

## Mr. G Video: The Inspiration of the Bible

Many Christians say the Bible is “inspired” by God, and it’s really important as a foundation to our discussion about the reliability of the Bible to talk about what inspiration is. Basically, we’re going to look at what the Bible says about itself and how Christians view the Bible.

People obviously have different views of what the Bible is and its relationship to God, if they believe in God. Most non-Christians would say that the Bible is just a collection of human writings, by fallible (which means they can make mistakes) human authors, and so there’s really nothing special about them. In no sense are they from or influenced by God, if there is a God.

Some members of particular non-Christian religions might view the Bible as having some value alongside other books. Jews might accept the Old Testament as being in some sense from God, but not the New Testament. Muslims believe that there once were authentic books from God which roughly correspond to parts of our Bible, but that they were corrupted and lost over time and what we have today is no longer authentic.

Christians, however, view the Bible as “inspired” by God. This word is derived from the verse we read, 2 Timothy 3:16, where it says literally that the Scripture (another name for the Bible) is “God-breathed.” Not all who call themselves Christians, however, view inspiration the same way.

Some Christians, some denominations of Christianity, which we would call “liberal,” believe that the Bible is not literally the Word of God, but is the work of fallible humans. It might point us to Jesus in a general way, for example, or God might use it to speak to us, or it might in some way but they would not believe that it is literally true and generally would not believe that we really have to obey commands that we don’t like or feel are outdated. Other Christians might say that parts of the Bible are inspired by God, especially parts having to do with doctrinal matters, religious matters, while other parts are of human origin and can contain mistakes. Some might say the Bible “contains the Word of God” but is not itself the Word of God. The problem with these views, in addition to going against what the Bible says about itself, is that it makes the Bible out to be basically worthless. It’s no more helpful to us in our life and faith than the works of any famous novelist might be. It puts us in a position of being unsure about anything relating to the Christian message, and makes truth very personalized according to individual taste. And if you try to separate out the true, inspired by God parts from the inaccurate human parts, well, first of all how do you know how to do that? And how can you pick out the religious stuff from the historical, for example, when the two are intertwined? The events that happened were vital to what God was doing and how He was revealing Himself. You can’t separate them. These kinds of views don’t work.

Another view you might hear of sometimes is the dictation view, where God just dictated to his chosen writers and they wrote down what He said word for word. This is accurate for some

parts of the Bible, in the prophetic books like Jeremiah, for example, you'll see places where God told Jeremiah directly what to write. But most of the Bible did not come about in this way. This view is more like the Muslim view of how their holy book, the Quran, came about. But it only works for a relatively small part of the Bible.

So what is the correct way of understanding inspiration, you ask? Well the traditional, orthodox view of the Christian church as a whole, and the one that makes the most sense, and that we're accepting as correct in this course, is that it is so-called plenary, verbal inspiration. What does that mean? Plenary means complete or full, and verbal means the very words. In other words, ALL of the parts of the Bible, and all the words in the Bible, down to the exact word choice, are believed to be FROM GOD. They are God's words. Not just general thoughts from God, but the exact words. So how does that work if God didn't just dictate his words to the many different men who wrote down the words of the Bible?

We get a clue as to how God did it in the second verse I had you read: 2 Peter 1:21. Here it says "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." That word meaning "carried along" in the original Greek, was used to indicate a ship with a sail being pushed along, or carried along, by the wind. The Spirit of God supernaturally working in the authors of the Bible caused them to write down the very words God wanted them to write down, but meanwhile they still maintained their unique personalities and different writing styles as they wrote.

It's important to note that this understanding of the inspiration of the Bible applies to the original manuscripts, in the original languages. As we'll see later in the course, we're able to know with a high degree of accuracy what the original manuscripts said, even though we don't have them, and the translations we read are generally trustworthy and accurate reflections of the originals, but still it's important to remember that no one translation is inspired by God in the same way as the originals. We'll talk more about these topics in coming lessons.

It's also important to note that the fact that the Bible is inspired by God doesn't necessarily mean that God commanded or approves of everything that happens in the Bible, everything that everyone does. It records accounts of people doing things that are evil because it's historically accurate, but that doesn't necessarily make what they do right.

So guys, that's the foundation for our study of the reliability of the Bible: we believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible, and I think we'll see as we investigate different areas relating to the Bible in coming lessons that we have good factual reasons to believe that God is in fact the author and preserver of the Bible.