

GROWING DEEP IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Returning to Our Roots

STUDY THREE

God's Book—God's Voice

Psalm 119:98–100; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21

If I could have one wish it would be that God's people return to the Word of God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DURING his ministry, Pastor Chuck Swindoll has consoled families devastated by grief. He has spoken to spouses after infidelity shattered their marriages. He has visited desperately ill people hanging onto life in the ICU, encouraged business owners who lost everything, and comforted survivors of disasters sifting through the rubble of their once-beautiful homes.

Walking with sufferers through their pain, Pastor Chuck has observed the unhealthy ways people try to cope in crisis. Some escape through denial or chemical dependence. Cynicism consumes others, and they turn bitter and angry. In desperation, some run to self-help gurus or even consult mediums and dabble in the occult.

None of these strategies plants a person's feet on solid rock when the bottom drops out. Instead, Pastor Chuck writes, "They leave the victim in quicksand—more desperately confused than at the beginning."¹

On what reliable authority do we rest secure when crisis strikes? Which lighthouse guides us to a safe harbor? Whose voice speaks truth? These questions touch on the deepest yearnings of our soul for security and hope, and they all point to the answer: God's Book—God's voice.



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God's Book—God's Voice

Psalm 119:98–100; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God is the “God of truth,” Isaiah declared (Isaiah 65:16), and, therefore, God’s “word is truth,” Jesus affirmed (John 17:17 NASB). As you open your Bible, reflect for a moment on the divine wisdom in your hands and pray . . .

Father, thank You for revealing to me Your infinite thoughts and unchanging ways through this Book. You have spoken truth through its pages. Your Word is the only true “light for my path” (Psalm 119:105), and I pledge myself to You as I study. Teach me Your ways, O Lord. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Countless books of wisdom have been written. What makes the Bible our surest foundation through this life and beyond? What makes the Bible stand apart and above other sources of guidance?



Observation: Identity, Inerrancy, and Reliability

A helpful *observation* technique is to find common concepts and themes by comparing verses. We’ve grouped the verses to compare under the following headings that summarize three remarkable attributes of the Bible.

The Bible’s Identity

In all of literature, there is nothing else like the Bible. It is truly one of a kind. What did post-resurrection Jesus say about Scripture in his walk with two men to Emmaus in [Luke 24:13–27](#)?



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How do the following verses describe the Bible: *Psalms 119:142, 151, 160*? What do you learn from Jesus' prayer for His followers in *John 17:17*?

In *1 Thessalonians 2:13*, how did Paul refer to the message that God gave the church through the apostolic writings?

What qualities did Peter ascribe to the Bible in *1 Peter 1:23–25*?



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Piece your observations together into an answer to the question, “What about the Bible’s identity makes it unique?”

Think of it this way: God’s Book is God’s voice. If He were to make Himself visible and come and stand in this place, His message of truth would tie in exactly with what we see in Scripture. His opinions, His counsel, His commands, His desires, His warning . . . His very mind is in this Book. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Bible’s Inerrancy

The Bible’s source is God, so it must be true . . . and yet, it was written by fallible human authors. How did God safeguard the Bible against error? Read [2 Timothy 3:16–17](#) and [2 Peter 1:20–21](#) and write down the phrases that describe how God expressed His Word using individuals.

At times, God spoke directly to individuals who wrote down precisely what God said, such as when God spoke to Abraham in [Genesis 12:1–3](#). Most of the time, however, God didn’t dictate His Word. Instead, He *inspired* people or *moved* them to write Scripture.



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We'll examine the meaning of these two concepts in the interpretation phase. For now, reflect on the connection between the divine source of Scripture and the truth of Scripture. How can we be certain the writers of Scripture didn't make errors?

We have a Bible full of human personality and style, and yet it's God who breathed out His message. Because God superintended the entire process, no error was present in the original text right down to the very words. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Bible's Reliability

The rubber meets the road on the issue of reliability. Can we trust the Bible when we need an ethical compass to guide our business decisions? When we need a moral scale to determine right from wrong? When we need a ballast of truth to stabilize us in life's storms?

Observe the answers to these real-life issues in [Psalm 119:9–11, 23–24, 27–28, 41–42, 49–50, 61, and 165](#). In what ways did the psalmist lean on the Scriptures?



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We truly can cling to the lifeline of God's Word in our darkest hour . . . because we can cling to God. Read the following verses slowly, letting them soak into your soul and pausing to thank the Lord for speaking truth through Scripture.

*Your eternal word, O Lord,
stands firm in heaven.
Your faithfulness extends to every generation
as enduring as the earth you created.
Your regulations remain true to this day,
for everything serves your plans.
If your instructions hadn't sustained me with joy,
I would have died in my misery.
I will never forget your commandments,
for by them you give me life. (Psalm 119:89–93)*



Interpretation: Revelation, Inspiration, and Illumination

In the interpretation stage, our observations of the Bible's identity, inerrancy, and reliability become the basis of three key doctrines.

Revelation—How God Communicated His Word

God reveals Himself to humankind through *general revelation* in His creation (*Psalm 19:1–4; Romans 1:18–20*) and *special revelation* in His Son (*Hebrews 1:1–2*) and His Word (*2 Peter 1:16–21*). To dive deeper into this doctrine, consult the article, “*What is general revelation and special revelation?*” at gotquestions.org. Write your findings here.



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Inspiration—How Individuals Received God's Word

The means by which individuals received and recorded God's revelation is inspiration. The Greek word for *inspired* in 2 Timothy 3:16 means “God-breathed.” Sometimes we say that human artists were “inspired” when they created a masterpiece. But how is “God-breathed” inspiration unique to God's Word?

The content of the Bible originated in the mind of God, who “moved” individuals as they wrote the holy text (2 Peter 1:21). The NET Bible translates the Greek word, “carried along” (1:21 NET), which captures the nautical sense of the word. The writers were caught up in the current of the Spirit as divine and human elements operated together perfectly to create Scripture.

Illumination—How We Understand God's Word

Special revelation and inspiration have ceased. Illumination, however, continues as the Holy Spirit opens our minds to help us understand God's truth. What did Jesus promise the Spirit would do for His followers, according to *John 16:12–15*?

Right now, the Holy Spirit is incessantly at work instructing you, challenging you, and giving you hope and direction as you study God's Word. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Hearing God's Voice in God's Book

Today's pundits and philosophers deny truth exists or, they say, if truth does exist, no one can know it. Since God has spoken in Scripture, however, we *can* know the truth . . . and God's voice does not waver. He tells it straight when He declares good and evil, right and wrong, holiness and sin.

How does the unwavering nature of God's voice in the Bible give you stability in your current situation?

God's Book gives you a deep sense of purpose and meaning through stormy times.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

"I have more insight than my teachers," the psalmist stated, because he knew Scripture (Psalm 119:99). Do you sometimes feel intimidated in today's critical culture? How does knowing God's Word give you more understanding than humanistic teachers?

Knowing Scripture and seeing it work in our lives helps us face criticism and not feel intimidated, because we have the truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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What new truth about Scripture have you learned or what idea has been reinforced through this study that can bolster your confidence in God's Word? Share this insight with someone to encourage him or her.

In our day of shifting moralities, we long for a solid foundation on which to build our lives. Thankfully, God's voice speaks to us through His Book—the bedrock of truth on which we stand secure.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are the Author of the Book I hold in my hands. Thank You for presenting it to me as my guide through life and for preserving it from error so I can count on it today. Through Your Spirit, illumine my mind with truth and fill my heart with devotion as I obey Your Book and follow Your voice. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Returning to Our Roots* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 55.



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