

The Preeminence of God's Word

John 8:30-32

As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."



As you begin to learn more about God and more about the relationship that He desires to have with you, it is very important that you begin to feed your mind and spirit on the truths that can be found in the Word of God. The Bible is not just an ordinary book. It is the very Word of God that is able to save us (James 1:21), conform us to the image of Jesus (Romans 12:2), and keep us secure in the love God (Ephesians 5:26). Plants can die for various reasons, especially when they stop receiving nutrients from the soil that they are planted in. In fact, they can wither away fairly quickly

when their roots are not absorbing enough water and minerals. Just like a root that is cut off from its source, we will die spiritually if we cut ourselves off from the very source of life that God intended to nurture us and feed us with. That source of life is found primarily in the Person of His Son, the Messiah. As you have already learned, the Scriptures point us to the person of the Jesus (John 5:38-39). It should make sense to you that if we are to come to Jesus for life, then the *way* we come to Jesus is tied to the Scriptures themselves. Though it is not the only way God can speak to us, the Bible is the primary way that He speaks to us about His ways, His personality, and His vision for our life. Not only that, the Bible is the only reliable source of truth that we can base our ideas of God on. Consider the words of Jesus found in John 8:30-32.



Who was Jesus talking to when He said "abide in My word"?

What is one thing that distinguishes a disciple (follower) of Jesus from someone who is not?

According to Jesus, where does the truth that sets us free come from?

Most of the world does not consider the Bible to be reliable or to be inspired by God. In fact, most people do not believe the Bible has anything relevant to say to those of us who are living in the 21st century. We will consider much about the validity of the Bible later on and why it is reliable both as a historical document and as a book that we can trust our eternal destinies with. For right now though, realize that in John 8, the Lord Jesus was talking to people who had believed in Him first. Only those who believe in Jesus will ever bother to read, study, believe, and obey what the Bible has to say—to listen to the words of Jesus. It is interesting to note that Jesus went even further when He was describing those who needed to continue in His word. He told those who believed in Him that if they wanted to be His follower or disciples, then they must abide in His word.

There are many people who "believe" in God or who "believe" Jesus died for their sins. However, that is really not the kind of belief that God is looking for in us. Belief in the sense of mental agreement is required of course... but Jesus is looking for those who not only believe in Him but who would be His follower or disciple as a result of their belief. That is the kind of belief that will

save a person. Many refer to it as "saving faith." Jesus addressed His teachings to His disciples, or followers. There are many people who believe in Jesus who do not follow Him or do not have a desire to put His teachings into practice. However, it is impossible to be His disciple or follower without *first* believing in Him. As you study the life of the Lord Jesus more and more, you will discover that He never compelled or forced anyone to believe Him, to follow Him, to trust Him, or to love Him. He simply lived a life of obedience to the Father, spoke the truth that His Father told Him to speak, and then left the decision to those who heard Him and those who saw His miraculous touch of love. We are no different... and if we want to be His disciples or followers, then we must do what our Lord tells us to do. That is what it means to be a disciple: one under the discipline or direction of another. The rest of your life is going to be spent following the Man Jesus, getting to know His ways, putting into practice His commands, imitating His way of life in relationship to God, and falling in love with Him. This defines the "Christian" life. As you follow the Lord Jesus, He will use you to touch the lives of other people, just as Jesus was obedient to His Father and was used to touch countless people in His everyday life.

Jesus also related "truth" to His word. Pilate, the Roman ruler who had authority to crucify Jesus, would ask Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Many people today want to know what is true as well... and there are almost millions of voices out there all claiming to be "truth." The Bible tells us that our enemy, the devil, is the father of lies (John 8:44) and that he works to deceive people in the world from seeing the truth of who God is and the truth of man's separation from Him. Jesus told His disciples (those who would follow after Him) that if they would abide in His word they would know the truth (John 8:32). Knowing the truth in this Word will in turn set us free. This freedom involves being free from sin, free from the prison of our selfish desires, free from the rulership of lesser "gods" and spiritual influences, and free to become a part of God's family. The greatest freedom we enjoy in Jesus the Messiah is the free access we have to God through Him. Every human being has the possibility of a deep, passionate, and intimate relationship with the very Creator of the Universe! This friendship has requirements of course on our part. Every friendship does, correct? However, God has done everything that is necessary to break down the walls that would keep us from Him... all that we need to do is say "YES" and respond to His offer.



**What else do you think Jesus requires of those who would be His followers?
What priority must Jesus have over every other relationship in our life ?**

Matthew 16:24-25

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

John 14:23-24

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."

John 15:14-15

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Luke 14:26-27

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

We can be assured of this: those who follow Jesus are those who abide in His Word. Jesus did not leave us any options in this regard. He simply stated to those who believed in Him, "If you want to be my disciple, abide in My Word." Of course this is not the only stipulation He put on those who would follow Him, but it is the one we are going to begin with because it is part of our basic foundation. Jesus also told those who *wanted* be His disciples that they must deny themselves (Mark 16:24), take up their cross (Mark 16:24, Luke 14:27), forsake even family relationships if they prevent someone from following and obeying Jesus (Luke 14:26), In most every case, Jesus related following Him to coming after Him in pursuit, denying ourselves, obeying Him, loving Him, dying to our own unholy and impure desires, and keeping His Word.

These are all tied together of course:

We cannot serve Jesus without following Him
 We cannot follow Jesus without coming to Him
 We cannot come to Him without keeping His Word
 We cannot keep His Word without abiding in Him
 We cannot abide in Him without loving Him

These are the very basic parts of the foundation of a life that is lived for God. Again, Jesus never forces anyone: He simply says "If you WANT to get to know Me intimately as My follower and as a member of My very own family, you can!" This is the greatest privilege that you or I can ever say "yes" to. In fact, it is what you and I were made for! We were made for just such a relationship with God. We were made so that God could "make His home in us." Going even further, we were made by God to be completely unsatisfied and unfulfilled outside of pursuing such a relationship with Him. That is why there is so much conflict, greed, pain, and suffering in the world: people are trying to fill that desire for a relationship with God with everything else but the One true God who made them. God has made us "brand new" through the power of the Holy Spirit working in our hearts... He has made our spirits and hearts alive and receptive to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in [the Messiah], he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.



Why would God compare a new believer or disciple of Jesus to a newborn baby?
 How often does a baby need to drink milk or be nursed? Why?
 How much can a newborn digest at one time? Is it a lot or a little?

Why don't we feed babies "steak and potatoes"? What would happen if we did?

As a "new" creation in Jesus, what parts of your life have already begun to change?

You should understand that God is ecstatic over you just as a new mother or father is ecstatic over their newborn baby. The Word tells us that angels rejoice when sinful people realize that they need God and change their mind about sin on the earth (Luke 15:1-10). Jesus told us in Luke 5:31 that He came as a physician to those who were sick (damaged by our disobedience and independence from God) and as a savior to those who realize they are unrighteous before God. Because of our repentance and faith in Jesus, God makes us into a new creation... our hearts are made alive and receptive to God in a brand new way. He is so proud of you! Really! You are one of the few people on the planet earth who has responded to His calling and wooing. You said "yes". That puts you in a very small percentage of the billions of people who live on planet earth right now and in an even smaller percentage of those who have ever lived.

Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Do you realize how excited He is just over *you*? The emotions of a mother and father at childbirth are very rare... they are not everyday kind of feelings. I can remember laughing and crying both at the same time when my own children were born... it is just that kind of feeling when children are born. This is exactly what Peter is saying in 1 Peter 2:2. God sees you as a new member and addition to His family. He is excited and thrilled that you took Him up on His offer of love. Zephaniah describes the emotions of God toward His people as "rejoicing over us with gladness" and "rejoicing over you with singing". Do you notice that Zephaniah references the emotions of a mother to her child as well? Just as a mother quiets a baby with milk, the Lord "quiets" the storms in our hearts and minds with His what? You guessed it: His love! It is the knowledge of God's love for you (that can be found in the Scriptures) that you need to begin to feed on, meditate on, put into your mind, put into your memory, and put into your heart.

He is excited and thrilled that you didn't have all the facts, you didn't have full evidence of His existence, you didn't see heaven or the spiritual realm fully opened, you didn't listen to the doubts of friends or family or the enemy of your soul, and you didn't even know everything there is to know about spiritual and Biblical truth before you made your decision. You just responded to the love that you felt God offer you through His Son Jesus and you said "yes". Just like a newborn baby, though, you are not "mature". Newborns require constant attention and constant reminders of God's love for them. The Lord wants you to know: that is OK! He expects that you are going to have burps, make messes, need changing, need washing, and that you may not be able to do hardly anything for yourself spiritually at first.

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Matthew 28:20

... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age..

You need to be absolutely confident that through this "new birth" God is with you and living in you, even though you may not feel Him or sense Him, and He wants you to begin to respond to Him on that basis. You are not trying to clean yourself up so that He will come make His home in you: He has come to make His home in you so that He can make you clean! This is how God always works: inside out. Jesus made final promises before His ascension into heaven (Matthew 21:20) that He would be WITH HIS DISCIPLES always.

Of course Peter talks about some of the very *immature* characteristics of many believers: malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. The day after you receive Jesus as your master and savior, you will very likely still have some or all of these qualities. Your "yes" however has given God the permission to begin changing you and molding you into what a member of His family looks like. The difference now is that the day after you receive Jesus as your master and savior you may begin to realize how wrong and sinful it is to have malice, to speak evil, to be hypocritical, to envy your neighbor's job or position, or to be deceitful and sly. As you act in these ways, you will most likely feel uneasy about it. There will not be a peace any longer when you sin in this manner. More than that, you will not be at ease or have a sense of joy when you sin or disobey God from here on out.

This is normal! It is because God has begun the process of making His home in you that now you will no longer find the same pleasure you once did in anything that is sinful or disobedient to God. In fact, His coming into your heart will make you a miserable sinner from here on out! This is why Peter encourages followers of Jesus to "put away" or "lay aside" these old ways of living and to instead FEED ON the pure milk of God's word. If we do not take an active part in putting away these old habits, they will cause conflicts within us and within our hearts. It must be this way, though. God is preparing you as a very dwelling place for His Spirit and for His presence to be manifested through. Wouldn't it make sense that the King of the Universe is doing His own renovations in your heart so that He will feel at home? He is entirely humble, though: He has condescended to live in you even though your heart might be equivalent to a shack with a leaky roof! It is His purpose to make you into His very own temple (1 Corinthians 3:16), however, if we will simply continue on in faith and follow after Jesus.

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

If you are trained how to approach God through His Word... using it as a point of both conversation and meditation with an eye towards obedience... you will not depart from this as you mature in the Lord. The Word is to be your point of contact with the love, truth, and power of God that will see you through to the end of your life of faith on this earth. Peter says that "if" we have "tasted that the Lord is gracious", then the only logical and natural response would be to drink deep from His Word. This is very similar to Jesus addressing His command to abide in His Word to those who believe and to those who would be His followers. God will use His Word for many purposes. He will use it as a means to talk to you, correct you, affirm you, discipline you, examine you, love you, and comfort you. What you should begin to realize is that you must take an active part in the growth of your heart in love toward God, and the Bible must take a "first" place in your activity.



What was the primary reason that Peter wanted new believers to “desire the pure milk of the Word”?

Is reading books about the Bible different or better than reading the Bible itself? Why or why not? Why do you think the Bible is the “purest” form of nutrition for a growing believer in Jesus?

2 Timothy 3:14-17

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in [Jesus the Messiah]. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Peter 1:23

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

2 Peter 1:16-21

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:17

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Ephesians 6:17

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;



What kind of things can Scripture be profitable for?
What role does Scripture have to play in our “new birth” into God’s family?
What role does Scripture have to do with faith?
Why would God’s word be equated with a spiritual weapon like a sword?

What difference would it make if you believed the Bible was written just by men (i.e., its just a human book) as opposed to it being written by God through men (i.e., a divinely inspired book)?

The Apostle Paul (who wrote most of the books in the New Testament) had a very specific view about the Scriptures. He essentially said that the Scriptures were "God-breathed" or "inspired" (2 Timothy 3:16). The word inspiration sounds a lot like the word "respiration", which is a word that has to do with human breathing. Likewise the word "inspiration" has everything to do with "divine" breathing. As you study the account of how God created human beings in Genesis 1 and 2, you will see that God took something that we normally don't associate with "life" when He made Adam. God took the lifeless "dust" of the earth, formed it into a human body, and then "breathed" into it the breath of life. It was when God "breathed" into the dust that the first human became a living soul. Likewise, when God "breathed in" the men who penned the words of the Bible, He was imparting His very life into the words they were writing!

Peter in (1 Peter 1:2) refers to the "milk" of the word as being "pure". One of the problems that occur as we approach God's Word is that sometimes we can put our understanding and interpretation of the Word above the Word itself. This happened in the history of the nation of Israel and it happens in modern day Christianity as well. There are some truths of the Word that you should hold as immutable, and we'll try to discuss those as we progress. Other interpretations and doctrines of the Bible (which are influenced by our culture in America, denominational affiliation, and theological persuasion) are not to be confused with the Word itself. In fact, you should be cautious of all doctrinal positions—especially ones that deny the power of God or ones that promote unrighteousness or sin. Never confuse a "commentary" or "opinion" about what the Bible says with the Bible itself.

The Holy Spirit has the power and ability to reveal the truth of the Bible to YOU. You *do* need to be wary of false doctrines and teachings, and that is why you were born into a FAMILY. Families exist in the natural realm to provide PROTECTION and GUIDANCE for young people who will become fully mature adults one day! The spiritual family of God is no different. God has given teachers, preachers, and shepherds to believers for the sole purpose of nurturing others in their faith. As long as you don't separate yourself from other Christians and exist in a vacuum, you can be assured that God will speak to YOU from the Scriptures and that you can receive revelation from the author of the Scriptures yourself. Commentaries and books about the Bible are good.. don't get me wrong. However, the Bible itself is the "purest" form of truth you can feed on to grow spiritually. Begin now to formulate a radical hunger for the Word of God. You WILL grow as you do and God WILL speak to you in a personal and intimate way through the Scriptures.

Peter goes on to describe the process of how the prophetic word of God was produced (2 Peter 1:21) and says that men were "moved" by the Holy Spirit. This is a picture of a leaf that is picked up and blown by the wind from place to place, with the leaf not really knowing exactly where it is going to land! The word *breathe* is associated very closely with the Holy Spirit because the word for "spirit" is the word "pneuma" (noo-ma'). You can think of other words like a pneumatic press, pneumatic tires, or pneumatic pump that all have to do with compressed air. In fact, the study of the lungs is called "pneumatology". The Scriptures are said to be "God-breathed" because the Holy Spirit of God was the source or inspiration behind the words that we see in the Bible.

When Paul wrote to his young pastor friend named Timothy, he made it a point to say that "ALL" Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable. That means that the entire collection of writings (the 39 books of the Older Testament and the 27 books of the Newer Testament) are all profitable for you. Of course, you will want to primarily focus your attention on the writings of the Gospels and the apostles as you start out. Just keep in mind that the *first* followers of the Lord Jesus preached the Gospel exclusively) from the Hebrew Scriptures (Acts 9:20, Acts 18:28, Acts 26:22-23). This would make sense if you consider that the New Testament had not been fully completed in the early days of the church (AD 30 – 90). Paul reminded Timothy of the "Holy Scriptures" that he had known since childhood that were able to make him wise about salvation through faith in the Messiah. Timothy's mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1) and had most likely made sure her son knew the "Torah" from his youth. Paul was referring to Timothy's knowledge of the *Hebrew* Scriptures that made Him wise about faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

The Hebrew or Jewish Scriptures are referred to collectively as the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings:

The Law	T orah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
The Prophets	N eviim	Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve Minor Prophets (treated as one book: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)
The Writings (or Psalms)	K etuvim	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra & Nehemiah (treated as one book), I & II Chronicles

The Hebrew Scriptures are also referred to as the "Tanach" or "Tanakh" because of the first letter of the Hebrew words for "the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings" which are **T, N, K**. Many Jewish believers refer to the entire Hebrew Scriptures as simply "the Law" or "the Torah." You should place your reliance on these Scriptures not so much because you can present an "intellectual" argument for their defense. One of the strongest arguments for these books came from the Lord Jesus Himself and the fact that Jewish people reliably transmitted and reproduced the Scriptures over a nearly 1500 year period. I believe in the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures because my Lord did...

Romans 9:3-5

For I could wish that I myself were accursed from [Messiah] for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, [Messiah] came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Luke 24:27

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Luke 24:44-45

Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

If we have made Jesus our Lord, then we should understand that He trusted the reliability and inspiration of the Scriptures fully. When Jesus expounded all the Scriptures, He expounded the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Psalms). As we will also discover in our study, Jesus corrected the "commentaries" on the "Law" of His day on several different occasions. The main Jewish commentary on the Law was called the "Talmud", and is still used extensively in Rabbinical Judaism today. Jesus never refuted "the Law", but rather He refuted people's wrong interpretation and application of it. Jesus never told us that there were Hebrew Scriptures that were incorrect or that there were books that should have been included that were not. His disciples (who were all Jewish) would have made sure that revelation was carried forward if it were so.

You should understand that the major purpose of the Bible is to reveal the person of God to your heart! When Jesus met His disciples on the Road to Emmaus, after His resurrection from the dead, He personally gave them a tour of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Malachi. In this tour of Hebrew Scripture, Jesus could have discussed many different topics and expounded on many different doctrines. What Luke tells us is that He expounded (interpreted) in ALL the Scriptures "the things concerning Himself". Luke goes on to say that "He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." This is the MOST important fact of Biblical interpretation you can ever learn: the interpreter of Scripture is available to you the same way Jesus was to His first disciples!

The Bible is designed to reveal the person of Jesus and the Holy Spirit is given to you as a helper so you TOO can understand the Scriptures. You were saved and accepted into God's family in order that you would have 1st hand knowledge of God. Even someone else's commentary on the Scripture is 2nd hand... It is a gross error to believe that you cannot read and understand the Bible for yourself. The Bible was written for uneducated, unskilled, and theologically untrained people—just like you and I! It is also important to realize that the Holy Spirit MUST open your understanding and impart the truths of the Bible to your heart. It is one of the greatest privileges you have... you, even you, can approach God and can talk with the Author of the Scriptures through the Lord Jesus. Error comes when we believe that there are other approaches to God (than the Lord Jesus) and that other prophets apart from the Bible can give you more in-depth revelation of God.

Matthew 5:17-20

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

In terms of the New Testament, I like to look at the authorship in speaking of their reliability. The Lord Jesus validated the Old Testament or "the Law" as being inspired by God and trustworthy for us as His followers. He in fact said not even one "jot" or "tittle", which are small accent marks on

Hebrew letters, would pass away. The New Testament books are validated for the most part by a simple test: they were authored and authenticated by the original 12 disciples who were with the Lord Jesus. This is called "apostolic authority" and was the same divine privilege that the Lord entrusted the Old Testament prophets with. Apostolic authorship was the key test for the books of the New Testament and in some cases, the apostles accepted books written by close associates that they themselves attested were divinely inspired.

Author	Books(s)	Authority
Matthew	Gospel of Matthew	One of the 12 apostles
Mark	Gospel of Mark	Validated by the Peter/apostles Close associate of Peter (1 Peter 5:13)
Luke	Gospel of Luke, Acts	Validated by the Paul/apostles Close associate of Paul (Col 4:14, Phil 24, 2 Tim 4:11) and the only Gentile (non-Jewish) author
John	Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Revelation	One of the 12 apostles
Peter	1 st and 2 nd Peter	One of the 12 apostles
Paul	Romans, 1 st and 2 nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 st and 2 nd Thessalonians, 1 st and 2 nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, (and more than likely, Hebrews)	The apostle to the Gentiles Validated by Peter and the Jerusalem church Eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus Considered by some to be the "replacement" for Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord
James	James	The physical half-brother of Jesus Eyewitness of the resurrection Leader of the Messianic Church of Jerusalem Validated by the apostles
Jude	Jude	The physical half-brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3) Eyewitness of the resurrection Validated by the apostles

God is still speaking today, just as He is described in the Bible as doing. However, there are no additional Scriptures that have apostolic authority being written (like the Book of Mormon) and there are no apostles alive today that have the authority to pen or write "Scripture". There are indeed apostles alive today and God indeed speaks to us apart from the Scriptures today (which we will talk more about later), but the key point is that the **ONLY** authoritative source you should rely on to test or judge **all other** revelation by are the 66 books of the Bible. If you WANT to be a disciple or follower of Jesus, then "follow" or "abide" in His Word. Many have left this basic command of our Lord and as such have become confused, deceived, and shipwrecked in their faith as a result. All cults are departures from Biblical truth because they include "other" books in their definition of "Scripture. Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witness are three of the largest cults that depart from the revelation of the Bible.

Many new believers like to spend exhaustive time discovering the arguments as to why the Bible can be trusted so they can defend to others why believing the Bible is so important. There are many great evidences, which have all been ordained by God, to point to the trustworthiness of the Bible and to His Word. Just to set your mind at ease, you do not have to have all the answers! God doesn't even require us to have all the answers to everything that He has written about in the

Scriptures. The MOST important thing, however, is to have a heart toward God that loves Him and wants to obey Him. That is MORE important than the intellectual knowledge of arguments for the Bible and arguments that support certain theologies.



How can you increase your understanding of the Scriptures?

What relationship does obedience and experience have with understanding the Bible?

John 7:17

If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Acts 1:1-2

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen

Jesus tells us in John 7:17 that if anyone really wants to do God's will (obey the Bible and the words of Jesus), then they will know whether the teaching is from God or not. People who just want to argue about Scripture on an intellectual level (whether they are Christians or non-Christians) really are never going to understand what they are reading. The Bible was written to those who would be followers of Jesus (those who want to be part of God's covenant family) with the idea that understanding does not come until there is first a willingness to obey or believe. If you notice, Jesus began to DO and then TEACH, not TEACH and then DO. His theology and His revelation of Scripture flowed as one with His life and His actions. Never listen to anyone who tells you that you can separate your actions and your belief as a follower of Jesus. If you want to understand the fullness of the Bible's meaning, give your heart to obeying and following the one who wrote the Bible first... then as you DO, you will be given the understanding. You should understand that we do not have to have a seminary degree, have a full understanding of the Greek or Hebrew language, or be in full time paid ministry in order to have revelation and understanding of the Bible. Many believers in Western Christianity define spiritual maturity based on their intellectual knowledge and understanding of the Bible. This is just not so! Most religions are designed to be intellectually and logically sound. You should understand that truth is REVEALED to us BY the Holy Spirit THROUGH the Bible. This is the method that Jesus used to train His disciples. As He spoke His words to them, the Holy Spirit gave them understanding of what He was saying. Luke 24:45 has one of the MOST important principles of Bible study: Jesus opens our understanding so that we can understand His Word! Yes, we can listen to preachers and teachers or read books about the Bible, but never forget that YOU can understand the Bible just as it is written if you have a heart of sincere belief and a willingness to do the things that Holy Spirit reveals to you.

What does it mean to abide or continue in the Word?

What does it mean for Jesus to abide in us?

There are not simple answers to either of these questions, but rather lifelong pursuits! To have a living, effectual reality of God's word in our heart is going to take our effort, our time, and our desire to come after Him. You should begin to put the reading, meditation, and study of God's word as the number one priority in your life. You must see it as being vitally linked to your spiritual survival... because it is! Just like we would never leave a baby unfed and just like babies can only take in small amounts of milk at any one time, so you too must earnestly desire the "milk" of God's word if you want to survive. God's word is the vehicle through which His grace and His power are going to be extended to you, through the working of the Holy Spirit who has been given to live in you and with you. The Holy Spirit has the power to take the words of the Bible and "breathe" upon them in your own heart and your own mind. Jesus through the Holy Spirit has the same ability to make your heart "burn" with the truth and knowledge and understanding of His word. It is His goal to make His word "alive" in your heart, mind, emotions, and will.

This is not the same as cultic concept that we are to discern whether something is true or not by whether we get a "burning" feeling. Absolutely not! People who wind up discerning truth by non-objective means other than the Bible essentially wind up no longer being a disciple or follower of Jesus. They are disciples, no less, but they become followers of a religion, followers of a prophet, or followers of an intellectual belief system. We are followers of Jesus, and based on His instruction and the authority of His apostles, we keep the Bible as our objective standard of truth and as the wellspring of our spiritual life in God.

Acts 14:3

Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Acts 20:32

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

God will honor His Word. You can trust that. When Paul left the group of believers in Ephesus (whom he had personally discipled and labored with), he commended them to God and to the WORD of His grace. God grants signs and wonders, miracles and healings, gifts of the Holy Spirit that bear witness to the WORD of His grace. Paul tells us that the Word of God is able to BUILD us up in our faith and it is able to establish you in your inheritance among all those who have said "yes" to God's invitation of love and covenant.

Colossians 1:5

Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

2 Timothy 2:15-16

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

Colossians 3:16-17

Let the word of [Messiah] dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Ephesians 1:13-14

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.



What is to be our ultimate source of truth and doctrine in living our new life in God?
What role do we play with abiding in the word's of Jesus?

What things in your life must change if you are going to abide in His word?

Can you put God's word as a priority without changing the way you spend your time?

It is because of the hope that you have in heaven and it is because you are now part of the very family of God that we are to make every effort to present ourselves to God as a wholehearted lover. That means that we must exert energy and effort if we are to grow in our faith and knowledge of Jesus. One of the paradoxes of grace is that it *does* require human response. Grace is the power of God given to us freely without our merit or without our deserving it. His grace and His Word give us the power to have faith, change our minds, have victory over area of darkness, and become more and more like Jesus in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We are to let God's word dwell in us RICHLY, not POORLY. We are to be SKILLED in the Word, not UNTRAINED. We are to be DILIGENT in approaching the Word, not LAZY. It all starts with a simple "YES" and a change in the way we live our lives. If you want to be a healthy, growing, and mature follower of Jesus, you have no choice but to abide in His word. To choose otherwise is to choose the common way that many believers in America have gone over the last century. If you do not abide in His word, you will eventually have a version of Christianity that may look "American" or "Western", but it will not look "Biblical" and "like Jesus".

Hebrews 5:13-14

For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Many Christians who have known the Lord for many years are still spiritually "immature" because they never took serious or never put into practice the command of Jesus to abide or continue in His word. Although God is thrilled over new additions to His family, He is certainly not thrilled with all of the junk that we each bring with us. However, He sees us in love as new additions to His family... just like a mother and father feels about a newborn baby (they too overlook the messes that a baby makes initially because of their love relationship with the child). As the baby grows into childhood and further into adulthood, more and more boundaries are required and more direction and discipline is needed. Even we as humans think that babies are cute and adorable but most of us would be appalled to see a 20 year old wearing a diaper! The behavior that we would overlook in a baby we would consider to be abhorable in a much older person. As you being a new journey of following the Lord, we are going to focus on the "milk" or the "basics" of the faith.

They are the building blocks that more "meaty" topics can be built upon. If you want to be able to swallow the "meat", you need to take serious the command to feed night and day on the Word of God. Get to know Him, His character, His ways, and His heart! Use the Scriptures to fall in love with God and be caught by His passion for you. Then you will more readily be able to work for Him and be able to discern right and wrong and walk in "right" paths.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that our senses are trained to discern good and evil only by reason of USE. In other words, it takes time and a constant attention of applying God's word to every area of life to produce maturity. Don't equate maturity with physical age either! There are spiritual "adults" that are teenagers because they are passionately and actively saying yes to God in a continual manner and learning as a result. This should be our goal and the cry of our heart. Our minds have to be renewed to a new way of thinking, a new way of perceiving the world, and a new way of viewing God. We are going to spend a considerable amount of energy doing just that. If you will begin to change the way you see yourself and the way you see God, your words, thoughts, and deeds will change as a result! They are bound to.

Questions

1. If we want to be disciples and followers of Jesus, we prove that by _____ in His _____ (John 8:31).
2. What is our primary source of truth as followers of the Messiah that we are to judge all other truths by? _____
3. _____ is a spiritual being who is described as the "father of lies" (John 8:44).
4. If we want to be _____ from sin and our own selfishness, we must know the truth that is found in God's word. (John 8:32)
5. True or False. Love for God is tied to our sincerely wanting to obey and put into action His words. (John 14:23).
6. A _____ of God can be defined as one who does what God asks and commands (John 15:14).
7. _____ is the most purest and basic ingredient that we must earnestly seek and desire if we are to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2).
8. The Word of God is compared to an _____ seed that is planted in our hearts and will produce fruit that will last forever. (1 Peter 1:23).
9. True prophetic revelation does not come by the _____ of man but rather by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).
10. _____ is developed by hearing the Word of God through teaching, preaching, and application of its principles in our life (Romans 10:17).
11. Scriptures are said to be "God-breathed". What does this mean?

12. The Gospel or "good news" about Jesus was first expounded by Jesus to His disciples based on the revelation that could be found in what part of the Bible? (Luke 24:44-45)

13. We trust the inspiration and authority of the Hebrew Scriptures based on the authority of _____ and the priestly history of the nation of _____. We trust the inspiration and authority of the New Testament based on the authority of the _____, who were all eyewitnesses of the resurrection and were originally called by the Lord Jesus.
14. The Word of His grace is able to _____ and give you an _____ among God's people (Acts 20:32).
15. If we want to know the *truth* concerning the Scripture, we must first _____ what God says (Hebrews 11:6) and then be willing to _____ His will (John 7:17).