

*Voltaire, the noted 18th century French philosopher, said that it took centuries to build up Christianity, but "I'll show how just one Frenchman can destroy it within 50 years." Taking his pen, he dipped it into the ink of unbelief and wrote against God.*

*Twenty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society purchased his house for printing the Bible. And it later became the Paris headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Bible is still a best-seller; an entire 6-volume set of Voltaire's works was once sold for 90¢.*

Voltaire wanted to destroy Christianity, yet the Bible was printed in his house. How ironic is that? The Bible is the tool of the Christian. The Bible is very important to us as Christians.

Today I want to talk about the Bible and the Scriptures. Today I want to talk about what the Scriptures are, what they are useful for, how to study the Scriptures and why to study the Scriptures.

**Let's read 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 complete, equipped for every good work.*

- I. First, let's talk for a minute about what the Scriptures are.
  - a. Well, in this passage I think it is most likely that Paul was referring to the Old Testament.
  - b. Paul was encouraging Timothy that the Old Testament is inspired by God. The NIV says "God- Breathed."
  - c. There are three major views of how the Scriptures are inspired:
    - i. (1) a dictation theory, which asserts that God spoke through the writers as though they were dictating machines;
    - ii. (2) verbal plenary inspiration in which the result of inspiration is that God produced in all Scripture the very words he wanted;
    - iii. (3) a dynamic view in which the thoughts of Scripture are viewed as inspired but the choice of words is left to the individual writers
  - d. I think the Scriptures are a little bit of all three depending on the type of literature and the context. There certainly were times when God inspired word for word and other times God inspired the thoughts.

- e. Now we are going to do some Bible work for a minute, as I said, Paul was likely writing about the Old Testament. In 2 Peter 1:20-21 Peter wrote about Scripture as well. Let's read that passage.
- f. **Read 2 Peter 1:20-21:** *...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*
- g. Now look at 2 Peter 3:14-16: *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*
- h. In that passage, Peter includes Paul's writings as Scripture. Notice Peter says that Paul writes what the wisdom of God gave him. Then in verse 16 Peter includes Paul's letters with the other Scriptures.
- i. Now, one more passage about Scripture is found in 1 Cor 14:37. I'll just summarize this passage. In this passage Paul says that if someone thinks of himself as a prophet he must understand that what he writes is the Lord's command. Paul knew he was writing Scripture.
- j. So, we can see from early on that Paul knew he was writing Scripture and Peter also believed that.
- k. By studying the first few centuries we know that by the middle of the second century the New Testament was being compiled. The individual letters and works were written by the end of the first century, but now it is being compiled as what we now know as the New Testament. We know this by quotes of church fathers. Some of these church fathers were disciple by the apostles.
- l. One of my resources reads:
- m. *The first time that we know of a list containing precisely these twenty-seven books is in Athanasius' Easter letter of A.D. 367.*<sup>1</sup> That is the first reference of them altogether.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul J. Achtemeier, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Includes index., 1st ed., 700 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985). He also writes: By the middle of the

- a. In AD 367 is when we first know of a list containing our 27 New Testament books. There is plenty more reading that we can do on that.
- b. What I want you to know is that the Christian Church since very early on, even in the second century, has recognized the 27 books in our New Testament as Scripture. In my manuscript I have more info about this. Through certain early church councils as well as Peter's own words, I think it is evident that Paul's letters and the New Testament is Scripture and is God breathed. **(Readers, see footnote for more info which is from the *Moody Bible Handbook*.)**
- c. Some of you may question the Old and New Testament thinking it is just written by men and men make mistakes.
- d. I want to challenge you that God was over the process in inspiration and there are many proofs of this.
- e. One proof is the prophecies of Jesus. There are over 300 prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. These are fulfilled in the New Testament. The probability that several different authors writing these prophecies several hundred years prior to Christ and these prophecies being fulfilled in Jesus is astronomical. Many of these prophecies Jesus couldn't be in control of. For example, He couldn't control His birthplace.
- f. I would love to talk to you more about these matters. Contact me. I also recommend the book: *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell.
- g. Also C.S Lewis' *Mere Christianity* and Lee Strobel's books.
- h. Josh McDowell was a devout atheist until he studied Christianity and the religions of the world and came to know Christ.

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*second century, a collection of the four Gospels was made. At this time, Luke was separated from Acts so that thereafter Acts had a life of its own. If one takes seriously the claim of Tertullian, some type of Christian canon existed before Marcion—a canon that the heretic cut down to his own canon of an expurgated version of Luke and ten 'corrected' Letters of Paul. If one does not accept Tertullian's claim, then by the end of the second century, partially in reaction to Marcion, a NT canon of some sort existed. This canon was a collection of collections (the four-fold Gospel, the Pauline Letters, and Revelation, which was itself a collection of seven letters and seven visions), with the Pauline Letters introduced by Acts and supplemented by several general Letters to counter Marcion's exclusive focus on Paul. The Christian writings that were produced within a period of seventy-five to one hundred years, in contrast to the period of nearly one thousand years for the production of the OT documents, were now on the road toward acceptance in a twenty-seven-book NT canon normally used by Western Christians today.*

- II. Okay, now let's get back to the text of 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Paul says that all Scripture is God breathed and is useful.
- a. The Bible is from God and has purpose.
  - b. There are four of these purposes.
  - c. Teaching: that is what I am doing
  - d. Rebuking: a rebuke is a sharp correction.
  - e. In Ephesus, where Timothy was the pastor, there were false prophets. These people needed rebuked and they need rebuked with Scripture.
  - f. Listen, my words don't matter that much, the Scriptures are what is important.
  - g. Correcting: the Scriptures are useful for general corrections
  - h. Training in righteousness: The Scriptures train us how to live
  - i. Verse 17 answers the question of "why," why, use the Scriptures.
  - j. Paul says, "So the man (or woman) of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
  - k. The Scriptures equip us.
  - l. Look with me at 2 Timothy 2:15: *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*
  - m. Paul says "do your best." The KJV translated this as "study." However, it really means to "be diligent."
  - n. This includes studying but not only that. This is about our whole life.
  - o. So, we are to "be diligent," "work hard" in order to present ourselves to God. We are presenting ourselves to God. We are presenting ourselves as one who doesn't need to be ashamed.
  - p. "Ashamed." This means that we are to live our lives as men of God, women of God.
  - q. We would be ashamed of our sin. Our shame comes by standing in front of a holy God, but also by being seen by the world as hypocrites.
  - r. But that is not the end. Paul says, correctly handles the "Word of Truth."

- s. So, Paul is telling young Timothy (and us) to work hard, be diligent to live a holy life and also to know the Scriptures. Paul is about to die, and these are his final words. He died soon after writing this.
  - 1. This is where we fail, big time.
  - 2. Today we have more availability to know the Scriptures than ever before, but we don't know them.
  - 3. Most of the time we don't even care about the Scriptures.
  - 4. Even in most churches, the pastor might rather quote a psychologist than the Bible. I have listened to youth messages with hardly any Bible. I have listened to Sunday morning sermons with hardly any Bible. How sad.
  - 5. When solving problems, how often do you consider the Bible's words?
    - a. Now, I agree, as an engineer, the Bible may not speak to your equation.
    - b. But the Bible will speak to many of life's problems. Just read Proverbs, there is so much financial management instruction in Proverbs. There is also so much family wisdom in Proverbs.
    - c. Even if you are a non-Christian the Bible will help you out in life.
  - 6. As a church, in our board meetings, do we consult and think about Biblical wisdom? Intentionally. There may be times when our church boards will face heavy decisions and the best thing to do will be to pray and fast for a week and then come together to decide. We must pray, we must also consult God's Word.
- ii. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Theologian killed by the Nazi's in World War II. There is a great biography about him out right now. He was a brilliant man who would not cave to the Nazis. Many other German churches were going along with Hitler's anti-Semitic comments but he would not. He was trying to organize churches that stayed true to Scripture. There was a time that he came to New York City to study. His impressions of our American church were not good. He wrote:
- iii. By this time Bonhoeffer is in his lower twenties and has almost, if not, completed his PhD.

*“ [The Union Students] talk a blue streak without the slightest foundation and with no evidence of any criteria... they are unfamiliar with even the most basic questions. They become intoxicated with liberal and humanistic phrases, laugh at the fundamentalists, and yet basically are not even up to their level.”*

iv. On another occasion he wrote:

*“In New York they preach about virtually everything, only one thing is not addressed, or is addressed so rarely that I have as yet been unable to hear it, namely, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the cross, sin and forgiveness, death and life.”<sup>2</sup>*

v. You see Bonhoeffer came to the U.S. soon after a pastor in New York City made some waves. His name was Harry Emerson Fosdick. Listen to what Eric Metaxis writes about him:

*Fosdick had been the pastor at New York’s First Presbyterian Church when in 1922 he preached an infamous sermon titled, ‘Shall the Fundamentalist Win?’ In it he laid out a kind of Apostles Creed in which he expressed his serious doubts about most of the historic assertions of the Christian faith, including the virgin birth, the resurrection, the divinity of Christ, the atonement, miracles, and the Bible as the Word of God. This sermon was the opening salvo in a battle that would rage particularly hotly through the 1920s and 1930s. The local presbytery immediately conducted an investigation, but as a son of the moneyed East Coast WASP establishment, Fosdick had little to fear. His defense was conducted by another establishment scion, John Foster Dulles, who would serve as Eisenhower’s secretary of state, and whose father was a well known liberal Presbyterian minister. Fosdick resigned before they could censure him, and he was given the pastorate of the fashionably progressive Park Avenue Baptist Church, where John D. Rockefeller was a prominent member and whose foundation’s philanthropic arm was run by Fosdick’s own brother.<sup>3</sup>*

1. When we start compromising Scripture that’s what happens. But the Bible teaches us to use the Bible to teach, correct, rebuke and instruct in godliness. Bonhoeffer came to America and his first impression was this mess with Fosdick. He thought we were all people who compromise Scripture. Ironic that usually, even then, it was the European churches that were known to compromise Scripture. But

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Metaxis. *Bonhoeffer Pastor, Prophet, Martyr, Spy*. Thomas Nelson, Inc. Nashville, Tenn. 2010. (page 99)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. page 102.

Bonhoeffer, even coming from Europe saw what was going on in this church in New York City and didn't like it.

- vi. We as Christians must get into the Scriptures more and more.
- vii. We must not compromise the Bible. We must believe it in faith.
- viii. We must live it. It is not enough to believe the Bible, we must live the Bible.
- ix. We must study the Scriptures so that we "correctly handle the Word of Truth" as Paul said.

III. How do you study the Scriptures?

- a. First you read the Scriptures
- b. You can't study the Scriptures when your Bible stays on the shelf.
- c. Get the Bible off the shelf and read it. We think it is a difficult thing to do but we never try. Read the Scriptures.
- d. If you read about 90 verses a day you will complete the Bible in one year. Read 45 verses a day and you will complete the Bible in two years.
- e. If you don't have a good Bible with a modern translation let me know and I will give one to you. By modern translation I mean New International Version or New American Standard Version and there are several other good translations.<sup>4</sup>
  - i. There are other Bible translations known as paraphrases like the *Message* and the *New Living Translation*, they have their place but not as your main Bible.
  - ii. By the way, Eugene Peterson is the author of *the Message*. He did a good job in what he set out to do which was render the Bible in a very contemporary format. He didn't intend for it to take the place of our main translation. Peterson does, however, have a PhD in linguistics and is a brilliant scholar. He has a series of theological books that are awesome reads. They are seminary level, so if you purchase any of his other books, take your time through them.
- f. You should also have a good study Bible. In a study Bible there is a section at the bottom of each page that has commentary on the text. This will help you apply it and understand it.

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<sup>4</sup> The NRSV, the ESV, the HCSB, etc

- g. Go to a Christian bookstore. They have a section on study Bibles. I can help you with this if you contact me during the week.
- h. It is important that you set aside an hour or so each week for in depth study of the Bible. During this time you open your Bible and spend time studying one chapter or one small section.
  - i. You will be tempted to move on to another section or chapter but don't.
  - ii. Read through the chapter a couple times.
  - iii. Then divide the chapter into paragraphs.
  - iv. Give each paragraph a title.
  - v. Then take each paragraph and write it in your own words.
  - vi. Also, think about any cross-references to those verses. A cross-reference is another Bible passage that is stating something similar. Most Bibles list cross-references in the inside column or along the right or the left. Scripture interprets Scripture, so those cross-references are important.
  - vii. Meditate and pray for God's wisdom in applying the passage and understanding the passage.
- i. I also recommend Christian radio to help learn the Bible.
- j. Go to [Oneplace.com](http://Oneplace.com) and listen to sermons. That will help.
- k. The Bible is important. We need to learn the Bible.

*The Bible can change not only a life but an entire lifestyle. Most of us have heard the story of the Mutiny on the Bounty, but few of us have heard how the Bible played a very vital part in that historical event. The Bounty was a British ship which set sail from England in 1787, bound for the South Seas. The idea was that those on board would spend some time among the islands, transplanting fruit-bearing and food-bearing trees, and doing other things to make some of the islands more habitable. After ten months of voyage, the Bounty arrived safely at its destination and for six months the officers and crew gave themselves to the duties placed upon them by their government.*

*When the special task was completed, however, and the order came to embark again, the sailors rebelled. They had formed strong attachments for the native girls, and the climate and the ease of the South Sea island life was much to their liking. The result was mutiny on the Bounty,*

*and the sailors placed Captain Bligh and a few loyal men adrift on an open boat. Captain Bligh, in an almost miraculous fashion, survived the ordeal, was rescued, and eventually arrived home in London to tell his story. An expedition was launched to punish the mutineers, and in due time fourteen of them were captured and paid the penalty under British law.*

*But nine of the men had gone to another distant island. There they formed a colony. Perhaps there has never been a more degraded and debauched social life than that of that colony. They learned to distill whiskey from a native plant, and the whiskey as usual, along with other habits led to their ruin. Disease and murder took the lives of all the native men and all but one of the white men named Alexander Smith. He found himself the only man on the island, surrounded by a crowd of women and half-breed children. Alexander Smith found a Bible among the possessions of a dead sailor. The Bible was new to him. He had never read it before. He sat down and read it through. He believed it and he began to appropriate it. He wanted others to share in the benefits of the book, so he taught classes to the women and children, as he read to them and taught them the Scriptures.*

*It was twenty years before a ship ever found that island, and when it did, a miniature Utopia was discovered. The people were living in decency, prosperity, harmony, and peace. There was nothing of crime, disease, immorality, and sanity, or illiteracy. How was it accomplished? By the reading, the believing, and the appropriating of the truth of God!<sup>5</sup>*

I ask that you take the Scriptures seriously, learn them. I wonder why we wouldn't learn them. This is God's Word to us. God has communicated to us. Wow!

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<sup>5</sup> Swindoll, Charles R. Read in *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*. Thomas Nelson. Nashville, TN 1998. Pages 50-51. (referenced from Keith Miller, *Edge of Adventures*)