

**SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION** with Pastor Mike Maslin

- I. Why this topic matters: background issues
- II. Doctrines that drive faithful interpretation.
- III. Claims that can affect faithful interpretation.
- IV. Conclusions
- V. Questions for Personal Application

I. Why this topic matters: background issues.

A. What brought you here today?

No matter what brought you here, there will be something for everyone to learn! God wants His ways and His truth to be known to us. So He has given us His Word. No matter where you are in a walk with God’s Word, God has something for you today.

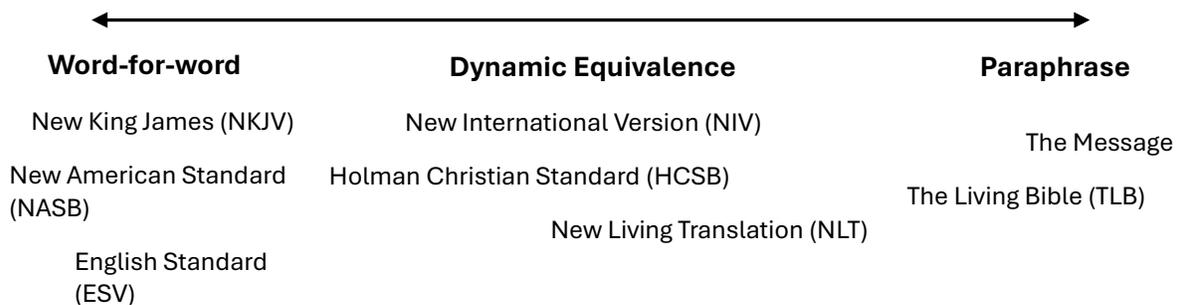
B. Who have we, on earth, to thank for the Bible we hold before us?

Significant moments and figures:

- Jerome (translated the Latin Vulgate ca. 400 AD)
- John Wycliffe (translated into English ca. 1390 AD) – severely persecuted
- William Tyndale (translated into English from Greek and Hebrew ca. 1530 AD) – burned at the stake

God has used people to preserve His Word through the ages and into different languages, so that we can read it in our common language. Blood was spilled. Tyndale was burned at the stake for his efforts. Servants of God through the ages have preserved and translated God’s Word under threat of persecution and death. They did so because they believed the Bible should be understood, and read, by the average person – not just the professional religious establishment of the day. May we be inspired to read this precious book ourselves.

C. A brief word about different translations of the Bible?



English readers have many translations available to them. Most languages have many fewer options, only one, or none at all. This perspective can make English Bible readers grateful for the variety of translations available.

There are three general approaches used in developing the different translation. Some brief knowledge of translation theory could be helpful as you choose a translation for daily devotional, or in-depth study, use.

Word-for-word translations translate the original Greek or Hebrew words and phrases directly to English and preserve the original grammar and sentence structure as much as possible. In this way, they are a literal translation. Word-for-word translations are excellent when used for any in-depth study. They are also fine options for a daily-use or devotional Bible, though some may find the reading a bit “stiff” or “wooden” since readability is not an emphasis for word-for-word translations and no two languages flow the same after translation. Examples of word-for-word translations are NKJV, NASB, and ESV.

Another literal translation approach is “dynamic” or “functional equivalence.” The goal of these translations is to functionally adapt the full sense of the original Greek and Hebrew text for greater readability in the translated language, so that current readers can experience what the original readers did when reading the original text in their own language (no two languages function exactly the same). In this way, many find these translations helpful for daily and devotional use. If using one of these translations, it is helpful to consult word-for-word translations when doing more in-depth study. Examples of dynamic equivalent translations are the NIV (which is used as the stock Bible at Forcey), HCSB, and NLT.

Paraphrase translations might not be truly translations but are often presented and understood that way, so it may be helpful to explain their limitations and potential value in that light. This translation approach makes the reading further from the sense of the original language. Because of this, some of the nuance and imagery found in literal translations (and thus intended by God) are replaced with words and sentences which the translator has deemed more helpful to the reader but can miss the original sense. Paraphrases are not typically recommended for regular use. They can be helpful, at times, when comparing multiple translations for personal application.

D. The discipleship goal of this event: May it not stop with me.

God’s heart is for disciples to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). The goal of this event is not for accumulating more head knowledge about the Bible. Our goal in this event, as always, is to equip us more thoroughly for discipleship.

May the outcomes of this training overflow to our children and grandchildren and neighbors and co-workers and friends, that others beyond the reach of this training also understand how to interpret the Bible today!

## II. Doctrines that drive faithful interpretation.

### A. Foundational doctrines

#### 1. Inspiration

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

##### a. What does inspiration mean?

The term “inspiration” describes the work of the Holy Spirit enabling human authors to record the very words of God; that the Scriptures are fully “God-breathed” and thus authoritative, without error, and fully accomplish God’s intended purpose for the writing.

##### b. Who is the Bible’s author – the earthly writer, or God Himself?

***For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).***

##### 1) Dual authorship (see 2 Peter 1:21)

God “superintended” (directly oversaw by His Spirit) the inspiration of the very words of Scripture, while in no way diminishing the personality, cultural context, and writing style of the human author. In this way, we can refer to the Bible’s authorship as both divine and human. Both agents of authorship are relevant when studying and interpreting the text.

##### 2) It is God that did the inspiring of Scripture, not the writer, or the reader.

#### 2. Inerrancy

***The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times (Psalm 12:6).***

a. What does inerrancy mean?

The idea that Scripture is completely free of error and fully non-contradictory. The doctrine of inerrancy flows from the doctrine of inspiration – that the Scriptures come from God. Scripture’s inerrancy reminds us of the full reliability and trustworthiness of the Scripture. A related doctrine is “infallibility” – that the whole text of Scripture cannot fail the purposes God have in giving it to us.

b. What inerrancy does NOT mean?

Inerrancy does NOT mean that the Bible tells us everything there is to know about all subjects. It doesn’t. For example, the Bible is not a science textbook. Great learning about our natural world (which God created) can be learned and gleaned from good science, which is beyond the words contained in Scripture. But such learning is not true learning if it conflicts, in any way, with the Word of God, since the Word is inerrant. Receiving the Bible as inerrant is part of God’s invitation for us to humbly live under His ultimate authority in all things spoken to by His Word.

B. Structural doctrines

1. The Bible is authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 119:137-138)

***For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).***

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2. The Bible is sufficient.

***I run in the path of your commands,  
for you have broadened my understanding  
Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path... (Psalm 119:32, 105)***

***<sup>7</sup>The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.  
<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the Lord are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the Lord are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.  
<sup>9</sup>The fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The decrees of the Lord are firm,  
and all of them are righteous (Psalm 19:7-9).***

The sufficiency of Scripture is under attack today by diverse ideas about truth and living which are not Scriptural. Examples of these extra-biblical ideas come from the fields of economics, or nutrition, or science, or psychology. And certainly there can be helpful things learned from this fields. But Scripture is sufficient to lead us into godly living. It, not other realms of study or interest, ought to be the sure foundation of our living.

3. The Bible is necessary (John 6:68).

***Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (John 6:68).***

Scripture’s necessity is the idea that it is required to fully understand the Gospel and to live a godly life. Such a life is not possible without it. This doesn’t mean that certain truths cannot be determined by natural revelation (the natural world), as they surely can. But Scripture is necessary for putting together the essential truths for following God.

4. The Bible is clear.

*“All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.” (The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 1.7)*

- C. Our God-glorifying goal as we come to the Bible: Faithful interpretation.

1. Why?
  
2. Is faithful interpretation even possible?
  
  
3. It is God's plan for His people.

### III. Claims that can affect faithful interpretation.

A. CLAIM: There is no objective reality outside of reason or experience that can be known.

- 1) Example: Gary Dorrien, a leading modern liberal theologian, writes - *“The essential idea of liberal theology is that all claims to truth, in theology as in other disciplines, must be made on the basis of reason and experience, not by appeal to external authority. Christian scripture may be recognized as spiritually authoritative within Christian experience, but its word does not settle or establish truth claims about matters of fact (Gary Dorrien, as quoted in DeYoung, Kevin, Taking God at His Word, p. 77).*

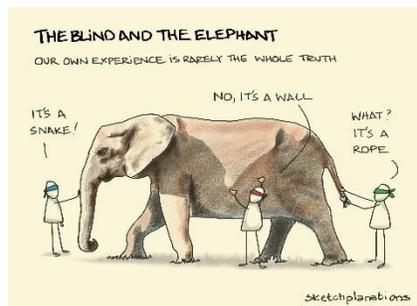
B. CLAIM: Scripture isn't thorough enough (I need more than Scripture).

- 1) Example: Leading Catholic theologian Peter Kreeft writes, *“The Church gives us her Tradition like a mother giving a child hand-me-down clothing that has already been worn by many older sisters and brothers. But unlike any earthly clothing, this clothing is indestructible because it is not made of wool or cotton but truth. It was invented by God, not man. Sacred Tradition (capital ‘T’) must be distinguished from all human traditions (small ‘t’)...Sacred Tradition is part of ‘the deposit of faith’, which also includes Sacred Scripture. It is comprised of the Church’s data, given to her by her Lord.” (Peter Kreeft, Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Church Beliefs Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2001), p. 18)*

- 2) Example: The idea that Scripture served as a good “starting point” for understanding God, but the development of thought in fields like philosophy, science, and psychology, have rendered the Bible insufficient for its stated purpose.

***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...And He will be called Wonderful Counselor...(Isaiah 9:6-7).***

- C. CLAIM: God’s Special Revelation is ongoing.
  - D. CLAIM: Modern science disproves the Bible.
  - E. CLAIM: Nature is a more trustworthy compass for truth than the Bible.
  - F. CLAIM: Literary meaning can’t really be known.
  - G. CLAIM: The presence of multiple views negates clarity.
- IV. Conclusions



***Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar (Romans 3:4a)***

*“Until fairly recently, Christians of every tradition have assumed the complete trustworthiness and comprehensive truthfulness of Scripture. Holding to the highest view of inspiration – as originated with God Himself – was not the invention of any tradition, theologian, or school. It was simply part of what it meant to be a Christian.”*

*-Kevin DeYoung, Taking God at His Word, p. 120*

#### V. Questions for Personal Application

- A. Are you prone to pursue extra-biblical knowledge at the expense of foundational biblical truth? How can you correct this tendency in your life?
- B. Have you allowed claims against sound doctrine to soften your firmness when it comes to the reliability of the Bible? How might this be affecting how you read the Bible and apply it to your life (and the lives of others)?
- C. Which of the claims in section III are you most prone to feel? What ways might Satan be luring into this claim against Scripture?