



6.8.08.

2 Timothy 3:16 opens with the statement, that “**all Scripture is inspired by God...**” all Scripture is literally- *God-breathed*. “**God-breathed.**” Think about what that means tangibly, experientially: every single word on the printed page *still has* the scent of the Spirit’s breath upon it. It’s as fresh today as it was the day it came *out* of His mouth, *into* His prophets, and *onto* the scroll. Now if we believe that the very words themselves are inspired by the Spirit of God, which is basic, bedrock, bottom-line Christian belief, let me ask you something. If the same God who inspired the words of Scripture, the very tenses, voices, and moods which constructed His Message to man, wanted to write a textbook or a how-to manual, don’t you think He could’ve done that?

And if He *did* want the Bible to resemble a science textbook or a ‘fix-it quick manual,’ don’t you think He *would’ve* done that? I mean, we’re talking about the Creator of All that Is here, not some second-rate dollar store novelist, but a Father of infinite love and incredible creativity. Surely He can accomplish His will, in precisely the way He wants to, even with children as imperfect as we are. It’s not as if ‘how-to manuals’ were unknown in the ancient world; the Egyptians were writing manuals on how to mummify human bodies and solve mathematical problems 500 years {or more} before Moses ever wrote the opening lines of Genesis.

If God wanted to give us a detailed, step by step *formula* {which is the key term} for how all things work or how all of life can succeed in a fallen world, don’t you think He would have? The reason there are no formulas with the Father, no set in stone this-is-way-to-get-what-you-want-from-God instructions in the Word, is because God desires a level of unparalleled intimacy with us. Yes, with you and with me, His Beloved Sons and Beautiful Daughters. He wants us to *walk* with Him, to trust His counsel, to seek His strength, to long for His embrace; and in that to discover a oneness with Him which cannot be explained, it can only be experienced— a place where our motivations and our actions are those of the Jesus we adore. One of the reasons He doesn’t give us a formula to follow is that He knows if we can make life work without Him, we will! “I have the formula, what do I need God for?” To experience this intimacy with the Trinity and bring glory to the great and Mighty God is why we’re here to begin with, because it’s *from* that sacred place of closeness and communion that our healing and restoration flows, it’s *in* that place we find the Freedom and Life for which we were designed {Eph. 1:4-6 cf. 1 Jn. 4:11-17}. And oh how desperately we need this for our hearts and lives today.

— Ric Webb
Pastor-Teacher
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6.15.08.

If the Lord of Heaven and Earth had wanted a purely mechanical process, *uninvolved* and *irrelational*, for dealing with His creatures and His creatures with Him, it seems to me He would have given us one... one plain enough in its diagrammatical accuracy for all to see in exactly the same light. I.e., a simple map to the treasure, with none of the twists or turns which make up our lives in a fallen world. But the Bible doesn't come to us as a set of bullet points or theoretical propositions, does it? It comes to us as *history* and *story* {Genesis, the Prophets, 1 and 2 Samuel, Kings and Chronicles}, *poetry* and *song* {Psalms, Proverbs, Solomon's Song}, eyewitness accounts of the King of all Creation {the Gospels}, and personal letters written to specific Christian communities to deal with specific circumstances surrounding their specific lives {the Epistles}. But ironically enough, no detailed manuals on how to make *God* work for *you*. What He does tell us is all that He has done for His People in the past and all that He will do for His People in the future, and in between— in the Here and the Now— the abundant Grace and everlasting Life which flow from the Fountain of Heaven, and which can only be tasted in a deep and trusting relationship with the Lord of All that Is, Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons God doesn't give us a formula to follow, choosing instead to mature us into 'followers' ourselves {*disciples* who will walk with Him in every arena of life},

is that if we can make life work without Him, we will! It's a given, it's a *guarantee* in the nature of man: give a boy a hammer and the whole world looks like a nail. Which is another way of saying that when fallen men and women find something that 'works' for them {whether it's right or wrong, true or false: beauty, money, power, prestige, social skill or athletic ability} they will use that *one thing* until it kills them.

What we have in the Bible is something much more akin to a Love Story ...a love story to end all love stories. It is the Story of God as Lover and us as His Beloved, the Lover chasing, wooing, pursuing His Beloved down the corridors of Time through every rebellion and betrayal humanly imaginable. And loving us with a flame that will not be denied {SOS 8:6-7}. Author Brent Curtis in his beautiful book *The Sacred Romance* said that our lives in Christ parallel perfectly "a Love Story set in the midst of a life and death Battle." Truer words were never spoken. Both sides of his analogy must be kept in the forefront of our souls: that the purpose of our lives is a passionate relationship with Jesus, and that this purpose— as well as all things divinely good which flow out of it — will be opposed every step of the way. It would serve us well if we never forgot either of these.

— Ric Webb
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