

What Do You Believe About the Bible?

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[0 : 00] This is our final week in our study on the doctrine of the Word. We've covered much ground in this study together.

We've looked at the different attributes of Scripture. We've studied out different passages and what they particularly teach us about the doctrine of the Word. We've looked at our Lord, and we've seen what He believed and what He taught about the Word.

And we've been reminded that we should hold the same convictions as Him. And all of this was with the goal that as we understand the Word and the doctrine of the Word better and better, our affections for it would be stirred up, and even more so than our affections for the Lord would be strengthened.

We saw that in Psalm 119 at the very beginning of our study, seven weeks ago. We looked at that psalm, and we saw the psalmist overflowing with love and affection and joy and delight in the Word, and the giver of that Word.

So all of this that we've looked at and we've considered together has been guided by Kevin DeYoung's book, *Taking God at His Word*. And so we're going to end our study this morning where DeYoung ends his book by unpacking perhaps the most significant verse in all of Scripture on the doctrine of the Word.

[1 : 21] So if someone were to ask you, what do you believe about the Bible? What would you say? You probably wouldn't sit them down for eight Sunday school lessons and then run them through everything that we've covered.

You probably wouldn't have that kind of time or focus with that person. So what would you say in short form? What's a concise yet clear answer that we could give someone?

What do you believe about the Bible? Well, what better answer than to simply quote a verse from the Bible itself? And if there was just one verse that we could go to, 2 Timothy 3.16 is a great verse to choose.

It reads, That is clear.

That is concise. There is so much that we could say in answer to the question, what do you believe about the Bible? This verse captures much of what we could say.

[2 : 28] Here's a verse that we can answer that question with. So this verse is good for answering questions like that for others. This verse is also good for reassuring our own hearts.

It's good for us. It gives us good reason to continue believing the Bible, to stick close to the Scriptures, to hold fast to the Scriptures.

Good reasons are provided for us in that verse, and really in the whole passage of 2 Timothy 3 and the surrounding verses. So we're going to read in 2 Timothy 3.

If you want to open your copy of the Scriptures there, we're going to read, beginning in verse 10, we're going to read this whole section with the focus of it being verses 14 to 17.

So 2 Timothy 3, and we're going to start reading in verse 10 for a little bit of context. This is the Word of the Lord.

[3 : 34] You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured, yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which

are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

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. So Paul begins here in verse 10 with a contrast. He begins with this description of those who oppose the Lord and His Word.

[4 : 48] We see that in those verses just following in verse 10. We see that they are those who persecute Christians. We see that they are evil people. They are imposters. They are described as those who deceive and are being deceived.

So he's probably thinking of people who once professed faith, people who claimed Christ and then turned away from the faith. They made shipwreck of their faith, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, two people that Paul had mentioned in his previous letter to Timothy.

And then again in 2 Timothy, Paul says that Alexander did great harm to him. Another man, Demas, Paul says that he was in love with this present world and deserted him.

The list could go on of those who had failed to continue in the faith, of those who had failed to stick with the Word and now had become imposters, those who were seeking to deceive others, to lead them too away from the faith.

That's who Paul is thinking of in those first few verses. Then we get to verse 14 and there's a shift. Verse 14 begins with the words, But as for you, Paul wants Timothy to persevere in the faith.

[6 : 08] He wants him to endure. He wants him to press on. And so what's his exhortation to Timothy? Stick with the Scriptures. Stick with the Scriptures. Continue in what you've learned and have firmly believed.

Verse 15 says, You've been acquainted with the sacred writings from childhood. So Paul is saying, Keep coming back to them. Keep holding fast to that Word that you have known.

That's Paul's charge to Timothy. It's a fitting charge to us as well. We too should stick with the Scriptures and continue in what we've learned and what we've believed.

And we have good reasons to do this. 2 Timothy 3, 14-17 gives us good answers to the question, Why stick to the Scriptures? Why should we do that?

In Kevin DeYoung's book, he gives us four reasons. And so we're going to look at those four reasons. Three of them I consider kind of as review. So the first three, we're going to go a little bit quicker through.

[7 : 10] And then we're going to really camp on the fourth reason. So don't begin to think, if we're going one, two, three, and we're like 15 minutes in, you're wondering, What's going on here? How long will this be? Don't you worry. The fourth one we will cover extensively.

So let's look at the first reason together that we should stick with the Scriptures. And that reason is Scripture's ability. Scripture's ability. In the second half of verse 15, Paul speaks of the Scriptures as able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

This is hitting on both the necessity, of Scripture, and the sufficiency of Scripture. The Word of God is able to accomplish all that we need for life and godliness.

And only the Word is able to accomplish what we need for life and godliness. It's in our Bibles that God gives us sufficient knowledge in order to be saved, to be brought back into a right relationship with Him.

It's here that we learn of Christ Jesus and His death on the cross for our sins, His victory over death in His resurrection. It's here that we learn that we must repent and believe as we saw just from the Gospel according to Mark last week.

[8 : 27] The Scriptures teach us all of this. And the Scriptures alone teach us that. DeYoung says, Nothing else in all the world has this ability.

The word of the president is important. The word of your parents is to be honored. The word of your spouse is to be treasured. But only the Word of God can save.

So we stick with the Scriptures because the Scriptures alone have the ability to make us wise unto salvation. That's the first reason. Scripture's ability. Let's consider the second reason.

Scripture's originality. Reason number two. Scripture's originality. Now when DeYoung uses that word originality in his book, he isn't talking about necessarily the creativeness or the artistry of Scripture as though it's beautiful and artistic and creative.

Though it is beautiful and artistic and creative, he's talking about the origin of Scripture, its source. Look at verse 16. All Scripture is breathed out by God.

[9 : 36] So this verse is emphasizing the inspiration of Scripture. So right here, just in these few verses, we've already hit on three major attributes of the doctrine of the Word. Necessity, sufficiency, inspiration.

The Scriptures find their origin in God Himself, not in its human authors. Now they were indeed carried along by the Spirit to write just as God intended for them to write.

But we need to speak with precision here. The Scriptures were breathed out by God, not breathed into by God. It's not as though the authors of Scripture set down their words and then God came along and said, you know what?

I'm going to breathe into this and make this inspired Scripture. That's not how He did it. He breathed out His Word. He carried along the writers of Scripture. B.B. Warfield, I've referenced a few times in our study.

He wrote a very significant work called *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. And in this book he says this, The biblical writers do not conceive of the Scriptures as a human product breathed into by the divine Spirit and thus heightened in its qualities or endowed with new qualities, but as a divine product produced through the instrumentality of men.

[10 : 59] And then the last point that we need to make note of in this phrase is that Paul says all. He says all Scripture is breathed out by God.

Not just portions of it. Not just the red-letter words of Jesus. Just so that we're all clear on this, if you have a Bible with red letters, those words spoken by our Lord are absolutely the Word of God.

But so is every other word in your Bible. The red letters aren't to be elevated over other passages of Scripture, nor are they to be diminished below other passages of Scripture.

They are all breathed out by God. There's no Scripture that is more authoritative. There's no Scripture that is more true or more free of error or more divinely inspired.

All is divinely inspired by God. So that's the second reason that we ought to stick with the Scriptures. Let's look at the third reason together. And that is to consider Scripture's practicality.

[12 : 03] Consider Scripture's practicality. And we see that as we continue in verse 16 and 17. I'll read all of that. 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 with every good work.

So Scripture is profitable. It accomplishes good in us. And all of those good things that Scripture does, teaching us the truth, convicting us of sin, correcting us of error, and molding and shapening us, that we might be more righteous.

All of those things have this end result. They make us complete. They make us mature. So as we're in the Word of God, we ought to be then growing in grace.

So if we're not in the Word and we're feeling stagnant in our Christian life, we shouldn't be surprised. You've cut off your source for growth in godliness, and that's going to impact you at the most basic levels of your life.

I love how de Young says this. We need the Bible if we are to be competent Christians. The Bible will build us up so that we can endure suffering. It will give us discernment for difficult choices.

[13 : 31] It will make us strong enough to be patient with others and patient enough to respond with kindness when others hurt us. The Bible will get us up to bring meals to new moms and pray for people on their hospital beds.

The Bible equips us to be truth lovers and truth tellers. It sends us out to care for the poor and welcome the stranger. There is no limit to what the Bible can do for us, to us, and through us. We can never outgrow the Bible because it always means to make us grow. The Bible is only impractical for the immature and only irrelevant for the fools who believe that most everything is new under the sun.

So we stick with the Scriptures because of their ability, because of their originality, and because of their practicality. Now let's look at the fourth and the final reason where we're going to spend the majority of our time together this morning.

We stick to the Scriptures as we consider our history. We stick to the Scriptures as we consider our history. So we skipped over a phrase that we've got to come back to.

[14 : 40] Jump back to verse 14. Look at verse 14, and Paul says to Timothy in that verse, But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.

So for Timothy, there were at least three people that we can mention here who greatly influenced him in his Christian life. Look back at chapter 1, verse 5.

I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.

So for Timothy, right off the bat here, we see the family ties. We see that his grandmother, we see that his mother, they were Christians, they knew the Word, they studied the Word, and they passed along the truth of the Word to Timothy.

From childhood, Paul says, he was acquainted with the Scriptures. So for some of us this morning, that story is our story. We grew up in homes where the Scriptures were read and taught and promoted.

[15:55] We grew up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, as Ephesians 6 says. Our parents weren't perfect, but they loved us, they pointed us to Christ, and they lived out their faith before our eyes.

We learned from them, from their instruction. We learned from them in their example. Most of us didn't have parents who were pastors or trained theologians or in the world of academia.

They were faithful Christians who walked with the Lord, and that counts for something. More and more, our society is ruled by the expert mentality.

Unless someone can claim the title of being an expert, well, that person then doesn't have a voice. You don't have a degree. You're not an expert. You don't have a degree from a prestigious institution.

You're not an expert. You don't have a following on social media. You're not an expert. You don't know Greek or Hebrew. You're not an expert. And if you aren't an expert, you're not all that worthy of being listened to.

[17:03] So goes that line of reasoning. I doubt that Lois and Eunice fit the bill of that kind of expert. I doubt that they were learned individuals according to the world's standards.

words. But God is pleased to use such people in his kingdom. Remember the words of 1 Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 16. For consider your calling, brothers.

Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world. Even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are.

So God used ordinary, common men whom the world took no notice of to literally turn the world upside down. And he continues to use those kinds of people today.

[18:08] Timothy's mother. Timothy's grandmother. They learned the scriptures. They knew the scriptures. And they taught the scriptures to Timothy. For many of us, we were taught the scriptures by people like Lois and Eunice.

Not learned in the world's eyes, but ones who learned the word and lived the word. They didn't have the wisdom of this age, but it's not the wisdom of this age that we needed.

They passed on the wisdom of God that's found in his word and that wisdom, it far surpasses the wisdom of this age. We could have received no greater wisdom than the wisdom that is found in the word that's given to many of us by believing parents and grandparents.

For that, I am so abundantly thankful. So we stick with the scriptures because like Timothy, our believing family members, they shared those truths from scripture with us.

And the rationale for believing them is rather simple and I find very refreshing. So they weren't experts in the world's eyes, but we knew that they loved us.

[19:18] We knew that they had our good at heart. We knew that they believed the scriptures. They submitted to those scriptures and for all of those reasons, by God's grace, we trusted them.

We trusted them and we still do. Kevin DeYoung told this story in his book. I remember on a conference panel, someone asking John Piper, why did you conclude inerrancy is true?

The first thing out of his mouth surprised everyone, because my mama told me it's true. Yet that wasn't a throwaway line or a glib remark crafted for effect. Piper was capturing something deeply true in many of our lives and deeply biblical.

It's not necessarily a sign of growth to move past the faith of your childhood and not necessarily a weakness to believe the same thing throughout your whole life. The world is filled with skeptics.

Highly educated, knowledgeable skeptics who write books, post articles, talk on panels at conferences. But I'm going to stick with scriptures. In part, because my mother and my father taught me the word.

[20 : 28] And I know they love me. I know they have my good at heart. I trust them. Now can those who are sincere in their love for us, those who are sincere in what they believe be wrong?

Of course they can. But the point here is simply this. We should be slow to throw off the faith of our parents and our grandparents simply because they don't have that label of being an expert. They are much more qualified to have our listening ear than the world may think them to be because the standards by which they are qualified are completely different than the standards of the world.

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? And does not our faith rest in the power of God rather than the wisdom of man? Now most of us aren't in some kind of crisis of conviction.

Most of us aren't in the throes of doubt and uncertainty. But perhaps some of us today are. Some of us might be doubting the scriptures in a very strong way. Some of us might be questioning our salvation and maybe especially feeling that pull and persuasion of the world.

[21 : 42] To those of us in that position DeYoung says this. Before you leave behind what you used to believe about the Bible consider who taught you to believe what you used to believe about the Bible.

Now not all of us were taught the Bible by believing parents or believing family members. Some of us have no believing family members but most all of us have someone that we can point to who did introduce us to the Lord.

Someone that we can point to who opened the word to us and taught us the word. Even Timothy had others in his life outside of his family who discipled him.

when Paul says in verse 14 knowing from whom you learned it he probably had himself in mind. He calls Timothy in the opening of this letter my beloved child.

In fact in four different places in Paul's writings he describes Timothy in some fashion in this way. So Paul writes to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 4.17 and he says that he had sent Timothy to them and then he calls Timothy my beloved and faithful child in the Lord.

[23 : 02] So clearly Paul had heavily invested in Timothy. And then he tells us or Acts tells us that Timothy joined Paul on Paul's second missionary journey and he ministered alongside Paul.

He learned from Paul and Paul says that he was very useful to him. So when Paul writes to Timothy and he encourages him to remember his personal history Paul was a part of that personal history. I mean what did he say back in verse 10? You however have followed my teaching my conduct my aim in life my faith my patience my love my steadfastness.

You see Paul's investment in Timothy. Many of you have been members of Grace Fellowship Church for many many years and I've only been here a very short time but I have heard certain names spoken of often since I've been here.

Just a couple that jump out Pastor Bob and Letty. How many of us who knew them who have been here long enough to have known them how many of us have said something to the effect of the Lord used them in my life.

[24 : 18] Pastor Bob preached faithfully to you. Pastor Bob and Letty encouraged you. They pointed you to the scriptures. They reminded you of our Lord and Savior. They showed you Christ.

We rejoice that the Lord gives us people like that in our lives. Remember their aim in life.

Remember their love and continue in the scriptures. So we should consider our personal history. history. We should also consider on kind of a macro level church history. We should consider church history. We should remember whose shoulders we stand on.

Not just in our personal lives as important and good as that is but also in all of church history.

Remember the rich old heritage of your faith.

So this is one of the reasons that we've brought the 1689 our confession of faith into this study. One of the reasons that we do that is so that we can remember we don't just want to know what's being taught and believed about the Bible today.

[25 : 23] We want to know what was taught, what was believed about the Bible in church history. What was taught and believed a little over 350 years ago or so? I'm not very good at math.

Was it 350 years? So that should have a place of influence for us. We shouldn't be so foolish and short-sighted to ignore church history. Now you know this, but I think it's still worth saying, we are

not believing some new, trendy set of ideas.

This isn't a new philosophy or religion that has come out. We are continuing in a great history of Christian faith. This is one of many reasons why we should study church history, to know what others believed before us and then to check our own beliefs against what they were saying.

So if the church for centuries has held to certain points of doctrine and say in the last 100 years the church now is deviating from that doctrine, that should trouble us.

That should be a red flag. Something is amiss. We've changed what we've believed for centuries and now we're believing something else. So what has the church down through the ages believed about the scriptures?

[26 : 36] What has been the church's position on the doctrine of the word? Is this teaching that the word is inspired? That it's without error? That it's enough? That it's necessary?

That it's clear? And that it's authoritative? Is this teaching new? Well let's have a listen to what those who have gone before us have to say. And let's start with our confession.

We've seen this already in our study as we've looked at the confession but just to be abundantly clear the writers of the confession had an incredibly high view of the scriptures.

scriptures. It's why we start chapter one with the holy scriptures. And you hear that? The holy scriptures. So what did they say? Listen to the last paragraph of chapter one in the confession. All religious controversies are to be settled by scripture and by scripture alone. All decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, and doctrines of men collectively or individually are similarly to be accepted or rejected according to the verdict of the scripture given to us by the Holy Spirit.

[27 : 43] In that verdict, faith finds its final rest. So the scriptures are our highest authority. We measure everything else that we come to believe against what the scriptures teach us.

In other words, stay very close to them. Don't set them aside. Don't think them less than essential to your Christian life. So was the confession alone in this position on the doctrine of the word?

Does the rest of church history then deviate from that position? No, it doesn't. And in fact, what we see should give us even more confidence and conviction. We see all through church history this great unity, this general consensus on the doctrine of the word.

So I want us to see in kind of four different areas of church history, what the church was believing.

So I'm going to quote from the early church, and then we're going to look at the medieval church, the Reformation, and finally kind of more the modern period.

And much of these quotes I got from a really helpful good book that I would encourage you to called Historical Theology by Greg Allison. It's not a book you just sit down and read in one sitting.

[28 : 58] It's about this thick. But it is filled with reminders of what the church has believed, and it is filled with reminders to us of what pure doctrine has been and that we must maintain that, that we should not deviate from that.

So let's look at some of the things that the church has said through history. Justin Martyr, he was an apologist, and just as his name says, he was martyred in 165 AD, so early in church history.

And he wrote in kind of figurative language about the doctrine of the word. He wrote of the writers of scripture being like stringed instruments. And then he talked about the Holy Spirit being like a musician.

So this is what he said. He spoke of, quote, Augustine is very well known.

And he addressed a common problem in his day. And that problem was when people would bring up the point that Jesus himself never actually wrote scripture. We don't have his written words in the Bible that he himself penned.

[30 : 19] People would say that seems problematic. Your own Lord and Savior, he didn't actually write a book of the Bible for you. Is your Bible so trustworthy and wonderful? And this is what Augustine would do.

He would make the argument that Christ as head of his body used his disciples, quote, as if they were his own hands, end quote, in writing the scriptures.

Irenaeus was an early church leader who was theologically trained under Polycarp. And Polycarp was trained under the apostle John. So this is someone very, very close to the life and ministry of Jesus himself.

And he argued that one's theological position could be proven, quote, from the very words of scripture, end quote. He was just saying, I'm going to go to my Bible and I'm going to open up my Bible and I will show you what it says about whatever it is that you've run into.

So this was a high view of scripture that was held in the early church. But even in the Middle Ages, when there was a lot of spiritual darkness, there were those who continued to teach and to preach this robust doctrine of the word.

[31 : 32] John Scotus Eriugena, I think I said that right, he was a theologian at that time and I would not hold to all that he actually taught. I would not hold to all that he believed.

But I love this prayer of his. O Lord Jesus, no other reward, no other blessedness, no other joy do I ask than a pure understanding free of mistakes of your words which were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Nowhere else are you sought more effectively than in your words. You're probably familiar with Thomas Aquinas. He said it really simply. The author of Holy Scripture is God.

There it is. Or how about the clarity of Scripture? Rabanus Maros wrote this, To be sure, sacred Scripture is written on our account.

Indeed, many things in it are so open that they provide nourishment to little ones. Certain things have more veiled sentences. Sentences such as to put the stout-hearted through their paces in which are more gratifying insofar as it takes more work to understand them.

[32 : 45] Some things in Scripture moreover are so closed and impenetrable that while we do not understand them owing to our weakness and blindness, we find them to be a more profit to our sense of humility than to our understanding.

So he understood the clarity of Scripture. Jump forward in history to the Reformation. I'll just quote one reformer, John Calvin. He said this, And then finally we jump to the modern age.

And we have an example of Charles Hodge. He was a theologian. He was a principal of Princeton Theological Seminary before Princeton became what it is today, back when it was producing men of high conviction concerning the word.

And he would often say that a new idea never originated at Princeton. And by that he simply meant that every point of doctrine taught ought to find its grounding in the ancient truths of the Bible.

So all through church history this conviction is firmly upheld. The Bible is no ordinary book written by ordinary men. Christian. And so to this point DeYoung says, until fairly recently Christians of every tradition have assumed the complete trustworthiness and comprehensive truthfulness of Scripture.

[34 : 15] Holding to the highest view of inspiration as originated from God himself was not the invention of any tradition, theologian, or school. It was simply part of what it meant to be a Christian.

So we've been given good reason to continue looking to the Word to live the Christian life. We are simply believing what Christians have always believed about the Bible.

We're believing the same things as those Christians who personally shared the truth of Scripture with us in our own lives. And we're believing the same things of those Christians who went before them.

So remember church history. Remember your personal history and then stick with the Scriptures.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for how you have guided us in this study on the doctrine of the Word, how you have shown us in your Word abundant evidence that we should hold to the Scriptures, that we should believe everything that the Bible teaches us about what you have said.

We thank you that you've given us your Word, what a privilege it is to have it. We pray, Lord, that you would stir up our love for your Word like the psalmist, that we would believe all that your Word says about itself, that we would live in accordance with all that your Word teaches.

[35 : 44] Help us to that end, we pray. Help us to not just be hearers of the Word, but doers of it, that our doctrine of the Word would impact the way that we live the Christian life.

We pray that your Spirit would be at work in us, that your Spirit would produce the growth, that your Spirit would produce the change, that your Spirit would grow us to be more and more looking like the image of your Son, Jesus Christ.

And it's in his name that we pray. Amen. Amen. We are dismissed.