

BY THE BOOK: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE AND ITS BIG STORY

Course Rationale

Would you like to learn more about the Bible and how to read it? By the Book is a four week mini-course run by EBC to help you understand and engage with the Bible yourself. We believe that God has given us a precious gift in the pages of the bible, and yet, at times it can be overwhelming and hard to both interpret and apply. This course aims to help you:

1. Understand the Bible;
2. See the big picture of what you're reading;
3. Know how it points towards Jesus, and;
4. Applies to your life.

By the Book is for anyone who would like to grow in their knowledge of the Bible, and how to read it. Although this course is aimed for those within the church, it would be a great opportunity for anyone to come and hear about what makes the Bible such a unique and significant book.

"In the words of the apostle Paul: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." - 2 Tim 3:16-17

Course Outline

1. "What's the Word?" - Intro to the Bible
2. "What's the Story?" - Exploring The Biblical Narrative
3. "Jesus on Every Page" - Discovering the Overarching Themes of Scripture
4. "What am I looking at here?" - Intro to Genre & Context (*Alternative Title -- "There is No God"*)

Typical Night

1. Homework and Bible Reading Discussion (15-30mins)
2. Main Topic Content (60mins)



Devotional Sessions

During the week between sessions, we will be reading a chapter of the book of Ephesians, before joining together on Monday night to discuss!

Additional Resources List

We are only really scratching the surface of these things together in this course. Below is a list of additional resources you might like to look at.

1. **ESV Study Bible.** A good study bible is a must have for any student of the word. The ESV Study Bible is among the very best in terms of scholarship and theological discernment. If you only get one thing on this list, make it this one.
2. **God's Big Story** by Vaughn Roberts.
3. **Knowing Faith Podcast (by The Village Church).** Great theology podcast with Jen Wilkin, JT English and Kyle Worley.

The rest of the list are other great resources about the Bible and how to read it.

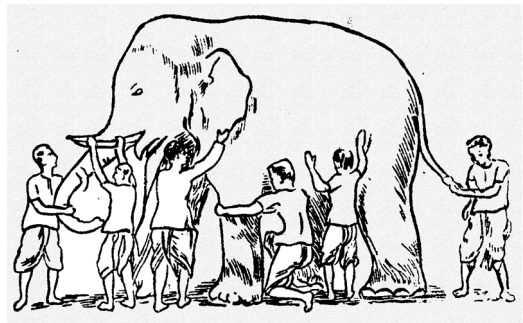
4. **John Piper's Lecture Series on the Bible**
 - a. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/why-we-believe-the-bible-session-1> (5 sessions)
5. **Tim Keller's *The Trouble with Christianity: Why it's so Hard to Believe it* Series**
 - a. Message on Literalism – "Isn't the bible historically unreliable and regressive?"
<https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/literalism-isn-t-the-bible-historically-unreliable-and-regressive-am-5496/>
6. **EBC Messages on the Bible:**
 - a. *Sola Scriptura* – Part one of our Reformation 500 series
<https://www.enoggerabaptist.org/podcast/2018/8/15/500-1-sola-scriptura>
 - b. *Rhythms of Grace – Meditation on Scripture*
<https://www.enoggerabaptist.org/podcast/2018/7/26/rhythms-of-grace-2-meditation-on-scripture>
7. **Why Trust the Bible** by Greg Gilbert
8. **Taking God At His Word** by Kevin DeYoung
9. **Can I Trust the Bible** by R.C. Sproul
10. **Why Believe the Bible** by John MacArther
11. **How To Read the Bible Book by Book** by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart
12. **One-to-One Bible Ready** by David Helm
13. <http://ehrmanproject.com/> Lots of good resources by top scholars here about the bible.

If you'd like to see the rest of our book recommendations, check out <https://www.enoggerabaptist.org/books> for our other recommended reading or chat to a pastor.

SESSION #1: “WHAT’S THE WORD” AN INTRO TO THE BIBLE

The Elephant and the Blind Men

There is an old parable called the Elephant and the Blind Men. The story is about a group of blind men who stumble onto an elephant. One grabs the leg and says, “it seems to me, that an elephant is like a giant tree trunk! It’s round and sturdy.” The next one grabs the ear and says, “a tree trunk? Not at all! Its more like a kite. Definitely nothing like a tree trunk.” The next one is holding the trunk, and says “a tree trunk? A kite? No, an elephant is more like a snake.”



The one holding the tusk says an elephant is like a spear and the one holding the tail thinks elephants are unpleasant damp cords.

I hope the meaning is clear of the parable. What is true? How can anyone actually know the truth? We’re all just blind men stumbling around the dark, and although we might all grasp some of the truth, we’re all just apprehending a portion of reality from our own perspective. Applied to religion, the parable is making a point – no religions should claim to have the truth, because they all have part of the truth. Technically, all the blind men are both right and wrong at the same time!

But there are a few big problems with the story. The first problem is this: the story undermines itself. It claims no one can know about the elephant because everyone is blind, but the one telling the story is the only one that knows about the elephant. It is claiming the knowledge it claims no one has! In claiming truth is unknowable, it is putting forward a version of the truth, that it says is unknowable. It is inconsistent, and is actually doing what every religion does in making truth claims. This is the problem with today’s popular post-modern thinking.

But there’s another problem here. The whole story changes if the elephant *speaks*. The revelation of the truth by the elephant blows everything up. *This* is the power of the Bible – it is God’s word to the world and his full self-disclosure.

What is the Bible?

The word “Bible” comes from the Greek word *Biblia* which means “books”, and started being used in the 5th century to refer the entire collection of canonical books of the Christian church.

The first thing we need to say about the Bible is that it is not *a* book. It is more like a library, made up of 66 books that have been compiled into one. These 66 separate books have their own history, author, purpose, genre, cultural context and reason for existing. These 66 books were written across a span of 1600 years, by 30-40 authors, on three continents (Asia, Europe and Africa) and three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). The authors are also remarkably diverse: priests, kings, fisherman, tax collectors, prophets, doctors, educated and uneducated, Jews and Greeks. And yet what is perhaps most amazing about the Bible as we have it today is the phenomenal harmony it has. It ultimately tells one story (see session 2!) with perfect unity and continuity, because ultimately, it is God’s own story.

What is in the Bible?

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament – which contains the Jewish scriptures, and the New Testament, which was written to record the life of Jesus and its implications by His followers. The Old Testament tells the story of the creation of the universe, the fall of mankind, and the promise of the coming Messiah. It finishes at around 450BC, leaving God’s people to wait for God’s chosen one to arrive.

Then Jesus arrives on the scene in history, resulting in biographies of his life and teaching, and the record of the early church and the apostles – what we call the New Testament.

Let’s take a look at the Old Testament in a bit more depth firstly.

The Old Testament

It is worth noting that the name “Old Testament” is mildly offensive to the Jew, because it implies that it is old and perhaps out of date or superseded.

The Old Testament – called the Tanakh – is made up of 39 separate books which can be divided up into three parts:

- The Torah (“teaching”, comprising the 5 books of Moses – also called the Pentateuch)
- The Nebi’im (“prophets”)
- The Ketuvim (“writings”)

Tanakh is an acronym of the first Hebrew letter of these traditional subdivisions – hence **TaNakh**.

They were assembled as follows:

<i>Main Divisions</i>	<i>Sub-Divisions</i>	<i>Constituent Books</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Torah <i>The Law or Pentateuch</i> (5 scrolls)		Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	
Nebi’im <i>The Prophets</i> (4+4 scrolls)	The Early or Former Prophets	Joshua Judges Samuel Kings	* The history of the times of the prophets * Samuel and Kings viewed as one book/scroll

Ketubim <i>The Writings</i> (3+5+1+2 scrolls)	The Later or Latter Prophets	Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Minor Prophets	* Excludes Daniel * The Minor Prophets are treated as one book/scroll
	The Poetic Books	Psalms Proverbs Job	
	The Megillot Book rolls/scrolls	Ruth Song of Songs Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther	* Also known as the 'festival scrolls' as each is associated with a Jewish festival
	Book of Daniel	Daniel	
	The work of the Chronicler	Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles	* Chronicles addressing same history as Kings

But today, we use a different breakdown that is different to the Tenakh. The most common way the Old Testament is categorised today is Law, History, Poetry/Wisdom and Prophets.

<i>Main Divisions</i>	<i>Sub-Divisions</i>	<i>Constituent Books</i>	<i>Description</i>
Law Books (5 books)		Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	The five books traditionally associated with Moses
History Books (7+3 books)	Pre-Exile	Joshua Judges Ruth 1&2 Samuel 1&2 Kings 1&2 Chronicles	"These books tell the story of the Israelites from their first entry into Canaan until their return there after the exile in Babylon."
	Post-Exile	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	
Poetry and Wisdom Books (2+3 books)	Poetry Wisdom	Psalms, Song of Solomon Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs	These books used the techniques of poetry and 'wise' writing to communicate God's truth
Books of the Prophets (5+12 books)	Major Prophets	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel**	"The prophecies of the ... prophets from the last 300 years of Old Testament history were collected in writing."
	Minor Prophets	Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah**, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	

**Check EBC Podcast/Website for sermon series on these books.

Bible Project Video: What is the Bible?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak06MSETeo4>

The New Testament

“Anyone who picks up the New Testament will find, if they give it a chance, that it is one of the most explosive books ever written.” ~ N. T. Wright

The New Testament is the collection of writings that came out of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. It begins with the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John which give a biographical account of Jesus. If you’re new to the Bible, start here! I’d recommend the gospel of John to start.

The gospel writer Luke, also wrote a history of the apostles called “Acts” or “The Acts of the Apostles”, recording all that happened from the resurrection of Jesus until approximately A.D. 62.

The following books are letters from Paul to churches, letters from Paul to individuals, and then miscellaneous letters from other apostles and eye witnesses to Jesus. The one exception is the book of Revelation (written by the apostle John, who authored the gospel of John, and three short letters 1, 2 and 3 John) which is a book of prophecy.

	Type	Books
	<i>Gospels</i>	Matthew Mark Luke John
	<i>Early Church History</i>	Acts**
<i>Pauline Letters</i>	Paul’s Letters to Churches	Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians
	Paul’s Letters to People	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon
	<i>General Letters</i>	Hebrews James Jude 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John
	<i>Prophecy</i>	Revelation

**Check EBC Podcast/Website for sermon series on these books.



Four Important Doctrines about the Bible

Having had a look at what the Bible is and what's in it, we are going to take a quick look at 4 massively critical theological concepts that help us understand the role it is to play in the Christian faith. These are authority, revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy.

These ideas all appear in our official statement of faith as a church:

“The Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is today the living written word of God to humankind. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. God's will in matters of Christian belief and living is revealed in or consistent with His Word. Because the Bible is inspired by God, its propositions as originally given, are true without any error.”

#1 Authority: God's Own Words

To put it simply, the Bible is God speaking to us. It is our highest authority that sits above and judges every other lesser authority (reason, tradition, culture etc.). This is what the Bible claims is true of itself. In the Old Testament, the words “Thus says the LORD” appears hundreds of times.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: 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.

2 Peter 1:21 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.

“The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” – Wayne Grudem¹

As followers of Jesus, we take the same stance that he does with regards to its authority, and receive it as *God's revelation*, *inspired* by God himself, and *inerrant* in all it says. We will now take a look at the idea of revelation, inspiration and inerrancy.

#2 Revelation: The Elephant Speaks

Returning to the parable of the elephant and the blind man, revelation refers to this notion that the elephant speaks. WE need God to reveal himself to us. WE will never be able to reason our way up to God perfectly, we rely on him breaking into our story and our world to tell us what he is like.

There are two categories of revelation:

General Revelation

General revelation is that which is available to all people, everywhere at all times. We can learn about God for example, by looking at the magnitude, beauty and complexity of the creation. We might conclude – God is big, powerful, beautiful, and intelligent! Psalm 19:1-4 says:

¹ Grudem, Wayne. 2000. Systematic Theology (pg 73).



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.

See also Romans 1:19-20 – “What can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. 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.” This is General Revelation. But General Revelation is not enough for us to truly know what God is like in all his perfection and glory. We need Special Revelation

Special Revelation

Special Revelation is referring to the way God breaks into human history to reveal who He is. The two ways he has done this most fully is in the person of Jesus, and through the Bible.

Referring to Jesus, Hebrews 1:1-3 shows us this:

Hebrews 1:1-3 “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. “

But God still speaks and reveals Himself today through the inspired Bible.

#3 Inspiration: Who Wrote the Bible?

The answer to the question, who wrote the bible is not so simple. Unlike any other book, the Bible is a book written by both God and man. The Bible has dual-authorship. Let’s turn to some key passages that help us how the Bible itself understands its authorship:

2 Peter 1:16-21 ¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 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.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: 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.

Acts 1:16 “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

Let’s make a distinction about what this is not saying. This does not mean that we must assume what some call a mechanical dictation theory, where the writer falls into a trance, with no knowledge of what they’re doing, and just recording “God’s words”. This is a poor understanding of divine inspiration. Rather, we should understand as Driscoll and Breshears say:

“People who were providentially prepared by God, and motivated and superintended by the Holy Spirit, spoke and wrote according to their own personalities and circumstances in such a way that their words are the very Word of God. God’s supernatural guidance of the writers and their situations enabled them to receive and communicate all God would have us know for his glory and our salvation”²

Or as J.I. Packer says: "Scripture is not only man's word, but also, and equally God's word, spoken through man's lips or written with man's pen."³ This is the mystery and beauty of the inspiration of Scripture!

Moreover, the apostles knew they were writing authoritative scripture. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter writes: “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.” There was an acknowledgement of God’s hand at work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sjbsc-OirLk&t=237s> 8:15-9:45

#4 Inerrancy: Is the Bible True?

The doctrine of inerrancy is concerned to articulate the truthfulness of Scripture. Two good definitions are:

“The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.” – Wayne Grudem⁴

“Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives.”⁵

Inerrancy is affirming that since God is truth, the inspired word of God is also truth. Some helpful qualifications:

1. **An inerrant Bible does not mean inerrant interpretation!** It is the text that is perfect, never our reading of it.
2. **The Bible can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language of everyday speech.** The bible is not scientific in nature, but rather uses idiom and metaphor freely. The nature of language is such that something can be stated truly, but not when pressed into an external (say scientific for example) framework. Example – the sun rises is a true statement, and yet, cosmologically we know the sun rotates the sun.

² Driscoll and Breshears. 2001. *Doctrine*. (pg 48).

³ (J.I. Packer, *The Origin of the Bible*, p. 31).

⁴ Grudem, Wayne. 2000. *Systematic Theology* (pg 91).

⁵ “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” in *Inerrancy*, p. 494.

3. **It is consistent with inerrancy to have unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions in the Bible.** Inerrancy is concerned with the truthfulness of the speech, not the precision of the grammar etc.

What does Jesus Think About the Bible?

What Jesus thinks about the Bible is pretty important to us as Christians. The title is a tad anachronistic, because the bible as we have it is not as Jesus had it. The New Testament about his life, teaching and the growth of the church following his resurrection is still yet to be written. So, the Bible of Jesus is the Hebrew scriptures the Tenakh. How does he speak of the them?

Let's see what we can learn in the gospels.

The Jewish order of the closed Jewish canon is assumed by Jesus⁶

[Luke 11:49-51](#): "Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.'"

But chronologically the last martyr in the Old Testament was Uriah the Son of Shemaiah, whose death is described in [Jeremiah 26:20-23](#). He died during the reign of Jehoiakim who reigned from 609 to 598 bc.

However in 2 Chronicles, the last book of the Jewish OT canon, there was a Zechariah killed in the temple court. This strongly suggests that the canon Jesus was familiar with was the Jewish OT canon that includes the books we have today.

Jesus upholds the authority of the Scriptures

[Matthew 5:17-18](#): "*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.*"

Jesus claims that it's all about him!

[Matthew 5:17-18](#): "*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.*"

[Luke 24:27](#) And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all *the Scriptures.*"

[Luke 24:44](#) "Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the *Law of Moses* and the *Prophets* and the *Psalms* must be fulfilled." (note the three part breakdown equivalent to the Tanakh!)

⁶ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/why-we-believe-the-bible-session-1>



[John 5:39](#) “You search *the Scriptures*, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me.”

Jesus turns to Scripture for strength

[Matthew 4:3-4, 7, 10](#) “And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “*It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’*”

Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, *it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’*”

Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! For *it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’*”

Jesus Thinks the Bible is Compelling Enough for Salvation

[Luke 16:28-31](#) “I have five brothers – that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘*They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.*’ But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘*If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.*’”

[John 5:39–47](#) “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and *it is these that bear witness of Me*; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life ... Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For *if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?*”

Jesus says the Scripture is unbreakable

[John 10:33-36](#) The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.” Jesus answered them, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (*and the Scripture cannot be broken*), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

Jesus treats story of the OT is historical fact, not fable

[Matthew 12:38-42](#) “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”³⁹ But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.⁴² The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.” See here Jonah, Solomon, Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba all used as historical figures. Elsewhere



he speaks of Abel, Noah, Isaac and Jacob, Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses, manna in the wilderness, David, Elisha, Elijah, and Zechariah without doubting any historical claim!

Tim Keller Video: Jesus and the Bible

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZAPFKXMy_Y

Can I Trust What's in the Bible?

The truth is, we have no original copies of the books written on the actual paper by the original authors of the bible. The good news is, there is many ancient manuscripts scattered all over the Mediterranean region from ancient times from which we can draw.

For the New Testament, our earliest copies date from 130AD with full manuscripts from 350AD. Moreover, the sheer volume of manuscripts of the New Testament is staggering: over 5000 Greek manuscripts, 10000 Latin translations, and 9,300 other language translations!

The small time-gap together with the incredible volume of ancient texts we have, means we have an amazing degree of certainty what the original text said. So how do we figure out what the original text said? Enter Textual Criticism. Textual Criticism is a branch of biblical studies which aims to evaluate the mountain of manuscripts we have from history, and establish what the original text said based on their age, consistence, quality etc. It is a massive job, so let's appreciate the scholarship that has gone into this task to give us such high-quality translations.

Biblica Video: What is Textual Criticism?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aegNjTPX_Fc

What about all the different translations?

No, the bible wasn't written in English. What we have is a translation made by teams of scholars from the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. But turns out, translation isn't such a simple thing. There is actually some different philosophies of translation that affect the final result. These can be categories as word-for-word translations (like the English Standard Version or ESV we use for preaching at Enoggera), thought-for-thought (like the New Living Translation or NLT). These two categories are more like to ends of a spectrum that each translation will sit on somewhere. My encouragement would be to read from 2 or 3 different translations – personally I use the ESV and NLT. Another great translation is the CSB or Christian Standard Bible.

One final word. Not all translations are created equal. Avoid bad translations with theological agendas like The Passion Translation.



BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

TWO APPROACHES

Two main philosophies behind translating the Bible range on a continuum between:

▶ WORD-FOR-WORD

Adhering to the words and structure of the original language without sacrificing clarity.

▶ THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT

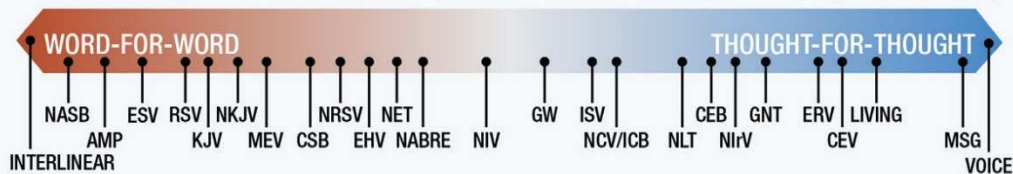
Prioritizing clarity and understanding of the meaning of the original language without sacrificing accuracy.

The Bible was originally written in:
HEBREW, ARAMAIC, and GREEK.

Freely read the Bible on Bible Gateway in more than 200 versions and more than 70 languages including:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Amplified Bible | The Message |
| Christian Standard Bible | Modern English Version |
| Common English Bible | New American Bible (Revised Edition) |
| Contemporary English Version | New American Standard Bible |
| Easy-to-Read Version | New Century Version |
| Evangelical Heritage Version | New English Translation |
| English Standard Version | New International Reader's Version |
| God's Word | New International Version |
| Good News Translation | New King James Version |
| International Children's Bible | New Living Translation |
| International Standard Version | New Revised Standard Version |
| King James Version | Revised Standard Version |
| The Living Bible | The Voice |

Bible translations represented in this spectrum by their abbreviations are available for reading on Bible Gateway



Let's open up Ephesians 1:3-9 and see the difference!

ESV – Word for Word	NLT – Thought for Thought
<p>³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us^a for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.</p>	<p>³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.</p> <p>⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.</p>



Big Takeaway: How does this change how I read the Bible?

Each week, we will conclude with this question: how does this change the way I read the Bible for myself?

If this book is just of human origin, then it may be interesting and insightful, but nothing more. But if it is what it claims to be, and what Jesus claimed it was, then it is truly life altering! Our God speaks to us through the Bible as a perfect loving Father. Because of this, what it teaches is for our ultimate benefit. But it doesn't just teach us about us and our life, it is the revelation of God to us so that we might know Him. Not just know about Him, but know Him personally!

The Bible is not just for information but for our transformation, and transformation through relationship with God. Everything in our life is to be guided by God's word. So read it, re-read it, memorize it, go digging for treasure in its pages, meditate on its teaching and share its truth with the world. Here is the bottom line: ever time we read the Bible we are hearing from God Himself. Never forget this. Keep its pages open and its words in your heart. Your life will never be the same!

Homework

There will be two levels of homework each week, depending on how much time you'd like to dedicate. Level 1 is for everyone to do, but if you want to dive a bit deeper, I'd definitely encourage you to do level 2 as well.

Level #1

- Over the next 4 weeks, we will be working our way through the book of Ephesians, doing one chapter per week. Our reading before next week is: **Ephesians 1**.
- In preparation for next week where we will be looking at the historical narrative of the Bible, please read the following chapters. They are New Testament retellings of some of the Old Testament story, climaxing in Jesus: **Acts 2** – Peter's sermon & **Acts 7** – Stephen's sermon

Level #2

- Read: **Appendix A – Summaries of Each Bible Book & Appendix B – Chicago Statement on Inerrancy**

Practical Advice for Reading the Bible

PRAYER: When it comes time for reading God's word yourself, always start with prayer. You're not just reading anything, you're reading God's own special revelation. It is authoritative, revelatory, inspired and inerrant. Ask Him that you would hear His voice in the text.

READ: Then read and re-read the text. As you read, use Light Bulbs, Question Marks and Arrows as follows:



Light Bulb: Something that 'shines' in the passage – whatever impacts or draws attention.



Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the text



Arrow: Personal Application point.

Once you've read it, use the following HEAD – HEART – HANDS framework.

HEAD: Start at the head. This is about understanding.

- *What does this mean?*
- *What are the main themes of the passage?*
- *What is it teaching about God?*
- *What is it teaching about us or me?*
- *How is this about grace/gospel*

HEART: Once we've understood, it's time to do some soul searching and heart application.

- *Do I believe this? Why or why not?*
- *What beliefs or idols does this challenge in me?*
- *What is hard about this?*
- *How does this encourage me?*

HANDS: Finally, we need to get ultra practical. The truth can't just be understood, but must be applied.

- *What changes if I believe or apply this?*
- *What do I need to lay down?*
- *What action is necessary?*
- *What action needs to stop?*

PRAYER: Use what you've learnt to be fuel for praise, confession, thanksgiving and prayer requests before God.

Appendix A – Summaries of Each Bible Book⁷

The Old Testament

The Old Testament (also known as the Jewish Tanakh) is the first 39 books in most Christian Bibles. The name stands for the original promise with God (to the descendants of Abraham in particular) prior to the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament (or the new promise). The Old Testament contains the creation of the universe, the history of the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, the formation of Israel as a nation, the subsequent decline and fall of the nation, the Prophets (who spoke for God), and the Wisdom Books.

Genesis

Genesis speaks of beginnings and is foundational to the understanding of the rest of the Bible. It is supremely a book that speaks about relationships, highlighting those between God and his creation, between God and humankind, and between human beings.

Exodus

Exodus describes the history of the Israelites leaving Egypt after slavery. The book lays a foundational theology in which God reveals his name, his attributes, his redemption, his law and how he is to be worshiped.

Leviticus

Leviticus receives its name from the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament) and means "concerning the Levites" (the priests of Israel). It serves as a manual of regulations enabling the holy King to set up his earthly throne among the people of his kingdom. It explains how they are to be his holy people and to worship him in a holy manner.

Numbers

Numbers relates the story of Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab on the border of Canaan. The book tells of the murmuring and rebellion of God's people and of their subsequent judgment.

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy ("repetition of the Law") serves as a reminder to God's people about His covenant. The book is a "pause" before Joshua's conquest begins and a reminder of what God required.

Joshua

Joshua is a story of conquest and fulfillment for the people of God. After many years of slavery in Egypt and 40 years in the desert, the Israelites were finally allowed to enter the land promised to their fathers.

Judges

The book of Judges depicts the life of Israel in the Promised Land—from the death of Joshua to the rise of the monarchy. It tells of urgent appeals to God in times of crisis and apostasy, moving the Lord to raise up leaders (judges) through whom He throws off foreign oppressors and restores the land to peace.

⁷ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/books-of-the-bible/>

Ruth

The book of Ruth has been called one of the best examples of short narrative ever written. It presents an account of the remnant of true faith and piety in the period of the judges through the fall and restoration of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth (an ancestor of King David and Jesus).

1 Samuel

Samuel relates God's establishment of a political system in Israel headed by a human king. Through Samuel's life, we see the rise of the monarchy and the tragedy of its first king, Saul.

2 Samuel

After the failure of King Saul, 2 Samuel depicts David as a true (though imperfect) representative of the ideal theocratic king. Under David's rule the Lord caused the nation to prosper, to defeat its enemies, and to realize the fulfillment of His promises.

1 Kings

1 Kings continues the account of the monarchy in Israel and God's involvement through the prophets. After David, his son Solomon ascends the throne of a united kingdom, but this unity only lasts during his reign. The book explores how each subsequent king in Israel and Judah answers God's call—or, as often happens, fails to listen.

2 Kings

2 Kings carries the historical account of Judah and Israel forward. The kings of each nation are judged in light of their obedience to the covenant with God. Ultimately, the people of both nations are exiled for disobedience.

1 Chronicles

Just as the author of Kings had organized and interpreted Israel's history to address the needs of the exiled community, so the writer of 1 Chronicles wrote for the restored community another history.

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles continues the account of Israel's history with an eye for restoration of those who had returned from exile.

Ezra

The book of Ezra relates how God's covenant people were restored from Babylonian exile to the covenant land as a theocratic (kingdom of God) community even while continuing under foreign rule.

Nehemiah

Closely related to the book of Ezra, Nehemiah chronicles the return of this "cupbearer to the king" and the challenges he and the other Israelites face in their restored homeland.

Esther

Esther records the institution of the annual festival of Purim through the historical account of Esther, a Jewish girl who becomes queen of Persia and saves her people from destruction.

Job

Through a series of monologues, the book of Job relates the account of a righteous man who suffers under terrible circumstances. The book's profound insights, its literary structures, and the quality of its rhetoric display the author's genius.

Psalms

The Psalms are collected songs and poems that represent centuries worth of praises and prayers to God on a number of themes and circumstances. The Psalms are impassioned, vivid and concrete; they are rich in images, in simile and metaphor.

Proverbs

Proverbs was written to give "prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young," and to make the wise even wiser. The frequent references to "my son(s)" emphasize instructing the young and guiding them in a way of life that yields rewarding results.

Ecclesiastes

The author of Ecclesiastes puts his powers of wisdom to work to examine the human experience and assess the human situation. His perspective is limited to what happens "under the sun" (as is that of all human teachers).

Song of Songs

In ancient Israel everything human came to expression in words: reverence, gratitude, anger, sorrow, suffering, trust, friendship, commitment. In the Song of Solomon, it is love that finds words—inspired words that disclose its exquisite charm and beauty as one of God's choicest gifts.

Isaiah

Isaiah son of Amos is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets. His name means "The Lord saves." Isaiah is a book that unveils the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation.

Jeremiah

This book preserves an account of the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah, whose personal life and struggles are shown to us in greater depth and detail than those of any other Old Testament prophet.

Lamentations

Lamentations consists of a series of poetic and powerful laments over the destruction of Jerusalem (the royal city of the Lord's kingdom) in 586 B.C.

Ezekiel

The Old Testament in general and the prophets in particular presuppose and teach God's sovereignty over all creation and the course of history. And nowhere in the Bible are God's initiative and control expressed more clearly and pervasively than in the book of the prophet Ezekiel.

Daniel

Daniel captures the major events in the life of the prophet Daniel during Israel's exile. His life and visions point to God's plans of redemption and sovereign control of history.

Hosea

The prophet Hosea son of Beerī lived in the tragic final days of the northern kingdom. His life served as a parable of God's faithfulness to an unfaithful Israel.

Joel

The prophet Joel warned the people of Judah about God's coming judgment—and the coming restoration and blessing that will come through repentance.

Amos

Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah over Judah (792-740 B.C.) and Jeroboam II over Israel (793-753).

Obadiah

The prophet Obadiah warned the proud people of Edom about the impending judgment coming upon them.

Jonah

Jonah is unusual as a prophetic book in that it is a narrative account of Jonah's mission to the city of Nineveh, his resistance, his imprisonment in a great fish, his visit to the city, and the subsequent outcome.

Micah

Micah prophesied sometime between 750 and 686 B.C. during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Israel was in an apostate condition. Micah predicted the fall of her capital, Samaria, and also foretold the inevitable desolation of Judah.

Nahum

The book contains the "vision of Nahum," whose name means "comfort." The focal point of the entire book is the Lord's judgment on Nineveh for her oppression, cruelty, idolatry, and wickedness.

Habakkuk

Little is known about Habakkuk except that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah and a man of vigorous faith. The book bearing his name contains a dialogue between the prophet and God concerning injustice and suffering.

Zephaniah

The prophet Zephaniah was evidently a person of considerable social standing in Judah and was probably related to the royal line. The intent of the author was to announce to Judah God's approaching judgment.

Haggai

Haggai was a prophet who, along with Zechariah, encouraged the returned exiles to rebuild the temple. His prophecies clearly show the consequences of disobedience. When the people give priority to God and his house, they are blessed.

Zechariah

Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was not only a prophet, but also a member of a priestly family. The chief purpose of Zechariah (and Haggai) was to rebuke the people of Judah and to encourage and motivate them to complete the rebuilding of the temple.

Malachi

Malachi, whose name means "my messenger," spoke to the Israelites after their return from exile. The theological message of the book can be summed up in one sentence: The Great King will come not only to judge his people, but also to bless and restore them.

The New Testament

The New Testament is a collection of 27 books, usually placed after the Old Testament in most Christian Bibles. The name refers to the new covenant (or promise) between God and humanity through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament chronicles the life and ministry of Jesus, the growth and impact of the early church, and instructive letters to early churches.

Matthew

Matthew's main purpose in writing his Gospel (the "good news") is to prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing how Jesus in his life and ministry fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures.

Mark

Since Mark's Gospel (the "good news") is traditionally associated with Rome, it may have been occasioned by the persecutions of the Roman church in the period c. A.D. 64-67. Mark may be writing to prepare his readers for such suffering by placing before them the life of our Lord.

Luke

Luke's Gospel (the "good news") was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers. It was presented to debunk some disconnected and ill-founded reports about Jesus. Luke wanted to show that the place of the Gentile (non-Jewish) Christian in God's kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus.

John

John's Gospel (the "good news") is rather different from the other three, highlighting events not detailed in the others. The author himself states his main purpose clearly in 20:31: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Acts

The book of Acts provides a bridge for the writings of the New Testament. As a second volume to Luke's Gospel, it joins what Jesus "began to do and to teach" as told in the Gospels with what he continued to do and teach through the apostles' preaching and the establishment of the church.

Romans

Paul's primary theme in Romans is presenting the gospel (the "good news"), God's plan of salvation and righteousness for all humankind, Jew and non-Jew alike.

1 Corinthians

The first letter to the Corinthians revolves around the theme of problems in Christian conduct in the church. It thus has to do with progressive sanctification, the continuing development of a holy character. Obviously Paul was personally concerned with the Corinthians' problems, revealing a true pastor's (shepherd's) heart.

2 Corinthians

Because of the occasion that prompted this letter, Paul had a number of purposes in mind: to express the comfort and joy Paul felt because the Corinthians had responded favorably to his painful letter; to let them know about the trouble he went through in the province of Asia; and to explain to them the true nature (its joys, sufferings and rewards) and high calling of Christian ministry.

Galatians

Galatians stands as an eloquent and vigorous apologetic for the essential New Testament truth that people are justified by faith in Jesus Christ—by nothing less and nothing more—and that they are sanctified not by legalistic works but by the obedience that comes from faith in God's work for them.

Ephesians

Unlike several of the other letters Paul wrote, Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. Paul wrote to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.

Philippians

Paul's primary purpose in writing this letter was to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his detention at Rome. However, he makes use of this occasion to fulfill several other desires: (1) to report on his own circumstances; (2) to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances; and (3) to exhort them to humility and unity.

Colossians

Paul's purpose is to refute the Colossian heresy. To accomplish this goal, he exalts Christ as the very image of God, the Creator, the preexistent sustainer of all things, the head of the church, the first to be resurrected, the fullness of deity (God) in bodily form, and the reconciler.

1 Thessalonians

Although the thrust of the letter is varied, the subject of eschatology (doctrine of last things) seems to be predominant in both Thessalonian letters. Every chapter of 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ.

2 Thessalonians

Since the situation in the Thessalonian church has not changed substantially, Paul's purpose in writing is very much the same as in his first letter to them. He writes (1) to encourage persecuted believers, (2) to correct a misunderstanding concerning the Lord's return, and (3) to exhort the Thessalonians to be steadfast and to work for a living.

1 Timothy

During his fourth missionary journey, Paul had instructed Timothy to care for the church at Ephesus while he went on to Macedonia. When he realized that he might not return to Ephesus in the near future, he wrote this first letter to Timothy to develop the charge he had given his young assistant. This is the first of the "Pastoral Epistles."

2 Timothy

Paul was concerned about the welfare of the churches during this time of persecution under Nero, and he admonishes Timothy to guard the gospel, to persevere in it, to keep on preaching it, and, if necessary, to suffer for it. This is the second "Pastoral Epistle."

Titus

Apparently Paul introduced Christianity in Crete when he and Titus visited the island, after which he left Titus there to organize the converts. Paul sent the letter with Zenas and Apollos, who were on a journey that took them through Crete, to give Titus personal authorization and guidance in meeting opposition, instructions about faith and conduct, and warnings about false teachers. This is the last of the "Pastoral Epistles."

Philemon

To win Philemon's willing acceptance of the runaway slave Onesimus, Paul writes very tactfully and in a lighthearted tone, which he creates with wordplay. The appeal is organized in a way prescribed by ancient Greek and Roman teachers: to build rapport, to persuade the mind, and to move the emotions.

Hebrews

The theme of Hebrews is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as revealer and as mediator of God's grace. A striking feature of this presentation of the gospel is the unique manner in which the author employs expositions of eight specific passages of the Old Testament Scriptures.

James

Characteristics that make the letter distinctive are: (1) its unmistakably Jewish nature; (2) its emphasis on vital Christianity, characterized by good deeds and a faith that works (genuine faith must and will be accompanied by a consistent lifestyle); (3) its simple organization; (4) and its familiarity with Jesus' teachings preserved in the Sermon on the Mount.

1 Peter

Although 1 Peter is a short letter, it touches on various doctrines and has much to say about Christian life and duties. It is not surprising that different readers have found it to have different principal themes. For example, it has been characterized as a letter of separation, of suffering and persecution, of suffering and glory, of hope, of pilgrimage, of courage, and as a letter dealing with the true grace of God.

2 Peter

In his first letter Peter feeds Christ's sheep by instructing them how to deal with persecution from outside the church; in this second letter he teaches them how to deal with false teachers and evildoers who have come into the church.

1 John

John's readers were confronted with an early form of Gnostic teaching of the Cerinthian variety. This heresy was also libertine, throwing off all moral restraints. Consequently, John wrote this letter with two basic purposes in mind: (1) to expose false teachers and (2) to give believers assurance of salvation.

2 John

During the first two centuries the gospel was taken from place to place by traveling evangelists and teachers. Believers customarily took these missionaries into their homes and gave them provisions for their journey when they left. Since Gnostic teachers also relied on this practice, 2 John was written to urge discernment in supporting traveling teachers

3 John

Itinerant teachers sent out by John were rejected in one of the churches in the province of Asia by a dictatorial leader, Diotrephes, who even excommunicated members who showed hospitality to John's messengers. John wrote this letter to commend Gaius for supporting the teachers and, indirectly, to warn Diotrephes.

Jude

Although Jude was very eager to write to his readers about salvation, he felt that he must instead warn them about certain immoral men circulating among them who were perverting the grace of God. Apparently these false teachers were trying to convince believers that being saved by grace gave them license to sin since their sins would no longer be held against them.

Revelation

John writes to encourage the faithful to resist staunchly the demands of emperor worship. He informs his readers that the final showdown between God and Satan is imminent. Satan will increase his persecution of believers, but they must stand fast, even to death. They are sealed against any spiritual harm and will soon be vindicated when Christ returns, when the wicked are forever destroyed, and when God's people enter an eternity of glory and blessedness.



APPENDIX B – THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON INERRANCY

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition*. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in



all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI



We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.



We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX



We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church.