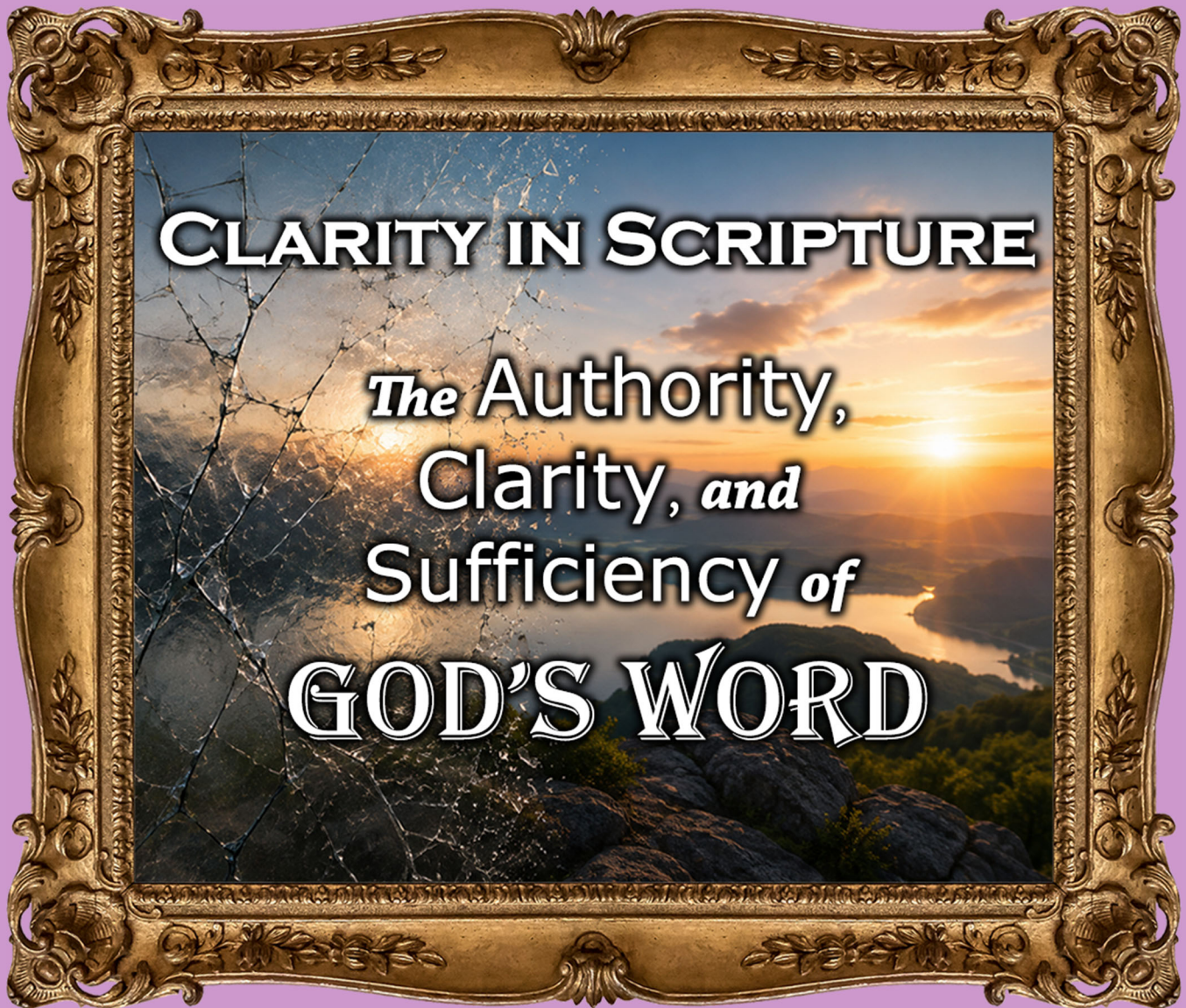


Theology for Life

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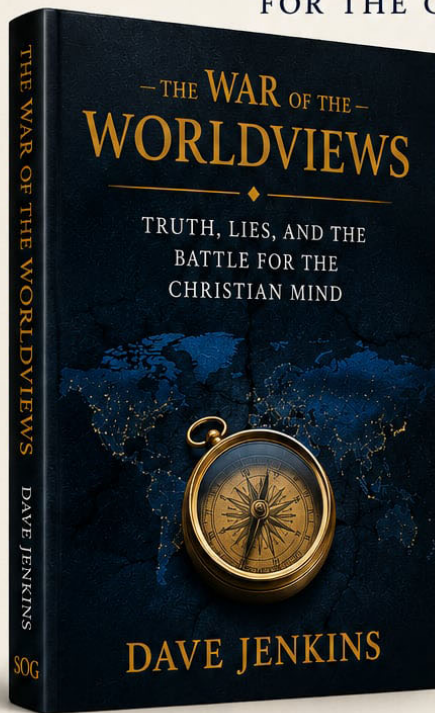
Inside this Issue...

- **Standing Firm in Clarity**
- **Reading the Bible for God's Glory**
- **Reclaiming Biblical Literacy in the Local Church**

IN A CONFUSED AGE, DISCERNMENT IS ESSENTIAL.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDVIEWS

TRUTH, LIES, AND THE BATTLE FOR THE CHRISTIAN MIND



Competing worldviews are shaping the way our culture—and even the church—thinks about truth, identity, morality, and reality.

Dave Jenkins exposes the most influential ideas challenging biblical Christianity today and helps believers think biblically, discern wisely, and stand firmly on the **authority** and **sufficiency** of God's Word.

THIS BOOK EQUIPS YOU TO:

- Understand the major worldviews shaping our culture
- Discern truth from error
- Recognize the dangers of deconstruction and ideologies
- Think biblically in every area of life
- Stand firm on the sufficiency of Scripture

“*The War of the Worldviews*” by Dave Jenkins is a timely book in our age of apostasy.

As a woman who ministers to women, I especially appreciated the sections on sufficiency and discernment.

Dave covers his subject well as he writes with clarity while defending truth. ”

— SUSAN HECK-DANIEL

Author, conference speaker, and regular contributor to Servants of Grace



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Contentment

The Journey of a
Lifetime

DAVE JENKINS

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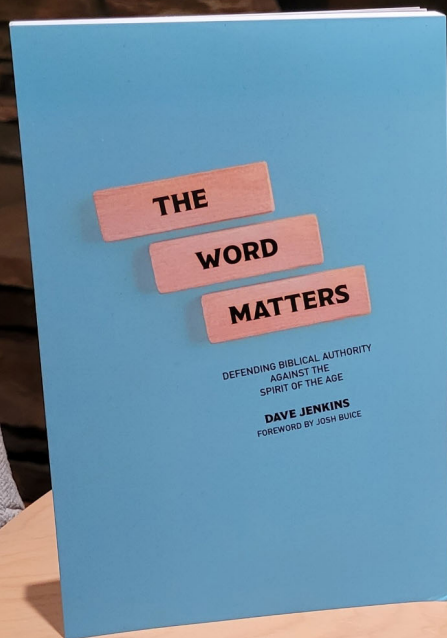
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In ***The Word Matters***, Dave Jenkins takes readers by the hand and helps them understand how serious the issue of biblical authority is and how the Bible is under attack, so that they can stand with confidence on the Word of God.



The Word Matters

DEFENDING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY
AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE



Editor's Corner

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In an age of theological confusion and cultural pressure, the Church must recover confidence in the clarity, authority, and sufficiency of God's Word. We are living in an age of noise. Voices compete for our attention. Opinions multiply by the hour. Cultural pressure intensifies. Even within the Church, confusion about truth, doctrine, and the practice of faith is no longer rare, it is increasingly normal. Many believers feel unsettled, unsure, and spiritually disoriented.

That is why our 2026 theme for *Theology for Life* is simple and urgent: clarity— seeing truth clearly in a confused age. And there is no better place to begin than with Scripture itself. This issue focuses on clarity in Scripture: the authority, clarity, and sufficiency of God's Word. If we lose confidence in the Word of God, we lose our footing everywhere else. But if we stand firmly on Scripture— understood in its context, trusted in its authority, and embraced in its sufficiency— we have an unshakable foundation.

Psalm 119:130 tells us, "*The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*" God has not whispered in riddles. He has spoken in words. He has revealed Himself in Scripture. The Bible is not a locked codebook for experts only, it is God's clear and gracious revelation, given to His people. This does not mean every passage is equally easy to understand. But it does mean the message of Scripture— who God is, who we are, what sin is, who Christ is, and how we are saved— is clear, knowable, and trustworthy.

And yet we are facing a growing biblical literacy crisis. Many professing Christians rarely read their Bibles. Many churches increasingly rely on sentiment,

trends, and personality tests rather than careful exposition of the text. Some reinterpret Scripture through cultural lenses. Others add subjective impressions and modern “revelations” alongside it. Still others quietly set it aside in practice while affirming it in theory.

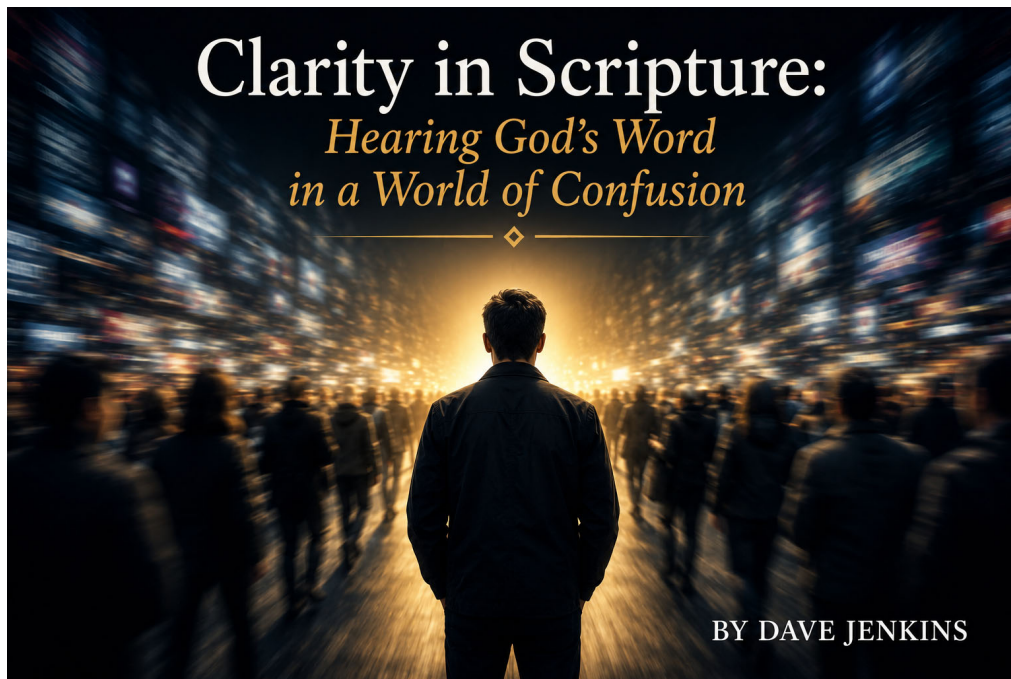
We should not be surprised that confusion grows where Scripture is neglected. This Issue of *Theology for Life Magazine* is designed to call us back— not to novelty, not to trends, but to open the Word of God. In these pages, you will find pastors, theologians, and discernment-minded writers addressing the clarity and sufficiency of God's Word from multiple angles: doctrine, Church history, discipleship, worship, apologetics, and practical Christian living. Each article shares a common conviction: God has spoken in/through the Scriptures, and what He has spoken in His Word is enough.

Clarity in doctrine begins with clarity in Scripture. Clarity in worship begins with clarity in Scripture. Clarity in discernment begins with clarity in Scripture. Clarity in life begins with clarity in Scripture.

My prayer is that this Issue will not only inform your mind but steady your heart. Further, I pray that reading this Issue will deepen your confidence in God's Word, strengthen your discernment, and renew your desire to read, study, memorize, and obey what God has revealed. My prayer is that this Issue will not only inform your mind but steady your heart. I also pray that reading these pages will deepen your confidence in God's Word, strengthen your discernment, and renew your desire to read, study, memorize, and obey what God has revealed.

In an age of confusion, God has not left His people without light. He has spoken in His Word, and His Word is clear, trustworthy, and sufficient. If the Church is to stand firm in our time, we must return again and again to the Scriptures— opening them carefully, believing them fully, and living them faithfully.

In Christ,
Dave Jenkins
Executive Editor, *Theology for Life*



We are not merely living in a busy age—we are living in a confused one. Information has never been more available, yet clarity has rarely been more scarce. Voices speak constantly into our lives through screens, platforms, podcasts, and personalities. Cultural convictions shift rapidly. Moral boundaries are redrawn almost daily. Even inside the Church, many believers feel increasingly uncertain about doctrine, discernment, and spiritual direction.

Questions that once had settled biblical answers are now treated as open debates. Teachings that once stood firm are now described as “outdated” or “unloving”. Practices once grounded in Scripture are now reshaped by preference and pressure. In a moment like this, the Church does not need novelty. It needs clarity. And that clarity begins where it has always begun—with the Word of God.

This issue focuses on clarity in Scripture: the authority, clarity, and sufficiency of God’s Word, because every other form of Christian clarity flows from

this source. When Scripture is trusted, understood, and applied, believers grow in stability, discernment, courage, and hope. When Scripture is neglected, reinterpreted, or sidelined, confusion inevitably follows. God has not left His people without light. He has spoken—and He has spoken clearly.

A God Who Speaks, Not a God Who Hints

The foundation of biblical faith is not a human search mission but divine revelation. Christianity does not begin with humanity reaching upward, but with God speaking downward. The book of Hebrews tells us that God has spoken at many times and in many ways, and that His revelation reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ. The God of Scripture is not silent, distant, or vague. He reveals. He declares. He makes Himself known. And He has chosen to preserve that revelation in written form.

Scripture is not a record of religious impressions. It is not a collection of spiritual guesses. It is the God-breathed Word—written through human authors, carried along by the Spirit, and preserved by divine providence. Because its source is divine, its authority is binding. Because its source is truthful, its message is trustworthy. This matters more than we often realize. If God has spoken, then His Word stands over our opinions, our experiences, our preferences, and our cultural moment. It does not bend to us; *we* bend to *it*.

The Light God Intends His Word to Give

Psalm 119 repeatedly describes God's Word in terms of light, truth, and understanding. Scripture is not presented as a fog, but as a lamp. Not as confusion, but as illumination. When the Psalmist says that the unfolding of God's words gives light and understanding, he is affirming something deeply helpful: God's revelation is meant to be understood. It is given to guide, instruct, warn, comfort, and direct His people.

The historic Church has used the term *clarity of Scripture* (often called

“perspicuity”) to describe this truth. The doctrine does not claim that every verse is equally simple or that study is unnecessary. It teaches that the central message of Scripture—especially regarding salvation and godly living—is clear enough to be understood by ordinary believers using ordinary means under the Spirit’s help. Clarity does not eliminate the need for teachers. It establishes the possibility of understanding. Clarity does not remove depth; it removes hopeless obscurity. Clarity means God is not playing games with His people.

Why Confidence in Scripture is Weakening

One of the great crises of our time is not only biblical illiteracy but biblical uncertainty. Many professing believers are unsure whether Scripture is sufficient to address modern questions. Others believe it must be supplemented by psychology, cultural theory, mystical experience, or new revelation.

We see several patterns emerging: some reinterpret Scripture through cultural frameworks, reshaping clear texts to match modern moral expectations. Others add subjective spiritual impressions and treat them as divine messages alongside Scripture. Still others reduce preaching to motivational encouragement with only passing reference to the text itself. In each case, something subtle but serious happens: Scripture is no longer functioning as the final authority. When the functional authority of Scripture is replaced, clarity disappears and confusion rushes in to fill the space.

Scripture’s Sufficiency and the Stability of the Believer

Scripture declares itself sufficient—not for technical skills or specialized trades—but for knowing God and living before Him faithfully. It equips believers for every good work. It reveals what we are to believe and how we are to live. Because Scripture is sufficient, believers do not need hidden knowledge, secret techniques, or elite interpreters to know God’s will. They need the Word rightly handled.

This sufficiency produces spiritual stability. When believers are grounded in Scripture, doctrine becomes anchored, discernment becomes sharper, worship becomes God-centered, obedience becomes clearer, and hope becomes steadier. The unstable believer is often the undernourished believer. Where the Word is thin, confusion is thick.

Clarity and the Life of the Church

Church history repeatedly shows that renewal follows the recovery of Scripture. When the Word is opened, preached, translated, studied, and sung, God's people grow strong. The Reformation was not merely a protest—it was a recovery of biblical clarity. The Reformers insisted that Scripture was not only authoritative but understandable. They labored to put the Bible into the language of the people because they believed God speaks clearly through His Word. They did not argue that Scripture was shallow, they argued that it was accessible. We need that conviction again today—in pulpits, classrooms, homes, and personal study.

“Clarity is not recovered by slogans but by habits.”

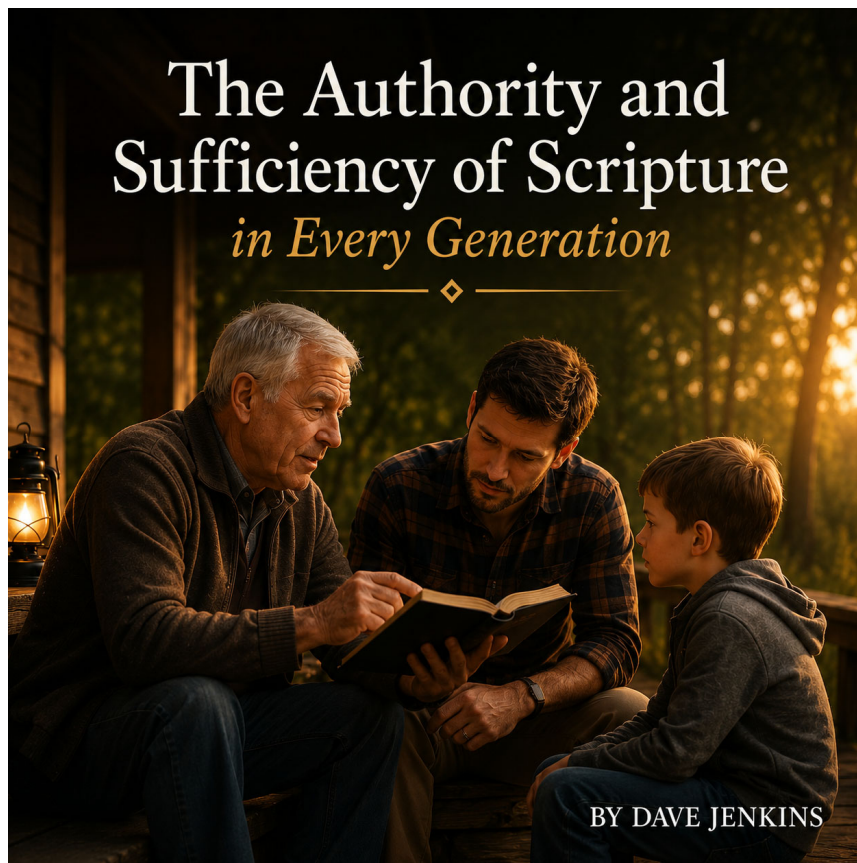
Recovering Clarity in Practice

Clarity is not recovered by slogans but by habits. Believers must return to daily Bible reading—not fragment reading, but contextual reading. Churches must return to expository preaching that explains the meaning of the text. Families must return to Scripture-shaped discipleship. Christians must support teaching by the Word rather than by charisma or popularity. We must slow down enough to read carefully. We must humble ourselves enough to be corrected. We

must love truth enough to submit to it. Clarity grows where Scripture is opened consistently and handled faithfully.

The Gift and Responsibility of a Clear Word

God did not owe us revelation. That He has spoken at all is grace. That He has spoken clearly is greater grace still. We are not left to spiritual guesswork. We are not navigating by instinct. We are not dependent on private impressions. We have the written Word of God. In a confused age, this is not a small gift—it is an anchor. The question before us is not whether God has spoken clearly. The question is whether we will listen carefully. Open the Word, read it with reverence, study it with diligence, receive it with humility, obey it with courage, and pass it on with faithfulness. God's light has not dimmed. His Word still gives understanding. **Walk in His light.**



Every generation of the Church faces the same enduring temptation: to look for something more than the Word of God. Sometimes that “more” comes dressed in intellectual respectability. Sometimes it comes wrapped in spiritual language. Sometimes it appears as cultural sensitivity, therapeutic insight, or ministry innovation. But beneath the surface, the temptation is unchanged—to loosen our grip on the authority and sufficiency of Scripture and place our confidence elsewhere. Yet, the Church has always stood strongest when she has stood firmly on the written Word of God.

The doctrine of *the authority and sufficiency of Scripture* is not a historical relic or a Reformation slogan. It is the living foundation of Christian faith and practice. It is the confession that God has spoken in Scripture with final authority and

“When Scripture speaks, God speaks.”

that what He has spoken is fully sufficient for the faith, life, and godliness of His people—in every age, every culture, and every circumstance.

This is what the Reformers summarized with the phrase *Sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone as the final, binding authority for

the Church. Not Scripture isolated from teachers or history, but Scripture as the highest authority over all teachers and all tradition. In an age of competing voices and growing confusion, we must recover not only the language of this doctrine, but its living reality.

What We Mean By the Authority of Scripture

To say that Scripture is authoritative is to say that it speaks with God’s authority because *it is* God’s Word. The authority of Scripture is not derived from the Church, from scholarship, or from personal experience. It rests in divine authorship. Scripture is God-breathed—written by human authors who were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Because God is truthful, faithful, and sovereign, His Word is trustworthy and binding.

When Scripture speaks, God speaks. This means the Bible does not merely offer spiritual suggestions; it gives divine commands. It does not merely provide religious inspiration; it reveals divine truth. It does not stand alongside other sources of authority—it stands over them.

Pastors do not have authority over Scripture. Councils do not have authority over Scripture. Cultural trends do not have authority over Scripture. Our ex-

periences and impressions do not have authority over Scripture. All of these must be tested by the written Word. This conviction has always marked faithful seasons in the Church. Whenever Scripture's authority is honored, the Church is strengthened. Whenever Scripture's authority is softened, confusion spreads.

What We Mean By the Sufficiency of Scripture

Closely tied to authority is sufficiency. The sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible contains everything God intends His people to have for knowing Him, believing the gospel, growing in holiness, and living faithfully before Him. Nothing necessary for salvation or godly living is missing from God's revealed Word.

Scripture is not sufficient for teaching us how to perform surgery or engineer bridges. But it is fully sufficient for teaching us truth, exposing sin, correcting error, training righteousness, and equipping believers for every good work.

It gives us what we need to know God rightly and walk before Him faithfully.

Because Scripture is sufficient, we do not need additional revelation to complete it. We do not need secret knowledge to unlock it. We do not need new spiritual authorities to supplement it. God *has not* given His people a partial

guide that must be completed by later insights. He has given a finished revelation that must be faithfully read, taught, and applied.

“The pressures facing the Church today are not new in kind – only in form.”

The Recurring Pattern in Every Generation

The pressures facing the Church today are not new in kind—only in form. In every generation, voices arise that say, “Scripture is good, but not enough.” The proposed additions change, but the pattern remains. Some elevate tradition

to equal authority. Others elevate mystical experience. Others elevate institutional declarations. Others elevate psychological theory. Others elevate cultural consensus. Others elevate personal revelation. The result is always the same: Scripture is affirmed in words but displaced in function.

We see this pattern in Church history repeatedly. When human authority or spiritual experience is placed alongside Scripture as equally binding, the clarity of doctrine erodes, and the confidence of believers weakens. But when the Church returns to the Word—read plainly, preached faithfully, and obeyed humbly—renewal follows. The issue is never whether other voices exist. The issue is which voice rules.

Modern Challenges to Sufficiency

Our present moment brings its own pressures against the sufficiency of Scripture. One challenge comes through therapeutic models that subtly replace biblical categories with psychological ones. Sin becomes dysfunction. Repentance becomes self-acceptance. Sanctification becomes emotional regulation. Scripture is quoted, but not allowed to define the framework.

Another challenge comes through progressive reinterpretation, where clear biblical teachings are reshaped to align with modern moral sensibilities. The problem is not new questions—the problem is treating Scripture as adjustable rather than authoritative.

A third challenge comes through claims of ongoing revelation—impressions, messages, and divine directives presented with scriptural-level weight. While believers rightly affirm the Spirit’s guidance, that guidance never

“Where Scripture is treated as sufficient, ministry strategies are shaped by biblical priorities.”

carries the authority of new revelation and must always be tested by the written Word. In each case, Scripture is not openly denied, it is quietly supplemented. But what is supplemented is eventually sidelined.

What Happens When Sufficiency is Lost

When the sufficiency of Scripture is practically denied, several consequences follow. Preaching shifts from exposition to motivation. Worship shifts from God-centered truth to experience-centered atmosphere. Discipleship shifts from Scripture-shaped growth to program-shaped activity. Discernment weakens because the measuring rod is unclear.

Believers become spiritually dependent on personalities rather than grounded in truth. Churches become vulnerable to trends rather than anchored in doctrine. Confidence erodes because the foundation has shifted. The Church does not become more effective when Scripture is treated as insufficient, it becomes more unstable.

Authority and Sufficiency in the Local Church

The authority and sufficiency of Scripture are not abstract doctrines, they are lived realities in healthy churches. Where Scripture is treated as authoritative, preaching explains the text rather than replacing it. Leadership is accountable to the Word. Doctrine is defined by Scripture rather than preference.

Where Scripture is treated as sufficient, ministry strategies are shaped by biblical priorities. Counseling is grounded in biblical truth, discipleship is Word-centered, and worship is Scripture-governed. This does not produce cold churches, it produces clear ones. And clarity feeds confidence, humility, repentance, and joy.

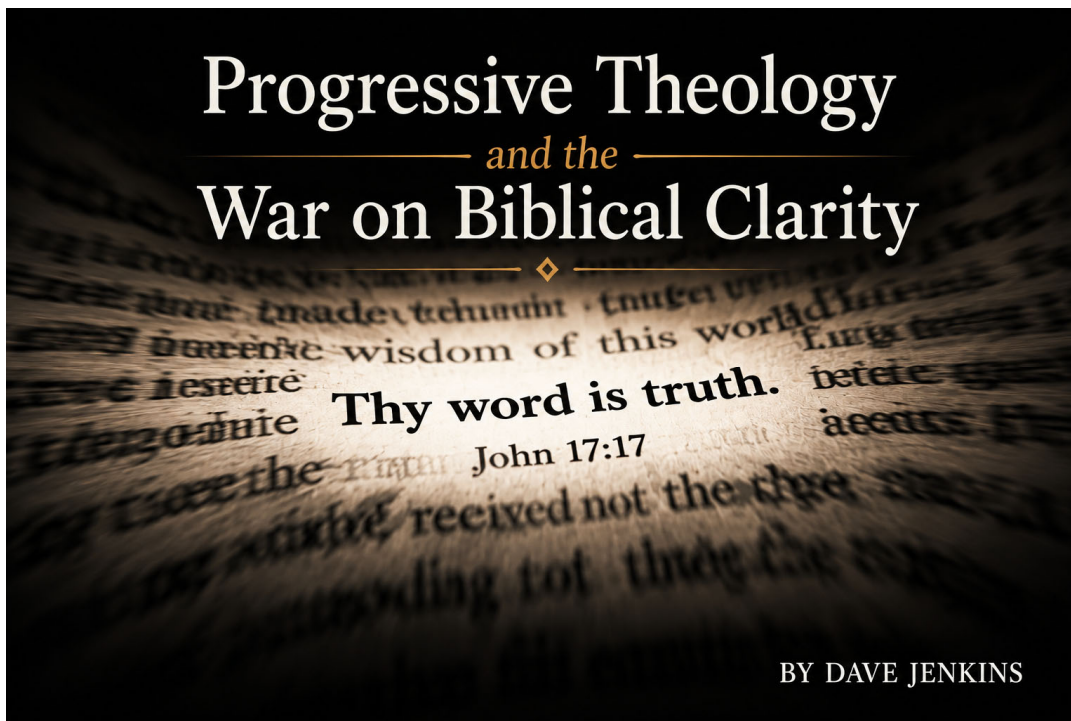
A Charge for Our Times

Every generation must decide where it will stand. We cannot borrow yesterday's convictions. We must hold today's line. The authority and sufficiency of

Scripture must be confessed, taught, defended, and lived—not only in doctrinal statements, but in daily practice.

This begins personally. We submit our beliefs to Scripture. We test teaching by Scripture. We correct our lives by Scripture. We shape our thinking by Scripture. It continues corporately: churches preach Scripture, teach Scripture, sing Scripture, pray Scripture, and apply Scripture. We do not need a new foundation; we need renewed faithfulness to the one already given.

God's Word has not weakened with time. It has not grown outdated with culture. It has not become insufficient in the modern world. It remains what it has always been—the authoritative and sufficient Word of the living God. Let us stand on it with confidence, humility, and courage in this generation and for the next.



Many debates in the Church today are not merely disagreements about conclusions. Beneath the surface of many contemporary controversies lies a deeper issue: disagreement about how Scripture should be interpreted. When Christians arrive at dramatically different moral or doctrinal conclusions, the differences are rarely explained simply by reading the same text carefully and arriving at different applications. More often, the differences begin with fundamentally different approaches to interpreting the Bible itself.

This interpretive divide has become especially visible in the rise of progressive theology. While “progressive Christianity” often presents itself as compassionate, thoughtful, and intellectually engaged with modern culture, the central issue is not merely the conclusions it reaches. The real issue is hermeneutical. Progressive theology operates from a fundamentally different ap-

proach to Scripture, one that frequently challenges the clarity, authority, and sufficiency of God's Word.

For that reason, the conversation about progressive theology must ultimately return to the doctrine of Scripture. The question before the Church is not simply whether certain conclusions are correct or incorrect, but whether the Bible itself speaks clearly and authoritatively on matters of faith and life. If Scripture is clear and sufficient, then the Church must submit to what God has revealed. But if the meaning of Scripture must continually be reshaped by modern cultural insights, then the authority of the Bible inevitably begins to erode.

The Rise of Progressive Theology

Progressive theology has gained increasing attention in recent years, particularly in Western churches wrestling with cultural change. For many people, progressive Christianity appears attractive because it promises a faith that feels intellectually open, socially compassionate, and culturally relevant. It often emphasizes empathy, inclusivity, and the desire to address modern ethical questions in ways that resonate with contemporary society.

“Yet Scripture consistently presents itself as a source of divine light, rather than cultural ambiguity.”

Another reason progressive theology appeals to many readers is its claim to engage honestly with modern scholarship and cultural developments. Progressive thinkers often present their approach as a necessary update to traditional interpretations of Scripture. According to this view, the Church must reinterpret biblical teaching in light of new historical insights, evolving moral understanding, or contemporary social concerns.

Yet the real issue is not the desire to address modern questions. Christians throughout history have sought to apply Scripture faithfully to changing cultural

circumstances. The deeper issue lies in the interpretive method that progressive theology often adopts. Instead of beginning with the conviction that Scripture speaks clearly and authoritatively, progressive approaches frequently begin with the assumption that the biblical text must be reshaped to align with modern perspectives.

The Attack on Biblical Clarity

One of the most significant implications of progressive hermeneutics is its challenge to the clarity of Scripture. Historic Christianity has long affirmed the doctrine often called the perspicuity of Scripture—the belief that the essential message of the Bible is clear and understandable. While not every passage is equally easy to interpret, the central truths of the faith are communicated in a way that ordinary believers can grasp through careful reading and faithful teaching.

Progressive theology often undermines this conviction in subtle ways. One common argument is that much of Scripture is culturally conditioned and therefore cannot be applied directly to modern contexts. Moral teachings that have traditionally been understood as clear are reframed as reflections of ancient cultural assumptions rather than enduring divine instruction.

Another argument suggests that biblical morality evolves as human understanding develops. Under this framework, modern insights about identity, relationships, or social structures are sometimes presented as corrections to the moral vision of Scripture. The implication is that the biblical text must be interpreted through the lens of contemporary cultural understanding rather than allowing Scripture itself to shape the Church's moral vision.

Yet Scripture consistently presents itself as a source of divine light, rather than cultural ambiguity. Psalm 119:130 declares, *"The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."* The Psalmist does not portray God's Word as obscure or inaccessible. Rather, the Word of God illuminates

truth and provides understanding even for those without specialized training. This conviction stands at the heart of the Church's historic confidence in Scripture.

Progressive Hermeneutics in Practice

The hermeneutical approach of progressive theology often reveals itself through several common interpretive patterns. One of these patterns is the reframing of moral commands that have traditionally been understood as clear. Passages addressing human identity, sin, and holiness are sometimes reinterpreted through modern sociological or psychological frameworks, which can alter their original meaning.

Another pattern involves elevating personal experience as a primary interpretive authority. Instead of allowing Scripture to challenge and correct human assumptions, experience becomes the lens through which the biblical text is evaluated. When a passage appears difficult or culturally unpopular, it may be reinterpreted to align more closely with contemporary sensibilities.

Progressive hermeneutics may also treat Scripture as an evolving conversation rather than a completed revelation. Under this model, the Bible is viewed less as a unified and authoritative message and more as a collection of diverse

“The historic Christian doctrine of the clarity of Scripture offers a very different understanding of God’s revelation.”

voices that must be continually reinterpreted. As a result, passages that once carried clear doctrinal or moral weight may be reframed as historically limited perspectives rather than enduring truth. While these approaches are often presented as intellectually responsible or sensitive, they carry significant implications

for the authority of Scripture. If the meaning of the biblical text can be reshaped whenever cultural expectations shift, then the authority of Scripture

gradually gives way to the authority of interpretation.

The Doctrine of the Clarity of Scripture

The historic Christian doctrine of the clarity of Scripture offers a very different understanding of God's revelation. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that every passage is equally simple or that careful study is unnecessary. The Bible contains poetry, prophecy, narrative, and theological argument, all of which require thoughtful interpretation. Yet the central message of Scripture—who God is, what sin is, who Christ is, and how we are saved—is communicated clearly.

Deuteronomy 30:11–14 emphasizes this accessibility when Moses tells Israel that God's commandment is *"not too hard for you, neither is it far off."* God's Word was given in such a way that His people could understand it and live in obedience to it. Similarly, 2 Timothy 3:16–17 reminds believers that *"all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."* Scripture is not merely informative but transformative, equipping believers for every good work.

The Reformers strongly defended this doctrine during the Protestant Reformation. In response to claims that Scripture required the interpretive authority of the institutional Church, reformers such as Martin Luther argued that the Bible speaks with sufficient clarity to guide the people of God. While teachers and pastors play an essential role in explaining Scripture, the authority ultimately resides in the Word itself.

"The Reformers strongly defended this doctrine during the Protestant Reformation."

The Pastoral Consequences

When the clarity of Scripture is questioned, the effects inevitably extend

beyond academic theology into the life of the Church. If believers are taught that the meaning of Scripture is endlessly flexible, confidence in the authority of the Bible begins to weaken. Moral teaching becomes uncertain, doctrinal boundaries become blurred, and the Church increasingly looks to cultural trends rather than biblical revelation for guidance.

This erosion of confidence often leads to confusion within congregations. Believers may struggle to understand what Scripture actually teaches or whether its teachings can be trusted in modern contexts. Instead of providing spiritual stability, the Bible may begin to appear ambiguous or negotiable. The result is not greater freedom but greater uncertainty. When the authority of Scripture is diminished, other authorities quickly fill the void. Cultural opinion, personal experience, and institutional pressure can gradually replace the Word of God as the final standard for truth.

Returning to Scripture

The Church's response to these challenges must not be reactionary but rooted in renewed confidence in the Word of God. Rather than abandoning Scripture in the face of cultural pressure, believers must return to the ordinary practices through which God has always nourished His people: careful reading of the biblical text, faithful preaching, and humble submission to what God has revealed.

A commitment to contextual and historical-grammatical interpretation helps preserve the meaning of Scripture by allowing the text to speak on its own terms. Instead of reshaping Scripture to fit modern expectations, the Church must allow the Word of God to challenge and reshape its thinking.

Confidence in Scripture also strengthens the ministry of preaching. When pastors approach the Bible with the conviction that God has spoken clearly, their task becomes the careful explanation and application of the text rather than the invention of new spiritual insights. The Church is built not on human specula-

tion but on the revealed Word of God.

The serpent's ancient question still echoes in many forms today: "Did God really say...?" The faithful response of the Church must remain clear and unwavering: **"Yes, God has spoken. And His Word is clear."**

How Progressive Christianity *Undermines* the Clarity of Scripture

Your word is
a lamp to my feet
and a light to
my path.
Psalm 119:105

BY AMY SPREEMAN

If you've been a Christian for more than a decade, you've probably noticed how quickly things have changed in the Church. Ideas that once would have been clearly rejected as unbiblical are now promoted from pulpits, podcasts, and conference stages.

I often write examining the dangers of Progressive Christianity and its growing influence in the Church. As I do so, I'm amazed (and grieved) by how much our world—and the visible Church—has shapeshifted in just the past several years. When I first started writing articles in 2010 about the different

movements impacting Christians, we were watching the final throes of the Emergent Church movement, with its big tent theology and lack of clear definitions and boundaries. Leaders like Brian McLaren, Jim Wallis, and Shane Claiborne were that generation's TED-Talk-style performers, always offering something “new” and “outside-the-box”. Their attack on the authority and sufficiency of Scripture shipwrecked the faith of many.

While the Emergents have since faded away, other progressives—shaped by a culture that celebrates “my truth” and “your truth”—are leading many churches and ministries to quietly surrender the one unchanging Truth. Progressive theology has declared war on the plain meaning of Scripture, and the casualties are souls drifting away from the Gospel.

I've watched this shift up close. Raised in a progressive-leaning environment myself, I now see how dangerous the idea is that the Bible somehow needs updating for modern ears. Progressive “Christianity” isn't a harmless update to the faith—it's a reinterpretation that sounds compassionate while quietly emptying the cross of its power. Over the years at Berean Research, I've watched these same arguments appear again and again. They're always dressed up as compassion, but they always lead people further away from the authority of Scripture.

How Progressive Christianity Reinterprets Scripture

Hermeneutics is just a fancy word for how we interpret the Bible. Faithful hermeneutics simply ask what the original author meant in the original context, under the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Progressive interpreters flip that approach on its head. They begin with today's cultural values—equality, inclusion, justice—and then read those ideas back into the text. The result? The plain meaning gets “reimagined”.

Take marriage and sexuality, for example. Genesis 1:27 and Matthew 19:4-6 record Jesus Himself affirming, “*male and female he created them*” and “*what God has joined together, let no one separate.*” The text is crystal clear. Yet progressive

teachers often frame these passages as cultural artifacts—products of ancient patriarchy rather than timeless creation order. Romans 1:26-27 gets reimagined as “Paul was only addressing temple prostitution or exploitative relationships,” and not same-sex behavior itself. The plain warning against exchanging “natural relations” disappears under layers of historical nuance.

Or, consider sin and judgment. Jesus spoke more about Hell than Heaven in the Gospels, describing it as a real place of conscious, eternal torment (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:48). Progressive voices often redefine Hell as nothing more than a temporary “separation from God” or claim everyone will eventually be restored anyway. Some sects have even stated that Hell isn’t eternal at all—just a quick transition into a kind of conscious-free nothingness.

These aren’t minor adjustments. They are direct attacks on the plain meaning of God’s Word, which Scripture itself warns will happen. As 2 Peter 1:20-21 reminds us, *“no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation... men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* When we start treating the Bible like clay to be molded by culture, we stop allowing it to mold us.

The Pressures Fueling the Reinterpretation

Why does this happen? Two powerful forces are at work: cultural pressure and academic redefinition. Our culture prizes tolerance above truth. Questioning modern views on gender, sexuality, or Hell quickly earns the label of unloving or bigoted. Pastors and church leaders feel the pressure—declining attendance, social media backlash, even the risk of losing their jobs. It becomes easier to say, “The Bible isn’t clear here”, than to risk being called intolerant. Progressive theology offers a convenient escape hatch: “We’re just making the gospel more inclusive.”

At the same time, skepticism toward the Bible has been steadily creeping into seminaries and Christian institutions for more than a century. Darwin’s

Theory of Evolution cast doubt on the biblical account of creation, and today those ideas flow almost unquestioned through classrooms, Christian media, podcasts, and influencer platforms.

Books and conferences promise “fresh readings” that supposedly free us from “outdated” interpretations. The result is exactly what the Apostle Paul

“Scripture itself provides the defense.”

warned about in 2 Timothy 4:3-4— people gathering teachers who will tell them what they want to hear, while turning away from sound doctrine. Even well-intentioned believers can slowly drift. One viral clip, one empathetic-sounding sermon, and suddenly passages like 1 Timothy 2:12 begin to feel “oppressive”. Cultural “kindness”

starts to feel more loving than biblical obedience—until we realize we’ve traded the narrow way for the broad one that seems right, but ultimately leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

God's Built-In Safeguards: Clarity, Authority, and Sufficiency

Praise the Lord, He did not leave us defenseless. Scripture itself provides the defense. Clarity means God’s Word is understandable to ordinary believers who approach it with humility and the help of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 119:130 declares, *“The unfolding of Your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”* The Bible repeatedly assumes its readers can grasp its meaning. Jesus quoted Scripture, expecting people to understand it, and the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to verify Paul’s teaching (Acts 17:11). Progressive claims that “the Bible is unclear on [insert a favorite cultural issue]” directly attack this clarity. But if the text plainly says something, our discomfort doesn’t erase it. We

don't need a seminary degree to grasp "love your neighbor" alongside "repent and believe."

Authority flows from divine inspiration. "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Peter calls it more certain than even the eyewitness account of the Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:19). When progressive theology elevates culture, personal experience, or "new revelation" above the text, it dethrones

"So how do Christians respond without becoming combative or fearful? Be a Berean."

God's Word. We do not judge Scripture—it judges us (Hebrews 4:12). Sufficiency completes the triad. The same passage in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 explains that Scripture equips believers for every good work. Psalm 19:7-11 calls God's Word perfect, reviving the soul and making wise the simple. We don't need to supplement it with social theories or

emotional reinterpretations. God's Word is enough.

These three truths form a strong defense when cultural storms start blowing through the Church. God gave us this protection for His good purposes. Yet many believers assume they know better. Churches that abandon these safeguards in the pursuit of relevance may indeed see attendance grow, but the presentation of the gospel often shrinks. Eventually the building is full of people who no longer know the Jesus of the Bible.

Equipping Yourself to Stand Confidently

So how do Christians respond without becoming combative or fearful? Be a Berean. Search the Scriptures daily and read them in context. Compare translations. Ask simple questions: What does the text actually say? What did it mean to the original audience? How does it point to Christ?

- **Test everything.** When a teacher, podcaster, or church redefines a clear passage, ask for chapter-and-verse support. If an explanation requires ten minutes of “historical background” just to overturn the plain reading, take a pause.
- **Pray for illumination.** The same Spirit who inspired the text illuminates it (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12). Ask God to make His Word clear and convicting.
- **Use faithful resources that support Scripture, not those that question it.** Our White Papers at Berean Research (i) exist for exactly this purpose—simple facts, helpful links, and most importantly, what the Bible says.
- **Speak the truth in love.** When progressive ideas surface in your small group or family conversations, respond graciously: “I love you, and because I do, I want us both to submit to what God clearly says here.” Then open the Bible together.
- **Find a faithful local church and serve there.** Look for a congregation that preaches the whole counsel of God without apology. The clarity of Scripture shines brightest in a community that honors it.

Standing on biblical clarity doesn't make us arrogant—it makes us humble. We are not smarter than the text. We are simply submitted to it.

The Clear Word Stands Forever

Progressive theology promises freedom through reinterpretation. God offers true freedom through obedience to His clear revelation. *“Heaven and earth will pass away,”* Jesus said, *“but my words will not pass away”* (Matthew 24:35).

In a time of doctrinal confusion, it is more important than ever to guard ourselves in the truth. When we anchor ourselves in what the Bible plainly says,

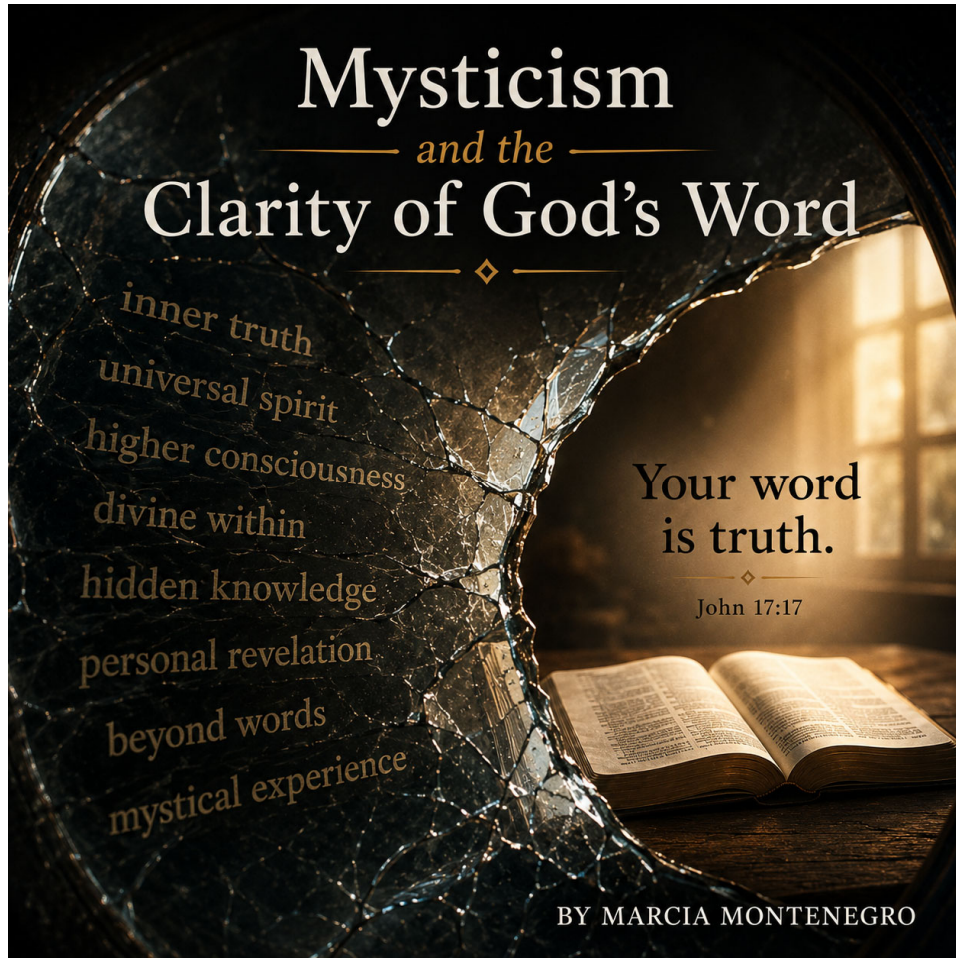
doctrinal drift begins to lose its grip. If you're encountering these pressures in your church, favorite podcast, or Christian social media feed, return to the Berean way: examine the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

The issue facing the Church today is not whether Scripture is clear—it's whether we are willing to submit to what it clearly says. That's why we must cling to the clarity, authority, and sufficiency of God's Word. It has guarded believers through every age of deception—and it will guard us today.

Jesus is Lord, and we magnify Him by proclaiming what He has plainly spoken. May we stand firm in His truth, equipped and unashamed, until He returns.

References:

i. <https://bereanresearch.org/>



To appreciate the clarity of God's Word, it helps to see how it contrasts with something less clear. The clarity of God's Word can be obscured or temporarily forgotten if feelings and experiences bring someone into what appears to be a spiritual experience. Experiences are powerful and able to offer what feels like a "God-experience".

The purpose of this article is to explain where we are seeing mysticism in the Church and how it undermines the clarity of God's Word by examining current trends that cloud said clarity and hijack God's Word for its own ends.

A biblical assessment and response are given as well.

What is Mysticism?

Mysticism has been defined as an unmediated contact with the Divine (or whatever a sacred source or being might be called). It is primarily experiential, and the methods taught to achieve this involve “going inward”. As one source (i) describes mysticism:

1. The belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (as intuition or insight).
2. A theory postulating the possibility of direct and intuitive acquisition of ineffable knowledge or power.
3. Belief in the existence of realities beyond perceptual or intellectual apprehension that are directly accessible by subjective experience.

Note the word “ineffable” in the second example. This is a key to understanding the Contemplative mindset, which is that silence is superior to words. Words are negatively linked to the mind or intellect by Contemplatives and viewed as inferior to what Contemplatives call the “heart” or “inner being”.

However, this is self-refuting since they must use words to convey this. They also neglect that in the Bible, the word translated as “heart” means *the whole self* – mind, will, spirit, and emotions. Also seemingly overlooked is the fact that God’s revelation, the 66 books of the canon, are in words.

The Components of Mysticism

The components of mysticism include an experience of subjective knowledge and ineffable knowledge. Subjective knowledge is knowing something merely through an inner experience, and ineffable knowledge is knowing something that cannot be communicated in words or by ordinary means.

The subjective knowledge gained through mysticism is not from information perceived by the senses, the intellect, through reasoning, or via normal

introspection. So, it cannot be based on any objective evidence or truth. Such knowledge is not teachable nor verifiable, so its assertions cannot be evaluated by objective truth. This seemingly protects Contemplative teachings from criticism since the defense is that one must have the experience to really understand it.

It is Ineffable

Additionally, this mystical knowledge or experience is viewed as superior to knowledge based on facts, tested principles, reasoning, logic, and superior to anything that can be clearly articulated. Words are deemed inadequate to express the experience or knowledge. This is also a self-protective stance which rejects reasoning or logic as shallow or unable to comprehend the Contemplative experience. This is because reasoning and logic would expose the fallacies. So, experience is appealed to in these cases, not Scripture.

It is Esoteric

Mysticism is by nature esoteric. That is, it is secretive and not able to be communicated with the mind or words, but must be sought inwardly, usually through certain practices. As this Christian article at Contemplation.info, which supports such ideas, states:

Esotericism, by contrast, offers a more structured and selective path. It involves the study of mystical texts, sacred correspondences, ritual practice, and symbolic systems. The seeker often progresses through initiatory grades, each unveiling deeper layers of insight. Esotericism asks, 'What is the hidden order behind the visible world? And how can I align with it?'(ii)

The above quote describes the view about the "truths" allegedly hidden behind the visible world that this writer had for many years while in the New Age. What is perceived with the mind and senses is either false or insufficient. This includes knowledge about God from Scripture.

Mysticism and its esoteric spirituality are by nature contrary to God and His revelation. God's Word is offered to all and is meant to be read in a normal fashion (not looking for codes or hidden messages). The Scriptures reflect God's character— God, as revealed in His Word, does not hide behind enigmas, nor is He a cipher challenging us to unlock secret codes that lead to Him.

Furthermore, God certainly knows man's limitations; but being God, He is more than able to communicate what He wants humans to know. Jesus continually quoted and referred to the Old Testament scriptures, and stated in His priestly prayer, "*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth*" (John 17:17). God has given His written Word so that we can know who God and Christ are and understand how to live the Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 4:23-24, 15:4; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Christians are told to "*test all things*" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) and are warned throughout the New Testament of false teachings. One must test teachings in the light of God's Word; God has commanded this (Isaiah 8:20; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 John 4:1, Acts 17:11, 2 John 1:7-10).

Where Do We See it Now?

In the past two decades, there has been a growing movement of mysticism in the Church, sometimes called Contemplative Spirituality. It also goes under names such as Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Practices, and Spiritual Formation (these terms can be used in a biblical way but, in most cases, they are connected to Contemplative teachings). This includes— but is not limited to— forms of meditation that put the mind in neutral, repeating words, centering/contemplative prayer, sacred reading (*Lectio Divina*), practicing solitude and silence, the *Prayer of Examen* (or *Ignatian Prayer*), *Lectio Visio*, and imaginary and guided prayer. Each section below will describe some of these practices followed by how these practices blur and misuse Scripture.

Prayer Redefined

Prayer is redefined and presented as a meditative state one enters in silence. “Wordless prayer” is promoted; this does not mean silent prayer, which is biblical. It means non-verbal in speech or thought. Contemplative or Centering prayer methods usually involve certain ways of breathing, being still, and entering a state of silence, which is believed to be a way to be in God’s presence and hear from Him and/or feel His love.

This state of silence, if done with certain breathing or other techniques, is actually a form of self-induced hypnosis in which critical thinking is suspended, and the mind is in neutral, receptive to any idea or influence that may enter. It is

“This theme is a common false dichotomy found in Contemplative Spirituality – that of the head (knowledge) versus the heart (love).”

similar to the methods of Hindu and Buddhist meditation.

In fact, the modern Contemplative Prayer movement deliberately adopted some methods from Hinduism and Eastern meditation. A video with Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington, and John Menninger— the three

Trappist monks who founded this movement— shows the discussion about incorporating Eastern meditation.(iii) Keating hosted Buddhist monks and a former monk turned Transcendental Meditation teacher at his abbey to teach and meditate with the Trappist monks.

Additionally, Keating and his cohorts drew from the 14th century work, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a mystical book thought to have been written by an anonymous monk. Reason and intellect are to be set aside. The “Cloud of Forgetting” is to forget everything below the cloud so that the “Cloud of Unknowing” can be pierced by love in order to know God. This theme is a common false dichotomy found in Contemplative Spirituality— that of head (knowledge) versus heart (love). The book also teaches repetition of a word “to anchor the mind” so that

the seeker may be free of thought. The book is esoteric and inward-oriented.

Biblical Prayer

Prayer as demonstrated in God's Word is starkly different from Contemplative and mystical forms of prayer. Prayer is verbal (whether silent or spoke aloud); it is never a suppression of thoughts or words.

Contemplative Prayer substitutes an esoteric form of meditation for prayer, so it is not really prayer. What is offered is a bait-and-switch. There are no bibli-

Pondering and reading over passages is chewing on the Word, which is what the Hebrew word translated as "meditation" means.

cal examples that one should cultivate a silent, wordless state, or that silence is superior to verbal communication, as the Contemplatives teach.

Scriptures cited by Contemplatives using the word "silent" or "silence" actually reveal that the silence comes about from one of these situations: it is in awe of God's majesty or something He has done; it is remorse due

to having sinned and therefore having nothing to say to God; or silence is a contrast to foolish words.

Jesus Himself, when asked by His disciples how to pray, taught the words in Matthew 6:9-13 (also Luke 11:2-4). Is not the pattern for prayer, as taught by Jesus, superior to anything else, especially a prayer based on mystical methods?

Lectio Divina

A method found in some evangelical churches, promoted on Bible apps, and taught in women's ministries, is *Lectio Divina*, which means "sacred reading." This way of reading the Bible is done without taking the context nor the meaning of words into account.

Practitioners are taught to read a passage slowly several times, noticing if a word or phrase stands out, and then to meditate on those words. In some cases, the person is to ponder those words for a day or a week, believing them to be a personal message from God.

Reading the Bible should be done the way one normally reads and understand words— with the mind. If God expected man to read differently, He would have indicated it or not given His revelation in words. The mind and reason are necessary to read words.

Pondering and reading over passages is chewing on the Word, which is what the Hebrew word translated as “meditation” means. It can also mean saying the words aloud, which may have been done for memorization since people did not have Bibles to carry around. This is the kind of meditation God means when that word is used.

Imaginative Prayer, the *Prayer of Examen*, and Guided Prayer

Imaginative Prayer and the *Prayer of Examen* are connected to Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Society of Jesus, known as the Jesuits. He compiled his teachings on methods for spiritual formation into a book, *Spiritual Exercises* (1548). It is noteworthy that Ignatius and the Jesuits were instrumental in fighting the Reformation as part of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation.

Imaginative Prayer is also known as Ignatian Contemplation. Most instructions for Imaginative Prayer tell the person to put themselves in the scene of a Bible passage and notice what they feel or think. Some may suggest seeing Jesus do or say something that is not in the text.

Many videos on this practice state that we connect to God and/or know Jesus through our imagination. They urge the viewers to let their imagination unfold to see where they are in a biblical account.

The Ignatian *Prayer of Examen* and Imaginative Prayer have spread into churches. Jared Boyd, a Vineyard pastor, has taught and written on Imaginative

Prayer for children. He writes in the introduction: “Perhaps in pretending to be with Jesus they might experience what it’s like to see him bring the kingdom.”

So, pretense here is equated with reality. Seeing a “pretend Jesus” in the imagination is not encountering the real Jesus of Scripture. Man’s imagination has not been redeemed (using imagination is also taught by Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, and Peter Greig). The mind and imagination are being conformed to the image of Christ in the process of sanctification, but this is an ongoing, lifelong process. If our minds were totally redeemed and sanctified, we would never have a bad thought.

Pete Greig acknowledges in a video in his Lectio course (iv) that the imagination is “broken”, but he claims that if God spoke through Balaam’s donkey and the burning bush, then God can speak through a “broken” imagination. There are also Bible apps and other Christian apps that offer imaginative prayer and guided visualizations using Scripture, and numerous online videos demonstrating these methods.

Closely related is Guided Prayer. Guided prayer is not the prayer you pray as someone else leads in prayer. It is when someone leads you through a prayer suggesting what to think or visualize. This is often done for healing and found in Inner Healing (also called healing of memories). Inner Healing is used in Theophostic prayer,

deliverance ministries, some forms of healing prayer, and in some counseling practices. Many who do this do not use the term “inner healing”. Guided Prayer involves, as in imaginative prayer, somebody directing the person what to

“The same problems go for Guided Prayer and Inner Healing. These methods conjure a fake Jesus.”

see or imagine, and it often involves Jesus, since He is used as the instrument of healing (but fallaciously in this case).

One is told to put Jesus into a past traumatic scene and to perhaps hear what Jesus might say in that situation; or one is told that Jesus was there and did say something, so what did He say or do? Again, this is a misuse of imagination. Using imagination is not wrong but it should not be misused in a way that ushers in a pretend Jesus.

For imaginative prayer, there may be a fine line between biblical and unbiblical practice, because it is not wrong to spontaneously imagine a scenario with Jesus as you read the Bible. In fact, it is quite normal. It is when one imagines Jesus saying or doing something not in Scripture, especially when directed by another person (found on some Bible apps or in conjunction with Contemplative practices), that the practice becomes problematic. In those cases, one may imagine Jesus speaking words not only that He never said, but that He *never would* say. However, we don't evoke the real Jesus with our imagination; encounters with Jesus are through God's Word and in prayer—two of the methods that God has clearly given as the way to know and follow Him.

As for examples of the burning bush and Balaam's donkey, God chose those methods according to His will. Neither Moses nor Balaam were using a bush or a donkey to hear from God. Moreover, God (the text also indicates the "*Angel of Yahweh*") did not speak through the bush; God called to Moses from "*the midst of the bush*" (Exodus 3:4).

The same problems go for Guided Prayer and Inner Healing. These methods conjure a fake Jesus. It is even possible in some cases, if the person is not saved, that it could introduce that person to a spirit guide (demon).

Biblical Truths Vs. Contemplative Practices

Biblical truths are clearly laid out in God's Word. God in His omniscience knows how to communicate what man needs to know in order to know the Trini-

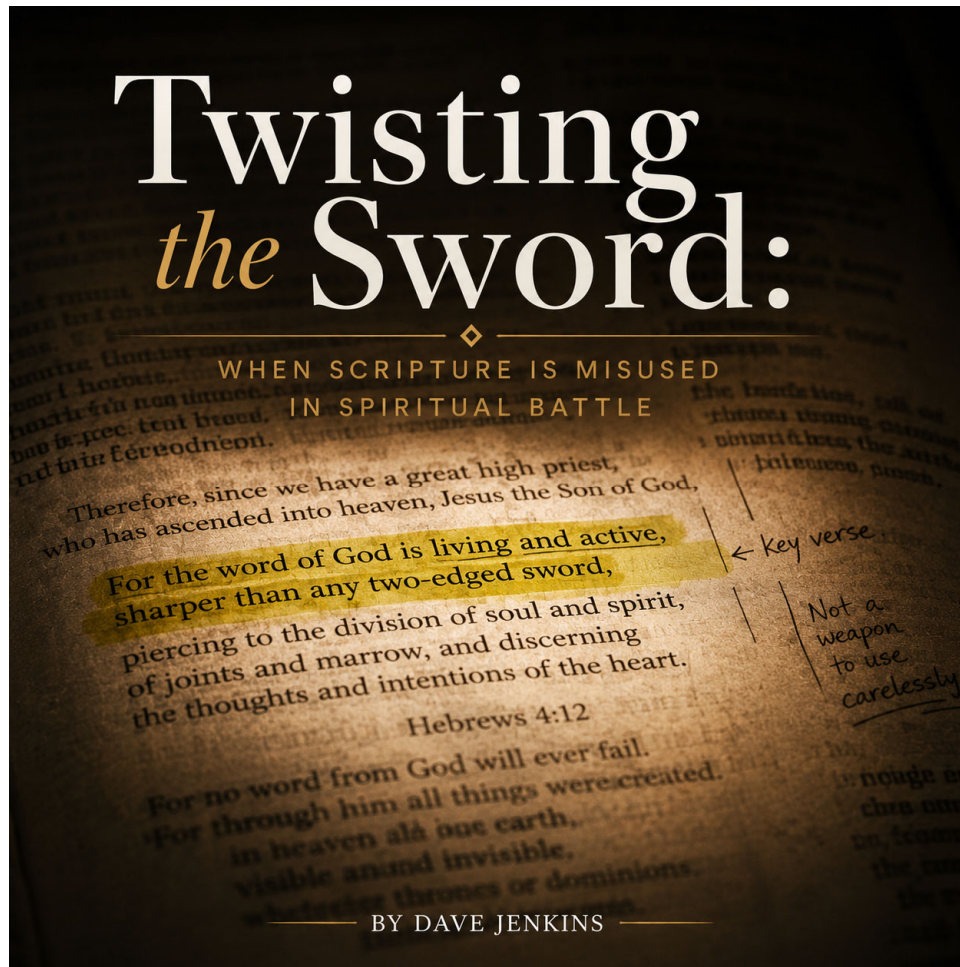
tarian doctrine, to know who Christ is, how salvation is obtained, and how to live the Christian life. God also gives patterns for prayer in Scripture, especially the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, and the meaning of terms are clear through context.

It is impossible for an omniscient, sovereign God to leave out important information in the Word that He has given. Insufficient revelation would indicate a faulty or negligent God, which is not the God revealed in the Bible, and is contradicted by 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Contemplative practices have been demonstrated to be at odds with Scripture and are based on mysticism in their attempts to be close to God. Compared to the clarity of God's Word, the mysticism of Contemplative practices falls short since it is subjective, murky, and experience-oriented, and lacks the foundation of God's Word.

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Few images in Scripture are more vivid than the Word of God described as a sword. *God's Word is living and active, sharper than any two-edged blade.* It pierces, exposes, judges, and frees. It is not decorative, it is decisive. It is not symbolic only, it is powerful. And like any powerful weapon, it can be used rightly or wrongly.

In our time, few areas show the misuse of Scripture more clearly than popular teachings on spiritual warfare. Many Christians are eager to take spiritual conflict seriously, and that is a good instinct. The Bible plainly teaches that

believers face real spiritual opposition. But alongside biblical teaching has grown a large body of unbiblical practice—much of it built on distorted, isolated, or misapplied Scripture. The tragedy is not only doctrinal error. The tragedy is that when Scripture is twisted in the name of spiritual battle, believers are weakened rather than strengthened. The very sword meant to protect them is bent out of shape.

The Sword Scripture Actually Describes

When Paul describes the armor of God, he names one offensive weapon: the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That image is not accidental. God's Word is truth spoken with divine authority. It exposes lies, it defeats deception, and it anchors the believer in reality. But notice how Scripture itself models the use of this sword.

“Right use of Scripture requires context.”

When Jesus faced direct satanic temptation, He did not shout at demons. He did not invent formulas. He did not appeal to hidden revelations. He quoted Scripture—accurately, contextually, and obediently. Each response began with the same grounding: “It is written.” Christ did not treat Scripture as a magic incantation, but as binding truth. He did not manipulate verses; He submitted to them. That is the model. The sword is used rightly when Scripture is handled faithfully.

How the Sword Gets Twisted

Scripture is twisted whenever it is removed from its context and reasigned a meaning God did not give it. This can happen accidentally through

careless reading, or deliberately through agenda-driven teaching. In spiritual warfare circles, several patterns of misuse are common. Verses describing Christ's authority are sometimes turned into universal formulas that believers are told to declare mechanically. Narrative passages describing unique apostolic events are treated as repeatable commands. Symbolic language is pressed into literal technique. Promises are detached from their covenant context and applied as guaranteed outcomes. The Bible becomes a phrase bank instead of a revelation. This is not how Scripture is meant to function. God did not give His Word as a collection of verbal tools to control spiritual forces. He gave it as truth to be believed, obeyed, and trusted.

When Technique Replaces Truth

A major danger in distorted warfare teaching is the shift from truth to technique. Believers are taught methods instead of meaning. They are given scripts instead of doctrine. They are trained in verbal strategies instead of biblical understanding. The focus subtly moves from:

- knowing God to using formulas.
- trusting truth to performing steps.
- submitting to Scripture to wielding phrases.

But spiritual power in Scripture never comes from technique. It comes from truth believed and obeyed. The apostles did not teach warfare formulas—they taught sound doctrine, holy living, sober vigilance, and resistance through faith. The emphasis was always on standing firm in truth, not mastering methods.

Context is Not Optional

Right use of Scripture requires context. Words mean what God intended them to mean in their setting. That includes literary context, historical context, covenant context, and authorial intent. When context is ignored, almost any verse can be made to support almost any practice. That is not spiritual insight, that is interpretive carelessness. Faithful handling of Scripture asks:

- Who is speaking?
- To whom are they speaking?
- Under what covenant was this spoken?
- About what situation is this written?
- With what purpose was this given?

This is not academic nitpicking. It is spiritual safety.

The Quiet Strength of Ordinary Means

One of the most overlooked truths in spiritual warfare teaching is this: the New Testament emphasizes ordinary means of grace far more than dramatic confrontation. Believers are told to:

- Put on the armor of God.
- Stand firm.
- Resist the devil.
- Pray.
- Know truth.
- Live righteously.
- Walk in obedience.
- Remain watchful.

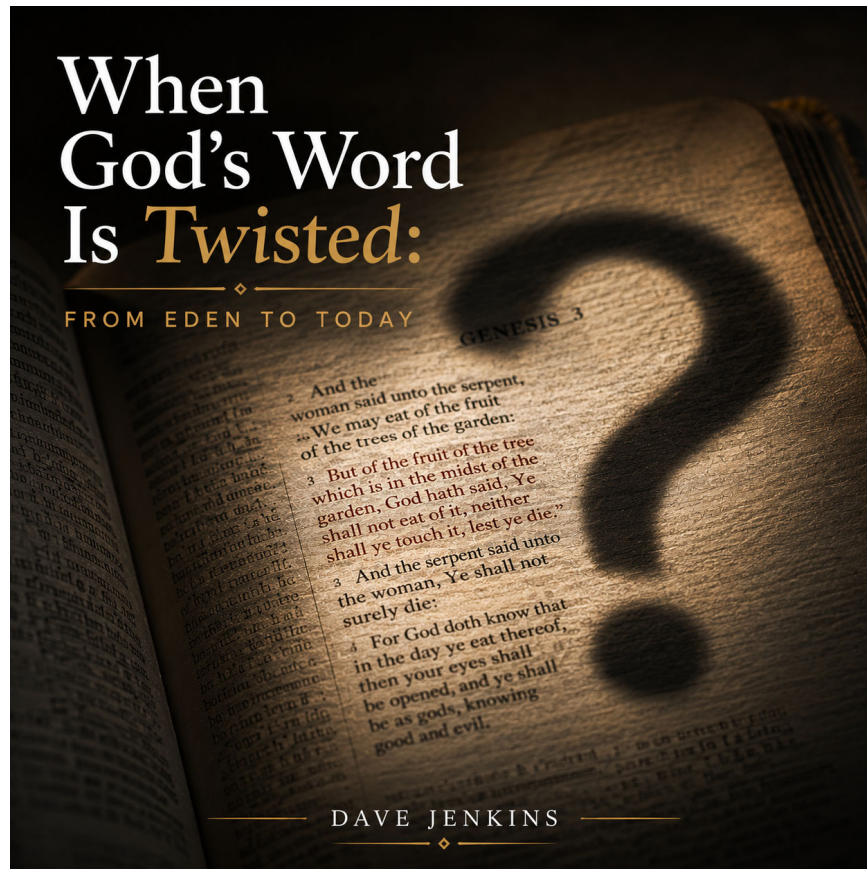
These are steady practices, not sensational moments. Scripture points us to endurance more than spectacle. The most powerful spiritual defense is not a shouted phrase—it is a truth-shaped life.

Modeling Right Use of the Sword

Using the sword rightly means reading Scripture in context, interpreting Scripture with Scripture, submitting to what it says, apply it where it truly applies, trust its authority, and obey its commands. The sword cuts cleanest when it is handled carefully. Believers do not need creative reinterpretations, they need faithful exposition. They do not need secret warfare knowledge, they need sound doctrine and steady obedience.

A Warning and Encouragement

When Scripture is twisted, believers are burdened with practices God never commanded and expectations God never promised. That leads to frustration, fear, and disillusionment. But when Scripture is handled rightly, believers grow in confidence, clarity, and courage. They learn that Christ has already secured decisive victory. They learn that truth is their defense. They learn that obedience is their posture. They learn that God's Word is sufficient. The sword is not dull; it does not need embellishment. It needs faithful handling. Let us not twist the sword, but rather let us use it well.



Spiritual deception did not begin with the denial of God's Word—it began with the distortion of it. The first recorded temptation in Scripture was not an argument against religion, morality, or spirituality in general. It was a question aimed directly at God's revealed speech: *"Did God really say...?"* With that question, the serpent did not immediately reject God's authority. He subtly challenged God's clarity, goodness, and intent. He introduced doubt about what God had spoken and how it should be understood.

From that moment forward, the twisting of God's Word has been one of the enemy's primary strategies. The pattern is remarkably consistent across

Scripture and church history. Rarely is deception built on open rejection alone. More often it is built on misquotation, misinterpretation, selective emphasis, or confident misuse. Truth is not always denied—it is bent. And a bent truth becomes a dangerous lie.

The First Twist: The Serpent's Question

Genesis 3 gives us the first recorded distortion of divine revelation. God had spoken clearly to Adam about the tree and the consequence of disobedience. The command was specific, understandable, and sufficient.

The serpent approached not with contradiction first, but with reframing: *"Did God really say...?"* Notice the move. He altered the wording. He broadened the restriction. He planted suspicion. He shifted the tone of God's command from generous boundary to unreasonable limitation.

Then came direct contradiction: *"You will not surely die."* Then reinterpretation: God's motive is questioned, God's warning is recast, and disobedience is presented as enlightenment. Distortion to doubt, doubt to denial, denial to disobedience. The fall was not caused by ignorance of God's Word but by failure to hold to it faithfully.

Misusing Scripture in the Wilderness

The next major twisting comes not from a human teacher but from the devil himself—quoting Scripture. When Jesus is tempted in the wilderness, Satan cites biblical text—he quotes a Psalm. But he quotes it selectively and applies it falsely. The misuse is not in the words cited, but in the meaning assigned. This is crucial: Satan uses Scripture, but not truthfully.

Jesus responds not by rejecting Scripture, but by interpreting it correctly and applying it faithfully. Each reply begins with grounding authority: *"It is written..."* He answers distortion with context and obedience. Right interpretation defeats misinterpretation. This account teaches us something vital: quoting Scripture is not the same as honoring Scripture. Accuracy of citation is not the

same as faithfulness of meaning.

The Prophetic and Apostolic Warnings

Throughout the Old Testament, false prophets repeatedly claim divine authority while speaking distorted messages. They use God-language but deliver

“Scripture is twisted today through methods such as...selective quoting...reframing...re-weighting...psychologizing...spiritualizing... and experiential override.”

self-generated revelation. They promise peace where judgment is coming. They soften what God has made severe and intensify what God has not commanded. Their error is not always obvious rebellion—it is confident misrepresentation.

The New Testament continues this warning. Jesus rebukes religious leaders for knowing the text but missing its meaning. The Apostles

warn repeatedly about teachers who twist Scripture to support destructive ideas. The danger is not merely outside the Church, but inside it. Distortion often wears a religious uniform.

How Twisting Happens Today

The same ancient pattern continues in modern form. Scripture is twisted today through methods such as: selective quoting—using verses while ignoring context; reframing—redefining biblical terms to fit modern values; re-weighting—minimizing clear texts and maximizing obscure ones; psychologizing—replacing sin categories with therapeutic ones; spiritualizing—turning concrete truth into symbolic suggestion; and experiential override—letting experience reinterpret revelation.

In each case, Scripture is not always denied, it is redirected. Modern distortion is often confident, articulate, and emotionally compelling. That is why

discernment must be grounded, not in tone or personality, but in textual faithfulness.

Why Distortion is So Effective

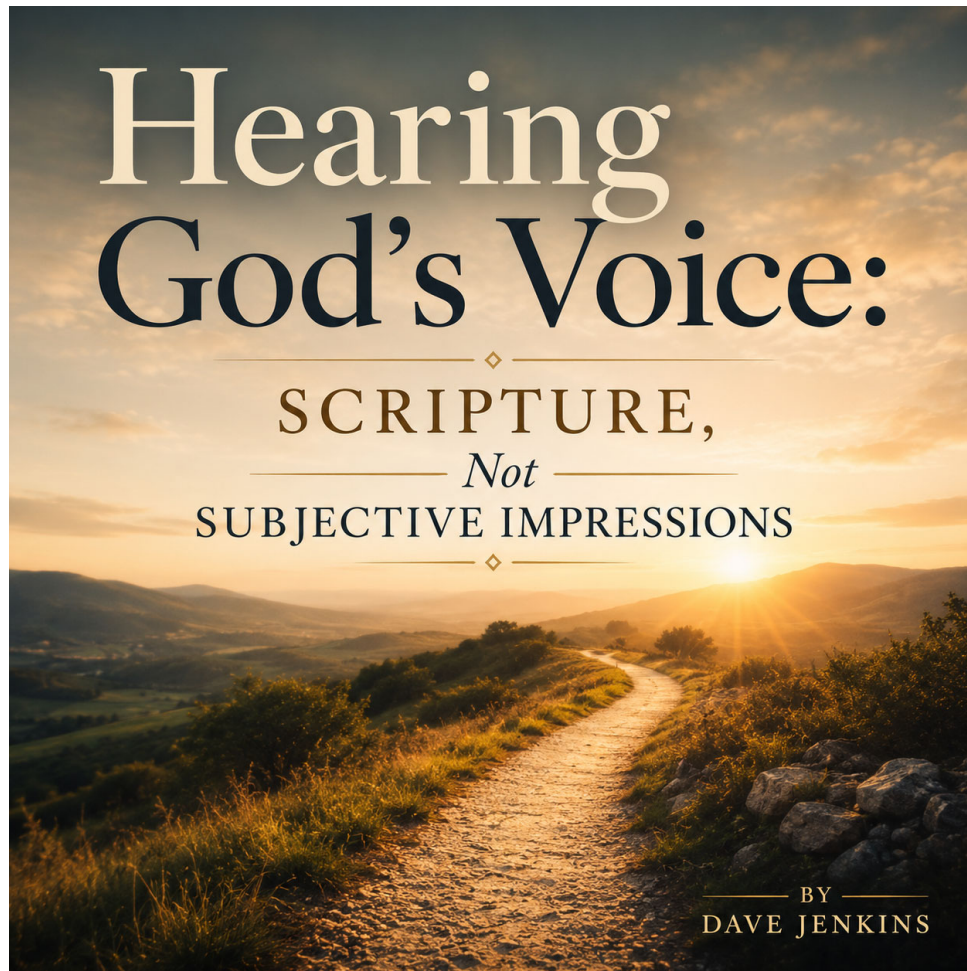
Distortion succeeds because it often stays *close* to truth. A small twist can produce a large error. A partial truth can produce a complete misdirection. People rarely follow teaching they recognize as false. They follow teaching that *feels* (almost) *right*. Add to this our cultural moment—fast content, short attention spans, emotional persuasion, platform authority—and the conditions are ideal for misinterpretation to spread quickly. Without careful reading and sound teaching, believers can be drawn into error while thinking they are pursuing truth.

Guarding Against the Twist

Scripture itself gives us the safeguards. We read contextually, not fragmentedly. We interpret Scripture with Scripture. We test teachings carefully. We value faithful exposition. We grow in biblical literacy (by thoroughly reading and studying the Word). We submit our preferences to the Scriptures. Discernment is not suspicion; it is careful listening anchored in God's Word. Believers who know Scripture deeply are harder to easily deceive.

A Call Back to Trusting God's Word

Every distortion ultimately questions God's goodness, clarity, or authority. That is why returning to Scripture is not merely intellectual, it is relational—it is an act of trust. We trust that God speaks clearly. We trust that God speaks truthfully. We trust that God speaks sufficiently. The serpent's ancient question still echoes: "*Did God really say...?*" The faithful believer's answer must still be, "*Yes—and we will listen carefully.*" From the Garden of Eden until now, twisting the Word leads to confusion and loss. Holding fast to the Word leads to life and stability. Let us be people who read carefully, interpret faithfully, and stand confidently on what God has actually said.



Few questions trouble Christians more—or confuse them more—than this one: *How do I hear God's voice?* For many believers, the phrase “hearing God” has become closely associated with inner impressions, mental pictures, emotional nudges, or spontaneous thoughts that feel spiritually significant. Some are taught to expect personal messages, individualized directives, or fresh spoken guidance beyond Scripture. Others are told that a vibrant Christian life depends on learning to recognize these internal promptings as divine speech.

The desire underneath this is often sincere. Believers want to know God, follow His will, and walk closely with Him. That desire is good. But sincerity alone does not guarantee clarity. When the question of hearing God is separated from the doctrine of Scripture, confusion quickly follows.

The Bible gives us a clear and freeing framework: God speaks through His Word, and the Holy Spirit illumines that Word to His people. The Spirit applies revelation; He does not add new revelation. Understanding that distinction protects believers from error and anchors them in confidence.

God Has Already Spoken

The starting point for clarity is this: God is not silent. He has spoken—definitively, authoritatively, and sufficiently—in Scripture. The Bible is not a partial message waiting to be completed by ongoing private revelations. It is the written, preserved, and God-breathed Word. Through Prophets and Apostles, God has given His revelation to the Church. That revelation is now inscripturated. It is fixed, public, and authoritative.

When we open the Bible, we are not searching for hints of God's voice, we are encountering it. This does not make God distant, it makes Him dependable. His voice is not hidden behind techniques or unlocked by spiritual sensitivity levels. It is available in the text He has given.

Illumination is Not Revelation

A crucial theological distinction must be kept clear: revelation and illumination *are not* the same thing. Revelation is God giving new truth through inspired authors. Illumination is the Holy Spirit helping believers understand and apply the truth already revealed. Revelation produced Scripture. Illumination opens our eyes to Scripture. The Spirit's ministry today is not to deliver new doctrinal content or personal revelation equal in authority to the Bible. His ministry is to shine light on what He has already inspired—to convict, clarify, and apply the Word to the believer's mind and heart.

This is why believers can read the same passage many times and suddenly see its significance more clearly. The text did not change. Revelation did not expand, but rather illumination has been deepened. That is the Holy Spirit's faithful work.

How Confusion Enters

Confusion enters when illumination is redefined as revelation—when internal impressions are treated as divine speech. Phrases like “God told me”, “I heard the Lord say”, or “the Spirit revealed” are often used to describe subjective experiences. Sometimes these are sincere attempts to describe conviction or guidance. But when this language is used loosely, it unintentionally places personal impressions in the category of divine revelation.

That creates several dangers. First, it gives subjective thoughts divine authority (by implying or explicitly stating that it was from the Lord). Second, it makes personal impressions difficult to question. Third, it pressures other believers to treat private experiences as binding truth. Fourth, it shifts confidence away from Scripture and toward internal experience. None of this produces clarity. It produces instability.

The Spirit Works Through the Word

The Holy Spirit is not silent, but His voice is not independent of Scripture. He speaks through the Word He inspired. He convicts through Scripture. He comforts through Scripture. He guides through Scripture. He corrects through Scripture. He assures us through Scripture. He also uses wise counsel, circumstances, and sanctified reasoning—but never in contradiction to the written Word and never as new revelation alongside it. The Spirit does not bypass Scripture to guide believers. He works through it.

Guidance Without New Revelation

Some worry that if we reject subjective revelation, we are left without personal guidance. But Scripture presents guidance differently than many expect.

God guides primarily through:

- Biblical commands and principles.
- Renewed thinking shaped by Scripture.
- Wise counsel from mature believers.
- Prayerful judgment.
- Providence and circumstance.

This is not lesser guidance—it is steadier guidance. It produces mature decision-making rather than impression-dependence. We are not called to decode hidden messages. We are called to apply revealed truth.

Testing Impressions Wisely

Believers *do* experience strong convictions, burdens, and promptings.

These should not be ignored—but they must be tested. They are not revelation. They are impressions that must be evaluated by Scripture. Wise language helps here. Instead of saying, “God told me”, it is more accurate and humble to say, “I believe this is wise”, or “I feel led”, or “I am persuaded this aligns with Scripture.” This keeps authority where it belongs—in God’s written Word.

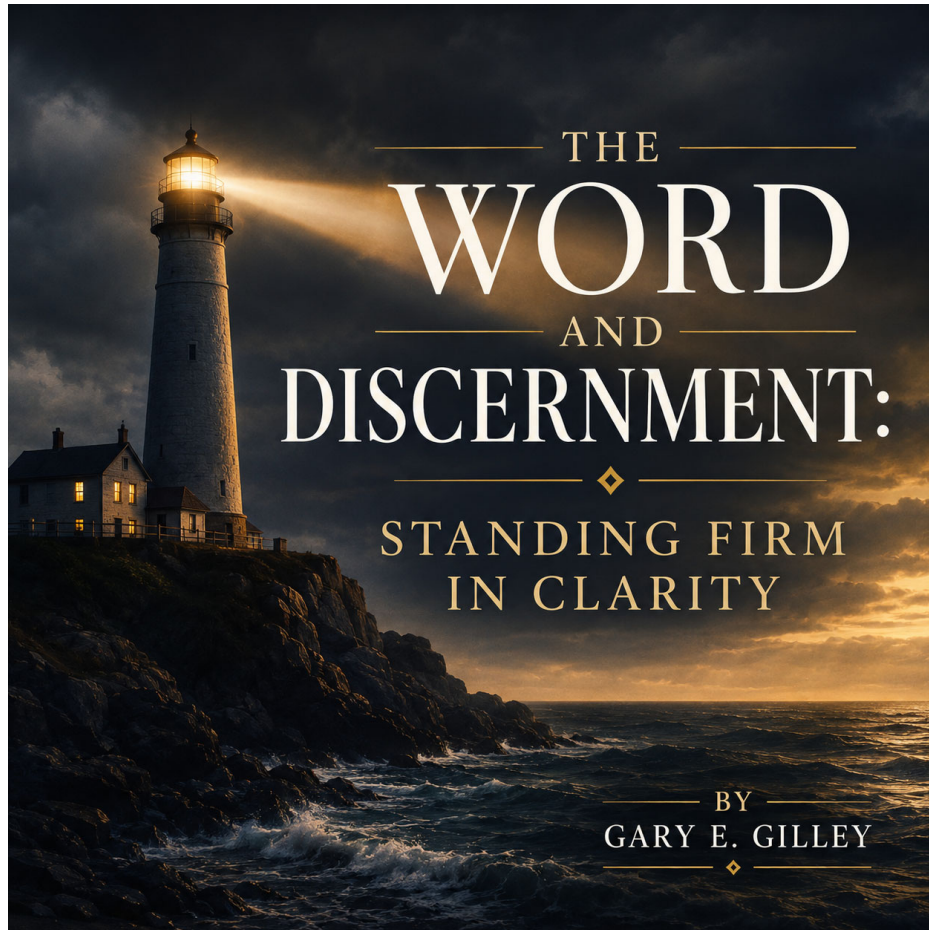
“There is deep freedom in knowing that God’s voice is not hidden or fragile.”

The Freedom of a Clear Voice

There is deep freedom in knowing that God’s voice is not hidden or fragile. It is written, it is preserved, it is accessible, and it is sufficient. You do not need mystical sensitivity to hear God; you need Scripture. Open it, read it, study it, and sit under faithful preaching. Then meditate on it and obey it. The Spirit will be faithful to illuminate it. Clarity grows where Scripture is trusted.

An Encouragement

Many believers are weary from chasing impressions and fearing they might miss God's voice. Scripture offers rest. God is not playing hide-and-seek with His will. He has spoken clearly in His Word. Walk in what He has said. Trust what He has revealed. Ask for wisdom, seek counsel, and pray for understanding. But anchor your confidence in Scripture, not impressions. The Spirit of God loves the Word of God—and He loves to help the people of God understand it. That is how we hear Him speak.



I came to the Lord at around age seven and grew up attending a small country church, which placed substantial emphasis on Bible reading. The little sanctuary had an old-fashioned wooden statistics board on prominent display at the front. Every week the attendance for both Sunday school and the worship service was placed on the board, along with the previous week's offering numbers. But unique to my church, or so it seemed, was a category labeled "Chapters." Every Sunday, everyone— adults and children— reported the number of chapters from the Bible they had read during the week; those numbers were then tallied and placed on the board.

Consequently, I grew up believing that it was important for believers to be daily in the Word. It was just what Christians did (we will postpone any debate on the motivation or wisdom of reporting our chapters for another occasion). In addition, the sermons and Sunday school teachings at my church were soaked in Scripture. My childhood teachers wore out their flannelgraph figures as they clearly, simply, and systematically led us through the Bible— Old and New Testaments. During my teen years, our leaders continued the pattern, taking us through the Bible using a simple hermeneutic (a word I had not heard at the time), which followed the strategy: if the text makes plain sense, seek no other sense. In other words, we were taught that the Bible made sense; it could be understood; its teachings were clear. Sure, there were hard parts, but even these could be comprehended with careful study or left for another day.

What this Bible-saturated environment accomplished in my formative years were two things: (1) a solid understanding of the Scriptures. I would discover years later that by the time I left high school that I had been given biblical knowledge of the Word that would rival that of most Bible college graduates. (2) And perhaps of even greater significance, I had a love for the Bible. I wanted to read it, know it, and eventually teach it. While much Bible knowledge and theology had been instilled in me, it was the love for and delight in the Word that has shaped my whole life.

It was therefore astounding to me when I entered the ministry to discover that many Christians seldom cracked open their Bibles. These were believers who loved the Lord, regularly attended and often ministered in the Church, and exhibited evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, but rarely read the Scriptures. When they did, they usually used a hop-skip-and-jump approach, in which they opened their copies of the Word randomly and read whatever passage lay before them.

Many would lament their lack of Bible reading in-take, offer excuses, and

occasionally make resolutions to do better, only to lapse into their old patterns in a few days or weeks. Some of those convicted to become Bible students often stumbled over practical obstacles that had very solvable solutions, such as lack of time, sleepiness, wandering thoughts, and interruptions which could be handled by developing new patterns: setting aside a time and a place to contemplate the Word, removing distractions, reading out loud, etc. These simple adjustments work wonders for many, but it seems that there are other more substantial barriers blocking a substantial number of would-be Bible readers.

Today, there seems to be little appetite for the reading and studying of God's Word, just as 2 Timothy 4:3-4 predicted. In the way of evidence, the American Bible Society recently released

“If one is considered a Bible reader if they open the Word three times a year, is it any wonder that America is facing a famine in the land for the Word of God...?”

the result of a startling survey in which they claimed that Bible reading dropped dramatically in 2022, declining by 39 percent. That means 26 million Americans stopped reading the Scripture in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁽ⁱ⁾ Even more alarming than this drop in Bible reading is the identification of Bible readers

as those who read Scripture *merely three times a year!*

If one is considered a Bible reader if they open the Word three times a year, is it any wonder that America is facing a famine in the land for the Word of God and that even evangelicals are becoming more biblically ignorant by the day? With these kinds of statistics, it was predictable that biblical illiteracy would become an epidemic, and it has. This anemia is not just “too bad”, it is deadly to the souls of individuals and destructive to churches across the land.

Why do so few, who claim to be Christians, who would even give credence

to the Bible being the Word of God, actually read the Bible? Aside from the practical obstacles mentioned above, here are a few more fundamental and concerning questions with which modern Christians wrestle.

Can the Bible Be Trusted?

While the majority of Americans give lip-service to the Bible being the Word of God, when the rubber meets the road, they hedge. Even if 2 Timothy 3:16 proclaims all Scripture is God-breathed, does that really mean it is a reliable guide for our lives? Is it really capable of teaching, reproof, correcting, and training us for righteous living as it claims? Such assertions have always been under attack but, since the Enlightenment, the Western world jumped on board

in its denial of the truth of inspiration.

“The majority of evangelical authors, preachers, and conference speakers will give lip-service to the value of Scripture, but in reality, many often turn to these above supplements...”

As a result, many question the divine authorship of Scripture. Maybe these are merely the words of men disguised as words from God. But consider: if there is a God, it should be expected that He would communicate to His creation. Why would the Lord of the universe leave those created in His image in

the dark about life’s most important issues: salvation, purpose, death, eternity, etc.? It only makes sense that He would reveal truth to mankind, and the best way to do so would be in written form that would be accessible to all. A written revelation is the perfect means of communication from God to His Creation. The belief that the Lord has packaged His truth in an accessible written format, and that truth is available to all who bother to interact with it, should be a powerful motivation for Bible reading.

Can the Bible Really Deliver?

In theological terms, we are referencing the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture. The Bible may be inspired, and it may promise significant benefits, as we have seen, but can it really deliver on its promise to equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17)? Even if Scripture is God-breathed, is it enough to grant us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)? Surely many would claim it needs to be supplemented by other sources and disciplines. Top contenders as biblical supplements include: mysticism (God reveals His truth through visions, dreams, and other extrarational means); experience (after all, experience is the best teacher we are often told); pragmatism (if it works it must be right); and psychology (the Bible may be valuable for salvation and the relatively simple problems of life, but for real concerns, we need the therapeutic insights of those who have studied the mind and understand its complexities).

The majority of evangelical authors, preachers, and conference speakers will give lip-service to the value of Scripture, but in reality, many often turn to these above supplements, or they attempt to integrate them with Scripture to guide their audience. But when the dust has cleared, the final word is being given to other sources rather than Scripture. In effect, this common approach undermines not only the authority of the Bible but confidence in the Word as well.

Why turn to the Scriptures when most everyone is saying that there are better answers elsewhere? Why do the hard work of studying the Word if we can rely on our feelings, or trust in a dream? What can Scripture teach me that experience cannot? If something I am doing seems to work, why examine it in light of the Bible? Sure, the sacred text is helpful for simplistic issues, but shouldn't I turn to the real experts on life—the psychologists who have scientifically studied human behavior—when faced with complex struggles?

The value or limitations of these supplements are not the point of this article. Suffice it to say much debate takes place among evangelicals on this subject.

The issue at hand is that these other forms of guidance have so encroached on the place of the Bible that many turn to it last, if at all, when determining how life is to be lived. The idea is that Scripture might be inerrant when and where it speaks, but it does not address the important issues that believers face. And the Bible may offer valuable insights that we might add to our collection of other insights, but it does not carry final authority. It may be helpful, but it is not sufficient. If this is the view one has of God's written revelation, it is not likely we will turn to it very often.

“The Bible should not be seen as a chore or an obligation...”

Can the Bible Really Be Understood?

Even if we believe that the Scriptures are inspired by God, having His authority, and even if we believe they are very helpful in guiding us through life, many see them as too difficult to understand. Aren't they full of archaic words and concepts that are unintelligible for most modern readers? Many Christians avoid Bible reading because they fear it is hard to grasp. Yet, while there are names, places, and some words that are uncommon, the vast majority of the Word is comprehensible to most people, even those with poor reading skills. In a sense, the idea that the Bible could be understood by the normal Christian (as opposed to clergy and theologians only) was central to the Reformation.

The Reformers championed the doctrine of the “perspicuity” of Scripture from the Latin, meaning “clear, transparent and self-evident”. In matters of importance, the Bible was clear. Roman Catholicism insisted that only the church could properly interpret Scripture, and the laity should stay in its lane and leave

the Bible to the professionals. Luther, and other Reformers, insisted otherwise, stating that the average Christian could interpret and apply Scripture.

Luther immediately got busy translating the Bible into German. Other translations followed, most notably Tyndale's English translation, which cost him his life, especially after his challenge to the Catholic leadership: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

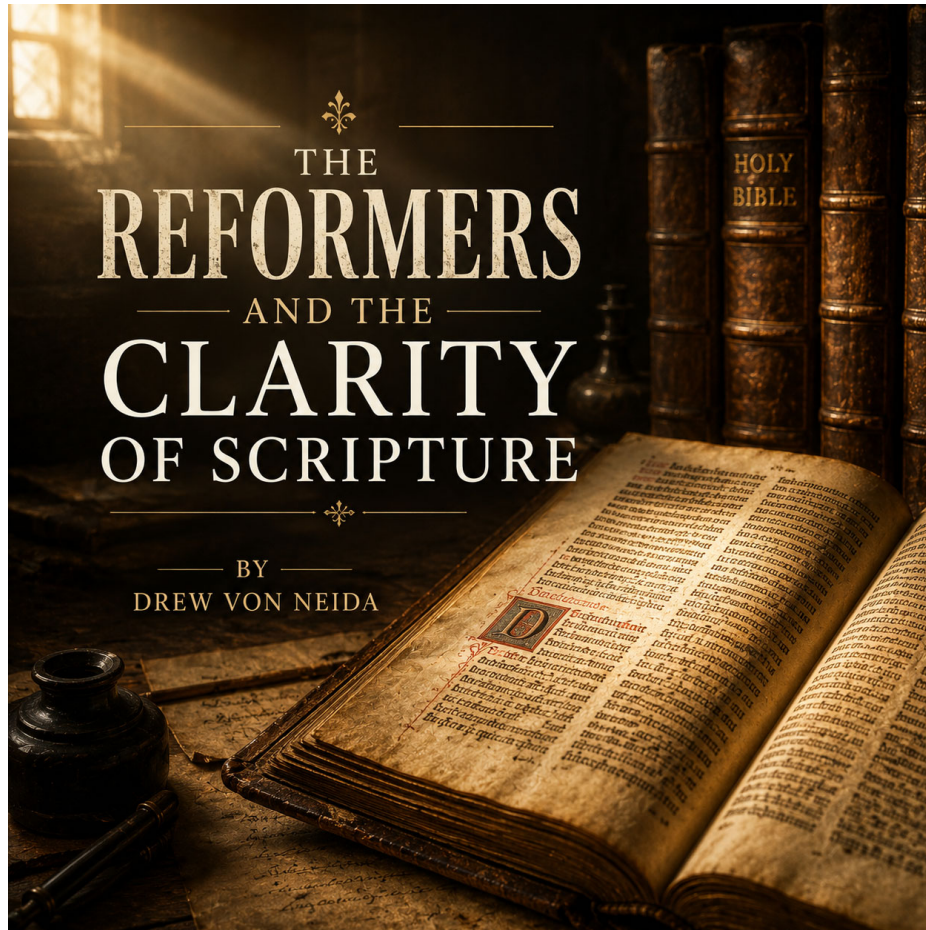
Arguably it was the belief in the supreme authority of God resting in Scripture rather than the Church that fueled the Reformation. Tyndale's prediction came true, and in time "plowboys" and many others not considered highly educated by the world were reading and being transformed by the clear teachings of Scripture.

Today we are privileged to have numerous translations and incredible aids to enable everyone to read, understand, and put into action the wonderful truths found in God's Word. Many years ago, I read a simple little book on Bible study methods. What stuck with me the most about this book was its title: *The Joy of Discovery*. What a marvelous concept.

The Bible should not be seen as a chore or an obligation—such as eating brussels sprouts because they are supposed to be good for your health. Rather, not only is the Bible good for your spiritual health, but it is also a great joy that brings much pleasure. As Psalm 19 declares: "*The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart... They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the dripping of the honeycomb*" (Psalm 19:8, 10).

References:

- i. "Take and Read" (*Christianity Today*, January/February, 2023), p. 17.



In the centuries preceding the sixteenth-century Reformation, a thick ecclesiastical veil had gradually settled over the pages of Holy Scripture. The Bible itself was not denied, nor was its authority rejected. Yet in practice it was increasingly being treated as a book whose true meaning could only be safely known through the mediation of the Church's priesthood and its accumulated traditions. The Word of God, which the Psalmist calls "*a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path*" (Psalm 119:105), was often handled as though it were a light too distant for the common believer

to approach directly. The ordinary Christian was encouraged to trust the Church's interpretation rather than the clarity of the text itself.

The Reformation was, in many ways, the lifting of this veil. It was the rediscovery of the doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture. That is, the Scripture is clear in its content and in its saving message. To the Reformers this was no minor point of theological speculation. It was a matter of spiritual freedom. If the King of Heaven has spoken to His people, He has not spoken in riddles. He has spoken clearly. The God who commands all men to repent and believe the gospel has also revealed that gospel plainly enough to be known.

The Historical Landscape: A Book Bound in Chains

To understand the Reformers' passion for the clarity of Scripture, we must first understand the interpretive climate they inherited.

The Fourfold Sense

Medieval interpretation often relied on what was known as the *Quadrigo*, the fourfold sense of Scripture. According to this method, every passage could possess four layers of meaning: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the analogical (or heavenly) sense. In theory, medieval theologians affirmed that the literal sense was foundational. However, in practice, allegorical readings frequently overshadowed the plain meaning of the text. Scripture could become a canvas upon which spiritual meanings were painted rather than a message to be plainly heard. For example, a word such as *Jerusalem* might simultaneously represent a historical city, the institutional Church, the human soul, and the heavenly Kingdom. While such interpretations often sounded devout, they could leave the ordinary reader dependent upon learned authorities to determine what Scripture truly meant.

The Shackled Word

Compounding this difficulty was the language barrier. By the late medieval period the Scriptures were largely confined to the Latin Vulgate. Latin was the

language of academia and the clergy, but it was not the language of the plowman. In this environment, many came to believe that clarity belonged not to Scripture itself but to the institutional Church that interpreted it.

Without the guidance of tradition and magisterial authority, it was feared that the Bible might become what critics called a *nasus cereus*, a “nose of wax”, easily bent to any interpretation. It was in this atmosphere that the Reformers spoke with renewed confidence with the clarity of God’s Word.

The Reformers’ Defense: God Has Spoken Plainly

The Reformers did not deny that some passages of Scripture require careful study. They did, however, insist that the message necessary for salvation shines with unmistakable clarity.

Martin Luther and the Light of the Word

The clearest defense of this conviction came in 1525 when Martin Luther answered the humanist scholar, Erasmus, in his work, *The Bondage of the Will*. Erasmus argued that Scripture was too obscure to settle many theological ques-

“John Calvin approached the clarity of Scripture from the tenderness of God’s fatherly character.”

tions. Luther replied with characteristic boldness in *The Bondage of the Will*, writing, “If the words are obscure in one place, yet they are clear in another... The subject matter of the Scriptures, therefore, is all in the light, though some of the words are still obscure. It is wretched of you to say that the Scriptures are obscure... for who will ever be sure of anything, if the

Scriptures are obscure?”

Luther distinguished between what he called the external clarity of Scrip-

ture and the internal clarity granted by the Holy Spirit. Externally, the Scriptures speak plainly. Their words possess a real and intelligible meaning. Internally, however, the sinner's heart must be opened by the Spirit of God in order to receive that truth with faith. This means any obscurity with a text lies not in God's revelation but in the blindness of the human heart.

John Calvin and the Father Who Stoops to Speak

John Calvin approached the clarity of Scripture from the tenderness of God's fatherly character. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, section 1.13.1, he described the way God graciously accommodates Himself to human weakness: "For who even of slight understanding does not perceive that God, as it were, lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children?"

God, Calvin argued, stoops to our frailty. Like a loving Father bending down to address a child, He communicates His truth in ways we may grasp. Calvin also emphasized that true understanding requires the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures must also open the eyes of those who read them. Without the Spirit, the clearest truth remains unseen. With the Spirit, the humble believer perceives the wisdom of God shining through the written Word.

Ulrich Zwingli and the Word that Interprets Itself

The Swiss Reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, likewise emphasized the inherent clarity and authority of Scripture. In his 1522 treatise, titled, *Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God*, he wrote:

The Word of God is so sure and strong that if God wills, all things are done the moment He speaks... It is certain, and cannot fail. It is clear, and will not leave us to wander in darkness. It teaches itself, it explains itself, and it brings the light of salvation to the soul.(i)

Zwingli insisted that the Word of God carries within itself the power to reveal its meaning. Scripture is not dependent upon ecclesiastical authority to grant

it clarity. Rather, the Word itself shines with divine light.

The Theological Anchor: *The 1689 London Baptist Confession*

This conviction reached mature expression in the confessions of the seventeenth century. *The London Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689) summarizes the doctrine with remarkable balance:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.(ii)

This statement guards two vital truths: first, Scripture contains depths that require diligence, study, and humility. Second, the saving message of Christ is so plainly revealed that even the unlearned may understand the way of salvation. God has not hidden the door of mercy behind riddles.

The Biblical Foundation for Clarity

The Reformers did not invent the doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture. They discovered it within Scripture itself. Moses told Israel: *“For this commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it far from you”* (Deuteronomy 30:11). The Psalmist declares: *“The unfolding of Your words give light; It gives understanding to the simple”* (Psalm 119:130). Even the Apostle Peter, while acknowledging that some things in Paul’s writings are difficult (2 Peter 3:16), still treats the Scriptures as a clear and binding authority for the whole Church. The Bible repeatedly presents itself as a light given for the guidance of ordinary believers.

Why it Mattered Then: The Birth of a New World

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture reshaped the Christian world. If Scripture speaks clearly, then every believer may hear the voice of God within its pages. Christians are not dependent upon an elite class of interpreters to access

divine truth. Pastors teach and guide the Church, but every believer may test that teaching against the Word of God.

The Vernacular Revolution

If Scripture is clear, it must also be accessible. This very conviction drove men like William Tyndale to translate the Bible into the language of the people. Tyndale famously declared that if God spared his life, the boy who drives the plow would one day know more of the Scriptures than the learned clergy who opposed him.

“The doctrine of clarity remains just as necessary today.”

Assurance of Salvation

Clarity of the Scriptures also brought comfort to troubled souls. The believer no longer had to search for hidden meanings to discover the way of salvation. The promises of Christ speak plainly: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life”* (John 6:47).

Why it Matters Today: Responding to the Modern Fog

The doctrine of clarity remains just as necessary today. Skeptics often argue that the existence of many denominations proves the Bible is unclear. But Scripture itself warns that misunderstanding often arises from human pride or distortion. As Peter writes: *“Which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction”* (2 Peter 3:16). The problem is not the light of Scripture, but the unwillingness of fallen hearts to walk in that light.

The Rise of a New Magisterium

Modern Christians sometimes feel that without advanced degrees or spe-

cialized scholarship they cannot understand the Bible. While historical study is valuable, Scripture was not written only for academics. It is a public book for the Church of Christ. The same Word that instructs scholars also instructs shepherds, laborers, mothers, and children.

Moral Obscurity

In many contemporary ethical debates, Scripture is often declared “unclear” on matters that previous generations of Christians regarded as settled. The claim of obscurity is frequently a refuge for disobedience. The clarity of Scripture calls us not merely to interpret God’s Word, but to submit to it.

Devotional Application: Treasuring the Accessible Word

To believe in the clarity of Scripture is to believe in a God who graciously speaks to His people. When you open your Bible, you are not entering a labyrinth of divine riddles. You are hearing the voice of your Shepherd. Christ said: *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”* (John 10:27).

Use the Ordinary Means

The Reformers spoke of the “due use of ordinary means.” These can also be referred to as the ordinary means of grace. These are given by God as the way He ordinarily grows and nourishes His people. These means involve prayer, the Word of God, and the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper). For the believer, understanding Scripture involves prayer, careful reading, and participation in the life of the Church. We compare Scripture with Scripture, allowing the clearer passages to illuminate those that are more difficult. The goal of clarity is not mere knowledge but to grow in holiness. God’s Word is clear in order that our lives may be conformed to Christ. It is not merely a lamp to admire, but a lamp by which we walk.

The Legacy of the Open Book

In many medieval paintings the Bible appears closed, held reverently by

saints or angels. In the imagery of the Reformation the Bible is almost always open. This open book symbolizes the recovered truth that God has clearly spoken.

We live in an age where faithful translations of Scripture are widely available. However, the great danger of our generation is not that the Bible is hidden from us, but that it remains unopened. Let us, therefore, treasure the clarity of God's Word. In its pages the light of Christ shines forth. It is the voice of the God who once said, "*Let there be light,*" and who now shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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- i. <https://www.e-rara.ch/zuz/content/zoom/278863>
- ii. 1689 London Baptist Confession, 1.7



Clarity at the Cost of Blood:

Translators Who Handed Us the Word

BY DAVE JENKINS

We live in a time of unprecedented access to the Bible.

With a few taps on a phone, we can read Scripture in multiple translations, listen to it being read aloud, or search entire books in seconds. Printed Bibles are widely available, affordable, and often taken for granted. And yet, in the midst of this abundance, biblical literacy continues to decline. Many who have access to the Word rarely open it. Many who possess multiple copies seldom read even one. It is easy to forget that this access was not always so.

There was a time when having the Scriptures in a language understood by ordinary people was not assumed—it was contested. There was a time when translating the Bible into the language of the people was not celebrated—it was

condemned. And there was a time when those who labored to make God's Word clear and accessible did so at the cost of their freedom, and in some cases, their lives.

The clarity of Scripture is not only a doctrine to be affirmed, it is a reality that has been defended, preserved, and—in many cases— purchased at great cost. The history of Bible translation reminds us that the question of whether God's Word can be understood is not merely theoretical. It has been a matter of conviction, courage, and sacrifice.

Why Clarity Was Contested

In the medieval period, the Scriptures were largely inaccessible to the average person. The Bible was primarily available in Latin alone, a language not commonly understood by the people. While the Church possessed the Scriptures, the ability to read and interpret them was effectively restricted to the clergy. The result was that many Christians were dependent on others, not only for instruction but for access to the Word itself.

The issue at stake was not simply translation but authority. If the Scriptures were placed into the hands of ordinary believers in their own language, then those believers could read, understand, and evaluate what they were being taught. The clarity of Scripture, once recognized, would place the authority of God's Word above all human authority.

For this reason, efforts to translate the Bible into the common language were often met with resistance. The concern was not merely about accuracy or doctrinal precision. It was about control. To make Scripture accessible was to challenge structures that depended on limiting that access.

John Wycliffe: The Morning Star

John Wycliffe, often called the "Morning Star of the Reformation", was among the first to challenge this restricted view of Scripture. Living in fourteenth-century England, Wycliffe became convinced that the Bible should be

available to the people in their own language. While he and his associates worked from the Latin Vulgate, rather than the original languages, their goal was clear: to bring the Word of God into the hands of ordinary believers.

Wycliffe believed that Scripture, as God's Word, carried supreme authority, and that it was meant to be understood by all of God's people. He rejected the idea that access to Scripture should be limited to the educated or the elite. Instead, he argued that the truths of the Bible were sufficiently clear to guide the lives of believers.

Though Wycliffe died of natural causes, his work did not escape opposition. After his death, his writings were condemned, and his remains were exhumed and burned as a symbolic rejection of his teaching. Yet his influence endured. He helped lay the groundwork for what would later become a much broader movement to recover the clarity and accessibility of Scripture.

William Tyndale: Clarity with a Price

If Wycliffe lit the spark, William Tyndale carried the flame forward with remarkable courage. Unlike Wycliffe, Tyndale translated the Bible directly from the original Hebrew and Greek, seeking not only accessibility but accuracy. His goal was not merely to produce an English Bible, but to ensure that the translation reflected the true meaning of the text.

Tyndale's commitment to clarity is captured in his well-known statement that he desired for even the plowboy to know more of Scripture than the learned clergy, who opposed such translation. He believed that God's Word was not obscure but clear, and that it should be understood by those who read it.

Because of opposition in England, Tyndale worked in exile, constantly moving to avoid arrest. His translation work was carried out under threat, and copies of his New Testament were often smuggled into England. Despite attempts to suppress his work, the demand for Scripture in English continued

to grow.

Eventually, Tyndale was betrayed, arrested, and imprisoned. In 1536, he

“Tyndale’s work did not stand alone. Others continued the effort to make Scripture accessible to the people.”

was executed. His final recorded words were a prayer: that God would open the King of England’s eyes. In God’s providence, that prayer was answered, and English translations of the Bible soon became more widely available. Tyndale did not die over a minor preference in wording. He died for the conviction that God’s Word must be understood.

Others Who Carried the Torch

Tyndale’s work did not stand alone. Others continued the effort to make Scripture accessible to the people. Miles Coverdale contributed to the production of the first complete printed English Bible. John Rogers, who helped compile the Matthew Bible, was later martyred for his faith. The translators associated with the Geneva Bible produced a translation that would shape English-speaking Christianity for generations.

These men were not innovators seeking novelty. They were Reformers seeking to recover what had been obscured. They believed that Scripture was not meant to remain distant or hidden, but to be read, understood, and obeyed by the people of God.

Their work reminds us that the recovery of biblical clarity was not the achievement of a single individual, but the fruit of a broader movement shaped by conviction and sustained through sacrifice.

What They Believed About Scripture

At the heart of these efforts was a shared conviction about the nature of Scripture itself. These translators believed that God had spoken in His Word and that what He had spoken was clear. They did not assume that every pas-

sage would be equally simple, but they held firmly that the essential message of Scripture was understandable.

“The history of Bible translation forces us to confront an uncomfortable reality.”

As Psalm 119:130 declares, *“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”*

This was not a theoretical claim for these translators. It was a conviction that shaped their work and, in many cases, cost them their lives.

They also believed in the sufficiency of Scripture. As 2 Timothy 3:16–17 teaches, Scripture is *“breathed out by God”* and is sufficient to equip believers for every good work. If Scripture is sufficient, then it must also be accessible. A word that cannot be understood cannot function as the guide God intended it to be. For these translators, clarity and sufficiency were not abstract doctrines, they were truths that demanded action.

The Cost and Our Complacency

The history of Bible translation forces us to confront an uncomfortable reality. What others gave their lives to make available, we often neglect. We possess the Scriptures in our own language, yet we fail to read them. We have access to careful translations, yet we rarely study them deeply. We affirm the authority of God’s Word, yet we often look elsewhere for guidance in daily life.

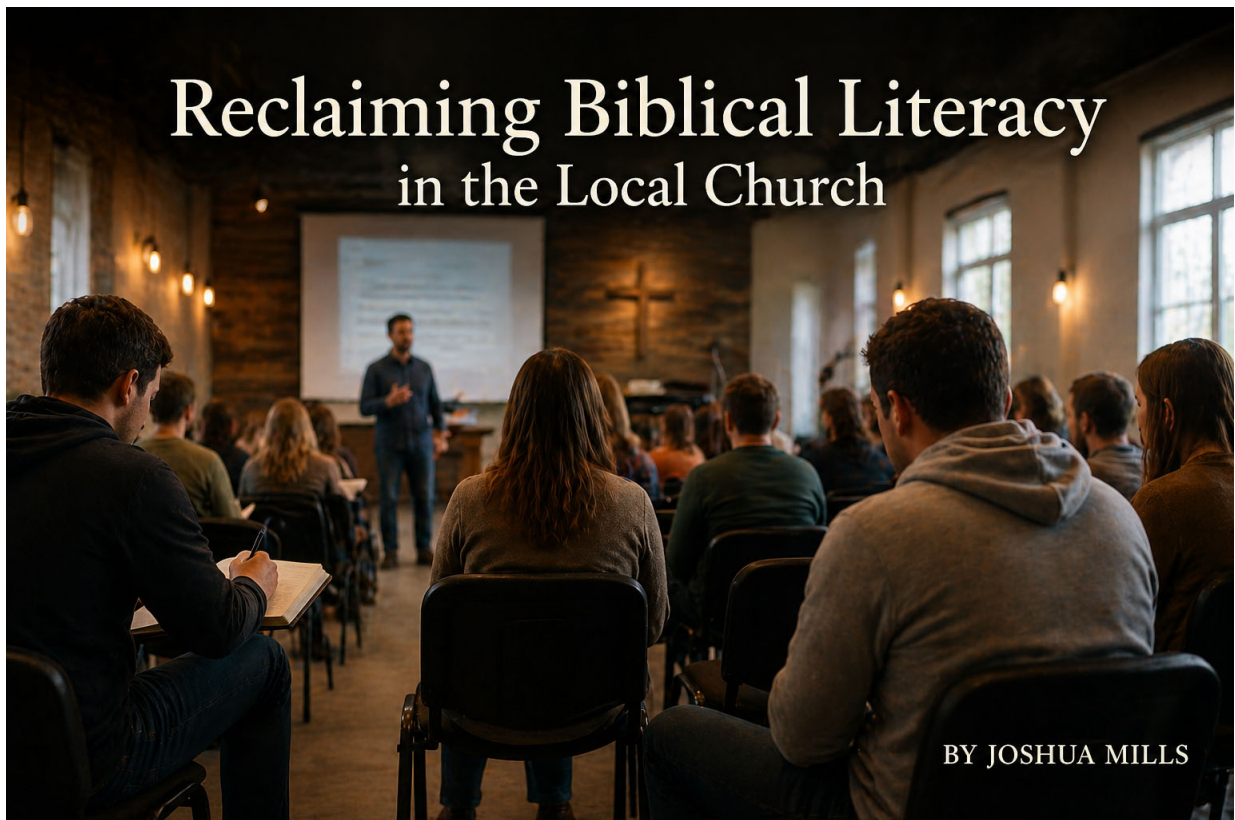
The issue is not merely one of discipline but of value. What we treasure, we prioritize. What we believe to be essential, we pursue. If we truly believe

that God has spoken clearly in His Word, then that conviction should shape our habits, our priorities, and our lives. The translators who labored before us did not view Scripture as optional. They viewed it as necessary. They did not treat it as distant or obscure. They believed it to be clear, life-giving, and worthy of their sacrifice.

Clarity Worth Treasuring

The clarity of Scripture was not preserved in comfort but in conflict. It was not defended in ease but in hardship. Men and women labored, suffered, and in many cases died so that God's Word could be read, understood, and obeyed. Their legacy is not merely historical. It confronts us in the present. We are not asked to give our lives to translate the Bible, but we are called to value what has been given to us. We are called to read it, to study it, to believe it, and to live in light of it.

In an age of confusion, the Church does not need new revelation. It needs renewed attention to the Word that has already been given. The same Scriptures that faithful translators labored to make clear still speak with authority and power today. The question before us is not whether we have access to Scripture. The question is whether we will treasure it. Men gave their lives so that God's Word could be placed into the hands of ordinary people. We now hold that Word in our hands. May we not treat lightly what was secured at such a cost.



As we scan through Church history, we are quick to find that the darkest days are the days when biblical literacy is at an all-time low. The Prophet Amos spoke about such days as coming from the hand of God as a judgement on the land: *“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land — not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”* (Amos 8:11). In the West, we see a growing famine on the land for the hearing and reading of God’s Word. What can we do to reclaim biblical literacy in the local church?

Biblical literacy will only increase in the Church when people are immersed in the Word of God. As a Christian, you can encourage fellow believers to read the Bible in three ways: personal, familial, and corporate. When the Bi-

ble informs and saturates every area of your life, over time your biblical literacy rate will increase. As it was said of John Bunyan, so it will be said of you, namely, that you bleed the Bible!

The Necessity of Personal Bible Reading

Have you lost the wonder that God has created His written Word for you? In God's kindness, He created you in a land that has access to His Word. It is an immense privilege to have God's Word on our laps and in our homes. How do you use His Word? Has your Bible begun to collect dust on the shelf? Or has it been worn into your heart? The chief way to increase your biblical literacy is to read the Bible! In the Old Testament, again and again, the Lord comes to His people and calls them to be personally immersed in His Word:

"This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Joshua 1:8).

"... his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

When you read those passages, do you have a longing to be like that blessed man? Does your heart yearn to know His Word more deeply and taste His sweetness more readily? What can you do to enrich your personal Bible reading?

Let me set before you three ways to read the Bible. First, be regularly engaged in systematic, consecutive Bible reading. By that, I mean, work through the Bible from cover to cover at an appropriate pace. Make it your goal to read through the Bible every few years. Find a plan that can be a helpful guiding tool for you on your journey from Genesis to Revelation. Over time, chapters will become familiar to you. The major structure and covenant promises will pop out at you. Texts that point you to Jesus Christ will be readily set before your

eyes each day.

“Have you lost the wonder of family worship? Though this spiritual discipline has been recovered more fully in our day, it is not a new practice.”

Second, be regularly engaged in memorizing Scripture. We must store up God’s Word in our hearts that we would not sin against Him (Psalm 119). When God’s Word is memorized, the Spirit of God treasures it up in our heart. It pierces into the very marrow of our soul. You will begin to think about Scripture. The Lord will encourage you on your daily pilgrimage with the texts you memorize. If you don’t have access to a Bible at a given time, you can call

prior Scripture you have either read or memorized in your heart and mind to help you.

Third, be regularly engaged in meditating on the Scriptures. Biblical meditation does not mean emptying your mind, but rather filling your mind with Scripture. It conveys the idea of a cow slowly chewing cud (they don’t just gulp the grass down as quickly as they can; it is a longer-than-average eating process). Find a text of Scripture each day to ponder and pray over. Ask the Lord to show you His worthiness and our neediness. This posture turns reading into worship. Beloved, do not neglect personal Bible reading.

The Necessity of Family Bible Reading

Have you lost the wonder of family worship? Though this spiritual discipline has been recovered more fully in our day, it is not a new practice. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 the Lord said the following:

“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in

your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Family worship is not simply for the sake of the kids. It is for the sake of the welfare of the *whole* family. Some of the richest spiritual times for our family has occurred around the dinner table with our Bibles and hymnbook open before us. The texts of Scripture that we are teaching our children are simultaneously being taught to our own hearts. If you can explain the various themes and topics, chapters and verses, to a child, then you can explain it to anyone.

One tool to use in family worship is Joel Beeke's *Family Worship Guide*. Read a chapter of the Bible and then read Beeke's helpful summary of that chapter. When you find yourself in deep Old Testament waters, such as the book of Ezekiel, this little guide will become an instructive friend in your Bible literacy!

As the ethos of the home is built around the Bible, you will start to think about the Scriptures each day. The daily rhythm of your home will be built upon the heartbeat of the Bible. You will begin to remember what you read yesterday with your family. You will begin to anticipate what you will read tomorrow with your family. Your whole week, as a family, will be organized around the structure of the Bible. This will not only help your biblical literacy, but also the biblical literacy rate of the next generation. Beloved, do not neglect family Bible reading.

The Necessity of Corporate Bible Reading

Have you lost the wonder of corporate worship? The Lord has not left you to yourself in the Body of Christ. He has saved you and added you to His body, the Church. If you are a Christian, you must join a biblical local church, which is a visible expression of the universal Church. As you gather together

with God's people, you will gather around His Word. The Scriptures emphasize the necessity of reading and hearing the Word of God as an assembled body. It is a foretaste of Heaven, when the universal Church will one Day gather around the throne in the very presence of the Word of God and see Him face-to-face.

Whether you're a pastor, elder, deacon, or layperson, there are several things you can do to increase the biblical literacy rate of your church's congregation. For the sake of this article, we will only look at two ways. First, encourage the public reading of Scripture in the church. If you're a pastor or elder, this will be specifically applicable to you. This is a command of God: *"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture"* (1 Timothy 4:13). A key element of your worship service must be the reading of the Bible. This is a perfect time to train fellow congregants to increase their attention span in Scripture reading.

"As the flow of redemptive history is set out in the pastor's preaching, congregants will learn how the whole Bible fits together as one major structure centered on Jesus Christ."

If you're a pastor or elder, endeavor to read a large portion of Scripture every time you gather. Think strategically about what you will read. Read books of the Bible together! I remember hearing Conrad Mbewe say that his congregation took up the task to read the whole Bible together. Each time the local church gathered, a chapter of the Bible would be covered. That is a fantastic way to increase the biblical literacy rate of the church.

Second, if you're a pastor or elder, give yourself the preaching of the Word together. If you're not a pastor or elder, encourage those who are to do this in the church. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul said: *"Preach the Word."* As you active-

ly listen to faithful preaching, you will simultaneously grow in your knowledge of the Bible. Ideally, sit under an expository preaching ministry, where books of the Bible are opened up in their context and pressed to the heart in their application.

As the flow of redemptive history is set out in the pastor's preaching, congregants will learn how the whole Bible fits together as one major structure centered on Jesus Christ. Hearers will learn how to study the Bible from listening to the pastor's preaching. As your church's pastors and elders give themselves to faithful study and earnest preaching, the biblical literacy rate in the church will increase. Beloved, do not neglect corporate Bible reading.

As we conclude, Biblical literacy will only increase in your church when your people are immersed in the Word of God. Whether you're a pastor or not, you can encourage Bible reading in three ways: (1) Personal; (2) Familial; and (3) Corporate. What are the dangers of not growing in Biblical literacy? Your soul will be harmed, and the Bible will be forgotten in the next generation. Beloved, do not neglect the reading of God's Word but read, study, and apply the Word of God personally and in the context of your local church life.

Holding Fast to the Word:

*The Beauty and Clarity of Scripture
to Every Believer*



BY SUSAN HECK

Recent statistics tell us that about only 30% of professing Christians read their Bibles. That is a tragic percentage, but not a surprising one. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see the results of this statistic. Our churches are filled with people who have no idea what the Bible even says, which not only results in a suspicious Christian walk, but weakens the resolve of all to be men and women of the Word. How can we hold fast to the Word when we don't even read it? What are we holding fast to? Why is it that, even though Peter says that He has given us everything we need for life and godliness, that we are seeing less godliness and more "believers" falling morally and doctrinally (2 Peter 1:3)?

My friend, we need to understand that the sacred pages of God's Holy Word, which are God-breathed, should be our very sustenance for all of life. Paul puts it well in 2 Timothy 3:16 where he states, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."* The word "all" means just that, *all* or *the whole* of Scripture is inspired, which means it was God-breathed. What was in the mind of God became breathed out by God and men wrote it down. This would mean every word was inspired.

The same word, "inspired" or "God-breathed" is used in Genesis 2:7 where it is written, *"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."* God breathed into Adam life. God has breathed out His Words to men, who wrote them down.

This word is also used in John 20:22, where the Apostle writes, *"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"* Now this should give us great assurance, as we can trust the Word of God because God wrote it. God is truth and what He breathes out is truth. Paul's brother in Christ (and ours), Peter, confirms this same truth. In 2 Peter 1:19-21, he writes, *"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; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* What Peter and Paul are both emphasizing is that God's Word, which was breathed out, was given as if God Himself were audibly speaking what He wanted us to know.

J.C. Ryle, one of my favorite authors wrote, "Let us receive nothing, believe nothing, follow nothing which is not in the Bible, nor can be proved by the Bible." (i) Oh my friend, the sacred 66 books are God speaking. Do you grasp the

awesomeness of what Paul, Peter, and others are saying? Paul also states that Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. The word “profitable” means that it is helpful, beneficial, advantageous, useful, and sufficient. Now, we must be careful that we don’t put in the text what is not there. The Scriptures are not profitable for teaching you how to change a tire, but they are profitable for teaching you how to be patient

“The Bible is an inspired gift of God that we should use for all of spiritual life.”

while changing the tire or waiting for roadside service to come. The Scriptures are not profitable for instructing you in how to plan a wedding, but they are profitable in teaching you how to choose a godly man to marry and preparing yourself to be a godly woman. The Scriptures are not profitable for helping you to know how to build a home from the ground up. But they are profitable for helping you once

that home is built to know how to live in that home in a godly manner.

The Bible is an inspired gift of God that we should use for all of spiritual life. Since this is true, why do we often run to other sources or people first, especially when we have the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God at our fingertips? Paul is clear that it is profitable for doctrine, which is simply instruction of truth—truth that is about God, creation, eternal life, the fall of man and many other things. It is also profitable for reproof, which leads to conviction of sin. This would also include warnings from the Word about any error we might fall prey to, such as false teaching. We would be wise to receive, with meekness, the reproofs of Scripture, along with those who love us enough to re-

prove us.

The Word of God has the power to convict as Hebrews 4:12-13 states, *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”* The Scriptures are powerful, they are sharp, they pierce us, they get to our thought-life and the intent of our heart. We cannot hide from God, the One to whom we will give an account. What other book besides the Bible has that power? None of them! It is like no other book.

Paul also says that the Bible corrects us. This word (“corrects”) means to straighten up again, to restore things to their proper place. Once we have been reprovved by the Scriptures, then we must correct our path, right? We must change our ways and “straighten up” so to speak. Often this takes discipline as we wrestle, fight, and pray. And often the good we want to do we end up not doing, and the evil we know we should not do, well that’s what we do. But praise God we have a promise that we are (and will continue to be) transformed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord, and that He who began that good work in us will perfect it (see 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Philippians 1:6).

The Holy Bible also instructs us in righteousness. This is basically teaching us what is right. These four things are nicely lined up and flow from one to the other. Once we have right doctrine, we then are often reprovved or rebuked regarding sin. Then we correct our ways, our false ideas, and finally we can do what is right. Now, my friend, what other book can provide this for you? Why do only 30% of professing believers read this book, that is not only God-breathed but also our means to spiritual growth? This is exactly what Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:17, *“that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* I don’t know about you, but oh I desire to be equipped for

every good work that God has called me to do, along with being complete.

Do you believe that God's Word is inspired? If you do, then it should manifest itself by a longing to know what He has said. The God of the universe has breathed out His Words, and they are contained in the book we call the Bible. Amazing! I would encourage you to have a regular diet of Scripture by daily reading, study, and memorization of God's Word. Psalm 1 is clear—that we are to mediate day and night on the Word of God. In our day, we scroll through all of our social media apps day and night, and the fruits of it are seen in our daily lives.

Do you believe God's Word is profitable? What profit have the Scriptures been in your life this week? If there has been no growth in your life recently, you might ask why? What are you feeding your mind? What are you reading? What do you listen to? Do you know more about God and about the Bible this year than you did last year? Are you increasing in your knowledge of doctrine? And what about receiving reproof from God's Word? When you read something in the Word of God, and you become convicted, do you repent of your sin? When others reprove you do you receive their admonishments with grace? After being convicted by reproof do you correct the wrong way you are living? Do you straighten up?

Once we are convinced of the authoritative, all-sufficient Scripture and that we are indeed endeavoring to live our lives by it, then we must hold fast to it. Oh, how this is needed in our age, when the Word of God is being watered down. No longer do we hear the hard truths of the Word of God, but we want our ears tickled, and we want to hear stories that warm our hearts and make us laugh.

Paul tells his protégé in 2 Timothy 1:13, *"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."* The idea is

that of *continuing to adhere to* something, to remain tightly secure. Paul charges Timothy to “hold fast to the pattern of sound words”.

A pattern is a word that comes from a plan or an outline of a building. If you hire an architect to design a building, you are trusting it will be designed with precise plans. If not, the building will be faulty and may even crumble. So it is with doctrine. We must follow a precise diet, set forth in Scripture. If we do not, we will be faulty in our faith at best, and it may result in our crumbling. If our foundation is not set on Christ alone and His Word, the results will be a great fall, as Jesus mentions in the ending of His Sermon on the Mount. Sound words are those which are uncorrupt and pure. We might say it is healthy doctrine. We are to then hold fast to what is good from what we have heard. We are to cling tightly to it, and we are to pass it on to the next generation, as Paul tells his son in the faith in 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

We cling tightly to the sufficient Word by keeping it, as Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:14, *“That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”* Paul mentioned something similar in verse 12 when he wrote, *“for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”*

“It is interesting that Jewish teachers felt that they were passing on a sacred deposit to their disciples, who were expected to pass it on to others in turn.”

It is interesting that Jewish teachers felt that they were passing on a sacred deposit to their disciples, who were expected to pass it on to others in turn. This is the desire of all who pass on good things to those they teach. We hold fast to what we know is truth, but not to the point that we don't pass it on. We keep

that which we know to be true but not to the point that we don't pass it on.

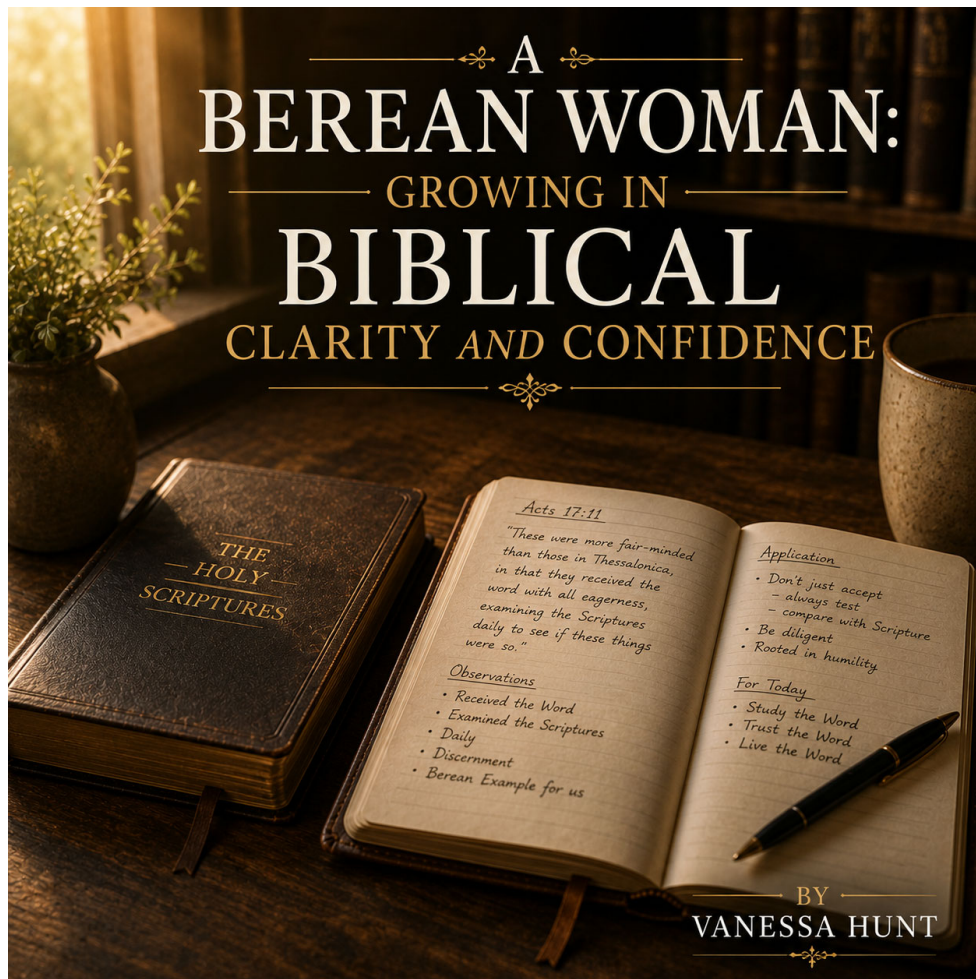
Are you holding securely to truth? In what ways do you feed yourself spiritually? How much sound doctrine do you digest each day? Who are the teachers you listen to? When you hear something that doesn't measure up to Scripture, do you dismiss it? Are you caught up in the religious novel ideas of our day? How are you keeping those things that have been committed to you and who are you passing them on to? Do you hear a sermon and quickly forget what you heard, or do you ponder it deeply? Do you pass truth on to others?

My dear friends, we need more Pauls and Timothys today. We need men and women who will forsake all for the gospel, who will lose their life to save it. We need young people who will listen to the wisdom of godly older men and women as they instruct them in the truths of Christ. Are you willing to lose your life for the gospel? Will you pass on sound doctrine to the next generation?

In our age of apostasy, we can no longer afford to hold loosely to the Word of God. We can no longer afford not to study the Scriptures; we can no longer afford to not memorize them. We can no longer afford to not live the gospel of Jesus Christ; we can no longer afford to deny its power. My friend, let us hold fast to the all-sufficient and powerful Word of God. As Charles Spurgeon said, **"A Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't."** (ii)

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- ii. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/397346-a-bible-that-s-falling-apart-usually-belongs-to-someone-who>



My daughter has almost completed her freshman year of college. She attends a very small, local, Christian university and is having a wonderful experience so far. At the end of the first semester, she had to write an extensive paper for her theology class and asked me to read it over before submitting it. Her professor had instructed the students in the proper way to exegete Scripture and the assignment was their chance to show whether they had learned this very necessary skill. As I skimmed through the pages, I marveled at how well she seemed to understand the importance of reading a

passage in context.

After giving it the “mom seal of approval”, I told her that she was light years ahead of where I was when I was her age. Despite attending a Christian university myself, knowing that

there was a right and a wrong way to read God’s Word wasn’t something I learned until I was much, much older. The youth groups of my generation were big on games and pizza, but not on hermeneutics and apologetics. Which led to me having a fervent, yet shallow, faith. I was passionate, but easily swayed by emotions and couldn’t have given

“There wasn’t one specific moment where I realized that I needed to spend time in deeper study of the Bible, but rather a series of moments that all added up...”

real answers about why I believed what I believed. I loved the Lord, but I didn’t love His Word as much as I should. Sadly, this shallow, emotions-based approach to studying and applying Scripture continues to be a massive problem within the broader Church and particularly within women’s groups.

There wasn’t one specific moment where I realized that I needed to spend time in deeper study of the Bible, but rather a series of moments that all added up to the fact that I was ill-prepared to meet the seismic shifts happening inside and outside the broader Evangelical community. Years spent in Bible studies, where I was rarely asked to read a verse in its context, or to consider the fact that Jeremiah 29:11 — which states, *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope”* — was, in fact, a promise to Israel and not one that I could claim for myself, meant that I had to essentially be deprogrammed. Now, that isn’t to say that the Lord doesn’t have plans for our good, because He does (many verses do confirm this). Rather it is

to say that understanding verses in the proper biblical context is vital to their accurate interpretation and application.

I often think about how similar this process is to what happens when we try to make healthier choices for our bodies. If we've spent years consuming fatty, sugary foods then we have been conditioned to only crave those things. Our appetite is not only satisfied by unhealthy food, but it also actually wants more of it. Similarly, if our appetite for God's Word has been satiated by verses taken out of context, eisegesis, and extra-biblical sources then we will have to retrain ourselves to hunger for the healthier option.

Once I learned how to properly study the Bible, I began to want more of it. My appetite changed and the fluffy, shallow, me-centered content was no longer appealing. And not only did my appetite change, but I grew in discernment so that I was more equipped to recognize errors when they crossed my path. *"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"* (Philippians 1:9-10).

As a woman, I'm aware of the fact that my nature makes me more susceptible to having my emotions wielded against me. The enemy of our souls knows the pressure points, and I truly believe that this is why there has been such a dearth of women who have been properly disciplined in Bible study, hermeneutics, systematic theology, and Church history. As a Titus 2 woman (who just turned 50!), it is my responsibility to come alongside younger women and help them to mature in these areas. So, here are my recommendations for women who want to grow in Biblical clarity and confidence.

First, read your Bible. This may seem rudimentary, but women are far more likely to turn to social media pages or books about faith rather than actually opening up God's Word and reading it. To change our appetite, we must be

almost ruthless about the habits we've developed. Scaling back on extra-biblical sources is a must if we are to mature in our walk with Christ. Just as someone who is getting healthy will only occasionally allow for a sugary treat, we should see the content *about* the Bible as secondary to the Bible itself. And we should always carefully test that content to be certain that it aligns with Scripture.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Second, learn biblical hermeneutics. Hermeneutics help us to know how to properly interpret and understand the Bible. Reading is one thing, applying is another. For example, I was never taught that Scripture interprets Scripture. If we are confused about a passage or think that there is a contradiction, we use other passages of Scripture to help us find clarification. We must read the Bible

"As we delve more deeply into God's Word, we move beyond shallow understandings to get to the true meanings of the text, and this guards us against deception and error."

within context which includes cultural, historical, and other elements which help us to understand the true meaning of the text. *"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"* (2 Timothy 2:15).

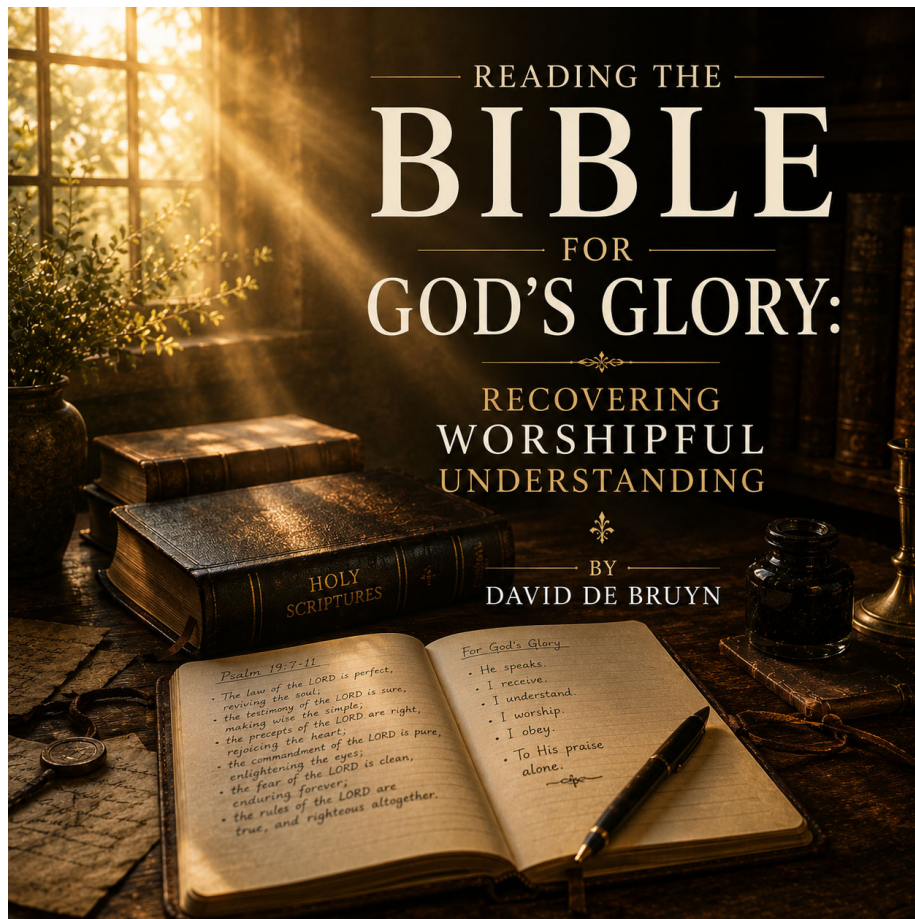
Third, study Church history.

Knowledge of Church history has been long neglected, but it's an essential part of how we grow in clarity and confidence. Most churches never offer classes or incorporate this information into sermons, so we have generations of Christians who simply have no idea how to answer questions about how the Bible actually came to be in our hands, what happened during the Reformation, or the many councils held throughout history. When we know

how to answer these questions for ourselves, we become more confident in answering them when asked by others. And, trust me, people are asking.

Fourth, utilize apologetics. Christian apologetics is the practice of giving a defense of our faith. It helps us to know how to respond to skeptics and even attacks on Christianity. Sadly, this is another neglected area for women (and the Church at large), but I'm seeing a resurgence of interest as we engage more with a culture that is antagonistic to historic Christianity. When you study apologetics, you will not only be better equipped to handle those encounters, but you will also grow in confidence in your own faith as you learn how to answer the questions that come your way. *"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect"* (1 Peter 3:15).

Lastly, becoming more rooted in Biblical clarity and confidence is not something that happens overnight. It's a deliberate, lifelong pursuit that reshapes us—changing our appetite from milk to meat. As we delve more deeply into God's Word, we move beyond shallow understandings to get to the true meanings of the text, and this guards us against deception and error. Ultimately, our goal is to know and love Him more deeply and give Him glory as we share the hope we have in Christ with those around us. Every woman who desires to be more confident in this area must be passionate about being a woman of the Word, trusting that the Lord will be faithful to transform her heart and her mind.



It's possible to read the Bible with your heart untouched. It's also possible to untether our understanding from worship. Both are sub-Christian practices. Scripture was given not merely to inform the intellect alone, nor as an irrational catalyst to stir the emotions, but to reveal God in such clarity that the mind is illumined, and the heart is moved to reverent adoration.

Rightly understood, the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture is the solution to these deviations. God has spoken plainly enough to be known. And because He has spoken clearly, He may be worshipped truly. The recovery we need in

our churches is not simply better exegesis, nor merely warmer devotion. We need worshipful understanding—clarity in interpretation that leads to clarity in worship.

The Modern Divide: Meaning Without Worship, Worship Without Meaning

Two errors frequently appear in contemporary Christianity. First, Scripture is sometimes treated as an academic text to be mastered. One may parse verbs, trace arguments, and catalogue theological categories while remaining personally unmoved. The Bible becomes an object of study rather than the living Word of the living God. Exegesis is performed without reverence. Precision is achieved without praise.

Second, there is a devotional subjectivism that severs worship from meaning. Scripture becomes a springboard for private impressions. The controlling question is no longer, “What did the Spirit intend?” but “What does this mean to me?” Worship then becomes detached from revelation, shaped more by sentiment than by truth.

The first error yields spiritual sterility. The second yields spiritual instability. Both disconnect meaning from adoration. Yet Scripture itself joins them inseparably. The Psalmist does not merely analyse the law of the Lord; he delights in it. The Apostle Paul does not merely expound justification in Romans 1–11; he erupts into doxology in Romans 11:33–36. Theology culminates in worship.

The Clarity of Scripture as an Act of Divine Grace

Historic Protestant theology has insisted upon the perspicuity, or *clarity*, of Scripture. This doctrine does not claim that every passage is equally simple, nor that diligent study is unnecessary. It affirms that the essential truths necessary for salvation and godliness are set forth plainly enough that believers, us-

ing ordinary means and dependent upon the Spirit, may understand them.

This conviction was central to the Reformation. When Martin Luther stood before ecclesiastical authority, his appeal was not to mystical insight but to the plain testimony of Scripture. When John Calvin described Scripture as spectacles through which we see God rightly, he assumed that God intended to be seen.

The clarity of Scripture is really a declaration about the character of God. He is not a deceiver. He does not play games with language. He does not veil Himself behind riddles to frustrate His children. He speaks so that He may be known. If God had spoken in perpetual ambiguity, worship would be guesswork. But because He has spoken with sufficient clarity, our praise may be grounded in truth rather than conjecture. Worshipful reading follows a basic path.

Take Scripture Literally

First, take Scripture literally. God did not write His Word in secret code, though certain sects and cults have often implied that He did. Be wary of any group that claims exclusive possession of the “true” interpretation of Scripture. There is indeed only one correct interpretation of any given passage—but no local church, denomination, movement, or teacher holds a monopoly on it. The meaning of Scripture is not a carefully guarded secret, revealed only to those who discover a hidden key.

Certainly, there are difficult texts. There are passages that require patient study, careful thought, and mature reflection. The superficial reader will miss much. But God has not buried His meaning so deeply within Scripture that only an elite class can extract it. The Early Church confronted this very error in Gnosticism, which claimed access to hidden knowledge unavailable to ordinary believers. The Apostles rejected such thinking. The Word of God was given to be understood.

Scripture is meant to be taken at face value. When God commands, *“Repent and believe the gospel,”* He means repent and believe. When He commands, *“Flee fornication,”* He means flee. When Christ says, *“Behold, I come quickly,”* He speaks meaningfully, not mystically. This does not mean we read foolishly or woodenly. Scripture itself makes clear when metaphor or figure is being used. When Jesus says, *“I am the door,”* we do not imagine hinges and wood.

“People generally allegorize for two reasons. Firstly, to construct a teaching the text does not actually support. Or secondly, because they are embarrassed by what the text plainly says.”

When God speaks of covering His people with His wings, we understand the language of protection. Figurative language is as natural in Scripture as it is in everyday conversation. We recognize it instinctively. But we must guard against unnecessary allegorizing or spiritualizing.

John MacArthur mentions a young couple confused about marriage after hearing a sermon on Joshua's battle with Jericho, in which the preacher claimed the battle represented dating. Israel represented the young man, the walls represented a woman's heart, marching around seven times symbolized persistence until she “gave in”. Such handling of the text is not merely creative—it is irresponsible. The passage records a historical battle demonstrating God's power and Israel's faith. There are legitimate lessons about obedience, courage, and trust. But to turn it into romantic methodology is to distort it.

People generally allegorize for two reasons. Firstly, to construct a teaching the text does not actually support. Or secondly, because they are embarrassed by what the text plainly says. Some who wish to remain intellectually respecta-

ble before the world dismiss the Red Sea crossing, Jonah's deliverance, or Genesis 1–11 as mere metaphor. These are said to be stories conveying spiritual

“The next principle may well be the cardinal one: Scripture interprets itself.”

truth, not historical reality. But if that principle is applied consistently, what becomes of the cross? What of the resurrection? If the early chapters of Scripture are myth, on what grounds do we insist the empty tomb is history?

Scripture itself establishes the literal principle. Jesus treated Jonah's experience as historical (Matthew 12:40). Paul regarded Adam as a re-

al historical figure whose sin brought real consequences (Romans 5:12, 19). Peter treated the flood as an actual event (1 Peter 3:20). The Bible teaches us how to read the Bible. Take Scripture literally unless the text itself clearly signals a figure of speech. Those who habitually allegorize often do so because they have already accepted the world's assumptions about origins, history, and miracles. They judge Scripture by secular wisdom instead of judging secular wisdom by Scripture.

Compare Scripture with Scripture

The next principle may well be the cardinal one: Scripture interprets itself. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:13 of *“comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”* The meaning of one passage is illuminated by the teaching of others. No verse stands alone. Because God is the ultimate author of all Scripture, the whole Bible speaks with a unified voice.

One of the most dangerous practices in interpretation is isolating a single verse and constructing an entire doctrine upon it. Consider 1 Corinthians 7:1:

"It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Read in isolation, this would mandate universal celibacy. But Scripture elsewhere clarifies the matter. Jesus speaks of celibacy as a gift given to *some* (Matthew 19:11–12). Paul himself goes on in 1 Corinthians 7 to affirm marriage. Other passages—Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3—celebrate and regulate it. Only by comparing Scripture with Scripture do we arrive at a balanced understanding.

God did not give us a reference manual to consult selectively. He gave us a canon to read comprehensively. Some treat the Bible like a buffet—selecting prophecy, encouragement, and promises of love, while ignoring instruction about sin, holiness, or judgment. But every portion was written *"for our learning"* (Romans 15:4)—even the tabernacle passages, even genealogies, even ceremonial laws.

If we desire balance, we must read broadly. A believer who reads four chapters a day will complete the Bible in a year. Saturation in Scripture enables us to recall one passage while reading another. As Paul exhorts in Colossians 3:16, the Word must dwell in us richly. Without such saturation, comparison is impossible.

Consider the Context

Context determines meaning. Begin with the immediate context. What do the verses before and after say? Philippians 4:19 promises that God will supply every need, but Paul writes to believers who had sacrificially supported gospel ministry. Matthew 18:20 promises Christ's presence where two or three gather, but the surrounding verses concern church discipline. Neglect of context breeds error.

Expand outward. What is the theme of the chapter? In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's great chapter on love appears within a larger discussion of spiritual gifts. He is not offering a detached meditation on romance, but correcting loveless use of spiritual gifts in a disorderly Church.

Expand further still. Who wrote the book? To whom? When? Under what circumstances? Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians addresses tongues and prophecy in a particular church—Corinth, around 55 A.D.—correcting abuses in a young and immature congregation. Historical setting matters. Literary form matters. Is the text poetic, prophetic, narrative, or epistolary? Each genre communicates differently.

The epistle to the Hebrews illustrates contextual interpretation beautifully. Writing to Jewish Christians, the author shows how Old Covenant rituals were shadows fulfilled in Christ. He handles Old Testament texts carefully, placing them within redemptive history. He makes distinctions because he understands context.

Christians make such distinctions instinctively. Why do we not offer animal sacrifices today? Because Christ has fulfilled the law (Romans 8:3–4). The commands of Exodus and Leviticus remain in Scripture, but their fulfillment in Christ changes their application. We interpret them in light of their covenantal context. Context, in its fullest sense, includes immediate verses, broader argument, book purpose, historical situation, covenantal setting, and place within God’s unfolding plan.

Attend Carefully to the Words

“All Scripture is breathed out by God” (2 Timothy 3:16). Scripture does not merely *contain* the Word of God—it *is* the Word of God. Therefore, the words matter. Paul’s argument in Galatians 3:16 turns on a singular noun—“seed”, not “seeds”. He understood that inspiration extends to the very wording of the

“The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to test even the Apostle Paul.”

text. Precision is not pedantry, it is reverence.

Pay attention to grammar. Is this a command or a statement? A promise or a warning? Observe connectors such as “therefore”, “for”, and “because”. These words reveal the logic of the passage. Notice repetition. Identify subjects and objects. Observe verb tenses. Such attentiveness protects us from confusion and reinforces literal interpretation.

A faithful translation in one's own language is ordinarily sufficient. Yet those who teach and preach should use the tools available to ensure accuracy in reflecting the original Hebrew and Greek. Sometimes grammatical detail is crucial. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul's use of the aorist tense regarding Spirit baptism indicates a completed action shared by believers.

Use the Teachers God Has Given

Finally, use the teachers Christ has given to His Church. Some claim to be entirely “Spirit-taught”, citing 1 John 2:27 as justification for rejecting all human instruction. Yet that passage addresses discernment against false teachers, not independence from faithful ones. If teachers were unnecessary, Christ would not have given pastors and/or teachers and evangelists to the Church (Ephesians 4:11).

God gives teachers for the equipping of the saints. It is unwise to depend blindly upon others. No one's interpretation is to be accepted merely because of position or reputation. The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to test even the Apostle Paul. Discernment is essential.

Yet it is equally unwise to ignore the wisdom of faithful students of Scripture. Throughout Church history, godly men have wrestled with the text, suffered for it, and clarified it. Their labour benefits us. Consult commentaries. Seek counsel from mature believers. Listen to faithful preaching. But first wrestle with the text yourself. Spiritual muscle is formed through effort. Teachers assist; they do not replace personal engagement. God has given gifts to His body.

To refuse them is not independence—it is ingratitude.

These principles—literal reading, comparison of Scripture, contextual awareness, grammatical precision, and humble use of teachers—are not mechanical rules. They are acts of reverence. They reflect confidence that God has spoken clearly, truthfully, and sufficiently. And when Scripture is handled in this way, it does not merely inform the mind, it shapes the soul and prepares the heart for worship.

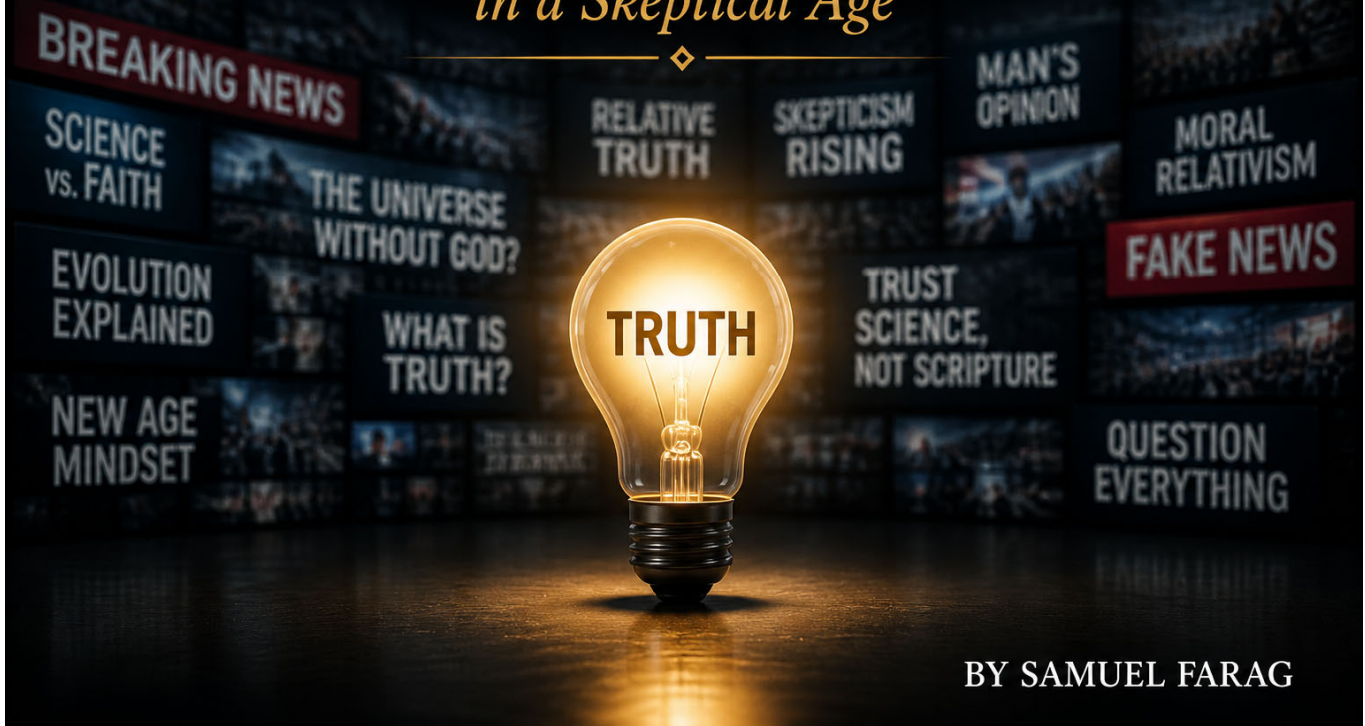
Clarity and the Glory of God

Ultimately, the clarity of Scripture serves the glory of God. He is glorified when He is known as He truly is. Misunderstanding distorts His character; clarity reflects it faithfully.

The goal of Bible reading is not information alone. Nor is it transformation considered in isolation. The goal is adoration. God has revealed Himself so that His people may see Him rightly and bow before Him gladly. When Scripture is rightly understood, the fog lifts. The character of God stands forth in sharp relief—holy, sovereign, merciful, just, wise, faithful. The work of Christ appears in its full beauty. The promises of God shine with steady light. And when we see Him clearly, we cannot remain indifferent. Clear Word, clear worship.

May we labour for hermeneutical precision, not as an end in itself, but as a pathway to praise. For when God is understood according to His Word, He is worshipped according to His worth.

Defending the Clarity of God's Word *in a Skeptical Age*



BY SAMUEL FARAG

In 2025, according to the Pew Research Center, it was reported that, “Overall, 44% of U.S. adults say the Bible is extremely important or very important in their lives, while 19% say the Bible is somewhat important, and 37% say the Bible is not too important or not at all important.” (i) That means at least 56% of Americans do not understand or appreciate the fact that the Bible is not just any ancient text, but it is truly the God-breathed Word of God.

This lack of reverence for God's Word is due to the skeptical age we are in. Most people today are far more willing to put their faith in science, nature, or

the New Age than in the God of all Creation. There is a true battle raging in our society of a variety of worldviews, but basic logic and common-sense demand that we conclude that only one worldview can be right. And when all worldviews are put to the test, when they are all put on the fire, only one stands tall. The worldview that is built on the Bible (for a wonderful book that I highly recommend on this battle of ideologies, see *The War of the Worldviews: Truth, Lies, and the Battle for the Christian Mind* (ii) by Dave Jenkins).

Now, anyone can claim that any book is divinely inspired. Anyone can claim their religious text is true, and all should follow it. So, why should anyone put their faith in the Bible and build their worldview on this text, as opposed to the myriads of other options the world offers? Well, trusting in the truth found in the Bible is not an act of blind faith, as it is often presented by its opponents. We, as the followers of Christ, have a very reasonable faith.

Consider what Dr. Andrew A. Snelling says in article 5 of the series "*Is the Bible True?*", titled, "*Scientific Accuracy: Seven Compelling Evidences*", featured in *Answers Magazine*:

The Bible is clearly unlike any other document in history. Every claim it makes about science is not only true but crucial for filling in the blanks of our understanding about the origin of the universe, the earth, fossils, life, and human beings. The more we study and learn about the world, the more we come to appreciate the Bible's flawless, supernatural character... Over the centuries the Bible has been rigorously tested for scientific accuracy, and it has never failed. Not only is God's Word always true; it has proven to be the key to understanding God's world today! (iii)

It is no small or unfounded claim that Bible-believing Christians make when we say that the Word of God is inerrant and infallible. We are able to back up that claim, not just from the Bible itself, but when we evaluate science, archaeology, and history, there is not a single contradiction found in the Bible.

There may be apparent contradictions, but not a single claim thrown at the Bible has ever stuck.

Every apparent contradiction, when honestly studied and evaluated, has revealed that the Scriptures (both the Old and the New Testaments) are error-free. All 66 books of the Bible fit perfectly with science, archaeology, and history.

“No ancient text, or even modern text, can make a claim like that and prove it like the Word of God.”

ry. In fact, over time, conclusions in science, archaeology, and history have had to change with new evidence that was discovered. But the Bible has never needed a revised or updated edition.

It was considered a “scientific fact” by many at one point that the Earth was the center of the universe. It was an “archaeological fact” at one point that there was no evidence for

Pontius Pilate. It was a “historic fact” at one point that Israel never had a Davidic line in their history of kings. All those “facts” were turned on their heads when new evidence was discovered. However, the Bible never needed to come out with a correction. No ancient text, or even modern text, can make a claim like that and prove it like the Word of God.

In his sermon, “*Does the Bible Agree with Science?*”, John MacArthur said: All creation truth is from the Creator as recorded in Scripture. All geological, astronomical, biological, scientific data fit the Bible. True science has no argument with Scripture. Genesis 1 to 3, as I said, tells us exactly the truth about creation, and that establishes the fact that the Bible tells us the truth about everything. Modern scientists, now long past Darwin, have in a very unscientific move decided that they’re going to be irrational, and

they're going to be amoral when it comes to the Bible. They want to say that chance is the creator: accident, coincidence, a kind of randomness I guess you could say. They want to believe in blind luck that everything came out of nothing, produced in an intricate complex of ecosystem microcosms, macrocosms, complexity, all interacting successfully by accident. There is not a more significant absurdity in the thinking of humanity than that, that nobody times nothing equals everything is insanity; that all of this complexity came out of nowhere, nothing, nonintelligence is a fool's paradigm. Now, some scientists are beginning to say, 'Look, maybe there is some intelligence.' Maybe there is some intelligence out there somewhere because you have to come to that point. You can't have intelligence and personality and complexity coming out of non-intelligence, non-personality, and non-complexity. That's foolishness. And so there is some interest in what is called intelligent design—that's a kind of new buzzword—intelligent design. It stops short of acknowledging God, but it does say there has to be some intelligent force behind this.(iv)

Hence, the presupposition that the Bible is accurate because it was God who authored it is clearly no far-fetched claim. In fact, it is the only claim of truth that has any real weight behind it. So, we should take seriously what it says in passages from the Word of God, as found in 2 Timothy 4:1-4, which says, *"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."*

Worldviews and ideologies, such as New Ageism, communism, socialism, humanism, Marxism, scientism, etc., all make bold claims. They often tickle the

ears of their listeners with appealing assertions. But God's Word is the only source of truth that can be used to faithfully and genuinely reprove, rebuke, and exhort anyone.

Likewise, 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, *"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."* Thus, the Scriptures are not just a collection of random books. They are not just amazing works of literature. They are not just ancient masterpieces. They are the authority that we need to submit to, as they are written by the Holy Spirit, God Himself.

The Clarity of Scripture

In addition to the authority of Scripture, we must also bring up the clarity of Scripture. Though there are some texts that require deeper study in order to interpret them correctly, the gospel message and the overall message of Scripture are clear to those with eyes to see. Jesus would constantly appeal to Scripture during His earthly

"Even the crowds that followed Jesus' ministry saw that Jesus taught with authority..."

ministry and rebuke the man-made and man-centered teaching of the religious elite of His day with God's Word (see Mark 7:1-13 for a powerful interaction Jesus has with the Pharisees who tried to rebuke Him and His disciples for not following their "Tradition of the Elders"). Even the crowds that followed Jesus' ministry saw that Jesus taught with authority, versus the teaching of those in religious authority (Matthew 7:29). The reality is that God is not the God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), so we should expect His Word to bring clarity.

Even when the Apostles were spreading the gospel truth of Christ, it was the Bereans who were viewed as most faithful, as they examined all of Paul and Silas's words on the authority of Scripture. As Acts 17:10-11 says, *"The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."* Thus, it is right and good to claim that the Scriptures are clear enough for understanding if we approach them with a genuine and humble attitude.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Lastly, the Word of God is fully sufficient. The idea that Scripture is not

"So, even if one were to see a person rise from the dead, as amazing and spectacular as that would be, that wouldn't be enough to convince someone of God's truth..."

enough, and that additional doctrines, writings, or traditions are needed, is foreign to the entire Bible. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that *"I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another."*

Paul made it clear that we are never to go beyond what is written in God's Word. There is a true assurance found in following God's truth by having a pure devotion to the Word of God. As 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *"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."* The Scriptures give us the complete teaching we need for salvation,

and they are our only true source to lead us to accomplish every good work (a by-product of saving faith) that God acknowledges.

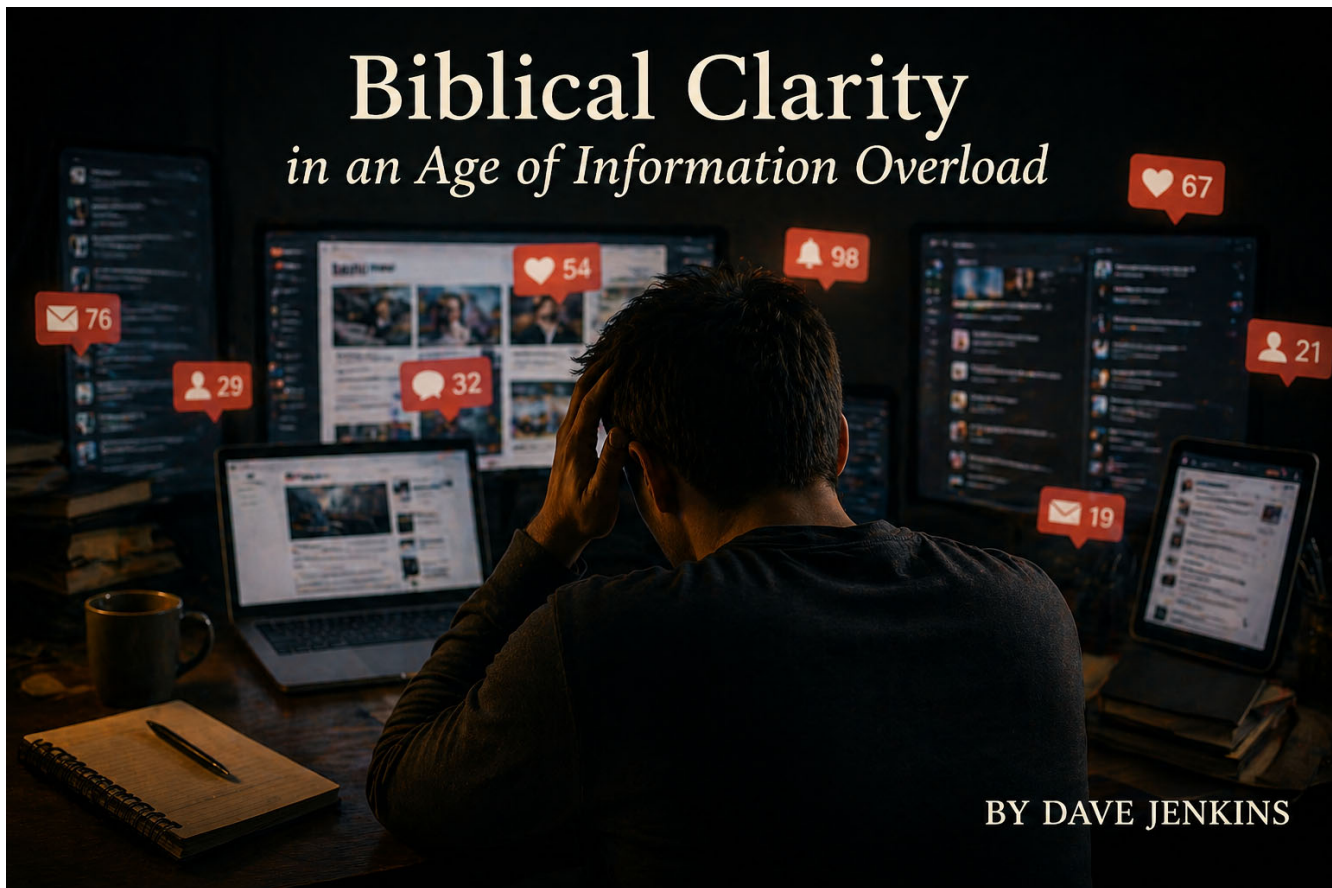
As this study comes to a close, I want to bring to attention what is recorded in Luke 16:19-31, which says, *“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”*

So, even if one were to see a person rise from the dead, as amazing and spectacular as that would be, that wouldn't be enough to convince someone of God's truth if they refuse to accept what is penned in the Scriptures. You see, when Abraham said they had Moses and the Prophets, he was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. And he said those writings were enough! Likewise, the Old and New Testament is enough for us today. We don't need to accept any extra-biblical source that claims it is some kind of missing truth. I can

promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit did not somehow neglect to provide us with the truth we need in the 66 books of the Bible that we hold in our hands. Scripture is authoritative, clear, and sufficient. The truth found in the Word of God has everything we need for salvation! To God be all the glory!

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Biblical Clarity

in an Age of Information Overload

BY DAVE JENKINS

We are living in an age, not of information scarcity, but of information saturation. Every day, we are bombarded with voices—news feeds, social media posts, podcasts, videos, articles, and endless streams of commentary. The opinions of others are ubiquitous, our subsequent reactions to these opinions are constant, and our attention is fragmented. In such an environment, the challenge is no longer simply finding information but discerning what is true. This presents a unique challenge for Christians. The question is no longer whether we have access to truth, but whether we are able to recognize it, hold fast to it, and live in light of it.

In a world filled with noise, clarity is not found in hearing more voices,

but in hearing the right One. Scripture speaks directly into this challenge. God has not left His people to navigate a sea of competing ideas without direction. He has spoken clearly in His Word. The problem is not that God's voice is unclear, but that we are often distracted, overwhelmed, and inattentive.

The Problem of Too Many Voices

The modern digital landscape is built on constant engagement. Platforms are designed to keep us scrolling, reacting, and consuming. The result is a steady diet of fragmented infor-

mation that rarely encourages deep thinking or sustained reflection.

This constant exposure shapes how we think. It trains us to prefer speed over depth, reaction over reflection, and novelty over truth. We become accustomed to forming

opinions quickly rather than carefully considering what is true. In such an environment, even serious theological questions can be reduced to soundbites and slogans.

The danger is not merely distraction but distortion. When our thinking is shaped more by algorithms than by Scripture, our understanding of truth becomes unstable. We may begin to evaluate ideas based on popularity, emotional impact, or cultural acceptance rather than on their faithfulness to God's Word.

Why Clarity Matters More Than Ever

In the midst of this noise, the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture becomes especially important. God's Word is not one voice among many. It is the Voice of Truth. Psalm 119:130 reminds us, *"The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."* In a world filled with confusion, Scripture provides light. This clarity does not mean that every question is answered instantly

"In the midst of this noise, the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture becomes especially important."

or that every passage is equally simple. It does mean, however, that God has spoken in a way that can be understood.

The essential truths of who God is, who we are, what sin is, and how we are saved are not hidden behind layers of ambiguity. They are revealed plainly in the pages of Scripture. This is crucial in a digital age. When information is abundant, but wisdom is scarce, clarity becomes a lifeline. Scripture anchors the believer in truth that does not shift with trends or change with cultural moods.

Digital Distraction and Spiritual Drift

One of the subtle dangers of information overload is spiritual drift. We may not consciously reject Scripture, but we may gradually give it less attention. Time once spent reading, meditating, and studying the Word is replaced by scrolling, watching, and reacting. This shift often happens quietly. We still affirm the authority of Scripture. We still believe it is important. But in practice, other voices begin to shape our thinking more than God's Word does.

Jesus warned of this kind of distraction in Luke 8:14, where He speaks of the seed that is choked by "*cares and riches and pleasures of life.*" While the context is broader than digital culture, the principle applies. When our attention is consumed by lesser things, our ability to receive and respond to the Word is weakened. The issue is not technology itself. Technology can be used for good, including the spread of biblical teaching. The issue is how easily it captures our attention and reshapes our habits. Without intentional discipline, we can become spiritually distracted in ways that dull our sensitivity to truth.

Learning to Discern in a Digital Age

The solution is not withdrawal from the world but renewed commitment to discernment. Discernment begins with a clear standard: the Word of God. Hebrews 5:14 describes mature believers as those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. This kind of discernment requires more than occasional exposure to Scripture. It requires

consistent, careful engagement with the text. As we read and study the Bible, our thinking is shaped, our categories are formed, and our ability to evaluate competing ideas is strengthened.

In practical terms, this means slowing down. It means resisting the pressure to react instantly to every issue. It means taking the time to ask, “What does Scripture actually say?” before forming conclusions. It means testing every idea, not against cultural opinion, but against the Word of God.

Re-centering Our Lives on the Word

If we are to live with clarity in an age of information overload, we must be intentional about how we order our lives. Scripture must not be an afterthought; it must be central.

This begins with regular, unhurried time in the Word. Not reading for the sake of checking a box, but reading to understand, to meditate, and to be shaped. Psalm 1 describes the *blessed man* as one who delights in the law of the

Lord and meditates on it day and night. That kind of steady, rooted engagement stands in contrast to the constant distraction of the digital age.

It also means evaluating what we allow to shape our thinking. What we listen to, watch, and read has an impact. If our intake is dominated

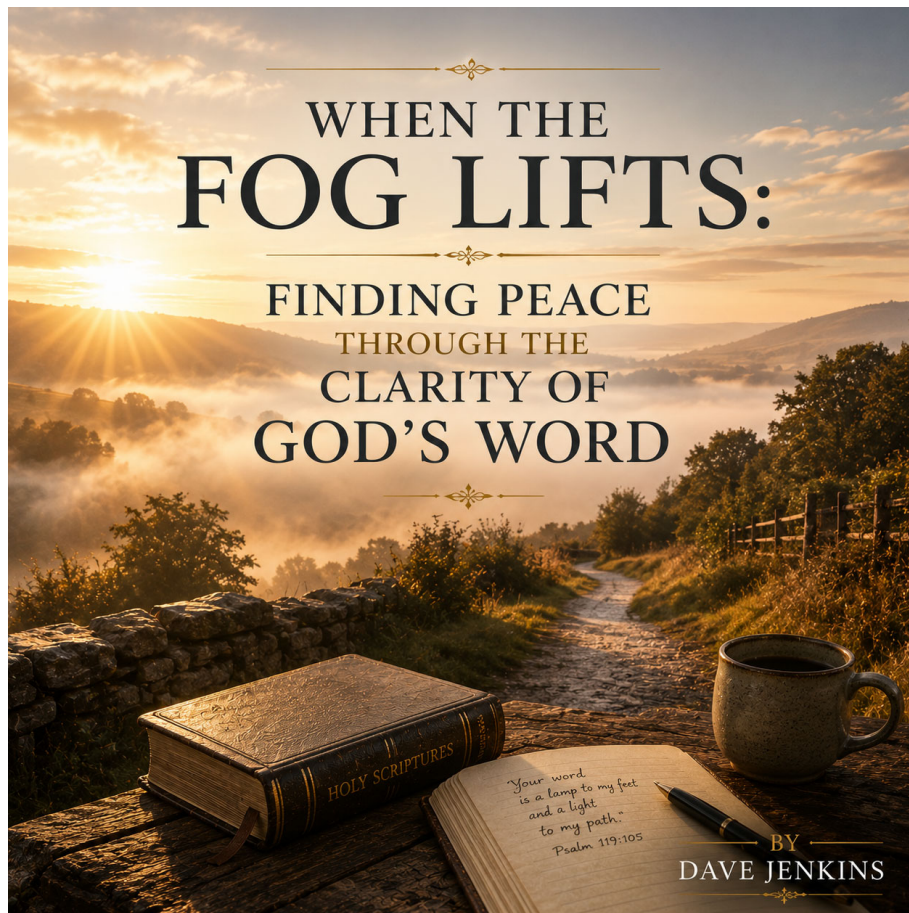
by shallow or misleading content, our understanding of truth will be affected. If, however, our minds are consistently shaped by Scripture, we will be better equipped to navigate the complexities of the world around us.

Clarity in a Confused Age

We do not need more information—we need clarity. And that clarity is

“The voices around us will continue to multiply. The noise will not go away. But God’s Word remains clear...”

found not in endless content, but in the enduring truth of God's Word. In a world that constantly demands our attention, the call of Scripture is simple and steady: listen to God, open His Word, read it carefully, believe it fully, and live in light of it. The voices around us will continue to multiply. The noise will not go away. But God's Word remains clear, sufficient, and trustworthy. In an age of information overload, clarity is not found in hearing everything, it is found in hearing what God has said, And His Word is enough.



There are seasons in life when everything feels unclear.

Decisions feel heavy. Circumstances feel uncertain. Emotions shift quickly. Questions multiply. What once seemed steady now feels unsettled. It can feel like walking through a dense fog—unable to see what lies ahead, unsure of where to step next, and increasingly anxious about what might be coming.

In those moments, the problem is not always the absence of information. Often, it is the absence of clarity. We may seek guidance from many places. We listen to voices, read opinions, and search for answers. Yet the more we take in, the more overwhelmed we can become. Instead of clarity, we find confusion. In-

stead of peace, we feel unsettled. This is where Scripture speaks with quiet but steady power.

God has not left His people to navigate life in uncertainty, without direction. He has spoken, and what He has spoken is not vague or inaccessible. His Word brings light into darkness; it gives clarity where confusion reigns.

Psalm 119:105 reminds us, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* Notice the imagery. God's Word does not always illuminate the entire road ahead. It gives light for the next step. It provides clarity for where we are and direction for where we should go.

This is often how God works in our lives. We want full visibility. We want answers to every question. We want certainty about every outcome. But God, in His wisdom, gives us something better. He gives us His Word—clear, sufficient, and trustworthy—so that we can walk by faith, not by sight.

The clarity of Scripture does not remove every difficulty, but it anchors us in truth. It reminds us of who God is—sovereign, wise, and good. It reminds us of who we are—created in His image and, in Christ, redeemed by His grace. It reminds us of what is true, even when our feelings suggest otherwise.

In seasons of confusion, our greatest need is not more voices, but the right voice; and God's Word speaks with clarity. When the fog of uncertainty settles in, Scripture calls us back to what we know to be true. It calls us to remember that God is not distant or silent—He has revealed Himself; He has made His will known in His Word. He has not hidden the path of life from His people.

Psalm 119:130 says, *"The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."* This is a promise. As we open the Word, as we read and reflect, God gives light. He does not leave us in confusion. Yet in these moments, we often struggle to slow down and listen. We are tempted to turn first to other sources—advice, commentary, or even our own reasoning. None of these are inherently wrong, but they cannot replace the clarity of Scripture.

When we prioritize other voices over God's Word, we often find ourselves more confused, not less.

Peace does not come from having all the answers. It comes from trusting the One who does. The clarity of Scripture points us back to God's character and His promises. It reminds us that He is faithful, even when circumstances are uncertain. It assures us that He is at work, even when we cannot see it. It directs us to walk in obedience, even when we do not know what lies ahead. This is where clarity leads to: peace. Not because everything is explained, but because everything is anchored.

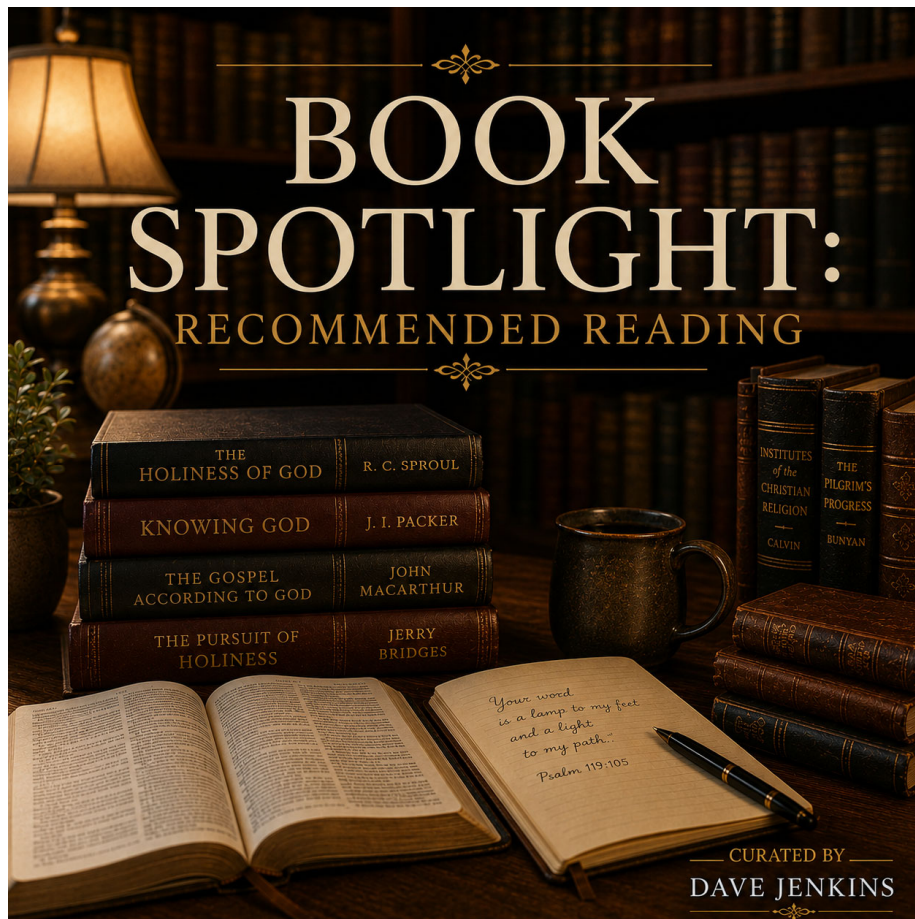
“If you find yourself in a season of uncertainty, do not chase clarity in endless voices. Return to the Word...”

Philippians 4:6–7 calls us to bring our anxieties to God in prayer, and it promises that His peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That peace is not detached from truth; it is grounded in the reality of who God is and what He has said.

The Word of God steadies us because it does not change. In a world where circumstances shift and emotions fluctuate, Scripture remains constant. It speaks the same truth in every season. It calls us to the same faith, the same obedience, and the same hope.

When the fog lifts, it is not because we have figured everything out—it is because the light of God's Word has guided us forward. We begin to see more clearly—not necessarily the future, but the path we are called to walk. We begin to understand that clarity is not about control, but about trust. It is not about knowing everything, but about knowing what God has said. And what God has said *is enough*.

If you find yourself in a season of uncertainty, do not chase clarity in endless voices. Return to the Word—open it, read it slowly, and meditate on it. Let it shape your thinking, correct your assumptions, and remind you of truth. God has spoken. His Word gives light. And when His Word is opened, the fog begins to lift.



In an age marked by confusion, theological drift, and competing voices, the need for clarity has never been

greater. God has not left His people without guidance. He has spoken clearly in His Word. And throughout Church history, faithful teachers have helped the Church understand, defend, and apply that Word.

The following resources are carefully selected to help you grow in your confidence in the authority, clarity, and sufficiency of Scripture. These books are not a replacement for the Bible—they are tools to help you read, understand, and treasure it more deeply.

On the Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture:

- ***Knowing Scripture, By R. C. Sproul***

A foundational work on how to read and interpret the Bible. Sproul explains both the clarity of Scripture and the responsibility of the believer to study it carefully.

- ***Fundamentalism and the Word of God, By J. I. Packer***

A classic defense of biblical authority in the face of theological compromise. Clear, direct, and deeply needed in every generation.

- ***The Sufficiency of Scripture, By John MacArthur***

A strong reminder that Scripture is enough for life and godliness. This work helps anchor believers in the completeness of God's revelation.

On Discernment and Doctrinal Clarity:

- ***This Little Church Stayed Home, By Gary E. Gilley***

A helpful work on staying grounded in Scripture when the broader church culture drifts. Practical, clear, and anchored in truth.

- ***Is That You, Lord? By Gary E. Gilley***

Addresses confusion around hearing God's voice and emphasizes the sufficiency of Scripture over subjective impressions.

Classic Works on Scripture and Clarity:

- ***The Bondage of the Will, By Martin Luther***

A powerful defense of God's sovereignty and the authority of His

Word. Not light reading, but deeply formative.

- ***Institutes of the Christian Religion, By John Calvin***
A cornerstone of Christian theology. Calvin consistently emphasizes the clarity and authority of Scripture.
- ***Holiness, By J. C. Ryle***
A pastoral call to godliness rooted in Scripture. Clear, direct, and enduringly relevant.

Where to Begin

If you're not sure where to start:

1. Begin with *Knowing Scripture* for practical help.
2. Move to *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* for doctrinal clarity.
3. Add Gilley's works for discernment in today's context.

Take your time. Read slowly. Let these resources drive you back to the Bible itself.

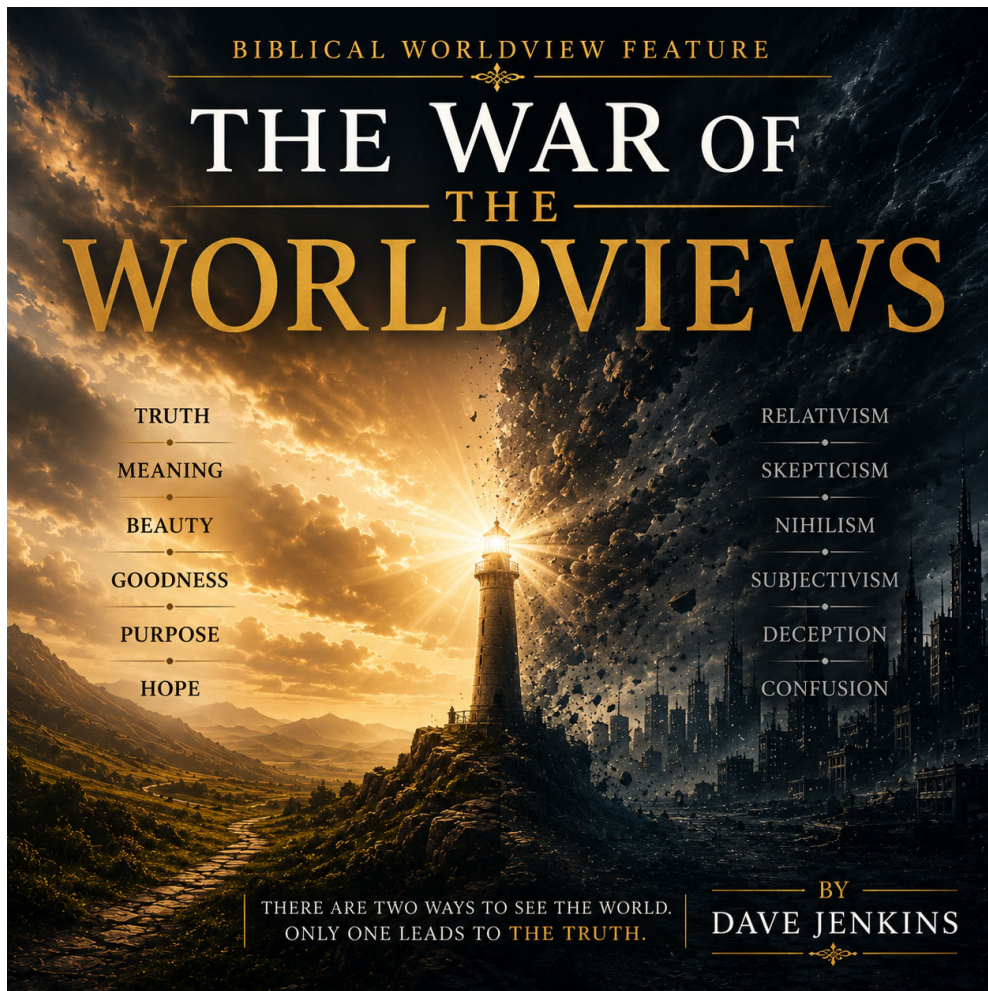
Final Encouragement

Books like these are gifts to the Church, but they are not the final authority. They are guides that point us back to the one place where true clarity is found—the Word of God. Read widely but anchor yourself firmly in Scripture. Because in the end, clarity is not found in the number of voices we hear, but in faithfully listening to the voice of God.

In Christ,

Dave Jenkins

Editor in Chief, *Theology for Life Magazine*



A worldview is the lens through which we interpret everything—what we believe about truth, who we are, and what the world means. Everyone has a worldview, whether they recognize it or not. The issue is not whether we have one, but whether it is shaped by truth.

One: How Does Your Worldview Shape the Way You Understand Truth, Identity, and Reality, and How Does Scripture Correct or Clarify That?

Scripture provides the only fully coherent and truthful worldview because it is God's revelation. It tells us that truth is not subjective but grounded in God's character (John 17:17). It defines identity not by feelings or culture but by our relationship to God—as His image-bearers and, in Christ, redeemed sinners (Genesis 1:26–27; 2 Corinthians 5:17). It explains reality as created, fallen, and redeemed through Christ.

Where our thinking has been shaped by the world—whether in how we view truth, identity, or purpose—Scripture corrects and clarifies. It does not adjust to our assumptions; it confronts and reshapes them.

Two: Why Must Scripture Be the Final Authority for the Christian Life Rather Than Culture, Experience, or Personal Opinion?

Scripture must be the final authority because it is the very Word of God. As 2 Timothy 3:16–17 teaches, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and sufficient to equip believers for every good work.”* No other authority carries this divine origin or sufficiency.

Culture shifts, experience is subjective, and personal opinion is limited and often shaped by sin. If any of these become the final authority, truth becomes unstable. What is accepted today may be rejected tomorrow.

By contrast, God's Word is unchanging (Isaiah 40:8). It stands above every cultural moment and speaks with final authority to every generation. To submit to Scripture is not to limit ourselves—it is to anchor ourselves in truth that does not move.

Three: What Does it Mean That Scripture is Clear, and Why is That Truth Essential in an Age of Confusion and Competing Voices?

The clarity of Scripture means that the essential message of the Bible—who God is, who we are, what sin is, who Christ is, and how we are saved—is understandable. Psalm 119:130 tells us that God's Word gives light and understanding, even to the simple. This does not mean every passage is equally easy or that study is unnecessary. It does mean that God has spoken in a way that can be known and trusted. In an age of confusion, this truth is essential. We are surrounded by competing voices, each claiming authority. If Scripture were unclear, we would have no stable standard. But because God has spoken clearly, we are not left guessing. We can know truth, stand on it, and live by it with confidence.

Four: In What Ways are People Today Tempted to Add to or Replace Scripture, and Why is the Sufficiency of God's Word so Important?

Today, many are tempted to supplement Scripture with other authorities. Some elevate psychology or cultural wisdom as ultimate guides for understanding life. Others rely on personal impressions or claimed "new revelations" as if God is still adding to His Word. Still others treat Scripture as incomplete, needing to be updated or reinterpreted through modern perspectives.

These approaches all share a common assumption: that Scripture is not enough. But Scripture itself teaches the opposite. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). His Word is sufficient to guide us in truth, to correct us, and to shape our lives.

When we look outside of Scripture for ultimate answers, we do not gain clarity—we lose it. The sufficiency of Scripture provides stability, grounding us in a truth that is complete, reliable, and unchanging.

Five: What Voices Most Shape Your Thinking Right Now, and How Can You Intentionally Anchor Your Mind More

Deeply in God's Word?

Every believer is being shaped by something—what we read, watch, listen to, and dwell on. In a digital age, these influences are constant and often subtle. The question is whether those voices are leading us toward truth or away from it.

To anchor our minds in God's Word, we must be intentional. This begins with regular, unhurried time in Scripture—reading not just for information but for transformation. It includes meditating on the Word, memorizing it, and applying it to daily life (Psalm 1:1–2).

“Clarity is not found in listening to more voices— it is found in listening to the right One.”

It also involves evaluating the voices we allow to shape us. Are they grounded in Scripture? Do they point us back to God's Word, or away from it? Romans 12:2 calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. That renewal happens as we consistently place our-

selves under the authority of Scripture, allowing God's Word to shape how we think, live, and see the world.

Closing Encouragement

Clarity is not found in listening to more voices—it is found in listening to the right One. God has spoken in His Word, and His Word is clear, authoritative, and sufficient. As you reflect on these questions, let them lead you back to Scripture. Read it carefully. Believe it fully. Live in light of it. Because in a world of competing worldviews, the Word of God remains our sure and steady foundation.

If you would like to explore these themes further, *The War of the Worldviews: Truth, Lies, and the Battle for the Christian Mind* (i) provides a deeper look at how competing ideas shape our world, and how Christians can remain anchored in the clear and sufficient truth of God's Word.

Reference:

- i. <https://servantsofgrace.org/product/war-of-worldviews-book/>

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Dave Jenkins is happily married to his wife, Sarah. He serves as the Executive Director of Servants of Grace Ministries, the Executive Editor of *Theology for Life Magazine*, the host of several podcasts. He is the author of *The Word Explored: The Problem of Biblical Illiteracy and What to Do About It* (House to House, 2021), *The Word Matters: Defending Biblical Authority Against the Spirit of the Age* (G3 Press, 2022), and *Contentment: The Journey of a Lifetime* (Theology for Life, 2024).



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**Upcoming in the
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A Look at Clarity in Doctrine**