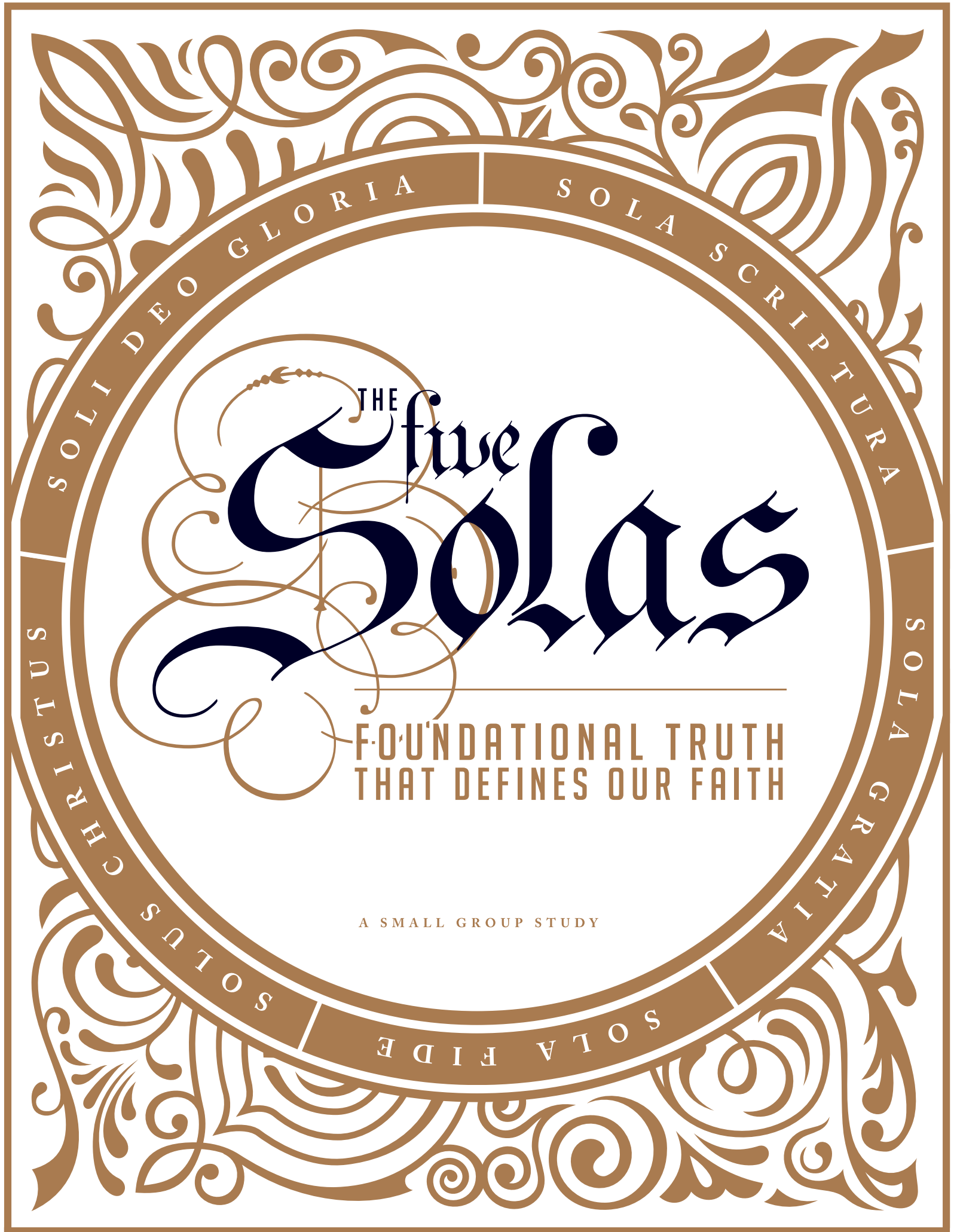




SOLI DEO GLORIA

SOLA SCRIPTURA

SOLUS CHRISTUS

SOLA GRATIA

SOLA FIDE

# THE five Solas

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH  
THAT DEFINES OUR FAITH

A SMALL GROUP STUDY



WEEK 2



# Sola Scriptura

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## SCRIPTURE ALONE





WEEK 2

# SOLA SCRIPTURA

## INTRODUCTION

### 2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17 ESV

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

**CERTAINTY IS OFTEN** interpreted as a form of arrogance in today’s culture. For many people, the height of arrogance is the declaration that you know something for sure. In addition, suspicion of authority is a common attitude of many people. Commenting on today’s culture, Carl F.H. Henry said: “No fact of contemporary Western life is more evident than its growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word.”<sup>1</sup> So, the claim that the Bible is an authoritative source of certainty is doubly dubious.

This week we’re going to study one of the most important doctrines of the Reformation: *Sola Scriptura*. If you recall from last week, *Sola Scriptura* is the doctrine dealing with the Bible. In Latin, *Sola* means “alone” and *Scriptura* means “Scripture.” So, *Sola Scriptura* is the doctrine of “Scripture Alone.”

Some of you who read this study will prick at the notion of the Bible being the final authority for the Christian. You may even balk at the idea that we can be certain about what the Bible says. Yet for others, it may be easy to accept that the Bible is authoritative and you are confident that what it says is true. Regardless of where you fall on that spectrum, there are many things in our lives that compete for authority. No matter who you are or what your past is, everyone has a final authority that they ultimately surrender to—even if that authority is nothing more than their own feelings and desires. The question for us is what authority does the Bible have in *our* lives?

*Sola Scriptura* is the doctrine of the Reformation that says the Bible alone is the Word of God. This means that although God continues to communicate today through various means—

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*What authority does the Bible have in our lives?*

# URA SCRIPTURE ALONE

such as visions and prayer—ultimately, God’s final authoritative speech is found in the Bible alone. This does not mean that God only speaks through the Bible, but that God’s final and ultimate communication comes through the Bible, and all forms of communication must submit to it.

The reformers also taught that the Bible is the only infallible rule in all matters of faith and practice. But what does it mean for the Bible to be infallible? To be infallible means that it is unable to err. If the Bible is truly infallible, then not only does the Bible contain no errors, but it cannot err. This has incredible implications for our lives today.

Because the Bible cannot err, we can have confidence about all that it affirms. There are many things about life that the Bible does not directly address. For instance, the Bible never tells us whether we should go PC or Mac with our next computer; it never helps us decide between 89, 91, or 93-octane gasoline. However, the Bible claims that it is a sufficient source of wisdom so that we can live to glorify and honor God. So, although we may not get the answer to our PC or Mac dilemma, we are given wisdom about the use of money, purity, time management, and being productive. This kind of wisdom may not direct us to our decision, but it does influence how we make that decision. Although the Bi-

ble may not give explicit answers, we can be confident that the answers we do get are accurate and sufficient.

This week we will explore what the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* means and what it does not mean. You will see how the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is a summary of what the Bible teaches about itself. Even though the Bible never uses the phrase “*Sola Scriptura*,” it clearly teaches the doctrine. You will have a chance to reflect on how the Bible should shape the way you think and the way you live.

Feel free to take notes, underline sentences, and write questions about the things you’re reading. It’s important that you continually seek what God wants to communicate to you through the study this week.

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*God’s final and ultimate communication comes through the Bible.*



“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

MATTHEW 4:4



# DEFINE *Sola Scriptura*

**“THE BIBLE ALONE IS  
THE WORD OF GOD  
AND THE ONLY  
INFALLIBLE RULE IN  
ALL MATTERS OF  
FAITH AND PRACTICE.”**

**WHAT DOES THIS** definition of *Sola Scriptura* mean? We will now spend time breaking this definition into components to help us grasp exactly what it means. Once we finish that, we will move on to survey this doctrine’s major implications.

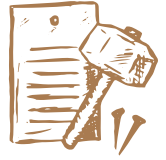
This definition can be broken down into three parts. First, the definition says, “The Bible alone is the Word of God.” This means that the written text that we know as the Bible is synonymous with the very words of God. To be the Word of God, the Bible must originate from God. As the apostle Peter writes, “*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:20–21). So, to say that the Bible alone is the Word of God means that the Bible is divinely inspired.

Secondly, *Sola Scriptura* says, “the Bible alone is the Word of God.” In other words, the Bible alone is the divinely inspired Word of God. There are many ways that the Bible’s teaching can be communicated: like preaching or putting it to music. Additionally, the teaching of the Bible can be formulated in books, creeds, or catechisms. However, none of these forms of communication are divinely inspired. The Bible alone is divinely inspired.

Thirdly, the Bible alone is the “only infallible rule in all matters of faith and practice.” This means that there can be all kinds of practical wisdom derived from the Bible, and all sorts of principles that are based on the Bible’s teaching, but none of these things are without error. As Martin Luther once said, “church councils do often error.”<sup>22</sup> The Scriptures, however, cannot err; they are infallible. *Sola Scriptura* affirms that the Bible is infallible in “all matters of faith and practice.” This means that the Bible is a sufficient source for matters dealing with what is necessary to be saved (faith) and how to live a godly life (practice). Whatever the Bible says about these matters is without error.



# DEMONSTRATE



**SINCE WE'VE COVERED** the definition of *Sola Scriptura*, we will now consider some of the implications of this doctrine. There are reasonable conclusions we can come to that have their basis in Scripture and are derived from the definition. Although there are others you may think of, I've listed five significant ones.

## 1 THE BIBLE ALONE IS INFALLIBLE AND INNERRANT

If the Bible is God's Word, then the Bible must be without error, since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). When we say that the Bible is without error, we mean that it is without error in all that it affirms. So, if the Bible affirms something as true, then it is true because God has said it to be true through the Bible. This is what is meant by the word "inerrant." In all that the Bible affirms, it is without errors.

Not only is the Bible inerrant, it is also infallible. Whereas "inerrant" means that the Bible contains no errors, infallibility goes one step further and affirms that the Bible cannot err. The reason the Bible cannot err, and is without error, is because the Bible is the Word of God.

Because the Bible is the Word of God, we can have absolute confidence that what the Bible affirms is true and we can depend on it. There are many other places we can look to for guidance—such as prayer books and the wisdom of other believers and pastors—but none of these sources is without error.

Although Martin Luther never used the word "inerrant," he teaches the concept in his writings. For instance, Luther writes that church fathers "have erred, as men will; therefore, I am ready to trust them only when they give me evidence for their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred."<sup>3</sup> This reminds us that even though some advice or a certain Bible interpretation may appear quite reasonable, it must be grounded in Scripture because only Scripture is without error.

## 2 AS THE WORD OF GOD, THE BIBLE IS DIVINELY INSPIRED

What does it mean to say that the Bible is the Word of God? It is the written record of God speaking about, and to, His creation. The very words, subjects, characters, and literary genres are all used by God to reveal Himself. The Bible is the self-revelation of God and is therefore inspired by Him.

We have to be careful about the word "inspiration." For some people, the word "inspiration" is nothing more than a feeling—often associated with producing art or self-motivation. However, the inspiration of the Bible has more to do with the words themselves, rather than the effect they have on their readers. In 2 Timothy 3:16 esv, the apostle Paul says that, "*all Scripture is breathed out by God.*" This means that every word of Scripture is sourced in, and approved by, God. It wouldn't be true to say that God breathed *on* Scripture that already existed and therefore made Scripture His Word; rather, God breathed out the Scriptures so that the very words themselves are the very words of God.

What do we do with the fact that Scripture also has a human author? Even though God inspired the very words of Scripture, He did so through human authors so that their own writing style, word choices, and imagery would be the method He chose to use. This concept is called "dual authorship." It's not only the concepts and ideas of Scripture that are inspired, but the very words themselves. And, it's not some of the words in certain portions of the Bible, it's the entirety of the Bible—each and every word in each and every book. That is what Paul meant when he wrote, "*all Scripture*" (2 Timothy 3:16).

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*Because the Bible is the Word of God, we can have absolute confidence that what the Bible affirms is true and we can depend on it.*

### 3 THE BIBLE ALONE IS THE SUPREME AUTHORITY IN ALL MATTERS OF DOCTRINE

There are many authorities in the world we live in. Parents, law enforcement, instructors, etc. all hold a certain kind of authority. The Bible is unique, however. When it comes to authority, there is always a final or supreme authority. The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* affirms that this final and supreme authority is found in the Bible itself.

What this does not mean is that there is no other authority outside of the Bible. In fact, the Bible itself clearly teaches that there is a certain level of authority that church leaders have, but every authoritative position within the church is subservient to the ultimate authority of the Bible. In addition, there are civil authorities that the Bible recognizes as legitimate authorities. However, even these authorities never supersede the authority of God's Word.

The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* emphasizes the authority of Scripture to regulate all matters of doctrine. When Martin Luther was being examined for his radical belief that the Bible was the final and supreme authority, his view was often challenged by church magistrates who cited councils and edicts from the pope. For the Medieval Roman Catholic Church, Scripture and tradition (Councils and edicts from the pope) were equal authorities. The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* however, asserts that Scripture alone is the final and supreme authority—even above church councils and the authority of the pope.

At the Leipzig debate in 1519, Luther was asked about authority. He

responded: "It is not in the power of the Roman pontiff or the Inquisition to construct new articles of faith. No believing Christian can be coerced beyond holy writ. By divine law we are forbidden to believe anything which is not established by divine Scripture or manifest revelation."

A man named Johann von der Eck was the leader of the Leipzig debate who had the responsibility to question Luther. He was appalled that a man should think Scripture is a greater authority than the pope and church councils. Eck placed Luther's writing on a table in the middle of the room where the debate was happening and demanded that Luther recant his teaching. Here is what Luther said in response:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they often err and contradict themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen.<sup>4</sup>

The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* affirms that the Bible alone is the final and supreme authority. The authority of Scripture is not equal to that of the pope, or to church councils, or to creeds, or to the writings and teachings of church leaders. In the end, Scripture alone has the final say in all matters of doctrine.

### 4 THE BIBLE ALONE IS SUFFICIENT TO TEACH US HOW TO LIVE AND BE SAVED

There is nothing outside of the Bible that is necessary for one to be saved. The Bible itself is sufficient to teach us what we need in order to be saved from sin and reconciled to God through Jesus.

Moreover, the Bible is sufficient to teach those who are saved how to live as redeemed sinners. There is nothing outside the Bible that ought to morally bind the conscience, though there is a great deal of practical wisdom that can be found outside of the Bible. Thus, faithfully applied, principles and wisdom outside of the Bible can be useful, but must never bind one's conscience to guilt.

We are exposed to so much practical wisdom and advice that it can be overwhelming. We must be careful that we don't allow good advice, or helpful insight, to become a law. For instance, when my wife and I went through premarital counseling we were told that every day we needed to sit on the couch and look into each other's eyes and debrief our day for at least 30 minutes. If we didn't, then our marriage would suffer. So, I remember feeling guilty that we weren't debriefing each day for 30 minutes. Then it hit me: where is the 30-minute debrief described in the Bible? Answer: nowhere! I cannot allow my conscience to be guilty because of some practical advice that is not even remotely grounded in Scripture. Scripture alone is my authority, not premarital counseling tips.

*Sola Scriptura... asserts that Scripture alone is the final and supreme authority—even above church councils and the authority of the pope.*



*Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Bible's teaching is not only clear to the well-educated, but to all believers.*

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**5** CHRISTIANS HAVE A RIGHT TO PERSONAL  
INTERPRETATION AND DO NOT NEED CHURCH  
AUTHORITY TO RIGHTLY INTERPRET SCRIPTURE

Scripture is sufficient to teach all that is necessary to be saved and to live as a redeemed sinner. There is no need for church institutions to mediate scriptural interpretations for individual Christians. For the individual Christian, the Bible clearly communicates what it teaches. Although not everything the Bible presents is equally clear, the things that are necessary to know can be clearly understood in the Bible.

During the Reformation period, it was often taught that no one could know what the Bible taught unless the church explained it. The church monitored all interpretation and all matters of theology. By contrast, the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* affirms that the Scriptures can be, and should be, read individually. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Bible's teaching is not only clear to the well-educated, but to all believers. Since Scripture can never contradict Scripture, any personal interpretation that introduces a contradiction is not a correct interpretation.

**ALL  
SCRIPTURE  
IS BREATHED  
OUT BY GOD.**

# EXEGETICAL BASIS

**A DOCTRINAL POSITION** is only as strong as its ability to be articulated from the clear teaching of Scripture. If a doctrine cannot be demonstrated from Scripture, then it is not to be believed. If, however, one can demonstrate that the doctrine is clearly taught in Scripture, then there is no reason for a person to reject that doctrine.

Admittedly, there are many interpretations of various texts of Scripture and there are various doctrinal positions. One must not conclude that since there are numerous interpretations and doctrinal positions that the true meaning of Scripture is unattainable. If that were the case, then most of history contains no truth because there are a multitude of interpretations and positions on historical figures and events. Think about it: how many different biographies of George Washington are there? And how many of those biographies contain different interpretations on what kind of leader and man he was? Does this then mean that we cannot know anything about Washington truthfully?

The existence of many interpretations is no indication of a lack of meaning and an inability to know something truthfully. Likewise, the existence of differences in certain doctrinal beliefs cannot lead to the conclusion that there is no true doctrine. Some interpretations and doctrinal positions will be truer than others. But how do we decide? There must be some final authority that stands as arbiter that can affirm some interpretations and doctrines, and deny others. The arbiter, according to *Sola Scriptura*, is the Bible.

The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* implies that the Scriptures are self-authenticating. This means that there is no authority higher than Scrip-

ture. It would be foolish to place ourselves over God's Word—proposing that our authority exceeded its inherent authority. There must be an arbiter who makes the final call. Since *Sola Scriptura* affirms that the Bible is the Word of God, then the arbiter must be God—since there is no greater authority than Him. And since Scripture is God's Word, the only true arbiter is Scripture itself; God's Word decides what God's Word says. That is what it means for Scripture to be self-authenticating.

So, does the Bible actually teach *Sola Scriptura*? The basis for believing the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is developed from an exegetical perspective. This means the Scriptures themselves contain verses whose meanings form the foundation of the doctrine. As you read the passages below, you will see how the Bible teaches *Sola Scriptura*, even though it never mentions the words. It's called "exegetical" because "exegete" means to interpret the meaning, or to bring out the meaning. So, the meaning of these texts is the foundation for the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*.

As you read the following verses, try and identify how they demonstrate the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* by underlining the portion of the text that directly communicates it. If you can, write which component of the definition of *Sola Scriptura* the verse exemplifies.

...“exegete” means  
to interpret the  
meaning, or to  
bring out the  
meaning.





*“Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.”*

—DEUTERONOMY 4:2

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*“See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.”*

—DEUTERONOMY 12:32

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*“The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”*

—PSALM 19:7–11

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*“How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your Word.”*

—PSALM 119:9

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*“I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.”*

—PSALM 119:11

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*“Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”*

—PSALM 119:105

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*“The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”*

—PSALM 119:130

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*The statutes You have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy.”*

—PSALM 119:138

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*“Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”*

—ISAIAH 8:20

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*“As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”*

—ACTS 17:10–11

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*“Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, ‘Do not go beyond what is written.’ Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.”*

—1 CORINTHIANS 4:6

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*“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

—2 TIMOTHY 3:14–17

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*“When God made His promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for Him to swear by, He swore by Himself.”*

—HEBREWS 6:13

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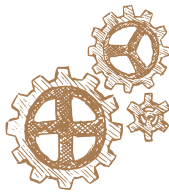
*“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

—2 PETER 1:20–21

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**Note:** To see some common misconceptions about and typical objections to the doctrine of Sola Scriptura, please refer to pages 104–107 in the Appendix.

# DIGEST



## THE GOAL OF

this section is to provide us with an opportunity to see how the doctrine impacts our everyday life. Doctrine has not been developed to be retained in the mind alone, or to be concealed in a vacuum. All doctrine is supposed to result in certain actions. Theological thought is to shape our mind and affections. Once shaped, our whole person is transformed and the result is a particular way of life. Doctrine is not dull and impractical; rather, doctrine is the fuel that empowers transformation. Here are a few ways the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* can impact our everyday life.

### 1 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS WE CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT THE SCRIPTURES SUFFICIENTLY REVEAL ALL WE NEED TO BE SAVED AND TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE

*Sola Scriptura* maintains that the Bible is sufficient to make us “wise for salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15). Therefore, nothing should be added or taken away from Scripture. Because the Bible is both inerrant and infallible, whatever it has to say is completely reliable and trustworthy.

We occasionally feel like we aren’t making the kind of progress in our faith that we think we should. We can feel like we are failures. When these moments come, we sometimes think there is something special we need to do that will jumpstart our faith. We seek out new books, new techniques, and anything else that we haven’t tried. But, *Sola Scriptura* teaches that all we need is in the Bible.

We are given a promise in Psalm 19, verse 11: “By them [Scriptures] Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.” We can be confident that this is true; God’s Word is rewarding. All that you need to be right with God is found in Scripture.

### 2 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS THAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE CLEAR AND THERE ARE NO SECRETS TO UNLOCK THE MEANING

The Bible is not a book full of secrets. It is a book that reveals God and His redemption of creation through the person and work of Jesus Christ, His only Son. Because *Sola Scriptura* affirms the clarity of Scripture, we can be confident that we can read the Bible for ourselves and understand it. As Psalm 119:130 says, “The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” Not only can it be understood by “the simple,” but it will help “the simple” gain understanding.

Of course, there are some things in the Bible that are not clear. We may need help to understand some of those things because we may lack knowledge of the ancient cultural setting of the Bible. Though at times we may need help to understand imagery and certain metaphors, what we need to know will be made plain to us and we will be able to clearly understand. So pick up your Bible and read. The Holy Spirit will guide your thoughts and enlighten you.

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*...nothing should be added or taken away from Scripture.*



### 3 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS THAT WE CAN BE REASSURED BY THE INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE

One of the most applicable things about the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is it implies that the Bible will never be irrelevant. Since the Bible contains all that we need to live a godly life, and since it is infallible in all matters of faith and practice, we can be reassured that it will never lead us astray.

The Bible directly, or indirectly, addresses all kinds of issues about what it means to be human. God has promised to make all things new again (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:5); He has promised to execute justice on the earth (Jeremiah 9:24); He has promised that He is making a kingdom of people from every walk of life (Revelation 5:9–10). Whatever God has promised will come to pass because His Word is infallible; it cannot fail, and it cannot err. God's Word is true.

*Since the Bible...is infallible in all matters of faith and practice, we can be reassured that it will never lead us astray.*

### 4 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS OUR CONSCIENCE IS FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF HUMAN TRADITION AND LAW

There are many sources of great wisdom and practical advice that we can find helpful. However, when we allow things that are “helpful” to seem necessary, they become a burdensome law. When this happens, we feel guilty for the wrong reasons.

For instance, a very popular Christian ethical teaching throughout the 20th century was to never go to the movies. Regardless of what movie was being shown, going to the movies was perceived as sinful. This is not taught in Scripture. In fact, I have a hard time finding a biblical principle that would classify the act of going to the movies as sinful. However, there are many biblical principles that help us determine what movies are appropriate for us to see.

*Sola Scriptura* frees us from the bondage of human traditions like whether or not we can go to the movies, because it teaches that we should not add or take away anything from what the Bible teaches. We are not to edit the Bible, we are to obey its teaching. However, *Sola Scriptura* affirms that what the Bible does teach is necessary, so the principles it contains are for us to obey and apply. The principle to avoid sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3) and to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8) inform what entertainment we, as Christians, should consume.

*There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to experience God, but sometimes we can seek the experience above the object we're experiencing.*

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**5 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS WE CAN READ THE BIBLE AND REAP GREAT BENEFITS FROM CAREFULLY STUDYING IT**

What a great comfort to know we can pick up our Bibles and read them in order to learn how to live a life that pleases God.

Reading the Bible to learn more about God and to learn how we can honor Him with our lives reaps great rewards. *Sola Scriptura* affirms that the Scriptures are clear and there are no secrets to unlock its meaning. The Bible is sufficient to provide us with all we need to know to be saved and to live a godly life.

**6 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS WE DON'T NEED TO SEEK OUT SPECIAL REVELATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE BIBLE TO KNOW GOD**

This practical benefit is probably one of the more important ones. Today many Christians are seeking special communication from God in order to help them make decisions about life. Moreover, many people want some kind of “confirmation” or “word from God” that will affirm their thoughts, feelings and decisions. *Sola Scriptura* teaches that we *already* have a word from God: The Scriptures.

**7 SOLA SCRIPTURA MEANS THAT ALL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES ARE SUBJECT TO THE BIBLE AND ARE NOT MORE AUTHORITATIVE THAN THE BIBLE**

No one has to be convinced that we live in an experience-rich culture. From flashing lights and loud sounds, to experiential smells and petting zoos, we constantly want an experience.

Having an experience with God and God's people is amazing. It can be something we look back on as a time we encountered God. However, there is a danger to this as well. There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to experience God, but sometimes we can seek the experience above the object we're experiencing.

It's amazing how frequently we experience God in musical worship. While we think we're seeking an experience with God, we may actually be seeking the fringe benefits of the entertainment that is associated with God. It's almost as if the presence of the Holy Spirit comes only when the band is at its most dramatic moment.

*Sola Scriptura* ensures that we subject all our experiences to the authority of Scripture. Our experiences do not create truth, nor are they more authoritative than the Bible. Instead, we should allow the Bible to interpret, correct, and shape our expectations and experiences. By doing this, we will be less susceptible to being people that are “*tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming*” (Ephesians 4:14).

# DISCOVER



## THE GOAL OF

this section is for us to discover how we should respond to what we've read this week. One of the reasons so many people hesitate to study doctrine is because of the false assumption that to do so has no practical benefit. Rather than tell you how you should respond, I encourage you to take the time to ask God how He would want you to respond to this great foundational principle of our faith.

Typically, we are trained to look for applications that directly address how we ought to behave. We're accustomed to finding two or three things we are to do that will prove we have applied what we've studied. But haven't you noticed that the Bible itself contains many commands that aren't necessarily action oriented? For instance, what action must we do to obey the tenth commandment: "*you shall not covet*" (Exodus 20:17)? Coveting is something that takes place in the heart, a part of us that is associated with the non-physical component of our humanity, often understood as our souls. So, in order to be obedient to that command, we must discover the condition of our hearts, our emotions, and our thoughts.

Not only should we think about how to apply this doctrine to our lives by way of action, but we should also take the time to discover how *Sola Scriptura* impacts our attitudes and our affections.

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*Take the time to  
discover how Sola  
Scriptura impacts  
your attitudes and  
your affections.*





# SUGGESTED QUESTIONS



- 1 What is the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*? Why is it important to know? How does it shape how you live out your Christian life?
- 2 What was something that challenged or enhanced the way you currently think about the Bible?
- 3 How can the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* shape your attitude about the Bible?
- 4 Which of the implications in the “Demonstration” section did you find yourself thinking about most? Why do you think that particular implication had that effect on you?
- 5 How frequently do you read your Bible? What factors contribute to this occurrence? How can *Sola Scriptura* encourage you to grow in this area?
- 6 When have you felt most connected with God? What was it that made you feel so connected to Him?
- 7 What in the “Digest” section did you find intriguing, or helpful? How can you apply that now?

# ENDNOTES

# NOTES/ PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Quoted in Barrett, Matthew. *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016, p.115
2. Bainton, Roland H.. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1950, p.103
3. Quoted in Barrett, Matthew. *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016, p.40
4. Quoted in Barrett, Matthew. *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016, p.45

# NOTES/ PRAYER REQUESTS

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*So, in order to  
be obedient...  
we must discover  
the condition of  
our hearts, our  
emotions, and  
our thoughts.*