

"Inspired"

When the Bible speaks of being inspired, it means that it was breathed out by God. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to explore the inspiration of the Bible.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We search the Bible, because we know that the Bible provides the one, true and trustworthy source of God's wisdom and instructions. We go to the Word of God, because it's the only way to eternal life. Some modern-day prophets claim God spoke to them but they offer no proof of inspiration. We can, however, trust the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Occasionally someone speaks of a book being inspirational, meaning the book had a positive impact on their thinking and lives. I love inspirational books like *Tom Sawyer* or Greg Tidwell's new book, *The Effective Edge*. You pick 'em up, and they're so good you can't put them down. You read them with a smile and appreciation. But being inspirational isn't the same as being inspired of God. While one can learn a whole lot from an inspirational book, in the end it's still coming from a human being. But when the Bible speaks of being inspired, it means that it came from God Himself; that God breathed it out to us and for us.

One of my teachers and a translator of the New Testament, Hugo McCord said, "The Bible was given by inspiration of God as the Holy Spirit worked within select men, revealing to them the thoughts of God and enabling them to use the appropriate words to communicate divine truth without error. God put the Holy Spirit into the writers of the Bible and, through Him, guided them in the writing of the Bible. Thus 'inspiration' may be defined as the process by which God breathed His Spirit into men, enabling them to receive and to communicate divine truth without error. Oh, the Bible is God speaking!" Well, Brother McCord is right! And we must pay attention to God's word.

Now if you want to study more about inspiration and other things regarding the Bible, we have this free little booklet call "Give Me the Bible." It's free for the asking. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. And that number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org. The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 2 Peter 1 verses 16 to 21, and then we'll study the inspiration of Scripture.

Our reading today comes from 2 Peter, chapter 1, verses 16 to 21. "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased' — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." That's from the book of 2 Peter. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful that You have made

the word more sure, that the Bible is inspired and that men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. And Father help us to pay attention, and help us to be good hearers of Your word. In Jesus name, Amen!

If we wish to understand the idea of inspiration, we must go to the Scriptures themselves. You know the Bible actually has a lot to say about inspiration. There are three passages in the New Testament that are especially valuable.

First, Paul said in I Corinthians 2 verses 10 to 13, "these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual." Paul here argues that what he taught came from God through the Holy Spirit, not through human wisdom. He didn't borrow these things from the worldly religions or the Jewish rabbis; you see, the Holy Spirit himself was their source.

Second, Paul said in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 16 to 17, that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." When Paul says "all scripture," he unquestionably is referring to the Old Testament but not exclusively. You see, Paul had earlier given a definition of Scripture that included passages in the New Testament.

Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5 and verse 18, "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" Now here in this passage Paul quoted from both the Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 25 and verse 4 and Luke 10 and verse 7) and he called both of them Scripture. While Paul spoke of the "sacred writings" or "Holy Scriptures" in 2 Timothy 3 and verse 15 referring to what Timothy learned as a child, Paul speaks of "all" Scripture in chapter 3 verse 16. The use of the word "all" suggests that Paul understood clearly that there was more to the inspired Scriptures than merely the Old Testament. Furthermore, Paul said what he wrote came from God and had God's authority. He told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 37, that "the things that I am writing to you are a command of the Lord."

Third, Peter said in 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 20 and 21, "knowing this first, that 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." Prophecy didn't come by an act of human will, but men of God spoke as the Holy Spirit moved them. The phrase "of one's own interpretation" doesn't refer to how men today interpret or understand Scripture, but how the prophets delivered it. While false prophets set forth their own ideas, the Holy Spirit moved the men of God to speak what He wanted to be said.

The Lord God spoke through men not only with their words but also through their lives. One can hardly read the Psalms without also wanting to look closely into the life of David. One can hardly read the book of Philippians about joy and not remember how Paul was imprisoned. One can hardly read of Hosea's struggles with an unfaithful wife and not see how God was revealing His own heart and His own love to an unfaithful Israel. God moved and spoke through His servants.

Now the Old Testament repeatedly claims to be from God. God told Moses to write the commandments of the Lord in a book in Exodus 34 and verse 27. The Old Testament repeats hundreds

of times such expressions as “The Lord says,” or “thus says the Lord,” or “the word of God came saying....” Jesus called the Law of Moses the “word of God” in Matthew 15 and verse 6. Scholars estimate that there are over 2,600 such claims that Scripture is God’s word.

David said in 2 Samuel 23 and verse 2, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.” God said to Isaiah, “I have put My words in your mouth” (Isaiah 51 and verse 6). The Lord told Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1 and verse 7) and “Because you have spoken this word, Behold (that is God speaking), I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them” (Jeremiah 5 and verse 14). God made His will known by testifying through the prophets according to 2 Chronicles 24 verse 20. The clear testimony of the prophets and the writers of the New Testament was that the teaching of the Old Testament came from God.

Now while the Old Testament sometimes designates a human speaker or author to a passage, the New Testament attributes those same words to God. For instance, Psalm 2 verses 1 to 2 is attributed to David, but Peter claimed that this verse came “by the Holy Spirit” in Acts 5 verses 25 and 26. When the psalmist said in Psalm 95 and verse 7, that the Hebrew writer says the same verse came by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 3 and verse 7. What the sons of Korah wrote in Psalm 45 and verse 6 and an unknown Psalmist said in Psalm 102 verses 25, and verse 27, well the New Testament attributes these things to God in the book of Hebrews chapter 1 verses 8 to 12. You see, God speaks through Scripture, so that one may easily recognize that whatever the Scripture instruct us, the Lord is actually behind those instructions.

The New Testament views the entire Old Testament as ‘the oracles of God’ (Romans 3 and verse 2). Christ and his apostles quote Old Testament texts, not merely as what Moses, David or Isaiah said but also as what God said through these men. Now the idea of God speaking and the idea of Scripture are interchangeable in the Bible. For instance, Paul refers to God’s verbal promise to Abraham as words which the Scripture spoke to him in Galatians 3 and verse 8. This shows how completely that Paul equated the statements of Scripture with the utterances of God.

The New Testament likewise claims inspiration for itself. Jesus, you’ll remember, claimed that His words were not His own but came from His Father in John 7 verses 16 to 17. Jesus explained in John 12 verses 49 to 50, “For I did not speak on My own initiative (that is, that I did not think it up on my own), but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. (And then he said) I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

Now Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit would inspire their messages and would defend them before authorities (in the book of Luke chapter 12, verses 11 to 12); also, the Spirit will teach them what to speak and remind them of Jesus’ words (in John 14 and verse 26); and the Spirit of truth will guide them into all truth (John 16 and verse 13). Now, according to Jesus the Holy Spirit’s function was to reveal to the apostles the truth that was given to Him by the Father.

So, when Paul wrote to the various churches, he argued that what he wrote was indeed “the commandment of the Lord” (I Corinthians 14 and verse 13). Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians, because they “received the word of God which you heard from us, and you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe” (I Thessalonians 2 and verse 13). Again in Galatians chapter 1 verses 11 to 12 Paul said, “For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

We should look at Scripture the way that Jesus did. When Jesus relied solely upon the Hebrew Scriptures as the basis of authority for those under the Law, He looked at them as God's word. Christ never referred to those extra-Biblical literature, those books of the day, but He candidly rejected the Jewish traditions that contradicted the Scripture in the book of Matthew 15 and Mark chapter 7. He didn't want those traditions. For Jesus Scripture is enduring. When Jesus says, "It is written," He means that what has been written is still written and still in force. Jesus shows the enduring nature of Scripture with such statements as: "Have you not read...?" (Matthew 21 verse 16; or Mark 12:10) or "You do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matthew 22 and verse 29). You see, what God said through Moses and the prophets was still true even hundreds of years later in the days of Jesus Christ.

Jesus believed every part of Scripture is worthy of our accepting. In Luke 24 verses 44 to 45, He speaks of the law and the prophets and the writings. In Matthew 23 and verses 34 to 36, there the Lord speaks of the first and the last martyrs in the Bible (that is "from Abel to Zechariah"). Well this is a reference from Genesis to Chronicles, the first and last books of the Hebrew Bible.

When Jesus interpreted Scripture, he commonly used the literal method (according to Matthew 12 and verse 40), considering the events of the Old Testament, like Jonah being in the belly of the great fish for three days, so he would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. So He looked at those things as historical. Jesus used the punishment of Lot's wife as a means to warn his disciples not to turn back (Luke 17 and verse 32). You see, there is simply no evidence that He ever regarded the creation, the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, or any other story of the Bible as some myth or a fable.

Jesus said in John 18 and verse 37, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Well what does Jesus have to gain by dealing with myths or fables? Nothing! But He has a great deal to lose by presenting inventions of men as fact. Jesus frequently corrected erroneous religious teaching when he found it. He was indeed committed to the truth. So, what did He have to say about the authenticity of the Genesis account of creation, of the flood, of Jonah's big fish, or of Daniel's writing of the book of Daniel? Well surely, he was aware of these things. You see what Jesus does is He underscores the truthfulness of the Genesis account of creation when He referred to the "beginning" of creation as the time when a man and a woman were created and joined together by God in marriage. You remember Jesus said, "But from the beginning of the creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10 verses 6 to 9). By quoting from Genesis, Jesus acknowledged its authority and truthfulness. By using the words "What God has joined together..." He recognized God to be the author of these Genesis writings.

For Jesus, all Scripture is utterly true and trustworthy. He said in John 10 verse 35, that "Scripture cannot be broken." And so, Jesus is arguing that Scripture is both authoritative and reliable. If the Son of God, who has lived through all eternity and witnessed all the events of the Old Testament regards them as true and utterly trustworthy, what need have we of further witnesses? We too can believe every word of every sentence of every verse of every chapter of every book is inspired of God and utterly trustworthy. Let's pray together. Father, we're so grateful for Your love and so grateful for all that You have done for us. And Father, we pray that as we study Your word, that we'll recognize that it came from You. And Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Whether the Bible arose from men alone or whether God inspired it is perhaps the most crucial question of our time. Some are asking whether the Bible is verbally inspired and whether it is inerrant. Some believe the Bible to be inspired of God but say it contains flaws and contradictions. They say the Bible is infallible in its essential message pertaining to our salvation but contains mistakes in its details. If the Bible is merely human, arising from myths and legends, it has no authority in our lives and should be granted no greater honor than any other ancient literature. On the other hand, if the Bible is from the one true and living God as it claims, then it possesses unconditional, divine authority over us.

Now since the Bible is from God and accurately transmitted to us, then we may surely trust every letter of every word, every word of every sentence, every sentence of every verse, every verse of every chapter, and every chapter of every book. And we regard its promises to be true, its commands to us to be binding, its approved examples as a light to our path, its implications to be truth indeed, and its warnings and admonitions to be taken to heart. This is no ordinary book, the Bible; there is none like it in all history. It is God's Word.

Why do I believe the Bible? Because it accurately predicts the future in the most specific terms. The prophecies of the Messiah, the Lord's prediction of His own death and resurrection, and the Lord's prediction of the fall of Jerusalem provide unquestionable evidence that the words of Scripture come from God Himself. No other book in all history has so many specific prophecies that have come to be true. And only God can see the future, and only God could give us this book. Oh, give me the Bible, because it is inspired of God!

Well we hope that today's study about the Bible has stirred you to consider your soul. We're offering this little book, Give Me the Bible, it's free. If you want a printed copy, or if you want a CD of this message and you live in the United States mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches, perhaps one in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you write, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you to get to heaven.

Please get involved with a church of Christ in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.