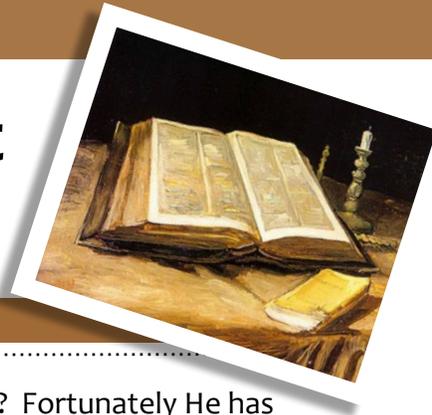


"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."  
2 Timothy 3:16



# The Word of God – Old Testament

**Theme: The Bible is the Word of God, and we have it!**

## Review

There is nothing in the universe like God, so to what or whom can we compare Him? Fortunately He has revealed what we need to know and much can be understood by this phrase: **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"** (John 14:6). We also learn that He is holy, gracious, and encompasses all that is good and righteous. Four frequently asked questions were addressed: Where did God come from? Is God male? If God cares for me, why do I have problems? Is Allah God? The main thing in life is developing a relationship with God. That relationship brings salvation and helps with life's problems, addictions, failures, fears, and emotions. It also establishes a purpose in life and teaches us how to live for Him each day.

## Introduction

The next three lessons will discuss the Bible: how we got it, how the ancient writings have been preserved, how He gets truth to our minds, the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us understand the Word, and which translation(s) are competent. Most importantly the goal is to discuss what the Word of God means to teens today.

## Bible Truth

The protestant Bible is made up of 66 different books that were written over at least 1600 years. The Old Testament (OT) has 39 books (originally written from ~1500 BC to 400 BC) and the New Testament (NT) has 27 books (written from around 40 AD to 90 AD). The OT was written originally in Hebrew, with some in Aramaic, and the NT was written in Greek. The Roman Catholic Bible has more books which, for good

reasons, are not considered as Scripture by protestants.

The very first biblical documents were written on clay or stone, later papyrus was used (a fragile material made from plants), and then parchment or vellum (animal skins). There is overwhelming evidence that the Bible(s) we have today accurately represents the

original writings. The writings of the Bible are far better preserved than any ancient human writings.

### Inspiration of the Original Writings

Each church has a doctrinal statement which states the beliefs of greatest importance. One of the first statements is generally about the Bible. It will often say that God breathed the words of the Bible to the authors (inspiration) and that inspiration applies to the entire Bible (plenary authority) in its original writings. Such a statement is essential to establish the fact that a church believes the entire Bible is the Word of God and it has complete authority in all matters of our lives. However, such statements relate to “the original writings” which do not exist today.

**Question:** What value is a statement about authority and inspiration of the original writings if they do not exist today?

This lesson will look at how we got our present-day Bibles from the original writings, and in so doing it will be made clear that God has preserved His Word in a most remarkable manner. God not only inspired the original, but He then assured we got accurate, reliable copies. Thus, His Word has been accurately transmitted to us with all its original authority and truth.

The Bible says, **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God”** (2 Tim 3:16). This means that God “breathed” His words (inspiration) to the authors without destroying their personality and style. We could say that God “carried along” the writers so they recorded the very words of God. What the authors recorded were not human words **“for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Pt 1:21). Whether speaking or writing they were proclaiming His words not their own. The process of inspiration applies to all

Scripture. A major issue is whether or not we have those writings today.

### Manuscripts and Texts

We do not have any of the original writings of any of the books of the Bible. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls are not originals. The old writings that do exist are called manuscripts. There are thousands of very old manuscripts that have been discovered; some are merely a phrase or two while some are nearly the complete Bible. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts go back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD and the oldest NT manuscripts date to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. The reason Hebrew manuscripts do not go back farther in time is because the older ones were destroyed by the scribes when they made a new copy.

Since we have no original writings, it is necessary to take the manuscripts we have and reconstruct the original text from them. For our purposes a “text” is a reconstructed version (in the original language) of the original God-breathed writings. The existing manuscripts, in parts and fragments, have to be compared, studied, and analyzed, and then combined in a way to make a complete text of either the OT or NT. This is no easy task and godly believers are needed for this. Once a text is made in the original language, then translations into other languages will more closely represent the original writings.

### The Old Testament

Prior to the invention of the movable-type printing press (1455 AD), all manuscripts were carefully copied by hand. Handwriting, no matter how good, is harder to read than the printed word. Each time a manuscript was recopied by hand the possibility of mistakes was multiplied, so great care had to be taken to assure accuracy. Ancient manuscripts were written without punctuation or even spacing between words. To make matters even worse, the older Hebrew

writings did not have vowels and went from right to left.

**Activity:** Look at the phrase below (in all capitals). This is an English example of an ancient manuscript written without spaces between words, without vowels, no verse or chapter numbers, and written from right to left. What Bible verse is this?

HTRHTDNNVHHTDTRCDGGNNGBHTN  
(answer at end of lesson)

In the example above, we can see how hard it would be to make a copy without an error or to know where one word starts and another ends. Over a number of centuries confusion could occur; for example a group of letters may mean "abundance" or maybe "a bun dance."

In spite of the fact there are few OT manuscripts in existence, that is not a problem because the Jewish scribes took incredible care to make accurate copies of the biblical text. (Note: manuscript errors are more of an issue with the NT.) That care assured the OT text transmitted throughout the ages varied little or not at all. All the OT manuscripts that exist today represent the one and same text, called the Masoretic Text. The Masoretes were a group of Hebrew (Jewish) scholars who were specially trained to make accurate copies. Their goal was not only to preserve and transmit the text as they received it, but to preserve the proper pronunciation of the words. They eventually added vowels to the consonants which was finished sometime in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. That is the text we have today. There is very little dispute over the correct Hebrew text from which to translate the OT.

**"Hark, I hear a Cannon" (this section applies to both the OT and NT)**

We all know that a couple centuries ago cannons were used in warfare. In biblical studies, there is another word pronounced the same way but spelled differently c-a-n-o-n. The word canon means a rule or way of measuring something (Gal. 6:16; 2 Cor. 10:13). Today we use the phrase "canon of Scripture" to mean the collection or list of books which have "measured-up to the rules" for determining if something is inspired by God. Those books are the authoritative word of God. The word Scripture carries the thought of that which measures-up; that is, writings which meet the rules of being inspired.

The rules that help establish if a book or writing should be in the canon of Scripture are listed below, but be sure there are more and it is complicated.

- **Genuine:** a writing is genuine if it can be traced back to the author (authorship issue).
- **Authentic:** a writing is authentic if its contents are truthful (truthfulness issue).
- **Not Corrupt:** a writing cannot have any intended or unintended errors or changes made by a copyist (no changes in the text).
- **Inspiration:** must bear the marks of divine inspiration (complicated issue).
- **Authorship:** must have been written or edited by a recognized prophet or apostle or have been endorsed by such (example: Peter endorsed Paul's writings in 2 Pt. 3:15-16). In Luke 24:25-27, 44, Jesus Christ endorsed the entire OT.

The Jewish OT had the same exact Scripture we now have in the 39 books of the protestant OT. The Roman Catholic Bible has more books, called Apocryphal books, which do not pass protestant rules for the canon of Scripture.

### The First Writings

It should be mentioned that the Bible has revealed (Ex. 24:12, 31:18), and there is mounting archeological

evidence, that ancient writings were made on tablets of clay or stone. Based upon the Bible and archeology it may be that God revealed His written Word to people living even before Moses. Moses would have then been the final editor bringing all those ancient writings together as God guided him. This would mean that people for all ages, from the very beginning

to the very end, will have had the written Word of God to guide and instruct them.

**Discuss:** The Bible is His Word, but why should a teen care? Discuss eternal truth, knowing God's will, knowing future events, need for salvation, living for Christ, etc.

## Life Applications

Several life application principles are shown below from the OT (since that is what this lesson has covered). These principles are eternal; they never change regardless of when a person lives. These life applications are why we all need to study the Bible and respect it's wisdom relying upon the Holy Spirit to help us understand it.

**Know the Truth:** If you want to accomplish something great in your life (and it may never be known by anyone but God), then hear the Word of the Lord. It is the truth of the Word that teaches us, leads us, provides light on the pathway of life, and brings salvation. On top of all that, it endures forever. It is through the Word that the will of God comes to us, so that we can grasp what He desires and can accomplish the great things He has in store for us. We can be sure the Word will never grow weak or out of date while forever providing the direction and wisdom we seek from above.

- **"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation..."** (Psa.25:5).
- **"Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me..."** (Psa. 43:3).
- **"For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord endures forever"** (Psa. 117:2).

**See the Future:** The Bible clearly reveals what the future will be. We can learn the course of our Age,

what is next in God's great plan for this world, and where we will be for eternity. If you are concerned about death, what happens after you die, or what lies ahead for this world (prophecy); then there is only one true source of information. What is so incredible is that the Bible has predicted many events, some are now history and they were fulfilled exactly, in the tiniest detail, just as God predicted. This is evidence that the Bible is divinely inspired and can reveal the future. As an example, the Bible speaks of a coming period of seven years called the Tribulation. Many verses tell us in great detail about this terrible time on the earth. Every person needs to know about the seven-year Tribulation so they are aware of what lies ahead. However, as you learn of the future, you will also discover that God has graciously prepared an escape from the Tribulation; it is called the Rapture (more on this in future lessons). So if you care about the future and what will happen to you and the world, there is only one true source.

**Burn in Your Heart:** Below are several verses which teach us that the Word was so precious to Jeremiah they were life-sustaining and he "ate them up." Later, after being mocked for trusting in God, he tried not to speak of Him, but the Word was like a burning fire and he could not hold it back. That is the power of God's Word. The unbeliever will never understand this power, but the believer knows it in his/her heart. This

burning passion to know the Lord and to serve Him can be yours by faith in Jesus Christ.

- **"Your words were found, and I ate them. And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16).**

- **"Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not" (Jer. 20: 9).**

## Take 2 Heart

### Summary

The words of the Bible were God-breathed to the authors who were moved and guided by God to write precisely as He wanted. God then assured that the Word He gave was not lost but transmitted down through the ages to us. We have only studied the OT so far, but you can be sure it is the perfect Word of God. The Word of God is old but timeless; thus, it has specific application to us. The Word teaches us His truth so we can be saved and know His will for our lives (His plans for the believer today). His Word teaches us about the future so we can know what will certainly happen. We should have a desire to eat it up and then have a burning passion to speak/live its truth.

### Gospel

The Bible is designed to teach truths that have come from God. The main truth from the OT, starting in the first book of the Bible, is that we are sinners and that sin has a penalty that must be paid; it can never be overlooked or just forgotten. The NT presents the case of the Lord Jesus Christ who died to pay the

penalty for our sin. If we believe in Christ, our sin will be forgiven. The moment we believe our sins are forgiven; we are saved. Saved from the penalty of sin (Hell) and saved unto a glorious future in Heaven. The Bible says, **"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him"** (Rom. 5: 8-9).

### Encouragement

Christian teens living for Christ face many problems today. You may be ridiculed for believing the Bible as Jeremiah was. The Lord understands and has promised to provide all you need and to help you through each situation. Surely, the Lord rejoices in young people who hold their faith as a precious treasure. Others will grow to respect that faith and may ask you to tell them about it. How amazing God is! He has provided us His Word in a pure and undefiled manner. That Word reveals His will for you, so that you may know the truth and so that He can work in your life to accomplish wonderful things.

**Activity page 2: Genesis. 1:1, "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth."**