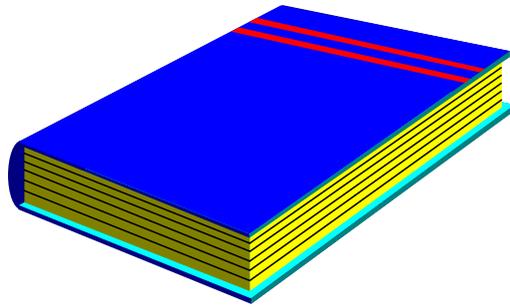


THEWORD

BIBLE TRAINING COURSE FOR LEADERS



FIRM FOUNDATIONS COURSE

PARTTWO

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. (2 Timothy 3:16)

The object of this study is

TO DISCOVER AND PROVE:-

The Bible is fully trustworthy as the only authority upon which to base the Christian life and doctrine.

On completion of this study you will have:-

- Established the reliability of the Bible
 - Know the practical effects of the Bible in the life of a Christian
 - Love God's Word more
 - Will have confidence in using the Bible as a Foundation for your life
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NOTES

There are four practical aspects to these courses: exercises, Bible reading, learning and questions. The following notes are for your guidance:-

1. **Exercises** are to be written in your own words and returned to the Course Administrator through whom this course was given to you or returned to the address below.
2. **Bible Reading** is to be done at the point of the course where you are asked to read. Do not just read the passage but meditate upon it before continuing.
3. **Learning.** These are usually short passages of the Bible for you to learn so that you are able to speak them without reference to the Bible.
4. **Questions** are listed at the end of each study and are to be answered when you are satisfied that you have completed the study. Your answers are also to be sent back to the Course Administrator or posted to the address below.

Once you have completed the work you can e-mail it to stangain@btinternet.com for assessment. On successful completion of the whole course a certificate will be sent to you.

If you were given this course by your Course Administrator then return your work only to him. If this course came to you direct from London then please post your work to:-

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The Bible is God's Written Word

At the end of our study on “The Foundations of the Christian Faith” we established that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh and the Bible is The Word of God in written form. It is fundamental to any believer to know that we can base our life on the Bible. In 1 John 4:1 we are told to “test every spirit, whether they are of God” One way that we are able to do this is by measuring what we see, hear and do by the Bible. If it is in agreement with the Word of God then we know that we can accept it.

Exercise 1. There are many ways to “test every spirit”. One is by the Word of God. Write of other ways in which we can make this test. Give examples for your answers.

Many theologians today only accept the Bible as far as their own understanding. One reason for this is that there are many men who become a leader in the church because they are looking for work and not because they are called of God. Some are not born again (unregenerate). For them the Bible is just another book and they do not accept the Authority that it should have in their lives. If the Bible is to be limited by the size of our understanding then it is small indeed. God is bigger than our understanding and so is His Word.

The Attitude of Jesus towards the Scriptures

If we are disciples of Jesus who commands us to follow Him, then a good starting point in our study is to see what He said and how He acted towards the Scriptures. At this stage I use the term “Scriptures” because at the time of Jesus the New Testament (and therefore the whole Bible as we now have it) was not written.

Read carefully John 10:34-36 (and Psalm 82)

This passage throws light on Jesus' attitude towards the Old Testament. He uses two expressions to refer to the Old Testament and links them as being one:-

Firstly in this passage which quotes from Psalm 82 Jesus refers to the writings as the Word of God. He thus is showing that this Psalm, although written by a man named Asaph, actually has it's origin with God. In the writing of the Bible many men have been used but they have only been channels for God to communicate through them.

Secondly Jesus refers to the same writing as “The Scripture”. The meaning of the word Scripture is literally “that which is written”. In this short passage Jesus refers to the Old Testament as “your Law”, “the Word of God” and “Scripture”. In this way Jesus indicates that the Bible is totally the Word of God and has Authority in our lives.

Note: If the Scriptures are “that which is written” it would indicate that the Bible is not the full revelation of the wisdom of God, nor his total knowledge, but is that part which He has chosen to give to us for our Christian life here on earth. It is not a record of every word and prophecy that has ever been given by Him to man. (The Bible itself refers to prophecies that are not recorded - see Jude verses 14-15)

Jesus in this passage also says “that Scripture cannot be broken”. This, then, does not only confirm it to us as the Word of God but also confirms every claim that it has full and Divine Authority.

Exercise 2. Read the account of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1-11. In this passage we see how Jesus used the AUTHORITY of the Word of God

1. Three times Jesus used the words “It is written...” - From where in the Bible was Jesus quoting when he used Scripture?
2. What can we learn from the way that Jesus used Scripture in this confrontation with Satan?
3. Jesus was using Scripture with authority on this occasion. On what occasions are we able to use the authority of Scripture in our lives? Give examples.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit

The purpose of the Bible is the spiritual good of man - revealing the nature and consequences of sin and the way of deliverance from sin and its' consequences through faith in Jesus Christ. If Jesus affirms the reliability and infallibility (not able to be wrong) and authority of the Bible then we have a basis for trusting it. The apostle Paul also affirms the same claims when writing to Timothy:-

You have already learned 2 Timothy 3:16 but I repeat it here:-

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,
for reproof, for correction for instruction in righteousness”

The Greek word used for the English word “inspiration” could also be interpreted as “Breathed by God” This word is **THEOPNEUSTOS**. It is made up of two smaller words:-

THEOS - God ~ **PNEO** - To breathe

The second part of this word is the root of the word which is used to talk of The Holy Spirit:- **PNEUMA**. The word “Spirit” is therefore directly connected to the word “Inspiration”. So the Holy Spirit of God was the invisible, infallible breath of God that directed the writers of the Bible.

The apostle Peter states this even more plainly:-

“No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,”

Learn 2 Peter 1:20-21

In other words, in no circumstances does the message of revelation of the Bible begin with man but **always** with God.

There is another verse from the Old Testament which also applies the same truth. In Psalm 12:6 we have some wonderful teaching on this subject. The verse is written below but it is good for you to also **Learn** it.

“The words of the Lord are pure words.
Like silver tried in a furnace of earth,
Purified seven times.”

As we proceed with our studies through this course we shall see that there are many occasions where pictures and stories are used to illustrate certain points that the Lord wishes to make. When Jesus was teaching he often told stories or parables to help people understand His message. The written Word of God also does this. Certain words are used to represent a certain meaning or idea.

In this passage, God, by inspiring David through the Holy Spirit, gave an illustration using four words that have a special meaning. These are:-

1. **Silver** - which represents the Word of God through a human channel
2. **Earth** - represents the human being through whom the word comes
3. **Fire** - in the furnace is for the Holy Spirit which ensures purity
4. **Seven** - always represents perfection in Scripture

Exercise 3. Using the word meanings given above:-

1. What do you think that God is telling us about the accuracy of the Bible?
2. What is the meaning and purpose of fire in the following passages?
 - a) Acts 2:1-4
 - b) 2 Peter 3:10
 - c) 1 Corinthians 3:11-15
 - d) Isaiah 6:1-7

We are building up a picture of the complete accuracy of the Bible given by God; given through man; perfected by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is Eternal and Authoritative

It is hard to find a man in the bible who understood the power and the value and the authority of the Word of God more than King David. He is the author of Psalm 119 which is the longest of the Psalms and in fact the longest chapter in the Bible. It is no coincidence that the longest chapter should be written in praise of the Scriptures. Every verse is devoted to God's Word.

Learn Psalm 119 verses 89 and 160.

“Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven”. Verse 89

“The whole of Your word is truth, and every one of your righteous judgements endures forever”. Verse 160

The Bible is not limited by time. Although there was a time when each book was given to man by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit it contains the eternal mind and counsel of God. It existed before the beginning of creation (John chapter 1) and will never pass away (Matthew 24:35).

Exercise 4. Many times Jesus referred to Scripture in His life. Read the gospel of Matthew and write out every scripture that is recorded that was used by Jesus that you find recorded. (Note: this exercise will take some time, but one of the purposes of this course is that you will become more and more familiar with the Word of God.)

Up to this point in the study we have concentrated on the Old Testament and what the New Testament has to say about the Old (or the Scriptures). Now we will move on to see that the New Testament does not stand alone from the Old Testament but is in fact the fulfilment of it. In Matthew chapter 5:17-18 Jesus says:-

“Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter, nor will the least stroke of a pen by any means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

We will look more closely at the depth of meaning of the fulfilment of the law in the life of the Christian in Part 5 of this course “Law and Grace”. At this stage let us consider how Scripture was fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

Read Luke Chapter 24. In this passage you find two separate references of how the Old Testament found its fulfilment in the life of Jesus.

..... “Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Verse 27)

.....”These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me.” (verse 44)

The beginning of the ministry of Jesus as recorded in Matthew looks forward to the fulfilment of the Old Testament. The last words before the end of His earthly ministry as recorded in Luke are a statement of the fulfilment of the Old Testament. Therefore the life of Jesus as shown in the Gospels is a record of the fulfilment of the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.

Learn Romans 6: 14-15.

“Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!”

If the life of Jesus is a fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms it should not be difficult to look at the life of Jesus and find these fulfilments. There are some scholars that believe that they can find more than 600 direct fulfilments of the Old Testament in His life. We will not be that detailed but will illustrate a few here.

Read the following verses and you will find the stated fulfilment of prophecy:-

Isaiah 7:14	He was born of a virgin
Isaiah 61:11	His anointing by the Holy Spirit
Psalms 41:9	His betrayal by a friend
Numbers 9:12	The unbroken bones of the Passover sacrifice
Zechariah 12:10	They pierced His side with a sword

Exercise 5 Having been shown the above illustrations of the fulfilment of Scripture in the life of Jesus what further examples can you find? Give at least ten and no more than twenty examples. (A reading of Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and the gospel of Matthew will be helpful)

It is reasonable to say that the entire earthly life of Jesus from His birth to His resurrection and ascension was controlled and directed in every respect and at every stage by the absolute authority of the Word of God.

(FOR YOUR OWN REFLECTION AND NOT FOR SUBMISSION TO YOUR COURSE ADMINISTRATOR. **Jesus said “As the Father gave me commandment, so I do.” How much of what you do and say is as the Father has given commandment and how much is of your own strength and idea and imagination. How can you learn more to do what the Father has commanded?)**

The authority of the Old Testament is established by the life and actions and words of Jesus. The New Testament is similarly established by His life. It is not possible to separate the two. The interpretation of the Old Testament can only be properly established through the life of Jesus. His fulfilment is the only true interpretation. In

the same way the understanding of the New Testament can only be properly achieved if set on the foundation of the Old Testament. The keys to understanding the foundational principles of the Christian life are only fully understood through their fulfilment in Christ. Therefore we see again this unique and unbreakable relationship between The Bible as the written Word of God and Jesus the Living Word of God. It is impossible to escape from this foundational truth.

The Practical Effects of God's Word

Having set a biblical foundation for the reliability of God's Word as an immovable foundation upon which to build a Christian life, let us move on to study a little about the practical effects of God's Word in those who receive it.

Learn Hebrews Chapter 4:12

Jesus said "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63)

The Apostle Paul wrote "When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

These three passages all indicate that there is a working of the Word in our lives. It is not like a story book. The Word is living and powerful; it is spirit; it is life; it effectively works in you. It is our response to the Word that determines the effectiveness of it in our lives. 1 Corinthians 1:18 tells us that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. It is the same message but the effect depends on the response - Foolishness or power!

This study cannot look in depth at all the practical benefits of the Word of God in our lives when it is correctly applied but we will look at each one briefly. You may be encouraged to pursue your own detailed study of these effects.

Exercise 6. Each of the following numbered sections begins with a verse of the Word of God. Learn each verse as a foundation for your life. It is recommended that you learn one verse each day rather than all in one day. In this way you can meditate on each verse as its power works in you by faith. Write down and send to your Course Administrator any new light that you receive as you meditate on these benefits

1. Faith

**"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."
(Romans 10:17)**

There are three parts to the working of faith. Firstly God's Word, then hearing and finally faith. Faith does not come directly from God's Word but through hearing

God's word. That is why it is so important to read it; to study it; to meditate upon it; to listen to it preached. This will produce faith. It is important to understand that the production of faith takes a certain time. It is a process initiated in the soul by the word of God. This is why there is so little faith in much of the church today. Everything is expected to be immediate.

There are two dangers that entrap the Christian and do not allow faith to grow. Firstly there is the danger of hearing God's Word but not putting it into practice. The Word of God will not produce faith in the life of a Christian who merely expects to know the Word without responding to it by doing what it says. The second danger is to try to put into effect a faith that is not based on the Word of God but upon one's own hopes, dreams and desires.

Scriptural faith is believing that God means what He says and will do what He says. Mary, the mother of Jesus expressed it in this way: "Let it be to me according to your Word." (Luke 1:38)

2. New Birth

"You have been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23)

This is probably the most important effect of the application of the Word of God. "How will they hear without a preacher?" There is a principle which you can see outworked in the natural world that is copied in the spiritual world. Whatever seed is sown, the fruit will carry the nature of that seed. Maize seed produce maize; orange seed produces oranges etc. God's incorruptible seed produces incorruption. The seed of the imperishable Word of God produces in the life of the believer, when received by faith, a life that is imperishable, divine and eternal.

This new birth is the life of God himself coming into the human soul through His Word. The apostle John writes it this way:-

"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin because he has been born of God." 1 John 3:8

This is not a doctrine of sinless perfection that says that a born again believer cannot sin. 1 John 1:8-9 suggests that we do sin and that we have a remedy for such sin. However, the born again believer has planted within himself the incorruptible seed that gives him the possibility of leading a life of complete victory over sin. The unregenerate man has no alternative but to commit sin. He is a slave to his fallen nature and "all his righteous acts are like filthy rags". We will look at this closer in study 5 - Law and Grace.

"Of His own will, He brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." James 1:18

3. Spiritual Food

**Solid food belongs to those who are mature; for those who by practice have trained themselves to discern both good and evil”
(Hebrews 5:14)**

Once again we can use a natural principle to illustrate a spiritual truth. Everyone from the newest baby to the oldest man needs food for energy, health and strength. Just as food is for the body so the word of God is for the soul and spirit.

The bible shows itself to be nourishment in three separate stages:-

1) For the new believer - spiritual milk. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking, as new-born babies desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.” (1 Petr 2:1-2). Milk can very easily be turned sour if brought into contact with impurity. Let the pure Word of God remain pure by getting rid of malice, guile, hypocrisy etc.

2) For the growing believer - bread. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4). Just as in many parts of the world bread (or potato or rice etc.) is the main daily food of the diet so the Word of God is to be our main daily food. Note that the passage says every word. We are not just to pick and choose our favourite passages but to become familiar with the whole of God’s Word.

3) For the mature man - solid food. The writer to the Hebrews rebukes the church for their lack of maturity. “By this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone again to teach you the first principles of the scriptures..... solid food belongs to those who are mature.” (Hebrews 5:12-14). This passage tells us that Christian maturity comes from constant reading, feeding and meditation on the Word of God.

4. Physical Healing

“He sent forth His Word and healed them and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness. (Psalm 107:20-21)

This complex subject will form a more detailed study in another course. At this point we will see that we not only receive healing for our souls and spirits from the word of God but physical healing also. God sent forth His healing Word but we are also told in Isaiah 55:11 that “My Word that goes forth from My mouth shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

In this foundational course it is sufficient to discover that physical healing comes from God’s Word. Let this be your meditation.

“My son, give attention to My Words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those that find them and health to all their flesh.”
(Proverbs 4:20-22)

5. Mental Understanding and Light

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)

Formal worldly education has value for this world but separated from the light of God’s Word can be very dangerous. God’s Word however gives understanding to those things that man could not discover for himself - the reality of God in creation; the nature of redemption; the purpose of life and living; the true nature of man; the origin and destiny of man..... It is the Word of God that gives enlightenment to these truths.

“The entrance of Your Words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (Psalm 119:130)

6. Victory over Sin.

“Your Word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11)

The answer to such questions as “Is it right to dance?” “Is it wrong to have more than one wife?” should not be answered according to social practice, tribal customs or even church traditions. They should be answered by the application and interpretation of God’s Word. If His Word is hidden as a treasure in our hearts we will have the light to know what the correct action to take is. This subject will also form a separate future study.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Collossians 3:17)

7. Victory over Satan

“And they (Christians) overcame him (satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” (Revelation 12:10)

Yet another subject for a later full study. God’s Word is a vital weapon in Christian warfare against satan. In Ephesians 6 it is the only piece of the armour of God that is not defensive. We need a thorough knowledge of God’s word if we are to be able to successfully repel the enemy’s attacks. To complete these meditations reflect on the use of the Word of God by Jesus when tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11)
