



**Title: Loving Truth and Ignoring Fiction**  
**Theme: The Reliability of Scripture**

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

## **A Call to Stand in the Gap**

*In just a moment I am going to read several passages of Scripture that give God's directions to us as we are faced with the onslaught of questions that are coming up since the book "The Da Vinci Code" came out and especially since the movie has been released.*

A survey by Decima Research, Inc. showed out of those polled, one out of three Canadians who have read the book now believes there are descendants of Jesus walking among us today. (Exploring the Da Vinci Code) An ABC special on the book involved an interview with a Scottish man who truly believes that he is a descendant of Jesus Christ. (Sermon by John Ortberg) According to pollster George Barna, 53% of Americans who have read the book said it had helped them in their personal spiritual growth and understanding. (Exploring the Da Vinci Code)

Many believe the book is harmless because it contains fictional characters and states on the front cover (of the hardcover edition, at least), "A Novel." However, Dan Brown begins his book on the page just preceding the prologue with the boldfaced heading "FACT," then he tells his readers supposed "facts" regarding the Priory of Sion and Opus Dei and then states: "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate." (Exploring the Da Vinci Code) Because of this convincing statement many people who do not have the time or resources to check things out are being misled in some very important areas.

The Bible gives clear instructions on how the Lord feels about the delusions that come upon mankind. His first plea is found in Ezekiel 22:30, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land..." Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is around people of which good things will pour out and through which evil things like to crawl in.

There are Biblical ways of standing in the gap: 1.) Calling the sinner who is introducing the sin to repentance. 2.) Praying that God's Holy Spirit would reveal truth and draw willful sinners to Christ. 3.) Reformation, meaning to be "reformed" (*yasar*) literally "let oneself be instructed." (The truths found in this part of the message came about as the Holy Spirit led me to the teaching of these materials, The NIV Bible; Matthew Henry Commentary; The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; The New American Commentary; The Expositors Bible Commentary)

*I would propose to you that there are born again Christians who are called to stand in the gap and all Christians are to be ready in and out of season to share the reason for their hope.*

To those who are called to stand in the gap the Bible says, "...When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. (Ezekiel 33:8)" To all Christians Peter writes, "...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (1 Peter 3:15)"

*Just what questions have come up in the minds of those in the world and even in the hearts of church attendees regarding the accuracy of The Da Vinci Code? I am not going to talk about the art criticism or give you a literary critique of the book; I am not qualified to do that. I will address some Biblical issues and share with you what I have had time to study so far.*

## **Exactly how reliable are the Scriptures?**

*One of the questions that has been brought up in the minds of those who have read Dan Brown's red-hot page-turner is, "Exactly how reliable are the Scriptures?" Teabing, one of the characters in the Da Vinci Code says, "The Bible is a product of man, my dear, not of God... The Bible as we know it today was collated by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine the Great in 325 AD."*

This is an error. Historical studies show the idea we have the New Testament Gospels today because of the councils put together by Constantine is way off the mark. More than one hundred years before Constantine, a man by the name of Origen said, "The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the only undisputed ones in the whole church of God throughout the world."

This quote from at least a century before Constantine and the Council of Nicea shows that the gospel existed and was not the work of men in Constantine's time. According to Rev. John Ortberg, research indicates that there is evidence that when the Council of Nicea met they were formally recognizing the authority of Scripture that had already been guiding the followers of Christ for centuries. (Sermon by Rev. John Ortberg – Jesus and the Da Vinci Code)

It is important to know how the New Testament canon of Scripture came about and how the church recognized it as being in divine unity. There are focal points of authority in the earliest church, all of which were ultimately important as factors in selecting the New Testament canon. They are: 1.) The Word of the Lord, 2.) The place of the Spirit, and 3.) The authoritative position of the apostles. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) There are several practical approaches to helping you understand how the canon of the New Testament came together.

The one we are going to focus on today is that to be accepted as Scripture document must have its roots connected to one of the apostles by either being written by an apostle or by a student or associate of the apostles.

For example, Matthew, who wrote the Gospel of Matthew was one of the twelve apostles selected by Jesus. (Matthew 10:3) John Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark was a spiritual son of the Apostle Peter and he became Peter's interpreter and was led by the Holy Ghost while being in very close relationship with the apostolic authority of Peter. The author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts was Luke, the physician who was a second-generation Christian who was able to carefully "investigate everything from the beginning" that which was "handed down" by the "first eyes witnesses." (Luke 1:2,3) He accompanied the Apostle Paul on his missionary work and Luke was Paul's close companion. (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11)

The Gospel of John is written by the Apostle John who was one of the twelve apostles chosen by Christ and an eye witness to the works of Christ. (Matthew 10:3; John 7:37-39; 18:28) He was with Christ at His Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1) and Crucifixion. (Matthew 19:25-27) John was a close associate to the Apostle Peter and a pillar of the early church. (Acts 3:1-11; 4:13-20; Galatians 2:9) He was able to hear both of Jesus' public and private discourses and would have been actively engaged in the development of the church from its inception.

The Pauline Epistles-- 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus-- were written by the Apostle Paul.

Paul's call into the ministry with Christ was supernatural and confirmed in a vision to Ananias. (Acts 9:1-19) Paul spoke in at least three different letters of his anointed calling (Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7) and other noted pillars of the early church recognized God's grace given to him. Paul writes in Galatians 2:8-9, "For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me." "Grace" (*charis*) means the power and equipment for ministry.

It is traditionally considered that James, the half brother of Jesus wrote the Book of James. He was the most prominent leader in the church at Jerusalem. It is very likely that James was not converted to true belief in Jesus as being the Son of God until after the resurrection of Christ. One thing is for sure, the Lord Jesus did appear to James sometime after the Lord was raised on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:4-8) James knew first hand the life of Christ and was an eye witness to the living Christ before and after His Crucifixion.

First and Second Peter were written by the Apostle Peter. He was one of the original twelve called forth by Christ. (Matthew 10:3) At least three different times in the Gospel of Mark we read of Peter being included with James and John in the inner ring, meeting with Jesus or doing something of some real significance. (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3 and Luke 8:51) Peter was present with Jesus at the Transfiguration and heard the voice of God endorsing the Son-ship of Christ as well as the command to obey what Jesus taught and said. (Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:18) The Bible records Peter's confession of Christ when asked of the Lord, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) The Bible says, "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.'"

Listen to what Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by My Father in heaven. Peter was a man who could receive revelation from God and he had enough illumination of that truth to become one of God's preachers of the truth.

John wrote the Gospel of John, First, Second and Third John as well as the Book of Revelation. We know that by gathering external evidence, which is derived from the testimony of other writers. We also know it by examining the internal evidence which is derived from what author says in his own writings. The external evidence regarding the writings of John is powerfully supported by what is known as "Sub-apostolic Literature" or more commonly known as the writings of the "Apostolic Fathers." These Apostolic Fathers were authors of church writings of the 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. These works are important because their authors knew the Apostles or their associates. Writing out of pastoral concern, their writings are similar in style to the New Testament. As a matter of fact some of their writings were given as high of respect as Scripture until the official canon was decided.

One of our Apostolic Fathers was Polycarp, who was Bishop of Smyrna. This church is identified in the book of Revelation as being under persecution. Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John and has been called the last surviving direct disciple of an apostle. He referred to the Book of 1 John in the beginning of the second century (the early 100s AD).

First John was quoted by Papias and Irenaeus. Papias, was one of the early leaders of the Christian church working in the first half of the second century. One of our most trusted encyclopedias says, (Wikipedia) "Papias' own authority being 'the presbyter John' and hearers of the Apostles." Irenaeus, was one of the great men of God who came right after the apostles. Irenaeus died in 202 AD and much of his work falls in the period of 100-170 AD. He delighted himself with the unadulterated teachings of the gospel taught through Polycarp of Smyrna. He kept himself faithful to the true faith in Christ through his entire life.

Origen was a Christian Scholar and theologian, He was considered to be one of the most distinguished of the fathers of the early church. He wrote, “John, besides the Gospel and Revelation, has left us with an epistle [1 John] with a few lines and also a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> [epistle]...” Other early Christian writers wrote about John’s writings (Dionysius of Alexandria, Cyprian, Athanasius and Epiphanius). There is plenty of external evidence of the authenticity of John’s writings.

There is also strong internal evidence that the same person who wrote First John also wrote the Gospel of John. There is so much resemblance in the mode of expression and in the topics referred to. For example the gospel of John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In Him was life, and that life was the light of men... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” First John 1:1 says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

The Holy Spirit is writing through the Apostle John, expressing the same truth in the same expressions on the same topic without having someone attempting to imitate the language of another. These expressions are seen at least fifteen times in the Gospel of John and the Book of 1 John. (John 1:1,4,14/1 Jn. 1:1; Jn. 14:23/1 Jn. 5; Jn. 13:34/1 Jn. 2:8; Jn. 11:10/1 Jn. 2:8,10; Jn. 17:3/ 1 Jn. 2:13,14; Jn. 1:12/1 Jn. 3:1; Jn. 17:24/1 Jn. 3:2; Jn. 8:44/1 Jn. 3:8; Jn.15:20/1 Jn. 3:13; Jn. 3:16/1 Jn. 4:9; Jn. 1:18/1 Jn. 4:12; Jn. 20:31/1 Jn.5:13; Jn. 14:14/1 Jn. 4:14; 17:2/1 Jn. 5:20)

Another comparison is John 3:16, “For God so loved the World that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” And 1 John 4:9 says, “This is how God showed His love for us; He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.”

These passages of Scripture show John’s style; showing his mind and personality as both books cover the same points. These Scriptures show the same man who was writing again on the same subject and expressing himself in way as not to be copying. Although John is expressing the same truths that are found throughout the Bible, it is evident that the Gospel of John and the Book of 1 John are not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke or the Apostle Paul. The evidence is overwhelming in who wrote the Gospel of John, 1, 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> John and the Book of Revelation.

The Book of Jude was written by Jude who identifies himself as the brother of James, the leader of the Jerusalem church (James 1:1; Acts 15). Both Jude and James were the half brothers of the Lord Jesus. Jude is listed among Christ’s half brothers in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. Like James, Jude very likely did not come to true belief in the messiahship of Christ until after the Lord’s Resurrection. (John 7:5; Acts 7:14) Three of our Apostolic Fathers, Tertullian, Origen and Clement of Alexandria, all knew of the Book of Jude and Clement wrote, “...the Epistle under Jude’s name is a production of a prophetic mind.”

Origen wrote, “[the epistle] is full of heavenly grace.” Five of our early church fathers referred to the epistle of Jude as being the “the work of an apostle...” The four gospels and the other epistles passed a key test, that of being connected to the apostles. They were written by one of the first of the original twelve or from a student of one the apostles or lastly an associate of one the original twelve. These twenty-seven books were written in a time frame of where eyewitnesses could either yet challenge the things written in them as being false or could bear witness to the truths found in them. They have stood the test of time and intense scrutiny of Biblical and secular scholars alike as being authentic. (The truths found in this part of the message came about as the Holy Spirit led me to the teaching of these materials, The NIV Bible; The Ryrie NIV Study Bible; Who’s Who in the Bible; Thru the Bible; William Barclay; Papias of Heiraspolis; Irenaeus; Polycarp; The Pulpit Commentary; Matthew Henry Commentary; Tertullian; The Expositor’s Bible Commentary; Vines Dictionary of the New Testament; Barnes Notes; The New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; Wikipedia Encyclopedia)

## **God-breathed**

*The historical truths of the canon of the New Testament are proof of the reliability of the Scriptures.* What is more reliable is the truth of our key text about Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed...” (NIV) This is one of the greatest texts in the New Testament on how the Bible came about.

“God-breathed” (*theopneustos*) means literally “Prompted by God, divinely inspired.” Scripture is the production of God. The Lord in His greatness chose to use men who were sold out to Him and His Son to bring forth revelation by the leading of the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 says, “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” God breathed His truth into the hearts and minds of the writers of Scripture. This gives excellency to Scriptures and therefore the Bible is God’s Word and is infallibly true. The prophets and the apostles did not speak from themselves, but what they received from the Lord as the Holy Ghost moved them to write or speak. Therefore the Bible presents to us God’s truth, purity and doctrines that should be desired to be lived out by man.

When the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write “All Scripture” he was referring to Old Testament and New Testament, from the Book of Genesis to Revelation. The Apostle Peter considered the writings of Paul to be Holy Spirit inspired and they are not to be distorted. (2 Peter 3:16) Peter warns Christians in 2 Peter 3:3, “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires...” When scoffers arise, and they are arising today, Peter tells us to, “...recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the [commands] given by our Lord and Savior through [the] apostles.” Peter is asserting that the same level of authority of the Old Testament is to be given to the writings of the apostles. All sixty-six books of the Bible as originally given are God-breathed. The truths in them are from God. (The truths found in this part of the message came about as the Holy Spirit led me to the teaching of these materials, The Complete

Word Dictionary; Barnes Notes; Thru the Bible; Jamison, Fauset and Brown; Edwin Blum; Robert Tuck; Word Meanings in the New Testaments; The NIV Bible; Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon; The Pulpit Commentary; The Expositors Bible Commentary; A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory)

David Haun told the story of a mother reading the Bible to her young son. When they came to John 3:16, the little boy said "Oh, I know this one..." We can become so familiar with Scripture that when we read or hear a passages of Scripture quoted we can find ourselves just becoming too blind to the reality that these are the Words of God, the heart of God being revealed to us. Our familiarity can close our hearts to what the Lord wants to do with every Word that come from mouth of God.

When mankind does not look to the Holy Scripture as being inspired by God he will disregard what God has to say about His will for them. Mankind will do whatever he can to confirm in his mind that the Bible is just written by people who write about God as they see Him. A sinful person wants to create his own image of God.

Christians who accept the truth of the Bible as being divinely directed by God will be found prayerfully reading the Word of God regularly, studying and meditating upon it. They grow in their knowledge and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God was a blessing to Edwin Hodder and he wrote this poem: Thy Word is like a garden, Lord: With flowers bright and fair;

And every one who seeks may pluck  
A lovely cluster there.

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine;  
And jewels rich and rare  
Are hidden in its mighty depths  
For every searcher there.

Thy Word is like a starry host  
A thousand rays of light  
Are seen to guide the traveler,  
And make his pathway bright  
Thy Word is like an armory,  
Where soldiers may repair,  
And find for life's long battle-day  
All needful weapons there.

Oh, may I love thy precious Word;  
May I explore the mine;  
May I enjoy its fragrant flowers glean;  
May light upon me shine.  
Oh, may I find my armor there;  
Thy Word my trusty sword,

I'll learn to fight with every foe  
The battle of the Lord....