

The Blueprint What We Believe and Why The Bible

Introduction: The Bible is the most unique piece of religious literature in world history. There is literally nothing like it, not only in its teachings but also in how it was written and preserved.

For instance, Islam and Buddhism are entirely based on the writings of a single individual in a single lifetime. Islam is based on the writings of Muhammad, and Buddhism is based on the writings of Siddhartha Gautama. However, Christianity is based on the Bible, a book with a clear and uncompromised unified message written by upwards of 40 different authors over the course of 1,600 years! Matthew Easton noted,

“The Bible consists of sixty-six different books, composed by many different writers, in three different languages, under different circumstances; writers of almost every social rank, statesmen and peasants, kings, herdsmen, fishermen, priests, tax-gatherers, tentmakers; educated and uneducated, Jews and Gentiles; most of them unknown to each other, and writing at various periods during the space of about 1600 years: and yet, after all, it is only one book dealing with only one subject in its numberless aspects and relations, the subject of man’s redemption.”¹

The Christian Bible is divided into two main sections—The Old Testament and New Testament.

The Old Testament contains 39 books, the first five being authored by a man named Moses. After the Hebrew people had spent 430 years as slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to lead them out of captivity and back to the land He had promised to their forefathers. On their journey to that land, God made a covenant with Moses concerning the Jewish people, but the history he recorded in the book of Genesis that led up to that covenant was not first revealed to Moses by God but had been handed down from generation to generation. The stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were not privately revealed to Moses while he secretly met with God but were already universally accepted by the Jews as their identity and heritage, and some were even referenced to in the oral traditions and writings of other cultures.

Furthermore, the God who personally introduced himself to Moses in a burning bush (Exodus 3) wasn’t discovered by Moses but had previously revealed Himself to a pagan named Abram (later Abraham). But Abraham wasn’t the only one in the world to whom God had revealed Himself. After arriving in the land of Canaan, Abraham eventually met a king named Melchizedek, also known as the “Priest of the God Most High,” the same God who had been leading Abraham! Therefore, after defeating the people who had taken his nephew Lot, Abraham gave Melchizedek ten percent (a tithe) of all he had won in battle as

¹ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (pp. 98–99). Harper & Brothers.

an offering to the God they mutually followed (Genesis 14:18). Moses is the author of the first five books of the Bible. Still, he is by no means the one who discovered the history that led up to the covenant God made with him at Mount Sinai for the Jewish people to inherit and prosper in the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants, nor was Moses the one who discovered Yahweh! Therefore, the point I'm making with this concerns the unmatched uniqueness of the Bible in that even though the Bible has a clear, unified purpose and message, it is in no way whatsoever the product of the religious philosophy or claims of a single person, and as such, there is no other foundational religious writing like it.

For more on the authorship and history of the Bible, check out the videos produced by "The Bible Project" at www.BibleProject.com. Specifically, they have a series of very well-produced short illustrated videos that begin with one called "What is the Bible" that can be accessed at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/what-is-bible/>.

You can also check out three sermons I preached on the Bible in a series I did called "The Way" back in 2018 at ??????????????????

In addition, even though it was written by upwards of 40 different authors over 1,600 years of human history, it is still the undisputed most reliable piece of ancient literature on the planet. By "reliable," I mean that what you have in your hands accurately reflects what the original authors wrote. Why is that a big deal? Well, until the invention of the printing press, the accuracy of literature was at the mercy of the people who took the time to handwrite and send copies to others. Therefore, because of predictable human error, every piece of ancient literature contains textual variances, that is, differences between copies. However, of all the pieces of ancient literature on the planet, there is zero competition for first place when it comes to trusting that the Bible you have in your hands accurately reflects what the original authors wrote. For instance, about 200,000 variant readings of the New Testament text exist. By comparison, *The Iliad*, which is universally accepted as reliable, is 2/3 the length of the New Testament and has way fewer ancient copies. Therefore, given that the New Testament is longer and has more copies, you would expect it to have more variances. However, *The Iliad* has 10 to 20 times more variant readings than the New Testament, yet scholars universally consider it a totally reliable ancient text. If the ancient manuscripts of *The Iliad* are considered to be reliable copies of the original manuscript, then there should be no hesitation at all in believing the Bible is based on reliable manuscripts! *For more on this, check out a sermon I did on or about March 27, 2016, called, How Do We Trust the Bible Is God's Word in a series we called Box Session ... it can be found at ????????????*

Therefore, given its uniqueness, reliability, and historical credibility, it's not shocking that it is by far the most influential book in world history. To argue otherwise would be a rather ridiculous argument, especially given that an estimated 5 BILLION copies of it have been purchased across the globe, which is five times more than the book in second place.²

² <https://apeejay.news/which-are-the-10-most-read-books-in-the-world/>

However, despite the Bible's uncontested level of influence in world history and its unprecedented reliability and credibility, suggesting it has had a universal impact on all its readers would also be ridiculous.

For instance, Muhammad founded the world's second-largest religion, Islam, 600 years after Christ and more than 500 years after the last book of the Bible was written. In so doing, he attempted to directly associate his writings with all sorts of things in the Bible while completely and openly contradicting its central teachings.

Similarly, 1,200 years after Muhammad, another man named Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, which, like the Quran, references all kinds of things from the Bible. Smith claimed the Book of Mormon was the updated version of what Jesus meant to say, but apparently forgot, so He reappeared to the indigenous people of America and told them. Ironically, none of the indigenous people of America have a record of this appearance anywhere in their history, which may explain why Joseph Smith never allowed anybody else to see the tablets he claimed revealed all of this previously secret information and then later claimed the reason nobody else could see them was that he gave them to an angel when he was done translating them.

My point in mentioning the Quran and the Book of Mormon is that the mass influence of the Bible on world history has in no way aligned the people of the world with its unmistakable and openly stated message and that even includes people who claim to be "Christians." For instance, in my series on 2 Peter, we addressed the theological liberalism that increased in popularity during the 19th century and destroyed many of the historic Christian universities in Europe and North America. Theological Liberalism so rejected and redefined the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith that it's truly farcical to even reference it as "Christian," which takes me to the point of today's sermon. The common denominator in each of these examples is the rejection of the Bible for what it claims itself to be—the divinely inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative record of God's Word to man. This is also why it's so important to begin our theological blueprint with what we believe about the Bible: that belief determines everything else! So, with that, the official position of Venture concerning the Bible is as follows,

"The Church has always recognized the 66 books of the Old Testament and New Testament to be the definitive teaching of the prophets and the apostles. As such, the Bible is the full and complete Word of God. It was breathed out by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, written down by specially chosen human authors, and has no errors. Its purpose, from Genesis to Revelation, is to bear witness to God's plan of salvation in Christ Jesus. Because the Bible is the Word of God, it must be properly understood and obeyed in its entirety. The Bible is the final authority in everything the Church practices and teaches."³

³ <https://daretoventure.org/about/>

Now, what do all those words mean, and why are they important for us to understand? Well, that statement is important because it answers the seven most important questions about the book we believe to be the definitive and exclusive revelation of everything God wants us to know about Him, ourselves, and how we are meant to function.

Proposition: Venture's statement of faith answers seven vitally important questions about the Bible.

The first vitally important question Venture's statement of faith answers is the most basic,

(1) Which books are supposed to be in the Bible?

- A. "The Church has always recognized the 66 books of the Old Testament and New Testament to be the definitive teaching of the prophets and the apostles."**
- B.** Jesus quoted all kinds of things from the books we refer to as the Old Testament. The entire Jewish culture was built on those 39 books. Again, for a great, easy-to-understand animated explanation of the Old Testament, check out <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/what-is-bible/>.
- C.** But what about the New Testament? Some of you may have heard the 27 books of the New Testament didn't show up until almost 400 years after Jesus when they were officially and definitively recognized as the New Testament at the Synod of Hippo in A.D. 393.
- D.** "A brief history at this point will reveal that there were some 32,000 citations of the New Testament prior to the time of the Council of Nicea (325 AD)." ⁴
- E.** In Theology for Today Towns also cites F.F. Bruce concerning the ancient Scholar Irenaeus. – "[Irenaeus was] brought up in Asia Minor at the feet of Polycarp (the disciple of John) and he became bishop of Lyons in Gall in A.D. 180. His writings attest the canonical recognition of the fourfold Gospel and Acts, of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, of 1 Peter and 1 John and of the Revelation ... When at last a church council—the Synod of Hippo in A.D. 393—listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity."⁵
- F.** In other words, somebody didn't come running into the room claiming to have found some scrolls in a cave that an angel told him was God's Word, but rather,

⁴ Towns, E. 1994. Theology for Today (5th Printing, Second Edition, p. 53).

⁵ Towns, E. 1994. Theology for Today (5th Printing, Second Edition, p. 56).

since the day of their original authorship, the ones the Council agreed to be divinely inspired and accepted as such, had been so since the day they were first authored. The Synod of Hippo didn't create the New Testament; it ended the discussion about what belonged in it and, as such, eliminated false Gospels that were indeed written well after the first century and contradicted that which had been accepted as authoritative since the day they were first written by the actual officially recognized Apostles of Jesus Christ! For instance, Peter himself refers to some of the writings of Paul as divinely inspired Scriptures in his second letter to the church,

- G. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. 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. (2 Peter 3:15-16)**

- H. So, the idea that divine authority was given to these letters in 393 AD is profoundly false. They didn't form the New Testament in 393 AD; rather, they officially ended others' efforts to add things to it that were clearly not from God!

This takes us to the second vitally important question Venture's statement of faith answers, and it's obviously the most fundamental.

(2) What is the Bible?

- A. **"As such, the Bible is the full and complete Word of God."**

- B. The Westminster Confession of Faith states, **"The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."**⁶

- C. Paul wrote, **"8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."** (Galatians 1:8-9)

- D. This doesn't take away from the role of the Holy Spirit personally leading and convicting us, but it does make it clear the Holy Spirit will never lead us into

⁶ <https://www.westminsterconfession.org/resources/confessional-standards/the-confession-of-faith-of-the-westminster-assembly-of-divines/>

anything that contradicts what He has already said through the writers of the Bible, and it's why Jesus said to His Apostles,

- E. **25 "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)**
- F. The Holy Spirit wasn't going to say anything new. Jesus proclaimed the Gospel, and the Apostles wrote it down exactly how Jesus wanted it to be written down, not because of their own skill and strength but because God made sure of it through the Holy Spirit. We will talk about that more in just a second, but the Bible makes it clear the Old Testament was written the same way. Everything God wanted us to know was said and recorded by the authors of Scripture and nothing that God didn't want said was recorded. Therefore, when you read the Old and New Testament, you are reading the full and final, as well as the definitive and authoritative, Word of God to man! As such, anything or anyone else that claims to reveal "truth" from God, whether it appears to contradict the Bible or not, should be totally and swiftly disregarded.

The third vitally important question Venture's statement of faith answers about the Bible has to do with who and how it was written.

(3) How were the books of the Bible written?

- A. **"It was breathed out by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, written down by specially chosen human authors, ..."**
- B. **13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)**
- C. **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 Peter 1:21)**
- D. **16 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 competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16)**
- E. The point in each passage is that we believe the words written down by the original authors were not their observations or attempts to explain things based on their opinions but the very words the Holy Spirit of God moved within their hearts and minds to write. In these 66 instances, only the words that came from God were written.

- F.** Furthermore, those whom God chose to say and/or record these words (i.e., the author of Samuel wrote the divinely inspired words of Hannah when she praised the Lord for letting her have a son to commit to the service of the Lord—Samuel), were not self-proclaimed prophets but men whom God had already demonstrated His calling and anointing on their life as prophets. That is, each author of the Bible was acknowledged by the community of believers around them and through works of God Himself, that they were not simply speaking and ministering their own opinions but were, in fact, called and empowered by God to divinely declare His words and even accomplish His works! That’s why Paul reminded the church in Corinth of the difference between what he had preached to them and what some of the self-proclaimed “apostles” were preaching. These powerless false teachers were misleading Christians with their personalities and persuasive communication skills into a powerless false gospel that only benefited the glory and financial wealth of the ones preaching it! Therefore, Paul said,
- G. 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)**
- H.** The point being, that the difference between the self-proclaimed prophets and apostles, who were, in fact, false prophets and false apostles, and the actual prophets of God was the power and authority of the words and actions the actual prophets of God had because the Spirit of God actually filled them to say and do what God alone could do!

This naturally leads to the fourth vitally important question Venture’s statement of faith clarifies.

(4) Is everything in the Bible correct?

- A. “It was breathed out by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, written down by specially chosen human authors, and has no errors.”**
- B.** The popular statement of liberal theologians is that they believe the Bible “contains” God’s Word, but they don’t believe it “is” God’s Word. If you are not careful, you may not notice the massive difference between the two. To say the Bible contains God’s Word means you get to decide which words are from God and which aren’t. But if the Bible, as originally written by the original authors, “is” God’s Word, then I must accept all of it with the same authority over me, AND I must accept that all of it is correct.
- C.** Therefore, when we say the Bible has no errors, what we mean is:
1. The Bible is inerrant – everything in the original manuscripts is factually correct in context.

2. The Bible is infallible – everything in the original manuscripts are what God told the authors to write.
- D. Look again at the passages we read a few minutes ago and notice that there is no room in these passages for us to suggest in any way the words written down by the original authors were anything but God’s Word and thus fully inerrant and infallible because they came from God!
1. **13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)**
 2. **16 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 competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16)**
 3. **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 Peter 1:21)**
- E. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 states it this way, **“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.”⁷**

The fifth vitally important question Venture’s statement of faith clarifies about the Bible is its purpose.

(5) What’s the purpose of Scripture?

- A. **“Its purpose, from Genesis to Revelation, is to bear witness to God’s plan of salvation in Christ Jesus.”**
- B. In our strategic planning process, one of our key ministry objectives is called “TEACH.” That objective states that for us to be successful in the mission Christ gave His church, we must be fully committed to “Teach the Bible and the Gospel it’s about.” Notice that it’s not just to teach the Bible but also to ensure that as we teach the Bible, we are making the Good News of Jesus Christ (the Gospel) that the Bible is about abundantly clear and applicable!

⁷ <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#i>

- C. In Luke, we read, **“25 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25-27)**
- D. Jesus didn’t quote the entire Old Testament to them and then explain how every specific word was specifically about him. That’s not what he was saying here. Instead, Jesus showed them how the Old Testament itself was ultimately written to lead people to Him by showing them the specific things that were directly about Him! Therefore, with full confidence and authority, we can say that when the New Testament tells us an Old Testament Scripture is directly about Jesus, it’s directly about Jesus. We can also confidently say that everything God revealed to the Old Testament writers and accomplished through the lives of the people in the Old Testament itself was ultimately intended to point us straight to who Christ is and what He came to accomplish! It’s why Jesus also said this,
- E. **37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. 39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (John 5:37-40)**
- F. The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 states it this way, **“All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”⁸**

The sixth vitally important question Venture’s statement of faith clarifies about the Bible has to do with its authority.

(6) What authority does the Bible have?

- A. **“The Bible is the final authority in everything the Church practices and teaches.”**
- B. The Westminster Confession of Faith states that the Bible is,
- C. **“The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined; and in whose**

⁸ <https://bfm.sbc.net/bfm2000/#i>

sentence we are to rest; can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.”⁹

- D. Paul wrote,
1. **9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8-9)**
 2. **16 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 competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16)**
- E. Finally, the writer of Hebrews stated, **“12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)**
- F. The point is that the standard with which everything must align, including my own life and motives, is the Bible. No man, including the Pope, nor any council of men, no matter how learned they may be, has the authority to declare something to be an absolute truth from God that is not clearly and purposefully taught in the Bible itself.
- G. This also means that I have no authority to contradict or alter any moral teaching or commandment that is clearly spelled out in God’s Word for the New Testament Church, nor invent or insert one that isn’t.
- H. Therefore, the effort of every believer should be to understand God’s Word for what God’s Word says it means and nothing else, which takes us to our last question,

Finally, the seventh vitally important question Venture’s statement of faith clarifies about the Bible is how we should read and understand it.

(7) How do we correctly read and understand it?

- A. **“Because the Bible is the Word of God, it must be properly understood and obeyed in its entirety.”**
- B. Similarly, the Westminster Confession of Faith states, **“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when**

⁹ <https://www.westminsterconfession.org/resources/confessional-standards/the-confession-of-faith-of-the-westminster-assembly-of-divines/>

there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”¹⁰

- C. A perfect example of this occurred in the book of Acts when a group of Jews in Berea heard Paul and Silas preach the Gospel. Look at Acts 17:10-11,
- D. **10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11)**
- E. They knew the Gospel Paul and Silas were preaching could only be valid if it matched up with what we now call the Old Testament said it would be. If the Bible “is” God’s Word, then the authority on how to interpret it must be the Bible itself, in that if I come to a conclusion that goes against what I read elsewhere, then my conclusion cannot be correct.
- F. This happens all the time with the Old Testament. People pick and choose rules that they believe everyone should obey from the Covenant God made with Moses called the Mosaic Law and forget that Christ fulfilled and replaced the Mosaic Law with a brand new and totally different Covenant! It’s not that the New Covenant in Christ doesn’t contain some of the same instructions, i.e., love God with all your heart, love your neighbors, don’t commit sexual immorality, etc. Rather, the authority on what and how the Holy Spirit will lead an individual child of God, as well as a local church, to do and not do, is not the Mosaic Law but the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and their authoritative explanation and application in the rest of the New Testament.
- G. Again, it’s key to remember what Peter wrote, **“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 Peter 1:20-21)**
- H. Therefore, the meaning and application of everything in the Bible is not up to me or anybody else, but the Bible itself, and thus, everything I claim the Bible teaches must stand on itself within the whole context of Scripture.

OK! So that’s a bunch of really important head knowledge, but what do we do with it?
Well,

¹⁰ <https://www.westminsterconfession.org/resources/confessional-standards/the-confession-of-faith-of-the-westminster-assembly-of-divines/>

CHALLENGE: The Bible, God's WORD, is completely and utterly useless to you if you don't learn it, believe it, and live by it!

Given that so many people in Venture are new to the Bible, here are five tips on how to start learning, believing, and living by God's Word—the Bible!

- (1)** Take notes in Venture's worship gatherings, and then use those notes to re-read and reflect on the passage that was preached.
- (2)** Get involved in a Life group because it gives you a chance to discuss God's Word and hear how God is using it in other people's lives!
- (3)** Add listening to the reading of God's Word to your routine. Listening was the only way most people in human history ever received it. You can listen to it for free at places like [www.ESV.org](http://www ESV.org). Try reading the passage and then listen to it while you read it.
- (4)** Study the book of Romans and then the Gospels. Romans serves as the ultimate commentary on the entire Bible. It explains all the essential teachings of the Bible, including how we should understand the Old Testament. If you understand Romans, you will be equipped to properly understand everything else, including the story of Jesus in the Gospels.
- (5)** Don't read to say you read the Bible; read to understand and be changed by it. Take time to reflect on what you read and then pray what you read for yourself and others. Learning and being transformed by the Bible is not a race or task; it's a life and a relationship!