



Q. What does it mean, the Bible is inspired?

Josh McDowell Ministry

A. The inspiration of the Bible is an extremely crucial topic in today's world. Many talk about the Bible being inspired. But when asked to define what they mean by inspiration, they give a variety of definitions.

Some contend the Bible is inspired in the same way as all great literature. "It challenges the human heart to reach new heights," they say. However, this does not make the Bible unique. In other words, they see the Bible as only a human literary masterpiece, not as being of divine origin.

Others believe the Bible is inspired because it contains the Word of God — along with myths, mistakes, and legends. These people hold that it is wrong to identify the Bible as the Word of God; rather, it is a witness of God speaking to mankind. Putting it another way, the Word of God can be found in the Bible, but the Word of God is not synonymous with the Bible.

Two important verses speak to the heart of the matter: 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. The former reads, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." The word *inspired* is a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, meaning God-breathed. Thus the origin of Scripture is God, not man; it is God-breathed.

The second verse, 2 Peter 1:21, says, "For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." This also confirms that the writers were moved by God to record that which God desired.

Mechanical dictation was not employed as some claim. Rather, God used each individual writer and his personality to accomplish a divinely authoritative work.

The process of inspiration extended to every word ("all Scripture"), refuting the idea of myth and error. Since God is behind the writings, and since He is perfect, the result must be infallible. If it were not infallible, we could be left with God-inspired error. It is important to understand this concept, for the entire Christian faith is based upon the premise that "God is there and He is not silent," as the late theologian Francis Schaeffer so often said.

Sometimes it is easier to understand the concept of inspiration when it is compared with revelation. Revelation relates to the origin and actual giving of truth (1 Corinthians 2:10). Inspiration, on the other hand, relates to the receiving and actual recording of truth.

Inspiration means that "God the Holy Spirit worked in a unique supernatural way so that the written words of the Scripture writers were also the words of God."

The human authors of Scripture wrote spontaneously using their own minds and experiences, yet their words were not merely the words of men but actually the words of God. God's control was always with them in their writings with the result being the Bible — the Word of God in the words of men.

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