

## LEAD! A.1 God's Word

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*[Based on feedback, this study will actually become the first lesson, prior to [God's Commission](#)]*

In Which We Discover How God Speaks to Us, and Why We Ought to Listen to Him

[Updated Sunday, August 3rd]

### **Adoration**

[Psalm 19](#)

### **Bible**

[2 Timothy 3:10-17](#)

Why are you here?

Not in the existential sense of [here on earth](#), but the practical sense of here and now. Why are you taking this class, as part of this church, at this particular time?

Odds are, it is because someone you respected told you about this course in a way that made you believe it would be worth your while. You trusted them enough to give up this tiny slice of your life, perhaps in the hope that it would help you gain some of what they have -- whether knowledge, holiness, spirituality, or maturity.

In a similar vein -- albeit with much greater gravity -- Paul bases his exhortation on Timothy's personal knowledge of him:

But thou hast fully known my [doctrine](#), [manner of life](#), [purpose](#), [faith](#), [longsuffering](#), [charity](#), [patience](#)

And not merely on his virtues, but also what he has endured -- and how God provided:

[Persecutions](#), [afflictions](#), which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I [endured](#): but out of [them] all the Lord [delivered](#) me.

So why exactly is Paul sharing all this? Partly as a model for us, since we will be facing the same things:

Yea, and all that will live [godly](#) in Christ Jesus shall [suffer persecution](#).

But perhaps more importantly, to highlight for Timothy the difference between a life of integrity and one of deception. Or, more bluntly, between Paul and [evil men](#):

But [evil](#) men and [seducers](#) shall wax worse and worse, [deceiving](#), and being

deceived.

So what ought Timothy to do in order to follow the right path?

But [continue](#) thou in the things which thou hast [learned](#) and hast been [assured](#) of, [knowing](#) of whom thou hast [learned](#) [them];

Let's break this down:

1. Timothy started off by *knowing* someone whom he deemed trustworthy, due to their virtue and their sacrifice
2. From them he *learned* certain things of value
3. He then became *assured* of the truth of those things, presumably by seeing them proven in practice
4. His charge now is to *continue* in the practice of those truths

A fairly natural progression, and probably one most of us have experienced in many areas of life. This is usually what is meant by the word "faithful" -- perseverance in honoring the truth passed down to us.

However, the authority we revere is not a mere [traditionalism](#) based on ancestral teaching, but on the written word of God -- which both complements and challenges what we receive from our human teachers:

And that from a child thou hast known the [holy scriptures](#), which are able to make thee [wise](#) unto [salvation](#) through [faith](#) which is in Christ Jesus.

For Paul and Timothy, "holy scriptures" would mostly mean the Greek [Septuagint](#) (which roughly corresponds to our [Old Testament](#)), since that is what [the New Testament usually](#) quotes. But since those don't actually mention Christ Jesus by name, how exactly can they make Timothy "wise unto salvation through faith"?

The first key is probably the term [make wise](#), "sophizo" (as in [philo-sopher](#)). While the Old Testament doesn't convey explicit *knowledge* of Jesus, it provides the necessary *wisdom* to understand salvation, by teaching Timothy the nature of faith.

There's arguably a general pattern here: while the Bible may not contain answers to *all* questions, it provides answer to the *essential* questions -- those we need in order to be able to find and evaluate all the *other* answers. This is the basis of what is known as the [sufficiency of Scripture](#): the doctrine that we need no other authoritative revelation to accomplish God's purposes for us.

To be sure, we as [charismatics](#) (as opposed to [cessationists](#)) believe that God does still speak to us today; however, we hold all such post-Biblical revelation explicitly *subordinate* to Scripture. Contrast this with the New Testament, which we believe *supersedes* and completes the Old Testament, in a way that modern revelation does not. The doctrine of sufficiency explicitly disallows documents such as the [Qur'an](#) and [Book of Mormon](#), which Muslims and Latter Day Saints (respectively) believe complement and correct the New Testament -- but we as orthodox Christians do not.

The second key word is [able](#), "dunamai" (as in [dynamo](#)). We believe that Scripture *itself* is able to make us wise, even without the benefit of external authority or teaching. This doctrine is known as the [clarity of Scripture](#), and is central to Protestant Christianity. To be sure, this does **not** mean that everything is immediately clear to everyone; Scripture itself affirms that some things are [hard to understand](#), require [study to rightly discern](#), and are [veiled to unbelievers](#). However, the key point is that the essential facts are accessible to "ordinary people, who approach it in faith and humility."

So, what are the essential usages of Scripture, for which it is clear and sufficient? A good list is the one that follows:

All [scripture](#) [is] given by [inspiration of God](#), and [is] [profitable](#) for [doctrine](#), for [reproof](#), for [correction](#), for [instruction](#) in [righteousness](#):

This [famous verse](#) contains a wealth of sophisticated insight. The first is that scripture is "God-breathed" ([theo-pneustos](#), as in [pneumatic](#)). This unique phrase captures the dual nature of Scripture, in that it originates from God but is expressed by men, as it says in [2 Peter 1:21](#):

For the [prophecy](#) came not in old time by the [will](#) of man: but [holy](#) men of God spake [as they were] [moved](#) by the [Holy Ghost](#).

In many ways, this mirrors the [dual nature of Christ](#) Himself, who was fully God and yet fully man. And just as **the church has had to maintain that paradoxical tension against heresies which stressed one aspect and denied the other, so there are two opposing mistakes we can make in regards to Scripture.**

The first is to think of the Bible simply as a collection of 66 books by diverse human authors expressing their personal perspectives on the nature of religion. The Bible is much more than that; it is a [living entity](#) ordained by God -- faithfully reflecting what He did, said, and felt -- not some [collection of fables](#).

At the same time, we must also resist the temptation to think that the Bible was dictated by God to robotic scribes. The various books of the Bible reflect the culture, language, and personality of their human authors -- while still being faithful to the direction of God's spirit. That is why it is possible (even [mandatory!](#)) to translate Scripture into modern languages; though the translations are of necessity imperfect human artifacts, yet by the grace of the Holy Spirit they can still communicate the essence of God's intent, the *God-breath* behind the original human authors.

The end result is that we must approach Scripture with a holy humility, recognizing on the one hand that God desires to use them communicate with us, while still acknowledging that our present understanding of them is but a shadow of God's original thoughts. This is the basis for the [authority of Scripture](#): **God's original message to us is fully authoritative, but our own interpretation and application of it is only authoritative to the extent it reflects God Himself. This means we not only need to continually improve our understanding of how to properly translate and interpret Scripture, but we need to conform our hearts to God's will so that we can more clearly recognize His voice!**

That is why Paul explicitly links the inspiration of Scriptures with its usefulness for:

- doctrine
- reproof
- correction
- instruction in righteousness

Of course the Bible is about much more than just that: it contains history, literature, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, zoology, and other types of content. However, these four speak directly to Scripture's core purpose:

That the man of God may be [perfect](#), throughly [furnished](#) unto all [good works](#).

We must never forget that Scripture was given that we might [believe](#) and [obey](#) God, so as to [bring Him glory](#) through our [good works](#) here on earth.

That is also why we will be focusing on those same areas in this course, using the Bible as our study guide:

- Doctrine (Thinking Theologically)
- Reproof and Correction (Christian Character)
- Instruction in Righteousness (Skills for Service)

And we have full confidence that God will accomplish these things in our lives as we study the Scripture, because of the testimony of Scripture itself -- as well as of faithful men and women, who loved it more than their own lives.

## ***Conversation***

1. Share a time when reading or studying Scripture deeply impacted your life.
2. Which aspect of Scripture do you wrestle with the most: sufficiency, clarity, or authority? In theory or in practice?
3. To what extent (and in what ways) is it true that the Bible is "both human and divine", like Jesus?
4. Are there any passages in the Bible you wish weren't there? Why?
5. How has the Bible forced you to reexamine the beliefs you inherited from your parents?

## ***Decision***

- **Repentance:** Identify a Scriptural "reproof" or "correction" that you need to apply to your life.
- **Action:** What good works might God be calling you to undertake for His glory?
- **Worship:** What do the thousands of years God spent preparing Scripture tell us about His desire to communicate with us?

## ***Explore More***

- [Thoughts on the Sufficiency of Scripture :: Desiring God Christian Resource Library](#)
- [The Clarity of Scripture](#)
- [The Authority of Scripture](#)
- [The Canon of Scripture](#)
- [Fulfilled Prophecy](#)
- [Apollos.ws – Historical Reliability of the New Testament](#)
- ["The Place of Biblical Criticism in Theological Study" by Gordon J. Wenham](#)
- [The Bible: The Book that Bridges the Millennia, Parts I and II \(video\)](#)

### ***For Next Week***

Read [Matthew 28](#). What is Jesus trying to accomplish during his final days on earth?