

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The Bible is unique among the books ever produced:

- It was written over about 2,000 years.
- It has been around in various stages for about 4,000 years.
- It was written by about 40 different men.
- It was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- The writers had diverse backgrounds and occupations including priests, scribes, kings, shepherds, fishermen, physicians, tentmakers, and a tax collector.

What gives it preeminence, however, is that the Bible reveals the Eternal Most High God—the Creator of all life and all things. Without it, mankind could only imagine how flesh and blood and the universe came to exist or even guess at the purpose for this physical life. But then, the Bible is not always easy to understand; for example, some prophecies are quite vague. In fact, parts of it are encoded:

ISAIAH 28:10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

There are likely several reasons for the encoding where bits and pieces are strewn “here a little, there a little.” One is that it ensures that the biblical message is preserved throughout time so it is never lost or corrupted.

Some organizations have published *rules* for Bible study, which are focused on basics such as definitions, concordances, word usage, time period, writer, speaker and audience, context, and personal bias. While somewhat practical, they miss the mark because the Bible is not like other books. Rules treat Bible study as an academic exercise and are better suited to educational textbooks that progressively build upon knowledge as the student goes through it. The Bible, on the other hand, can only truly be understood with revelations from its Author and it is intended to be a guide for an entire lifetime.

Above all, the Bible is not knowledge to be learned for the sake of knowledge. It contains four main topics: 1) proof of the Creator God, 2) history and prophecy of God’s interaction with mankind, 3) God’s purpose for mankind, and 4) terms of salvation unto eternal life. The first three have no significance apart from the last one and, even then, they have no lasting relevance once the age of flesh and blood is finished. The primary purpose for the Bible, then, is the last one in which God presents mankind with a choice—life or death. The Bible is God’s ministry that probes deep into the heart as well as the mind. It is meant to cause introspection beyond simply acquiring knowledge by scrutinizing the deepest thoughts and emotions as students respond to, and increase, in knowledge:

HEBREWS 4:12 For **the word of God is living and powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing even to the division of soul and spirit**, and of joints and marrow, and is **a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**.

The Bible essentially is direction for a lifelong work of perfecting character that is not possible aside from the Author. Knowing our ignorance and weaknesses, God provided reassurances to those who delve into His Word. They reveal His unbreakable promises,

living commandments, and divine help and succor—everything that transforms knowledge in the Bible into the wisdom of salvation. The Bible is, in fact, the basis of a covenant in which God helps with our ignorance, confusion, doubts, uncertainties, weaknesses, failings, temptations, and sufferings that come upon all who strive for perfection. In simple terms, God makes possible the impossibilities of this life.

Rules for study might work well for a history book but not the Bible. Rules omit the very necessary power and influence of the Author upon those who desire more than knowledge. Knowing and holding onto the assurances of God opens the hearts and minds of students to reveal the wisdom of salvation. While well-known by most, they are some of the most precious Words of Life. Instead of rules, I suggest studying the Bible in light of God's greatness, His promises, and His inspiration. The following are His assurances that, for me, "pierce ... the soul and spirit":

- 1) The Bible is God's Word and He is the sole author.¹ It is beauty to behold the continuity of the mind of God woven throughout the Bible. His Truth shines brightly in the words of the many writers whose unique personalities connect with every possible temperament.
 - a) PSALM 119:160 The entirety of **Your [the LORD] word is truth**, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.
 - b) JOHN 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. **Your [God's] word is truth.**
 - c) 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
- 2) The Bible records God's purpose and desire for mankind is eternal life in His Kingdom. His desire is beyond a simple longing—He asked His Son to suffer as the sacrifice² that opened the gates of the Kingdom to His children.
 - a) LUKE 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for **it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.**
 - b) JOHN 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.** 17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that **the world through Him might be saved.**
 - c) LUKE 9:56 "For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but **to save them.**" ...
 - d) [TS2009] 2 PETER 1:10-11 For this reason, [brethren], all the more do your utmost to make firm your calling and choosing, for if you are doing these *matters* you shall never stumble at all, 11 for **in this way an entrance into the everlasting reign** of our [Lord] and Saviour [Jesus the] Messiah **shall be richly supplied to you.**
- 3) The Bible is the source of knowledge for salvation. It is called salvation because the alternative is inescapable death.³
 - a) 2 TIMOTHY 3:15 ... **the Holy Scriptures**, which are able to **make you wise for salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹ Also Prov. 30:5.

² John 10:15-17.

³ Also Gen. 3:19; Heb. 9:27; Eccl. 3:20.

- b) 1 THESSALONIANS 5:9 For **God** did not appoint us to wrath, but **to obtain salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 - c) 2 TIMOTHY 1:10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of **our Savior Jesus Christ**, *who* has abolished death and **brought life and immortality to light through the gospel**,
 - d) REVELATION 20:14-15 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death**. 15 And **anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire**.
- 4) The Bible sets forth the terms of the covenant—character perfected in God’s own agape love. There is nothing greater than love!⁴
- a) DEUTERONOMY 10:12 “And now, Israel, **what does the LORD your God require of you**, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and **to love Him**, to serve the LORD your God **with all your heart and with all your soul**,
 - b) MATTHEW 22:37-39 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall **love the LORD your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 “This is *the* first and great commandment. 39 “And *the* second is like it: ‘You shall **love your neighbor as yourself**.’
- 5) Biblical instructions for salvation are not confusing but simple to understand. The greatest gift in this life is knowing salvation is uncomplicated!
- a) [TS2009] PSALM 119:130 The opening up of **Your [the LORD] words gives light [of salvation; see 2 Tim. 1:10], giving understanding to the simple**.
 - b) 2 CORINTHIANS 11:3 ... **the simplicity that is in Christ**.
 - c) 1 CORINTHIANS 14:33 For **God is not the author of confusion but of peace**, as in all the [ekklesia] of the saints.
- 6) The Bible is a witness of God’s sworn oath to fulfill His promises.⁵ People vow an oath of obedience when they entered into covenant with God but it is humbling indeed to think that the Most High Creator gave US His word. He does not lie and has the power to fulfill every promise, even things that do not yet exist. How great is our God who has power even over death?⁶
- a) LUKE 1:73-75 **The oath which He [God] swore** to our father Abraham: 74 To grant us **that we**, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, **might serve Him without fear**, 75 in holiness and righteousness **before Him all the days of our life**.
 - b) HEBREWS 6:13, 16-19 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, **He swore by Himself**, ... 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus **God**, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, **confirmed it by an oath**, 18 that by two immutable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we might have strong consolation, **who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope** set before *us*. 19 **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil,

⁴ 1 Cor. 13:13.

⁵ Also Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Prov. 30:5; Rom. 3:4.

⁶ Rom. 8:35-39.

- c) ISAIAH 55:11 So shall **My [the LORD's] word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please,** and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.
- d) NUMBERS 23:19 “**God is not a man, that He should lie,** nor a son of man, that He should [change His mind]. Has He said, and **will He not do?** Or has He spoken, and **will He not make it good?**
- e) ROMANS 4:17 ... God, who gives life to the dead and **calls those things which do not exist as though they did;**
- 7) **The Bible is taught by God Himself through His Holy Spirit.**⁷ God instructs us with the same Holy Spirit by which He taught the apostles!
- a) JOHN 6:45 “It is written in the prophets, ‘And **they shall all be taught by God.**’ Therefore **everyone who has heard and learned from the Father** comes to Me [*Jesus Christ*].
- b) JOHN 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My [*Jesus Christ's*] name, it **will teach you** all things, and **bring to your remembrance** all things that I said to you.
- c) HEBREWS 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him [God]*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**
- 8) **As the Teacher of the Bible, God is faithfully engaged to bring His students into His Kingdom.** Unlike human teachers who do not go beyond the classroom, God is there throughout our lives!
- a) LUKE 12:32 “Do not fear, little flock, for **it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**
- b) ROMANS 8:31-32 What then shall we say to these things? If **God is for us, who can be against us?** 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how **shall He [God] not with Him [Jesus Christ] also freely give us all things?**
- c) PHILIPPIANS 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work [of salvation] in you will [perfect] it** until the day of Jesus Christ;
- d) PHILIPPIANS 4:13 I can **do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**
- e) MATTHEW 19:26 But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible.**”
- f) ISAIAH 59:1 Behold, **the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;** nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
- 9) **The Bible contains the encouraging promise that God's Way is not a burden but a rest for the soul.** As people grow older, the burdens of life begin to weigh more. It is deep consolation knowing there is coming a rest in which “God will wipe away every tear.”⁸
- a) 1 JOHN 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And **His commandments are not burdensome.**

⁷ Also Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:34; Mic. 4:2; John 16:13.

⁸ Rev. 7:17; 21:4.

- b) MATTHEW 11:28-30 “Come to Me [*Jesus Christ*], all you who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.** 29 “Take My yoke upon you and **learn from Me,** for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest** for your souls. 30 “**For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**”
- 10) The Bible records God’s pledge that He does not change.⁹ God’s purpose and requirements have remained consistent for all mankind. His promises and commandments to the ancient patriarchs are the same for us today!
- a) MALACHI 3:6 “For **I am the LORD, I do not change;** therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.
- b) JAMES 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from **the Father** of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**
- 11) The Bible assures us that God is just and merciful and does not show partiality. His Word and promises apply equally to everyone regardless of whether we are poor or rich, small or great!¹⁰
- a) ROMANS 2:11 For **there is no partiality with God.**
- b) ACTS 10:34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: “**In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.**”
- c) PSALMS 103:10-11 He [*the LORD*] has not dealt with us according to our sins [*as we deserve*], nor punished us according to our iniquities [*as mandated by the Law*]. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so **great is His mercy** toward those who fear Him;
- 12) The Bible reveals that agape love is the foundation of hope in God’s calling, a fountain of strength to suffer life’s burdens, and the source of faith that God is a refuge and strength. It is truly the greatest blessing for all life that God is love and not evil. Only love produces the fullness of living!
- a) 1 JOHN 4:8, 16 He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.** 9 In this **the love of God was manifested toward us,** that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ... 16 And we have known and believed **the love that God has for us. God is love,** and he who abides in love abides in God, and **God in him.**
- b) 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 **Love suffers long and is kind;** love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 **[love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**
- c) PSALM 46:1 **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**
- d) PSALM 62:7 **In God is my salvation** and my glory; **the rock of my strength, and my refuge,** is in God.
- 13) The Bible records God’s promise that all who diligently seek Him will never be disappointed or ashamed. Who has not faced uncertainty or failure? To know that our labor is not in vain is, to say the least, heartening!¹¹

⁹ Also Ps. 102:27; Heb. 13:8.

¹⁰ Also 2 Chr. 19:7; Heb. 6:10.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 15:58.

- a) 2 TIMOTHY 2:15 Be diligent to **present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed**, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- b) 2 PETER 1:5-11 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, **be even more diligent to make your call and election sure**, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so **an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- 14) The Bible reveals that this is not the only day of salvation but, in time, God will call all mankind unto salvation. The Kingdom would be a lesser place indeed if the rest of the world were lost forever.
- a) REVELATION 20:11-12 Then I [*John*] saw a great white throne and Him [*God*] who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw **the dead, small and great, standing before God**, and books were opened. And **another book was opened, which is the Book of Life**. And **the dead were judged** according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The Bible contains knowledge and can be read simply for intellectual purposes. Those who study it according to the rules of men will come away with some history, a perception of God, and prophecies that would make for interesting TV shows. However, the Bible is meant to change the LIFE of every kind of person including the logical and structured, artistic and creative, analytical and rational, abstract and conceptual, as well as the practical and realistic. Faith in God's assurances helps transform biblical knowledge into the perfection of love.

God is more than a Teacher—He gives us His thoughts¹². God's Kingdom is more than citizens—it is a place where souls are one with each other¹³. God is more than a Creator—He is a Father¹⁴. God is more than a Monarch—He is love¹⁵. The Bible is more than a book—it is LIFE!¹⁶

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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¹² 1 Cor. 2:16.

¹³ John 17:11, 22.

¹⁴ 1 John 3:1.

¹⁵ 1 John 4:8, 16.

¹⁶ John 6:68; 1 John 1:1.