



Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of
Niles

Volume 1/Issue 10

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

WELCOME

This week's reading is Psalm 73 (ESV).
Titled, *God Is My Strength and Portion Forever*
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. **2** But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. **3** For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. **4** For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. **5** They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. **6** Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. **7** Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. **8** They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. **9** They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. **10** Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. **11** And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" **12** Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. **13** All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. **14** For

all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. **15** If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children. **16** But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, **17** until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. **18** Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. **19** How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! **20** Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. **21** When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, **22** I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. **23** Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. **24** You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. **25** Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. **26** My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. **27** For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. **28** But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

This weeks Psalm is a wisdom psalm, helping those who sing it to rest content even when unbelievers seem to get along without a care in the world, and the faithful are attempted to join them. Or maybe it's their temperament and frustration joining their voices with those during this time of sheltering-in-place. Taking to heart where the different life paths of the faithful and unbelievers are headed; each one going toward their nearness to God or separation from him. The singer remembers that he discerned these different destinations while he was in the sanctuary of God, namely, at public worship (which points the congregation to what they should look for as they worship.)

Join us for a virtual prayer meeting on Wednesdays at 7:00pm.

Wednesday Bible Study ([Click Here](#))
Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230
Password: 409807
One tap mobile
+13126266799
Meeting ID: 899 2251 1230
Password: 409807



The Watchman's Notes
*Offering biblical messages, perspectives
and views on
Biblical & moral issues and current
events.*

A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor – Bible
Teacher

*"For thus the Lord said to me: Go, set a
watchman; let him announce what he
sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]*

May 14, 2020 – Issue #9

Dear friends:

Americans don't know much about Theology [Meaning, "the study of God"]. Most say that God wrote the Bible (about 58% of people). But they are not sure everything in it is true. Fewer than half of Americans (about 47%) say the Bible is 100 per cent accurate in all it teaches. Forty-three percent disagree. Ten percent are not sure.

I trust my article today on "How God gave man the Bible" will provide you with sufficient evidence on the authenticity and reliability of the God's Word. If not, perhaps it will encourage you to do some additional research on your own.

Bible engagement [reading & studying] is on the rise in the United States – for the first time in more than 10 years. Why is that? Because the number one thing that draws people to God's Word is pain and trauma. And we just happen to be living through a lot of trauma and pain right now because of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Just about every single person is experiencing difficult circumstances, like unemployment, financial hardship, health concerns and separation from loved ones.

People need HOPE! They need to know that God is in control and we're going to get through this. They need to know that we can persevere and we can make it. God's Word provides HOPE that nothing else can provide. We can have HOPE in the eternal promises of Jesus the Christ.

Has God gotten our attention yet?

"How God gave man the Bible?"

I have always believed that one thing every Christian should know is "How we got the Bible?" Most Christians don't know how we got the Word of God! When I was the Pastor of a church [all three], I usually preached several messages a year about the Bible. In fact, a couple of times I taught an Adult Sunday School Class - a 13-week course in How we got the Bible – needless to say, it was a detailed and thorough study.

How did God give man His Word or the teachings we know today as the Bible? This Issue of *The Watchman's Notes* is dedicated to all those who would like the "Cliff's Notes" version or the shortened version of a multi-week course.

Everybody knows the Bible has been and continues to be the world's best-selling Book, but not everybody knows just how this amazing Book came down to us today. It *could have* happened this way: *someone was walking along the road and found a stone tablet or some artifacts with writing on it – "Thus saith the Lord?"* Or perhaps at some ecumenical scripture session or church council or synagogue meeting – a group of prophets and priests got together in Jerusalem to write a religious best seller. *Then a committee was soon formed which assigned the books, appointed the authors, and arranged for all the other details. Upon completion, the publicity chairman commissioned the Palestinian Press to print up the first one million copies! I am saying – maybe, it could have happened that way!* But of course – it didn't happen that way!

However, some will believe this – just like those who believe all the other stories about *prophets* that have come along hundreds of years after Jesus with *their findings* or the so-called truth! The Mormons have their Book of Mormon that is not the Bible – the Muslims have their Koran – but that is not the Word of God. The issue is not whether the sacred writings of any religious group are popular or unpopular – the issue is whether they are true or false!

We have to ask - *if what is purported as the Word of God – then it has to be consistent and in accord with all available evidence. What God says is never contradictory – He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13) – it is utterly impossible for God to lie.* Therefore, God's truth will not misrepresent historical truth.

The fact of the matter is that God used *several wonderful methods* as He carefully carved out that most blessed of all books – His Word, the Bible! These tools [carving tools] are referred to as Revelation, Inspiration, Illumination and Canonicity. I want to show you how the Bible came into being and why it can be accepted as the unerring, authoritative Word of God.

How then did we receive our Bible?

Sometime around 1500 BC [Before Christ] God began to quietly call some 40 different men and women into His presence. They were not aware of it. They were from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, farmers, and a physician. They lived on three different Continents [Asia, Africa and Europe] – and spoke several different languages [Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek]. He didn't call them all at once in some big church/synagogue meeting, mind you. In fact, it took about 15 centuries to complete the job. God spoke the burden of His great heart in simple and common language to those 40 chosen writers. And when God had finished – the first tool in carving out the Bible was set aside. Revelation had occurred.

Revelation – means “disclosure” or “the unveiling” – it comes from a Greek word “Apokalypsis,” which means “lifting of the veil”, or finding out something secret.” Often this secret is discovered in a dream or vision. – Revelation has to do with disclosing, uncovering, or unveiling what previously was hidden, making known what had been secret. It refers to God’s deliberate manifestation or showing of His plans, His character, and Himself.

There is General Revelation which deals with the truths God has revealed about Himself through nature, providence, and conscience. (*Psalms 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21; Romans 2:14-15*).

There is also Special Revelation which is a narrower focus. Special Revelation is the various means God used to communicate His message. God spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many ways: the casting of lots, dreams, visions, audible voice, angels, theophanies, miracles, and of course, the Bible itself.

Then the Almighty God carefully guided each chosen human vessel in their assigned writing tasks. Each of the 40 individuals was dealt with individually. JOB, a rich farmer, wrote differently than Amos, a poor farmer. The words of the educated Paul were to be more complicated on occasion than those of uneducated men like John and Peter. But all would carry with them the Divine approval of heaven itself.

After the last Scribe [The Jewish Copyists] laid down his or her pen, the angels watched as their creator laid aside the second tool in carving out God’s manuscript - Inspiration.

Inspiration – (2 Timothy 3:16-17) (NIV) - “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Inspiration is an important tool or concept to understand because it is the necessary element to preserve the revelation of God. If God has revealed Himself but the record of that revelation

is not accurately recorded – then the revelation of God is subject to question. Therefore, Inspiration is what guarantees the accuracy of the revelation. The English word “Inspiration” in its theological usage comes from the Greek text in (2 Timothy 3:16). The word is used to translate the Greek term, “Theo-pneustos” which means “God-breathed.”

For 2000 years Christians have used a particular phrase to describe what they believe about the Bible. We call it THE WORD OF GOD. That phrase alone sets the Bible apart from every other book. When we use that phrase THE WORD OF GOD, we mean that the Bible comes from God, and He records His message to us – it comes from the very “breath of God” – God breathed it out to the human writers. “All Scripture is God-breathed” [Theo-pneustos] “Pasa graphe” [GK] means “all or every bit of the writings” are inspired or breathed out by God.

This tells us that the Bible originated in the mind of God, and just as the universe came into existence by the very word or breath of God – so did God breathe out the very words of the Bible, and the human authors wrote them down. In a supernatural way, the Holy Spirit of God influenced or directed the individual author or writer to write down the message that God wanted mankind to have. The prime mover in inspiration is God and God the Holy Spirit superintended the writers to ensure the accuracy of the writing.

(2 Peter 1:20-21) - Peter tells us how this worked. “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. 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.”

Though men were involved in the process – the Bible originated with God and was authorized by Him. As these men wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit – they used their own individual writing styles and personalities. That my friends are why the Bible is Infallible – not capable of being wrong – it teaches only truth – and

it means the Bible is Inerrant or without error – it is not capable of teaching error. Inspiration applies specifically to the original writings [or manuscripts] of the Bible - not to copies or translations. However, this should not cause us any concern about whether the Bible we hold in our hands today is truly the Word of God.

Many precautions and standards were taken in the process of translating the Bible from the original languages to ensure the accuracy of each copy of the Bible that was made and passed on to the next generation. It is possible to be 100% certain of the truth preserved in the texts and copies that have been passed on and survive today. Bible Scholars and Archaeologists have proven over and over again that we hold a Bible we can trust fully to be the Word of God.

To summarize: Revelation is: the message goes from God to man [man hears that which God wants written].

Inspiration is: the message goes from man to the paper or papyrus or stone tablet, whatever writing material was available at the time [man writes down what God wants written].

And finally, there is illumination - that’s what happens when God’s message written in the Bible goes to the heart of man [man receives that which God has written]. illumination is that method used by the Holy Spirit to shed divine light upon all seeking hearts as they look and read into the Word of God. Simply put, illumination in the spiritual sense is “turning on the light” of understanding in some area. Throughout the ages, people in every culture and religion have claimed some kind of revelation or enlightenment from God (whether true or not). When that enlightenment deals with new knowledge or future things, we call it prophecy. When that enlightenment deals with understanding and applying knowledge already given, we call it illumination.

The most basic level of enlightenment is the knowledge of sin, and without that knowledge, everything else is pointless. (*Psalm 18:28*) says, “You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God

turns my darkness into light.” (Psalm 119), which is the longest chapter in the Bible, is a song about God’s Word. In verse 130, it says “*The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*” This verse establishes the basic method of God’s illumination. When God’s Word enters the heart of a person, it gives light and understanding to them. For this reason, we are repeatedly told to study the Word of God. (Psalm 119:11) says, “*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*” Verses 98 and 99 say, “*Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.*”

The Canon of Scripture

We usually think of the Bible as one large Book or Volume. In reality, it is a small library of 66 individual books. Together these books comprise what we call the “CANON” of sacred Scripture. The term “CANON” comes from a Greek word that means “*measuring rod or ruler,*” or “*Standard for measurement,*” or “*Norm.*” Over time, the word eventually came to be used of the books that were “*measured*” and thereby recognized as being God’s Word.

Let’s make a distinction between Inspiration and Canonicity: “*Inspiration*” indicates how the Bible received its authority – whereas “*Canonicity*” tells us How the Bible received its acceptance.

When we speak of the *Canon of Scripture*, it means the list of books contained in the Scriptures, or the Bible – the list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the writings of the Christian Faith. The first clear application of this term to the Bible goes back to AD 367 to a man named Athanasius (aka Athanasius the Great, a Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt).

However, it is God who determines the Canon or Canonicity of the Bible. A book is not inspired because men made it *canonical*. It is canonical because God inspired it. Thus, *Canonicity* is determined by inspiration. It is

determined by God and it is discovered by man.

What does this really mean?

It means - No church or religious council determines which book is Canonical or fits into the Canon of measurement. It is God, God only - not man, who determines whether a Book is inspired and thus Canonical. God gives the Books of the Bible their divine authority. God’s people recognize this authority but they do not determine its authority.

The books of the Bible became Canon the moment they were written. They did not have to wait for the church’s sanction or approval to become part of the *Canon*. For example, Moses’ writings [first 5 books of the Bible] were received into the *Canon* shortly after they were written. Moses’ writings were considered authoritative and of God while Moses was still living (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). *Daniel* accepted Jeremiah’s book as *canonical* (Daniel 9:2). *Peter* considered Paul’s letters to be Holy Scriptures (2 Peter 3:15-16).

The Canon of the Hebrew Bible

The 24 books of the Hebrew Bible or Jewish O.T. Scriptures are the same 39 books we have in the English Protestant O.T. Bible. The difference in number is due to how the Jews numbered them – enumeration. From the beginning the inspired writings of the Old Testament were collected by the Jews and revered as sacred and divinely authoritative. The O.T. Canon era, as determined by God, lasted from 1445 BC to 430 BC [Malachi]. By the time of Jesus, the Canon of the Old Covenant had been fixed. By the beginning of the Christian era the O.T. as we know it today was well-known and widely accepted.

Roman Catholics and Protestants have the same 39 OT books. The Jews count these same books in a different way = 24. Where we disagree is the inclusion of a group of books called the “Apocrypha” [means hidden, concealed, secretive] by the Roman Catholic Church. The Apocrypha consists of about 14 books that were not part of the original Hebrew Canon. These books were

written after the Hebrew O.T. was written and before the N.T. was begun and did not meet the standards that were applied to the O.T. books or for that matter the N.T. books that were accepted as part of the Canon. The Roman Catholic Church decided to include these Apocrypha books between the two Testaments following the Protestant Reformation at the Catholic Council of Trent [1545-1563].

- The early church Fathers [Origen, Jerome, Augustine] all denied their inspiration.
- The Jewish Council of Jamnia in AD 90 rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture.
- They contain unbiblical doctrines [like praying for the dead or purgatory & salvation by works]
- They also contain historical and geographical inaccuracies.
- No N.T. writer [including Jesus Himself] ever quoted from any of these books as holy scripture or gave them any authority as inspired books.

The New Testament Canon

The entire N.T. 27 books were written within 50-60 years of Jesus’ death & resurrection - not hundreds or thousands of years later. However, the geographic distance or range was far wider than the O.T. books. As they were written they were immediately copied and sent out to various countries, cities and churches on several continents. Many books written during the N.T. times were recognized as being the Word of God at that time. Paul revealed this in 1 Tim 5:18 when he joined an O.T. reference and a N.T. reference together and called them both “*Scripture.*”

Some critics of the Bible will argue, that the Church didn’t approve of a Bible as such until the Council of Carthage in AD 397. But that is a distortion of the whole process. The Church met in a Council on several occasions over the years to discuss and settle disputes related to the Canon of Books going back to AD 70 or so. When the church formally recognized

what books belonged in the Canon – several primary tests were applied:

- Was the book written or backed by a prophet or apostle of God or someone closely associated with an apostle? (Apostolic authority).
- Was the book authoritative? (Based on Inspiration).
- Orthodoxy? If a book contradicted the apostolic faith and teachings – it wasn't considered as part of the canon. In other words, did the book tell the truth about God as it was already known by previous revelation? Was the book *in harmony* with others books?
- Universal church recognition? Was the book accepted by the people of God? All the N.T. letters and books were circulated among the churches and God's people. Did the people receive these books as God's Word?

Over the years, well-qualified people have written volumes of books, to explain everything you need to know about the Bible. Someone has said; *Man could not write the Bible if he would* - Even if a person had all the necessary spirituality – he could not know all the facts involved in the historical, scientific and prophetic statements found in the Bible. Without God's direction – *the Bible is not a Book that any man could write if he would! And Man would not write the Bible if he could.* Suppose God gave sinful man all the necessary facts and abilities to write the Bible. What then? *Man, still would not write it correctly, if he could!*

The Bible is not an edited book written by man or a church council. God wrote it and God is absolutely honest & trustworthy – He tells it like it is! Human writers would never do that!

Is the Bible the Word of God? You bet it is! You have been given some great arguments and evidences that it is. And I will say this without apology: *You will never be a great Christian or follower of*

Christ until you come to the unshakable conviction that the Bible is the Word of God. Amen!

In our reading this week of Psalm 73 I call your attention to the first part of verse 24. It says, *"You guide me with your counsel."* This fits in perfectly with Pastor Vitel's lesson this week as the verse refers to instruction from God's Word. Pastor Vitel mentions illumination and says, *"That's what happens when God's message written in the Bible goes to the heart of man [man receives that which God has written]. Illumination is that method used by the Holy Spirit to shed divine light upon all seeking hearts as they look and read into the Word of God. Simply put, illumination in the spiritual sense is *"turning on the light"* of understanding in some area." As the Word gets into our hearts we are contented because we are near to God. This nearness brings about confidence that we have him, God, as the strength of our heart and our portion forever.*

This confidence is seen in Psalm 19:7-11, *"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."*

The word Confidence comes from a latin word *fidere* which means "to trust." When we trust in the Bible being God breathed, then we can rely on everything in it being profitable for our use in making life decisions.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 is a verse that has given me the confidence to make some "humanly" tough decisions in my faith life. *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in*

righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Working back from verse 17 we see that scripture, referring back to the previous verse, makes one "complete" and "equipped for good work." In a broad sense, this means everything that God calls a believer to do. In a specific sense, it supports the doctrine of "sufficiency of scripture." This is the idea that the truth contained in scripture is sufficient in all matters pertaining to doctrine and moral behavior.

Briefly, there are four main areas of profitability that are mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:16.

1. God's Word is profitable for doctrine. Doctrine is a belief that is taught. To us as a people, it is the Bible which teaches about God and His Son our Saviour and man's obligation to accept that provision.

2. God's Word is profitable for reproof. Reproof convicts us of sin and points us to the Saviour. It is that which shows us our need of salvation and creates within us a desire to be saved.

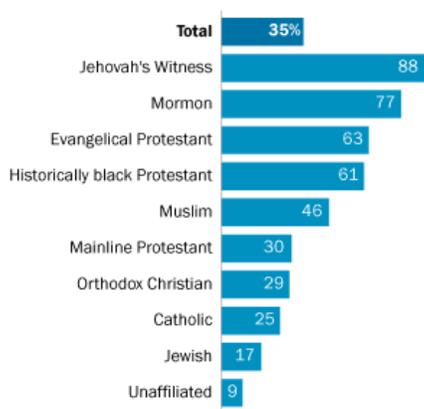
3. God's Word is profitable for correction. Correction may be the hardest of God's Word for us to accept. We struggle with a carnal nature which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for us to respond properly to correction unless we are born again and made new creatures in Christ.

4. God's Word is profitable for instruction in righteousness. In our lifetime we will never outgrow our need for spiritual instruction. The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:48 *"Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* The only way for us to grow toward God-like perfection is to be continually instructed in His righteousness. We cannot receive enough instruction by attending services once or twice a week. Daily we must spend time in meditation and study of the scriptures.

One of the greatest facts in all of history is that God gave us a Book. He has spoken. He has revealed himself to us through prophets and apostles, and appointed that they write down his words and that they be preserved. We have his words! We can hear in our souls the very voice of God himself by his Spirit through his Book. But only about one-third of Americans read scripture WEEKLY.

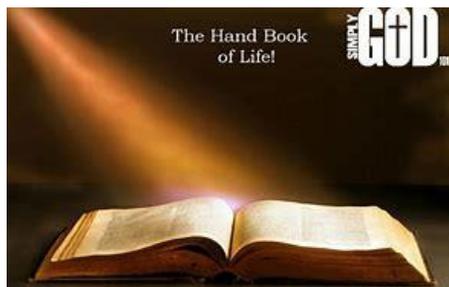
About one-third of Americans read scripture weekly

% of adults who read scripture at least once a week, by religious tradition



Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER





PRAYER LIST

✓ Continuing Prayers for loss:

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year. Remember those who have recently lost loved ones due to COVID 19. The family of Mary Grace Reyes.

✓ Continuing Prayers for physical needs:

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria, Anne Benliro's co-worker's husband—Oscar with Covid-19.

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor and Sue Vitel

✓ Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:

Leonard Hatfield, Carol Pelfrey's family, Daniel Ruehlman

✓ Continuing Prayers for:

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families, Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman living together at Bella Terra Nursing Home

Mylin Lardizabal - My husband, Errol, and I are both nurses and Errol did get assigned to work in ICU to take care of Covid patients, he will have to work on the unit for at least a month.

Liza Mitchell in her role as a health care worker at Vi Independent and Assisted Living Facility she has responsibility over those with Covid 19 .

Pray for our members that have lost employment and for those who still have jobs and need to interact with others on a daily basis. Pray for those still working that God will protect.

Rita McManus - Has been under the weather. Visited doctor. Reported NO Covid19.

George Bizadellis – Salvation. Brian has been witnessing to him. This past Saturday Al Nuzikowski was able to give him his testimony.

Lift up all our health professionals and their families who are on the front line of this pandemic.

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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