

## **Introduction**

I'd like to begin with what psychologists call a cognitive distortion, a wrong way of thinking about things. It's "**All or nothing thinking.**" This distortion views things in extreme black and white terms when there are actually gray areas in between. So, a straight "A" senior gets his first B ever and concludes, "**I'm a failure.**" It's all, only "A's", or nothing, failure. That's a distortion because even though he isn't perfect, straight "A's", he isn't a failure either, far from it.

But all or nothing thinking isn't always a cognitive distortion. It isn't always crooked thinking. It's sometimes straight thinking instead. The fact is that some things actually are all or nothing and our text reveals one of those. It's the Bible.

## **The Bible Is God's Word**

Look first of all at the word "**Scripture**" in verse 16, which is called "**the sacred writings**" in verse 15. For Paul, that Scripture was the 39 books of the Old Testament. For us, it's the 66 books of both the Old and New Testaments, what we call "**the Bible.**"

In verse 16, Paul makes a startling claim about it. It's "**inspired by God.**" The Greek words translated that mean "**God-breathed.**" My second favorite book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, is a human product. My favorite book, the Bible, is a divine product. That's the idea that the words "**God-breathed**" convey. Human beings wrote down the words on rolls of papyrus. But they were "**moved by the Holy Spirit**" as they did to quote 2 Peter 1:21. They wrote down, in other words, what God revealed to them and told them to write down. That makes the Bible literally "**the word of God.**"

Let's think about one aspect of God's competence. He's all-knowing or fully informed. He knows literally everything there is to know about literally everyone and everything – past, present, and future. Now let's think about one aspect of His character. He's utterly honest. He cannot

lie to quote Titus 1:2. His infinite knowledge and utter honesty together have an inevitable result. The Bible He wrote is infallible, meaning inerrant. It's has no mistakes in it.

### **The Claim – the Bible Isn't Inerrant**

That's inerrancy and there's something we need to grasp. It's at issue today. The results of an extensive Gallup Poll reveal just that. Gallup summarized them this way **"Only about one-third of Americans today believe the Bible is absolutely accurate. The rest either feel that the Bible is the inspired word of God, but not literally so, or that it is a book of ancient fables, legends, and history as recorded by man."** 33% of Americans believe the Bible is inerrant. It has no mistakes. 67% believe it's errant. It has mistakes.

The poll though is category specific. One of its categories is church attendance. Of those who never go to church, 92% believe that the Bible is errant. Of those who go to church every week, 46% believe it's errant. The 92% isn't shocking. The 46% is. It tells us that 46% of the people in America's churches every Sunday morning believe that the Bible to which they're listening has mistakes in it.

Some of those are the very ones preaching or teaching it. One Christian author tells about a professor he met from an evangelical seminary in California. In a public debate, the professor said, **"I believe the Bible despite all the mistakes in it."** Or R.C. Sproul ran into an old college classmate, now a pastor, at a conference. He told Sproul: **"I don't believe anymore what I used to believe about Scripture when we were in college together. Back then I believed in inerrancy, but I've been to seminary and have been exposed to higher criticism. I just don't believe that the Bible is inerrant anymore."**

Those anecdotes illustrate that the inerrancy of the Bible is at issue not just in our culture but in our churches and seminaries as well – not just among secularists but among Christians as well. Church leaders and attenders alike believe that it's errant. It has mistakes in it.

## The Truth – the Bible Is Inerrant

But they're absolutely positively wrong. The Bible is inerrant. Notice something about the word "**Scripture**" in verse 16. It's singular. It refers to a text or paragraph of thought in the Bible. Also notice the determinative word that precedes it, "**All.**" Let me ask you a question in light of that word. Which texts or paragraphs of thought in the Bible are without mistakes? The answer is "**all of them.**"

All of them are, *regardless of their subject matter*, and I emphasize that, *regardless of their subject matter*. That subject matter can be divided into four categories: faith, history, science, and psychology.

Some Christians claim the Bible is inerrant in matters of faith but not in matters of history, science, and psychology. They contend that its purpose is to teach us about God and life with Him, which are matters of faith. There are no mistakes, therefore, in what it states about that. But there are mistakes in what it states about history, science, and psychology, which are beyond its purpose.

Paul disagrees. Referring to the texts that comprise the Bible, he says that God inspired them all. The word "**all**" obviously encompasses those that record matters of history, science, and psychology. Please grasp what that implies. When it comes to the Bible, it's all or nothing. All of it is inspired and inerrant or none of it is. Well, the evidence shows that all of it is.

Let me give you a historical example of this. Christianity is rooted in history as no other religion is. A primary reason C.S. Lewis abandoned atheism for Christianity was that there is "**no such historical claim as in Christianity.**" The Bible records innumerable historical facts and events. Christianity maintains that if even one of those is proven false, the Bible is errant. And if it's errant, it isn't the word of God. And if it isn't the word of God, Christianity collapses.

But Christianity won't collapse because it has no historical mistakes. Nelson Glueck was a renowned 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish archaeologist. He wrote in that regard "**It may be stated categorically that no**

**archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference.”** On the contrary, archaeological discoveries have consistently affirmed Biblical references.

Isaiah 20:1, for instance, records that an Assyrian king named Sargon laid siege to a city called Ashdod. The Bible mentions Sargon only once, here, and no other ancient literature ever mentioned him. Critics argued, therefore, that this was a historical mistake. But then acclaimed archaeologist Paul Emille Bott uncovered the extensive royal palace of Sargon in his dig of 1842-1845 dig. Among the relics he discovered there was an account of the king’s siege of Ashdod.

That’s typical. The fact is that every text in the Bible is inerrant regardless of its subject matter. The Bible is as utterly reliable in matters of history, science, and psychology as it is in matters of faith. Isaiah 20:1 is as inspired and inerrant as John 3:16 is.

### **Profitable**

That’s the truth and notice what Paul concludes as a result in verse 16. The Bible is **“profitable.”** It is so in many ways, one of which is this. It shows us how to live well. That is the primary concern in most people’s minds – how to live well. It’s been so since Plato’s *The Republic* 2400 years ago. Living well requires two things. We must *identify* reality, and then *live consistently* with it. When we act according to reality, things go well for others and us. When we act contrary to it, things go poorly for others and us. Well, since God is all-knowing and utterly honest, this Bible He wrote is a perfect picture of reality, and thus profitable as no other book is. It does two things.

First, according to verse 15, it gives us **“the wisdom that leads to salvation.”** It tells us what we need to know about the dominant reality of the universe, God, and how we can enter into and sustain the personal relationship with Him that is foundational to living well.

Second, according to verse 16, it **“teaches”** and **“trains.”** That means it reveals how to act consistently with reality. It also **“reproves”**

and **“corrects.”** That means it reveals how not to act inconsistently with reality. James Dobson tells about a survey that asked a cross section of fourth grade girls one question, **“What is the biggest worry in your life right now?”** They gave one answer more than any other, **“My weight.”** We feel for them don’t we, their concern for appearance distressing them so. They’ve been socialized to act contrary to the reality in Matthew 6:27-30. That text teaches. Do treasure inner beauty of character. It also corrects. Don’t treasure outer beauty of body.

When everything is said and done, the Bible is one of the three **“guidance gifts”** that God has given to human beings.

### **Know, Believe, and Abide**

It only makes sense, therefore, that we incorporate it into our lives. We do so in the same way that Timothy did in verses 14-15.

First, we **“learn”** the Bible (verse 14) and thus **“know”** it (verse 15). There’s only one way of course to learn and know it. It’s to study it. We learn the principles for interpreting it (available under the *Disciples ‘R’ Us* curriculum on our church’s website). We then patiently, over the course of our lifetimes, interpret the sentences, verses, and paragraphs of thought that comprise it. As the last line in verse 14 implies, we can rely on people in the know to assist us. Those people in the know today include authors of commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and Bible handbooks, and pastors and teachers. However we do it, we do it. We get a working knowledge of the Bible.

Timothy did a second thing that we also do. According to verse 14, he was **“convinced of”** the things that He knew. He believed them in other words and so must we. Belief involves the readiness to act as if what is believed is so. Some people have what we call **“head knowledge”** of the Bible. They know it but don’t believe it – aren’t convinced it’s reality. Consequently, they don’t have the readiness to act as if what it says is so. It isn’t enough just to know the Bible’s content. We must also believe it. Understanding is the basis of belief. So, we

choose to learn and understand the nature of God and the Bible. We also pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the gift of belief.

We do a third thing that Timothy did. **“Continue in”** or as it’s better translated **“abide in”** the Bible, verse 14. Our knowledge of and belief in it is a working knowledge and belief. We habitually apply it to all the activities, experience, and events of our day-to-day lives. We make it the course of our everyday lives from the moment we wake up until the moment we go to sleep. We decide and act according to it.

That is what we need to do. Know, believe, and abide in the Bible.

An example, two companion texts, is worth a thousand words. One is 1 Corinthians 13:4, **“Love does not brag.”** I learned from several Bible commentators that the Greek word translated **“brag”** means **“windbag.”** If we love people, we aren’t windbags in our conversations with them. The other text is James 1:19, **“But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak.”** We should listen far more than talk in our conversations with others. The two texts together teach that we should be **“You-deep”** not **“Me-deep”** in conversation.

I’ve done three things with those two texts. First, I studied and know them. Second, I believe them. Based on what I understand about the nature of God and the Bible, I’m convinced it’s safe and best to do what they say. And third, I abide in them. I make them the course of my conversations with others. I purposely listen more than I talk. I direct the conversations to them not me.

## **Conclusion**

A young woman who was on a diet decided to eat just a spoonful of ice cream at a birthday party and immediately regretted it. **“I’ve completely blown my diet,”** she declared. That kind of all or nothing thinking has no place in our lives. But this kind does, **“All of the Bible is the inspired inerrant word of God or none of it is.”** Well, the evidence shows that all of it is. So let’s live accordingly. Know it. Believe it. And abide in it.