

Inspiration

What does inspiration mean?

- 2 Timothy 3:16
- What does it mean to inspire someone/something?
 - In modern English, we use "inspire" in a metaphorical way.
- What is the literal meaning of inspire?
 - To breath in(to). Think of "respiration" in biology.
 - Modern translation: "God-breathed"
- Paul is saying that the whole written Bible (not just the bits where God is speaking) are breathed out from God. The written words come from God.

How does Inspiration work?

- 2 Pet 1:21
- Peter gives a description of the prophets which fits with Paul's explanation. It was men who were speaking (or writing), but they were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit.
- God did not simply dictate what to write, but worked through people in such a way that they wrote what he wanted them to. When we study the Bible, we can often still identify the personality of each writer expressed in their own words and in their own understanding
- The process of inspiration is not fully explained in the Bible and, like other inexplicable things about God, is a mystery to us.

What does it mean in practice?

- Authority. Deut. 12:28; John 14:23-24
 - The words of the Bible are to be the final authority in all areas of life. We should be fully submitted to scripture.
 - But... we must be careful to interpret scripture correctly. Not every verse is a command; and not every command is for every person.
 - Commentaries and Teachers can help us to interpret the Bible, but we must remember that these do not have final authority.

- Truthfulness. 2 Samuel. 7:28; John 17:17
 - God always tells the truth. We can trust the Bible to be accurate in all areas of knowledge which it speaks about.
 - But... we must be careful to define "truthfulness" according to the normal rules of language, e.g.
 - God can truthfully record lies that a person told.
 - God can use rhetorical devices like symbolism and hyperbole.
 - A proverb is not an absolute statement of truth.
 - God can describe things truly while not using technical or scientific language.
 - What about contradictions?
 - People have alleged many contradictions within the Bible, but a few things should be remembered.
 - Strictly speaking, there is very high bar for two statements to be considered a logical contradiction. The alleged contradictions in scripture are not of this nature.
 - Many of the alleged contradictions are due to a failure to read the Bible in context. Often a careful reading (even in English), will clear up the difficulty
 - The most difficult allegations can be blamed on a lack of data. Solutions can often easily be conjectured, but not proved.
 - If the Bible contradicts some other source of truth, we need not assume that the Bible must be the one at fault.
- Clarity. Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 119:130
 - God's word is intended for all believers. That through it they may become wise and discerning. We should understand it sufficiently that we are able to teach it to others.
 - But... that does not mean that every part is easily understandable, or that we do not need human help, alongside the Spirit of God.
 - 2 Pet. 3:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:11
- Necessity. Romans 10:13-17; Matthew 4:4
- Sufficiency. 2 Tim 3:16