

5. THE WORD

—*Authority, Inspiration & Reliability*

The Bible is the most historically attested document of the ancient world. It is not surprising that millions of volumes have been written about the Bible to defend it and to understand it, because the evidence for the Bible is so convincing.

Written over a period of 1500 years by more than 40 authors including kings, peasants, fishermen, poets, philosophers, scholars, prophets and scribes, the Bible portrays the religious, political, and geographic history of 40 generations of humanity, representing the greatest of ancient cultures. It describes times of war, peace, prosperity and societal collapse in such a way as to convey the widest range of human emotions, experiences and shortcomings. Written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, it links three continents with “eastern” and “western” civilization. Although the Bible includes hundreds of topics, it has a constant unifying theme beginning to end: God’s rescue of the human race from sin, brokenness, and destruction.

Additionally, the Bible provides a historical account of God’s interaction with humanity - in fact it records him speaking over 3800 times! Many of the prophets refer to the oracle of the Lord prompting them to say what they say as coming directly from God. Both Moses and Jeremiah were instructed to write the things God told them to write. In John 10:35 Jesus equates the Old Testament with the “Word of God.” Paul indicates that he speaks, i.e. writes, as taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Each of us must choose to trust and obey God’s authoritative word as revealed through scripture.

To Explore: Jesus had a high view of the authority and fulfillment of scripture. The gospels record him quoting the Old Testament 78 times from 27 Old Testament books. *What do you observe about Jesus’ view of scripture from the following passages:*

Matthew 4:1-11

Luke 4:16-21

Luke 24:25-35, 44-45

John 5:39-40

Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:10–17. *What role did Timothy’s teachers play in his spiritual formation? What were the things he learned from them? What part did scripture play? What observations do you make about the authority and inspiration of scripture?*

Read 2 Peter 1:16-21 - Peter describes his eyewitness experience on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13) and his view of the authority of scripture. *What do you notice?*

What do you learn about the authority, inspiration and reliability of scripture from these passages:

Romans 15:4

Romans 16:25-26

I Timothy 4:13

APPLICATION : In Luke 24:26, Luke 24: 44-45 & John 5:39-40 Jesus describes the Old Testament as being fundamentally about him. If Jesus is indeed the center of the whole of Scripture, how would it change the way you read and apply the Bible? How would it change the way you talk about the Bible with others? Is there someone whom you could invite to explore the Bible with you?