



EMPOWERED & EQUIPPED

*Bible Exposition for Women
Who Teach the Scriptures*



JULIA B. HIGGINS
FOREWORD BY JEN WILKIN

“Julia Higgins is a dear friend and a much-valued colleague at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. She is an excellent scholar and superb classroom teacher. She is also a gifted writer, as this book clearly demonstrates. If you are looking for a book that will well equip women (and men!) to faithfully interpret and expound the inerrant Word of God, I strongly encourage you to consider this one. It will serve you well.”

—**Daniel Akin**, president and professor of preaching and theology, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The sheer breadth and clarity of wisdom distilled in this book is impressive! Not only does Dr. Higgins survey the essential components of biblical interpretation, and trusted methods for expositional teaching, she does so with a Christ-centered hermeneutic. Scripture is clear: women have been given teaching gifts to be used for the edification of the church. Julia helps us understand how to encourage and equip the women in our churches to use those gifts in a way that is faithful to the testimony of Scripture. Julia’s contribution to the saints in the pages of this book is both admirable and commendable. This work deserves wide readership and an easily accessible place on any church leader’s bookshelf.”

—**Matt Capps**, senior pastor, Fairview Baptist Church, Apex, NC

“*Empowered and Equipped* is a needed resource for developing doctrinally sound Bible teachers in the church. With great clarity and wisdom, Dr. Higgins provides a compelling approach for women desiring theological depth in their teaching. I highly recommend this resource for women preparing to teach the Bible.”

—**Emily Dean**, assistant professor of ministry to women,
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

“If you are serious about learning to teach the Bible, this is the book you need. Julia Higgins has written the most comprehensive, systematic, and accessible book I’ve seen on the topic. She steers her readers through each step needed to faithfully interpret, apply, and teach a passage. Not

only will I use this book as I help others learn to teach, I will return to it again and again to sharpen my own skills and grow as a teacher of God's Word."

—**Courtney Doctor**, author and coordinator of women's initiatives, The Gospel Coalition

"This is the book I've been hoping someone would write—a solid resource for women who want to be equipped to examine, understand, and exposit the Bible faithfully and soundly."

—**Nancy Guthrie**, author and Bible teacher

"One of the great needs in the local church is equipping and providing opportunities for women to teach the Bible. In this book, Dr. Julia Higgins provides a theologically rich and practical resource to help address this problem. This book is not just for women who have the spiritual gift of teaching (though these women will certainly gain much from reading this book). Because of the commands of the Great Commission we are all responsible for teaching the Bible; therefore, this book will benefit anyone. As one who is committed to seeing women equipped to be disciples who make disciples, I recommend this book to anyone who wants to participate in God's redemptive work."

—**Lesley Hildreth**, women's discipleship director, The Summit Church

"Equipping women to teach God's word is not just a nice, hopeful aspiration. It's a necessity for multiplying disciples and helping women know deeply about the God who reveals himself through Scripture and his redemptive plan for all people. I'm grateful Dr. Julia Higgins has compiled a resource that should be in every teacher's library. With this book, women will be challenged and encouraged to make Scripture come alive and transformational to those they teach."

—**Kelly King**, manager of magazines/devotional publishing and women's ministry training, Lifeway Christian Resources

“For anyone who wants to be equipped to teach the Bible, look no further than *Empowered and Equipped: Bible Exposition for Women Who Teach the Scriptures* by Julia Higgins. This book is a well-organized, insightful, practical, and beneficial guide for teaching God’s Word with accuracy, clarity, and insight. I highly recommend this excellent resource!”

—**Melissa Kruger**, author and director of women’s initiatives, The Gospel Coalition

“For years, many of us in the evangelical community have toed the line regarding the biblical guidelines for women to teach Scripture to other women and children, but not to men. Yet, simultaneous with this rigorous restriction has been our massive failure to provide opportunities and resources for God-called and Spirit-gifted women to carry out their task. My friend and co-laborer, Julia Higgins, has responded to the void. *Empowered and Equipped* not only celebrates the call and responsibility of female Bible teachers, but it also prepares them to do it. And Julia’s commitment to solid biblical exposition further strengthens this book to be a critical tool for mentors, disciple-makers, churches, and ministry training schools to mobilize a generation of female expository teachers.”

—**Jim Shaddix**, professor of expository preaching,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“*Empowered and Equipped* is a valuable resource for any woman who finds herself teaching in the church. As women answer the call to make disciples, they must teach all that God has commanded from ‘In the beginning, God’ to ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus,’ and everything in between. Julia Higgins has given women not only a much-needed tool for any Bible teacher who longs to rightly handle God’s Word, but also an impassioned word of encouragement for women to never stop teaching women, taking them to depths of Scripture that they may know the priceless treasure God has for them.

—**Terri Stovall**, dean of women and professor of women’s ministry, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Finally, a serious resource for women who want to grow in their gifting as Bible teachers. This book is both scholarly and readable. It is a trustworthy guide for anyone who wants to learn the tasks of faithful interpretation and formational exposition.”

—**Leigh Swanson**, executive vice president,
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

“Operating within a solidly complementarian framework, Julia Higgins has produced a marvelous tool to furnish women with a strategic grasp of God’s Word and an effective method to teach others. Engaging both the heart and the mind, relying on the Word and the Spirit, she expertly guides her readers through the world of the Bible so they can relate it in the contexts in which God has placed them. I commend the trustworthy theology and robust hermeneutic of *Empowered and Equipped* as a rich resource for the church, with confidence that everyone who reads and applies it will have greater gospel impact.”

—**Hershael W. York**, dean of the school of theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



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FOREWORD

by Jen Wilkin

You hold in your hands a book I wish I had held in mine twenty-three years ago. That was the year I first began to teach a small Sunday school class of women at my church. I was twenty-nine years old, younger than all of my students, and the class had fallen to me because no one else had wanted to take it on. I was terrified. And rightly so. Did I even belong there?

No matter the size of the room, when we presume to teach we should expect to be judged more strictly. Teaching is work, and 2 Tim 2:15 tells us to do our best at it, that we might be workers with no need to be ashamed. It seemed to me that if it was possible to be an unashamed worker who rightly divides the truth, it also must be possible to be an ashamed one who divides it wrongly. I very much wanted to honor the Word of God as I should, but my access to resources was minimal.

Julia Higgins has ably compiled the help I wish I had. She is a trustworthy guide, pointing the way to sound teaching as one who has shown many women that path. She brings years of experience in seminary settings to the pages of this book and offers them in accessible ways to women like I was two decades ago—compelled to start, uncertain of how to do so. A book like this would have shortened my learning curve and removed more than one shameful moment of clumsy or careless teaching. But I think it would have done more than just that.

Around the same time that I started teaching that class, my husband Jeff's roommate and best friend from college got engaged. We had

remained very close with Steve after graduation, and we looked toward his wedding eagerly. We went to a couples' shower and received our wedding invitation in the mail, but I knew we were both feeling the oddness of the fact that Jeff had not been asked to be a groomsman. It felt like a glaring omission, and honestly, it stung just a bit. But we coached ourselves through the confusion and hurt, assuming the very best of our friend.

Four days before the wedding, Steve called. His fiancée was checking off tasks and had noticed that Jeff had not picked up his tuxedo. In the excitement of getting married, Steve had forgotten to ask Jeff to be a groomsman, and at some point had just assumed that he already had. The tux was hurriedly procured, and the wedding took place just as it was planned to all along, just as it should be, with Jeff standing witness beside his dear friend.

We still tease Steve about this. It's one of the funniest stories of a long friendship filled with funny stories. And yes, I did change his name to protect the not-so-innocent.

Not just anyone picks up a book like this. My guess is that you sense a call to teach and, like me, you want to be a worker unashamed. This book will equip you with excellent tools, but it also contains a message you must not miss: *you are invited*. The church needs women to teach the Bible and to do so skillfully. If someone in church leadership forgot to tell you that or assumed you would take it for granted, consider this book your explicit invitation.

Ours is no forgetful Bridegroom. Your absence among those who bear witness to the faithfulness of God is unthinkable. The favor of your presence is requested—no, required. Take your place in line and make disciples, teaching them to observe all that he has commanded. Not only do you belong here, sister, the mission does not go forward without you. Take up your tools and do the good works God ordained for you to do.

INTRODUCTION

WHY SHOULD WOMEN TEACH THE BIBLE?

One semester, a colleague asked me to visit his class on a particular day when students would be discussing discipleship. He had planned for three different student panels—one where the male students would talk about discipling men, one where female students would talk about discipling women, and one where another group would discuss cross-cultural evangelism and discipleship. My reason for being there was to spur on discussion in the class, so I didn't expect the impact one student's comments would make upon me. As the conversation turned to discipling women, typical women's events came up. A student commented that she would no longer attend discipleship events geared for women at her church because the themes were always along the lines of topics like "how to be a Proverbs 31 woman" or "modesty." With passion in her voice, she began to express a desire for women's ministry to be filled with rich biblical and theological teaching.

Her desires underscore my own because I have been in churches that have disregarded expository Bible teaching from its pastors and members alike. From birth until eighth grade, I was raised in the Episcopal Church. I have vivid memories of sitting in my Sunday school class, discussing *Saturday Night Live* from the night before while dusty Bibles sat in a closet. We would spend the hour that was supposed to be devoted to small group Bible study discussing trivial things of the world. Looking back on that experience, and comparing it with other churches that taught the Word week in and week out, it stands out to me how empty it

feels to attend church programs where the holy Word of God is not given prominence and the Spirit is not at work.

Thankfully, God began to work in the life of my parents, and we were led to a different church. By the beginning of my ninth grade year, my parents had both been converted to Christ and we began visiting local churches. We would eventually join a vibrant Southern Baptist church where the pastors taught through the Bible on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. The church also held small groups every Sunday morning, before and after the Sunday morning service, where lay leaders taught through books of the Bible. It was in my ninth grade girls, small group where I first witnessed a woman teaching the Scriptures.

I can't remember the book of the Bible the class was studying. But I do remember my teacher, her love for Jesus and for his Word. She made the Bible come alive. She taught with passion and clarity, giving me a hunger to understand God's Word. When she taught, I recognized the authority of the Scriptures in her life as well as the soul-satisfying treasure the Bible was for her.

It was in that church, and others like it that I attended later in life, where I witnessed women teaching other women God's Word through various small group or women's ministry settings. Sometimes, the teaching was marked by expository Bible teaching, but I also began to notice that women's ministry events trended toward topical teaching that lacked biblical and theological depth. Teaching became focused on subjects related to the concept of biblical womanhood, such as how to be a good wife or mother. Messages sometimes were presented as if they were expository, but when taught, had nothing to do with the meaning of the text for the original audience and were focused mainly on broad application points that seemed unrelated and disconnected from the passage.

Biblical womanhood certainly has its place in women's ministry teaching. Teaching that conveys God's design for both genders is especially important for women in today's cultural context, and women need to be taught the importance of being made in the image of God, equal to men, and yet biologically distinct. But the emphasis that topic receives in women's ministry events often implies that being a good wife or mother is what forms women into mature disciples of Christ.

The Commission to Make Disciples: Teaching Others

The Great Commission provides a blueprint for discipleship in the church when Jesus tells the disciples, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:18–20). Additionally, the Great Commission underscores that both men and women are commissioned to teach. A key phrase to note is “teaching them to observe everything” commanded by Jesus. The imperative command of making disciples is fulfilled when we baptize believers and incorporate them into the life of the church, teaching them the doctrines of Jesus.

What must be underscored is the popular refrain, “Make disciples, not converts.” William Hendriksen contemplates this adage as he questions in his commentary on Matthew, “But just what is meant by ‘make disciples’? It is not exactly the same as ‘make converts,’ though the latter is surely implied.”¹ He concludes, “The term ‘make disciples’ places somewhat more stress on the fact that the mind, as well as the heart and the will, must be won for God. A disciple is *a pupil, a learner*” (emphasis his).² Considering that disciples are pupils or learners highlights the need for a curriculum—which Jesus identifies in the Great Commission as “everything I have commanded.” The mind of the disciple must be shaped by the teachings of Christ.

The church (indicating both men and women) is commanded to go and make disciples, or learners of the doctrines taught by Jesus. If women are to be on mission, fulfilling this calling and command of the Lord Jesus, this assumes they must both be taught and be teachers. The question might remain—what is meant by Jesus when he refers to all that he has commanded? Hendriksen is helpful in identifying those elements explicitly taught by Christ:

- a. All of Christ’s marvelous discourses

¹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 999.

² Hendriksen, 999.

- b. All of his parables; both a. and b. including ever so many “commands,” whether implied or expressed. Among them are:
- c. Precious “sayings,” such as: “Abide in me . . . love each other . . . also bear witness” (John 15:4, 12, 27); “Love your enemies” (Matt 5:44); “Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me” (Luke 9:23)
- d. Specific predictions and promises or assurances . . . implied directives for Christian conduct
- e. The lessons of the cross, hypocrisy, proclaiming the gospel; on prayer, humility, trust, the forgiving spirit, the law
- f. And is not even the narrative of Christ’s sojourn on earth—the account of his healing, traveling, suffering, death, resurrection, etc.—full of implied “commands”?³

We must conclude then that women are commissioned by Christ alongside their brothers to make disciples, teaching all that Jesus has commanded—namely the doctrines and ethics of Christian living.

The Pattern for Teaching in the Local Church

The Great Commission reveals the broad command for all believers to teach the doctrines of Christ, and the New Testament provides guidance on how the Commission is accomplished in the local church. In Titus 1 and 2, we discern the specific commands given to pastors for doctrinal oversight of the church, as well as pastoral responsibility for gender-specific relationships which concern how doctrine is lived out. Titus 2 in particular highlights how women are assigned a teaching role within the body for the edification of other women.

The book of Titus is named after its recipient. The apostle Paul wrote his epistle to a man he designates as “my true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4). Paul identifies himself as a servant and as an apostle, noting that his service and apostleship was “for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, in the hope of

³ Hendriksen, 1002.

eternal life . . ." (Titus 1:1–2). Within verse 1, we see that Paul's ministry was missional—for the salvation of those appointed to eternal life, and for their consequent growth in a body of doctrine ("knowledge of the truth") which would influence their behavior reflected in a holy way of life ("leads to godliness").

After identifying himself and his purpose as a servant and apostle of the Lord, and after identifying Titus as the recipient of the letter, Paul immediately lists his aim, which is to remind Titus about his role: "The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1:5). Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders (or pastors) for the churches in Crete. He recaps for Titus the specific credentials of an elder in verses 6–9 (which includes that an elder be "the husband of one wife," indicating that the position of pastor/elder is reserved for qualified men). He then contrasts the characteristics of elders with those of false teachers who were found at that time in Crete (vv. 10–14).

Part of Paul's own commission as an apostle (for the knowledge of the truth among the elect) is to be reiterated in the lives of appointed, qualified local church pastors. Elders are to be found "holding to the faithful message as taught, so that [they] will be able both to encourage sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it" (v. 9). Pastors must hold to a body of doctrine for two-fold effect upon the church: encouragement to hold to sound teaching and the repudiation of false doctrine. Thus, Paul tells Titus in 2:1, "But you are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching" (CSB) or rather he is to "teach what accords with sound doctrine" (ESV).

It is within the context of Paul's emphasizing elders who will teach and protect sound doctrine that the foundation is laid for gender-specific teaching/discipleship within the body. In the second chapter of Titus, verses 2 and following, Paul instructs Titus to make sure that the entire church is involved in the task of teaching that influences godly behavior. He designates gender-specific discipleship to accomplish that task, as he discusses older and younger men and older and younger women. Notice that older men are to "be sound in faith" (v. 2) and older women are to "teach what is good" (v. 3).

Thus, we conclude that pastors/elders have been given a task of overseeing the teaching ministry of the church. They are the chief teachers, disseminating and protecting the doctrine that is taught in a local body, making sure to expose false teaching, and encouraging members to hold to sound teaching that then leads to a godly life. Pastors/elders are given the task of making sure that men and women alike are sound and teaching what is good.

When pairing the concepts of the Great Commission and the Titus 2 passage, we cannot miss that women have been given a teaching role within the church, and that role is meant to be exercised in the context of discipleship. The Bible also teaches us that while all are commanded to disciple, some are especially empowered by the Holy Spirit with a gift of teaching.

Empowered to Teach

The New Testament contains various texts on the topic of spiritual gifts within the church. Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 are the two most significant passages written concerning gifts of grace that are given to believers by the Holy Spirit. The table below illustrates the various gifts:

1 Corinthians 12:7–11	1 Corinthians 12:28	Romans 12:6–8
Wisdom	Apostles	Prophecy
Knowledge	Prophets	Service
Faith	Teachers	Teaching
Healing	Miracles	Exhorting
Miracles	Healings	Giving
Prophecy	Helping	Leading
Discernment	Leading	Mercy
Tongues	Tongues	
Interpretation of Tongues	Interpretation of Tongues	

Commentators consistently remark that the list of gifts given is not exhaustive, but Paul was identifying ways individual members of the church might be empowered for the purpose of serving and building up other members of the church. Paul's emphasis in both Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 is that the body has been equipped with a diversity of giftings to manifest God's Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). Each person in the church has been empowered to serve others according to how the Spirit willed a gift to them (1 Cor 12:11). That means that the Godhead, through the Spirit, has a particular gift in mind for every particular person so that the work of the Holy Spirit and God's grace are manifested within the local church.

Some may conflate the spiritual gift of teaching with the office of pastor/elder and draw a false conclusion that only men are to exercise the gift of teaching. While qualified men are responsible to teach and oversee the local church, that does not negate the fact that both men and women are given the spiritual gift of teaching. Thus, John Frame distinguishes between two types of teaching that are seen in the New Testament—special-office teaching and general-office teaching:

The overseers are given particular responsibility for teaching, but there is also a sense in which every Christian is a teacher (Eph 4:29; Col 3:16; Heb 5:12; 1 John 2:27). In Reformed theology, the official teaching is said to belong to the *special office*, while the teaching of all believers is part of the *general office*, that is, the priesthood of all believers. Special-office teaching requires special gifts of character and competence (1 Tim 3:1–7), and (as I understand 1 Timothy 2:12) that teaching is restricted to men only. Women may and do participate in general-office teaching, however, as when Priscilla (mentioned first, most likely, to indicate her prominence in this activity) partners with her husband Aquila to instruct Apollos in the word of God (Acts 18:26), and as when Paul instructs older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:2–5).⁴

⁴ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 4 of *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 259.

Three women of the New Testament illustrate the concept of women teaching for the upbuilding of other believers: Mary, Lois, and Eunice. These women display general-office teaching that many women are called to today.

New Testament Examples of Women Teaching

In Luke 1:46–55, Mary sings a hymn of praise to God in front of her cousin, Elizabeth. This hymn was recorded by Luke and since that time, it has been used in worship services throughout the ages. Consider how the apostle Paul instructs the church at Colossae to *teach one another* through the use of hymns: “Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Col 3:16). Mary’s hymn is an excellent example of a woman worshiping God through a hymn, which had the immediate benefit of edifying another believer (Elizabeth) as she stood by, as well as teaching the church through its liturgical incorporation as the “Magnificat” throughout church history.

The contents of Mary’s hymn reveal that she was well versed in Old Testament Scripture. While there are references to Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Zephaniah, and Malachi, Mary’s words parallel the prayer of Hannah found in 1 Sam 2:1–10. Hannah’s prayer begins, “My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn is lifted up by the LORD,” while Mary’s begins, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46–47). Surely Mary, being a young woman who was told she was with child and who knew her Old Testament, was thinking back to Hannah, who also praised the Lord for how he had answered her prayer for a son. While Mary does not mention Gen 3:15, it is likely she would have been thinking of the promise given to Eve that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The women of Israel had been looking for this promised offspring since the days of the garden, and because this hope was being realized, Mary proclaims, “Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed” (v. 48). Mary’s hymn teaches us the character of God as she reflects upon her personal situation and the future for the people of God (vv. 50–55). Her words model that

of a psalm, as Robert Stein notes in *The New American Commentary* on Luke, “For a hymn or psalm to begin with an individual’s situation and conclude with a reference to Israel’s situation is not unusual.”⁵ This entire section of Luke gives evidence of a woman who knew the Scriptures and was interpreting and applying them appropriately to her situation, with the added benefit of teaching her cousin, Elizabeth, and all believers who would go on to sing the Magnificat.

Another example of learned women comes from that of Lois and Eunice, the mother and grandmother of Paul’s protégé, Timothy. The book of 2 Timothy, written by Paul to Timothy at the end of his ministry, gives us insight into these two women and provides a pattern for women teaching sound doctrine to their children. Hendriksen notes that the theme of 2 Timothy is that of sound doctrine, and he provides a brief, memorable outline of the entire book: “HOLD ON TO IT Chapter 1, TEACH IT Chapter 2, ABIDE IN IT Chapter 3, PREACH IT Chapter 4.”⁶ In 2 Tim 1:5, Paul mentions Timothy’s relatives by recalling Timothy’s “sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.” Later, in chapter 3, Paul instructs Timothy to abide in sound doctrine, reminding him of those who have taught him the Scriptures from childhood (vv. 14–15). Hendriksen conveys that Paul, Lois, and Eunice were used by God to instruct Timothy in the faith:

Timothy must never forget that he had learned these things from no less a person than Paul himself (see verses 10 and 11 above) and, going back even farther, from those highly esteemed worthies: grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (II Tim. 1:5), women who, before their conversion to the Christian faith, had instructed the little child Timothy in “the sacred writings,” and who, having once accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, had

⁵ Robert H. Stein, *The New American Commentary: Luke* (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 93.

⁶ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles, II Timothy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 219.

been used as instruments in God's hand to co-operate with Paul in the important task of leading the young man to see in Christ the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises.

It is clear that Paul, Lois, and Eunice, and any others who may have nurtured Timothy, are not viewed as independent authorities, apart from the Word, but as secondary or intermediate sources of knowledge, avenues of instruction, and even this *only because they accepted the Scripture!*⁷

Paul, the apostle, handing off his ministry to Timothy, reminds the young pastor to never forget what he has been taught by not only the apostle himself, but also his mother and grandmother. This charge from Paul highlights an important implication: women must be equipped to teach sound doctrine to those in their sphere of influence.

Equipped to Teach

A common adage states that women typically make up more than half the church. This observation is not true of only the US church but reflects the global church, as Lifeway Research notes, "Globally, the weekly church attendance gender gap remains an issue. Among the 53 nations Pew analyzed with enough Christian respondents, there is an average difference of 7 percentage points between men (46 percent) and women (53 percent)."⁸ While Lifeway Research notes that in the United States "for decades, women have been more likely to attend church than men" they comment that in "recent years the gap has been shrinking—but it's not necessarily good news."⁹ The reason a decrease in the gender gap is considered bad news is because the number of women attending church weekly is in decline. Lifeway cites a General Social Survey conducted by

⁷ Hendriksen, 295–96.

⁸ Aaron Earls, "Church Attendance Gender Gap Shrinks, but It's Not All Good News," Lifeway Research, September 25, 2017, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/09/25/church-attendance-gender-gap-shrinks-but-its-not-all-good-news/>.

⁹ Earls.

Pew Research from 1972–2014 which reveals that female church attendance has steadily regressed from 38 percent in the early 1980s to 28 percent in 2012.

The downward trend of weekly church attendance of both genders should awaken Christian men and women to a recommitment to the work of the Great Commission. Jesus told us to go and make disciples, literal learners, and teach them all that Jesus commands. His commission is a charge that women of the church must take seriously. The New Testament gives us the main pattern for how we should disciple, and that comes from Titus 2. Older godly women are to be teaching what is good in the context of gender-distinct discipling environments. But not only that, we cannot ignore that gifts of grace have been given to women to serve and edify the body, and this includes the spiritual gift of teaching. Women like Mary, Lois, and Eunice reveal to us that women should know the Scriptures and should handle them well, because their influence extends to the entire church. Because of these reasons, women in the church must be equipped to teach.

When a woman attends seminary to get a master's degree, no matter the degree program, she will be required to take a course that prepares her to teach the Bible. But not all women have the opportunity to go to seminary. This book seeks to prepare women in the local church who are committed to the Great Commission, who are making disciples, or who have been given the spiritual gift of teaching.

The book is divided into two parts: principles and practice. In the first part, we will consider the importance of core characteristics of the Bible and will introduce the concept of biblical theology, along with how to interpret passages of Scripture based upon genre. We will also explore what is known as the historical-grammatical method of interpretation, seeking to understand the best means for determining a text's meaning so that it may then be taught properly.

In the second part of the book, we will discover what it looks like to apply what we have learned by considering practical elements of teaching. Spiritual disciplines, a lifestyle that should mark every Christian, will be considered as the foundation for solid biblical teaching. We will also discuss core doctrines of the faith, our commitment to those doctrines,

and teaching within the bounds of orthodoxy. Finally, the last chapter will explore the various avenues for women to teach in the local church. It is my hope and prayer that as you delve into these matters, more so than ever, you will be equipped to teach.

The Nature of the Bible



Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.
—Psalm 119:105

From my childhood, the Lord has providentially placed his written Word in my life, and looking back, I can see that the Father was pursuing me through the Bible to reveal his Son, Jesus, to me. When I was around the age of five, someone gave me a record album that had the creation account and other biblical stories on it. I recall sitting on my bedroom floor, listening to that album all alone and becoming fascinated with stories from Scripture that I had never heard. As I grew a little older, my grandmother took me to the United Methodist Church she attended and bought a New American Standard Bible for me from the bookstore. I would read that Bible from time to time, but it was difficult to read, and I did not understand much of what it said. Around that same period, the Gideons distributed small Bibles at my school when I was in second or third grade. I would read the plan of salvation in the back cover of that small, green Bible and I would pray the sinner's prayer over and over. And while I was not truly converted at that point, God was using his Word, incrementally, to disclose himself to me.

The Bible is the most fascinating book that has ever been penned because it unveils a transcendent, powerful, holy, and righteous God. It reveals an infinite God to a finite people. According to his grace and by his divine initiative, he has chosen to reveal himself by imparting the written Word through the Holy Spirit, and he has preserved and used his words to show himself to his people for thousands of years. He employs the Scriptures to call us to salvation, to sanctify us, and to bring joy to our hearts as we traverse various trials of life. This chapter will discuss the means of revelation used by our triune God to communicate himself to his people and will demonstrate the nature of the Bible (its core characteristics).

The Revelation of God

Various Scriptures communicate the ways God has revealed himself, but one of the preeminent texts that systematic theologians appeal to when they teach the doctrine of revelation is Psalm 19. This psalm of David can be divided into two segments that reflect the concepts known as 1) general revelation and 2) special revelation.

General revelation is the act of God whereby he reveals himself through the created order. The triune God is made known as humans reflect on the world around them. Psalm 19:1–4 teaches that

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour out speech;
night after night they communicate knowledge.
There is no speech; there are no words;
their voice is not heard.
Their message has gone out to the whole earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.

In Psalm 19, David praises the Lord for the work of creation because the heavens (the sky, the expanse) proclaim to all of humankind that there is a God, and this God is glorious. The work of God's hands testifies daily

that there is a God who exists and who has fashioned this beautiful world with its bright colors and wonderful mountains, lakes, deserts, valleys, flowers, trees, and animals to exhibit his glory, power, and creativity. Paul, writing to the church at Rome in Rom 1:20, considers general revelation when he teaches that man has no excuse for unbelief because creation sets the character of God on display for all to see: “For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.” General revelation—the act whereby God reveals himself through nature—is a key way God communicates his existence to every single person on the planet. Although God’s glory is revealed through creation, it is limited in what it communicates for one cannot glimpse nature and come to know the love of God in Christ and the salvation he extends to all humankind.

God has chosen to reveal himself not only generally through creation but also particularly, through his Word. After David speaks about the revealing of the Lord through creation in Psalm 19, he goes on to consider the specific ways God makes himself known through the Scriptures in verses 7–11:

The instruction of the LORD is perfect,
renewing one’s life;
the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy,
making the inexperienced wise.
The precepts of the LORD are right,
making the heart glad;
the command of the LORD is radiant,
making the eyes light up.
The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are reliable
and altogether righteous.
They are more desirable than gold—
than an abundance of pure gold;
and sweeter than honey

dripping from a honeycomb.
In addition, your servant is warned by them,
and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.

Notice the five terms that David assigns to God’s Word: instruction, testimonies, precepts, commands, and ordinances. All of these terms encapsulate the various forms of Scripture available to David during his lifetime. When David was writing, he did not have the completed Bible that is accessible today, for the completed Bible or *canon* (that is, the sixty-six compiled books that make up the Bible) had not been assembled in its more modern form. As David wrote Psalm 19 and meditated upon the characteristics of the Word of God, he was likely contemplating the books of the law, known as the *Torah*. The word for law or instruction in verse 7 is the Hebrew word, *torah*. In Calvin’s commentary on the book of Psalms, the significance of David’s use of the word *torah* (or “law”) is explored:

Under the term law, he not only means the rule of living righteously, or the Ten Commandments, but he also comprehends the covenant by which God had distinguished that people from the rest of the world, and the whole doctrine of Moses, the parts of which he afterwards enumerates under the terms testimonies, statutes, and other names. These titles and commendations by which he exalts the dignity and excellence of the Law would not agree with the Ten Commandments alone, unless there were, at the same time, joined to them a free adoption and the promises which depend upon it; and, in short, the whole body of doctrine of which true religion and godliness consists.¹

The covenant, or the “whole doctrine of Moses” Calvin suggests that David understood, includes the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books were what David assigns as instruction, testimonies, precepts, commands, and ordinances that he then pronounces perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, reliable, and

¹ John Calvin and James Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol 1. (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife), 318.

altogether righteous. These seven descriptors of God's Word communicate something of its nature:

It is Perfect—meaning “complete, sound”²

It is Trustworthy—meaning “sure, fixed, firm, stable”³

It is Right—meaning “morally right, straight”⁴

It is Radiant—meaning “spotless, clean, without fault”⁵

It is Pure—meaning “ethically pure, clean”⁶

It is Reliable—meaning “firm, faithful”⁷

It is Altogether Righteous—meaning that “the entire Law, which is from first to last [is] ‘exceedingly righteous and true.’”⁸

As David employs these seven adjectives to describe the Torah, so too theologians adopt descriptors that highlight the perfection, trustworthiness, rightness, radiance, purity, reliability, and altogether righteousness of the entire Bible. These descriptors or characteristics are explored in the following section which highlights the nature of the Bible.

Core Characteristics of Scripture

For women who aspire to serve the local church through the general-teaching office (mentioned in the introduction, “Why Should Women Teach the Bible?”), the first step toward being equipped to teach is a

² Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, updated ed. (La Habra, CA: Foundation, 1998).

³ H. D. M. Spence, *Psalms*, vol. 1 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 129.

⁴ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1973), 117.

⁵ Spence, *Psalms*, vol. 1, 130.

⁶ Francis Brown, Samuel Driver, and Charles Augustus, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1977), 141.

⁷ Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*.

⁸ Spence, *Psalms*, vol. 1, 130.

study of the nature of God’s Word. A blunt question is relevant to consider: What is your doctrine of the Word? Women, alongside their brothers in Christ, should study and articulate what they believe about special revelation because “the Bible, or more accurately our attitude toward the Bible, is a watershed issue in Christian teaching. The Bible teacher’s view of Scripture will serve to determine the direction and purpose of his [or her] teaching ministry.”⁹ A teacher of God’s Word will not rightly divide the Scriptures if she has a faulty understanding of the nature of the Bible itself. For example, if a teacher of the Bible has not contemplated, explored, and developed a belief in the truthfulness and reliability of the Scriptures, the teacher may not place as great a weight as needed upon obedience to the commands given to Christians for lack of belief in the Bible’s inerrant and sufficient nature.

Therefore, readers must consider their ability to define and defend the Bible as inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, necessary, sufficient, and authoritative. This section will explore each of those core characteristics of Scripture.

Inspired

The inspiration of Scripture is defined as “the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine.”¹⁰ The Bible itself attests to the fact that it is divinely inspired, or rather that the ultimate origin of the Bible is from God himself. This truth is explicitly taught by the apostle Paul when he reminds Timothy that “all Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim 3:16). This small verse contains significant information regarding the divine origin of the Bible. First, Paul uses the word “all” to reveal that every single word and everything in the original manuscripts is inspired. The

⁹ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 21.

¹⁰ The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article VII, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/the-chicago-statement-on-biblical-inerrancy/>.

technical wording theologians use for this belief is *verbal plenary inspiration*. Verbal “means that the *words* of Scripture, not only the ideas of the biblical writers, are God’s Word.”¹¹ Plenary means “that *everything* in Scripture is God’s Word.”¹²

The second word Paul uses in 2 Tim 3:16 is “Scripture,” which in Greek is *graphe*, meaning “the writings.” The verse ends with a phrase: “inspired by God.” The literal rendering of this phrase in Greek is “breathed out.” The text is teaching that all the writings of Scripture are inspired because they have been breathed out or spoken by God.

While 2 Tim 3:16 enables us to understand the divine origin of the Bible, the apostle Peter comes alongside Paul to underscore God’s incorporation of human authors to compose the words he intended. Peter reminds his recipients: “Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20–21). Peter teaches that God inspired human authors through the work of the Holy Spirit. In his commentary on 2 Peter, Thomas Schreiner reflects on this concept:

Human beings spoke, and they spoke with their own personalities and literary styles; hence inspiration does not require a dictation theory of inspiration. The words the prophets spoke, however, ultimately came from God. They were inspired, or “carried along,” by the Holy Spirit. Hence, Peter defended the accuracy of the prophecies in the Scriptures. Note that v. 20 speaks of “prophecy of Scripture,” so Peter’s words cannot be limited to oral prophecies.¹³

¹¹ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 143 (see introduction, n. 4).

¹² Frame, 143.

¹³ Thomas Schreiner, *New American Commentary 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37 (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 324.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article VIII upholds both God's authorship of the Bible as well as human authorship by offering both an affirmation and a pertinent denial:

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

What both Schreiner and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy affirm about the inspiration of Scripture is critical to understand: God communicates to men and women through a distinct process which includes his own personal words revealed to humankind through human authors. John Frame, building upon work done by Kuypers and Bavinck, highlights that the process could be termed “organic inspiration” which means “God used the differences of heredity, environment, upbringing, education, gifts, talents, styles, interests, and idiosyncrasies to reveal his word. . . . God used the organic complexity of human persons and the diversities among persons to communicate . . . with us in a fully personal way.”¹⁴ The method God employs for special revelation is distinct and personal; consequently, the Bible teacher who understands the concept of divine inspiration may find joy in the God who has spoken and who has a divine word to impart to the humans he has created.

Inerrant

If the Bible is divine inspiration given to us by the triune God, it follows then that the divinely inspired words are incapable of deceiving us. God, who is true and is the standard of all truth, only speaks words which are true, for “it is impossible for God to lie . . . ” (Heb 6:18). Accordingly, the concept of inerrancy finds its foundation in inspiration.¹⁵ Inerrancy

¹⁴ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 142.

¹⁵ The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article XV.

is defined by the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy to mean that Scripture is “free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.”¹⁶ Proverbs 30:5 teaches that “every word of God is pure” while Ps 18:30 pairs the perfection of God with the purity, then, of his Word, “God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is pure.” In Prov 30:5 and Ps 18:30, the word for “pure” in the original language implies testing or refinement, hinting that the words of the Torah are as pure as if they have been “refined by fire.”¹⁷

Bible teachers should comprehend that the term *inerrancy* 1) applies specifically to the original manuscripts of the Bible and 2) pertains to current translations. Every Bible translation that exists today has been translated from various Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts that are copies of the original manuscripts penned by writers of Old and New Testament books. While none of the original manuscripts are available at present, “it may first be stated that for over 99 percent of the words of the Bible, we know what the original manuscript said.”¹⁸ Thus, Wayne Grudem succinctly concludes regarding the inerrancy of the Bible translations available in modern times: “Our present manuscripts are for most purposes the same as the original manuscripts, and the doctrine of inerrancy therefore directly concerns our present manuscripts as well.”¹⁹ Therefore, when Christian scholars and pastors discuss the term *inerrancy*, the usual application is both to the original manuscripts of biblical texts but also with strong conviction about and trust in the veracity of translated copies available throughout the world today.

Since God’s Word is pure and is free from deceiving, the truth of inerrancy implies first and foremost that God’s Word is the preeminent source of truth that supersedes all others. Teachers of the Scriptures may rely heavily upon commentaries and study Bibles, but it is the Bible alone that offers pure insight into the person of God and his plan for this

¹⁶ The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article XII.

¹⁷ H. D. M. Spence, *Proverbs* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909), 572.

¹⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 92.

¹⁹ Grudem, 92–93.

world.²⁰ In the realm of women’s Bible studies and the ministry of teaching employed by female Bible teachers, an understanding of and commitment to inerrancy underscores the necessity of women being equipped to teach. If the Bible alone is free from falsehood or deceit, then every Bible teacher should explore the tools for interpreting the Scriptures so that they may (1) teach rightly, and (2) discern when other teachers and/or curricula do not engage in the faithful exposition and interpretation of God’s Word.

Infallible

If the Bible is both inspired by God and inerrant in its nature, it follows then that the Bible is infallible, defined as “being free from or incapable of error.”²¹ In other words, “The infallibility of Scripture teaches that all of Scripture far from misleading us . . . is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.”²² The term *infallible* may sound similar to *inerrant*, which is a wise observation. To understand the distinction between inerrancy and infallibility, one must consider the slight nuances of each definition: inerrancy teaches that the Bible is in the “condition of being free from error” while infallibility teaches the same concept but also adds that the Bible is *incapable of erring*.²³ Thus, these two definitions pair together because “it is impossible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.”²⁴ A commitment to the Scriptures as divinely inspired calls one to a belief in the synonymous truths that the Bible is both inerrant and infallible.

²⁰ Daniel L. Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 237.

²¹ James D. Hernando, *Dictionary of Hermeneutics* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing, 2012), 164.

²² The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article XI.

²³ Hernando, *Dictionary of Hermeneutics*, 163–64.

²⁴ The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article XI.

The twin concepts of inerrancy and infallibility are affirmed based upon the Bible's presentation of itself as truth. In the Psalms, the truthfulness of God's Word is a repeated meditation for God's people. Consider Psalm 119 which proclaims,

Your law is true. (v. 142)

All your commandments are true. (v. 151)

The entirety of your word is truth. (v. 160)

Not only does the Bible assert its truthfulness, but Jesus upholds the idea, as well. In John 17, Jesus prays for the disciples and for those who would believe after them that God would "sanctify them by the truth." Jesus follows his request with the simple declaration, "Your word is truth" (v. 17). Because God has spoken, using written revelation as his means, that revelation is reliable and trustworthy; and God has a plan for the truths he has revealed, mainly that his Word be employed to bring about godliness in the life of believers. D. A. Carson, commenting on this verse in John's Gospel, highlights the truthfulness of revelation and the influence of truth upon the sanctification process of Christians: "The means Jesus expects his Father to use as he sanctifies his Son's followers is the *truth*. The Father will immerse Jesus's followers in the revelation of himself in his Son; he will sanctify them by sending the Paraclete to guide them into all *truth* (15:13). Jesus's followers will be 'set apart' from the world, reserved for God's service, insofar as they think and live in conformity with the *truth*, the 'word' of revelation (v. 6)"²⁵ (emphasis added).

In a world full of deceit, ever since the serpent approached Eve, beckoning and tempting her to doubt the truthfulness of God's Word, Bible teachers are called to stand upon the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures. Why? Because God's special revelation is the means by which God sanctifies believers and is the only source of knowing God, what he requires of mankind, how he has intervened to save a people for himself, and what he plans to do in the future. If one has no conviction or trust

²⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 566.

in the truthfulness of the Scriptures, then the entire Christian system of belief is called into question. Yet, if the Bible is God's Word, if it does not contain error, and if it is incapable of error, the next assumption is that the Scriptures are authoritative for all of life.

Authoritative

The continued study of the core characteristics of the Bible reminds us that God's Word is what it is to the believer because of the nature of the God who inspired it. To understand the authoritative nature of the Bible, one must first recognize the omnipotent character of God. The word *omnipotence* describes the power that God exerts over all creation and underscores the scriptural descriptions of God as the Almighty. In Rev 1:8, the apostle John conveys the vision of God that he is given with a sentence from God himself describing his very nature: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, 'the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.' In that one verse alone, God's preeminence, eternality, and power are revealed. The word, *almighty*, literally means "all-powerful, omnipotent one."²⁶ His power is on display in the book of Revelation, as he is revealed as the transcendent God who wields control over all history from start to finish. The authoritative, powerful nature of God results in one reaction from redeemed humanity: worship around his throne that exalts him as the one to whom blessing, honor, glory, and power are due (Rev 5:13).

This God who is revealed as almighty, all-powerful, and omnipotent demands not only worship but also obedience of living. As he reveals himself through divine inspiration, Christians come to personally know the Almighty and the desires he has for those who follow him. The Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to bring about obedience to God's commands. Yet, those who walk in disobedience to God's Word

²⁶ Frederick W. Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (BDAG) (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), 755.

are essentially disobeying God.²⁷ This detail helps to define scriptural authority as an acknowledgment that the Bible is the supreme, final standard of truth to which the Christian submits. The book of James reminds believers to “be doers of the word and not hearers only” (Jas 1:22). The “doer” of God’s Word is promised blessing “in what he does” (Jas 1:25). First John connects obedience to God’s Word with being a true follower of Jesus: “This is how we know him: if we keep his commands. The one who says, ‘I have come to know him,’ and yet doesn’t keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him” (1 John 2:3–5). Thus, a Bible teacher understands the authoritative role the Bible has for Jesus followers and seeks to understand all that Scripture has to say, so both she and those whom she teaches may walk in obedience to all it requires.

Necessary

Defining the term *necessary* in relation to the Scriptures “is simply to say that we need it.”²⁸

In the Gospel of John, the necessity of Scripture is put on greatest display as Jesus interacts with his disciples. John 6 reveals that some who followed Jesus decided to turn away and no longer follow him. The text says that after the others left, “Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘You don’t want to go away too, do you?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God’” (John 6:67–69). Peter’s reason that the Twelve dare not turn away is twofold: Jesus has the words of eternal life, and he is the Holy One of God.

When one ponders the nature of special revelation and considers that God has used the written Word to communicate himself to people, the ultimate deduction is that the very words of God are necessary, primarily for eternal life. Peter realized this truth and connected the Word

²⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 71.

²⁸ Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 211.

of God with the Word incarnate, Christ. John Frame explores the connection between the written Word and Christ, and its salvific import for the believer:

People often claim to have a personal relationship to Christ, while being uncertain about the role of Scripture in that relationship. But the relationship that Christ has established with his people is a covenant relationship and therefore a verbal relationship, among other things. Jesus' words, today, are found only in Scripture. So, if we are to have a covenant relationship with Jesus, we must acknowledge Scripture as his Word. No Scripture, no Lord. No Scripture, no Christ. And no Scripture, no salvation.²⁹

Frame's logic cannot be dismissed for the teacher of the Bible. The necessity of Scripture for the salvation and discipleship of souls inevitability implies commitment to the Bible as the core curriculum to be mined, cherished, loved, and disseminated for the upbuilding of fellow believers.

Sufficient

Meditation upon the details of the Bible's nature brings joy to the heart. After exploring the many attributes of Scripture, with the most precious being the necessity of God's Word for eternal life, one finds delight in the fact that if the Bible is indeed necessary, then God has met that need with a Word that is entirely sufficient. Sufficiency is "the affirmation that Scripture is itself sufficient for doctrine and life (2 Tim 3:16–17) inasmuch as the Scriptures are learned with the illuminating assistance of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 1:6ff.) and life is lived by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:3)."³⁰ Second Timothy 3:16–17 are the verses most often used to demonstrate the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and it is helpful to consider exactly what those verses state about the satisfactory nature of God's Word. Paul wrote this epistle

²⁹ Frame, 212.

³⁰ David S. Dockery and David P. Nelson, "Special Revelation," in *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 163.

at the end of his ministry and used his letter to encourage and build up a young pastor named Timothy. As Paul labors to “pass the baton” to an upcoming leader, he tells the young pastor to remember that God’s Word is “profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” When Paul describes the Bible as “profitable,” what he is saying is that its “value is unparalleled and indeed essential to the Christian pastoral task.”³¹

While this text specifically applies to pastoral ministry—the Bible is sufficient for the tasks of pastoring and preaching—one may deduce an application point that the Bible is the direct source for every believer to go to and find teaching (doctrine), rebuke (“reproof that is either personal or doctrinal”), correction (“revealing error and restoring to the right path”), and training (“moral training that leads to righteous living”).³² This principle is underscored by 2 Pet 1:3–4, which explains that God’s “divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. By these he has given us very great and precious promises . . .” Peter connects the idea of God’s “divine power” which is sufficient for life and godliness with “his very great and precious promises.” Christ is able to provide all that believers need for eternal life and for a godly life on earth, through our knowledge of him, through his promises. Surely, the Word of God outlines and details every great and precious promise of Christ, and it is sufficient for the task of calling believers to salvation and godly living.

Clear

The clarity of the Scriptures, also referred to as “perspicuity” by theologians, may be defined as “the belief that the words of Scripture are sufficiently clear (perspicuous) so that the competent Christian can read and

³¹ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (PNTC) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 430.

³² Hayne P. Griffin Jr. and Thomas D. Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture* (NAC) (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 237.

understand its redemptive message without the need for church tradition as an official guide.”³³ You may immediately be reminded of times of confusion or misunderstanding while reading the Scriptures, for the Bible does contain material that is difficult to grasp. For example, concepts and dialogue found within the book of Job can be unclear to those who do not seek assistance from commentaries or study Bibles. The perspicuous nature of God’s Word does allow for difficulty in understanding.

When thinking about perspicuity, one must understand that the doctrine applies to clarity surrounding knowledge of salvation and the need for guidance from the Holy Spirit. Charles Hodge explains,

It is not denied that the Scriptures contain many things hard to be understood; that they require diligent study; that all men need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to right knowledge and true faith. But it is maintained that in all things necessary to salvation they are sufficiently plain to be understood even by the unlearned.³⁴

Thus, the Scriptures are not only necessary to know about salvation, are not only sufficient to teach about salvation, but they are written in such a way that they are clear concerning salvation. Still, the work of the Spirit must be underscored. Bible teachers who believe in the necessity, sufficiency, and clarity of God’s Word are totally dependent upon God’s Spirit to help them understand the truths the Scriptures convey.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the revelation of God, both general and special. The nature of the Bible, that it is inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative, necessary, sufficient, and clear, has been defined, allowing you to contemplate the Bible’s core characteristics in relation to teaching the Bible and in the context of ministry to women. While this chapter considered

³³ Hernando, *Dictionary of Hermeneutics*, 31.

³⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1873), 183.

the main identifying features of the Bible, two important characteristics have not been explored: its unity and its Christotelic storyline. Chapter 2 advances an understanding of God's Word by revealing the importance of biblical theology for teaching the Word.



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