



FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING FROM

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M I N I S T R I E S

The Indispensable Word

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When you consult a physician, you want to have the assurance that she knows what she's talking about. We expect doctors to be able to tell us how to better prevent disease, remedy pain or sickness when necessary, and stay healthy and fit. We want them to have plenty of experience in the field, but they also need to have taken the appropriate training. How many of us would see a doctor who had never been to medical school, never studied the books, and hadn't stayed abreast of advances in research? How equipped would that person be to successfully help people?

The same applies to us as Christians. We can have all the "field experience" imaginable, but if we haven't studied The Book—if we aren't relying on the authoritative manual—we will not be successful in living the abundant life. You can espouse reasonable philosophy and noble thoughts about God all day long, but if you're not rooted in His Word, your words aren't reliable. There is no way around it: our Christian life must be built on the foundation of the Word of God.

There are two applications in Scripture of the title "the Word of God." One is to the Bible itself (God's written word), and the other is to Jesus Christ (God's personal word). Each of them is called the Word of God. If we want to be rightly related to Jesus, we must be rightly related to the Bible. So let's discover the authority and the power of God's Word.

Whose Word Is It?

The word *authority* comes from the word *author*. The authority of any work is the authority of the author. It is the author who gives authority to whatever he produces. So it's important to know the identity of the author of the Bible.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 NKJ

If you want to be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work, the source of it all is Scripture. Paul also says "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The Greek word for "inspiration of God" is defined as "God-breathed." The word for "breath" and the word for "spirit" are identical. Paul is saying, "All Scripture is inbreathed by the Spirit of God." The authority behind all Scripture is the authority of the Holy Spirit. He is ultimately the author. He used many different instruments, but the authority of the Holy Spirit—who is God Himself—directed each one. When we draw from Scripture, we are drawing from the authority of God Himself.

Paul also notes *all* Scripture is inspired, not some. We don't have the luxury of separating the passages we consider valuable from those we don't. The Holy Spirit Himself has declared *all* Scripture to be inspired by

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God, and *all* Scripture to be profitable. There are no books that you can leave out or deem unimportant. Let's not just focus on a few well-known passages of Scripture and think that they are all that matters.

If you want to be equipped—and remain equipped—you must rely on the entire Scripture. You will find that you move from strength to strength as you meditate on, study and apply the Word of God. Jesus said we need to be hearing and doing the Word of God; not just hearing, but hearing and doing.

You might say, “But the men who wrote the Bible were in many cases very weak and fallible. And the Bible even records a lot of their sins.” You would be correct. I believe that is a mark of the Bible's accuracy—that it records the sins of the people who wrote it. A lot of people today would omit their sins and try to present themselves as infallible. The Bible's writers don't. Even David, who wrote most of the psalms, recorded his serious sins for all to read.

So how can the Bible be infallible if the people who wrote it were fallible? There is a beautiful answer given to that question in one simple verse:

The words of the LORD are pure words,
Like silver tried in a furnace of earth,
Purified seven times.

Psalm 12:6 NKJ

Here is a picture of how people would purify metal. They would build a furnace of clay, light a fire in it and then put the metal there to be purified. So you have three things in that picture: the *furnace of clay*, which is the human instrument, just clay; the *fire*, which is the Holy Spirit, which purifies the *silver*, which is the message. So that tells us how fallible men and women can be the channels to produce an inspired and an authoritative Word of God. The clay is the human vessel, the fire is the Holy Spirit, and the silver—purified seven times, absolutely pure—is the message of God.

The Bible, though it came through vessels of clay—weak, fallible, sinful men and women—has been purified seven times by the fire of the Holy Spirit. It is totally reliable.

Jesus and the Word

We need to consider the attitude of Jesus Himself toward the Bible, because for us who are His disciples, He is the pattern. How did He relate to the Bible? Let's look at His response in a discussion with Jewish leaders.

“If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken) . . .”

John 10:35 NKJ

Here Jesus gives to the Bible the two titles that His followers have used ever since: the *Word of God* and the *Scripture*. Where He uses “the word of God,” it means it proceeds from God. It didn't proceed from man; it came from heaven, from God. And where He says “the Scripture,” it means that which has been recorded in writing. God has said many things that are not recorded in writing, but those that are recorded in the Bible are there for our special benefit. They contain everything we need to know for our salvation.

Jesus' attitude is summed up in the phrase, “The Scripture cannot be broken.” Nothing can express the authority of Scripture more completely than that simple phrase.

Let's look at how Jesus used Scripture. He is our pattern. We will look at what happened when Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. The end of Matthew 3 records Jesus' baptism in the Jordan:

After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with him.”

Matthew 3:16–17 NLT

You and I might think that after this Jesus was set to have an easy time. He had the endorsement of both the Father and the Spirit—along with that of the prophet John the Baptist. But that was not to be.

After this serene and powerful encounter, Jesus found Himself in the wilderness fasting for forty days and being

tempted by Satan. Please don't imagine that God's blessing will always make life easy for you. In fact, in a certain sense, it may make life more difficult, because Satan much more strongly opposes those whom God has anointed.

Luke says that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Luke 4:1), but at the end of the forty days, He came out in the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 14). Note the distinction. It is one thing to be led by the Spirit; it's another thing to move and operate in the power of the Spirit. Jesus did not do the latter until He had His conflict with Satan and won. In some degree or other, each of us will need to walk that same path. We will have to overcome temptation and opposition in order to move in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Satan came to Jesus in Matthew 4, the first thing he tempted Jesus to do was to doubt. That is nearly always the initial approach of Satan. He will not immediately deny the Word of God; he'll question it or cause you to doubt it. Notice the first thing that Satan said to Jesus.

Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Matthew 4:3 NKJ

Remember, God had just spoken from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son." But Satan was challenging Jesus to doubt what He had heard from God. "If You are the Son of God, then do something to prove it. Make these stones bread."

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4 NKJ

This is very important. Jesus dealt with temptation by meeting it from the written Word of God. "It is written." Don't think that you are clever enough to argue with the devil; he's much more clever than you are. He has been in this business a long, long time. Don't try to convince him with your arguments. Instead, meet him with the Scripture. Each time Jesus was tempted, He responded with, "It is written." And whenever Jesus said that, Satan changed the subject. He knew he had no answer to the Scripture. Don't be tempted into trying to overcome Satan with your wits. Just answer him with the written Word of God. The Scripture is authoritative. Accept it. Live by it. Answer the devil with it. He cannot answer the written Word of God.

In Ephesians 6:17 Paul says, "And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." There are two Greek words for "word": one is *logos*, the other is *rhema*. *Logos* is the total, eternal counsel of God. *Rhema* is a spoken word of God. This is the word used in Ephesians 6:17: taking "the sword of the Spirit, which is the [*rhema*, the spoken] Word of God." When you encounter Satan, you have to meet him by speaking the Word of God.

The Bible will not protect you if it is just sitting on your bookshelf, or even if it's on your bedside table. It only works when you quote it. You have to take it in your mouth and say it for yourself. Then it becomes a sharp sword from which the devil backs off. He has no answer for it.

Let's look at what Jesus said about the authority of the written Word of God, speaking about what we call the Old Testament:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." Matthew 5:17-18 NKJ

The word "jot," in modern Hebrew, is *yod*, the smallest letter in the alphabet. "Tittle" (*keraiia*) is a little curve put on a letter to distinguish it from a similar letter. Those are the two smallest items in written Hebrew text, and Jesus said not one of them will ever pass away. He wasn't talking about the spoken Word of God at that point, because the words "jot" and "tittle" only apply to that which is in writing. So Jesus absolutely endorsed the total authority of the written Word of God.

A little further on, quite near the end of His ministry, Jesus was dealing with the Sadducees who were the liberals of that day, the people who did not accept the authority of all Scripture. In fact, they only accepted the authority of the first five books, the Pentateuch. They were challenging the teaching that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and they came to Jesus with a smart question, but this is how Jesus answered them:

“But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”
Matthew 22:31–32 NKJ

Notice how Jesus applied that Scripture. These words were written by Moses fourteen centuries earlier. They were actually words spoken by the Lord directly to Moses. But Jesus didn’t speak about them as something that was said to Moses fourteen centuries ago. He said, “Have you not read what was spoken to *you* by God?” The Scripture is never out of date. It is never just the record of human cleverness. It is God-inspired. And even if it was written three thousand years ago, it is still God speaking to *you* today. That is the authority of Scripture as Jesus understood it.

New Testament Authority

The authority behind the New Testament is the same that is behind the Old Testament. Let’s look at Jesus with His disciples. He is preparing them for the fact that He is going to leave.

“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”
John 14:25–26 NKJ

The authority behind the writings of the apostles is the authority of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said that He would do two things: “Whatever I didn’t teach you, He will teach you; and whatever I said that you might have forgotten, He will bring to your remembrance.” So the record of the gospels does not depend on human memory; it depends on the truth of the Holy Spirit.

Incidentally, let me point out that Jesus breaks the laws of grammar to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is not an “it” but a “He.” According to Greek grammar, He should have used the preposition *it*, but He didn’t; He said *He*. It’s vital that you understand the Holy Spirit is not just an *it*, He’s a *He*, a person, and you need to relate to Him as a person.

In John 16 Jesus reveals another very important characteristic of the Holy Spirit.

“He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”
John 16:13–14 NKJ

The Holy Spirit always glorifies Jesus. If you ever are confronted by spiritual manifestations that do not glorify Jesus but give glory to a man or in some other direction, you can be sure that it is not the Holy Spirit. The supreme ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reveal and to glorify Jesus. The Bible says we are to test the spirits, and you can test if a thing is from the Holy Spirit if it glorifies Jesus. If it doesn’t—it may sound very good or spiritual, it may be uttered in a loud, resounding voice—but it isn’t from the Holy Spirit, because He will not glorify anyone but Jesus. I am very conscious of that myself. I continually examine myself by asking, “Am I giving the glory to Jesus, or am I trying to persuade people that Derek Prince is someone important?” Derek Prince is just a sinner saved by the grace of God.

In my next Teaching Letter we will explore more about the nature of God’s Word. I will help you discover its remarkable power and the effects it can have on your life.

Adapted from “The Power and Authority of God’s Word” (#4161).

For further study we recommend Derek’s message, “The Rod of God.”

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