

How We Got Our Bible

By John J. Yeo

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Study the comments relating to 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What is the significance of the phrase "breathed out by God"? What is the difference between objective and subjective truth? Why does this matter when it comes to the Word of God? Because God's Word is inspired by God, what does the Bible possess? Why is it important that Christians be "complete" to do every good work?

Assignment Two

Study the comments relating to 2 Peter 1:20-21 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What are the two negative statements and one positive statement in the passage? What do they communicate regarding the origin of the Bible and the doctrine of divine inspiration? How does the phrase "but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" apply to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy?

Assignment Three

Study the comments relating to Galatians 1:11-12 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How did Paul receive the message of the gospel? What does the word "revelation" mean? How can the Bible be written by men and still be the Word of God? Why is it important that the Bible be preserved and passed down to every generation?

Scripture to Memorize

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will understand the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and why the Bible was preserved and passed down to our generation.

John Yeo is assistant professor of Old Testament at Southwestern Seminary. Before coming to Southwestern, he served as a full-time faculty member and academic dean at Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, for five years. He is the author of *Plundering the Egyptians: The Old Testament and Historical Criticism at Westminster Theological Seminary (1929–1998)*. He also has served in various ministry positions, including serving as a youth minister for ten years. Contact him at jyeo@swbts.edu.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

A pastor wanted to illustrate the importance of the doctrine known as “divine revelation.” He asked a roomful of people to guess what he was thinking. He gave them a moment to guess. Then he said, “I was doing the backstroke in the Indian Ocean.” Although the crowd laughed, the reality was that the crowd could not guess what he was thinking.

When it comes to God, we have the same sort of issue. Unless God reveals Himself to us, we cannot know who He is and what He is like or what He has done.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 16. All Scripture. This phrase refers specifically to the Old Testament. But including the New Testament in “all Scripture” is proper since the New Testament speaks of its own divinely inspired nature (see 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Peter 3:15-16). **breathed out by God.** As we exhale, we articulate sounds with our mouths in order to communicate. Likewise, the Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the Bible and is, therefore, the ultimate Author of Scripture. Because the Bible is inspired by God, it possesses divine authority. **profitable for teaching.** The Bible explains God’s objective truth. Objective truth is different from subjective opinion. Objective truth is factual and rooted in reality, unaffected by a person’s emotions or opinions (see Psalm 119:160 and John 17:17). Subjective opinion, however, is based on how an individual thinks and feels about an issue. **for reproof.** Scripture rebukes us when we sin. **for correction.** Scripture shows us how to make changes and do what is right. **for training in righteousness.** Scripture shows us how to live upright lives pleasing to God.

Verse 17. the man of God. The apostle Paul encouraged a young man named Timothy to devote himself to the Word of God so he would be ready to fulfill his calling as a pastor. **may be complete.** Timothy’s training was to be based on knowing the Word of God and living according to its teachings. **equipped for every good work.** In the Greek, this phrase refers to a worker who is so well suited for a job that the worker is able to complete “every good work.”

Assignment One

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the questions regarding 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Discussion Question

From what you now know about 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what is the doctrine of “divine revelation” and why is it important?

On Your Own

Because the world is filled with many different perspectives, Christians have a hard time knowing what is right or wrong, but God has given us His Word. In the chart below fill in the boxes with the appropriate answers:

	The World Says . . .	The Word of God Says....
Pride		See James 4:6.
Sexual Purity		See 1 Thessalonians 4:3.
Bad Language		See Ephesians 4:29.
Greed		See Luke 12:15.

Read 2 Peter 1:20-21 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 20. no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

The apostle Peter declared that the words of the Bible did not arise from human guesswork or theorizing.

Verse 21. for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. The Scriptures were initiated by God. **but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** The words of Scripture were written by men who were moved by or carried along by the Holy Spirit. This does not mean those who wrote the Bible were mindless robots who wrote via dictation. God used their personalities, investigations and cultural perspectives (see Luke 1:1-4). At the same time, God still ensured that His Word was written in the words He intended. God protected the authors from introducing error into the original manuscripts of Scripture. This is known as the doctrine of inerrancy, which says the Bible is without error or falsehood.

Assignment Two

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on answers to two questions concerning 2 Peter 1:20-21.

Discussion Question

Second Peter 1:20-21 has two negative statements and one positive one. What are they, and what do they communicate regarding the origin and inerrancy of the Bible?

Read Galatians 1:11-12 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 11. the Gospel that was preached by me is man's gospel. According to Paul, the gospel of Jesus Christ did not have its origins in man or any human-invented traditions. Rather, the gospel was preached and spread by Paul because it was given

by God.

Verse 12. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul clearly denies that he had received the message of the gospel from any human source, but that it was explicitly revealed to him by Jesus Christ Himself.

The word *revelation* is defined as something that was previously unknown that has now been unveiled. This divinely revealed Word was, therefore, preserved and transmitted to our generation because it was meant to be preached and believed by Christians in all ages. In fact, God inspired men who were prophets to record the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 18:15-20) and apostles to write the New Testament (see Ephesians 3:5 and 2 Peter 3:5). The 39 Old Testament books were written from about 1500 BC to 400 BC, and the 27 New Testament books were written from around AD 45 to 100. Altogether, the Bible was written by more than 40 authors over a period of approximately 1,600 years. The Bible was accurately copied by trained scribes who developed techniques that would produce faithful copies of God's Word.

Assignment Three

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to questions drawn from Galatians 1:11-12.

Discussion Questions

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and 1 Corinthians 15:3 out loud. What principle is Paul communicating? Why is it important to pass down sound teaching to the next generation?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches that all Scripture is inspired by God. God is the ultimate Author of the Scriptures while the men He chose to write are secondary agents. However, these men were not mindless robots who were recording God's words by dictation. The Bible is clear that God used their personalities, investigations and cultural backgrounds to compose His Word.

2 Peter 1:21 declares that these men were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" as they "spoke from God." As the Holy Spirit inspired them, He gave them the words He wanted them to write. He also protected them from introducing error into the original manuscripts. This important teaching is known as inerrancy. Psalm 12:6 says, "The Words of the LORD are pure Words," and John 17:17 declares, "Your Word is truth."

The Bible's concept of truth, however, does not entail exacting precision as in a story you might see on the nightly news. When the Bible says there were four thousand men, this number was likely a round number and not the specific number of men who were present (see Matthew 15:38 and Mark 8:9). The fact that about four thousand men were present is still true even though it is not exact. Inerrancy means that all the Bible declares are truthful words and not intended to deceive or lie to us. This makes sense because God cannot lie (see Titus 1:2) and He is Truth itself (see John 14:6, 17).

Galatians 1:11-12 reveals that Paul preached the gospel to people because it was given to him by Jesus Christ. That gospel was not the figment of any human's imagination. This divinely inspired and revealed Word was to be spread to all people in all places throughout all generations. The goal was that people might have salvation and become Christ's disciples ("learners") who are taught everything Jesus commanded them (Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15). Because He has preserved His Word to our generation, we are blessed to know how God wants us to think, what God wants us to say and what God wants us to do.

Follow-Up Question

How can you use Scripture to support the fact that God's Word is inspired and inerrant?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.