

Central Reflection Guide

Childhood God, week 9

The past two messages explored various historical perspectives on interpreting the Bible, presenting three main camps: inerrancy, progressive revelation, and myth to history. Inerrancy asserts the Bible is without error, but interpretations vary widely among individuals and groups. Progressive revelation suggests God's truth unfolds gradually over time, culminating in Jesus as the ultimate revelation. This perspective acknowledges the historical context of scripture and the role of cultural norms in shaping its teachings. Myth to history views certain early Old Testament biblical narratives as symbolic or allegorical rather than strictly historical, recognizing the richness of metaphorical language in conveying deeper truths. The message attempted to emphasize how differing interpretations of scripture do not diminish its authority or relevance. Instead, they reflect the diverse ways in which Christians engage with and understand the Bible. Ultimately, the goal is to approach scripture with humility, openness, and a willingness to learn from one another, recognizing a literal reading of the Bible does not necessarily equate to a more faithful understanding.

Feel free to use this as a small group resource or for personal reflection.

Opening: Share a story about a time when you encountered a belief or interpretation about the Bible that challenged your understanding.

Choose questions that best fit your group.

Paul shared 4 categories or ways Christians have historically understood scripture. Which do you most relate to and why?

Inerrancy:

- How do different individuals or groups interpret the term "inerrancy," and what are some implications of these interpretations for understanding scripture?
- What is the difference between scripture being inerrant and one's interpretation of scripture being inerrant?
- Can you think of examples from the Bible where differing interpretations of inerrancy might lead to different understandings of the text? (e.g., consider historical accounts or moral teachings)
- How do you reconcile the idea of inerrancy with apparent inconsistencies or differences in details between the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection? (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21)

Progressive Revelation:

- What is the concept of progressive revelation, and what are your reactions to this category of understanding?
- Reflecting on Matthew 5:38-39, how does Jesus challenge traditional interpretations of Old Testament laws, and how might this influence our understanding of scripture's applicability today?
- How does Jesus serve as the ultimate revelation of God's truth, and how does this influence our interpretation of the entire biblical narrative?
- Paul talked about the idea of conceptual inspiration. What is your reaction to this concept? What are the implications for how we understand the inspiration of scripture? How might this perspective impact our approach to interpreting biblical teachings?
- In what ways does (or does?) progressive revelation challenge traditional views of scripture's authority and infallibility, and how might Christians respond to these challenges?

Myth to History:

- Consider the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1-3. How might interpretations of this story vary between viewing it as literal history versus symbolic myth, and what implications does this have for understanding its theological significance?
- How might viewing certain biblical narratives as myth or legend enrich our appreciation for their theological themes and moral messages? Does this view of scripture break down? What are the implications?

Different Interpretations of Scripture:

- Discuss the implications of interpreting scripture through the lens of Jesus' teachings and example. How does this approach influence our understanding of Old Testament laws and teachings?
- Reflect on the statement, "A literal reading of the Bible doesn't necessarily mean a more faithful reading of the Bible." How might this challenge common assumptions about interpreting scripture?
- How can Christians engage in respectful dialogue and exploration of different interpretations of scripture while maintaining unity in faith? What are some practical steps we can take to learn from diverse perspectives within the body of Christ?

Family Discussion Questions:

- Can you tell us a story from the Bible that you really like? Why do you like it?
- How do you think Jesus helps us understand what the Bible says?
- Do you think all the stories in the Bible are meant to be understood as literal history? Why or why not?
- How do you think different people might interpret the same story from the Bible in different ways?
- How can we respect and learn from people who have different views about what the Bible means?

Application Action Steps:

Engage: Commit to reading and studying the Bible with an open mind and heart. I would recommend you start with a gospel (Matthew or Luke would be my suggestions!). Read it slowly and perhaps several times. Ask “What do I learn about Jesus in this passage?” and “What did I learn about how he sees people?”

Seek Understanding: Encourage one another to engage in respectful dialogue and exploration of different interpretations of scripture. How do you feel about people who understand scripture differently than you?

Below is the link to Tim Mackie’s teaching on how the bible came to be. Please take the time to watch this if you haven’t already:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaqKzYJ151Y&t=4507s>

This is a link to the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy: This is a written statement of belief pulled together by more than 200 evangelical leaders at a conference convened in Chicago in October 1978, and it was the first big attempt to define the word “inerrancy.” To be clear, this document doesn’t speak for everyone in this camp, but it’s one of the more prominent views.

Below are some suggested resources for additional learning. These writers don’t all agree but offer different perspectives for understanding scripture and different ways of interacting with scripture.

“Scripture and the Authority of God” by NT Wright

“The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It” by Peter Enns

“Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading” by Eugene Peterson

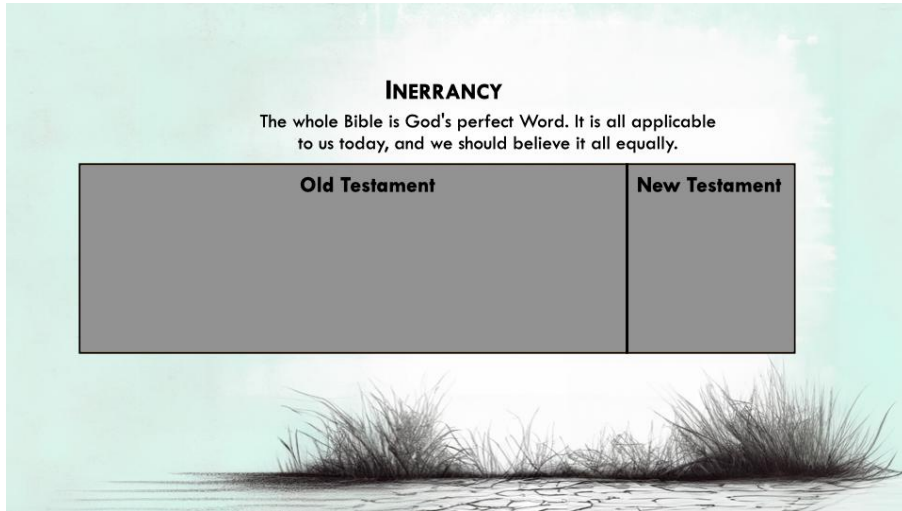
“How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth” By Gordon Fee and Douglass Stuart

“The New Testament in its World.” N.T Wright and Michael Bird

“The Living Word of God,” by Ben Witherington

The Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com>

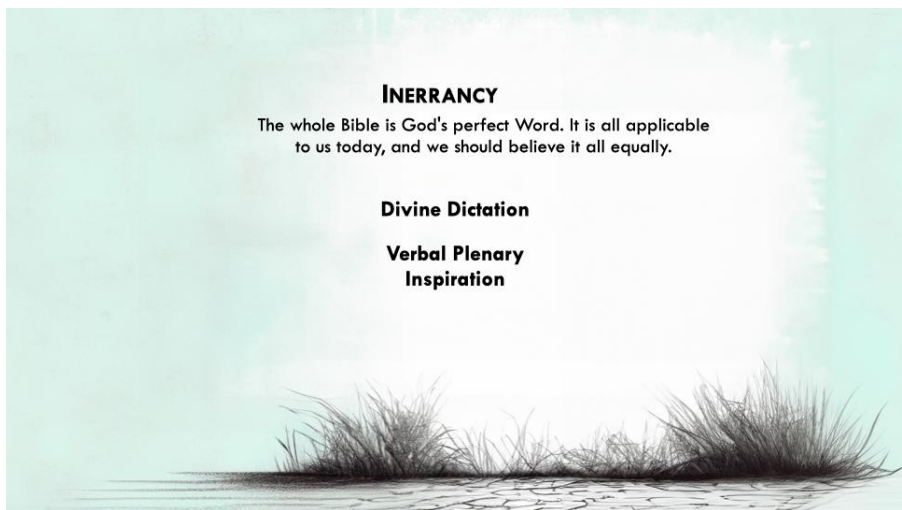
Slides below:



INERRANCY

The whole Bible is God's perfect Word. It is all applicable to us today, and we should believe it all equally.

Old Testament	New Testament

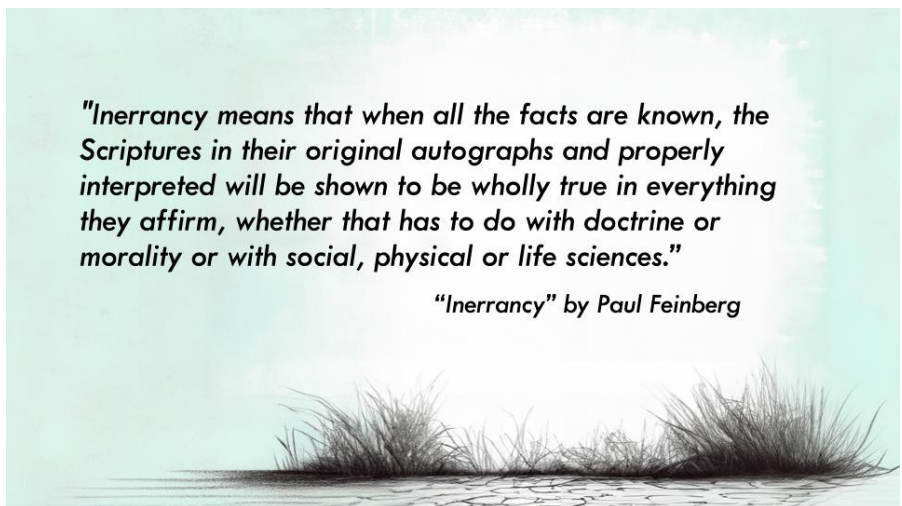


INERRANCY

The whole Bible is God's perfect Word. It is all applicable to us today, and we should believe it all equally.

Divine Dictation

Verbal Plenary Inspiration



"Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with social, physical or life sciences."

"Inerrancy" by Paul Feinberg

INERRANCY

The whole Bible is God's perfect Word. It is all applicable to us today, and we should believe it all equally.

Old Testament	New Testament

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

God revealed truth gradually, so the prophets add to the Law, and then Jesus brought the complete truth.

Old Testament	New Testament

FROM MYTH TO HISTORY

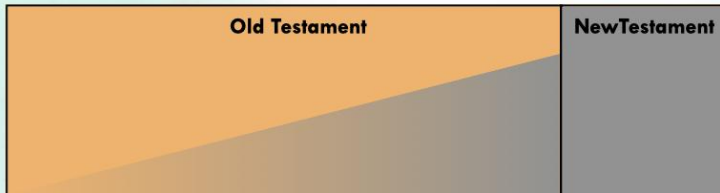
The Bible begins with myth and legend and gradually becomes more historical as God reveals himself more clearly. The New Testament is almost totally historical.

Old Testament	New Testament

Mythology is a form of literature that expresses fundamental truths in a way that ordinary discourse is inadequate to describe. The stories that make up the myths are often anchored in some historical reality, but this need not be so. Mythology adds a richness of detail and a concreteness to metaphorical language.

FROM MYTH TO HISTORY

The Bible begins with myth and legend and gradually becomes more historical as God reveals himself more clearly. The New Testament is almost totally historical.



JUST ANCIENT LITERATURE

The Old and New Testaments are both unhistorical, and mostly legendary. We shouldn't believe any of it.

Old Testament	New Testament

