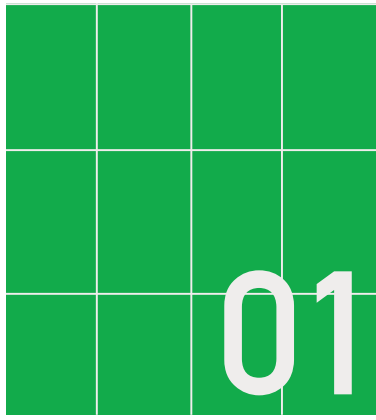




THE LIVING WORD:

Hope's Timeless Compass

I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Hope Channel. My name is _____ and I'll be your host for the series *There is More to Life*.

In this series of eight studies, we'll explore the foundational beliefs of Christianity from a biblical point of view. From the origins of the Bible to the life of Jesus Christ and what happens when we die, our time together will be a time of discovery and learning, guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

We begin our time together today with an exploration of the Bible. This sacred book has been a source of wisdom and strength for human beings for thousands of years.

We'll explore this subject by asking several questions: What is the Bible? Why was it written? How can we study and apply it effectively? And most importantly, how does it transform our lives?

Let us open our hearts to rediscover the depth and richness of God's Word. We begin with a word of prayer:

"Heavenly Father, we come before You with open hearts, longing to hear Your voice through Your Word. Fill our minds with understanding and our spirits with wisdom. May Your truth guide us, Your love inspire us, and Your presence transform us. Teach us to walk in Your light and to reflect Your grace to the world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

II. MAIN ARGUMENT

Have you ever stopped to think why so many people love the Bible?

Undoubtedly, there is something special about this book. The Bible has shaped nations, transformed lives, and provided hope to countless generations of believers. The Bible is not just a historical document or even a set of rules to live by. It's a living document that speaks to our lives today. It is deeply personal, speaking to each of us when we need it most.

Through its pages, we see God at work in the lives of His people.

We read about Abraham, who trusted God's promises. We see David, who found strength in God during times of trial.

We encounter Paul, whose life was radically transformed from persecutor of Christians to preacher of Jesus Christ. These stories aren't just ancient history—they're reminders that the same God who worked in their lives promises to be present in our lives.

Let us take a look at how this amazing book came about.

Christians consider the Bible the inspired Word of God because through the Bible, we hear God speaking. In its pages, we meet a God who is holy, just, merciful, and abounding in love.

From Genesis to Revelation, we see a consistent picture of who God is. He is the Creator who spoke the universe into existence. He is the Redeemer who sent His Son to die for our sins. He is the Sustainer who promises to be with us through every trial. And He is the soon-coming King who will end history and bring salvation to His people.

The belief that the Bible is God's Word was taught by the Apostle Paul. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“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.”

Paul was referring to the Old Testament here. Today, we also consider the New Testament to be God-breathed because it was inspired by God.

But what does it mean to say that Scripture is “God-breathed”?

It means that God, through the Holy Spirit, inspired the human authors of the Bible

to communicate His truth. These authors came from diverse backgrounds—shepherds, kings, prophets, fishermen, and Jewish scholars—and different times, yet their writings come together to form a cohesive narrative of God’s love and redemption.

Consider the prophetic precision of Isaiah 53, a chapter written hundreds of years before Jesus’ birth, yet perfectly describing Jesus’ suffering as the Messiah, even where he would be buried! Jesus confirmed this truth when he said in John 5:39:

“These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”

The Bible, from beginning to end, tells the story of a Savior who came to redeem us.

Think also of the unity of the Bible’s message: from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells one consistent story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Another remarkable aspect of the Bible’s inspiration is that it was not dictated by God. Except for some rare cases, God used human authors to communicate His Word, allowing them to write in their own styles, cultural contexts, and personal experiences. This blend of divine inspiration and human expression gives the Bible its human feel but authoritative nature.

Think about that for a moment.

For over 1,500 years, God inspired people from all walks of life to communicate His messages. Despite their time, background, and stylistic differences, their writings form a unified message of hope and salvation! This is nothing short of miraculous!

The Bible’s accuracy, unity, and life-changing power are proof of its inspiration. But here’s what really sets the Bible apart from any other book: it’s alive, because God’s words are living and active. Hebrews 4:12 says:

“For the Word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.”

What does that mean?

When we call the Bible the Word of God, we are declaring two things about the Bible

1. Its divine **origin**.

2. Its divine **authority**.

When we say that the Bible originated in God's mind, we mean that it is not just another book filled with human wisdom or ideas; it is the ultimate standard of truth and the guide for our lives.

For instance, David's heartfelt psalms reflect the emotional struggles and triumphs of life, while Paul's letters offer logical arguments for faith and practical advice for Christian living. Each book retains the personality of its author while conveying the unchanging truths of God. This dynamic interaction between divine guidance and human expression ensures the Bible speaks powerfully to every heart and circumstance.

The Bible's authority comes from its unique nature as the inspired Word of God, carrying the weight of His will and character. To call it the Word of God is to recognize that it is not merely a product of human effort but a divine message with eternal significance.

In summary, calling the Bible the Word of God, we affirm its power to transform, comfort, and guide. It is a message of love and salvation, divinely inspired yet accessible to all. Its authority is unparalleled, its wisdom timeless, and its relevance eternal. When we open its pages, we encounter the voice of God, speaking directly to us, calling us to know Him, and inviting us into a life of purpose and hope.

Throughout history, people have encountered God through its pages. From Augustine, whose heart was convicted by reading Romans, to ordinary believers who find guidance in its timeless words, the Bible has the power to change us from the inside out.

It is indeed fascinating how the Bible has a unified message even though it was written over 1,500 years. Yet what makes the Bible truly remarkable is its power to transform lives.

As Dwight L. Moody, the famous 19th-century American evangelist, once said:

“The Bible was not given for our information, but for our transformation.”

The Bible is powerful because it speaks to our deepest needs. When life feels

overwhelming, its promises give us hope. When we face uncertainty, its wisdom provides guidance. And when we feel broken, its message of grace brings healing.

The Bible also answers life's biggest questions:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

And every answer points back to God. It reminds us that we are His children, created in His image, and called to live for His glory.

The Bible transforms the way we think, the way we act, and the way we relate to others. Romans 12:2 tells us:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

The Bible plays an important role in the renewing of our minds, shaping us to be more like Christ.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates the Bible's transformative power.

Nicky Cruz was born on December 6, 1938, in Las Piedras, Puerto Rico, into a family deeply involved in witchcraft and spiritism. As one of 19 children, he endured severe physical and mental abuse from his parents, particularly his mother, who once declared him the “Son of Satan” during a spiritual trance.

At the age of 15, his father sent him to New York City to live with his older brother. However, Cruz soon left and took to the streets, eventually joining the notorious Brooklyn street gang known as the Mau Maus. Within six months, he rose to the position of Warlord and later became the gang's president.

In 1958, David Wilkerson, a preacher from Pennsylvania, felt compelled to minister to gang members in New York City. Despite initial resistance, including threats and physical assaults from Cruz, Wilkerson persisted in sharing the message of God's love. During a pivotal evangelistic meeting organized by Wilkerson at the St. Nicholas Arena, Cruz experienced a profound sense of guilt and began to pray. Moved by Wilkerson's

message, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, leading to a radical transformation in his life.

Following his conversion, Cruz and several former gang members surrendered their weapons to the police, symbolizing their commitment to a new way of life. He pursued biblical studies and eventually became a Christian evangelist, founding Nicky Cruz Outreach, a ministry dedicated to reaching out to urban communities and at-risk youth.

Over the past five decades, Cruz has traveled worldwide, sharing his testimony with millions and authoring several books, including his autobiography *Run Baby Run*, which has been translated into more than 40 languages.

Nicky Cruz's life story exemplifies the transformative power of the Bible and the message of Jesus Christ, turning a once-feared gang leader into a messenger of hope and redemption for millions of people. It is estimated that over 50 million people have been impacted by Cruz's ministry over the years.

Have you ever experienced the power of Scripture in your own life? Perhaps in a moment of despair or confusion, you found comfort in its pages. Passages such as Psalm 23:1 are a profound source of hope and strength: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing." Or Jesus' promise to be with us "until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

What other ancient book has such beautiful words of comfort?

The Bible was written for a specific purpose: to reveal God's character, His will, and His plan for humanity.

Let us break this down:

A. THE BIBLE REVEALS THE HEART OF GOD

The Bible is like a window into the very heart of God.

Through its pages, we come to understand His character—His holiness, justice, mercy, and unending love. Exodus 34:6-7 tells us of a personal encounter Moses had with God:

"The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,

abounding in love and faithfulness.”

When Moses had a vision of God, he couldn’t help but exclaim that God is loving and faithful. What a moment!

Moses’ proclamation about God resonates throughout Scripture, painting a consistent picture of His unchanging nature. God is not distant or indifferent but intimately involved in the lives of His creation.

Listen to Tiera’s story:

Tiera Fletcher, a young mother in Kihei, Hawaii, was overwhelmed by the demands of caring for her newborn baby and two-year-old child. The constant needs of her children left her feeling drained and inadequate as she struggled to balance parenting, household chores, and her own well-being. One particularly challenging day, as she sat exhausted and discouraged, she cried out to God for strength.

At that moment, her two-year-old, unexpectedly and in her small, sweet voice, recited Philippians 4:13: ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”***

Hearing those words from her child felt like a direct message from God. It was a reminder of His presence and His promise to give her strength even in her weakest moments.

Kiera was reminded that God is compassionate, faithful, and intimately involved in her life, speaking to her through His Word—even through the voice of her little child.

God’s promise to be present with us is revealed perfectly in Jesus.

B. THE BIBLE LEADS US TO JESUS

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible points us to Jesus Christ, the central figure of God’s plan of redemption.

This fact was confirmed by Jesus Himself when he said:

“These are the very Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39).

The Old Testament anticipates His coming through prophecies, symbols, and events that foreshadow the work of the Messiah. For example, the sacrificial lambs of the Old

Testament, which represented the ultimate sacrifice Jesus would make for the sins of the world. When Jesus started his ministry, John the Baptist called him precisely that:

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Prophets like Isaiah described Him as the suffering servant who would bear humanity’s iniquities. The New Testament reveals the fulfillment of these promises through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Every act of redemption, every sacrifice, and every prophecy in the Bible finds its culmination in Christ. He is not only the Savior of the world but also the ultimate revelation of God’s love.

The way that these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus’ life is not only evidence of the Bible’s divine origin but the confirmation that God keeps His promises!

Jesus reveals God’s desire to save humanity and restore a broken relationship with His creation. John 3:16 proclaims,

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

The Bible is a love story between God and humanity, showing His relentless pursuit of sinners, His sacrificial love through Jesus Christ, and His promise of eternal life for those who believe.

The gospel offers hope to the sinner drowning in guilt, comfort to the brokenhearted enduring life’s hardships, and guidance to the seeker searching for purpose. No matter what we may be going through, the Bible’s message speaks directly to our deepest needs.

C. THE BIBLE GUIDES US IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Bible would be very meaningful if it only revealed facts about God. But the Bible is not a book of facts about God and Jesus; it provides moral guidance and practical wisdom for every aspect of life. Its teachings show us how to live in harmony with God’s will and one another and shape our hearts and minds.

The Ten Commandments, for example, teach us how to love God and our neighbors, forming the foundation for a life that honors Him.

The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5-7, is another example. Here, Jesus teaches us how to live as citizens of God's kingdom, emphasizing values like humility, mercy, forgiveness, and love. These teachings are not just abstract ideals; they are practical instructions for living a life that reflects God's character. The Bible equips us to make decisions that honor God and serve others, guiding us on the path of righteousness.

Listen to the story of Augustine.

Born in 354 AD in present-day Algeria, Augustine's early life was marked by indulgence and skepticism. Despite his Christian upbringing, he pursued worldly pleasures and adhered to various philosophies. His mother, Monica, a devout Christian, fervently prayed for his spiritual awakening.

When he was 31 years of age, Augustine experienced a profound internal struggle, feeling torn between his sinful desires and a yearning for truth.

One day, he overheard children singing, "Take up and read." Interpreting this as a divine sign, he picked up a Bible and opened it in Romans 13:13-14:

"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."

This passage jolted Augustine, leading to his immediate conversion to Christianity. Augustine's transformation was so profound that he became one of Christianity's most influential theologians.

Augustine's story exemplifies how the Scriptures can penetrate the human heart, leading to repentance, faith, and a complete life transformation.

IV. HOW SHOULD WE STUDY AND UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Now that we have learned some basic facts about Scripture, let's explore how we should study the Bible. Here are some principles to help us approach God's Word effectively:

1. BEGIN WITH PRAYER

The first and most important step in studying the Bible is to begin with prayer. Prayer helps us to approach God's Word with a teachable spirit, free from distractions and preconceived ideas. It allows us to hear God's voice and to let His message penetrate our hearts. It invites the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds, enabling us to understand and apply God's Word. Jesus promised in John 16:13:

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth.”

The Bible is a spiritual book, and its truths are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). We cannot rely solely on our intellect or human understanding to understand the Bible.

Try it! I guarantee you it's going to make a big difference in your reading!

2. STUDY IN CONTEXT

Each passage of Scripture was written in a specific historical, cultural, and linguistic setting, and grasping these details can bring clarity to its message. Ask the following questions about any biblical passage:

- Who wrote the passage?
- Who was the intended audience?
- What was happening at the time?

For example, understanding the cultural significance of shepherds in ancient Israel brings greater depth to David's statement "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1) as well as Jesus' declaration, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

Without context, we risk misinterpreting Scripture or applying it incorrectly. A good Bible commentary will provide important background information.

3. COMPARE WHAT VARIOUS AUTHORS SAY

Once you start studying the Bible, you realize that it is a unified whole, and its teachings are consistent throughout. When we encounter a challenging or unclear passage, we can gain clarity by comparing it with other related texts. This practice not only enriches our study but also strengthens our faith as we see the coherence of God's

Word.

4. APPLY WHAT YOU LEARN

Studying the Bible is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is meant to transform our lives. James 1:22 reminds us:

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

When we put God’s Word into practice, it becomes more than words on a page—it becomes a living force in our lives. By living out what we learn, we witness the transformative power of Scripture and draw closer to God.

In summary, the Bible is God’s Word because it is:

1. Convicting

The Bible reveals our sins and points us to Christ, offering forgiveness and redemption.

2. Comforting

Its promises bring peace in times of trouble.

3. Transforming

The Bible changes how we think, live, and relate to God and others.

II. CONCLUSION

The Bible is a priceless treasure, a divine gift, and the ultimate guide for life. It reveals God’s character, leads us to Jesus, and equips us for righteousness.

I hope the evidence we explored here and the stories we shared convinced you that the Bible is trustworthy and relevant. Though written thousands of years ago, its teachings remain timeless and universal. It addresses the deepest questions and challenges of human existence—questions about identity, purpose, morality, and eternity. Its principles offer wisdom for relationships, integrity, justice, and faith. It speaks to the fears and uncertainties of every generation, providing unshakable truths that guide us through life’s complexities. It is alive and active, cutting through cultural barriers and speaking directly to our hearts today.

I invite you to commit yourself to studying, living, and sharing God's Word. Make it come alive in your life by daily reading and application of its truths in your daily walk with God.

Until next time, God bless you more than you ask or imagine!