

## Bibliology Resource Paper

**Lightbearers resource papers are designed as a resource to Lightbearers staff as they interact with students and partners and are asked to provide wisdom on a variety of topics. These papers should not be considered a doctrinal stance in competition with your local church but an internal resource providing clarity on a sound evangelical stance on particular issues. Please seek out the counsel of the church under whose authority you have placed yourself as needed in responding to specific situations.**

**Foundational to each paper is the perspective that the Gospel is primary. No topic competes with the message of the Gospel for primacy in the church. At the same time, the Gospel impacts every corner of life (1 Corinthians 6:20); therefore, we aim to provide staff with direction that is Biblically sound and points them to view any issue through the lens of the Gospel—the good news that we are far more sinful and God far more holy than we thought but the life and grace that God offers through Christ’s death and resurrection is far greater than we dare to hope.**

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The term “Bibliology” comes from the Greek biblos meaning “book” and refers to the study of the nature of the Bible as revelation. The revelation is Christ. The written word of God is what our theology is based upon. We know who Christ is and what He has done because of the Word of God. Believing what Peter wrote, “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you would do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts ... 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”<sup>1</sup>. Without the Word, we would be lost. It is the only sure thing.

Scripture is “God-breathed” and “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Believing this, we have confidence to go to Scripture for all manners of understanding and counsel both about God and about His people.

### Attributes of the Word

Believing the doctrine above, it impacts our practice. Where there is controversy, it is insignificant. And yet, it leads to many divisions and disbeliefs in the world. A few of those main categories are spoken of here.

**Authority.** All the words in Scripture are God’s words and therefore, to disbelieve Scripture is to disbelieve in God. When the prophets say, “Thus says the LORD”, we see the claims of Scripture as being from God. Some may protest that this is a circular argument, and it is. However, it does not delegitimize the fact that it is the ultimate authority for belief and can be trusted to reveal the creator of the universe. Hebrews 6:18 reminds us that God cannot speak a lie, and therefore his words can always be trusted.

**Inerrancy.** Inerrant means incapable of being wrong. Challenges typically made regarding inerrancy include the idea of infallibility (trustworthy). We see the New Testament authors take into account the smallest details of the Old Testament, which reveals to us that the idea of infallibility without inerrancy is incomplete. The Psalmist declared that he would not forget God’s word and longs to live and keep it (Psalm 119:16-17), knowing that it is perfect (Psalm 19:7). It is important to remember that the personal conviction that Scripture is true only comes through the work of the Holy Spirit. Apart from him, we are unable to believe.

**Clarity.** The Bible may not be easily understood, but we are promised that it makes the simple man wise and that we can understand it rightly<sup>2</sup>. Why do people misunderstand Scripture? Perhaps it is not the right time as determined by the Holy Spirit, there is a lack of faith, or a hardness of heart. This is not to say the Bible has every answer for every question. There are times where the Bible is silent on a matter and we are left to discern from what we know and believe from the whole of Scripture and the truths that are implied therein.

**Necessity.** Scripture is necessary for knowing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for maintaining our followership of Him. We are to live by every word that comes from God (Matthew 4:3-4). Without Scripture, we would not know the way of Salvation.

**Sufficiency.** Scripture contains all the words of God that he intended for his people to have for the generation in which they live (2 Timothy 3:16). Any writings that provide godly wisdom and instruction find their roots in Scripture. Extra biblical literature, whether the Apocrypha or the Book of Mormon or the latest book by John Piper, should be examined against Scripture.

For centuries, people have questioned how literally to understand the Bible. Some say sections of the Bible are metaphorical rather than factual. Others wave apparent contradictions in Scripture as evidence that the Bible is not trustworthy. A wise approach, however, is to begin by believing that God protects his word for all time (Revelation 22:18-19, Matthew 24:35). Then, we look first to Scripture to interpret Scripture (e.g. Hebrews 11 on various Old Testament figures) and next willingly step into historical research and good hermeneutical study to answer these questions. Believers should consistently lead the way in honest historical Biblical research. We continue to come back, however, to the authority and inerrancy of Scripture for all manners of interpretation and application.

### **Substitutions for the Word**

The Word of God is our source for life and doctrine. There are four areas often mistaken for doctrine that should be examined by every believer:

1. Confessions. The confessions of the church (e.g., Westminster, Heidelberg) are an encouragement to believers. However, they have no divine authority or infallibility as it relates to Scripture.
2. Tradition. Where have family, culture, and other traditions taken the place of Scripture? Jesus examined this in His people when they 'transgressed the commandment of God by their traditions'. As stated in Jude, our faith was entrusted to the saints once for all.
3. Rationalization. Approaching Scripture with a slant of criticism and evaluation of reason is dangerous. It makes man a critic of the Bible rather than the Bible the critic of man (Hebrews 4:12)<sup>3</sup>.
4. Mysticism. Building our doctrine around our experiences is misleading. Our experiences are to be interrupted in light of what we know is true from the Gospel of Christ.

### **Summary**

We are remiss to not also mention the external evidences of Scripture as the revelation of Christ. These are not the primary reasons, as stated above, but do act as a experiential testimony of how God has preserved His word since it's writing:

1. The Bible is indestructible. It has not changed in its message nor meaning since its writing.
2. The Bible has captured aspects of history completed by other writings of its time.
3. It is the one writing that adapts to every age in every culture in every generation.
4. Prophecy from Scripture has been fulfilled.
5. The Church exists and testifies to the Gospel.

In all manners of life and doctrine, we stand together stating that these aspects of Bibliology are primary. The debate of these things should be cordial and with charity, but are not secondary to the issue of faith and life as a believer like issues of eschatology, tongues, etc.

### **Resources for further reading:**

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

Roger Olson, *Mosaic of Christian Beliefs*

Philip Wesley Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible*

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<sup>1</sup>2 Peter 1:19,21

<sup>2</sup>Psalm 19:7

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.trinitycollege.edu/assets/files/ECBragg/BibliologyR.pdf>