



The  
**FLOW**  
Adult CURRICULUM

#31

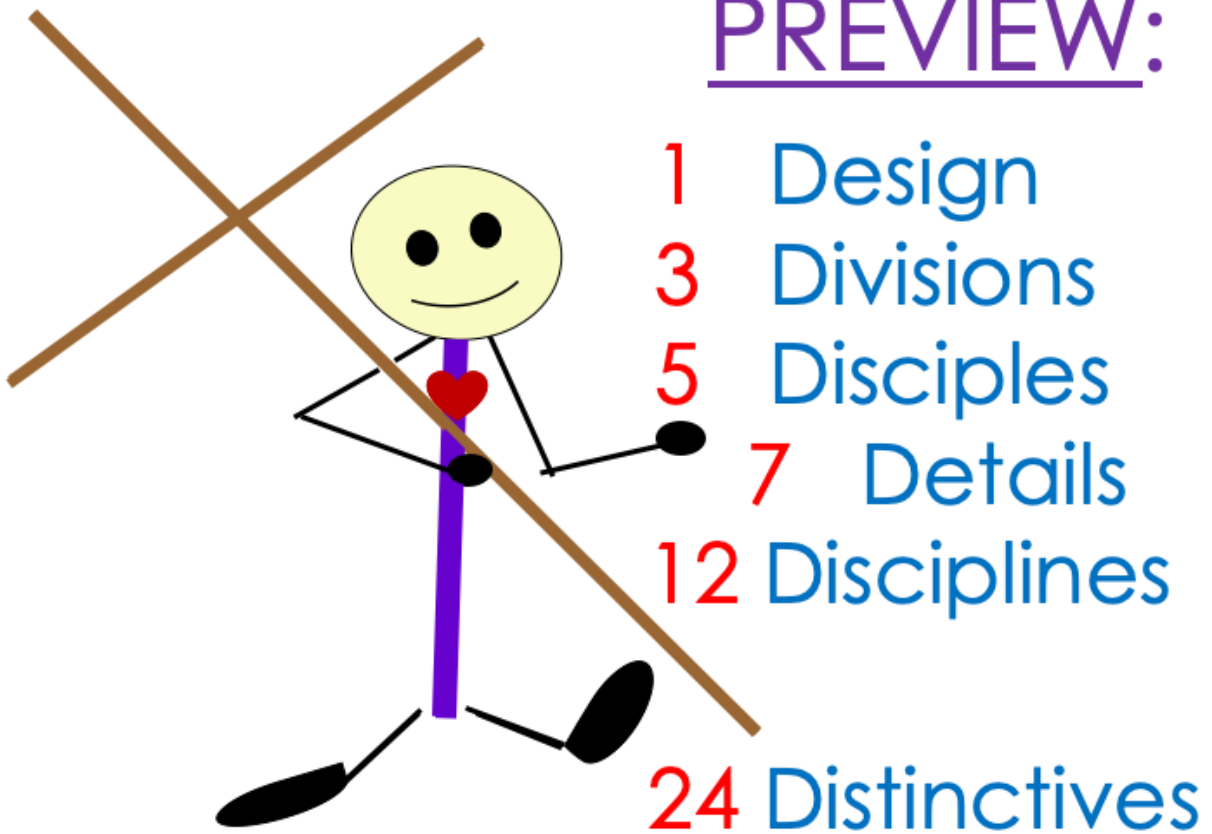
Trusting The Bible

2 Timothy 3:14

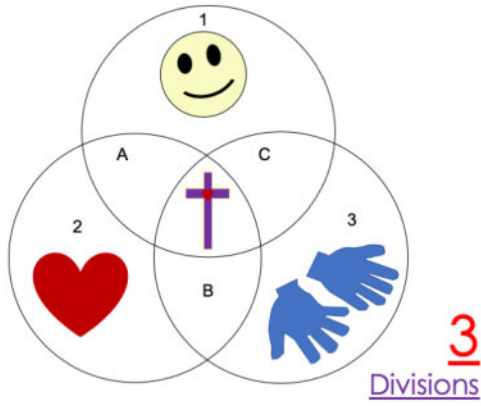
(Come And See Christianity book pages 94)

# The FLOW

## PREVIEW:

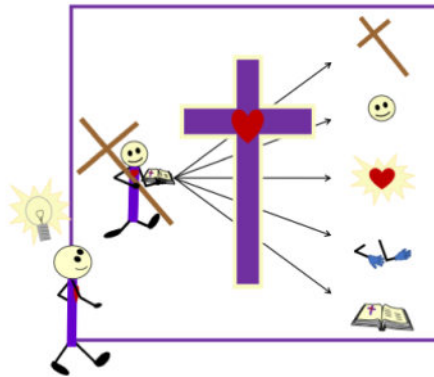


SECTION SIX: 12 Disciplines



**The Disciple's "Hands"** put into **action** the **truth** & **love** of God's Word, God's will, & God's ways. In short, when **each Christian's Head, Heart, & Hands** are united in purpose & power, the family of God is **living** as the **Body of Christ!**

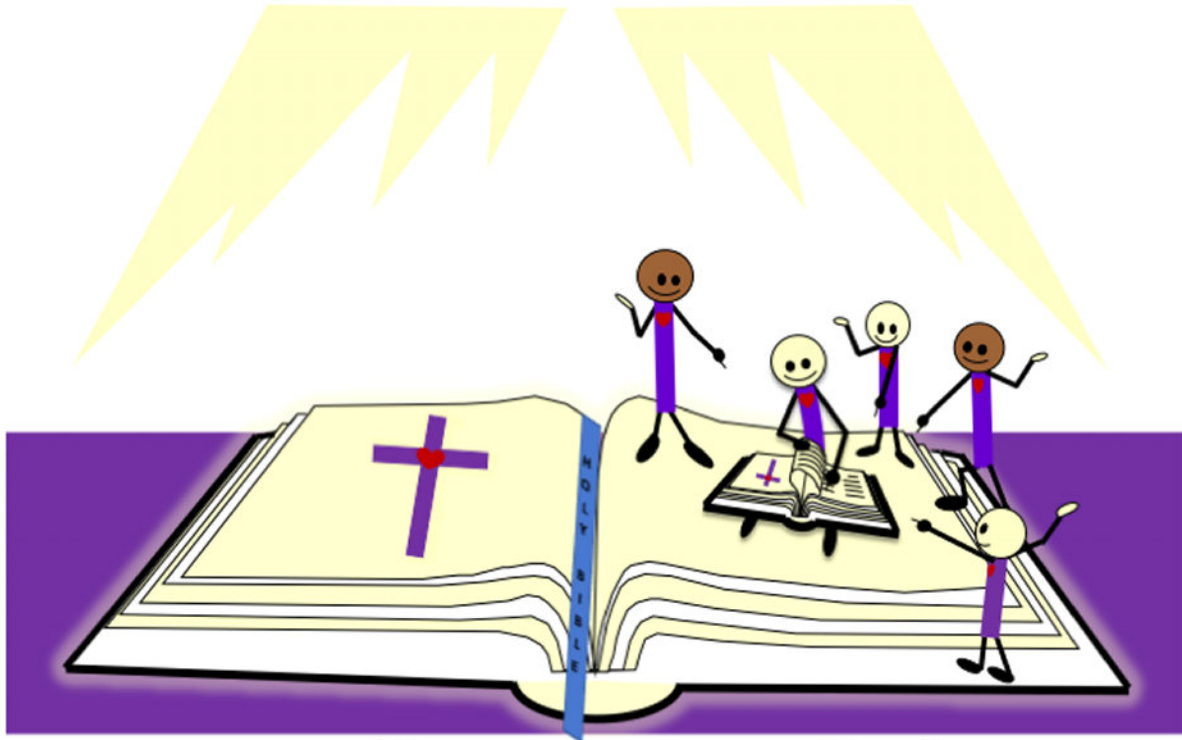
## 24 Family Distinctives:



## **24 DISTINCTIVES:**

The “**distinctives**” are a family portrait... When you add God’s Word, God’s Spirit, God’s Truth, God’s love, and God’s people **all together**, the **distinctives** are what **we** **look, love, & live like :-)**

# We are...



## Trusting the Bible

INTRO:

As we begin to **see the beautiful, biblical portrait of Christ's faith-filled family** defined and described by God's Word, will, and ways, it is critical to remember that the Holy Bible is to ALWAYS BE our ultimate source, authority, and interpreter in ALL things pertaining to one's understanding of reality and application of truth in love.

**Remember,**  
**The biblical Church is Christ's missional family...**  
**Moreover, God's Word reveals our Father's will and His family's ways.**

### [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Here are ***24 defining & describing HANDS-on DISTINCTIVES of Christianity:***

True Christians are biblically, miraculously, intentionally, missionally, and imperfectly...

1. *Responding to grace*
2. *Repenting of sin*
3. *Trusting the Bible*
4. *Obeying God's Word*
5. *Growing in Christ*
6. *Living Spirit-led*
7. *Praying for guidance*
8. *Following by faith*
9. *Dying to self*
10. *Carrying our cross*
11. *BE-ing The Church*
12. *Loving one another (truly loving one another)*
13. *Equipping the saints*
14. *Exemplifying supernatural unity*
15. *Ministering as ambassadors*
16. *Discerning matters shrewdly*
17. *Worshipping God vertically*
18. *Experiencing Him horizontally*
19. *Proclaiming the Gospel (no matter what)*
20. *Fishing for men*
21. *Making disciplined warriors*
22. *Winning spiritual warfare*
23. *Loving our King*
24. *Serving His kingdom*

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

## CONTEXT:

### Macro

**This lesson marks another major transition point** in our curriculum's eye-opening explanation of Christianity. By way of review, we began in Section One with the reality of Almighty God having 1 Divine DESIGN (also known as a biblical worldview and the eternal application of Jesus Christ's Gospel). In Section Two, we addressed the 3 DIVISIONS (Head, Heart, and Hands) that make up the "being" in every human being. Next, in Section Three, we demonstrated how Christianity accounts for, defines, and describes all of humanity, every person, past, present, and future. We noted that all people can be identified as one of the 5 DISCIPLES – Lost, Lover, Learner, Leader, or Lifer. Moving forward, Section Four revealed, engaged, and explained the 7 fundamental DETAILS of God's Divine DESIGN... because **we all need to know what we need to know**. To be more specific, those seven truths are: The Foundations, The Framework, The Facts, The Fight, The Faith, The Family, and the truth about Forever.

Then, in Section Five, which we just completed, our focus shifted from HEAD based truths to 12 HEART shaping exercises or disciplines - each having the potential to strengthen one's personal relationship with Christ, His Church, and their collective mission: bringing God glory by finding & growing more glorifiers.

We used the acronym **J.E.S.U.S.'S. P. S.W.O.R.D.** to outline and harmonize a biblical, missional, and intentional methodology for growing in God's love - & His loving witness. The 12 HEART DISCIPLINES are: **J**ournaling... **E**ating-nothing (fasting)... **S**cripture-intake... **U**nderstudy of Scripture... **S**tewardship... **S**olitude... **P**rayer... **S**erving... **W**orshipping... **O**utreach... **R**elationships... and **D**evelopment.

Now, our curriculum and study will transition to The HANDS. This is where **Christians demonstrate to the world that Christ is in their worship & witness**. Whereas our time spent in the HEAD sections (1-4) focused on the truths that Christians need and seek to LEARN, and our concentration on the 12 HEART DISCIPLINES of section 5 helped us to grow in God's LOVE, our sixth and final section will **walk through the 24 DISTINCTIVES, which explain & exemplify how Christians are to faithfully LIVE... and fully BE The Church... together** – all by God's grace & ALL for His glory!

God's Word puts it this way:

***"Let us not love with word and tongue but in action and truth."*** – 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:18

*And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47](#)praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2:46-47*

## I. **DISTINCTIVES are FRUIT:**

It is important to realize that God’s miraculous and authentic **Christian DISTINCTIVES are the FRUIT of saving grace and faith** (Ephesians 2:1-10). As Jesus described in John 15, people can do nothing outside of their abiding in Him and obeying His Word, will and ways. In short, there will be no fruit unless one remains attached to and provided for by the true Vine and divine Root. With that said, a cautionary note is worth sharing here, beware the counterfeits that abound around the world. ***Plastic fruit is deceptive vs. DISTINCTIVE!***

### Galatians 5:22-25

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

## II. **DISTINCTIVES are FAMILY:**



DISTINCTIVES, by definition, are those “distinguishing characteristics that are notable for having a special quality, style, and/or attractiveness” (Dictionary.com).

When it comes to God’s family, the true Church, each Christian and their individualistic DISTINCTIVES are as unique as their potential. At the same time, in the same way that a billion unique snowflakes can be combined to make a single snowstorm, or countless swatches of scrap fabric can be sewn together to make a single quilt, so it is with God’s family. The LORD creates His Christian family with a both/and combination of DISTINCTIVE uniqueness, as well as DISTINCTIVE love and defining unity.

**Christianity’s DISTINCT family (ecclesia) has a DISTINCTIVE unity (koinonia).**

*“By this all people will know that you are My disciple, if you have love for one another.”*  
– John 13:35



*“The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us.”*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

### III. **DISTINCTIVES are WITNESS:**

The most biblical and healthy understandings of Christianity will include an embrace of two overarching and DISTINCTIVE purposes. Namely, per God’s Word, will, and ways, every Christian has received miraculous, saving grace, as well as the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to:

1. Bring glory to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
**do all to the glory of God.***

2. BE Christ’s witness.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, **and you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem (locally), and in all Judea and Samaria (regionally), and to the end of the earth (globally).”*

**God’s DISTINCTIVE people have been filled with His Holy Spirit for the express purpose of living DISTINCTIVE lives.** When the world sees the LORD’s loving family living out their divinely empowered and God-honoring worship, work, and warfare, the resulting fruit will serve as a faithful witness, built with supernatural, grace-based, and missional DISTINCTIVES.

*“God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life.”*

*- John Piper*

## The Christian Distinctive

What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that it is a *revealed* religion. Christianity is not about our search for God or our means of finding him. Christianity is not a religion that works its way upward. It is all about God coming to us — God in grace making himself known to us and making a way for us to enjoy fellowship with him.

And so, at the very heart of Christianity is, simply, a message — a message from God to us about what he has done to bring us to himself.

If Christianity is distinctively revealed religion, then it is also uniquely *authoritative*. It does not offer itself as the best and highest of human thinking about God or even the best or most successful of human efforts to know God. It professes to be nothing less than the unique word from God, his very own self-disclosure and the record of the actions he has taken in Jesus Christ to bring us into fellowship with himself.

One of Rudyard Kipling's characters declares, "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone; He don't obey no orders unless they is his own." That is to say, human religions lack authority — they form their own ideas and "discover" their own beliefs.

By contrast the Christian is "under orders," because unlike human religions, Christianity is a revealed religion — divinely revealed. We Christians are not our own touchstone of truth, and we do not confuse our ideas about God with His own self-revelation. We learn truth about God not from "inner lights" within ourselves but from God's own objective Word.

And apart from this external authority, there is no Christianity. This, at bottom, is Christianity's leading distinctive.

And so, we **Christians, prize Scripture as God's Word. We joyfully submit to it. And we enthusiastically proclaim its message of grace in Jesus Christ to the world.**

- Dr. Fred Zaspel

Micro

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

*"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."*

*"Nobody ever outgrows Scripture;  
the book widens and deepens with our years."  
- Charles Spurgeon*

Message

***"I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He has written it down in a book! Oh, give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be: "A man of one book."  
- John Wesley***

### The Inspiration of Scripture

***When we open the Bible, we can be sure that what we're reading has been breathed out by God...*** When we talk about the inspiration of Scripture, we're not using the word in quite the same way that you and I usually speak of inspiration.

*I might say (for example) that I felt "inspired" as I wrote a book or composed a piece of music. And all I would be saying is simply that I felt particularly animated or motivated or fired up as I worked.*

*But when we say that the writers of Scripture were "inspired," we're saying much more than that. The King James Bible translates 2 Timothy 3:16 like this: **All scripture is given by inspiration of God.***

*This is what theologians are referring to when they talk about the "inspiration" of Scripture: the idea that God "breathed into" the biblical writers. He did this by His Spirit: "Spirit" being the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning "breath." So, **when God "breathed into" the writers of Scripture in this way, God was ensuring that what they wrote was what He wanted to say—and nothing else.***

*In other words, if we really wanted to hear God speaking, we should open our Bibles. The English Standard Version gets even closer to the original Greek when it says that: **All Scripture is breathed out by God.** That translation nicely captures the reality that what we have on the page has come directly from God, and therefore each word carries the weight of His authority.*

*That phrase “**all Scripture**” is also significant. Because **all Scripture is breathed out by God, it means that all of it is completely trustworthy.** This is what theologians mean when they talk about the “plenary” inspiration of Scripture—plenary meaning “full” or “complete.” **There are no particular bits of Scripture that are more or less God-breathed** than other bits. Red-letter Bibles, when they put Jesus’ words in red, can imply that Christ’s words are more authoritative than the surrounding ones, that they carry particular weight—but that is not the case at all. **All Scripture is God-breathed. All of it has the authority of God and of His Christ.***

*That’s because every word was inspired by the Spirit. Second Peter chapter 1, verse 21, puts it like this: **No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** And this is true for the New Testament as well as the Old.*

*By the way, the inspiration of Scripture needn’t imply some kind of mechanical “dictation” from God, as if the minds and personalities of the biblical authors were somehow hijacked and overridden by God. On the contrary, **the varying personalities and writing styles of the biblical authors do come through in Scripture.***

*At the same time, the concept of the inspiration of Scripture extends to what theologians call “verbal” inspiration. It’s not that God gave the biblical writers a general impression of the kind of concepts He wanted them to include and then told them to run with it.*

### **God’s inspiration actually extends to the very words they chose.**

*The teaching of Jesus shows this principle in action. Think about the way He debated His opponents. **Often, Jesus’ argument depends on a single word—or even on the tense** of a particular word—in Scripture. If God’s inspiration of Scripture did not extend to the specifics of individual words and tenses, then Jesus’ appeal to them would have been meaningless.*

*You see the principle of verbal inspiration again when the Apostle Paul argues in Galatians: **The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.** Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.*

*Again, if the Holy Spirit had not inspired the biblical writers to the extent of ensuring the use of a singular word rather than a plural, then Paul’s argument in Galatians would be meaningless.*

*So that is the inspiration of Scripture. When we open God’s Word, we can be sure that what we’re reading was breathed out by God. Not just in general, but right down to the specifics.*

*- Ligonier Ministries / Barry Cooper*

BIG IDEA: **“Trusting The Bible” involves faithfully learning, loving, & living THE divinely inspired Word, will, and ways of God, as found in THE Holy Scriptures.**

PREVIEW:

1. TRUSTING
2. THE
3. BIBLE

TEXT:

**2 Timothy 3:14**

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.*

## 1. TRUSTING

Illustration:

**The devil’s first words in the Bible tempted Eve to doubt & DIS-TRUST God!**

*“He does have surprising, secret purposes. I open a Bible, and His plans, startling, lie there barefaced. It’s hard to believe it, when I read it, and I have to come back to it many times, feel long across those words, make sure they are real. His love letter forever silences any doubts: “His secret purpose framed from the very beginning [is] to bring us to our full glory” ([1 Corinthians 2:7](#) NEB).”*

*- Ann Voskamp*

Explanation:

**Psalm 119:105**

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

**TRUSTING is a powerful verb** that is, by definition, intimately active, strategically intentional, and broadly consequential in application. At its core, **TRUSTING is relational**. For better or for worse, that/those which are TRUSTED are given tremendous potential to help or hurt the person/people who are doing the TRUSTING. To that end, think about the joy & celebrations that come out of TRUST's unified & virtuous victories (for example, a church family whose collective witness is being used by God to change the world). On the other hand, consider the carnage and crucifying consequences that followed Judas, the disciple most TRUSTED as the group's treasurer, in the aftermath of his TRUST-breaking, relational betrayal. Herein, when looking through such biblical lenses, it becomes sobering and clear rather quickly... **TRUSTING is missional and a very real component of spiritual warfare!**

*"Apply yourself wholly to the Scriptures,  
and apply the Scriptures wholly to yourself."  
- Johann A. Bengel*

Application:

**Matthew 4:4**

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

*"I've read the last page of the Bible, it's all going to turn out alright."  
- Billy Graham*

*"Don't fall into the trap  
of studying the Bible without doing what it says."  
- Francis Chan*

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

***5**Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

***6**In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.*

## 2. THE (definite article)

Illustration:

### Hebrews 4:12

*"For THE word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

In a comprehensive sermon series entitled "Defining Definitive Definitions," we have dozens of messages that seek to identify and bring better biblical understanding to a number of Christianity's most essential and widely used terms. To that end, one of the first and foundational words we defined was "gospel" - which literally means "good news."

In the opening of that particular sermon the question was asked: "What do you think of... What do you think is MOST important... when you hear 'the gospel?'" The point of the opening question was subtle but eternal.

Don't miss this. Most churched people naturally, quickly, and wrongly think that the most important focus belongs on the word "gospel," when in reality, the emphasis and defining power is found in the definite article "the." Think about it... while there are countless forms of "good news," there is only one Gospel of Jesus THE Christ. Thus, **the "THE" is the key for humanity.**

Explanation:

***"THE Bible is THE cradle wherein (THE) Christ is laid."  
- Martin Luther***

*While it might seem like a tiny word, "the" carries a lot of weight in terms of the specificity and clarity it can bring to a sentence. The general rule is that if a noun is of specific reference, then it will likely require the use of the definite article. - MyEnglishGrammer.com*

Application:

**1 Corinthians 2:12**

*Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.*

When it comes to TRUSTING the true, living, and loving God, it is eternally important to remember that there is only One reference that represents THE Author and authority of creation's Creator; namely, THE Word of God. *Thus, we are to theologically, intentionally, grammatically, and missionally TRUST the "THE" in THE Holy Bible & only THE Holy Bible!*

**No other religion or religious literature, regardless of its dogmatic fervor, carries divine authorship, authenticity, and/or authority.**

### 3. BIBLE

Illustration:

*"We go from Malachi to Matthew in one page of our scriptures, but that one piece of paper that separates the Old Testament from the New Testament represents 400 years of history - 400 years where there wasn't a prophet, 400 years where God's voice wasn't heard. And that silence was broken with the cry of a baby on Christmas night."*

*- Louie Giglio*

Explanation:

***The generic meaning of the word "bible" is simply book or books. What makes the Christian Bible unique is Almighty God... plus His HOLY inspiration and selection.***

**The Biblical Canon**  
(The Gospel Coalition - TGC)

***DEFINITION:*** *The biblical canon is the collection of scriptural books that God has given his corporate people, which are distinguished by their divine qualities, reception by the collective body, and their apostolic connection, either by authorship or association.*



**SUMMARY:** *The biblical canon is the collection of scriptural books that God has given his corporate people. These books were grouped together by God's people relatively early, with the OT being settled and stable by the birth of Jesus at latest, and the NT gaining large agreement even before the end of the second century. Although it wasn't until the fourth century that the NT canon was officially decided, there is good reason to have historical confidence in the process. These books were largely decided on by virtue of three factors: their divine qualities, reception by the churches, and connection to an apostle. Most of the NT books were composed directly by one of the apostles (including Paul), and those that were not have close links to the testimony of the apostles themselves.*

**The Bible is an unusual book.** *Unlike most modern books, the Bible is composed of many smaller books written by various authors in different times and different places. Naturally, this raises questions about how these books were collected together to form a single volume. When did this happen? Who made the critical decisions? And why should we think they got it right? All these questions pertain to what is known as the biblical canon. This term refers to the collection of scriptural books that God has given his corporate people.*

**Questions regarding the canon can be divided into two broad categories: historical and theological.** *Historical questions about the canon pertain to the when and the how. At what point in history do we see our OT and NT books collected into a functioning corpus? And what forces or individuals influenced that process? Theological questions are focused more on legitimacy and authority. Do we have a reason to think these are the right books? Can we even know whether we have the right books? This essay will briefly address both of these categories.*

**Historical Questions:** *As for the OT, there are good reasons to think there was an established corpus of books by the time of Jesus. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus offers a list of 22 OT books accepted by the Jews which appears to match our current 39 book collection (Against Apion, 1.38–42). For Josephus, at least, the OT canon seems quite settled: "For although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured neither to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable" (Against Apion, 1.42).*

*The comments of Josephus find confirmation in another first-century Jewish source, namely Philo of Alexandria. Philo hints at a three-fold division to the OT canon: "the laws and the sacred oracles of God enunciated by the holy prophets ... and psalms" (On the Contemplative Life, 25). This three-fold structure seems to match Jesus's own words about the OT being composed of "the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44). Other echoes of a three-fold division to the OT can be found in the Jewish work Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus) and a fragmentary text from Qumran known as 4QMMT.*

*One of the other ways to ascertain the state of the OT canon in the first century is to consider the way NT writers utilize OT books. Even though the OT is cited frequently by NT writers, there is no indication of any dispute over the boundaries OT canon. Indeed, there is not a single instance anywhere of a NT author citing a book as Scripture that is not in our current*

thirty-nine book canon. And while Jesus himself had many disagreements with the Jewish leadership of his day, there appears to be no indication that there was any disagreement over which books were Scripture—a reality that is hard to explain if the OT canon was still in flux. In sum, we can agree with Stephen Chapman when he says, “by the turn of the millennium, a Jewish canon of Scripture was largely in place, if not absolutely defined and delimited in scope” (see his article “The Old Testament Canon and Its Authority for the Christian Church,” 137).

As for the NT canon, there appears to be a core collection of scriptural books—approximately 22 out of 27—functioning as Scripture by the middle of the second century. Generally speaking, this core would have included the four gospels, Acts, thirteen epistles of Paul, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. Books that were “disputed” tended to be the smaller books such as 2 Peter, Jude, James, and 2-3 John.

Even so, it seems Christians were using NT writings as Scripture even before the second century. The book of 2 Peter refers to Paul’s letters as “Scripture” ([2 Pet. 3:16](#)), showing that a corpus of Paul’s letters was already in circulation and regarded as on par with the OT books. Similarly, [1 Timothy 5:18](#) cites a saying of Jesus as Scripture: “the laborer deserves his wages.” The only known match for this saying is [Luke 10:17](#).

In the second century, we see this usage of NT writings continue. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, appears to receive at least the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, as well as 1 Peter, 1 John, Revelation, and maybe some of Paul’s epistles (see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15–16). By the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr has an established fourfold Gospel collection that is read in worship alongside OT books (see his 1 Apology, 47.3). And by the time of Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons in the late second-century, we see a nearly complete NT corpus. His canon consists of about twenty-two out of twenty-seven NT books which he regards as Scripture and cites over one thousand times.

In sum, the early Christians coalesced around the NT books remarkably early. While it was not until the fourth century that the disputes over some of the peripheral books were resolved, the core of the NT canon was already in place long before.

**Theological Questions:** Even though the historical evidence surveyed above answers questions about when and how the canon was formed, there are still lingering questions about its authority and validity. How do we know that these are the right sixty-six books? Is there a way for the church to know a book is given by God? Here we will briefly consider three attributes that all canonical books share.

**Divine Qualities:** The first attribute to consider, and one often overlooked, is that we have good reasons to think books from God would contain within themselves evidence of their divine origin. The Reformers referred to these as divine qualities or indicators (*indicia*). If God is genuinely the one who stands behind these books, then we would expect these books to share God’s own qualities. After all, we know that the created world is from God by seeing

God's own attributes revealed therein ([Ps. 19](#); [Rom. 1:20](#)). Likewise, we would expect God's special revelation, his written word, to do the same. Examples of such qualities in God's word would be beauty and excellency ([Ps. 19:8](#); [119:103](#)), power and efficacy ([Ps. 119:50](#); [Heb. 4:12–13](#)), and unity and harmony ([Num. 23:19](#); [Titus 1:2](#); [Heb. 6:18](#)).

Through these divine qualities, Christians recognize the voice of their Lord in the Scriptures. Jesus declared, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me" ([John 10:27](#)).

**Of course, non-Christians will object to the idea of divine qualities in Scripture because they don't personally see such qualities. But we must remember that humans are corrupted by the fall and darkened by sin. In order to see these qualities rightly, they need what the Reformers called the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. For those in Christ, the Spirit opens our eyes to see the divine qualities in these books that are objectively present.**

**Corporate Reception:** It is important to note that the work of the Spirit does not happen only on an individual level, but also on a corporate level. Thus, there are good reasons to think that God's collective, covenantal people would eventually recognize the books that are from him. If so, then we can look to the consensus of God's people (in both old and new covenant times) as a reliable guide to which books are from him.

This does not mean that we should expect God's people to have instantaneous and absolute unity over the canonical books. There will always be pockets of disagreement and dissension (just like there would be over any doctrine). But we can expect a predominant or general consensus through the ages—which is exactly what we find.

As Herman Ridderbos argued, "Christ will establish and build his church by causing the church to accept just this canon and, by means of the assistance and witness of the Holy Spirit, to recognize it as his" (H.N. Ridderbos, *Redemptive History & the New Testament Scripture*, 37).

**Authoritative Authors:** A final attribute of canonical books is that they are written by God's chosen agents, his inspired prophets and apostles. Put simply, not just anyone can speak for God; only those commissioned to be his mouthpiece. In the OT this included the prophets and other inspired spokesmen ([Rom. 1:2](#); [2 Pet. 3:2](#)). In the NT it included the apostles, Christ's authoritative witnesses ([Mark 3:14–15](#); [Matt 10:20](#); [Luke 10:16](#)).

We have good historical evidence (which cannot be explored here) that the books in our Bible can be traced either directly to apostles/prophets or at least to a historical situation where that book could reasonably retain the teachings of an apostle/prophet. For example, we accept the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) as from God because we believe Moses was the author. Likewise, we accept the books like 1 and 2 Corinthians because we think the apostle Paul was the author. And we even accept anonymous books like Hebrews because we have good reasons to think the author received his information directly from apostles ([Heb 2:3–4](#); [13:23](#)).

*In conclusion, we can have great confidence in the state of both our OT and NT canons. Not only do we know a lot about the historical processes that brought those canons into existence, but God has given us ways to recognize the books that are from him, namely those that have divine qualities, corporate reception, and authoritative authors.* - Michael J. Kruger

In this lesson, much has been shared to inform, inspect, and inspire the reader to TRUST God's Word... ALL of it. Even the definite article "THE" has received considerable attention, drawing our focus to THE unique & miraculously HOLY attributes of divine Scripture. In short, **the world desperately needs to know and believe that our BIBLE is God's perfectly inspired Word... ALL of it!**

*It is not just the parts of the Bible that deal with religious doctrines that are inspired, but each and every word from Genesis to Revelation. Because it is inspired by God, the Scriptures are therefore authoritative when it comes to establishing doctrine, and are sufficient for teaching man how to be in a right relationship with God. The Bible claims not only to be inspired by God, but also to have the supernatural ability to change us and make us "complete." What more can we need?*

*Because the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, we can conclude that they are also inerrant and authoritative. A correct view of God will lead us to a correct view of His Word. Because God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and completely perfect, His Word will by its very nature have the same characteristics. The same verses that establish the inspiration of the Scriptures also establish that it is both inerrant and authoritative. Without a doubt the Bible is what it claims to be—the undeniable, authoritative, Word of God to humanity.* - GotQuestions.org

Application:

*"Reading and understanding the Bible involves lots and lots of interpretation. Not just in light of the world and culture around us, but in reference to other parts of the Bible."*

*- John Piper*

*"Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand."*

*- Mark Twain*

CLOSE:

**“TRUSTING THE BIBLE” is akin to “walking by faith”** (2 Corinthians 5:7). Both behaviors unify a Christian’s HEAD (committed understanding of God’s truth), HEART (authentic and Christ-like love), and HANDS (faithfully obedient works).

Consequently, per God’s Word, TRUSTING THE BIBLE is a foundational and validating fruit of a Christian’s RESPONDING TO GRACE and REPENTING OF SIN.

***“The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly.”***  
***- Søren Kierkegaard***

**For What?**

**Matthew 5:17-18**

***17***“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ***18***For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

***“The Word of God I think of as a straight edge, which shows up our own crookedness. We can’t really tell how crooked our thinking is until we line it up with the straight edge of Scripture.”***  
***- Elisabeth Elliot***

**So What?**

***“Unless we form the habit of going to the Bible in bright moments as well as in trouble, we cannot fully respond to its consolations because we lack equilibrium between light and darkness.”***  
***- Helen Keller***

**John 16:13**

*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*

**Now What?**

*“When the world beats you down, open up your Bible.”*

*- Lysa TerKeurst*

*“The more I have read the Bible and studied the life of Jesus, the more I have become convinced that Christianity spreads best not through force but through fascination.”*

*- Shane Claiborne*

**PRAYER**

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

*“Continue In What You Have Learned”*

2 Timothy 3:14

January 2, 2011

Sermon Series: Faithfully Fight To The Finish

## ADDENDUM:

### Why do our Bibles contain these books and not others?

Tony Watkins explores how the 66 books of the Bible were put together, why they were included and not others, and how we can be confident that the Bible we have today is the 'word of God'.

Christians believe the Bible to be the 'word of God'. It's vital, then, that we can be confident that it contains the right books. When we talk about the books of the Bible, we often use the word 'canon' (from the Greek word for 'measuring stick'). The 'canon of Scripture' is the standard set of biblical books. When you pick up any of the common Bible translations, such as the New International Version, English Standard Version, or Christian Standard Bible, you find the same 66 books in them: 39 in the Old Testament (OT) and 27 in the New Testament (NT).

Yet some Bibles have a longer Old Testament. Roman Catholic Bible also include the 'deuterocanonical' ('second canon') books,<sup>[1]</sup> and the Orthodox Church's 'longer canon' adds a few more.<sup>[2]</sup> We call this extra material the 'Apocrypha' (from a Greek word meaning 'to hide away'). Evangelicals don't accept these books as Scripture, though they are interesting and helpful. There are also other ancient Jewish texts, collectively known as the Pseudepigrapha (meaning 'written under a false name'), which are not included in any Bible.

Why are there these differences? What about other 'gospels' and early letters that are not included in any Bibles? Who decided which books are in or out, and why? These questions go back a very long way, and there are many misunderstandings about the answers. Perhaps that is not surprising, as the process of clarifying the canon took centuries and was not straightforward.

The most important thing to grasp is the fundamental reason why these 66 books became the canon. It is not because the early Christians particularly liked these books. And it's not because they were widely accepted, or because some church council decided to make them authoritative. Rather, it is because the early church recognised that these books had an inherent authority for how Christians live and what they believe. They believed that these books would have that same authority through all generations. The church understood them as Scripture—as the authoritative words of God, given through human authors (Zechariah 7:12; 1 Peter 1:10–12).

## The Old Testament canon

At the time of Jesus and the apostles, the question of what constitutes ‘the Scriptures’ was basically settled. What Christians call the Old or First Testament contains the same material as the Hebrew Bible – the Scriptures of Jesus’s day. The Hebrew Bible contains 24 books (scrolls, really, since books or codices did not appear until the second half of the first century). The Christian OT divides several of these up, giving us a total of 39 books.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Hebrew Bible comprises three parts and has a different order for many of the books. Part one is the Torah (often, but unhelpfully, called ‘the Law’), containing Genesis to Deuteronomy. These five books were understood to be Scripture right from the start. Part two is the Nevi’im or Prophets. This contains Joshua to Kings, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve (a single scroll of what we call the ‘minor prophets’). The final part is the Ketuvim or Writings, consisting of a mix of poetic books, wisdom, and history.<sup>[4]</sup> The initials of these three parts give a common name for the Hebrew Bible: the TaNaK. It seems that this Hebrew canon was well established by the second century BC,<sup>[5]</sup> though with some debate about the Writings continuing into the first century AD. Notice how Jesus refers to the Scriptures as ‘the Law and the Prophets’ (e.g. Matthew 5:17) or ‘the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms’ (Luke 24:44).

## Jewish Scriptures

There is significant evidence that Jews understood these 24 scrolls to be Scripture in a way that other writings were not. On the other hand, there is very little evidence that any major Jewish group accepted any of the apocryphal books as part of the Jewish canon. They date from between the third century before Christ and possibly as late as the second century after, well after Malachi (fifth century BC) who was the last inspired prophet.

There were different views in the early church about whether to accept the apocryphal books as Scripture. One wonders why, as we know Jews didn’t include them. Jerome, a prominent fourth century theologian, rejected the apocryphal material as Scripture, though he added some of it to the relevant parts of his new Latin translation, the Vulgate,<sup>[6]</sup> marking them off to indicate that they were different from the main text.<sup>[7]</sup> He recognised that the church read the apocryphal material (which is why he included some of it), but did not accept it as authoritative and canonical. Jerome’s contemporary Augustine however, argued that the church should accept them (as well as strongly criticising Jerome for translating the Old Testament from Hebrew, rather than Greek). The Orthodox Church follows Augustine’s view, while the western churches follow Jerome’s.



A thousand years later, during the European Reformation, Martin Luther included the apocryphal books between the Old and New Testaments, though he did not include them in the table of contents and gave them the title ‘Apocrypha: These Books Are Not Held Equal to the Scriptures, but Are Useful and Good to Read’. John Calvin later completely rejected all the apocryphal writings, and that became the dominant Protestant view. On the Roman Catholic side, most scholars agreed that these writings were secondary. However, in 1546, the Council of Trent (a meeting of Roman Catholic Bishops) insisted that the debated books were Scripture just as much as those on which all sides agreed.

### **The New Testament canon**

In one way, the New Testament is slightly more straightforward. There is no equivalent to the apocryphal books which appear in some Bibles but not others: all churches accept the same 27 books. In other ways, it is equally complex. One very common idea about the NT canon is that it was decided by the Roman emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* helped to popularise this notion, but it is completely untrue.

It is clear that the first Christians regarded at least some of the apostles’ writings and some oral traditions as Scripture (1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Peter 3:16). As well as attributing divine authority to the Hebrew Bible, New Testament writers treated each other’s writings in the same way. This is remarkable, but shows their conviction that the Holy Spirit inspired their work in the same way as he inspired the prophets.

The earliest letters from the Church Fathers cited NT passages as Scripture. They treated the four (and only four) gospels as Scripture right from the beginning. This is especially clear in the second century writings of Christians such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus. It is also clear that they accepted Paul’s letters as having divine authority.

### **The challenge of heretics**

Around AD 140, the heretic Marcion rejected the OT and most apostolic writings other than Luke (which he shortened) and some of Paul’s letters. This may have motivated the early church to clarify the status of Acts, Revelation, and the non-Pauline letters. Since Acts was also written by Luke, that was accepted very early, as were 1 Peter and 1 John (Polycarp and Irenaeus, among others, quote both of them). The earliest Christian writings after the NT refer to them in the same way as to OT Scripture: the church saw them as having same authority.

Some parts of the church did not immediately accept seven texts (Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation). This is partly because it took a long time for copies of them to reach all the regions into which the church had spread. Yet the Church Fathers refer to them often enough to show that most Christians believed them to be Scripture.

It seems that the growing number of heretical texts at the end of the second century prompted more debate. The churches knew that they must not attribute divine authority to the wrong texts. That concern prompted several writers to list the books that the churches in their region accepted as Scripture. The oldest of these lists is probably the Muratorian Canon, written sometime between about 170 and the fourth century.<sup>[8]</sup> It lists most of the NT books, not including Hebrews, James, Peter's letters or 3 John. It did include the Apocalypse of Peter, which was not widely accepted. A small number of other writings were accepted by some of the early Christians, but not widely, and were finally left out of the canon lists. Of these, [The Shepherd of Hermas](#) is referred to most often by the Church Fathers.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **Making lists**

The first listing of the New Testament canon in its final form was in Athanasius's Easter Letter (AD 367). It is important to note that Athanasius gives no hint of the church deciding to accept some texts and not others. Instead, he talks about the 27 NT books as being 'God-inspired Scripture', which the 'original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered unto our fathers' and which 'have been handed down and confirmed as divine'. He also mentions the Shepherd of Hermas and the Didache as being useful to read, as well as the Old Testament apocryphal books, but stressed that these texts do not carry divine authority.

Of course, that raises the question of how the early church recognised what was 'God-inspired Scripture'. A key part of this was whether the texts had been written by an apostle or someone very closely associated with apostles (e.g. Mark and Luke). We don't know who wrote Hebrews, but its contents are fully in line with the apostles' teaching. The early church sensed God's authority in these texts and not others. In the modern world we tend to view things in very rationalistic ways and want evidence-based criteria on which to make our decisions. Much more important, however, is that the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of these texts also confirmed to the church that they had divine authority. The 66 books of the Bible are the word of God, not because some church council decided they were, but because the Holy Spirit guided the church to treasure them above all other writings and to accept the authority of God himself speaking through them.

- Tyndale House