

This image shows a full page of blank primary-ruled paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal lines, each set consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The paper is otherwise completely blank, with no text or other markings.



# Knowing God

## Learning about authority and trust ...



Each of our children, Abby & Ethan, developed a ritual in their childhood. Like their childhood, the ritual came and went as both grew older.

Abby's ritual concerned her origin. Abby would crawl up into my lap, requiring my full attention: "Daddy, tell me about the day I was born."

My answer quickly became an almost ceremonial exercise. Polly waking me up because of contractions. The drive to St. Vincent's hospital. The very hard labor. The anxious birth and, because of some complications, those fretful few minutes (they felt like hours!) before Abby's first breath and baleful cry. My standing over her when she first opened her eyes ... and I was the first person Abby saw in this world. I call it a 'ritual' because if even one detail was glossed over, or told in a different way, Abby would quickly correct me. This was important! Do it right!

Ethan's ritual concerned his purpose and worth. Having entered the world of constant exposure to other children – pre-K! – Ethan's repeated question arrived a little later in his childhood. We would be either going to or coming from some kind of 'gathering of children'. Or

## Notes:

[illegible]

**Doctrine - What We Believe:** How does God use both law and gospel to relate to His people?

**Doxology - Praise & Worship:** Every good gift comes to us from the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit. How do Father, Son, and Spirit work together to inform and shape our worship?

**Discipleship - How We Live:** Can you have a high view of Scripture (receiving it as ultimately authoritative) and remain practically indifferent to laying it within your heart? What active steps can you take to develop and maintain constant openness to God's Word?

## Notes:

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dashed lines, typical of primary-ruled notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Ethan's question might arise from his young mind constantly in motion. But the question was always the same: "Daddy, what am I good at? Tell me what I'm good at." I would give answers unique to Ethan, those qualities of character and behaviors I treasured in him. Depending upon the moment, my answers would either satisfy him or lead to more discussion. I call it a 'ritual' not because of the details but because of the reassurance gained from the conversation.

What both rituals had in common was ... me. I was (am) their father. They looked up to me. They trusted me. In a way exclusive to them, as their father, I was a voice of unassailable authority.

They both grew older and, predictably, their valuation of my authority in their lives changed. While I remain their father, they both have long since discovered the all-too-human nature of my authority. I have no reservations confessing, "I am not a perfect father." Likewise, my children have plenty of reasons to say, "Amen to that, Dad."

In the 'healthy' course of family relationships children simply accept their parents' authority. Later, as time and events shape us, we begin to trust our parents' wisdom. First comes the acceptance of their authority, then comes the recognition of their wisdom ... or lack ... or limitations ... of it. So much of our lives going forward, from childhood even to old age, depends upon the trust we give to the wisdom we received from our parents.

## Allow me to 'flip this script'



## God's Word Creates God's People

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3.16,17

*And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

2 Peter 1.19-21

## The 4 "D's"

**Drama - The Big Story:** God created the world by the power of His Word (Gn. 1,2). God called Abraham and, by the power of His promise, created the people who would later come from him (Gn. 12.1-3). Those people would be God's people (Gn. 15.1-3). God met Moses in the burning bush, telling Moses he would bring out from Egypt *"My people, the children of Israel"* (Ex. 3.10). God called His delivered people to Mt. Sinai and, through Moses' mediation of the Law, formed His people as a holy nation according to His Word. Through the prophets God continued to shape His people through His Word, promising that His Word, *"that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

God sent His Word in the flesh to accomplish His purpose. The Word of God remains *"living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword"* (Heb. 4.12) and is the *"sword of the Spirit"*, the primary offensive weapon in our spiritual war with the evil one (Eph. 5.16).

God's Word is uniquely powerful, accomplishing God's will. You are *"born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God"* (1 Peter 1.23)

- Do you see yourself as a new creation, accomplished by the Word of God ... the gospel of Jesus?
- How does your embrace of God's Word affect your life?

# Key Terms and Distinctions

## Inspiration / Illumination

Scripture is inspired, that is, 'God-breathed. Our interpretation of Scripture is guided – illumined – by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1.13; 1 Co. 2.10-12; 1 Jo. 2.20,27; Isa. 59.21). Scripture itself is always infallible and inerrant whereas our interpretations are always fallible and subject to revision in the light of Scripture. We receive God's authoritative Word because it comes from the Father, with the gospel of His Son as its content and the Holy Spirit testifies within us to its truthfulness.

## Inerrant

Since Scripture is God-breathed it is inerrant, that is, free from error. Even with their humanity fully engaged in receiving God's Word, the prophets and the apostles were preserved from error by the Holy Spirit.

It is important to note inerrancy applies to the original writings themselves. We do not hold that our translations of the original texts are inspired and inerrant. Nor does inerrancy cancel out human agency; not some kind of trance-like mechanical dictation. Inerrancy does not mean the human authors were perfect in their understanding. Even Paul distinguished between the "command from the Lord" and his own "judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy" (1 Co. 7.25).

# Jesus accepted and promoted the authority of Scripture

We know God through Jesus.

We know God's redeeming work through His saving work in Jesus. We neither discovered nor overcame our own sin-soaked separation from God. God was, and is, the initiator Who reconciled us to Himself in Jesus (2 Co. 5.18-21). Jesus does not merely speak the Word of God. Jesus IS the Word of God made flesh (John 1.1-4, 14). Moses spoke God's Word given to him on Mt. Sinai. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus issued His commands as God Himself: "You have heard that it was said ... but I say ..." (Mt. 5.21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44).

Jesus' view of Scripture needs to be our view of Scripture.

Repeatedly Jesus said, "It is written." The words of the prophets are the Words of God (Mt. 4.4-7; Lk. 18.31-33; Jn. 10.31-39). Jesus asserted the truth of the creation of the human race "from the beginning" as male and female, "one flesh" in the covenant of marriage (Mt. 19.4,5). Jesus regarded as historical events Noah and the flood, the destruction of Sodom, manna & quail in the wilderness, Jonah being swallowed by the large fish (Lk. 17.26-30; John 6; Mt. 12.39). Jesus repeatedly called Himself the "Son of Man" (Dan. 7.13; c.f. Mk. 14.63) and submitted Himself to the image of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52.13-53.12; c.f., Mk. 14.32-45). Jesus's language was soaked with, and His life was defined by, Scripture.

# The Source of Scripture

As noted earlier regarding my children, trusting in the authority of the source is pivotal.



Paul calls Scripture *“the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* Paul then adds, *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Tim. 3.15-17) “Breathed out by God” or “God-breathed” translates *theopneustos*. This means Scripture is understood as the air that was physically expelled out of the lungs of God. The words of the prophets and the apostles are exhaled as God’s speech to us. The source of Scripture is God. No being in existence is more trustworthy than God. God alone is ultimately trustworthy.

In Mark’s gospel the sick and demon-possessed are ‘fetched’ in great numbers to Jesus (1.32; 2.3; 7.32; 8.22; 9.17). Jesus told Peter when he was older others would dress him and carry him where he did not want to go. (Jn 21.18). The ship taking Paul to Rome was over-taken by a storm and driven off course for days (Ac. 27.15, 17). Peter uses the term for ‘fetched’ or ‘carried’ or ‘driven’ when he writes that *“men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* (2 Peter 1.21) The prophets did not speak for themselves, from their own experiences, speculations or intuitions.

They were ***“carried along by the Holy Spirit”*** (2 Peter 1.21).

Peter’s theme is the origin and reliability of the Scriptures. The same God whom the apostles heard speak in the transfiguration spoke also through the prophets. We can rely on the apostolic account of the transfiguration because God spoke. We can rely on Scripture because behind its human authors ... God spoke. Neither the prophets nor the apostles made up what they wrote. They did not arbitrarily unravel it. ‘They did not blab their inventions of their own accord or according to their own judgments’ (Calvin). In the Old Testament, this was the characteristic of the false prophets, who ‘speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord’ (Jer. 23:16, cf. Ezek. 13:3).

Peter is talking about the divine origin of Scripture, not about its proper interpretation. Peter displays no interest in the psychology of inspiration. Peter is not concerned with what they felt, or how much they understood, but simply that they were the bearers of God’s message.

The prophets raised their sails, so to speak (they were obedient and receptive), and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft in the direction He intended. Men spoke: God spoke. The Holy Spirit did not use instruments; He used men.

