

# Bibliology

**Taught by Dr. Bill Mounce**

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

BiblicalTraining.org  
PO 276  
Spokane Valley, WA 99037-9998

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# Overview

Title: Basics of the New Testament

Program: Basics

Speaker: Dr. Bill Mounce

## Goals

1. To understand the basics of what the Bible is and how to read it for yourself in a meaningful way
2. To understand the basics of what the Bible teaches you about God, yourself and others
3. To introduce you to the main content, themes and theological teachings of the Bible

## Requirements

8 sessions

2 hours 50 minutes

## Prerequisites

None

## Format

Video and Audio

# Your Speaker

Dr. Bill Mounce lives as a writer in Washougal, Washington. He is the Founder and President of BiblicalTraining.org, an organization offering world-class educational resources for discipleship in the local church. He also runs BillMounce.com, a site committed to helping people learn biblical Greek.

Formerly Bill was a preaching pastor at a church in Washington state, and prior to that a professor of New Testament and director of the Greek Program at Gordon-University for ten years.

Bill is the author of the bestselling Greek textbook, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, and many other resources. He was the New Testament chair of the English Standard Version translation of the Bible, and is currently serving on the NIV translation committee.

Robin and Bill have been married since 1983 and have three children.

## Education

Ph.D. 1981, in New Testament. Aberdeen University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

M.A. 1977, in Biblical Studies. Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

B.A. 1975, in Biblical Studies, minor in Greek. Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota; Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 1971-74.

# Guidelines

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining.org. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this Student Guide.

## Weekly Schedule

**Listen or watch the lesson.** The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts about 30 minutes. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

**Take notes.** This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

**Reflection questions.** Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Most of the questions are reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

## Meeting Together

While some people may have to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group encourages to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

## Facilitator's Guide

If you are facilitating the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

**Your role is to facilitate.** This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

**Preparation.** Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and thought carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going.

**Creativity.** What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

**Correct error.** This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. Look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

**Focus.** Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

**Lead the discussion.** People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

**Silence.** Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started and then step out of the way.

**Discipleship.** Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

**Different Perspectives.** People process information and express themselves in different ways based on their background, previous experience, culture, religion and other factors. Encourage an atmosphere that allows people to share honestly and respectfully.

**Privacy.** All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

**Goal.** The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

**Relationships.** Share everyone's name, email, and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack, Teams, or WhatsApp.

**Finish well.** Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

**Prayer.** Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

# BiblicalTraining.org

BiblicalTraining.org is not-for-profit ministry that gives all people access to a world-class Christian education at no cost. Our classes range from new believers (“Basics”) to biblical literacy (“Foundations”), deeper Bible study (“Academy”), and seminary-level training (“Institute”).

BiblicalTraining.org relies on the donations of our users. All donations are tax deductible according to the current US tax codes.

## **Vision: Where will we be in five years?**

We want every Christian around the globe to experience a deep relationship with God by understanding the life-changing truths of what God tells us in Scripture.

## **Mission: How will we get there?**

To lead disciples toward spiritual growth through deep biblical understanding and practice.

## **Who are We?**

BiblicalTraining is a team of distinguished professors, pastors, and authors providing high-quality biblical teaching for free for every Christian, everywhere, forever.

## **Biblical basis**

We are to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, being filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Matt 28:19-20; Col 1:9-10).

## Core Beliefs

1. Spiritual growth requires knowledge and understanding of biblical content and theology
2. Education requires both content (head) as well as reflection and integration (heart, hands)
3. All people should have access to high quality Christian education because we are all members of the one body of Christ.

## Distinctives

**World Class** – Our professors are among the best academics in the world and know how to teach

**Trustworthy** – all of our classes are controlled by our Statement of Faith.

**Holistic** – We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application. We want them to ask what they learn about God, themselves, and others at the end of every lesson.

**Accessible** – BiblicalTraining is a web-based ministry whose content is free. We are fully donor-based.

**Community-based** – We encourage people to learn together, in mentor/apprentice relationships. We encourage people to listen to the lessons on their own and then use small group time to deal with application.

**Broadly and firmly evangelical** – Our materials are broadly and solidly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith. Our professors range from Calvinists to Wesleyans, men and women.

**Multi-tiered** – We provide three levels of classes to ensure that people of all academic backgrounds have the opportunity to learn and grow (see below).

**Comprehensive** – We offer comprehensive programs of study, covering a wide range of subjects that are essential for any Christian to know. World Class – Our professors are among the best academics in the world and know how to teach.

# 1

## Oral Period

### I. ORAL TRADITION

Jesus taught using oral tradition

### II. EARLY CONTENT FORMS

Gospels, apostolic letters, hymns

### III. ORTHODOXY DEVELOPMENT

Core beliefs and 22 of the NT books accepted early

#### **IV. MODERN CHALLENGES**

Jesus seminar and anti-supernatural bias

#### **V. REBUTTALS**

Eyewitnesses, Holy Spirit, faith in the face of persecution

#### **VI. SHIFT TO WRITING**

Paul and other apostles, Mark likely the first Gospel

#### **VII. AUTHORS AND AUTHORITY**

Apostles, Luke's association with Paul

#### **VIII. REFLECTION**

Preservation of oral teaching, discussions with skeptics

## Reflection questions

1. What is a rabbi? Why did they teach by verbally repeating what they wanted their students to learn? How did this make it possible for the teachings of Jesus and the stories about his life to spread quickly throughout the world?
2. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he refers to “hymns” of the early church? How did they help believers in the early church memorize the stories and teachings of Jesus? How do you use music or other strategies to help you memorize the Bible or theological teachings? Give an example.
3. What does Dr. Mounce mean by “orthodoxy.” Give an example.
4. What is the Jesus Seminar? What assumptions do they make about Jesus and the Bible that result in their conclusion that the Gospels are historically unreliable?

5. Give some examples of miracles and teachings recorded in the Gospels that were done in a public setting. What does Dr. Mounce mean by "corporate memory" or "social memory?" Why does the public nature of the ministry and teaching of Jesus indicate that it is likely that the Gospel accounts are trustworthy?
  
6. In what ways were early Christians persecuted for their faith by government and religious leaders? Why is this an argument in favor of the reliability of the Gospels?
  
7. What role did the Holy Spirit have in the lives of the Gospel writers? Why is this a reason to view the Gospel accounts as trustworthy?
  
8. Why did the Gospel writers think it was important to create a written record of the life and teachings of Jesus? Approximately when were they written? Why does the date they were written give you a reason to rely on them as trustworthy?



# 2

## Synoptics

### I. SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW

Matthew, Mark and Luke similarities and differences

### II. TEXTUAL EXAMPLES

Word-for-word parallels and passages with variations

### III. LUKE'S PROLOGUE

Eyewitness research for Theophilus, certainty

#### **IV. JOHN'S EMPHASIS**

Belief in Jesus

#### **V. GOSPEL SOURCES**

Mark, Q, M and L

#### **VI. MATTHEW'S PURPOSE**

Jesus is Messiah, genealogy and prophecy

#### **VII. LUKE'S PURPOSE**

Gentiles, outcasts, women, historical detail

#### **VIII. HARMONIZATION**

Matthew and Luke's birth accounts

## Reflection questions

1. What is the core meaning of the word “synoptics?” Which Gospels are referred to as the synoptic Gospels? Why?
2. Why do some people view the differences in the synoptic Gospels as a reason to doubt their reliability? From the perspective of a law enforcement detective, why to the differences in the accounts in the synoptic gospels indicate that they are trustworthy?
3. What are the differences in the accounts of Matthew and Luke of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness?
4. In Luke’s Gospel, what do we know about Theophilus? What is the difference between writing an orderly account and a sequential account? How might this explain some of the differences in Luke’s Gospel from the other Gospels? What stories did Luke include that would indicate that he interviewed eyewitnesses?

5. Which Gospel was likely written first? What was the source for the accounts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why is it likely that there was a document that scholars refer to as "Q" that contains accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How are the purposes of Matthew and Luke different? Why does this make a difference in the stories they include?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What does the term, "harmonization" mean as it relates to the Gospels? Give an example from the birth narratives of Jesus showing how two different accounts can both be true. Why did each Gospel choose their version? How does the harmonization perspective give you confidence in the reliability of the Gospel accounts?

# 3

## Canonicity

### I. OVERVIEW

Can you trust the Bible?

### II. WHY CANON EMERGED

Death of eyewitnesses, persecution, heresy

### III. NT APOCRYPHA

Not authoritative, some harmless, others bizarre

#### **IV. DEFINING CANONICITY**

The Church recognized their divine authority

#### **V. CRITERIA FOR CANON**

Apostolic authorship, harmony, universal usage

#### **VI. ACCEPTANCE OF NT BOOKS**

Paul's letters, Gospels, 22 accepted early

#### **VII. DISPUTED BOOKS**

John, Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John

#### **VIII. GOSPEL OF THOMAS**

Fails authorship and doctrinal criteria, not used by early church

## **IX. IS THE CANON CLOSED?**

2,000 years of church agreement, no explicit statement

## **X. DID THE CHURCH GET IT RIGHT?**

Reliable, faith decision

### **Reflection questions**

1. At what point did people begin to feel the need for the accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus to be written down? Why was it important for the record to be accurate?
2. What does "canon" mean as it relates to the Bible?
3. What was the authorship requirement for the books in the New Testament? What does it mean that the canon is "closed?"

4. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he describes the books in the New Testament as having “the same harmony of doctrine and tone?” Give an example from a writing describing the childhood of Jesus that would not fit with the Gospels in the New Testament.
  
5. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he says that “the church as a whole recognized the divine authority of these 27 books [of the New Testament]?” How is this different from the idea of the canon being determined solely as result of debates at church council meetings? Why is this important both then and now?
  
6. Why were the Gospels by Matthew and Mark and the writings of Paul accepted as authoritative right away? Give an example from these Gospels and one from the letters of Paul that has taught you about your relationship with God and made a difference in how you live.

7. What do we know about the person who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts? Why were these books accepted as part of the New Testament? Give an example from these books that has been inspirational to you.
  
8. Why were people initially hesitant to include the Gospel of John as part of the canon? Why was it eventually accepted? Give an example of a story or parable from the Gospel of John that stands out to you.
  
9. Why did some people initially object to Hebrews being included in the canon of the New Testament? What is a verse or teaching from Hebrews that is significant to you? Why is it significant?
  
10. Who wrote the book of James? Why did some people have objections about including it in the New Testament canon? Why was it eventually included? What is a verse or teaching from Hebrews that is significant to you? Why is it significant?



# 4

## Transmission

### I. IMPORTANCE OF TRANSMISSION

Accuracy, technical issues

### II. DEFINITIONS

Autographs, manuscripts

### III. TYPES OF VARIANTS

Omissions and additions, verse-level and word-level, spelling and harmonization

#### **IV. EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENCES**

Romans 5:1, John 5:4, footnotes

#### **V. TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

External and internal criteria

#### **VI. WHY SCRIBES MADE CHANGES**

Clarify meaning, harmonize texts

#### **VII. CURRENT MANUSCRIPT SITUATION**

About 6,000 texts exist, 99% of the text is certain, no doctrine-altering issues

#### **VIII. INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY**

Applies to autographs, variants are minor

## Reflection questions

1. What does the “transmission” of the NT manuscripts refer to? How is this related to the trustworthiness of the Bible?
2. What is the “autograph” of a manuscript? Why don’t the NT autographs exist?
3. Give an example of a deletion or omission in the copies of the NT manuscripts from the passage in John 5 about the pool of Bethesda. Does the inclusion or exclusion of this verse change a major doctrine in the NT?
4. Summarize the content of Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. Since these passages appear only in later manuscripts, how are they consistent or inconsistent with the teachings of the Gospels overall? Why do you think most translators include them as part of the NT?

5. About how many complete or partial manuscripts of the NT writings exist? Why is it likely that the copyists made some inadvertent spelling or omission errors in the process along the way?
  
6. When evaluating the quality of a manuscript, what are two examples of external criteria? What is an example of internal criteria?
  
7. According to Dr. Wallace, when you compare all the manuscripts, what percentage of the original writing can we be confident about? When you combine this with the existence of the first manuscripts dating to within a few years of when they were originally written, how does this give you confidence in the trustworthiness of the NT?

# 5

## Translations

### I. TRANSLATION GOALS

Differences, accuracy

### II. CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATION

Original languages, bundles of meaning, “literal” misunderstood

### III. TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY

Interpretation, interpreting words vs. meaning, hilasterion

#### **IV. FORMAL EQUIVALENCE**

Greek structure and wording, less interpretive, awkward English, obscured meaning

#### **V. DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE**

Meaning over form, readable, clear, more interpretive choices

#### **VI. PARAPHRASE**

Clarity and interpretation, fresh perspective, easy reading, mixes commentary with the text

#### **VII. COMMENTARY-STYLE TRANSLATIONS**

The Message, Living Bible, too interpretive for formal study

#### **VIII. TRANSLATION COMPARISON EXAMPLES**

Romans 16:16, Acts 27:17, Matthew 5:41

## **IX. TRANSLATION SPECTRUM**

Literal, Formal, Dynamic

## **X. FINAL ADVICE**

Trust your Bible, use two translations

## **XI. CONCLUSION**

Canon is trustworthy, manuscripts are reliable, translations have strengths

## **Reflection questions**

1. What are the original languages that the Bible was written in? Why these languages?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he says that, "words don't have a meaning?" How does he use the word, "can" as an example? In what way is this a challenge when you are translating from one language to another?

3. How does the Greek phrase *me genoita* in Romans 6:15 illustrate the challenge of translating the meaning in Greek to an equivalent meaning in English? Why is it necessary to use more English words to be accurate?
  
4. Why does Dr. Mounce say that it is a misperception to describe a translation of the Bible as a “literal” translation? What is the example he uses from the parable of the prodigal son?
  
5. What is the emphasis of the formal equivalence translation philosophy? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach? What are some versions of the Bible that follow this philosophy?
  
6. How does the interpretation of the Greek word *gune* in 1 Timothy 3:11 and John 2:4 show an example of how translators make decisions that involve interpretation?

7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a dynamic equivalence translation philosophy? How is the result of this translation philosophy evident in the NIV translation of the of one of woman man phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2? What do you think is the best way to translate this phrase? Why?
  
8. What is a paraphrase version of the Bible? Give an example from the NLT.
  
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of reading a Bible that is written primarily as a running commentary?
  
10. What reasons does Dr. Mounce give for trusting the major translations of the Bible to be accurate and readable?
  
11. Why does Dr. Mounce recommend comparing different versions when you are studying your Bible? Which ones are you currently reading? What have you learned recently from your reading and studying that has changed the way you live?

# 6

## Can We Trust the Bible?

### I. INTRODUCTION TO TRUSTING THE BIBLE

Inspiration, thoughtful reflection is necessary for trust

### II. THREE KEY QUESTIONS

Was Jesus right, are the Gospels accurate, do you trust the Bible

### **III. THE ROLE OF FAITH IN WORLDVIEWS**

All require faith, Scripture is foundational for Christians

### **IV. THE PROCESS OF REEVALUATION**

Reevaluation is necessary for maturity

### **V. LIFE'S HARDSHIP AND FAITH**

Tragedies often test belief, rethinking belief can strengthen trust

### **VI. PREPARATION BEFORE SUFFERING**

Wrestle with questions in calm times

### **VII. IMPORTANCE FOR PASTORS**

A pastor's job is to clearly declare God's Word

## VIII. FINAL REFLECTION

Do you believe Scripture comes from God?

### Reflection questions

1. What are three fundamental questions to ask regarding trusting the Bible?
2. What is a worldview? Are all worldviews based on faith? Why or why not?
3. How does your view of the inspiration of the Bible affect what you believe and how you live?

# 7

## Inspiration

### I. DEFINITION OF INSPIRATION

Scripture is “god-breathed”

### II. MODES OF INSPIRATION

Dictation, dynamic

### III. SCOPE OF INSPIRATION

Infallibility, Inerrancy, plenary inspiration

#### **IV. DEALING WITH APPARENT ERRORS**

Most objections are vague or uninformed

#### **V. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Misinterpretation, secular courses may be incorrect, harmonization

#### **VI. FINAL THOUGHTS**

Conservative answers usually exist, Scripture deserves the benefit of the doubt

### **Reflection questions**

1. What word did Paul use in 1 Tim 3;16 to describe the source of the content of the Bible? Why does Dr. Mounce consider "inspiration" to not be the best translation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the purposes for which Scripture has been revealed? Give an example from your experience showing that this is true.

3. How does the "dictation theory" describe how God communicated the words of Scripture? What parts of Scripture are consistent with this description? Why are there parts of Scripture that are not consistent with this description? Give an example.
  
4. What are the two assertions of the "dynamic view" of God's revelation of Scripture? Why does Dr. Mounce describe this as a "mystery?" How is this approach confirmed by 2 Peter 1:20-21?
  
5. What is the term used to describe the point of view that Scripture is true in areas of faith and practice but not necessarily true in areas of history and science? Why do some people think it is important to make this distinction? What are some passages where it is difficult to divide the two?

6. What is the term used to describe the point of view that Scripture is true in everything it affirms? What is one of the examples that Dr. Mounce gives to indicate that this view is consistent with other passages in the Bible?
  
7. When someone makes a comment about contradictions in the Bible, what does Dr. Mounce recommend as the first question to ask? Why?
  
8. Why do some people say that the accounts of the temptation of Jesus in Matthew and Luke are an example of a contradiction of two passages? What explanation does Dr. Mounce give to show that it's a different point of view, not a contradiction?
  
9. What are a couple examples that Dr. Mounce gives of people claiming that there was a contradiction in Scripture, but actually the secular historical or scientific account was wrong?



# 8

## More on Inspiration

### I. OUTSIDE SCOPE OF INSPIRATION

Only original documents are inerrant, ancient writings used approximations and figures of speech

### II. VERBA VS. VOX

Exact words, true meaning

### III. WHY I BELIEVE

Bible claims divine origin, explains reality, confirmed by the Spirit, all worldviews require faith

### IV. STATEMENT OF FAITH

Bible is supreme authority, original documents without error, sufficient for salvation and sanctification

### Reflection questions

1. What does the term "inspiration" mean as it relates to the Bible? What does Dr. Mounce mean by the term "plenary inspiration?" Why is this important as it relates to the trustworthiness of the Bible?
  
2. Dr. Mounce states that even though we don't have the original New Testament documents, we have thousands of copies that agree to the extent that we can be confident that we have a record of the text that was originally written. Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. When people say that the Bible is not divinely inspired because it contains figures of speech and hyperbolic language, why is that an invalid argument? What are some examples mentioned in this lesson from Revelation and the Gospels?
  
4. What are some of the examples that Dr. Mounce gives to illustrate that using approximations are often used in normal human communication? What are some examples from Scripture that are likely intended to be approximations rather than examples of incorrect calculations?
  
5. What do the Latin phrases “ipsissima verba” and “ipsissima vox” mean as they relate to the Gospel accounts? Give an example of each one? How does this give a reasonable explanation for differences in verbiage between the Gospel accounts?
  
6. Why is it important for you faith to decide for yourself whether or not you believe the Bible is inspired and reliable?

