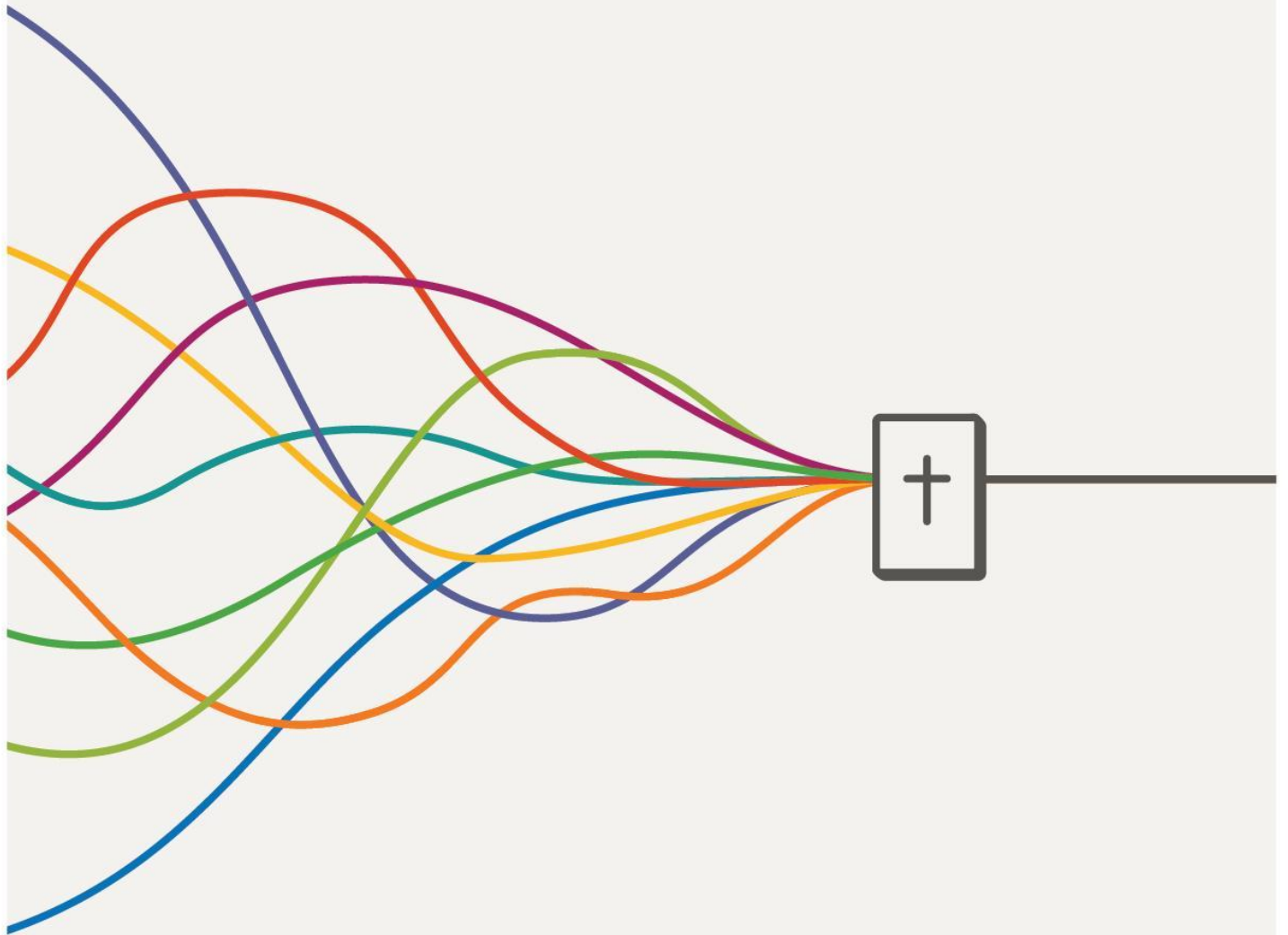




truth :
stability
in a world
of chaos

Truth

Stability in a World of Chaos

September 2023

Introduction

What is our hope and stability in a world that is constantly shifting and changing? How do we make sense of a world of chaos? Which way is up and which is down and how do we know what is true?

One book has been printed in more languages than any other and has been more widely sold and read than any other. Yes, it's a fact; the Bible is consistently the best-selling and most widely read book of all time! This book also makes claims about itself that set it apart from any other book. The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God. It claims to be the very words of the Creator God. And it is inseparable from the Triune God! We see this reflected through Jesus being referred to as the "Word," the second person of the Trinity, who is in intimate fellowship with God the Father throughout all eternity. This truth was proclaimed as the Apostle John introduced his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Apostle Paul also professed, "All Scripture is breathed out by God..." (2 Timothy 3:16a). The entire Bible was recorded by human authors under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if Jesus is God, if the Bible is God's Word, then we can and must base our lives on what the Bible says. We can only find stability and hope in a shifting world in the words of God. We can only make sense of a world of chaos through understanding the Word of God.

The Bible is our authority because it is the very words of God who is our authority, our King and Creator. The Bible is inerrant because God knows all things and He does not lie. The Bible is clear and understandable because God desires that people know and worship Him. The Bible is sufficient because ultimately we all need God.

We want you to be confident in the Bible and in the God of the Bible so that you will live with hope and trust in God in the midst of the chaos of the world. We want you to be able to point others to trust in Christ Jesus and the Living Word of God.

Schedule

September 3 – Church in the Park (10:30 service only) – The Authority of the Bible

September 10 – The Inerrancy and Infallibility of the Bible

September 17 – The Clarity of the Bible

September 24 – The Sufficiency of the Bible

*We are using the book *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem as an outline and for some of the definitions in this growth guide.

Week 1 – Authority and Inerrancy

*The Bible is God's Word; therefore, the Bible is our authority
and it is perfect and without error.*

This lesson prepares for sermons on September 3 and September 10. Meet with your Growth Group to discuss September 10-16.

Definitions

AUTHORITY of Scripture

The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.
(Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 73)

INERRANCY of Scripture

The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. (Grudem, p. 90).

Launching Question

What questions do you have about the authority or inerrancy of Scripture that make you less confident to talk about the Bible with those who do not believe it?

2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21

1. What do you learn about Scripture from these two passages?

1 Corinthians 2:12-14, John 10:27

2. What is true of those people who understand that the Bible contains the words of God?

Self-Attesting

"Thus the words of Scripture are 'self-attesting'. They cannot be 'proved' to be God's words by appeal to any higher authority. For if an appeal to some higher authority (say, historical accuracy or logical consistency) were used to prove that the Bible is God's Word, then the Bible itself would not be our highest or absolute authority: it would be subordinate in authority to the thing to which we appealed to prove it to be God's Word. If we ultimately appeal to human reason, or to logic, or to historical accuracy, or to scientific truth, as the authority by which Scripture is shown to be God's words, then we have assumed the thing to which we appealed to be a higher authority than God's words and one that is more true or more reliable." (Grudem, p. 78)

*This means that the most reliable way to prove that the Bible is the Word of God is through what the Bible itself says. Also, as you seek to know who Jesus is through the Bible and you begin to believe in Him as Lord and Savior, you must accept what He says about the Bible being God's Word.

Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18, Numbers 23:19

3. Because Scripture is the Word of God, it reflects God's character. What do you see about God in these three passages and what does it tell us about Scripture?

Psalms 19:7-11

4. What do you see about the Bible from these verses?

Inerrancy of the Bible

- The Bible is inerrant and still speaks in the ordinary language of everyday speech. For example, the Bible can say that 5,000 men ate and were filled in John 6 even if there were 5,002 men or 4,996 men. The writer in the ancient context was not expected to give a precise numerical count in these accounts.
- The Bible is inerrant not only in matters of faith and practice, but in all things about which it speaks.
- We have a high level of confidence in what the original manuscripts said even though we do not have the original manuscripts. Any copying errors are able to be identified as we compare various copies of the original manuscripts.
- There are challenges in understanding passages that seem to contradict or have some kind of error present. However, careful study of these situations provides us with answers to each of these “problem passages.”

Isaiah 55:6-11, Job 42:2

5. Another aspect of the Bible is that it is infallible. One definition of infallible is that God’s Word always does what God means it to do. What do you learn about God in these passages?

Discussion Questions

6. What passages or truths give you the most confidence that the Bible is truly the Word of God?
7. What aspects of the Bible being without error are most helpful to you?

8. If God's Word is infallible and always effective, how should we think about what God has said?

Application

9. How do you want to grow in submitting to the authority of the Bible in your life?
10. What areas of your thinking or living need to be refined and directed by God's Word (especially because God's Word is without error and always accomplishes the purposes He ordains)?

Prayer Requests/Sermon Notes

Week 2 – Clarity

The Bible is written by God to be understood and obeyed by His people through faith and the help of the Holy Spirit.

This lesson prepares for the sermon on clarity on September 17; discuss with your Growth Group September 17-23.

Definition

CLARITY of Scripture

The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it. (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 108)

Launching Question

What do you think most often causes people to not understand what the Bible means?

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Psalm 1:2-3

1. What do these verses show us about how understandable the Bible is for ordinary people?

Clarity

Jesus often said "Have you not read..." to those he was teaching or debating with. He never said, "I can see why you don't understand that issue because it is very confusing." He implied it is clear what the Scripture says on that topic (Matthew 12:3, 19:14 and many other places). Most of the New Testament epistles are written to the whole congregation, not just the leaders. The assumption is that the whole church, Jew and Gentile, would be able to understand what is written.

1 Corinthians 2:14, John 5:37-40

2. What causes people not to understand the revelation of God, according to these two passages?

Overcoming Spiritual Blindness and Rebellion

"Thus, although the New Testament authors affirm that the Bible in itself is written clearly, they also affirm that it will not be understood rightly by those who are unwilling to receive its teachings. Scripture is able to be understood by all unbelievers who will read it sincerely seeking salvation, and by all believers who will read it while seeking God's help in understanding it. This is because in both the Holy Spirit is at work overcoming the effects of sin, which otherwise will make the truth appear to be foolish." (Grudem, p. 108)

Discussion Question

3. What truths about God's character encourage you that the Bible is understandable to those who are willing to obey it as they trust in Christ?

Hermeneutics and Exegesis

While the Bible is understandable to all who will read it while seeking God's help and being willing to follow it, it is also important to follow normal rules of communication to understand the Bible. If someone sends you a text message that says "LOL" or "BTW" or "NVM," you should interpret that text message based on the conventions of the English language regarding texting. If you are a lawyer writing a will or a judge interpreting a will, you will be following different norms and rules of communication. Knowing the kind of communication we are using and its context helps us to understand what someone is saying. *Hermeneutics* is the study of correct methods of interpretation. *Exegesis* is the process of interpreting a text of

Scripture. So, hermeneutics helps you know how to correctly read and understand a Bible passage. Exegesis is the process of “digging out truths” or “uncovering meaning” in the text. You do exegesis, or study, using proper hermeneutical principles.

Hermeneutics 101

The basic principle of hermeneutics is that you need to observe what the Bible says very carefully so that you can interpret it correctly and apply it faithfully: OBSERVE, INTERPRET, APPLY. Careful observation of what is written is the necessary basis of any interpretation of meaning and subsequent application of that meaning to your life. A great resource to help you understand this process of how to read the Bible well is *Journey Into God’s Word* by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays published by Zondervan Academic in 2020. Another great book that helps you understand how to read the Bible is *One to One Bible Reading* by David Helm.

OBSERVE

One of the most important things you can do is carefully read the Bible. Take time to understand what you are reading, to write down observations and to write down questions that come to mind. During the interpretation stage you will try to answer the questions that seem most important. However, you want to take time to read and reread and write down what you see and what you want to understand better.

Genre or Type of Literature

There are four main types of literature in the Bible: Narrative, Poetry, Prophecy and Epistles. These four main types are further broken down into smaller categories: Within narrative, there are the books of the Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy), the historical books (Joshua through Esther), and the Gospels (Matthew through Acts). Within poetry or the writings there is wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) and poetry (Psalms and Song of Solomon as well as poetry mixed in throughout the other parts of the Bible). Prophecy includes Old Testament prophetic books (Isaiah through Malachi) and apocalyptic books (Revelation and the last half of Daniel). The epistles or letters include all of Paul’s letters (Romans through Philemon) and the other letters (Hebrews through Jude). Understanding what type of literature you are reading will help you to understand how to read it well and interpret it correctly.

Notice the kind of literature you are reading. Are you reading a historical narrative? Are you reading a poem? Are you reading a prophecy? Is it a letter? Depending on what kind of literature you are reading, you need to understand how that literature works.

Historical Narrative – Remember the main character in the Bible is God. What do you learn about God from the actions and dialogue in the narrative? Remember that the whole Bible is a story of how God is establishing His Kingdom by redeeming a people for Himself. How does this story fit into the bigger redemptive story? Remember that any dialogue that is written down is very important, as is anything that is repeated. What is being emphasized in the narrative?

Poetry – In poetry and in wisdom writings, very often the author uses metaphors and word pictures as well as contrasts. There is a context for the stanza or proverb you are reading. What is the context? What is the emotion being conveyed? What word pictures and metaphors are being used? What is the poem teaching you about how to relate to God? Is the author lamenting evil, confessing sin, rejoicing in God's salvation, or praising God for who He is?

Prophecy – Every prophetic book is based on the covenant and promises of Genesis through Deuteronomy, especially Deuteronomy. Each prophecy is addressing a people in a specific context and situation. Who is the book addressing? What is their situation? What aspect of the covenant or law of God is being emphasized? How have the people strayed from obeying and loving God? Is figurative language being used to describe God's judgment or salvation? How does the prophecy point forward to Jesus?

Epistles – Remember that every epistle or letter is written to a specific people in a situation. What is the situation of the epistle? What are the main points that the author is making? What truths is he teaching? What commands is he giving in light of those truths?

After considering what type of literature it is, identify the repeated words, the ideas being emphasized and the clear message of the passage. Understand what is being communicated to the original readers.

INTERPRET

To interpret the Bible passage, you need to ask good questions. Think about the story, the poetry, the prophecy or the letter and the message being communicated. Ask as many questions as you can, thinking broadly as well as narrowly. What is the difference between the original readers and the church today reading this part of the Bible? What is the passage teaching about God and how He relates to people? How does Jesus fulfill the passage or relate to the passage?

APPLY

The goal of the hermeneutical process, or the goal of exegesis, is to correctly read and understand the Bible so that you can obey God. You need to carefully observe the passage and interpret it so that you can apply it. How would the original readers have applied the passage? What differences are there between us and the original readers? Is the application to them retained for us? Is it retooled in light of what Christ has done? Is it retired because it has been fulfilled by Christ? (Retained, retooled or retired is taught by David King in *Your Old Testament Sermon Needs to Get Saved*.) Is there something in this passage to believe about God? Is there a principle that God is teaching His people that I need to understand? Is there something to pray about? Is there a command to obey?

Jude

4. Let's apply what we have been talking about to the book of Jude. Read through the book of Jude and observe the main things that Jude is saying and write down your own summary of those things Jude is writing, forming your own rough outline. Write down any questions you have as you read. We will come back to answer them during the interpretation step.

Outline of Jude

5. Jude is a letter written to a certain people facing a particular situation. Read Jude 4. What is the situation that Jude is addressing?
6. Jude then explains why the situation he identified in Jude 4 is a big deal. What do you learn in Jude 5-16 about why the situation is serious and worth noticing and addressing?
7. Jude then gives them instructions about what to do in the rest of the letter from Jude 17 until 23. What does he tell the readers of his letter to do?

8. What truths does Jude praise God for in Jude 24-25? Why are these a big deal in light of what he has already talked about?
9. What questions do you have about what Jude means as you read through the book? Write down any questions that you can think of as you seek to rightly interpret Jude. Seek to answer any questions you are able to answer **first** using the immediate context of the book and **then** any cross references that you can find from other parts of the Bible.
10. How should the original readers of Jude have applied this letter? Are there any differences between them and us?
11. How should we apply the message of the book of Jude to our lives?

Application

12. Considering the clarity of Scripture, in what ways do you want to grow in reading and thinking about the Bible?

Prayer Requests/Sermon Notes

Week 3 – Sufficiency

The Bible is sufficient and necessary to know God, to be saved by God through faith in Christ and to grow in our relationship with God.

This lesson prepares for the sermon on September 24; discuss with your Growth Group September 24-30.

Definitions

NECESSITY of Scripture

The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws. (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 116)

SUFFICIENCY of Scripture

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly. (Grudem, p. 127)

Launching Question

What do you use the Bible for?

2 Timothy 3:14-17

1. What do these verses tell us the Bible is able to do?

Deuteronomy 29:29

2. What does this verse tell us about the things that are not taught in the Bible? What is the purpose of what is taught in the Bible?

Colossians 3:16

3. What is it that Paul commands the Colossians to do here? Why is the word of Christ so necessary for us?

The Sufficiency of Christ

We know that Christ is the only one who is able to show us what God is like. He is the only one who is able to save us from our sins and give us a relationship with God. He is the only Savior! He is sufficient for salvation and for all of life. We know Him through the Word of God, the Bible. Therefore, the Bible is sufficient for all children of God because we know Christ and experience His grace through reading and believing His Word, the Bible. When we think about salvation, we see a past, present and future aspect to the salvation we have in Christ Jesus. In the past, we were justified or declared righteous by God through faith in Jesus. Jesus saved us. In the present, we are being sanctified or set apart or caused to grow and change by God through faith in Jesus. Jesus is saving us. In the future, we will be glorified or made to be just like Jesus by God through faith in Jesus. Jesus will save us.

John 14:6, Acts 4:12

4. What do these verses show us about salvation through Jesus Christ?

Colossians 2:6-10

5. What do these verses show us about sanctification (becoming progressively more like Christ) and growth as a Christian through Jesus Christ?

2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 1:28-29, 2 Peter 1:3-4

6. What is the key to being transformed and changed as a child of God? What is it that we need in order to grow and change?

Is Scripture Sufficient?

Some people would claim that knowing Christ through the Bible is not sufficient for all the problems of life. They would say we need other things besides Christ so that we can overcome sin and live life the way God wants us to live it. For example, someone might say, *"I yell and scream at my kids because my parents did that to me."* Some psychologists might say that understanding that the reason you are yelling at your kids is because you were yelled at when you were a kid is enough to help you overcome that habit. Biblical counselors would say that while understanding how your past has shaped you can be helpful, the only way to truly overcome this sin is through understanding the Gospel and how Jesus can save you from your own sinful anger. The understanding of one's past is not sufficient to produce change and growth now: we need the gospel. Ultimately, modern psychology and the humanistic worldview tell us that the answers to life's problems are inside each one of us. We know from the Bible that we must look outside of ourselves to the only Savior, Jesus Christ, whom we know and trust in through His Word, the Bible.

Discussion Questions

7. How would you respond to the following claim: Understanding your past or some other psychological technique is necessary and sufficient for producing a changed life that ultimately pleases God?

8. Why is the Bible alone sufficient and able to help you to know God and to be saved through Jesus and to grow in Him?

Application

9. In what ways do you want to grow in trusting in Christ through reading and meditating on His Word?

10. What do you sometimes do or not do because you are not believing that God's Word is sufficient?

Prayer Requests/Sermon Notes

GROUPS

 **FAITH BIBLE CHURCH**