

Title: "OIC Statement of Faith, Part 1: We believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God."  
Key verse: 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 – "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work." (NASB)

Good morning, everyone. It is good to see you all again. After Pastor Alistair retired as pastor here, I have had many ideas for sermon topics that I might present to you when I have opportunity to speak. And one of the more ambitious ideas I have had is to go through each paragraph of our church's Statement of Faith and outline for you the foundational doctrines that we stand on as members of Osaka International Church. There are ten paragraphs in the Statement of Faith, and I plan on preaching one sermon for each paragraph. So, today I begin a ten-part series of messages, doing one or two messages per month.

By the way, many of you know that I have recently begun studying at seminary. After many years of reading and meditating on Scripture, and listening to all kinds of sermons and lectures, I decided last year that it was time for me to begin formal theological training. So, in these series of messages, I will be sharing with you some of the material I have been learning in seminary.

Today's message is entitled: "OIC Statement of Faith, Part 1: We believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God." That title is a summary of the first paragraph of the Osaka International Church Statement of Faith. Let's read that first paragraph in full:

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life. II Timothy 3:16.

The main Bible text I would like to base today's message on is 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB) – "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work."

Let me look briefly at each phase in this passage. Later, I will expand on these brief comments.

"All Scripture is: inspired ... by ... God." This phrase "inspired by God" literally means "breathed out by God." The words of Scripture are God's words, spoken with God's authority. Of course, there is also a human author for each book of Scripture, and that author is writing in a particular time and place to a particular audience, but the words he writes are imbued with God's power and authority – they are God's message to us.

Related to this is 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:20-21 (NASB) – "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Let's return to 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy.

All Scripture is "profitable." Profitable... for four main things:

#1. For teaching – sometimes this word is translated "doctrine" or "instruction." The Bible is where we get our doctrines from, and our instruction for living faithfully.

#2. For reproof – this word is sometimes translated "rebuke." That's a strong word. But if a professed Christian holds to some false teaching or is engaged in some ungodly behavior, then that has to be rebuked so that the person can be brought back in line and conform to sound doctrine and sober living.

#3. For correction. This is a more positive-sounding word than the last one. We all make mistakes, and we all need to be corrected sometimes. Scripture shows each of us the places in our lives where we need to correct our thinking or our actions.

#4. For training in righteousness. Training. Another word with a positive connotation. I have been living as a Christian for many decades, but I often feel like I am still “in training.” This is a life-long process, and the Scriptures are an inexhaustible source of instruction for us on how to live our lives ... how to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ. That should be our goal in this life.

Let’s look at verse 17 – “so that the man of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.” After Scripture has instructed us and trained us, we will be fully equipped to do the work that God has set forth for us. Fully capable. Fully equipped.

This brings to mind Ephesians 4:11-12 (NASB) – “And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.”

Verse 12 again: *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.*

God has given us apostles and prophets and pastors and teachers ... to equip you and me (us regular church members) to do the work of the ministry, playing our part in building up the “Body of Christ,” meaning the church. The Scripture and the God-given teachers equip you and me to do the work of ministry.

Well, that is a quick overview of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17. Let us now look in more detail at that passage and at some key phrases in the first paragraph of the OIC Statement of Faith.

## Part 1: The Scripture.

At the point in time when Paul is writing, this term “Scripture” referred to the Old Testament, and Christians have always valued the Old Testament as crucial sacred writings foundational to the Christian faith. Indeed, Paul says something interesting in the preceding verse, in verse 15 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3 (NASB) ... he says about Timothy, “And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Those “sacred writings” are the Old Testament, and we can see here that the apostles believed that those writings pointed to salvation in Jesus Christ.

Indeed, we see this explicated in Luke 24:44-48 (NASB), where Jesus, after His resurrection, says to the disciples: “Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things that are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”<sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,<sup>46</sup> and He said to them, “So it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,<sup>47</sup> and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.”

I don’t have time today to show you all the places in the Old Testament where there are prophecies of the coming Messiah and God’s unfolding plan for the salvation of mankind. But as the apostles came to understand these things, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, they proclaimed this gospel message to other lands.

The Greek word for “Scripture” in Luke 24:45 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16 is *graphē* (pronounced graf-ay’). This word occurs 51 times in the New Testament and it always refers to the canonical Old Testament scripture. However, there are two places in the New Testament where this word seems to have a broader scope.

Let's look at 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:18 (ESV) – “For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”” The first quotation here comes from the Old Testament, from the book of Deuteronomy. The second quotation comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10 verse 7. From the Gospel of Luke. What Jesus said was written down by Luke: “The laborer deserves his wages.” And what Luke wrote in the New Testament is being called “Scripture” in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:18.

Another interesting reference comes in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:15-16 (ESV) – “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup> as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”

I would like to highlight two things we see here. First, there seems to be a collection of Paul's letters circulating among the churches during the lifetime of the apostles. Already, Paul's letters were special to the Christian community and being shared among them. Second, the Apostle Peter is saying that the Apostle Paul's letters are included among “the Scriptures.” Again, this is that Greek word *graphē*, which refers to the canonical Old Testament. But here we see that this word is being used for New Testament material as well – in those two examples I've just given you.

A moment ago, I used the adjective “canonical” to describe the Old Testament. The noun form of this word is “canon,” and we often use this word to speak of “the canon of Scripture.” The word “canon” means the list of books officially recognized by the community of faith as being the authoritative books of Scripture. The original Greek word is *kanōn* (κανών), and it means a “measuring stick” or a “ruler.” When speaking of Scripture, this word refers to those books of the Bible that are recognized as the authoritative books inspired by God. That means that these are the books which are the proper measure by which any teaching or any behavior is evaluated. As is said in our Statement of Faith, the Bible is “the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.”

Part 2: All Scripture is “inspired by God” ... “breathed out by God.”

The Greek word here is *theopneustos* (pronounced *teh-op'-nyoo-stos*). “*Theo*,” meaning “God.” And “*pneustos*,” meaning “breathed in” or “given by inspiration.”

The very words in this book, the Bible, have been given to us by inspiration of God. Some people have imagined this process as a type of *dictation* – that God is dictating words to the human author. No, not quite ... that isn't the right way to view the process. Of course, we can find some examples in Scripture where God's precise verbal utterance is written down word for word. One example might be the giving of the Ten Commandments and other portions of the Law of Moses. But, generally speaking, inspiration by God is not a mechanical process, which is what is implied if we use the word *dictation*.

Evangelicals generally prefer to describe the process of writing down Scripture as the “verbal plenary inspiration” of Scripture. “Verbal plenary inspiration.” In this viewpoint, God produced in the written Scripture the very words that He wanted. “Verbal” means *words*. “Plenary” means *everything*. Every word in Scripture is inspired by our God.

And, of course, since they're inspired by God, the words of Scripture reflect God's character of truthfulness, holiness, and authority.

I would like to share a quotation with you from one of the essays in my ESV Study Bible. This quote comes from the essay on Biblical Doctrine:

The Bible is “God-breathed” and gets its true, authoritative, powerful, holy character from God himself, who inspired human authors to write exactly what he wanted them to write. Instead of God merely dictating the words to them, God worked through their unique personalities and circumstances. Scripture is therefore both fully human and fully divine. It is both the testimony of men to God’s revelation, and divine revelation itself.

Let me read that last sentence again: “Scripture . . . is both the testimony of men to God’s revelation, and divine revelation itself.”

Well, I have reached the halfway point of today’s sermon. For the second half of today’s message, I would like to focus on the first paragraph of the OIC Statement of Faith. Let’s read it again:

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.

I would like to focus on the following phrases:

- *without error in the original writings*
- *the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men*
- *the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life*

Part 3: The Bible is “*without error in the original writings*.” We call this the doctrine of the “inerrancy of Scripture.” First, I would like to share a few verses with you declaring the truthfulness of God’s Word. Then, I’d like to share another quotation with you.

Psalm 119:160 (ESV) – “The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous rules endures forever.”

In John 17:17 (ESV), Jesus is praying to His Father – “Sanctify them [the disciples] in the truth; Your word is truth.” *Your word is truth*.

In Colossians 1:5 (ESV), Paul writes this – “Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel.” *The word of the truth, the gospel*.

On the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, I want to share an interesting quotation with you which I think it is a clear and concise explanation of this doctrine. Again, this comes from the ESV Study Bible’s essay on Biblical Doctrine:

The doctrine of inerrancy means that the Bible is entirely truthful and reliable in all that it affirms in its original manuscripts. Another way of saying this is that the Bible does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact. Because God is the ultimate author of the Bible, and because God is always perfectly truthful, it follows that his Word is completely truthful as well: He is the “God who never lies” (Titus 1:2). It would be contrary to his character to affirm anything false. God is all-knowing, always truthful and good, and all-powerful, so he always knows and tells the truth and is able to communicate and preserve his Word. “O Lord God, you are God, and *your words are true*, and you have promised this good thing to your servant” (2 Sam. 7:28). “Every word of God proves true” (Prov. 30:5; cf. Ps. 12:6; 119:42; John 17:17).

Inerrancy does not require twenty-first-century precision or scientifically technical language. The following quotation from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy summarizes what inerrancy does not mean: “We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling,

observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations” (*Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, Art. XIII).

The inerrancy of Scripture gives the believer great confidence in the Bible as his sure foundation for understanding all God wants him to know and all that he needs for godliness and eternal life.

That last sentence summarizes the main purpose of Scripture very well: the Bible tells us all we need to know to live God-honoring lives and it tells us the way of eternal salvation.

By the way, in both our Statement of Faith and in this quotation I just shared with you, please note that when we speak of the Bible being without error, we say that this refers to *the original writings, the original manuscripts*. When Moses and David and the various prophets and apostles wrote down the words, those statements were without error in those original manuscripts. However, over time, as the manuscripts were copied by hand over and over again, some mistakes were made in copying. Today, you can look at any publication of the Bible that has detailed footnotes and you’ll find there some statements about some variant readings among some of the older manuscripts. Yes, there are some mistakes in the transmission of the written record, but by and large these are minor and they should not affect our confidence in the inerrancy of the Scripture. In the original composition by the original author, the statements are without error.

Part 4: The Bible is “*the complete revelation of God’s will for the salvation of mankind.*”

Let’s look one more time at the last statement of my quotation from the ESV Study Bible:

The inerrancy of Scripture gives the believer great confidence in the Bible as his sure foundation for understanding all God wants him to know and all that he needs for godliness and eternal life.

That sentence summarizes the main purpose of Scripture very well: the Bible tells us all we need to know to live God-honoring lives and it tells us the way of eternal salvation.

John 3:16 (NIV) – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV) – “Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

Next, I’ll share some verses telling how important Scripture is in telling us the way of salvation. And how important it is for faithful parents to pass on to their kids what the right way is. Let’s read what Paul says to Timothy in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:5 (NASB) – “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelled in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.” It is really important for parents to share the gospel message with their children from an early age. That’s the way it was for me, as I told you before ... I’m so grateful for the excellent Sunday school program my mother sent her kids to. What an important foundation Sunday school can be for our children.

Paul continues some words to Timothy in chapter 3, verses 14 and 15 (NASB). I’ve already commented on verse 15 earlier today, but let’s look also at verse 14 – “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them [*from whom you have learned them: from his mother and grandmother*], <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

I told you before how even the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to Christ. This was what the apostles taught as they spread the gospel message. In Acts 17 we read an interesting story. Paul and his companions had been teaching in the city of Thessalonica, but they were not welcome there, so they had to leave and they headed to the city of Berea.

Let's read Acts 17:10-12 (NASB) – “The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, many of them believed, along with a significant number of prominent Greek women and men.”

The Bereans were “examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” They eagerly examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul and Silas said about Jesus Christ being the promised Messiah was true. And they believed. Today, the word “Berean” is often used by Christians as a way of referring to people who eagerly wish to examine the Scriptures. Many Bible Study groups and churches call themselves by this name. You may have noticed this. This usage of the term “Berean” harkens back to this story in Acts 17, and reminds us how important it is for all of us to really get to know the holy Scriptures.

Well, I could read many more verses for you on the importance of studying your Bible, but I would like to move on to the last part of today's message.

Part 5: The Bible is *the divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.*

The place of the Bible as an authority for Christian faith and practice was a big issue during the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The institutional church of that day said that it was the church leadership in Rome which had the final say on matters of doctrine and practice. Not so, said Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers. Luther pointed out that many of the current practices and doctrines handed down by the church were not in line with Scripture. He stirred up a lot of controversy by pointing out that even some of the ancient church fathers and some of the proclamations of church councils have been in error. Only in Scripture can we find the final authority for our doctrine and our church life. This principle has been stated in Latin as “*Sola Scriptura*,” Scripture alone. They didn't mean that you shouldn't read anything else – of course they recognized that there are valuable Christian books to read. But the Scripture must be the final authority: every doctrine we assert and every practice we engage in (in church life and private life) should be brought into line with God's Word, the Bible. It is with this conviction that the Protestant Reformers sought to translate the Bible into the common language of the people and put this Book into the hands of as many people as possible.

Many of you know that I love church history. And I often reflect on the great privilege we have of being able to have this Bible readily available to us. For most of Christian history, the common people were illiterate and they were unable to read this Book for themselves. But due to the Protestant Reformers' call to order our lives by the Bible, due to the translation of this book into the common language, and with the invention of the printing press and the increase in literacy in modern times, we today have easy access to the Word of God. So I want to close my message today by encouraging all my fellow Christians to read this Book, meditate on its words, keep on reading it and keep on meditating on it. Live by these words and get to know your God. The Bible is God's precious gift to us for our instruction and training in righteousness.