

Course 100.

The Bible as Sure Foundation of the Christian Faith

(A teaching note of the Global School of Ministry, London, England & Waxahachie, Texas)

Course Objectives:

This is a foundational course designed to present the Bible as the Word of God and ultimate guide of Christian behaviour in all areas of life. It is like no other book ever written on planet earth! The very first segment of what now constitutes the WORD of God was actually dictated by God (**Exodus 20: 1 – 21**)!

The Holy Bible, which is the final form in which the Word of God is preserved, is the final authority for personal life and ministry. It is the basis of sound doctrine for instructing the saints and should offer the final word that settles every dispute or theological argument. In **2 Timothy 2:15**, very true minister of the gospel is enjoined to study the word in order to gain divine approval and the capacity to serve sound doctrine, rather than subjective perspectives to people. To claim the status of a minister of the gospel and yet manifest a disdain for diligent study and application of scripture is simply anathema!

A. Introduction

Our entire faith as Christians stand on one sure foundation: the Holy Scriptures which have been put together in a single volume called the Holy Bible. The reason is simple: the God we serve and worship has chosen to elevate His Word above His very name **Psalms 138:2**. That is why He has preserved His mind for His children and humanity on every subject matter relating to how to live on earth in a form that cannot be subject to the whims and caprices of fickle humanity: the written word! Knowing the written word therefore amounts to knowing the mind of God as the Psalmist exclaimed throughout the **119th Psalm**.

Any one who purports to be a child or servant of God but refuses to study, understand and practically apply His Word in all situations is not sincere in that profession.

B. Authority of the Word of God

Our Lord Jesus Himself said categorically that knowing the truth is the key to real freedom! **John 8:32** no wonder, He used the ultimate weapon of ***“it is written”*** to defeat Satan on the day of temptation as recorded in **Matthew 4: 1 – 11**. This is why **Colossians 3:16** charges us to let the Word dwell in us with all wisdom so that we can meditate on, draw from, confess and apply the appropriate scripture to every situation of life and thus walk in constant victory!

It is vitally important to acknowledge that God still speaks by audible voice, revelatory gifts such as dreams, vision, prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discernment and the like. In this post-modern world, many revelations that ministers purport to have or share with the people of God can be divided into three broad categories:

- Biblical truth that is expounded and presented or
- Extra biblical truth. This is truth that comes forth from say a prophetic utterance or manifestation of any of the revelatory gifts.
- Unbiblical declarations which may be products of human imagination, emotional outburst or of satanic origin. Praise God however, that the simple test of whether any current speaking or instruction is from God or not is simply this: ***to what extent is such purported word of God confirmed or contradicted by the written word in the Holy Scriptures!***

Many people tend to forget that Jesus is the Word made flesh that came and dwelt amongst us **John 1: 1 – 3**. Whoever is called to ministry by whatever means needs to spend some quality time to diligent study of the Word, understand same, apply it first in his or her own life and then rightly divide same to faithfully feed believers and unbelievers alike. **2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Revelations 22:18, 19.**

It is for this reason that the Lord birthed the **Global School of Ministry** as a platform where there will be intensive training of believers for ministry based 100 percent on the Word of God in all ramifications.

Necessity:

The necessity of this outcome is obvious: we live in the last days when the spirit of the anti-Christ will work mightily to fake prophecy and other revelatory gifts. It is a sad day when people are encouraged to develop itching ears for prophecy to the degree of being bereft of the written word! Prophecy is not meant to supplant but rather to complement the work of God in the life of His children! Any prophetic move which works otherwise is suspect and must be tested for its source and direction.

Divination will blossom in the name of the Lord as we approach the very end of the Church age. As Jesus warned, the elect of God may be at risk of being confused and swept away. That is why we are urged to test every spirit! **1 John 4: 1 – 3; 2 John 1: 7 – 11; 2 Peter 2: 1 – 3.**

We have no basis for testing the spirits when our hearts and minds are devoid of the Word! Any Christian who has inadequate knowledge of the Word is potentially at risk of falling aside with the mighty shaking that is coming on the world. **Matthew 7: 24 – 27.**

This ground breaking course also explores these sub-themes:

C. The inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures

Scripture is God breathed! The Holy Spirit literally breathed the words of scripture through the agency of human hearts, minds and will that He chose as vessels through which He expressed His thoughts on various issues of life. This is what we mean by inspiration of the Scriptures. **2 Peter 1: 16 – 21.**

To this extent, the Word of God is inerrant. It is sure and can be relied upon for life and godliness. It is important to note however that some words in scripture were not necessarily uttered by God. These are to be taken in the context of the question: ***“what did God have in mind in allowing those words to make their way into His Holy Book?”*** A typical example is the kind of words of the friends of Job who tormented him with their insistence that his travails were because of his sins. Were those the inerrant words of God? The answer is clearly No!

The reason God allowed their inclusion in the Holy Writ is to show us the fickleness of man and warn against presumptuousness when dealing with brethren facing challenges of life! Some of the statements of Solomon concerning his high degree of self indulgence were allowed to be included in the Holy Writ so that we can be sure that there is no unconditional eternal security for those who are called by God. The soul who strays from the path of righteousness will surely fall aside and turn into vain jangling as Solomon did!

For this reason, we cannot just quote any scripture out of context, regardless of the author and expect God to back it up. Every word in the Holy Bible was uttered in context and as part of a divine whole. Every promise of scripture has a condition attached to it. The one central written and unwritten condition that unlocks every promise is obedience. The wise believer is he or she who will not just skim the surface of the Holy Writ for promises to claim but the one who will rather be led by the Holy Spirit to dig deep to know, understand and apply the principles of the Word, rightly divided, to guide in all areas of life!

We need to be guided by the Holy Spirit to understand the overall mind of God and to see how the fullness of truth is weaved as a tapestry throughout the scriptures. To get to this outcome, we are commanded to compare scripture with scripture, precept upon precept, taking a little here and a little there to arrive at the full counsel of God. This is serious work which is however, highly profitable.

D. Critical factors in the Origin, Authorship and Power of the Holy Bible

It is important to establish in clear detail, the divine origin and authorship of the Holy Bible which is the present form in which the full counsel of the written Word of God is presented.

Several terms are used to describe the Word of God. In **Joshua 1:8** the first 5 books of the Bible are called “**Book of the Law**”. They contain the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20: 1 – 17**) and the ceremonial laws which govern all aspects of life which God designed to keep His chosen people, the Hebrews or Jews separate and distinct from other peoples and nations. Israel was a called out nation of priests unto God who were to be holy unto Him and teach His ordinances to the heathen, as long as they kept their peculiar Covenant relationship with God based on obedience of His laws. (**Exodus 19: 5, 6**) The enduring power of the Ten Commandments as the ground norm of the laws of most civilized societies is a tribute to the fact that humanity needs God’s instructions in order to survive and prosper!

Besides the Ten Commandments and Ceremonial Laws, God used various vessels to bring forth His counsel to Israel, culminating in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Christ did not come to abolish but to fulfil the whole essence of the Law and declaration of all the prophets. All that was written and said was a shadow of what was to come in the form of a perfect man, perfect God who would offer the ultimate price for the atonement of the sins of the whole world. By His teachings and atoning sacrifice at the Cross, Jesus fulfilled the Law and Prophets and took away their exclusive claim as only source of access to God. He thus opened the gates of salvation to all who would believe – Jew and Gentile alike! **Matthew 5: 17 – 48; Galatians 3: 1 – 29; Hebrews 10: 19 – 22.**

These are other terms used to describe the Word of God.: **the Book of the Lord** (Isaiah 34:16); **Word of God** (Mark 7:13), **Holy Scriptures** (Romans 1:2, 2 Timothy 3: 15), **the word of life** (Philippians 2:16), **the word of Christ** (Colossians 3:16), **Oracles of God** (Romans 3:2, Hebrews 5:12),

Case Study: Authorship and Harmony of the Gospels.

It is also necessary to mention the issue of harmony of the Gospels. It pleased the Lord to use four different vessels with different personalities and backgrounds and varying degrees of proximity to Jesus Christ to capture the story of His life and times.

Matthew was a tax collector who had an eye for details. A Jew by birth, the Lord used him to give the Jews a treatise on their King-Messiah. It was necessary for him therefore to capture the genealogical claims of Christ back to Abraham, the Patriarch of their sub race and David, the King of Israel from whose lineage the Messiah would come (Matthew 1: 1 – 6). That background necessitated what God allowed him to see and record.

Mark was the son of one of the women who waited on the Lord Jesus Christ named Mary and related to Peter and Barnabas (Acts 12: 12; Colossians 4:10). He was apparently a teenager who followed the Lord from his youth and sourced most of his materials through his mother and the three outstanding generals of the faith he had close relationship with (Peter, Barnabas and Paul). The Lord used Mark to record predominantly the account of Jesus as the Servant of God and man, a theme that gentiles could connect with. They were his prime audience.

John was the most intimate companion of Jesus and yet had an awesome revelation of His Divinity. His account focussed on inspiring faith in Jesus as the very Son of God long awaited (John 20:31).

Luke was a physician with eyes for minute details. His core passion was to weave a holistic account of the life and times of Jesus Christ in a clear way that would incorporate what various eye witnesses saw so that his gentile audience would have sufficient facts on which to build their faith. Luke 1:4. What these backgrounds and foci show is that it is necessary to study the whole gospels, comparing scripture with scripture in order to present a full picture of the life and times of Christ in a way that both Jews and gentiles can connect with.

A separate course, **All that Jesus began to do and to teach** will explore this issue in detail. In other words, a full examination of all the gospels will present a fuller picture of the life and teachings of Christ. When you throw in the Acts of the Apostles and all the epistles, there emerges a fuller picture oh who He is; what He came for and the New Covenant that was sealed with His blood. He or she who claims to represent this same Jesus Christ and refuses to engage in diligent study of the New Testament is definitely in need of scrutiny.

E. Scope of the Bible

The divine nature of the Bible is further proved by the fact that it is the only book which details these:

- i). Revelation of who God is
- ii) Origin of life and man, the earth and all creation
- iii) It contains words of prophecy that have been fulfilled with pin point accuracy. These include the divine plan of redemption of man including the virgin birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- iv) The rise and fall of major world powers
- v) Timeline of the end of the age and the restoration of all things

Because of the way past prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled at their set times, we can fully trust that what it says of the future will happen with precision.

F. Technical and Historic Details of the Word

The word Bible is derived from the Greek Biblios or “written word”. It is an extraordinary collection of 66 individual divided into two major parts: 39 that make up the Old Testament or Covenant and 27 that make up the New Testament.

The Old Testament, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, was essentially addressed to the Jews as a people. Gentiles (rest of the world that converted to Jewish laws and customs were called proselytes and proved their faith and allegiance to Judaism (the worship of God through observance of the laws and code of conduct of the Old Testament) by reading and observing the Torah and other sacred books of the Old Testament. A good example was the Ethiopian Eunuch who Phillip led to Christ in **Acts 8: 26 – 40**.

Various book laid claim to divine inspiration over the past two millennia. However, the following 66 books comprising 39 in the Old and 27 in the New Testament passed through various tests to make the final list of books that are adjudged to be truly inspired.

The Old Testament in Summary

F.1. the Pentateuch – 5 books.

Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy

F.2. Historical Books – 12 books

Joshua; Judges; Ruth; I Samuel; II Samuel; I, Kings; II Kings; I Chronicles; II Chronicles; Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther.

F.3. Poetic Books - 5 books

Job; Psalms; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song of Solomon

F. 4. Prophetic Books (5 Major & 12 Minor)

Major: Isaiah; Jeremiah; Lamentations; Ezekiel; Daniel

Minor: Hosea; Joel; Amos; Obadiah; Jonah; Micah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi.

The New Testament in Summary

F.2.1 the Gospels

Matthew; Mark; Luke; John

F.2.2 the Acts of the Apostles

F.2.3 the Pauline Epistles (Authored by Paul the Apostle)

Romans; 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1

Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Hebrews

F.2.3 the General Epistles

James; 1 Peter; 2 Peter; 1 John; 2 John; 3 John; Jude

F.2.4. the Book of Revelation

The New Testament was originally written in Greek partly because of the pervading influence of Greek scholarship in that generation. It is this Greek influence that lingers till today, almost obscuring some of the original Hebrew contexts of the Word.

For instance, the name of the Saviour has progressed from the original Hebrew Yeshua Maschaih through the Greek Christos from which the present English translation, Jesus Christ emerges. It is wrong therefore to resent a Jewish/Messianic Christian who uses Hebrew to share his faith or worship God in his original tongue.

The issue of translation notwithstanding, it is profoundly significant that over 40 authors who lived in various generations across 1,600 years were human vessels through whom the Holy Spirit spoke or inspired the writing of the Bible. These were men and women from disparate backgrounds, education, social class, race and language. In spite of this diversity, the Holy Bible is one coherent whole that does not contradict each other. It is a case of unity in diversity. God has ensured a preservation of His counsel in a holistic manner within the pages of the Bible.

G. What the Bible says of the Ministry of the Word in the life of believers

The word of God is ordained to perform some specific discernable assignments in human beings. Let us hone in on some those assignments of the Word in the life of both sinners and saints:

1. The Word of God is the **principal instrument or catalyst for salvation**. It is the spoken or written word which the Holy Spirit quickens to convict the sinner of sins, righteousness and judgement. Mere arguments with human wisdom or ordinary words can never convict a sinner but rather generate controversy and arguments. **1 Peter 1: 22, 23 – 25; John 16: 7 – 15; 2 Timothy 2: 23 – 26; 2 Timothy 3: 15, 16; 2 Timothy 4: 2-5;**
2. The Word, when known, understood and meditated upon will **keep the saint from presumptuous or wilful sins thus ensure that children of God remain on the path of righteousness**. It thus acts as a base station which the Holy Spirit will connect with to give us an enhanced awareness of what God approves or not. The Word works with the Holy Spirit and the human conscience to achieve this state of fear of the Lord which propels us to walk in the path of righteousness with minimal struggle! **Psalms 119: 1 – 16; 26 – 38; 41 – 48; 54 – 56; 65 – 68; 71 – 73; 79 – 80; 85 – 109; 112 – 120; 127 – 133; 137 – 144; 148 – 176. Hebrews 6: 1-8; 1 John 3: 1 - 9**
3. **The Word acts like a fire which refines by the process of burning up every chaff or trace of flesh that wants to remain as the old man in the lives of the saints**. As we look intently at the word and allow it to do its work in the deepest recesses of our hearts and minds, it will like fire, scorch all un-seeming things deep within our persona so that we can enjoy true liberty in Christ Jesus. **Jeremiah 23: 29.**
4. **The Word acts like a hammer which breaks off every rough aspect of our being**. As we assemble with others to study or as we do so alone, it behoves us to be honest with God and ourselves so that His word will minister to us in the hammer dimension. This happens most when we do not have pre-conceived notions of what God should be saying to us. The best student of the word is he or she has an open mind, a child-like attribute which is of great price in the sight of God. **Jeremiah 23:29**
5. **The Word acts like water to wash off filthy sediments of worldly wisdom in our mindset**. Through the agency of our natural environment, culture, education, lifestyle and human perspectives, we often come into the faith with mental strong holds that need to be dealt with before we can truly think and act like Christians. The Word has this powerful facility for cleaning up the mind! Jesus said as much to

His disciples in **John 15:3**; They were saved but needed His words to cleanse them to begin to think in a new perspective! In the closing chapter of the Church age, the Lord is still at work to cleanse His bride and make her fit for Himself **Ephesians 5:26, 27**

6. The Word acts like a sharp sword which pierces through the heart to identify the real person. God alone sees the secrets of the hearts of men. **Jeremiah 17:9, 10** One critical quality of the Bible which confirms its hallowed status as the inspired written word of God is its capacity to pierce through every veneer of self righteousness to identify the real person underneath the polished surface. This is necessary to bring conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement! **Hebrews 4: 12, 13**. This process of sanctification is vital to stay fresh.

7. The word acts like a mirror which reveals aspects of our hearts and minds that we are not conscious of. Ignorance is no excuse, says **Hosea 4:6**. Many Christians tend to be deceived by what they think and see, holding to them as if these were the truths of God. A perspective however is simply an individual's way of seeing something. Perspectives are the fruit of relativity. The enemy uses perspectives to make Christians to live contrary to the word of God and still feel comfortable. What the word does therefore is to spotlight the areas of our lives where we are falling short of the glory of God and confronts us frontally with the truth, rather than our self righteous perspectives which are deceptive. **James 1: 21 – 25**.

8. The Word acts like food which nourishes the human spirit and soul so that it can grow in grace. The constant nourishment of our spirit man and the soul (mind, will and emotions) with the word of God rather than what we think or like is one crucial way through which the Christian is able to be all that God ordained him or her to be. **1 Peter 2:1 – 3; Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 19:10; Matthew 4:4; John 21:17**

9. The Word of God acts as a lamp to guide the feet of the saints into their divinely ordained destinies. **Psalm 119: 105, 130**. Proper study, meditation and understanding of the Word will keep the saint supplied with sufficient knowledge of the will of God and wisdom to do and say what He approves.

10. The Word of God refreshes the spirit and soul to be productive just as rain and snow water dry places. **Isaiah 55: 10, 11**. A heart filled with the word brings forth appropriate fruit in each season and is stable and secure. **Psalm 1:1 – 3**

11. The Word of God has in itself the inherent power to activate faith in those who receive it with the right spirit. **Romans 10:17**. People ask: how can I have or increase faith? The simplest answer is by regular study, meditation and praying in the Word of God. The more we are filled with the Word, the more we start seeing the invisible followed by release of faith which draws down the blessing.

12. The Word is a potent tool of spiritual warfare.

There are three things the Devil fears more than all else. These are i). The Authority of the Name of Jesus (**Philippians 2: 5 – 11**); ii). The Power of the Blood of Jesus (**Revelations 12:11**); iii). The Power of the Word of God that can not be changed. It was this power that Jesus deployed to great results in His epic encounter with Satan after His baptism at Jordan. (**Matthew 4: 1 – 11**).

This is why **Ephesians 6: 10 – 18** includes the Word as the Sword of the Spirit (an instrument of offensive warfare and for passing decrees or prophetic praying. It is also for this reason that **2 Corinthians 10: 3 – 6** charges the believer to wage the warfare of the mind by replacing carnal arguments and mindsets with the Word of God. It makes sense therefore to store up the word of God into our inner most beings so that out of our bellies, the Word can flow unhindered to produce appropriate fruit!

13. The Word catalyzes true prosperity.

The uniform testimony of scripture is that the word of God is a catalyst of true prosperity. True prosperity is holistic, transcending the spirit, soul and body. Those who will give attention to diligent study, meditation and application of the word in every area of their lives will soon discover that it is the most

potent source of the blessed life which many seek for. **Deuteronomy chapter 8; Deuteronomy 28: 1 – 15; Joshua 1: 8; Psalm 1: 1 – 3**

H. Principles for benefitting from study of the Word:

To profit properly from the Word of God, we need to have a proper attitude to the Holy Bible. It is not just another book! It is not a religious totem! It is the living Word of God that is ordained to bring us comfort, direction, correction and guidance. It is not to be used as a talisman nor applied craftily to confirm our predisposed positions. It is not to be used to manipulate people – including our spouses or children to do our bidding! The Word of God should not be studied academically or mined for the purpose of obtaining its promises.

The word works best to deliver the above outcomes when we develop the consciousness that it expresses the mind of God not just for yesterday or tomorrow, but also a book of guidance and instruction for every day living. We need to be in a frame of mind that God wants us to prosper in a holistic way and enjoy the fruits of Calvary and that this is only possible when we know and live by His precepts. God established this principle in His relationship with Israel in **Deuteronomy 28: 1 – 15**.

It is not enough to study the word. Our whole attitude should be to hear from God, receive His instruction on how to live a life that pleases Him and allow the word to determine our life style. Any lifestyle that contradicts the word is simply an act of disobedience. We should not be carried away by what we think we are doing or can do for God. The critical question is whether we live by His word?

To profit optimally from the Word therefore, we are called to: firstly, root out every potential factor which may cause the heart and mind to be calloused and impervious to its ministry. These include

i). **Pride** Deuteronomy **8: 1 – 14; Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 18: 12**. Pride makes mortal man to think he is qualified to live the way he wants.

ii). A **wandering mind** that lacks concentration; double mindedness or being overcharged in the heart with the cares of this life **Matthew 13: 1 -7, 12 – 22**

iii). **Double mindedness** **Mark 4: 15 – 17; James 1:8**

iv). **Hypocrisy, evil speaking and malice** **1 Peter 2: 1 -3**

v). **Carnality/strife/preference for particular preachers/denominationalism** **1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 8**

The Right approach

We are called to a consistent regimen of **regular reading, meditation and purposeful application** of the Word of God. (See Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1: 1 – 3). We are also called to exercise faith in the God who authored the Word and the vessel He uses to expound His word to us. **2 Chronicles 20:20**.

Furthermore, we are called to pray though every scripture we study so that they are internalized and made flesh in us. It is a good habit to pray to begin and pray as we end study of the word.

Every believer and especially those who are called to ministry have a responsibility to dig deep into the word and avoid the unprofitable habit of skimming the surface for mere nuggets. Our study should be based on the need to know God and His ways more (like Moses in Psalm 103:7); love of the truth for itself; a sense of inadequacy; willingness to make necessary sacrifice.

It is obvious therefore that rightful understanding of the whole counsel of God and proper division and declaration, rather than subjective interpretation of it is the key to successful, God-approved ministry. Jesus told Peter three times to “feed` his sheep and lambs! **John 21: 15 – 17**.

Conclusion

It is important to note that a good number of saints were martyred for the faith because of their attitude to the Word of God. Some were required to renounce their whole faith in God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Others were required to renounce specific doctrines such as the Trinity, Deity of Christ; Virgin birth; bodily resurrection of Christ or the full ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some were tied to the stakes and burnt; others were thrown into dens of lions or used as pawns in brutal sports. Their blood was used to procure what is now known as the Holy Bible. Shall we not honour their faith and commitment to truth by staying true to the Word of God? Men like John Wycliffe paid the supreme price at the stakes for daring to make the Bible accessible to all the saints!

Final Word. In conclusion of this ground breaker, the words of Deuteronomy 29: 29 are of utmost relevance: **“The Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”** KJV. Every one who purports to speak for God and such communication clearly contradict the revealed will of God should be treated with holy suspicion until proved otherwise! This is the safest course these last days!

Assignment:

1. Every student is required to provide the scripture references for items I – V in section E (Scope of the Bible) and turn their work in within two weeks.
2. Allow the mirror of the Word to identify 3 critical aspects of your life that do not line up with the express provisions of some scriptures. What are you going to do to ensure that you live in obedience?

Questions

Please feel free to post your questions on the discussion board in our group page on face book and we will make every honest effort to answer them! If its of a private nature, kindly post them into the message box or via email.

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