

# Scripture Is God-Breathed

Text: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

By Pastor Trent Boedicker

I've been reading a lot of children's books lately. We have a first, second, and third grader in school and reading is a big part of their homework. Every week Jordan brings home a book of short stories, written by different authors, and he has to read it to us and then take a quiz on it the next day. This week's story was about a family of ducks. The youngest was a little smaller than the others. It took her a little longer than her siblings to swim. But over time she grew big and strong and flew higher and further than the rest of them. Of course every page was illustrated and there was a nice lesson for the kids. At the end, there was a little section about the author. Apparently the man who wrote this particular story is from England, and he said the idea for the story came to him one day when he was jogging through the park and noticed a family of ducks swimming in the pond. It's interesting to hear about the process that was involved in writing a book. I can imagine authors get their inspiration from many different sources.

That gets us thinking about the background of the Bible. Where did it come from? Who is the author, or authors, of Scripture? What moved them to write these words? These are important questions because we're not talking about a children's book, we are dealing with sacred Scripture that addresses the deepest spiritual concerns of our existence. It speaks to us about our purpose and points us to God. It wrestles with matters of life and death and eternity. The Bible introduces us to Jesus and shows us what it means to be saved. There are serious concerns. It doesn't really matter, in the grand scheme of things, who wrote "The Little Ducks in the Pond" or where he got the idea. But it matters a great deal who wrote the Bible and where they got their ideas, because we need to know that these words are faithful and true.

If you want to know whether a book or an article is reliable, you ask "who wrote it and where did they get their information?" Maybe you read an article on the internet that sounds good but you come to find out that their sources were shaky, which makes the whole story difficult to believe. On the other hand, you might check it out and discover that their sources are solid, they really know what they're talking about, and so you have good reason to trust the message that is presented. The same is true of the Bible. When you find yourself wondering whether or not its message is reliable, all you need to do is consider the source. Who wrote it, and where did they get their information? If the God is the source, and the author, then we can place our complete confidence in everything that Scripture teaches us.

This is what sets the Bible apart from any other book that has ever been written. It isn't simply the words of men, it is the Word of God written for us. When we talk about the authorship of the Bible, there are really two sides of the equation. There is the human side. The Bible was written by at least 40 different authors who came from various backgrounds and walks of life. There were shepherds, kings, farmers, generals, rabbis, tax collectors, medical doctors, fisherman, and more. They lived in many different locations all the way from Egypt to Israel to Babylon and all throughout the Mediterranean world. They came from different time periods, writing over a span of more than 1,500 years. And yet somehow, miraculously the books of the Bible fit together to form a unified whole.<sup>1</sup> It is not a hodgepodge of spiritual ideas with random

bits of wisdom tied together. The Bible presents a unified message about sin and redemption and the God who pursues us all the way to the cross. There is only one explanation for that. The words they wrote didn't come from their own insight or understanding. Their message came from above. That takes us to the other side of the equation, the divine element. While there many human writers involved in the process, ultimately God is the author of Scripture. The Holy Spirit guided the individual writers in such a way that what they wrote is the Word of God.

There is a theological term that describes this process: inspiration. We find it in our passage this morning. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17 the apostle Paul was encouraging his friend Timothy to remain firm in his commitment to the gospel. Timothy had grown up with a believing mother and grandmother, and they took the time to teach him the Scriptures. Later on, his life, he met the apostle Paul, who also became a mentor to him and explained the good news of Jesus Christ. Now Timothy had become a pastor, serving the churches in the city of Ephesus, and he had the opportunity to teach others what it means to follow the Lord. Paul urged the young man to preach with conviction, knowing that he wasn't sharing his own ideas or opinions. He proclaimed the very Word of God.

When we study the Bible, we are not studying the ideas of spiritual leaders who lived at different times in history. We are studying the Word of God, and we believe that its message is able to change our lives.

We're going to talk about inspiration this morning. What does it mean that the Bible is inspired by God?

## **Inspiration means that God speaks through the pages of Scripture.**

Look at verse 16. *"All Scripture is inspired by God and [is] profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

This is telling us about the source or the origin of Scripture. If you spend any amount of time studying its pages, it becomes clear to you that this is no ordinary book. You hear the voice of the Lord calling out to you. Now a person might choose to harden their heart to its message, or they might close their ears to its truth. But those who are willing to listen will encounter the living God.

The verse doesn't simply tell us that the Bible is an inspiring book, although it is. It certainly does inspire us to seek the Lord to live for his glory. But the passage tells us that was given by divine inspiration. The word literally means "God breathed, which creates a powerful picture in our minds. God breathed out the words through the prophets and apostles to deliver his message to us.

I've always admired people who can play musical instruments. When I was in junior high, I tried to play the trombone in the band, but that only lasted a couple of weeks until I realized it

wasn't for me. I blew into the mouthpiece and the noise sounded like a goose that had been severely injured. But my brother Pat on the other hand is very talented. The first instrument he learned to play was the saxophone, and he got pretty good. All it takes is the breath of saxophone player, who knows what he's doing, to produce beautiful music.

And in a similar way God breathed out his word through the biblical authors to give us his Word. They were only the instrument, God is the musician giving us a beautiful message that changes our lives. Charles Baker explains it this way,

The Scripture came into being by the breath of God. Just as God breathed into man's nostrils and he became a living soul, so in like manner God breathed into the writers and brought into being His infallible Word... inspiration extends to the very words which the writers used in the original writings. This does not mean that God dictated the words, but that He so guided men to write in their own language, with their own words, and in their own style that when they had written they had said exactly what God wanted said.<sup>ii</sup>

God spoke through Moses to deliver the Law to Israel. God spoke through David to give us a sacred hymnbook leading us in worship and praise. God spoke through the prophets to call his wayward people back to him. God spoke through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to introduce us to Jesus. God spoke through the Paul to show us our need for grace. They were writing to the people of their day, addressing real life situations, but at the same time the Holy Spirit was moving them to record a timeless message that continues to speak to us today.

Now we need to be clear about what inspiration means and what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that the biblical writers were only secretaries. Most of the time God didn't say, "go grab a pen and take a memo." There wasn't usually a voice from heaven dictating what they were write. Sometimes that was the case, but not always. They were writing in their own unique style, with their personality, using their own vocabulary, but the end result is the message God wanted us to have. It doesn't mean that the biblical writers were perfect, some kind of super-saints, holier than everyone else. That wasn't the case. They were ordinary people like us. Peter denied Jesus three times, but he was forgiven, and the Lord called him to tend his sheep. Paul was a stubborn man who persecuted God's people. But when he met Christ on the road to Damascus, he couldn't wait to tell others about the grace of God. Moses begged the Lord to send someone else, insisting that he was slow of speech and slow of tongue. But God told him, "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to say." (Ex. 4:12). They are examples of how God can work through imperfect people to accomplish his purpose. It doesn't mean that the biblical writers were all-knowing. They didn't understand everything that God revealed to them. Think about the prophets, who predicted the coming of the Messiah. They certainly did not know how all the details of their prophecies would be fulfilled. I'm sure there were plenty of times when they would have liked more information, but God gave them what they needed to know in the moment. And yet, in time the words that God gave them would come to pass exactly as they had written.

Inspiration does mean that the Lord was superintending the human authors to communicate the message he gave them, and the result is God's written word: authoritative, trustworthy, free from error. **2 Peter 1:20–21** (NIV84) tells us <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no

prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> 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." It wasn't their opinions, or their own ideas, or their own thoughts about God. The Holy Spirit influenced them to deliver God's thoughts to us.

So when we read the Bible, we can come expecting God to speak to us. When the prophet Samuel heard God's voice he responded "Speak Lord, your servant is listening," and that would be an appropriate prayer for us. When you do devotions for the day understand that there is something God's wants you to learn. There is something he wants you to hear. There is something he wants you to take to heart. Don't think of the Bible as a dry and lifeless document that contains information about God. The Bible is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. Listen for God's voice.

## **Inspiration means that every part of the Bible is divine.**

Go back to our passage in 2 Timothy 3:16. The apostle tells us, "*All Scripture is inspired by God...*" He doesn't say some of the Bible, or certain sections, little soundbites here and there sprinkled throughout. It says, "all Scripture, which makes it abundantly clear that every part of the Bible is to be regarded as God's Word. From the front to the back and everything in between.... That includes the 39 books of the OT, these were the books Timothy would have studied as child growing up in a Jewish home. But God continued to speak through the apostles, as well, and the churches gathered their writings, recognizing them as having the same level of authority, so the 27 books of the NT are also included. From Genesis to Revelation, all 66 books compose the full counsel of God, and every verse is true.

That means we cannot pick and choose the passages that appeal to us and ignore everything else. – "Oh I like this chapter because it talks about God's love, but I'm not a big fan of that chapter because it tells me that I'm a sinner who deserves God's judgment, so I'll tear that part out and keep the rest." – It doesn't work that way. You cannot understand the depth of God's love unless you come to terms with the seriousness of our sin and see the lengths that Christ went through to redeem us. – "Oh I like this book because it is full of encouragement, but I don't particularly care for that book because it's convicting." – We can't do that, because we need both encouragement and conviction if we're going to grow in our walk with God.

It's okay to have a favorite, but it's not okay to pick and choose what we're going to listen to. It is all from God. So many people today try to do that. They quote a verse from the Bible when it is convenient but try to explain away verses that are difficult to hear. But the whole Bible is God-breathed, and so to ignore any part of it is to ignore the voice of the Lord.

Now we have to understand each passage in its context. We don't bring animal sacrifices anymore, the way Israel was commanded to do under the Law, because Christ has fulfilled those sacrifices through his death on the cross. But that doesn't mean those verses are somehow less true than other verses. Those chapters help us understand the nature of Christ's sacrifice, and why it was necessary, so we continue to study them. All Scripture is inspired by God.

Many Bibles today are printed with red letters in the NT. It is meant to be helpful tool in for Bible study, highlighting the words were spoken by Jesus during his earthly ministry. It can help us keep track of who is speaking, in the midst of a conversation, but it can also be somewhat misleading. We might get the wrong idea that red letters are somehow more significant... or more powerful... or more relevant than other verses, and that's not the case. In some verses the Lord may be speaking to us directly, in other verses he may be speaking through the prophets or apostles, but it is all God's Word.

It is helpful for us to look at how Jesus handled the Bible during his earthly ministry. We certainly don't want to take a lower view of Scripture than Jesus, so what kind of attitude he have towards the OT?

**Jesus considered the whole of the Bible as inspired.** - After the resurrection, the disciples were having a difficult time understanding why things had to happen the way that they did. And so in Luke 24:44-45 Jesus explained that everything that was written about him in the OT had to be fulfilled, including his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. He said... *"These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." (Luke 24:44-45 NASB95)

That phrase, "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms," was a common way of referring to the entire Old Testament. These were the three major divisions of the Jewish Scriptures. He was telling them everything in the Bible must be fulfilled because it is the Word of God. In another passage, John 10:35 he says: *"the Scripture cannot be broken."* When he makes a statement like this, he is affirming the authority of the entire Bible.

**Jesus also considered the parts of the Bible as inspired.** He often quoted individual verses to make his point. When the Pharisees would argue with him over some particular issue he always pointed them back to Scripture saying, "haven't you read...?" And he would go on to quote a passage from Deuteronomy or Genesis or Isaiah. When Satan tempted him in the wilderness, Jesus responded to each temptation by quoting Scripture. He was hungry, and so the devil suggested that Jesus should use his power to turn a stone into bread. But Jesus answered, *"It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"* (Matthew 4:4 NASB95). And so not Jesus valued the individual books of the Bible and individual passages of Scripture as well as the whole.

**Jesus also considered the words of the Bible as inspired.** In Matthew 22, he found himself in a debate with the Sadducees, another group of religious leaders. Some of them were trying to trip him up with questions he couldn't answer, but of course they were unsuccessful. The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection, so in **Matthew 22:31-32** Jesus told them, *"But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: <sup>32</sup> 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."* Matthew 22:31-32 (NASB95) Did you catch what he did there? His entire argument rests on a single word: I **am**... present tense... not I was the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob long ago when they were still living and wandered the earth. But I am their God still today. If there is no resurrection and these men had vanished

from existence why would the Lord speak in the present tense when describing his relationship with them? I am their God, which means even though they have died they still live. One word, that was all it took for Jesus to silence the Sadducees. Jesus regarded every word of Scripture as authoritative.

**Jesus also considered the words of the NT as inspired**, even though it hadn't been written, while he walked the earth. Before his death he told the disciples, "*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you,*" (John 14:26 NIV84). He was telling them they wouldn't need to worry about remembering everything he had taught them during the three years they spent at his side following him through the towns and villages of Israel. The Holy Spirit would help them remember and would give them the right words as they proclaimed the good news.

I. One author tells us,

An obvious conclusion is that Jesus Christ held a very high view of Scripture, affirming its inspiration in the entire Old Testament—the various books of the Old Testament, the precise words, the actual letters—and He pointed to the inspiration of the New Testament. Surely those who hold to [some other view] need to reconsider the attitude of Jesus to the Scriptures. Ought His view of the Bible not to be the standard? Is it legitimate to hold a *lower* view of Scripture than He held?<sup>iii</sup>

Imagine if someone were to hand you a stack of \$100 bills. That would nice wouldn't it? Here you go, it is yours. There's just one tiny detail that you should probably know. Some of those bills are genuine, authentic US currency. But there are also several counterfeit bills mixed in with the rest of them. Um, wait a minute, all of the sudden I'm not sure I want to accept this. How am I supposed to tell the difference between what is genuine and what isn't? You're going to get me in trouble. I don't know what to do with this.

And so if someone tells you that the Bible contains some truth, but there also a lot of errors mixed in, that's a problem. How could you tell the difference? How would you know what parts to trust and what parts to ignore? Why would God give us such a book? He is the God of truth, not a God of lies. The Bible doesn't merely contain the Word of God, it is the Word of God. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

## **Inspiration means that the Bible is powerful.**

It has the power change our lives if we allow its message to permeate our hearts. Look at our passage in 2 Timothy 3:16. "*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*"

There are so many times when I've been doing devotions and it has felt as if the passage were speaking directly to me and the situation is was going through. Maybe I needed encouragement, and it said exactly what I needed to hear to lift my spirit. Or maybe I needed to be challenged in some way, and the passage tugged at my heart. Or maybe I needed to be corrected in my

thinking, and the verse I happened to be reading brought clarity to the issue. God's Word has a way of ministering to us exactly where we are.

Paul tells us that it is beneficial to show us truth, to expose our sin, to correct our mistakes, and to train us to live for the Lord. As we spend time with God listening to his voice, he equips us to serve him and others each day.

Maybe you have read powerful books that have left an impact on your life, in one way or another. But there is no book as powerful as Scripture.

## **Conclusion –**

This morning we've seen that the Bible is a unique book, unlike any that has ever been written. It's not just another religious text, like so many others: the Koran or the writings of Buddha, or the latest bestseller from Oprah. What makes the Bible special is source. It comes to us from God. Yes, there were human authors who penned these words, people like: Moses, Solomon, Peter, and Paul. But they would be the first to tell us that they couldn't take credit for the pages they wrote. The Holy Spirit was guiding their hand, moving their heart, giving them the words, so that the words they wrote are the very words of God. Ultimately, he is the author and we can trust him.

We should study the Scriptures and listen for God's voice. Approach him with a receptive heart praying, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

And we should make the Bible the authority for our lives. Allow its message to challenge your thoughts and ideas and shape the way that you view the world.

It may have been written thousands of years ago, but its truth is still just as relevant and applicable to our lives today as it ever was.

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<sup>i</sup> Enns, P. P. (1989). *The Moody handbook of theology* (p. 164). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

<sup>ii</sup> (A Dispensational Theology, p.45, 49)

<sup>iii</sup> Enns