

LESSON 2 Basic Information About the Bible

The Bible is for all people—young and old, uneducated and educated, rich and poor. It is a spiritual guidebook to teach people how to be saved and to know God’s plan for them. The apostle Paul writes of the Bible, “Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Thus, each person can relate personally to the Bible.

We can receive blessing and instruction from reading the Bible, even though we do not understand it completely. But the full joy of Bible knowledge comes only with serious study. Therefore, we need to have some basic information. In this lesson we will learn about the writing of the Bible, its central ideas, unity, and divisions.

The Plan

- A. Writers of the Bible
 - 1. Inspiration
 - 2. Authority
- B. Transmission of the Bible
- C. Unity of the Bible
 - 1. Old and New Testaments
 - 2. Progressive Revelation

The Goals

- 1. Describe how the Bible was written and transmitted to us.
- 2. Discuss the main theme and structure of the Bible.
- 3. Indicate the main factors that create unity in the Bible.

A. WRITERS OF THE BIBLE

Goal 1. Describe how the Bible was written and transmitted to us.

Inspiration

About 40 men wrote the Bible during a period of about 1600 years. With so many different writers and circumstances involved, the Bible could have had little or no unity. But the Bible tells us that the supernatural God guided or inspired the writers to record His dealings with humanity.

Inspiration, in reference to the Bible, is the actual “breathing in” of God’s Spirit to guide the thoughts of the writers. This is easy to understand if we recall that God created man out of soil and gave him life by breathing life-giving breath into his nostrils.

Some critics believe that though the Bible does contain God’s truth, it also contains errors. Others try to explain that

parts of the Bible become the inspired Word of God to each person when God speaks to people through these particular Bible words. Still others explain that God dictated the Bible word by word to men who wrote it without thinking about the words. These are all wrong ideas about inspiration.

The Bible says, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). In 2 Peter 1:21 is written, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” If we accept any of God’s Word as truth, then we must accept the whole Word as truth.

Also, we cannot say that the writers were mere machines with no freedom of choice. Though some did not fully understand what they wrote, especially concerning prophecies yet to be fulfilled, others studied their topics. They even wrote about their own experiences. What all had in common was God’s special revelation. Paul noted this: “The mystery made known to me by revelation, . . . which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:3, 5). God’s Holy Spirit continues to confirm God’s Word as truth.

Authority

The words of the Bible, just as the writers wrote them at first, are the best words possible for God’s purpose. Since God inspired them, we can trust them. They are always true, and they cannot fail.

The Bible is complete. As the Word of God, it needs nothing else. Nothing is to be added to the Bible words, and nothing is to be taken from them.

Because the Bible is true, complete, and inspired by God, biblical scholars say that it has authority. Even the crowds who heard Jesus speak recognized divine anointing. They said He was not like other teachers, but he taught with authority (Matthew 7:29). The three main meanings of authority are: final truth, official statement or law, and power to give commands. God’s Word has authority in all three areas. It reveals the truth

about God. It is the official plan of redemption for all people. And it has power to change lives as people obey its commands.

When we accept the authority of God's Word, we can study it with greater understanding. We no longer just say it is God's Word and forget about it; we respond to it as the real, living Word of God, which transforms our lives. As we understand its teachings, we accept them without doubt. Paul was so thankful that the church of the Thessalonians received and accepted God's message "not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

We can rely on the authority of the Bible. We can believe God's promises are real and claim them for our lives. His joy and peace will follow. Then we can respond to the Word in complete obedience.

Application

- 1** To understand the Bible, we must recognize that it was written under divine
 - 2** Because the Bible is true, it speaks with
 - 3** We recognize inspiration of the Bible through
 - a)** its own words.
 - b)** its literary qualities.
 - c)** the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 4** The authority of the Bible is seen in its
 - a)** final truth.
 - b)** power to change lives.
 - c)** hundreds of commentaries.
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B. TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

Goal 2. Discuss the main theme and structure of the Bible.

For a long time there was no written revelation from God to humanity. But God did speak to people and guided them in

many of their actions. God's Word was given to each person in a direct way. For instance, God called Abraham and told him that through him and his descendants (the Hebrew nation), all the world would be blessed. Out of that nation God chose certain men to write His revelation. We will describe how the Bible was written and transmitted or given to us.

God inspired Moses to write a revelation that would explain the creation of the earth and give God's laws, promises, and prophecies. Thus, Moses wrote a set of books to which other holy men of God added writings. These writers wrote the books of the Bible on stones, clay tablets, skins, and scrolls. These first writings do not exist today, but God guided wise and faithful men to copy all the books of the Bible. Many copies of the first writings do exist today. They are in museums and libraries throughout the world.

For many years the books in the Bible were called "the Books." The word "Bible" came from the Greek word *biblia*, which meant "book." Then the Bible became known as "the Book," corresponding with the Greek. Thus, the meaning of the name "Bible" is appropriately ascribed to the 66 books, which make the holy book.

Bible scholars have examined and accepted the Bible as the inspired Word of God. In fact, they call the books of the Bible "the canon." The canon is complete. There are other ancient writings about God, but they are not inspired. They are not part of God's revelation to us.

God wants us to understand His message. He had the Old Testament writers use Hebrew so the Hebrew people could understand them. The New Testament writers used Greek, which was the common language of Jesus' day.

Today, the Bible has been translated into more than 1300 languages, so that more people can understand the message of God. It is common to find different wording in different translations. But the message is the same.

Application

- 5** In modern language the word *Bible* means
- the Book.
 - Greek books.
- 6** The Bible is translated into more than 1300
- books.
 - languages.
- 7** The books of the Bible are called the canon because
- they are accepted as the inspired Word of God.
 - they are written by 66 men.
- 8** We have the Bible today because
- it was written on solid stones.
 - God guided wise men to copy the writings.
 - God preserved the clay tablets and scrolls.



C. UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Goal 3. Indicate the main factors that create unity in the Bible.

Old and New Testaments

The 66 books of the Bible are divided into the Old Testament with 39 books and the New Testament with 27 books. Yet they are one book, one history, one story. The main idea of each book is God's plan of redemption for humanity. The Old Testament predicts what will happen in the New Testament, and the New Testament explains and fulfills the old covenant. Thus they work together in unity, for both were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The central figure of both Testaments is Christ. Each book shows Him in a special way. For instance, Genesis shows Christ as the Creator, Exodus shows Him as the Redeemer. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles show Him as the King, and Isaiah shows Him as the Messiah. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John show

Christ as the promised Messiah, the Servant of God, the Son of Man, and the Son of God. As you study each book, try to see how Christ is shown.

Christ in the Bible	
Genesis	Creator
Exodus	Redeemer
Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles	King
Isaiah	Messiah
Matthew	Messiah
Mark	Servant of God
Luke	Son of Man
John	Son of God

The word *testament* means “agreement.” The Old Testament reveals God’s agreement with man about his salvation before Christ came. This was based on the laws God gave Moses to write down. The New Testament is God’s agreement with humans after Christ came. It is based on God’s grace, which is His complete love for humanity. God sent His Son to die and rise again so that we can have the gift of salvation.

The Old Testament predicts the coming of Christ and shows the weakness of the old agreement. The covenant of the Old Testament was for a limited time and for one nation, the Jews. It was limited in other ways, for instance, the people had to sacrifice animals each year to keep paying for their sins. (See Hebrews 10:4–7, 10, 14.)

The New Testament tells of Christ’s coming and fulfills the predictions of the Old Testament: “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son” (Galatians 4:4). The new agreement lasts forever (Hebrews 7:24, 28). It is for all nations (Acts 10:34–35) and pays the penalty for all sins. All we have to do is accept God’s gift of His Son.

The following chart shows how to group the books of the Bible.

Old Testament		
Law	Genesis–Deuteronomy	5
History	Joshua–Esther	12
Poetry	Job–Song of Songs	5
Prophecy		
Major Prophets	Isaiah–Daniel	5
Minor Prophets	Hosea–Malachi	12
New Testament		
Gospels	Matthew–John	4
History	Acts	1
Epistles		
Paul’s	Romans–Philemon	13
General	Hebrews–Jude	8
Prophecy	Revelation	1

Progressive Revelation

The Bible story begins in Genesis with the creation of the world and man. It ends in Revelation with the ending of life on the earth as we know it. Between these two books is the story of how God worked out humanity’s salvation so that we can enjoy eternal life in heaven.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they sinned. They were then separated from God spiritually. But God still loved them. He began to make a way to heal their spirits. It took a long time for man to receive the full revelation of God about spiritual healing. Hebrews 1:1–2 tells us, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”

Today, we have the full revelation through Christ, who is the living Word. The people who lived in the Old Testament times did not have this. They had a part of it. As time went by, God

revealed more and more of His truth. (See Isaiah 28:10.) We call this progressive revelation.

God dealt with Old Testament people in a different way than He deals with us. The teachings in the New Testament against polygamy and divorce, for example, seem to conflict with Old Testament stories of these practices. But Jesus explained that God dealt differently in the past. They had less of the truth revealed to them than we have (Matthew 19:3–9). We have more truth because Jesus came to show us the way. As you study the Bible, you will see more the unity of God’s plan for your life.

Application

9 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement:

- a)** The main theme of the Bible is the creation of the world.
- b)** The Old and New Testaments are God’s old and new agreements with man.
- c)** The Old and New Testaments work together to explain God’s plan for man.
- d)** The message of each book in the Bible centers on a different character.

10 Select the description below that best represents progressive revelation.

- a)** The revelation of God is for a few people.
- b)** People tell others about God’s revelation from beginning to end.
- c)** God revealed His truth a little at a time.

11 Select those statements that illustrate the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

- a)** Both were written on ancient scrolls.
- b)** The Old Testament predicts what will happen in the New.
- c)** The central figure of both Testaments is Christ.
- d)** God dealt with people the same in Old Testament times as in New Testament times.
- e)** The New Testament reveals truths from the Old Testament.



Reading the entire Bible through will help you to see that what some unbelievers have called contradictions are, in fact, confirmations of the completeness of God's Word.

Check Your Answers

- 1** inspiration.
- 7 a)** they are accepted as the inspired Word of God.
- 2** authority.
- 8 b)** God guided wise men to copy the writings.
- 3 a)** its own words.
c) the work of the Holy Spirit
- 9 a)** False
b) True
c) True
d) False
- 4 a)** final truth.
b) power to change lives.
- 10 c)** God revealed His truth a little at a time.
- 5 a)** the Book.
- 11 b)** The Old Testament predicts what will happen in the New.
c) The central figure of both Testaments is Christ.
e) The New Testament reveals truths from the Old Testament.
- 6 b)** languages.

