

JOHN F.
MACARTHUR

WHY *Believe*
THE BIBLE?



BakerBooks

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

John F. MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible?*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 1980, 2015. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 1980 by G/L Publications

Published by Baker Books
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakerbooks.com

Baker Books edition published 2015
ISBN 978-0-8010-1794-0

Previously published in 1980 and 2007 by Regal Books

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

The Library of Congress has catalogued the first edition as follows:
MacArthur, John, 1939–

Why believe the Bible / John F. MacArthur

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-8307-4564-7 (hard cover)

1. Bible—Evidences, authority, etc.

BS 480.M22

220.1'3—dc19

79091704

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations labeled ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2007

Scripture quotations labeled KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations labeled NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations labeled NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

John F. MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible?*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 1980, 2015. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

*Dedicated to Bob Vernon
in gratitude for his faithful prayers
and generous friendship.*

CONTENTS

Preface to the 2015 Edition 9

PART I

CAN WE REALLY BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

Chapter 1 17
What Does God’s Word Mean to Us?

Chapter 2 31
Who Can Prove God’s Word Is True?

Chapter 3 45
How Did God Inspire His Word?

Chapter 4 58
What Did Jesus Think of God’s Word?

Chapter 5 69
Can We Add to God’s Word?

PART II

WHAT DOES GOD’S WORD DO FOR US?

Chapter 6 87
God’s Word: Source of Truth and Freedom

Chapter 7 99
God’s Word: Guide to His Will

Contents

Chapter 8..... 114
God's Word: The Way to Grow

Chapter 9..... 128
God's Word: The Perfect Pruning Knife

Chapter 10..... 143
God's Word: The Ultimate Weapon

PART III

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM GOD'S WORD

Chapter 11..... 159
What Does God's Word Say?

Chapter 12..... 170
What Does God's Word Mean (and What Do I Do About It)?

Appendix A..... 181
Bible Reading and Study Plans

Appendix B..... 185
The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Endnotes..... 201

PREFACE

TO THE 2015 EDITION

This book, originally published in 1980, was one of my earliest written works. At the time, I was already a full decade into my ministry at Grace Community Church. I could not have envisioned the extraordinary longevity the Lord would graciously grant me as pastor and teacher here, and I am profoundly grateful to be still serving the same congregation four and a half decades after being called here. My driving passions then, as now, were to make the Word of God known and understood to my congregation, and (even beyond the circle of our fellowship) to persuade as many people as possible that the Bible is true and trustworthy.

This book had its genesis about the same time as *Grace to You* began broadcasting Bible teaching daily on the radio across North America. My goal was to declare the authority and inerrancy of God's Word to as many ears as my voice could reach, and I therefore purposely wrote this book to be as basic and accessible as human language would permit.

In those days, the evangelical community was embroiled in a significant controversy about the authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy of the Bible. Biblical conviction was under heavy assault from liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, especially in academic circles. Some of the most prestigious evangelical seminaries had become hotbeds of compromise and even skepticism. Telltale signs in several once-sound churches and

denominations revealed that even where God's Word had once been proclaimed with power and clarity, confidence in the authority and reliability of Scripture was getting wobbly. Harold Lindsell's explosive 1976 book, *The Battle for the Bible*, exposed and documented the trends.

In October 1978, a group of concerned churchmen and scholars led by James Montgomery Boice and Jay Grimstead founded the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). The organization drew together a hundred faithful leaders and biblical scholars who for the next decade wrote books, published papers, and united their efforts in an unprecedented way to reaffirm and defend the historic evangelical commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture.

In their early meetings together, ICBI's leadership made a list of 14 areas of debate, and they commissioned a series of white papers to answer every challenge that was being made against the truthfulness or accuracy of Scripture. Within its first decade, ICBI sponsored three summit meetings that brought together some 300 evangelical scholars to discuss and defend the principle of biblical inerrancy. The organization hosted two major national gatherings that were open to the public. And they coordinated the publication of dozens of books with numerous evangelical publishers, all in defense of the accuracy, authority, and sufficiency of the Bible.

But ICBI's most enduring contribution was the historic document reproduced here as an appendix: *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*. It is without rival as the most important and influential theological document of the 20th century. ICBI co-founder Jay Grimstead called it "the first systematically comprehensive, broadly based, scholarly, creed-like statement

on the inspiration and authority of Scripture in the history of the church.”

The work accomplished by ICBI was monumental, but the organization was founded to perform a highly focused and well-defined job, not to become an institution. So, in September 1987, when the work that was laid out at the start had been accomplished, the organization was formally disbanded.

For the next decade and a half, inerrancy was hardly a controversial issue. Relatively few overt or large-scale challenges to biblical inerrancy arose within evangelical denominations and seminaries, and those that tried received scant publicity and seemed to have little influence. But other, more subtle, threats to biblical authority *did* manage to gain footholds among evangelicals. These included overtly pragmatic methods of evangelism and church growth; a move away from biblical preaching in favor of psychology and various kinds of entertainment; and the deliberate dumbing down of content in most forms of evangelical media (radio, television, books, and magazines). Having won the hard-fought inerrancy debate, the evangelical community seemed to lose interest in the victory, choosing instead to focus attention on things other than Scripture.

Most of those in church leadership today have no memory of ICBI and the inerrancy debate. As a result, many of the old, already-answered arguments against the reliability of Scripture are resurfacing in nuanced fashion as if they constituted new and revolutionary ideas. Suddenly the inerrancy of Scripture is back on the table for debate.

It is an opportune time to bring this book back into print.

I have never aspired to be known as a theologian, a polemicist, or an academician. My main passion is teaching and preaching the Word of God. That is why I wrote this book

with lay readers in mind. It is not meant to be a textbook or an academic treatise; it is just a simple, basic introduction to the Word of God, highlighting the Bible's proper role as the Christian's sole, sufficient, and final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

It is also a plea to Christians to keep a proper focus on Scripture as they try to navigate this pathologically shallow, media-hungry, entertainment-oriented, pleasure-mad, distraction-filled culture.

The attack on inerrancy today may pose a greater threat than it did 35 years ago, because Christians are now preoccupied with everything *but* the authority and truthfulness of the Word of God—and that is a profound tragedy. Even worse, many churches seem to encourage their people to be more concerned with things like stylishness, relationships, prosperity, temporal wellbeing, and other worldly cares than with the truth of Scripture. The church becomes weak and ineffectual wherever the Word of God is not proclaimed with boldness and conviction.

Here, in fact, is the primary duty of every faithful pastor: “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2, ESV). When Paul wrote those words to Timothy, he added this prophetic warning: “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (vv. 3–4).

We are living in such a time, and the only way to resist the downward pull of a declining society is by anchoring our lives in the Word of God. That means our minds must be renewed

by God’s truth as revealed in the Bible (Romans 12:1–2). Our thoughts, our affections, and our actions must be brought into conformity with the Word of God. That’s hardly possible for those who do not know God’s Word, because Scripture stands in opposition to human instinct, earthly wisdom, and worldly philosophy. “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14, ESV).

My hope is that if you are a believer, this book will not only bolster your confidence in the authority and reliability of God’s Word but also motivate you to become a student and a lover of the Bible. And if you are not yet a believer, I trust you will consider the claims of Scripture seriously, with an open heart. May the Spirit of God grant you an understanding of the things freely given to us by God.

John F.
MacArthur



PART I

CAN WE REALLY BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

John F. MacArthur, *Why Believe the Bible?*
Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 1980, 2015. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

As Christians, most of us would like to say that we of course believe the Bible. But we are surrounded by a worldly secular system in which all truth is relative and in which there are no absolutes. The Bible is not openly attacked as much as it is subtly undermined. It is accepted as one more way to look at the world, but its divine authority is simply passed over, ignored, flippantly popularized or dismissed with a tolerant smile. Today more than ever, people are asking the following questions:

- *What Does God's Word Mean to Us?* Is it authoritative, infallible, inerrant and effective in our life? How can we tell?
- *Who Can Prove God's Word Is True?* What about the evidence in changed lives, the Bible's uncanny ability to keep matching up with scientific discovery, archaeological finds, fulfilled prophecy? What is the only "final proof" of the truth of Scripture?
- *How Did God Inspire His Word?* Did God use biblical writers like robots and dictate the 66 books to them? Are the writers inspired, or the writings? Or both? What does Scripture mean by "inspired"?
- *What Did Jesus Think of God's Word?* Can we believe in Christ's authority but not the authority and truthfulness of Scripture? Did Jesus support the Scripture of His day as truthful history?
- *Can You Add to God's Word?* Who decided which books would go in the Bible and which ones would not? What happens when individuals or groups try to add to the Scriptures?

In these first five chapters, we will grapple with these very old questions that are still extremely relevant today.

WHAT DOES GOD'S WORD MEAN TO US?

How important is the Bible to people's lives?

There are several ways to answer that question. Some say, "The Bible? It's just another book. Some wise sayings here and there, mixed with a lot of genealogies, myths and crazy visions."

A second group says something like this: "Of course I know the Bible is important—at least my pastor thinks so. He's always quoting it and waving it in the air. But I don't read it too much—can't really understand it too well."

There is still a third group, however, who would align themselves with Sir Walter Scott, a famed British novelist and poet, who was also a committed Christian. On his deathbed, Scott is reported to have said to his secretary, "Bring me the Book." His secretary thought of the thousands of books in Scott's library and inquired, "Dr. Scott, which book?"

"The Book," replied Scott. "The Bible—the only book for a dying man!"

The committed Christian would have to add that the Bible is not just the only book for a dying man, but it's the only book for a living man, because it is the Word of God.

In which of the three categories do you fall? Obviously, Group 1 represents the typical response from the secular world. It doesn't know Christ, and it accepts only what seems to fit in with worldly wisdom. For them the Bible has little importance and less authority.

Group 2 includes a lot of church members, and even some Christians. They know the Bible is important and that it should have priority and authority in their lives, but they don't make much personal use of it. They neglect its teachings altogether, or they slip by, seldom opening the Bible for themselves and depend on pastors, teachers or speakers to "explain it to them." They make little application of what the Scriptures teach. The Bible remains a mysterious, somewhat confusing rulebook that they are supposed to swallow bravely, like a bitter vitamin every morning before breakfast.

Group 3 sees the Bible much differently. For them the Scriptures are alive, literally popping with exciting truths. This group doesn't live by bread alone, "but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

But perhaps you're thinking that you don't quite fit in any of these three categories. If you are like a lot of Christians I have met, you land somewhere between Group 2 and Group 3. You want the Bible to be more important. You want to submit to its authority, but life sort of crowds in. Everywhere you turn you are enticed or intimidated to forget the teachings of the Scripture.

For example, you turn on a TV talk show and hear a big star make authoritative announcements such as, "I think everyone should do his own thing, live his own life and have his own faith." The studio audience bursts into applause and you are left wondering if it's really very bright (or even very American)

to think that you, a born-again Christian and member of a church, have all the answers between the covers of such an old and seemingly “outdated” book.

But when we let the world's value system intimidate us, we forget a basic truth. In a world of relative thinking that has no absolutes, the Bible stands as the absolute authority for the Christian. The Scriptures are the Word of God, not man's opinions, human philosophy, somebody's ideas, not the polling of the best thoughts from the best thinkers. Scripture is God's Word and that means it has several characteristics and qualities that should make it extremely important in our lives.

GOD'S WORD IS INFALLIBLE

Some statements of faith published by churches or Christian organizations say, “The Bible is God's Word, the infallible rule of faith and practice.” That is a good statement, but I prefer an even stronger one that says, “The Bible is God's *infallible* Word, the only rule of faith and practice.”

There is a real difference in where you place the word “infallible” in those two statements. The second statement clearly says that *in its totality* the Bible makes no mistakes. The original autographs (the absolutely first copies) were without error. Copiers have made minor mistakes over the centuries, but none of these are serious enough to challenge the Bible's infallibility. The Bible says of itself, “The law of the Lord is perfect” (Ps. 19:7). The Bible is flawless because it was authored (inspired) by a God who is flawless.

I will discuss inspiration of Scripture in more detail in chapter 3, but the point to think about here is this: *If God is our*

ultimate authority and His character is flawless, and if He inspired the writers of Scripture to put down His thoughts while still allowing them freedom of personal expression, then the Bible is flawless and it becomes our ultimate authority—our only rule for faith and practice.

To put it another way, if we believe God is perfect, then it has to follow that the original copies of Scripture—the original giving of God’s Word—also had to be perfect. Is the Bible infallible? It has to be, because it is the only book that never makes a mistake.

GOD’S WORD IS INERRANT

The Bible is not only infallible in its totality but it is also inerrant in all its parts. The writer of Proverbs says it well: “Every Word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him” (Prov. 30:5).

In regard to Scripture, inerrancy and infallibility go hand in hand. According to the writers of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, the negative terms “infallible” and “inerrant” “have special value, for they explicitly safeguard crucial positive truths.” The Chicago Statement, drafted at a summit conference called in October 1978 by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy to affirm the authority of Scripture, goes on to say:

Infallible signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters. Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so

safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.¹

As implied in both the above definitions, one convenient way to describe infallibility and inerrancy is in the word “truthfulness.” In Isaiah 65:16, the Lord calls Himself, “God of truth.” In Jeremiah 10:10, the prophet writes, “The Lord is the true God.” The New Testament agrees with the Old in calling God a God of truth. Examples of many such statements include: “God is truthful” (John 3:33); “that they may know you, the only true God” (John 17:3); “He is the true God” (1 John 5:20).

To make sure that we don't overlook the importance of God's truthfulness, three times the Scripture stresses that God cannot lie (see Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

Some critics of Scripture, however, like to point out that biblical “truthfulness” is open to question because Scripture contains terms that are not scientifically precise or grammatically correct, and passages that seem to contradict one another. The writers of the Chicago Statement face this criticism head-on by saying:

In determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of his penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise. So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth. Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must be observed . . .

non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days . . . Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.²

In a list of 20 Articles of Affirmation and Denial, the Chicago Statement further confirms the need to understand how God inspired certain men to write Scripture at certain times, under certain circumstances. Article XIII reads: “We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.”³

Testimony for the truthfulness of God is found throughout His written Word, and if we don’t accept and believe that testimony, we will wind up somewhere in Group II: those who know the Bible is supposed to be important, but who remain apathetic and listless about what it says. In fact, such apathy can lead to real despair. A young man visited my office and said, “My whole Christian life is in a mess. Everything is falling apart. I can’t study the Bible. I have these doubts . . .”

I listened to him for about 20 minutes and then I said, “I can tell you right now what your problem is. It’s obvious.”

“What is it?” he wanted to know.

I replied, “You do not believe in the absolute inerrancy of Scripture. If you believe there are errors in the Word of God, then you are confused and you don’t know what to believe. That’s your problem.”

“You know,” he said, “you hit it right on the nose. I don’t believe in the absolute inerrancy of Scripture.”

“Then my friend,” I answered, “how can you hope to be an effective student of the Word of God or to ever lead an effective Christian life?”

Is the Bible inerrant? It has to be, because the Bible is God's Word and God is a God of truth.

GOD'S WORD IS AUTHORITATIVE

If the Bible is infallible and inerrant, it must be our final word—our highest standard of authority. The writers of the Old Testament make more than 2,000 direct claims to be speaking the very words of God. Again and again they wrote such phrases as, “The Spirit of the Lord has spoken to me” or “The Word of God came unto me.” For example, Isaiah opens his prophecy by saying, “Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken” (Isa. 1:2). When God speaks, everybody is to listen because He is the final authority.

In the New Testament we find more of the same, especially in the teachings of Jesus. Talking about God's Word in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17–18).

That even the tiniest part of God's Word has authority is echoed by James when he writes, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (Jas. 2:10). All of God's Word is authoritative.

But while the Bible claims complete authority over our lives, many people do not always recognize that authority. Today's "all truth is relative" way of thinking takes the Bible off its authoritative pedestal and places it on the shelf as "just another book."

In an article written for *Eternity* magazine many years ago, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote words for the church of the '50s that are even more true for the church of today. Lloyd-Jones points out that the attack on Scripture's authority began in the middle of the eighteenth century with the beginning of what came to be known as the "higher critical" view of Scripture. Naturalistic presuppositions, along with man's knowledge, new discoveries in science, and human reasoning and understanding, were all brought to bear in an attempt to analyze the Bible and "get at its real truth." All of this developed into the movement we know as liberalism, which held sway throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Liberalism saw the Bible as full of errors, the work of men, and something to be accepted as having no more authority than the works of Shakespeare or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

With the dawn of the twentieth century, a new movement began. Neo-orthodox thinkers tried to restore some of the Bible's authority by reaffirming the sinfulness of man and claiming that while the Bible is not the Word of God, it "contains the Word of God." As Lloyd-Jones describes it, "The Bible, we are told, is partly the Word of God and partly the word of man. In part it has great authority and in part it has not."⁴

Lloyd-Jones goes on to point out that this "partly God's Word, partly man's word" position leads to a view of the Bible that says that part of it is of great value but there are also other

parts that are full of errors and that are “utterly useless and valueless.”⁵ But, observes Lloyd-Jones, we are then faced with a very basic question: “Who decides what is true? Who decides what is of value? How can you discriminate and differentiate between the great facts that are true and those that are false? How can you differentiate between and separate facts from teaching? How can you separate this essential message of the Bible from the background in which it is presented? . . . The whole Bible comes to us and offers itself to us in exactly the same way. There is no hint, no suspicion of a suggestion that parts of it are important and parts are not. They all come to us in the same form.”⁶

Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy are still with us in every conceivable shape and form. As Lloyd-Jones wrote in 1957, “The modern position amounts to this, that it is really man’s reasons that decide. You and I come to the Bible and we have to make our decisions on the basis of certain standards, which are obviously in our minds. We decide that one portion conforms to the message, which we believe, and that another does not. We are left still with the position, in spite of all the talk about a new situation today, that man’s knowledge and man’s understanding are the final arbiter and the final court of appeal.”⁷

From ministers and seminary students to lay people in the pews, we can all get caught up in the doubts and skepticism. Even the greatest of Christian leaders know what it is to wrestle with this. Some have wrestled and lost; others have wrestled and won.

Before he launched his career, Billy Graham wrestled with doubts about the Scriptures. Recalling those days of struggle, he says:

I believe it is not possible to understand everything in the Bible intellectually. One day some years ago I decided to accept the Scriptures by faith. There were problems I could not reason through. When I accepted the Bible as the authoritative Word of God—by faith—I found immediately that it became a flame in my hand. That flame began to melt away unbelief in the hearts of many people and to move them to decide for Christ.

The Word became a hammer, breaking up stony hearts and shaping men into the likeness of God. Did not God say, “I will make my words in thy mouth fire” (Jer. 5:14), and “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29).

I found that I could take a simple outline, then put a number of Scripture quotations under each point, and God would use it mightily to cause men to make full commitment to Christ. I found that I did not have to rely upon cleverness, oratory, psychological manipulation, apt illustrations, or striking quotations from famous men. I began to rely more and more upon Scripture itself and God blessed it. I am convinced through my travels and experience that people all over the world are hungry to hear the Word of God.⁸

Is the Bible authoritative? Does it need defending? The great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, said it well: “There is no need for you to defend a lion when he’s being attacked. All you need to do is open the gate and let him out.”

GOD'S WORD IS EFFECTIVE

One of the most powerful claims to the Bible's infallibility, inerrancy and authority is its effectiveness. The prophet Isaiah aptly describes the ability of Scripture to get results when he said, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11). One of the best things about being a preacher and a teacher of God's Word is that you know it will do what it says it will do. You are not left worrying about what you will say when your product doesn't work.

There is a story about a lady who lived way out in the country. A vacuum cleaner salesman came by and began to give the woman his high-pressure sales talk.

"Madam, I have the greatest product you have ever seen. This vacuum cleaner will eat up anything. In fact, if I don't control it, it will suck up your carpet."

Before the woman could reply, he went on to say, "Lady, I want to give you a demonstration."

The salesman went to the fireplace, scooped up some ashes and threw them in the middle of the carpet. Then he reached into a bag in his own pocket and poured more dirt and junk right on the carpet. After making a thorough mess he said, "Madam, I want you to watch this product at work. I guarantee it will suck up every bit of everything I've thrown on your rug."

The woman stood there aghast—speechless—and the salesman went on to say, “Lady, if it doesn’t suck up every bit of this, I’ll eat it all with a spoon.”

The woman looked the salesman in the eye and finally found her voice: “Well, sir, start eating. We ain’t got no electricity.”

It’s tough to be caught in a situation where your product isn’t going to work. But that never happens with the Bible. It is always effective and it always does exactly what it says it will do. Paul talked about this great effectiveness of the Scriptures when he wrote, “Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). When the Word goes forth, it has power. It has the Holy Spirit and you have the assurance that God’s Word will do what it says.

TO SUM IT UP

So what have we said so far? The Word of God is infallible in its totality and it is inerrant in all its parts. God’s Word is authoritative and demands our obedience. Again and again we see the Bible’s infallibility, inerrancy and authority demonstrated because the Bible is effective. The Bible does what it says it will do.

Everything we have said so far is good, *if* we have one more thing—the presence of the Holy Spirit. The need for this vital extra dimension is well illustrated by a conversation I had with a man on an airplane. As we talked, he continually admitted that he didn’t understand the Bible. I didn’t really tell him in so many words, but I hinted at why I didn’t expect him to

understand the Bible. He didn't have the one necessary thing he needed—the life of God in his soul by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, the Bible is “just another book.” When we have the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts the Bible is THE Book. We will see why in the next chapter.

SOME PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. I know the Bible is important to me because:
2. Recently, I have looked to Scripture as the final authority in my life (my thoughts, words, behavior) in the following ways:
3. When describing the Bible, I prefer to say it is (rank in your order of preference):

- infallible
- authoritative
- inerrant
- completely true

KEY VERSES TO KEEP IN MIND

*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word
that comes from the mouth of God.*

Matthew 4:4

*Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those
who take refuge in him.*

Proverbs 30:5