

The Bible As The Word Of God For All Times

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>The Bible is the written Word of God, a divine gift of heavenly origin. It is the inspired word of God, a reliable source of both truth and wisdom from God Himself and the standard for a believer's life. It is the Word of God in a personal and transformative sense, holding authority in an individual's life to the extent that its teachings resonate as true, morally upright, and spiritually meaningful to them. However, misconceptions about the Bible persist. Some believe that the Bible contains the Word of God and not the complete Word of God. While others argue that the Bible is not the Word of God but it is also is the Word of God. A more extreme view is that the Bible is not the word of God at all. This view dismisses the Bible as merely a fallible human book devoid of divine authority. Meanwhile, this presentation affirms the Bible as the Word of God. The descriptive approach is adopted. It is discovered that the Bible stands as the timeless word of God, its message piercing through ages. It is the sole valid basis for constructing doctrine, providing the necessary framework for understanding and applying Christian teachings. When correctly interpreted and contextualized with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Bible becomes a timeless blessing for current and future generations, leading to personal transformation, church growth, and community impact.</i></p> <p>Keywords: The Bible, the Word, God, Inspiration, Authoritative, All Times.</p>
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Introduction

Psalm 119, a Torah Psalm, highlights the significance of God's written word (Psalm 119:9). It encompasses laws, decrees, statutes, commands, and ordinances. This psalm conveys God's will to the Israelites and emphasizes the importance of reading, meditating, and obeying the Torah (Psalm 119:15-16). By doing so, individuals can avoid sin (Psalm 119:11), find strength (Psalm 119:28), guidance (Psalm 119:105), and counsel (Psalm 119:24). The nature of Torah is described in Psalm 119:89 as heavenly in origin, unchanging, and eternal, making it eternally relevant. Through its informative and performative aspects, the Torah showcases the transformative power of God in readers' lives.

Today, the Bible is revered as the written Word of God, a divine gift of heavenly origin. Christian theologians

universally acknowledge its uniqueness and incomparability.¹ According to John Murray, it is the definitive standard for Christian faith and life.² Ricky Donald Montang and others asserts that the Bible is the inspired word of God, a reliable source of both truth and wisdom from God Himself and the standard for a believer's life.³ E. Albert Cook considers the Bible as the Word of God in a personal and transformative sense, holding authority in an individual's life to the extent that its teachings resonate as true, morally upright, and spiritually

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²John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary*, Presbyterian Guardian Publishing

Corporation, Philadelphia, 1946, 1.

³Ricky Donald Montang et al., 'The Holy Bible as the Word of God', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, Volume 104, Issue 3, 2023, 11-12.

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However, misconceptions about the Bible persist. Some believe that the Bible contains the Word of God and not the complete Word of God. This means that it partially contains God's Word. While others argue that the Bible is not the Word of God but it is also is the Word of God. This connotes that the Bible's status as God's Word depends on interpretation and contextualization. A more extreme view is that the Bible is not the word of God at all. This view dismisses the Bible as merely a fallible human book devoid of divine authority. These perspectives undermine the role of the Bible as a trusted source of truth. Meanwhile, this presentation affirms the Bible as the Word of God.

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In this article, I argue that the Bible, as the Word of God, brings blessings to Christians when engaged properly and thoughtfully. My purpose is to explore the nature and functions of the Bible, affirming its unchanging and eternal relevance for all times. By examining its nature and functions, I seek to confirm the enduring significance of the Bible for contemporary and future generations of Christians. I use the descriptive method for my argument.

The Bible as the Written Word of God

The Bible is composed of words, but it is also an expression of God's word. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term "*dāḇār*" signifies "word," often referring to the communication or revelation of God. According to Wayne Grudem, the phrase "Word of God" typically denotes God's spoken or written word or the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1).⁹ This concept encompasses God's self-revelation, nature, will, and purpose, manifesting through historical events and interactions with His people.¹⁰ The Word of God takes various forms, including spoken words through human messengers and written words, as recorded in the Bible.¹¹

The term "Bible" originates from the Greek word "*biblia*," meaning "books." This word is derived from "*biblion*," a diminutive of "*biblos*," referring to written documents, often on papyrus.¹² The Bible is also known as "the Scriptures" or "the writings," emphasizing its sacred nature as a revelation from God. Jesus frequently referenced the Scriptures, asking, "Have you never read...?" (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10).¹³ Over time, the term "Bible" became the standard designation for the collection of sacred books,

⁴John F. Walvoord, 'Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God?', *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January 1959, 8.

⁵John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," *The Infallible Word: A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary*, Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, Philadelphia, 1946, 1.

⁶Ricky Donald Montang et al., 'The Holy Bible as the Word of God', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, Volume 104, Issue 3, 2023, 11-12.

⁷E. Albert Cook, 'The Bible as God's Word', *The Biblical World*, Sep., 1913, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Sep., 1913), 139

⁸E. Albert Cook, 'The Bible as God's Word', *The Biblical*

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⁹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 47.

¹⁰Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2 ed., L. Arnold Hustad, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 55.

¹¹Grudem, 47-49.

¹²F. F. Bruce, 'The Bible,' *The Origin of the Bible*, Philip Wesley Comfort, ed. (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2003), 3.

¹³I. H. Marshall et al., eds., 'Bible,' *New Bible Dictionary* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 135.

or “Library of Divine Revelation,” with its usage popularized in English by Wycliffe.¹⁴

The evangelical tradition affirms that the Bible comprises 66 books, authored by diverse human writers under God’s divine guidance. The Bible is originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Its texts span various circumstances and social contexts. The human authors came from different walks of life – statesmen, peasants, kings, and more – and wrote over approximately 1600 years, often unknown to each other and in different locations.¹⁵ Despite this diversity, the Bible presents a unified narrative centered on human redemption.¹⁶ Its uniqueness and incomparability set it apart from all other books, standing alone in its singular focus and divine authority.¹⁷

The Bible as the Word from God: Its Nature

The nature of the Bible is distinct and unparalleled compared to all other books. The Bible is unique and incomparable in terms of its origin, authority, revelation, preservation, canonicity, and unity. Exploring the nature of the Bible will reveal these distinct characteristics of the Bible. This exploration is crucial for understanding the view on the Bible and the functions and relevance of the Bible for all times.

The Inspiration of the Bible

The Bible asserts its divine origin, claiming to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). 2 Tim 3:16 says “All Scripture is θεόπνευστος” (“God-breathed” or “inspired”). The term “inspiration” literally means “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), signifying the content of the Bible as the very words of God. The term “inspiration” is derived from the Latin words “*inspiro*” (to breathe on/into) and “*inspiratio*” (God-breath). Inspiration has taken on a specific meaning in the biblical context, referring to the divine influence on the authors and books of the Bible.¹⁸

According to Benjamin B. Warfield, Samuel G. Craig, and Van Til, inspiration is “a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.” These

authors required divine revelation to comprehend supernatural truths due to their human limitations. Thus, revelation presupposes the doctrine of inspiration.¹⁹ The authorship of the Bible is dual, combining human and divine elements, making it a unique document. Through inspiration, God’s revelation is preserved, carrying the same authority and effect as God’s direct speech.²⁰

The Authority of the Bible

The divine origin of the Bible makes it authoritative, serving as the ultimate source of guidance for Christians in matters of doctrine and practice.²¹

The term “authority” in the secular sense can mean “who’s is in charge?”, “exerting control on people or situation” or “the place where one can find out the correct answer to key questions”.²² According to Wright, when we talk about the authority of the Bible, we do not mean that the Bible is in charge, controlling people or situations or the place where one can find out the final solutions to key problems of life. Rather, it means the authority invested in the Bible is by God. In the Bible itself, all authority lies with God, its inspiration.²³ The authority of the Bible is rooted in God’s inspiration, making it a reflection of His authority. God exercises this authority through human agents who convey biblical truths.²⁴ Ultimately, the authority of the Bible rests on God, enabling Him to fulfil His purposes through the Bible.

Revelation

The Bible is a source of divine revelation, serving as a human witness to God’s self-disclosure. Revelation involves uncovering the truth, derived from the Hebrew word “*gālah*” (to uncover) and the Greek word “*apocalyptein*” (to unveil). It is God’s act of making Himself known to humanity, a supernatural expression of His will. As the starting point of God’s communication, revelation enables humans to understand His nature and purposes.²⁵

The Bible as the ultimate source of God’s revelation, provides a perfect and accurate understanding of His nature,

¹⁴Stuart Brown and N. J. Fox, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Leibniz’s Philosophy* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 207.

¹⁵Brown and Fox, 207.

¹⁶Brown and Fox, 207.

¹⁷Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 14-16.

¹⁸B.H. Carroll, *Inspiration of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), 15.

¹⁹Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, Samuel G. Craig, and Van Til, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1948), 131.

²⁰David S. Dockery, *The Doctrine of the Bible* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1991), 55-56, 67.

²¹Francis Mpilo Mpindu, “James Barr and Biblical Inspiration: A Critique of Barr’s View of Biblical Inspiration in the Light of Recent Exegetical and Theological Developments in Evangelical Theology,” (PhD, University of Pretoria, 2003), 186.

²²N.T. Wright, “How Can the Bible Be Authoritative,” *Vox Evangelica*, 21 (1991): 2, 4.

²³Wright, 4.

²⁴Wright, 8-10.

²⁵Norman L. Geisler, and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 39.

purpose, and will for humanity. It serves as God's complete instruction manual for human life, offering a flawless standard for righteous living. As the authentic witness to divine revelation, the Bible is itself the Word of God, revealing the triune God through the Holy Spirit.²⁶ Throughout its pages, particularly in the Old and New Testaments, God is seen revealing Himself through historical events, with the Bible largely documenting His acts in history.

The Preservation of the Bible

Although the original biblical manuscripts are no longer extant, the Bible is considered divinely preserved. God's providential care ensures the Bible remains available to humanity, safeguarding its timeless message.²⁷ The transmission of the Bible relied on human agents, including Rabbis, Masoretes, early Christian copyists, church fathers, monks, and scribes, who demonstrated remarkable care and professionalism in copying and recopying the texts.²⁸

The Canon of the Bible

The books of the Bible, divinely preserved and recognized as inspired by God, were carefully evaluated and canonized.²⁹ The term "canon" denotes a collection of books acknowledged by the early church as the authoritative rule of faith and practice. These books met a specific standard, confirming their status as Holy Scripture.³⁰ The sixty-six books of the Bible, in their original form, are widely accepted by Christians as the ultimate authority for faith and doctrine.

These books of the Bible were not handed down from heaven in a single moment but were made up of texts selected over time amidst controversy about exactly which books should be considered sacred Scripture. Despite disagreements over the boundaries of Scripture, these books were recognized for their central witness to the eternal, unchanging God and His ongoing revelation and salvation of His people.³¹

²⁶Eric C. Rust, 'The Authority of the Bible: The Word of God and the Bible', *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 57, No. 1, January 01, 1960, 48.

²⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 316.

²⁸Danny McCain, *Notes on New Testament Introduction* (Bukuru: ACTS, 1996), 3-4.

²⁹Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures In Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), 102.

³⁰Gesler and Nix, 204.

³¹Lydia Harder, 'The Bible as Canon and as Word of God: Exploring the Mystery of Revelation', *Conrad Grebel Review* 24, no.1, 2006, 53.

The Unity of the Bible

The unity of the Bible lies in its cohesive message about God, humanity, and salvation, all centered on Jesus Christ. Despite diverse authors, genres, and historical contexts, the Bible presents a unified narrative from Genesis to Revelation, with the Old Testament laying the groundwork for the New Testament and the person of Jesus Christ.

The unity of the Bible requires consistency across its divine revelation, with no contradictions between parts.³² This unity is rooted in God's progressive revelation throughout history,³³ which unfolds diverse aspects of His plan while maintaining coherence.³⁴ Luther and the Reformers identified four key pillars supporting the unity of the Old and New Testaments: (1) Scripture's divine authorship, (2) the agreement between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment, (3) Christocentricity, and (4) doctrinal agreement throughout Scripture.³⁵ These pillars demonstrate the teaching of the Bible as a cohesive whole.

The Bible as the Unchanging Word of God: External Evidence

The Bible is the inspired, authoritative, and divinely preserved Word of God, presenting a unified message about God and Jesus Christ's work. Its divine origin and authority are substantiated not only through internal evidence (1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21) but also by means of external validation from historical scholars and sources, which collectively affirm its status as the Word of God. Its teachings have been consistently upheld by these scholars. As the written Word of God, it remains unchanging and authoritative.

In the early church era, the Bible was viewed as "inspired books" (2 Tim 3:16), "holy writings," and "sacred letters," penned by "divine writers" (2 Peter 1:21).³⁶ According to Dilday, the early church fathers relied on the Bible as their primary authority in addressing false doctrines and heresies.³⁷

³²R. D. Linder, "Antinomianism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 59.

³³C. C. Ryrie, "Dispensation," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 322.

³⁴Francis Watson, "Scripture," *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Ian A. Mcfarland and others eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 465.

³⁵Robert D. Preus, "The Unity of Scripture," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 54, Number 1 (January 1990), 3.

³⁶Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (London: Hutchinson & Co (Publishers) Ltd., 1972), 20.

³⁷Russel H. Jr. Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1982), 44.

In the Medieval period, the Bible was regarded as God's Word, spoken through prophets who relied on divine inspiration.³⁸ The Bible was considered the ultimate authority for faith.³⁹ However, some theologians of the time diminished the Bible's importance, prioritizing church tradition and philosophy over biblical teachings.

The Reformers affirmed the divine origin of the Bible, believing it to be God's Word, in which God speaks.⁴⁰ They championed the principle of sola Scriptura, asserting the Bible's sole authority and sufficiency. As Westhelle notes, this means the Bible surpasses human expectations, conveys the person of Christ, and serves as the singular source of authority for Christians and the church.⁴¹ The Reformers advocated for all doctrines and practices to be evaluated and esteemed according to biblical teachings.

Today, evangelical churches affirm the Bible as the trustworthy and authoritative Word of God, deserving of full confidence and belief.⁴² They hold that Scripture alone is the true and ultimate authority.⁴³ They believe that:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and a supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.⁴⁴

As an evangelical denomination, Baptists' doctrine of the Bible aligns with the broader evangelical tradition. A review of Baptist confessions of faith reveals a consistent emphasis on the supreme authority of the Bible, surpassing all other faith documents.⁴⁵ Baptists affirm the Bible as the Word of God, deserving of full trust and belief, and recognize it as the sole true and authoritative Word of God.⁴⁶ The Baptists believe that:

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Furthermore, Baptists believe that the Bible is a record of God's revelation to humanity, with Jesus Christ as the key to its interpretation.⁴⁸ The concept of biblical infallibility has sparked debate among Baptists, with some scholars redefining the term. For instance, Garrett distinguishes between "functional" infallibility, which affirms the authority of the Bible in faith and practice, and "modal" infallibility, which implies a dictation-like method of inspiration.⁴⁹ Regardless of terminology, Baptists view the Bible as the ultimate norm for faith and practice, superior to other documents. They see it as a direct revelation from God, trustworthy and worthy of obedience when interpreted correctly. Other faith documents can serve as guides, but the Bible is the final authority. Baptists believe that the special revelation culminates in Jesus Christ, and the Bible, as a product of inspiration, is authoritative in matters of faith and doctrine, with its revelation ultimately pointing to Christ.⁵⁰

The Bible as the Unchanging Word of God: Its Functions

The Bible stands the test of time as God's Word, remaining relevant today despite being written in ancient times. Its timeless themes, universal principles, and enduring wisdom continue to speak to human experiences, conveying God's message to us in the present. The fundamental truths of the Bible are unchanging, and its principles have transformed countless lives and societies. Its relevance endures, addressing universal human needs and experiences. Some of these timeless truths and their relevance are highlighted below.

The Bible as the Primary Witness to God

The Bible testifies to the person and work of the one true and living God throughout history, with the entirety of the

³⁸ Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration*, 48.

³⁹ Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 44.

⁴⁰ Rene Pache, *The Inspiration, and Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 235–236.

⁴¹ Babatunde Adekunle Ogunlana, 'The Impact of the Reformation on an Evangelical Understanding of the Bible and Its Implication for African Christianity,' *Reformation and Theological Education in African Context: A Gedenkschrift in Honour of the Late Prof. Timothy Palmer* (Bukuru: ACTS, 2022), 88.

⁴² Ogunlana, 90.

⁴³ Russ and Nettles, 357.

⁴⁴ Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 105.

⁴⁵ Bush L. Russ and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists, and the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 355.

⁴⁶ Russ and Nettles, 357.

⁴⁷ Dilday, 105.

⁴⁸ Dilday, 106.

⁴⁹ James Leo Garret, "Source of Authority in Baptist Thought," *Baptist History and Heritage*, July 1978, 48.

⁵⁰ Russ and Nettles 357–358

Bible pointing to His reality (Genesis 1:1). Rather than arguing for God's existence, the Bible reveals His nature, attributes, and mighty acts of creation and redemption.⁵¹ It showcases God's interactions with humanity, serving as a witness to the one eternal and unchanging God who acts dynamically in history to reveal Himself and save His people.⁵²

The Bible as the Primary Witness to Jesus Christ

The Bible is Christ-centered, serving as a witness to His life, teachings, death, and resurrection. The Old Testament foretells the coming of the Messiah through prophecies, types, and shadows, such as the sacrificial system and priesthood, which prefigure the redemptive work of Christ. The New Testament provides a detailed account of Christ's life and teachings, further illuminating the significance of His redemptive work. Notably, Jesus Himself affirmed that the Old Testament points to Him, testifying about His identity and mission (Luke 4:1-18, John 5:39, Luke 24:44). The New Testament confirms Jesus Christ as the central message of Scripture, building upon the Old Testament's foundation.

The Bible as the Primary Source of Information about Salvation

The message of salvation as contained in the Bible is timeless, offering a profound and enduring narrative of God's plan to redeem humanity through Christ (John 14:6, Acts 3:20). As the primary source of salvation information, the Bible traces God's plan from its inception to its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, detailing the means and significance of salvation. This message remains fundamental to the faith of believers, strengthening their trust in Christ as they immerse themselves in the Bible (Romans 10:17). Despite being written centuries ago, the salvation message of the Bible remains relevant and powerful today, offering forgiveness, reconciliation, and inner transformation through Jesus Christ, the eternal Savior.

The Bible as the Foundational Source for Morality and Ethics

The moral and ethical teachings of the Bible are timeless, offering a framework for understanding right and wrong that transcends centuries. The Old Testament laws, Jesus' teachings, and other biblical passages guide relationships, justice, and social issues. Key examples include the Decalogue's foundational principles (Exodus 20:1-17) and Jesus' teachings on love, compassion, and justice (Matthew 5-7). Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself"

(Matthew 22:39) serves as a guiding principle for moral decision-making. The Bible also emphasizes virtues like humility, forgiveness, and gratitude, essential for moral growth (Hebrews 10:24-25; Galatians 6:2). Christ's selfless love and sacrifice set the ultimate standard for moral character. The moral and ethical teachings of the Bible remain relevant and applicable today, enabling Christians to develop a moral and ethical nature through Jesus Christ.

The Bible as the Primary Source of Wisdom

The wisdom of the Bible is timeless, offering practical guidance on living a meaningful life, building relationships, and making wise decisions. The Old Testament wisdom literature, such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and Psalms, provides valuable insights, while Jesus' and the apostles' teachings in the New Testament offer wisdom on love, relationships, forgiveness, and humility. Through numerous examples of wise and foolish behavior, the Bible illustrates the consequences of choices and actions, providing principles for wise living. It addresses life's toughest questions and offers solutions to its problems. The Bible's wisdom remains relevant and applicable today, with Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's wisdom, generously granting wisdom to those who ask.

The Bible as the Primary Text for Civilization and Culture

The Bible has had a profound impact on Western civilization, shaping various aspects of society, including government, education, literature, music, law, art, history, and religion. It has provided a moral framework, influencing cultural values on justice, compassion, and human dignity (John 4:1ff). The principles derived from the Bible remain timeless, continuing to offer guidance and relevance in today's society. These enduring principles have not lost their significance over time, instead, they continue to be helpful and applicable in contemporary contexts.

The Bible as the Primary Text for Christian Missions

The Bible portrays God as a missionary God, exemplified through the Old Testament Israelites, Jesus Christ, the apostles, and early Christian missionaries. The Bible provides foundational teachings that inspire and guide Christian missions, outlining the motivation, message, and methodology for missionary work (Matthew 28:18-20). The Bible establishes principles for evangelism, cross-cultural engagement, and Christian missions, centering on the gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

⁵¹Charles Lee Feinberg, 'A High View of Scripture: Why We Know the Bible is the Word of God', *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2023, 39.

⁵² Harder, 'The Bible as Canon and as Word of God: Exploring the Mystery of Revelation', 54.

A Call to Engage with the Bible Today

The Bible remains relevant today as God's Word for all times. It calls on Christians, ministers, and theologians to interpret and contextualize its teachings. Through active engagement, biblical passages can be made more relevant to contemporary contexts, leading to personal transformation, church growth, and community impact. Biblical interpretation is a key way to effectively engage with the Bible, unlocking its power to transform lives and communities.

Biblical interpretation involves explaining the meaning of Scripture, and uncovering what the Bible says and means (2 Timothy 2:15). To accurately interpret the Bible, one must consider the context of the original writers and recipients. This requires the interpreter to discover the original meaning of the biblical text, which can be achieved through the application of hermeneutics, the principles and methods of interpretation.

Hermeneutics, derived from the Greek words "hermeneuō" (to interpret) and "hermeneia" (interpretation), refers to the science and art of interpretation.⁵³ According to Ramm, it is "the science and art of biblical interpretation". It is a science. It follows systematic rules and is an art because it requires skillful application.⁵⁴ The task of hermeneutics begins with exegesis, uncovering the original meaning of the text, and culminates in contextualization, applying that meaning to contemporary contexts. This process is incomplete without reliance on the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Exegesis

The term "exegesis" is derived from the Greek word, *exegeomai* meaning "to lead out of", and when applied to texts, it denotes "reading out of the meaning".⁵⁵ It "is a thorough, analytical study of a biblical passage done to arrive at a useful interpretation of the passage".⁵⁶ This thorough study incorporates linguistic, literary, theological, historical, and structural analysis to arrive at a thoughtful interpretation. While detailed exegesis may be challenging for laypeople, they can still engage deeply with the Bible by utilizing commentaries and other scholarly tools, helping them understand the text's original context and intended message.

Contextualization

Contextualization, the second aspect of hermeneutics, involves making the original message of the Bible relevant

and impactful for modern readers. Alongside doctrinal construction and preaching, contextualization seeks to fuse the timeless content of the Bible with the ever-changing contemporary context. While exegesis uncovers the biblical content, contextualization considers the form, including traditions, philosophies, experiences, worldviews, and cultures, through which the message is communicated. The goal is to present the unchanging content of the Bible in a way that resonates with diverse contexts.

While other sources may be useful, they also carry potential dangers that must be avoided. In contrast, the Bible is the sole valid component in doctrinal construction, serving as the final authority on all doctrinal matters. It is essential for sound doctrine among Christians of all ages, serving as the foundation of the Christian faith. Any teaching or preaching considered sound must be grounded in the Bible. It is the sole valid basis for constructing doctrine, providing the necessary framework for understanding and applying Christian teachings. Throughout history, the Bible has been used to evaluate the truth or falsehood of doctrines. As the foundation for doctrinal development, the Bible is essential for sound teaching and remains the fundamental reference point for Christian doctrine. Any sound doctrine must be grounded in and aligned with the Bible.

Dependence of the Holy Spirit

Hermeneutics is a spiritual endeavor that requires the interpreter's dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, some scholars today approach the Bible solely as literature, overlooking its sacred dimension. According to Osborne, this perspective neglects the spiritual aspect of interpretation. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, human efforts alone are insufficient to fully understand the true message of the Bible.⁵⁷

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in biblical interpretation, enabling interpreters to understand and apply Scripture accurately. As the inspirer of the authors of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16), the Holy Spirit also illuminates the interpreter's understanding, guiding them into all truth (John 16:13-14). He helps overcome personal biases and flawed human understanding, allowing interpreters to grasp the intended meaning (1 Corinthians 2:12-14). By bringing life to the written Word (2 Corinthians 3:8), the Holy Spirit makes the Bible as the Word of God active and living, both for interpreters and those they serve (Hebrews 4:12).

⁵³A. Berkeley Mickelson, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 1.

⁵⁴Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 1.

⁵⁵John H. Hayes, and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1934), 5.

⁵⁶Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Primer for Students and Pastors* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 21.

⁵⁷Osborne, 5.

For this reason, to accurately interpret the Bible, interpreters should possess certain essential qualities. These include being born again, having a genuine passion for understanding God's Word and cultivating a deep dependence on the Holy Spirit who inspired the biblical writers. Additionally, they should also have the necessary educational foundation to effectively interpret and apply Scripture.⁵⁸

Conclusion

'For the word of God is living 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.' (Hebrew 4:12).

This study has explored the nature and functions of the Bible, affirming its eternal and unchanging character as the Word of God and its relevance for all times. As a divinely originated, preserved, and recognized text, the Bible is living, active, discerning and transformative. It is authoritative in matters of doctrine and practice. It stands as the timeless word of God, its message piercing through ages. Its message remains vibrant and effective, transcending time and culture. Its message has the power to shape lives and societies. Its truths are as relevant today as they were centuries ago, speaking to the human condition with clarity and depth. Its consistent message about God and Jesus Christ has been informative and transformative for individuals, churches, and societies throughout history. The relevance of the Bible extends to all aspects of life, making it a comprehensive guide for every context and generation. The Bible is essential for sound doctrine among Christians of all ages, serving as the foundation of the Christian faith. Any teaching considered sound must be grounded in the Bible. The Bible is the sole valid basis for constructing doctrine, providing the necessary framework for understanding and applying Christian teachings. When correctly interpreted and contextualized with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Bible becomes a timeless blessing for current and future generations, leading to personal transformation, church growth, and community impact.

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⁵⁸Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 13-16.

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