

**Resource Ministries**  
**STM 2 - Communicating God's Word**  
**KNOWING AND USING GOD'S WORD**

I. There is no other book like the Bible. It is unique and incomparable because:

- A. It is the revelation of God to man. It shows us what God wants us to know about Himself, the Universe and World, the unseen Spiritual Realm, and about Ourselves.
- B. It is 'God-breathed' or inspired. (2 Timothy 3:16, Rom 3:2)

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2 Tim 3:16)*

*1 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? 2 Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. (Rom 3:1-2)*

- C. It tells us of God's plans and purposes for the ages of time and eternity. It is the story of God's creation, Man's fall, God's progressive plan of Redemption. It shows that God is a Covenant-Making and Covenant-Keeping God.
- D. It centres in God incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

*1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. (Heb 1:1-2)*

II. What is the meaning of the word "Bible"?

- A. The word Bible comes from the Greek word "Biblia" which means books.
- B. Where do we get the term "scripture" ?

- 1. This term was used by New Testament writers in referring to what we now know as the Old Testament. It simply means "writings."2 Timothy 3:15; Matthew 21:42; Luke 24:32; John 5:39; Acts 18:24.

*from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 3:15)*

*Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" (Matthew 21:42)*

*They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lu 24:32)*

*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, (John 5:39)*

*Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. (Acts 18:24)*

2. Peter also referred to Paul's epistles as 'Scriptures' in 2 Peter 3:16.

*He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:16)*

3. Also referred to by the terms "the Law of Moses", "the Law and the Prophets", and "the Psalms." (Luke 24:44; Matthew 5:17, 11:13; Acts 13:15; John 10:34, 12:34, 15:25; 1 Corinthians 14:21)

*He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44)*

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. (Matthew 5:17)*

*The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain for ever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?" (John 12:34)*

### III. What do the terms 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' mean?

- A. Since the close of the 2nd century A.D., the terms 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' have been used to differentiate the Hebrew or Jewish Scriptures from the Christian Scriptures. The formal collection of Christian writings made after the middle of the 2nd century was called the New Testament. This collection was placed with the Hebrew canonical books as of equal

inspiration and authority. The Hebrew Scriptures were then called the Old Testament. Tertullian, an early Latin father (c. 200), first employed the term *Novum Testamentum*. Thereafter it came into general use, and the concept of a Christian Bible was crystallized.

B. These terms mean 'Old Covenant' and 'New Covenant'

The Covenant idea goes back to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:3-8), and even before Moses to Abraham (there are even earlier hints of the Covenant, Genesis 6:18) when God made a promise to His chosen people. In making that promise or covenant, God put Himself in a special relationship to His people, a saving or redeeming relationship. The Old Testament tells the story of how that special relationship was worked out in history. But a New Covenant was foreseen and hoped for by the Jews; indeed, Jeremiah (31:31-34) foretold that New Covenant. That the New Covenant really came is proved by Jesus Himself when He said, "This cup is the new Covenant in my blood". It is not surprising that Paul speaks of the Old Covenant and New, and the writer of Hebrews makes the difference between the Covenants one of his great themes.

IV. What language or languages was the Bible written in?

A. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the language of the Jews.

B. The New Testament was written in Greek, the language of science and commerce.

1. The Palestine Jews in Jesus' time spoke Aramaic but wrote mostly in Greek.

2. The Jews in the time of Jesus did not speak or understand the formal Old Testament Hebrew, except for some priests and leaders. Therefore, before the time of Christ, Jews living in North Africa translated the Old Testament into the Greek language. This early translation of the Old Testament into Greek is called the Septuagint version. It was this Septuagint translation of the Bible that Jesus and his disciples quoted in the New Testament. So we see that Jesus knew the necessity of having God's Word in a language that man understood easily.

V. What do we mean by the "Inspiration of the Bible?"

A. The English Word "inspiration" means "in-breathed." Since God in-breathed the Scriptural utterances, the Bible is a divine product; men were the

vehicles God used to put His message into writing. **How** this was accomplished (the process) is a mystery; **that** it was accomplished is a fact.

- B. Inspiration means the influence God exerted over the human authors of Scripture so that the words and thoughts they recorded were without error. (2 Timothy 3:16; John 10:35; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16)*

*..the Scripture cannot be broken.. (John 10:35)*

*19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19-21)*

- C. This inspiration covers the original writings only, although a high degree of accuracy in the transmitted text is to be expected if God directed the process, and is demonstrated by textual criticism.
- D. "And God said" or the equivalent is used over 2600 times in the Bible.

## VI. The Authority of The Bible

- A. God's authority resides in God's inspired Word (the Bible interpreted by God's Spirit operating through Spirit-taught human agents.) John 17:17, 2 Peter 1:21

*...your word is truth. (John 17:17)*

*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)*

- B. Christ is the central and unifying theme of the Bible
  - 1. The Old Testament prepares the way for Him and predicts Him in both type and prophecy.
  - 2. The gospels present Him redemptively in divine-human manifestation. Acts portrays Him preached and His gospel propagated in the world.

The epistles expound His redemptive work. The Revelation reveals Him as the consummation of all the plans and purposes of God.

3. The Bible is one book, with one message; Salvation.

God spelled out salvation in His Written Word (the Bible), dramatized it in His Living Word (Jesus Christ), and demonstrates it today in His Continuing Word (the Holy Spirit in His Church).

4. The Bible's theme is consistent; a redemptive God reaching out to redeem His fallen creation.
5. The Bible is a book with a purpose; That we may know God! All other religions and their books are about man's search for God. The Bible tells us of God's redemptive search for man and how man (we) must respond.

C. The Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Spirit of God

1. One Holy Spirit, many speakers and writers. One theme; many ways of illuminating it. One message; many styles of communicating the message. This is why prophecy must be judged by the Word of God; the same Holy Spirit who inspires prophecy inspired the scripture.
2. This is why cults that require additional books or a "prophet / founder" to interpret the Word of God are suspect and must be guarded against.

- D. The Bible is its own best authority and one must read it for himself to discover its authority. The same Spirit that inspired the Bible will bear witness in the receptive person to its authority.

VII. How the Bible was written. When, over how long a time, by whom?

- A. The Bible is composed of 66 books written by more than 40 authors over a period of 1500 to 2000 years without contradiction. Job was the first book written. James was the first New Testament book written. Revelation was the last book written (about 90 A.D. or 60 years after Jesus died).
- B. The church no longer possesses the original manuscripts written by the apostles and the prophets. They are all lost. We can believe that is the will of God, because if they existed some men would worship them and they would become idols to them. We do have copies of the original manuscripts that we call ancient texts. There are many of these, because in Old

Testament times some religious men spent their entire lives memorizing and copying the Word of God. Even the Hebrew boys had to learn the law of Moses by heart. Religious scribes copied the ancient texts. They considered their work a spiritual work, a work for God. They were so careful and respected the word so much that before they began copying they washed their clothes, their hands and even their pens. Before they wrote the name of God they would take a new pen. If they made one mistake on a page they threw the entire page away. If they made two mistakes they threw the book away, to start anew. For almost 2000 years the Old Testament was copied and recopied in this manner. Religious scribes did the writing, but these copies were then entrusted to the priests to be kept in the place of worship. Each individual book was written on a scroll, and the scrolls were generally kept in clay vases. As time went by and they had a collection of these individual books, devout priests and teachers examined them carefully to ascertain that they were truly the inspired Word of God.

- C. The disciples of Jesus did not write the story of Jesus while He was alive, firstly because they didn't believe who He was, and secondly, they didn't understand his teaching or the meaning of his life. After Jesus rose from the dead and went back to heaven He sent them the Holy Spirit. Then they understood and believed. Even after Pentecost, it was almost 50 years before the apostles began to write the gospels. It was as the disciples were getting older and some were dying martyr's deaths that they realized that would not be there much longer and that others would begin to preach the gospel. They did not want false apostles to twist the gospel or the true gospel message to be lost.
- D. The books that make up the rest of the New Testament were generally written to either persons or churches. The churches guarded these as a word from God. They would circulate or exchange their books with other churches and would copy them so that each church would have its own set of New Testament books. The result was that even by the end of the first century there were many copies of the New Testament.
- E. The Bible as we know it today, consisting of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament is known as the "Canon of The Scriptures". Canon comes from the Greek *kanon* meaning a "level" or "ruler" as used by a cabinet maker or scribe. Figuratively, canon may refer to the standard or *rule* of conduct or belief, a list or catalog of what may and may not be done or embraced. Figuratively it also came to mean a list of books of the Bible.

- F. In the New Testament Church several rules came into existence to help determine what New Testament era writings constituted the true Word of God.
1. It had to be written by an apostle, or the source of the material must have been an apostle. That would mean the disciples themselves wrote them or they gave the information to someone else such as Luke. Paul was not one of the twelve, but a specially chosen apostle. (Matthew was an apostle, Mark got his information from Peter, Luke got his account from Mary and others, John was an apostle.)
  2. The witness of the church. The church had to testify to the authenticity of the sender and receiver of any book.
  3. The books themselves should give some internal evidences of their unique character, as inspired and authoritative. It had to be consistent with other recognised scripture, both Old and New Testament. The content should commend itself to the reader as being different from an ordinary book in communicating the revelation of God.
- G. There are 24 books of the Hebrew Bible and they correspond with the books 39 of our Old Testament. The number is altered primarily by dividing the Hebrew Minor Prophets into twelve separate books and by making two books each out of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. Ezra-Nehemiah is also made into two books.
- H. The Hebrew Canon, though not officially acted upon until the Council of Jamnia about 90 A.D., was for all practical purposes fixed before the time of Christ. That Old Testament was accepted by Christians as part of the Bible. The New Testament canon was mainly established by the late second century A.D. But even after that, there was some uncertainty for a long time about the last five or six books of the New Testament. The first known listing of our twenty-seven books, as we now know them, was put together by Athanasius in 367 A.D.
- I. About the year 300 A.D. the church experienced much persecution. The Roman emperor would have liked to destroy the Bible. This forced the church to decide which books were genuine and which were not. Later another emperor, Constantine, was converted. He gave the order for the church to prepare 50 Bibles and so the first official New Testament was collected. This is the same New Testament we recognize today.
- J. Not all Christian canons the world around are the same. The Roman Catholic canon is different. It includes the Apocrypha, consisting of fourteen books,

all written in Greek, from 200 BC to shortly before John the Baptist. The Apocrypha is not universally accepted for two main reasons:

1. They are Jewish books but the Jews themselves do not accept them as part of their Scriptures. They were rejected at the Council of Jamnia in 70 BC by Hebrew scholars.
2. The internal value of the books is very low. Some are accounts of dragons and the like.

VIII. How the Bible is constructed: Books, chapters, verses.

- A. It was not until 1250 A.D. that the Bible was divided into chapters. At that time Cardinal Hugo incorporated chapter divisions into the Latin Bible. His divisions were not always accurate; however, those same chapter divisions have persisted to this day.
- B. Verse divisions were attempted by the ancient Hebrews, but those we now have were made just three hundred years after Cardinal Hugo's work on chapters. In 1551 Robert Stephens introduced a Greek New Testament with inclusion of verse divisions. He did not fix verses for the Old Testament. The first entire English Bible to have verse and chapter divisions was the Geneva Bible (1560). The King James verse and chapter divisions became the most widely used, but are not always accurate, as seen, for example, in Acts 7 where the story runs into chapter 8. A stricter division of subject matter would require that chapter 8 commence in another place, perhaps at the present verse 4.

IX. How did we get various translations or versions of the Bible?

- A. The New Testament has survived many translations and copyings. One of the first translations of the New Testament was from Greek to Latin, the language of the Romans, about 200 A.D. The first good Latin translation was done by Jerome about 400 A.D. and became known as the Vulgate. This became the official Catholic Bible for many centuries. In 1516 Erasmus produced a new Greek version that became the basis of the English King James Version.
- B. Since the translation of the King James Version, scholars have discovered better Greek sources to help determine the best interpretation. Later scholars went behind the Latin translations to determine the true meanings from the original Greek.



- C. The gospel had spread to many lands and men felt the need to put the scriptures in their language. Many men sacrificed much to accomplish this. They are heroes of our faith.
1. Martin Luther translated the Scriptures into German.
  2. In England, John Wycliffe suffered much to translate the complete Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate in 1382. Even though his translations were burned and destroyed he persevered.
  3. William Tyndale, another English translator carried on the tradition and produced the first printed English New Testament in 1525. For his labours he was strangled and burned at the stake.
  4. Other men translated, such as Coverdale in Switzerland, and another group published the Geneva Bible. At that time the Queen of England was Catholic and persecuted all who owned Bibles.
  5. In later years, in 1604, King James VI of England gave the order to produce an authorized English version. He appointed 54 scholars to do a thorough work. Completed in 1611, the result was a classic version of the Bible and it was superior to previous translations. It became the most widely used Bible in history, loved much for its beautiful, poetic English.
- D. We come to the reason for newer translations. In the course of nearly 500 years the English language has changed. No one speaks King James English today. Many words have changed their meanings. Beside that, during this period much study and research was done into the original language, and many manuscripts of ancient texts have been discovered. The result is a need for newer translations, and the capability to produce translations that are more accurate and faithful to the original texts. The Bible is the "Living Word". **It cannot be encapsulated in any language and time.** It is God speaking to every man in his own tongue.
- E. In our century current English has changed and evolved so rapidly that many other versions have been made. In 1946 the New English Bible, in 1971 the New American Standard Bible, in 1978 the New International Version was published. Each one has its good points and weak points. Different people prefer one or the other depending on their own dialect of English or whether they prefer a literal translation or one that is more in the modern terminology.
- F. Besides these main versions there have been many paraphrases of the Bible such as Phillips, Goodspeed, Today's English Version and the Living Bible.

They are not as exact as the versions but are easy to read and understand. Each has its own value. We cannot say one is bad and the other good. New versions will continue to come as our language changes, to meet the needs of a changing world. However, many people are so accustomed to the King James Version that they prefer its lyrical, poetic language. One recent translation is the New King James Version which corrects some of the deficiencies of the King James while maintaining the poetic language structure.

- G. This is not the end of the road. There are thousands of languages in the world. Each people group needs the Word of God in its own language and dialect. Over the past 150 years missionaries have translated the Bible into many dialects but there are nearly two thousand yet to be done. Bible Societies and Wycliffe Translators have devoted themselves to this task.
- X. What are some of the best known or most popular translations? Dates and brief history.
- A. King James Version - 1611. It was the culmination of earlier translations and revisions, and became the third 'authorized' English Bible. There was a revised version (1881-85)
  - B. The American Standard Version - 1901. An American edition of the Revised Version of 1885, including preferred readings and format changes, by a group of American scholars under the direction of William H. Green of Princeton Seminary.
  - C. The Amplified Bible - 1965. New Testament (1958); Old Testament (1962-64). An attempt to add clarifying of meaning to the single-word English equivalents of key Hebrew and Greek words.
  - D. The New International Version - 1978. New Testament (1973); Complete Bible (1978). New translation from Greek and Hebrew by an international team of conservative scholars.
- XI. What is the difference between a translation and a paraphrase?
- A. A translation is from one language to another. Example: New International Version
  - B. A paraphrase is from same language to same language, saying it differently. Example: The Living Bible

XII. What use should we make of the Bible?

A. We should search the scriptures diligently and reverently. We should listen while they are being read, for God has magnified them above His great Name. We should believe them and make them our guide to daily living. We must know them, for in the scriptures God is speaking to man. Psalm 138:2

1. The scriptures tell us about Jesus. (Jn 5:39)

*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, (John 5:39 NIV)*

2. We are blessed when we obey the Bible. (Luke 11:28; Jeremiah 15:16)

*He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:28 NIV)*

*When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty. (Jer 15:16 NIV)*

3. When we obey the Bible, we prove our love for Jesus. (John 8:31-32, 14:23)

*31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32 NIV)*

*Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:23 NIV)*

XIII. How to use the Bible

A. Develop the habit of Bible reading

1. Just do it!
2. Takes 21 days to break a habit/or to develop it.
3. Find something that works for you

- Through the Bible in a Year
- A chapter a day
- Old and New Testament and a Psalm

4. A time and place

B. How to read

1. With an open mind....and heart
2. Thoughtfully
3. Keep a pencil, highlighter handy

- make notes
- cross-reference
- make note of special times, etc.

C. Learn the names and locations of the Bible books

D. Memorization and meditation (Psa 1:1-2; 119:15, 48; Josh 1:8; Psa 19:14)

*1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalms 1:1-3 NIV)*

*I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. (Psa 119:15 NIV)*

*I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees. (Psalms 119:48 NIV)*

*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:8 NIV)*

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalms 19:14 NIV)*

#### XIV. Understanding the Bible for ourselves

- A. Read, study, fellowship with the Lord and believers, teachers
- B. Basic principles of interpretation:
  - 1. Understand word meanings; Use dictionaries Bible and regular.
  - 2. Understand some of the time and place, figures of speech, what was common at that time -- how it would be expressed today.
  - 3. What is the context?
    - a. Verse within several verses.
    - b. A text outside its context is a pretext.
  - 4. Progress of revelation; Old Testament and New Testament.
  - 5. Recognize the important sections of the Bible when interpreting it. The most basic is the difference between the Old and New Testaments. But there are also different kinds of writings - historical, poetic, prophetic - that must be recognized as different if they are to be interpreted correctly. Other landmarks in the Bible that affect proper interpretation are things like the great covenant made with Abraham and the one with David, the mystery of the church as the Body of Christ, and the difference between law and grace.