bible is made up of?

*Watch the video and use the space below to make some key notes*

Did the church change the original texts? There are innumerable conspiracy theories of how the Bible was put together.



**The Canon – closed collection, rule of faith, a set guide to what is true.**

A spirit level gives us a guide of truth. The HS gives the guide to all truth. So why are these 66 books truth?

### How was the Old Testament formed?

Phase 1 – God reveals himself in words

Phase 2 – God’s words are written down and gives us the 10 commandments paradigm.

**Spoken by God; written by Moses; read by us.**

Phase 3 – The writings form the OT.

By the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC, these writings were **set apart** from other writings. **A Canon.**

For your notes



Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran caves).

In 1947 manuscripts are discovered. Now we can test with what we had previously. The discovery showed that 95% of the text in the Dead Sea Scrolls matched up to what the church has relied on as the Old Testament for the previous 1000 years. **The texts were reliable.**



Jesus quotes the OT with authority. Jesus gives us confidence that the OT has unique authority.

### **How was the New Testament formed?**

Phase 1 – The historic life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Phase 2- Matthew, Mark, Luke and John researched the events and wrote their accounts (the Gospels and Acts)

Phase 3 – The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles who wrote Epistles (Romans to Revelation)

2 Peter 3:14-15 Our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 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.

For your notes

Phase 4 – the early church recognised the Canon of the NT.

**The end of Revelation is the end of the Bible.**

Revelation 22:18 ‘And I warn everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book

The core of the Canon was recognised by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

By 110AD, it was recognised that the writers had unique authority when it came to writing the Bible and that no one should add to it.

By 397AD, the Council of Carthage finally recognised the Canon as we have it.

### **What was the selection process?**

#### *1. The Authority of Jesus – does it line up with the historic Jesus?*

e.g. Gospel of Thomas (pseudo-author)

Paragraph 114 – ‘Peter said to them “Let Mary go away from us for women are not worthy of life”. Jesus said “Lo, I shall lead her so that I may make her male... For every woman who makes her self male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven”

#### *2. Authority of Apostles – is it consistent with what they taught?*

Paul writes to his protégé Timothy urging him to remain consistent with what he has been taught.



For your notes

2 Timothy 1:13-14 Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.

For your notes

3. *Authority of Churches – is it widely accepted as Truth for all?*

The NT letters written to one church (e.g. Ephesians) were passed round to all churches.

**Why do we believe the Bible is God's book?**

1. *The Bible was endorsed by Jesus*

When tempted: 'It is written (Matthew 4)

When teaching: 'I have not come to abolish them [the law and the prophets] but to fulfil them (Matthew 5)

2. *The Bible has miraculous harmony*

- Prophecies fulfilled – Jesus' birth, betrayal, death, burial
- The writers were blind to the future but guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible has harmony because there is 1 divine author!

3. *The Bible changes people's lives. How has it changed yours?*

**How should we handle the Bible?**

The Bible is a message from God himself.

**Learn it**

Read and study the Bible together

## Live it

Apply the Bible to how we live

## Love it

Make the Bible our passion and priority

# Divine Inspiration

Christians talk about the Bible as being 'divinely inspired'. They take this idea from verses such as 2 Timothy 3:16 which says

'All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.'

In fact, the phrase Paul uses of the Scripture is 'God-breathed' which Christians interpret as meaning that the Scriptures are not merely the production of men, but of men working under the command and inspiration of God.

Some people believe in what is called **verbal inspiration** — the idea that every word in the Bible came directly from God. 'After all,' the argument goes, 'God is perfect and cannot make mistakes — so divinely inspired Scriptures must also be perfect and without error.' At

For your notes

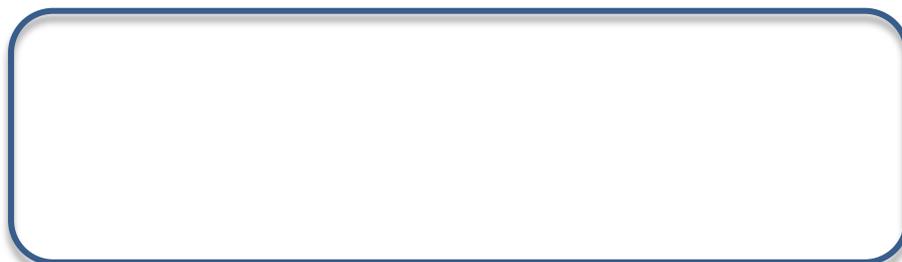
its extreme, followers of this view believe that everything in the Bible is free from error, not only in terms of religion, but also in terms of history and science. 'Fundamentalists' reject scientific theories such as evolution, or archaeological theories that conflict with Bible history.

Some talk about '**moral inspiration**', by which they mean that the Bible is inspired in its moral and ethical teaching, but not in its religious and mystical teachings. Subscribers to this view would, for example, agree with Jesus' moral teaching, but reject his miracles or resurrection. Or they might explain those events in a metaphorical or symbolic way.

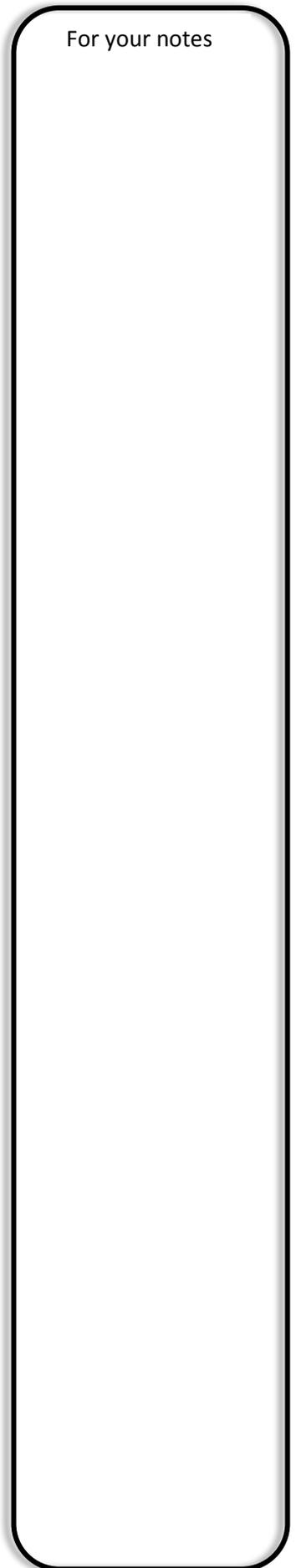
Others prefer what is called '**plenary inspiration**', which means that the subjects and themes that the Bible deals with are inspired by God, but the grammar, the sentences, the details were left to the original writers. This view takes the position that the writers were prompted and inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the words they used were their own. They might make mistakes and errors as they wrote, but the meaning and significance of their words would be inspired by God.

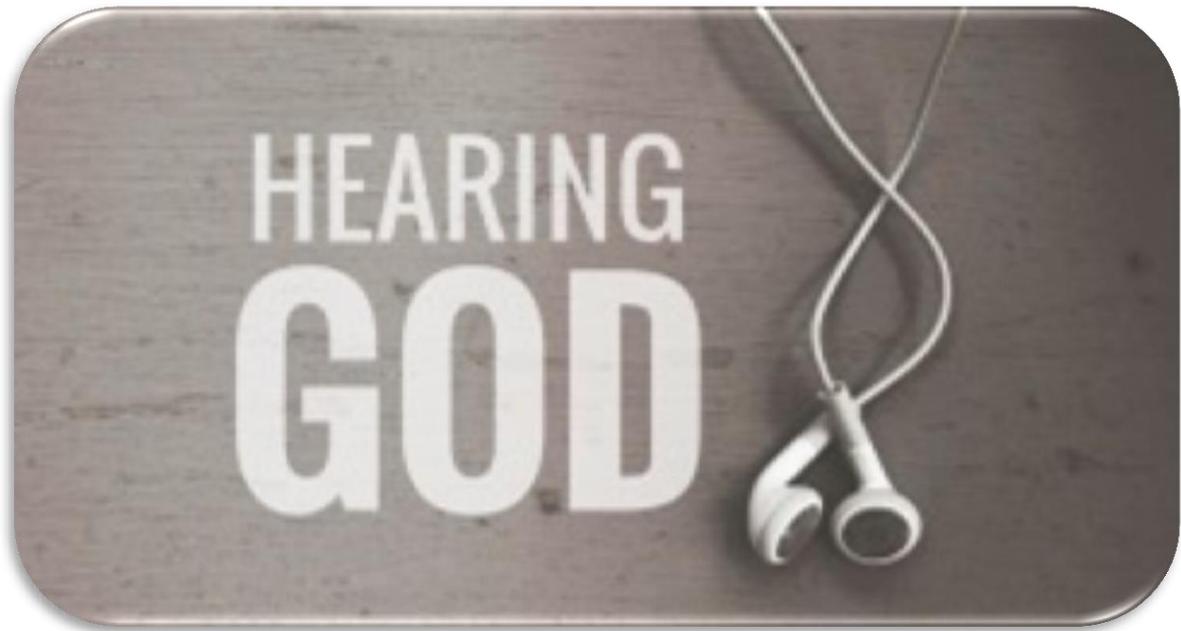
**Perhaps the key factor here is what we mean by 'inspire'**. The word comes from two Latin words: *spirare* meaning 'breathe', and *in* meaning ... um ... 'in'. Inspire literally means, to breathe in. If the Bible is 'God-breathed' therefore, to read it is to inhale something - to feel what he feels, hear his words, feel his life within us. So, whatever your view of the Bible, perhaps the most important question is, *'How has it changed your life?' To breathe in something of God is to be more loving, kind, forgiving, faithful, patient, understanding, compassionate in ourselves and to recognise and respond to those qualities in God.* If we do that, then we will truly be inspired and the Bible will truly be inspirational.

Discuss your thoughts on how the Bible was inspired with your group. Write down your conclusion.



For your notes

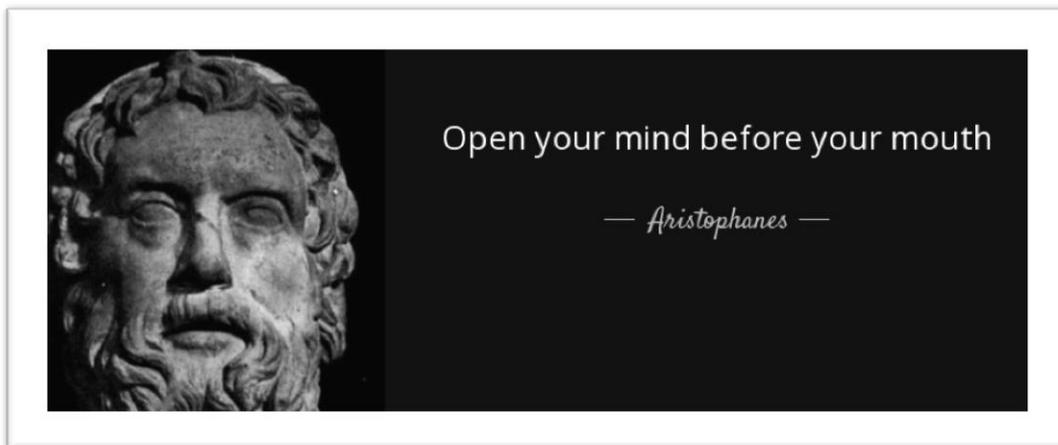




### **Barriers to effective communication can effect inspiration and interpretation**

Whenever two people try to communicate, there are several obstacles to overcome for their communication to be effective. These barriers can be expressed in terms of distance; the distance from the speaker's mind to the speaker's mouth; the distance from the speaker's mouth to the listener's ear; the distance from the listener's ear to their mind. And if the listener chooses to reply, the process is repeated.

### **From Mind to Mouth - Inspiration**



The first obstacle to overcome is the *distance between the speaker's mind and their mouth*. This is the challenge of successfully transmitting to our mouth what our mind is thinking. Sometimes our mouth says things that we did not intend to say.

When we apply this to the Bible, God supplied the thoughts, but man wrote down the words. But how do we know that what they wrote was accurate? How does **2 Peter 1 vs.21** answer this question?



The people who wrote the Bible were "carried along by the Holy Spirit." This phrase is a word picture of a sailing ship being propelled by the wind. Just as the wind fills the sails of a ship, so the Holy Spirit filled the minds of the prophets to speak and write the Word of God. They were inspired, moved, in-breathed.

Inspiration refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the authors of Scripture. This inspiration caused their writings to be accurate, so that what they wrote is the very Word of God. Because of this supernatural influence, we believe the original, written or spoken words are inerrant.

The Holy Spirit directed the thoughts of the writers so that they were the exact thoughts that the Spirit desired to be expressed. However, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not overpower the personality of the human writer. The Holy Spirit's thoughts were expressed in the natural vocabulary of the individual.

The inspiration of the writers was temporary while the inspiration of their writings was permanent. That is, Peter was inspired to write the two epistles that bear his name, but not everything he said throughout his life was inspired.

The level of inspiration the Holy Spirit provided did not supersede the personality or thought processes of the writers. Carefully read the opening paragraph of Luke's gospel. What observations can you make from this opening passage about inspiration?

Luke 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 1:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 1:4 \_\_\_\_\_

It would appear that the writers of the Bible were expected to make use of available material, both written and oral (Luke 1:1-4). This blending of the divine inspiration and human expression and investigation, appears to parallel the divinity and humanity of Christ; both are mysteries.

Inspiration does not mean the writers were geniuses with an exceptional degree of intelligence. Nor does it mean their natural perception was heightened. Nor does it mean that God dictated with words so that the writers were passive with no distinctive style. (Numerous passages in the Bible were dictated directly, but each of these is clearly identified as dictation as in Revelation and Christ's letter to the seven churches.)

Inspiration literally means "God breathed". God breathed out His Word into the hearts and minds of the writers. In John 10:34-36 Jesus taught that Scripture cannot be broken, that is, the inspiration of Scripture is total, to the extent that the choice of words, the tense of verbs, the number of nouns, the use of pronouns are without error. **We believe in verbal, plenary inspiration.** Whilst subjectively we may consider certain passages of Scriptures to be of greater value than other passages, **all Scripture is equally inspired.**

There is no communication problem in the distance from the God's mind to the God's mouth.

## From Mouth to Ear - Interpretation

The second barrier to communication is the distance between *the mouth of the speaker and the ear of the hearer*. This is the challenge of the speaker being heard or read accurately. And to correctly interpret what the speaker said, we have to do all we can to **discover the original intended meaning of the writer.**

Along with all these difficulties, every reader contains a bias. When we seek to interpret the Bible, we contribute our pre-conceived ideas, theological beliefs, education, culture and personal experience. Without being aware of it, we each have a bias and bring to our reading a number of assumptions. This is particularly true of how past experiences can influence our interpreting of the Bible.

**Scripture must interpret my experience, rather than my experience interpreting Scripture**



As you watch the video, make some key notes on the literary styles in the Bible

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a dark blue border, intended for taking notes.

## Translations – Which one should I use?

The books of the Bible were originally written in three different languages, Hebrew (the Old Testament), Aramaic (small sections of Daniel and Ezra) and Greek (the New Testament). No originals of any of these manuscripts exist. There are however, thousands of copies of these manuscripts, along with copies of very early translations of the Scripture. No two of these copies are identical. The different translations we have today have evolved from better scholarship and the discovery of older manuscripts. *Different Bible translations follow different emphases.*

With the Bible being translated from those early and sometimes ancient languages, it does mean that we are in a sense at the mercy of the translator and those translators have had to make choices as to what in fact the original Hebrew or Greek was really intending to say.

The trouble with using only *one* translation is that you are committed to the exegetical choices of that translation as the Word of God. So it could be right or it could be a bad translation of certain words or phrases used in the original texts.

A literal translation endeavours to keep to the exact words and phrasing of the original language yet still make sense in the language it is being translated into. The goal of the literal translator is to keep intact the meaning of the original language. *The King James Version and New American Standard Bible are more literal translations.*

A free translation attempts to translate the ideas of the original language with less concern about using the exact words or phrases of the original. A paraphrase is usually a free translation. The focus is to make the Scripture understood in the vernacular of the reader. *The JB Phillips and Living Bible and The Message are free translations.*

A dynamic equivalent translation attempts to translate words, idioms and grammatical constructions of the original language into precise equivalents in the reader's language. *The New International Version and New English Bible are dynamic equivalent translations.*

**It is good to read from one translation**, this provides consistency and aids memorisation.

**It is valuable to study from several translations** to bring a greater understanding.

It is preferable to use translations that are the product of a group of scholars rather than the work of just one translator.

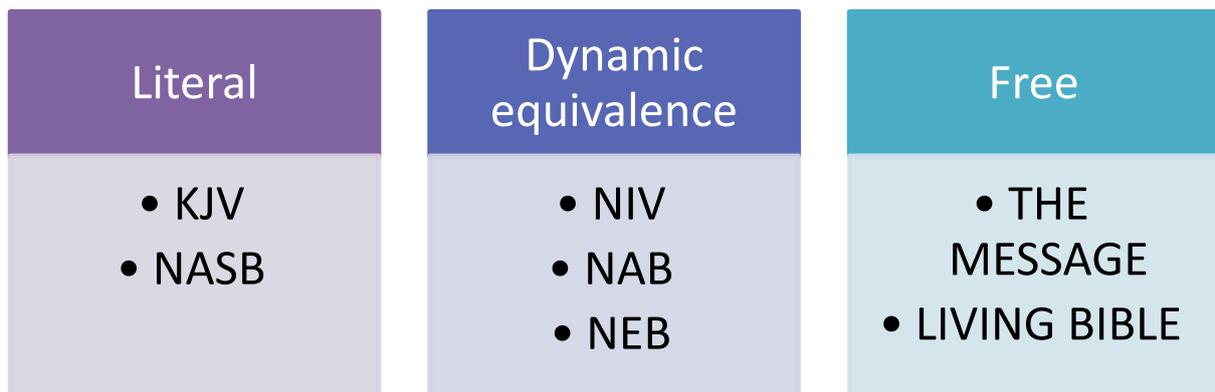
## A note about the King James Version.

Remembering that translators must make textual choices explains why translations sometimes differ from one another.

The KJV is not only the most widely used translation in the world; it is also a classic expression of the English language. Indeed, it coined phrases that will be forever embedded in our language. However, for the New Testament, the only Greek text available to the 1611 translators was based on late manuscripts, which had accumulated the mistakes of over a thousand years of copying. Few of these mistakes – and we must note that there are many of them – make any difference to us doctrinally, but they often do make a difference in the meaning of certain specific texts.

*This is why for study, you should use almost any modern translation rather than the KJV.*

Below is a chart showing you how some of the common translations are grouped according to their style of translation.



The best translational theory is **dynamic equivalence**. A literal translation is often helpful as a second source; it will give you confidence as to what the Greek or Hebrew actually looked like. A free translation also can be helpful – to stimulate your thinking about the possible meaning of a text.

*The basic translation for reading and studying should be something like the NIV.*

Next week we will focus on how you can form a daily time with God.