

**Live in 3-D**  
**The Authority of the Bible**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Intro: Today, we have the opportunity to launch into the concept of “Live in 3-D.” But before we do, remember that I gave you some homework last week. The purpose of the Church was defined in a single sentence: ***“We exist to help people become mature followers of Jesus Christ.”***

Today, we consider the first D of 3-D. It stands for Discover God. A person who is mature in Christ will find out that their perception of God is different.

A middle aged woman has a heart attack and is taken to the hospital. While on the operating table she has a near-death experience. During that experience she sees God and asks if this is it. God says no and explains that she has another 30-40 years to live.

Upon her recovery she decides to just stay in the hospital and have a face lift, liposuction, breast augmentation, and a tummy tuck. She even has someone come in and change her hair colour. She figures that since she's got another 30 or 40years she might as well make the most of it.

She walks out the hospital after the last operation and is killed by an ambulance speeding up to the hospital.

She arrives in front of God again and asks, "I thought you said I had another 30-40 years?"

God replies, "Sorry, I didn't recognize you."

To the immature, God suffers from mistaken identity. He is either a sweet, doting, loving old man or a harsh, judgemental, loveless one.

We believe that the best way to Discover the Real God is to learn from the primary source that goes into detail about Him.

Whenever your kids are out of control, you can take comfort from the thought that even God's omnipotence did not extend to God's kids. After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve. And the first thing He said to them was: "Don't."

"Don't what?" Adam asked. "Don't eat the Forbidden Fruit." God replied. "Forbidden fruit? We got Forbidden Fruit? Hey, Eve..we got Forbidden Fruit!" "No way!" "Where?" "Don't eat that fruit!" said God. "Why?"

"Because I am your Creator and I said so!" said God, wondering why he hadn't stopped after making the elephants. A few minutes later God saw the kids having an apple break and was angry.

"Didn't I tell you not to eat that fruit?" the 'First Parent' asked. "Uh huh," Adam replied. "Then why did you?" "I dunno," Eve answered. "She started it!" Adam said.

"Did not!" "DID so!" "DID NOT!"

Having had it with the two of them, God's punishment was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own...thus the pattern was set, and it has never changed.

I'm going to preach about the authority of the Bible today. Ten years from now this will be an even more difficult sermon to preach." There are at least two beliefs that will continue to run more counter-culturally to the direction that our society is moving. The first belief is that Jesus is the only way to salvation. People love to say that all roads lead to heaven and that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere in your belief. That's the one message that will be very difficult. The second one is the one the authority and the reliability of the Scriptures.

People have a hard time in this age of enlightenment accepting that a book written thousands of years ago should be our guide for today—especially if we claim that it is absolute truth and that it is God's Word.

Have you ever seen builders putting up a bank? “First they put down a cement pad, then they bring in this huge, heavy, silver box and they set it down on the pad. Then they begin framing and adding drywall.” The huge, heavy, silver box was the vault. It was the most important thing, and because of its size, because of its weight and because of its importance they have to build everything around it. They couldn’t get it through the door after they put the framing up.

You see, you construct what is most important. You lay the foundation. And what a vault is to a bank, Christ is to Christianity and this book is to the church. Christ is the living Word; the Bible is the written Word. They are the foundation, and contained within them are the valuable treasures that open the door to forgiveness from sins, rules to live by, patterns for the abundant life and the pathway to eternity with Jesus Christ.

We begin our series of “Live in 3-D” with this part of Christianity that is so important—a sturdy undergirding that assures you that you can be grounded in the Word, you can believe it, and you can trust that it is God’s master plan to communicate to us.

### ***I. The Authors of the Bible***

First, let’s notice the authors of the Bible. There are about forty different authors, yet it still remains internally consistent. Now we are discovering that it even remains externally consistent through some of the findings that people are discovering in ancient areas of civilization that have been unearthed. God inspired forty people over a 1500 year period to write down His message for mankind. For the most part it was written down in two languages. For the most part, the Old Testament is in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. God used the personalities of the authors—their skills, their backgrounds, their personal styles—and yet it was God’s message and it has remained accurate and valid in every society. Now I say “over forty different authors” but the amazing thing about the Bible is that it manifests a unity that could only exist if there was just one author responsible for its contents. For, you see, the author of the Bible is God who has revealed His message to human authors.

### ***II. The Writing of the Bible***

Secondly, the writing of the Bible—God supernaturally oversaw the writing of the Scriptures so that the writer in his own personality composed and recorded, without error, God’s revelation in the original manuscripts or letters. Their style and their personality came through in their writings. For example, in Mark’s Gospel, in the account of the woman who suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years, Mark said, “She suffered under the care of many doctors.” Now Luke, in his gospel account, is a doctor, so he’s not going to say that “she suffered under the care of many doctors”; instead he says that “she suffered from an incurable disease.” Now both said the same thing, but they did it from their own personal and professional experiences and their perspective comes through.

Have you watched any of the Presidential Debates? One of the candidates said last, “We are saying some of the same words, but we are meaning something very different.” We see just the opposite in the Bible. For example, in the four gospels the writers give different observations of their time with Christ, but they convey the same thing. They are speaking from their own perspective but the message is the same: Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, the Savior of the world, the One who can heal—regardless of whether its incurable or whether it’s just too complicated for doctors to be able to diagnose. The bottom line is that He is the Great Physician and He can heal us both physically and He can also heal us spiritually. You see, God could’ve had spiritual robots write and say the exact same thing, but it would have diminished the credibility and it wouldn’t reach out to every person.

Some people, though, are condescending when it comes to the fact that God used human beings, imperfect man, to record and write the Bible. A nonbeliever said, “Well, I have hard time believing that God used man to write the Bible.” And a Christian replied, “Would you rather He used rabbits?”

Max Anders says, “God could’ve dropped a finished Bible out of heaven, but the fact that He gave it quite differently should not escape us as unimportant. You see, God has always enjoyed using ordinary people in supernatural ways to do extraordinary things.

### ***III. The Foundation of the Bible***

The next area I want us to see is the foundation of the Bible. I want us to notice four different planks in this foundation. The first is that of incarnation.

#### **A. Plank # 1: Incarnation**

The Bible calls Jesus “the Word of God.” John 1:1 and 2: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” Now we usually think of the Word as being the Bible, but in this case John starts it off by reminding us of the correlation between the living Word and the written Word. Listen to this figurative description given to Jesus in the book of Revelation. Revelation 19:13, “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.” This is very significant. I don’t want you to miss the correlation between the written Word and the living Word. Max Anders, who helped start the *Walk Thru the Bible* program, says:

The fact that the Bible calls Jesus the Word of God reveals that there is a very close connection in the mind of God the Father between the written Word, the Bible, and the living Word, Jesus. Jesus has fully revealed to us what God is like, how we can be related to Him and what God expects of us. The Bible, God’s written revelation, secures the revelation Jesus provided and transmits it to the extent any writing can to all believers who live after Jesus’ earthly life.

### **B. Plank # 2: Inspiration**

So at first we have the incarnation. Secondly, we have the inspiration. II Timothy 3:16 and 17: “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.” “All Scripture is God-breathed.” When God dipped His pen, He wrote out the words through finite and imperfect man who were led by the Holy Spirit of God. They were inspired by Him. God *breathed* it into them.

The significance here is that the Bible claims to be inspired by God. When you make a claim like that, you invite the scrutiny of people. You may not be familiar with I Thessalonians 2:13, “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

### **C. Plank # 3: Inerrancy**

There is a third plank, and that is inerrancy, inerrancy. By that I am saying that the Bible is verbally and totally inspired and without error in the original writings. God

made certain that the scribes who made copies, letter by letter, were very thorough and very careful. In fact, the way they did it back then when they copied a manuscript was they would double check the other person's work beside them before they would be able to move onto the next line. If it was inaccurate, they had to start all over again.

Inerrancy is a bold statement based upon the incredible manuscript evidence and a trust in God's providential plan of passing along a complete document that does not have errors. Some people will say, "Well, parts of it probably have some errors," or, "Some sections might not be inspired." But you know, when you think about the Bible this is not a "pick and choose" proposition. W.A. Criswell, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, said:

You can't say, "This part is inspired and inerrant and those parts are not." If you do, you end up jeopardizing the Bible altogether. It's like letting a snake get just its head through a hole. If it can get its head through, there is nothing to keep the rest of the snake from going through.

#### **D. Plank # 4: Illumination**

The final plank in the foundation of the Bible is that of illumination. The Holy Spirit is living inside of the believer. That means that when you read God's Word, His Spirit will illuminate your understanding and increase the takeaway for those who have put their trust in Christ. This is a very important point that we don't talk a whole lot about. The Holy Spirit has a way of bringing to your mind an understanding of what God is trying to convey to those who believe in Him. Now that doesn't mean that you don't study and you don't research, that you don't dig into it; it means that the Holy Spirit can help communicate to you what the message is that God wants you to receive on that particular day.

#### **John 16:12-15:**

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, (the Holy Spirit) he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

The Holy Spirit reveals things to the believer as you hear Scriptures opened, as you read God's Word. That's why after a sermon or after a lesson, if you're sitting around in your small group or you're sitting in a Bible Study and you start talking about a particular section of the sermon, you say, "Oh, yeah. I really got this out of it," and you start sharing what God taught you out of that. Then a person across the room says, "Well, you know what? That same part really spoke to me, but this is what I got out of it." And the Holy Spirit communicates a message that both individuals needed to hear from the same Scripture but they might be very different lessons that they walk away with. The Holy Spirit illumines the written Word for the believer.

Let me set up a pretty deep passage that Paul shares in I Corinthians 2:11-14 by saying that at different times and in different situations you know what somebody else is thinking. Your boss makes a statement in the middle of a presentation to a board of directors, and you know that he didn't mean to say something that he said, and you know in your mind, "Oh, I bet you he is going crazy saying, 'Boy, I wish I hadn't said that.'" Or let's say that a person walking out of church tonight trips over something and a lot of people see it happen. You say, "Oh, boy, I feel sorry for that person, because that person feels embarrassed right now that other people witnessed that." The reason that we can relate to what other people are experiencing is because we share something in common: We are both mankind, and we've experienced it ourselves. The problem is, how do we understand the mind of God and the thoughts of God? We are imperfect creatures; He is a perfect Creator.

### **I Corinthians 2:11-14:**

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

That explains why nonbelievers cannot understand why you give ten percent of your income to this church to be used for the Lord's work. That's why your unbelieving friends cannot fathom why your teenager wants to go on a mission trip

to a Third World country instead of hanging out and partying with their teenage kids. You see, the Holy Spirit has a hold and it is illuminating God's plan.

#### **IV. The Compilation of the Bible**

But quickly, let's look at the compilation of the Bible. Throughout history there are certain books which have, by their very nature, distinguished themselves as more than just regular books. They have been historically and theologically true. They have told the story of God's relationship with His people. They've been written by people of God—like Moses or one of the prophets, an apostle or someone close to an apostle. They have been remarkably preserved. Now you have on your sheet a word called *canon*, and you'll notice it's spelled a little bit different than the cannon that you think of when I say the word. *Canon* is a Semitic word that originally meant "read" but it came to mean "measuring read" and hence "rule" or "standard." We could say that the Canon, when referring to the Bible, is the collection of documents that constitute authoritative Scripture.

In A.D. 397, a gathering of church leaders called the Council of Carthage took the books that we have in our Old and New Testament and they were officially acknowledged as Scriptures. Since that time the 39 Old Testament books and the 27 New Testament books have formed the Canon of Scripture for all Christians—a list that for Protestants has remained unchanged even today. Now since the beginning of the early church, there has been a controversy over whether or not a number of books sometimes referred by Protestants as the Apocrypha are considered Scripture. The Catholic church would say that the apocryphal books are inspired by God and that they are part of the Canon and that they should be included in the Old Testament Canon. There has been a debate that has waged through for centuries. The debate was refueled even back in the Reformation Movement.

But I want you to notice that if you have a Catholic Bible you might have some additional books that are in there that the Bible that Evangelical Christians usually use might not have in them. But the important thing for us to remember is that, even though Catholics and Protestants disagree about these books, this does not need to divide Christians. It's interesting to notice that there has never been any controversy over the 27 New Testament books which tell us that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. On that we can agree, and on that we can be united.

Church fathers employed three criteria to determine which books should be included in the New Testament. It had to be written by one of the apostles or close associates of Jesus. It had to be recognized by the early church as Scripture. And, doctrinally, it had to be consistent with all of the other writings. It's important for us to understand that if God is going to hold us accountable to truth, He's going to make certain that we have the truth. I believe that He did that by providentially overseeing the process of the formation of the Canon.

Theologian and author John Stott says:

The overriding reason for accepting the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture is plain loyalty to Jesus Christ. If Jesus endorsed the Old Testament (which He did), setting upon it the stamp of His own approval, He also foresaw the writing of the Scripture of the New Testament parallel to the Scripture of the Old Testament. Indeed, He not only foresaw it, He actually intended it and He deliberately made provision for it by appointing and handpicking and authorizing His apostles.

The Bible claims that God has spoken to us and that the Word is sufficient. If you think about it from a logic standpoint, would it make any sense for God to come to earth in the form of Jesus, to die upon a cross, to come back from the grave and then, after He was gone, not leave us with a written record of telling how we can get to be with Him? John Wesley said:

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safely on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way, for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book at any price. Give me the book of God. I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book.