

Further Reading:

The following resources are primarily from Energion Publications, with a few added to cover the range of Christian views on biblical inspiration.

Cornwall, Robert D. *The Authority of Scripture in a Postmodern Age: Some Help from Karl Barth*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2014. This Topical Line Drives book offers a brief look at how the theology of Karl Barth can help us take the Bible seriously without getting tangled in verbal issues.

Fee, Gordon. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*: Fourth Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. An evangelical standard on reading and understanding the Bible.

Hamilton, Adam. *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2016. A progressive standard on understanding the Bible.

Hudgins, Thomas W. *Those Footnotes in Your New Testament: A Textual Criticism Primer for Everyone*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2017. What does it mean when your Bible has a note in it something like “other ancient authorities read?” Can you still trust your Bible?

Hushbeck, Jr., Elgin L. *Evidence for the Bible*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2005. From an evangelical perspective, this book provides evidence and arguments in favor of the fundamental reliability of the Bible.

Kindle, Steve. *I'm Right and You're Wrong: Why We Disagree about the Bible and What to Do about It*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications,

2015. Why do we come up with such wildly different interpretations of scriptural passages? This book looks at what makes us understand scripture differently and how we can deal with these differences constructively.

Lentz, Geoffrey and Henry E. Neufeld. *Learning and Living Scripture: A Guide to the Participatory Bible Study Method*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2010. This introduction to Bible study emphasizes our participation in and extension of the story of the Bible, of God's interaction with people.

Neufeld, Henry. *When People Speak for God*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2008. How can we hear God speak through scripture, history, science, and even the voices of people around us without being manipulated?

Thompson, Alden. *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*. 2nd Revised Edition. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2016. How can we honestly look at the Bible text in its human aspects without losing touch with the divine?

Vick, Edward W. H. *From Inspiration to Understanding: Reading the Bible Seriously and Faithfully*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2011. This is an advanced study that encompasses most of the material and discusses advanced questions of the theology of inspiration and hermeneutics.

Other FastTracts:

- » What Is Biblical Criticism?
- » Seven Barriers to Hearing the Word
- » What Is the Word of God?

This Pamphlet Provided

Courtesy of:

Place your church address here.

Energion Publications
P. O. Box 841
Gonzalez, FL 32560

Phone: (850) 525-3916
Web: <http://energion.com>
E-Mail: pubs@energion.com

You may freely copy and print this tract provided that the content is not altered. Please contact Energion Publications for permission to use the text in any other form.

All scripture quotations taken from the Contemporary English Version, Copyright © 1995 American Bible Society, unless otherwise marked.

Copyright © 1998, 2017 Henry E. Neufeld

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

What God has said isn't only alive and active! It is sharper than any double-edged sword.

— Hebrews 4:12



Energion Publications
ΣFastTracts
a gateway to spiritual growth

What is the authority of scripture in the life of a Christian?

Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live. The Scriptures train God's servants to do all kinds of good deeds. — 2 Timothy 3:16, 17

The key word in this passage is “useful.” Scripture should be a present guide to life and should be useful in our daily lives and in the life of the church.

There are a number of ways in which the Scriptures can be useful, and a variety of ways of thinking about **how** scripture is inspired, but all will lead to a way in which the Scriptures can be useful as individual believers and communities seek to determine what God's will is for them.

The Law of the Lord is a lamp, and its teachings shine brightly. — Proverbs 6:23

How can I test the Scriptures to determine if they are true?

We test the Scriptures by placing our trust in God and seeing what He will do for us through Jesus Christ. “Discover for yourself that the LORD is kind. Come to him for protection, and you will be glad” (Psalm 34:8). “But if we live in the light, as God does, we share in life with each other. And the blood of his Son Jesus washes all our sins away” (1 John 1:7).

We place our trust in God, His Word and His promises, not in a book. God will fulfill those promises and validate His word in our lives.

Our LORD, you are true to your promises, and your word is like silver heated seven times in a

All scripture is useful. — 2 Timothy 3:16

fiery furnace. — Psalm 12:6

What should I do when people tell me there are errors and contradictions in the Bible? Doesn't this make the Bible untrue?

Suppose you are using a hammer successfully to pound in a nail and someone comes by and starts pointing out the flaws in the hammer. They tell you it doesn't look very good, and perhaps it isn't too efficient. If it is accomplishing the task for which you bought it, what will you do? You'll keep on using it, of course!

Though the Bible contains much history, we don't read it because we are curious about the historical details it contains. We read it to receive a message from God. If the Bible sheds light on our paths, then it is doing what it is supposed to do. Many people study and debate about errors and contradictions in the Bible. It takes considerable knowledge to enter that debate—knowledge of history, of languages, of interpretation, and of science. But there is one test we can perform, no matter what skill we have. We can apply the promises of God and verify them in our own lives.

You can tell what they are by what they do. No one picks grapes or figs from thornbushes. A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. — Matthew 7:16, 17

Is the Bible all there is to God's word?

No. The Bible is one of the ways that God has to give us His word. The Bible contains God's word and conveys God's word and is God's word, but it is not all of God's word.

- » God's word created the heavens and the earth (Psalm 33:6-9)
- » God's word is shown in the heavens (Psalm 19:1)
- » God's word comes through the Holy Spirit (John 14:7)
- » God's word can come through the gift of prophecy (Romans 12:6)
- » God's word can come through words of knowledge or wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8)
- » God's word can come via dreams (Acts 16:9)
- » God can speak directly (1 Samuel 3:4ff)

Long ago in many ways and at many times God's prophets spoke his message to our ancestors. But now at last, God sent his Son to bring his message to us. God created the universe by his Son, and everything will someday belong to the Son. God's Son has all the brightness of God's own glory and is like him in every way. By his own mighty word, he holds the universe together.

— Hebrews 1:1-3

Isn't this basing all our belief on experience?

We are basing our lives on experience that works. But this is not just our own experience. It is the experience of God's people through the ages as recorded in the Bible and in church history. It is not just our experience, but the experience of our fellow-believers.

Hebrews 11 describes many of these people of faith and then concludes: “All of them pleased God because of their faith! But still they died without being given what had been promised.

This was because God had something better in store for us” (Hebrews 11:39, 40a).

Is the Bible good only for providing doctrinal information?

The Bible isn't even primarily designed to give doctrinal information. It is a book of experience. “These things happened to them as a warning to us. All this was written in the Scriptures to teach us who live in these last days” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

God's word, brought to us in these various ways, also aids us in doing much more than just gaining information. It can:

- » Help us resist sin (Psalm 119:11)
- » Help us discern right and wrong (Hebrews 4:12, 13)
- » Guide us in knowing what God will do soon (Revelation 1:1)

If the Bible is a valid guide, why do so many people understand it differently?

It is natural that we get different things from Scripture because we are each different. We should be careful to allow others to find what they need in Scripture even though it may differ from what we see there.

At the same time, the Bible needs to be understood as part of a community of faith. “But you need to realize that no one alone can understand any of the prophecies in the Scriptures. The prophets did not think these things up on their own, but they were guided by the Spirit of God.” —2 Peter 1:20,21

We need the Holy Spirit and our brothers and sisters to help us understand God's message for us.