



# **The Christian Life**

**Module 4**

***The Bible***

## MODULE FOUR

# *The Bible*

## INTRODUCTION

By now you have completed one-fourth of this course on the Christian life. We commend you for you are well on your way to receiving a solid, basic understanding of the many precious truths God has revealed through Jesus Christ.

The next two lessons are about the Bible. The first is a **General introduction to God's Word**, and the second is an in-depth lesson on how to study the Bible.

**Don't let up for one moment in your diligent study of this course.** The lessons on the Bible were written not only to acquaint you with the most fascinating book in the world, **but most importantly to enable you to personally mine the Bible** of its many treasures. So dig in! You'll be **glad** you did!

## 1. THE NATURE OF THE BIBLE

### STUDY 2 Timothy 3:16.

Plainly and simply, the Bible is **God's word to mankind**. The very first verse of Scripture starts out, "In the beginning God", (Genesis 1:1), and from that point on God unfolds before us **(1) a historical account of His dealings with man, (2) a manual on the way to salvation, and (3) an inspirational and practical guide to everyday Christian living.**

Let's consider the first six words of 2 Timothy 3:16. Paul writes, "All scripture is inspired by God." The English phrase "inspired by God" is one word in the Greek and literally means "God-breathed." Thus, Paul is unequivocally saying that God "breathed" the Scriptures upon men. **The Bible is not the product of the human mind. It is the work of God.** Quite often the Bible writers stated that what they wrote came directly from God.

-----

## SELF-STUDY #1

**STUDY Jeremiah 36:1-4, 1 Corinthians 14:37, and Revelation 1:1-3 and answer the following questions.**

- (a) What did Jeremiah dictate to Baruch? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) What was Paul writing to the Corinthian Christians? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (c) What is John's revelation? \_\_\_\_\_

(d) How did he receive it? \_\_\_\_\_

---

## The Old Testament

### STUDY Matthew 4:1-11 and Act 6 28:23.

Some liberal theologians and teachers of our day, even some who call themselves Christians, like to tear the Bible apart, especially the 39 books of the Old Testament, and dogmatically assert that it is merely an attempt to find God.

But Jesus, who is God's own Son, **upheld the Old Testament as the very word of God.** Never did He depreciate those ancient Scriptures. In fact, when He was tempted by the devil He simply yet prayerfully quoted the Old Testament to him. **(A good example to follow when you are tempted! Quote the truth of God's Word and watch Satan flee).**

The early Christians, who had no New Testament, used the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Paul, who freely quoted from the Old Testament, did not ascribe its many books to the words of men. Rather, he attributed them to the work of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25-27).

### STUDY 2 Peter 1:20-21.

The other writers of the New Testament also believed very strongly that the Old Testament was the inspired word of God. Peter warns us about carelessly interpreting prophecy because it is not man's writing, but rather the very words of the Holy Spirit. And in Hebrews 3:7-11 the writer quotes Psalm 95:7-11 and attributes the Psalm not to the human instrument who physically wrote it, but to the Holy Spirit who inspired it.

## The New Testament

### STUDY 2 Peter 3:15-16.

When Jesus' blood was shed on the Cross, a new covenant was initiated between God and man (see Matthew 26:26-28 and Hebrews 8:6-13). To preserve the history of Jesus and the words of God pertaining to the new covenant, God, through the Holy Spirit, inspired devout men, most of them apostles, to write the 27 books of the New Testament.

It did not take long for the early Christians to recognize that God was speaking to them through the new writings. **As early as 63 or 64 A.D. Peter called Paul's writing "Scripture."** And ever since the days of Peter and Paul, the New Testament has been received for what it claims to be - **God's word to mankind.**

## 2. HOW WE KNOW THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

### STUDY 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and Hebrews 4:12.

As we have seen, the Bible itself claims to be the Word of God. **But this is not only witness of its source of inspiration. Basically, there are six solid, external proofs that the Bible is God's word to man.** They are as follows:

(1) **Preservation:** The first words of Scripture were written over 3000 years ago, and the last book in the New Testament, Revelation, was recorded about 95 A.D. as you can see, the Bible is an **Old** book. Until the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century the bible had to be tediously reproduced by hand. One would think much of it would have been lost. **But God miraculously preserved it through devoted men who had been changed and renewed by its message.**

(2) **Unity:** Despite the fact that the Bible was written over a 1400-year period, there is an incredible unity from Genesis to Revelation. The same God of love is pictured throughout, continually calling mankind back to fellowship with Him. The more you study the Scriptures the more you will recognize and appreciate the unity of God's word. **No human agent could have produced it.**

(3) **Fulfilled prophecy:** Approximately one-fourth of Scripture is prophetic. Prophecy is found mostly in the Old Testament, but a portion of the New Testament is also prophetic. The amazing things about biblical prophecy is that many scriptures were not fulfilled until **several hundred years after they were prophesied!** (In our next topical discussion we will examine a few of the Old Testament prophecies which were fulfilled by Christ.) **Only a divine, eternal God could have inspired men to write accurate prophecies hundreds of years before their fulfilment.**

(4) **Archaeological discoveries:** Many liberal scholars have attacked the Bible by saying that it distorts and even invents history as well as facts and details of the various cultures it depicts. But time and time again the shovel of the archaeologist has verified the accounts of each of the biblical writers, thus giving credence to the truth the book contains.

(5) **Transformed Lives:** Undoubtedly the most convincing proof that the Bible is God's Word lies in the message it conveys, that Jesus Christ will make a new person out of all who believe in Him. Down through the centuries millions have been transformed by the power of Jesus Christ just as the Bible promises.

(6) **Personal Experience:** Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 that the Word of God was still at work in those who had believed in Jesus. **Today that very same Word is vibrantly working in your life.**

It matters not who denies that the Bible is God's Word. The greatest proof of all that the Bible is the inspired Word of God lies in its power to conform us to the image of Christ. **No other literature holds that same power.**

### 3. THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF THE BIBLE

#### **STUDY John 1:45 and 5:46.**

In lesson Two we discussed John's reference to Jesus as the "Word". It was pointed out that Jesus was called the "Word" because He is God's message to mankind.

Although Jesus did not appear on the earth until well into man's history. **Jesus has always been God's message.** Even the first book of the Bible, Genesis, contains references to Jesus. He is the ruler Jacob prophesies about (Genesis 49:10), and most Bible scholars also see Jesus in Genesis 3:15 as "her offspring" who shall destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), "strike your head."

**And don't forget that the New Testament writers tell us He was the Creator of Genesis 1 and 2** (see Lesson Two, topic 2, The Eternal Nature of Jesus Christ).

#### **STUDY 1 Peter 1:10-12.**

There are numerous prophecies about man's promised Redeemer, Jesus, scattered throughout the Old Testament. From Isaiah 52:13 to the end of the Chapter 53, for instance, there are **25 prophecies about Jesus, all but two of which were fulfilled by His life and death** (compare Isaiah 53:4 with Matthew 8:17). The remaining two will be fulfilled when He returns to earth.

One of the incredible prophecies about Jesus is that of the place of His birth. It was predicted by the prophet Micah, who lived in the time of Isaiah some **700 years before the birth of Jesus.** See Micah 5:2 and Mathew 2:3-6.

**The Bible truly is an amazing book.** And to use colloquial language, one could rightly say. **"The Bible is Jesus"**.

## 4. HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

### **STUDY Luke 21:33.**

The story of the ways in which God preserved His word over the centuries through His devoted followers is fascinating. The Bible was written over at least a 1400-year period. Nearly 2000 years have passed since the writings of the New Testament were completed. **And the Bible - miraculously - is still with us!**

How did it all happen? First, let's look at the Old Testament, and then we'll take a look at the New.

The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, was written in the fifth century B.C. It is believed that about that same time godly Jews verified our present 39 books as those which were truly inspired by God. Since that time the Old Testament has been faithfully copied by careful scribes.

### **Masoretic Text**

The earliest complete Hebrew text of the Old Testament in existence dates from the 9th century A.D. It was very carefully copied by devout Jews and is called the Masoretic Text. All translations of the Old Testament from the time of the King James Bible are based for the most part on this fine text.

### **Dead Sea Scrolls**

Many Jewish writings referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls have been discovered not too far from Jerusalem. Included were copies either in whole or in part of all the Old Testament books except Esther. Many non-biblical works were found as well. These writings are believed to have been done by a Jewish sect called the Essenes somewhere between 200 B.C and 70 A.D.

**The remarkable thing about the Dead Sea Scroll copies of the Old Testament books is that they are in almost 100% agreement with the Masoretic Text, produced nearly 1000 years later!** The few minor differences do not in any way change the truth God has conveyed to us.

### **Septuagint or LXX:**

Sometime around 250 B.C a group of 70 Hebrew scholars translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, which was rapidly becoming a universal language. In the time of Jesus, Greek was spoken by everyone and the LXX was the Old Testament version used even by the Jews. Most of the New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are from the Greek version and not the Hebrew.

Thus, since no language can be translated with exactness, some differences exist between the New Testament quotations and the original Old Testament verses. The same situation has occurred in translating Hebrew and Greek into English. Still, **God has preserved the truth of His Word despite some errors in copying and translating.** Considering the time and work involved, that is a quite a miracle.

### **The New Testament.**

Unlike the Old Testament, which is a collection of work written over a 1000-year period, the entire New Testament was written over a 60-year span between the death of Christ and the end of the first century.

Both the Gospel and the letters of the New Testament were passed from church to church in both the first and second centuries, copies were diligently and carefully reproduced and thus preserved.

In 397 A.D a church council convened at Carthage and our present 27 books were ratified as those which were inspired by God to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ.

### **Greek Manuscripts**

Believe it or not, over 5000 Greek manuscripts, **containing all or parts of the New Testament have been uncovered.** Unfortunately, the original writings of the apostles and disciples of Jesus have either been lost or destroyed. But we have several excellent complete copies of the New Testament from as early as the 4th century. Fragments from the Gospels of Mathew and John have been discovered from the second century, and copies of many of Paul's letters have been positively dated as written in the third century.

We can be grateful that faithful Christians stuck to their God-given task of copying the Scriptures even though they often worked in harsh conditions. It is not surprising that there are some differences in the many New Testament manuscripts, but, as in the Old Testament, we find that God has preserved the truth of His word.

## 5. WHY WE NEED THE BIBLE

### **STUDY John 1:17-18 and John 20:30-31.**

There are several reasons why God gave us the Bible. But most importantly, **“the Bible is Jesus,”** and Jesus is God’s way for man to reach Him and to have eternal life. **No other book tells us about the love and saving power of Jesus.**

### **STUDY Psalm 19:7-11 and Isaiah 55:8-9.**

There are many books from which we can study and learn about our world. We can study psychology, economics, science, or any other subject, and each of these has its place in helping us understand ourselves and our world.

But when we want to learn about spiritual things there is only one book, **God’s word, the Bible. Man cannot teach us spiritual truth, though some have tried.** God’s ways are foreign to man and it is only through the study of His word that we can become godly persons.

And the fascinating thing about the Bible is that while its main purpose is to teach us spiritual truth, the more you study it the better you will understand **psychology, economics, science, and any other subject which relates our everyday living.** For God’s Word is about life at the gut level where He wants to minister to us each and every day of our lives.

### **STUDY 2 Timothy 3:16-17.**

In the first few pages of this lesson we looked at the first six words of verse 16. To close out our study on the Bible we shall now look at the remainder of verse 16 and the following verse as well.

Paul writes that Scripture is, “useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.” The Bible is our infallible guide in conduct and belief. Many have strayed from faith in Jesus by believing the teachings of men rather than the teachings of the Bible. Even many who call themselves Christians do not teach the Bible but their own personal beliefs.

That’s why it is extremely important for you to become grounded in the Word of God. **When you know the Bible you cannot get involved in the traps of Satan.** Rather, you will find yourself, as Paul says in verse 17, “God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work”.

In the next lesson we will show you how you can develop good study habits which will enable you to become a competent **Bible** student thoroughly knowledgeable in the Word of God. For now, remember this one fact: **The Bible is the most important book you will ever read.**

## SELF-STUDY #2

1. What is the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Bible is man's attempt to find God. T ( ) F ( )
3. The early Christians knew that the writings of the Apostles were inspired by God. T ( ) F ( )
4. The Bible is a collection of many books which sometimes do not harmonise. T ( ) F ( )
5. Some prophecies were written hundreds of years before their fulfilment. T ( ) F ( )
6. What are the two greatest proofs that the Bible is the inspired Word of God? (2 answers).
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Both Moses (in the law) and the Old Testament prophets wrote about Jesus. T ( ) F ( )
8. Jesus is prophesied in the Old Testament as man's Redeemer. T ( ) F ( )
9. Many of the ancient Jews argued among themselves as to which Old Testament books were authentically from God. T ( ) F ( )
10. What are the Dead Sea Scrolls? (2 answers)
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_
11. Jesus and the Apostles usually quoted from the Greek version of the Old Testament. T ( ) F ( )
12. Parts of copies of the Greek New Testament have been dated as early as the second century. T ( ) F ( )
13. What is the most important reason for studying the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. We can learn only spiritual truths from the Bible. T ( ) F ( )
15. It is important that we know what the Bible says because it is our only infallible guide. T ( ) F ( )

## **ANSWERS TO SELF-STUDY #1**

- (a) All the prophecies (messages) of the Lord.
- (b) A command from the Lord.
- (c) A revelation from Jesus Christ.
- (d) God gave it to John through an angel.

## **ANSWERS TO SELF-STUDY #2**

- 1. God's Word to mankind
- 2. F
- 3. T
- 4. F
- 5. T
- 6. (a) Transformed lives  
(b) Personal experience,  
OR (if you have one of above).  
(c) Fulfilled prophecy.
- 7. T
- 8. T
- 9. F
- 10. (a) Copies of Old Testament books  
(b) Non biblical writings
- 11. T
- 12. T
- 13. It tells us about Jesus Christ.
- 14. F
- 15. T