

God Breathed Study Guide

STUDY GUIDE
for Individuals and Adult Groups

God-Breathed
The Undeniable Power and Reliability of Scripture

Josh McDowell

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Contents

Acknowledgments	7
How to Get the Most Out of This Study Guide	9
Session 1	
What Is the Real Purpose of the Bible?	10
Session 2	
Who Is the True Author of the Bible?	23
Session 3	
Is the Old Testament Historically Reliable?	41
Session 4	
Is the New Testament Historically Reliable?	
Session 5	
How the Bible Can Come Alive in Your Life	
Group Leader's Guide	
About the Author and Writer	

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Josh McDowell

How to Get the Most Out of This Study Experience

This five-session *God-Breathed Study Guide* is to be used by small groups or can be used for individual study. While you can answer the questions throughout this guide from your own knowledge and the Scripture references given, you will get the most out of this experience if you read *God-Breathed*, the companion book to this study. If this study is used within a group, you will be assigned chapter readings at the end of each session.

If you have not already obtained a copy of the book, you can purchase one at your local Christian supplier, order directly from the publisher by calling 800-852-8010, or order online at www.barbourbooks.com.

The purpose of this study is to deepen your understanding of the power, relevance, and reliability of God's Word. There is a certain mystery to God's book, and he wants you to discover its hidden treasures and the insights you need in order to deal with the challenges of life. Participating in this study with friends in a group will heighten that experience.

God wants you and your group to grasp the relevant truth in his Word that will transform, strengthen, and bring greater peace to your life. But more than that, God wants you to come to know him more deeply by studying his Word. "If you look for me wholeheartedly," God says, "you will find me. I will be found by you" (Jeremiah 29:13-14). This study is designed to give you greater confidence in God's Word and to motivate you to diligently seek—and find—its Author.

A sunburst graphic consisting of 20 thin black lines radiating from a central point, creating a circular shape. The lines are evenly spaced and extend to the edges of the page.

SESSION 1

***What Is the Real
Purpose of the Bible?***

What Do You Think?

The Bible is an extraordinary book. In 2012 alone, the United Bible Societies distributed more than 400 million Bibles, Testaments, or smaller Scripture portions. The Bible is by far the most circulated book in all of history with billions in circulation.¹ It has now been translated into 2,650 languages, which covers the primary modes of communication for well over 90 percent of the world's population.

What is your earliest memory of seeing a Bible?

“I remember seeing a Bible when I was _____ years old. I recall reading the Bible on my own when I was _____ years old.”

What is the Bible designed to do for us?

“I would say the Bible acts as a _____ and is designed to _____

_____.”

Session Objective

To discover the true purpose of God's Word and to strive to always read the Bible with God's core purpose in mind.

How Do You Respond?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 aloud.

Based on these verses, what would you say the Bible is meant to accomplish in your life? In other words, what is its purpose?

Read Exodus 20:15–17 and Matthew 5:27–28 aloud.

What is the purpose of these types of commands and instructions?

Read Romans 8:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:14 aloud.

What is the purpose of these types of verses? Why does the Bible give us this kind of information?

Have someone in the group read aloud the following paragraphs, which are adapted from chapter 3 of *God-Breathed*.

Some people would say that God gave us his Word entirely for doctrinal and behavioral purposes. In other words, the Bible was written to teach us to think rightly and to live rightly. They might point to 2 Timothy to assert that correct beliefs and right living are what Scripture is all about: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction” (2 Timothy 3:16 NASB).

Certainly doctrinal and behavioral guidance are part of God’s purpose for Scripture. The English word teaching in 2 Timothy 3:16 is from the Greek word didaskalia, which means “doctrine” or “correct thinking.” So Paul is truly explaining that God gave us his Word so that we might believe correctly.

The word correction in this passage is from the Greek word epanorthosis, which means “restoration to an upright or right state of living” or “improvement in character.” So Paul is certainly telling Timothy, and us, that the Bible is God’s way of correcting us when we’re wrong and restoring us to right living. Therefore, we have the Bible to teach us how to believe rightly and live rightly.

Passages such as Romans 3:30 and 1 Corinthians 15:14 are there to teach us doctrinal truths—they help us think rightly. Other passages, such as Exodus 20:15–17 and Matthew 5:27–28, are there to teach us behavioral truths—they help us know how to live rightly.

Though this guidance is an important aspect of Scripture, it is not the full picture. The teachings of Scripture (doctrine) keep us thinking and believing rightly, and the instructions of Scripture (commands) keep us acting and living rightly. But without the proper context, we can miss the true purpose of Scripture, which is to guide us into keeping right thinking and right living in balance.

We can easily overemphasize the importance of the law and focus on knowing all the right doctrines. This can lead to arrogance and the acquisition of knowledge for the mere sake of having it. We can overemphasize adherence to the law, and this can lead to legalistic behavior and a judgmental attitude. Such legalism is what characterized the Pharisees in Jesus' day, who focused only on these two aspects of Scripture. Their believing and living were out of balance because they failed to understand the most important command of all.

Jesus explained the true purpose of Scripture when he answered a question posed to him by an expert in religious law.

Have someone in the group read aloud Matthew 22:36–40. Based on Jesus' answer, what is the purpose of Scripture in each of our lives?

Have someone in the group read the following paragraph aloud:

Jesus told this Pharisee that the greatest, most important commandments are to love God with everything we have and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. But Jesus didn't stop there. He followed up with a most profound statement: "The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:40). In other words, all right teaching and all right living hang on the commandments to love God and love one another. Jesus told this religious expert—and all of us—that Scripture was given to lead us into a deeper love relationship with the One who wrote the book, and then also with everyone around us.

The Pharisees and other religious leaders had seemingly grasped the doctrinal and behavioral purposes of Scripture. But what they failed to understand was the connection between right *beliefs*, right *behavior*, and right *relationships*.

Do you see the connection? If so, describe in your own words how those three elements work together. In other words, what does it mean to say that the primary purpose of Scripture is a relational one?

Read these verses aloud:

Moses begged God: “If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you” (EXODUS 33:13 NIV).

Jesus prayed to his Father: “This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth” (JOHN 17:3).

God spoke through Hosea the prophet, who said: “Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know him. . . . I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me” (HOSEA 6:3, 6).

What is your response to the reality that the mighty God of the universe is open enough to say, “I want you to know me”? Is that hard for you to believe? Explain how that makes you feel.

Have someone in the group read the following paragraphs aloud:

We may study God’s Word for correct beliefs. We may even obey God’s Word for right behavior. But we must not forget why. The relational God of the Bible wants us to experience his love and the love of those around us. God gave us the Bible because he wants an intimate loving relationship with us,

wants us to enjoy intimate loving relationships with others, and wants our relationships together to extend into eternity.

The relational purpose of Scripture is a powerful reality—the amazing truth that God wants you to be in an intimate relationship with him. Take a moment to allow that truth to sink in. Think of Jesus, through his Holy Spirit, speaking directly to you in very intimate terms. He longs for you to know him intimately. He longs to fulfill you, complete you, and give you joy as you love him and love other people. That is why he has given you his Spirit and his Word. What does he say to you and me? Contemplate the words of Jesus below.

“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” (John 5:39)

“My purpose is to give. . . a rich and satisfying life.” (John 10:10)

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:11–12 NIV)

“I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.” (John 17:21)

How might grasping more deeply the relational purpose of

Scripture cause you to read the Bible differently?

How do you respond to the following statement? In the Bible God has written you a series of love letters, rather than a big instruction book intended simply to teach you how to think and live rightly.

Apply It This Week

This week share with a friend or family member about the relational purpose of the Bible. Here are some conversation starters to help you:

- I've been studying lately about the purpose of the Bible. What would you say is the real purpose of the Bible?
- Our small group has been discussing the purpose of the Bible. I've been learning. . .

In a devotional time before God, read Psalm 145:13–21. Write a prayer of thanks to God for how he has been a relational God who has protected you and provided for you. Be specific about how God has protected you and provided for you.

This week, before the next group meeting, read chapters 1–4 in *God-Breathed*. Pay particular attention to what the book says about how the Bible is alive and powerful, as well as how it is to be interpreted. If you don't already have the *God-Breathed* book, you can obtain a copy from your local Christian supplier, order directly from the publisher by calling 800-852-8010, or order online at www.barbourbooks.com.

Close in Prayer

Pray that the truth you have encountered will become real, alive, and active in your life. Use this prayer time to express your desire to more deeply experience the power and relevance of God's Word.