

WHAT THE BIBLE IS AND ISN'T

1. The Bible is, first of all, God's Word to His people united as Church. The private, or personal message to the individual, important as it may be, is secondary.
2. The Bible is God's message through His Church. It does not bypass the Church on its way to the individual. It was written, discerned, and canonized in the context of Church; All interpretations are weighed and judged in the power and guarantee of the Holy Spirit who is uniquely alive in the Church. The living Word of the Bible does not reach its fullness apart from the unity of God's people gathered as Church.
3. The Holy Bible does have power for our personal lives. It should be an important part of our daily attention.
4. The Bible is not a fortune telling device, nor is it a magic book. Its power depends on the Holy Spirit alive in the reader.
5. The Bible is not meant to be a complete handbook nor even a constitution for the Church. The Church was alive before the Bible was written. The Bible came forth later by the power of the Holy Spirit alive in and through the Church.
6. The Bible is not meant to be an encyclopedia of Science and History. The Bible does not have direct answers to all life's challenges, but the Holy Spirit does, and can speak personally through the Bible.
7. The Bible is a library of many books, inspired by God and written by people over a period of more than 1000 years.
8. While many of the books of the Bible were written by use of special Charismatic gifts, such as Word of Knowledge, Wisdom, prophecy, inspired understandings and insights, etc., the writers used their own words and cultural assumptions and were not simply taking dictation.
9. The Bible is not a mixture of the human and the divine, nor is it a purely divine work nor merely human work. The Bible, like the Church, and like Jesus Himself, is fully human at the same time as fully divine.
10. The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and can only be fully understood when read or listened to under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.
11. The Bible is the family records of the people of God. It is the written record of the ancient oral tradition. The Old Testament is a written record of some of the handed down stories of the Hebrew people. The New Testament is a written record of much of the handed down tradition of the Apostles. It contains the tradition necessary for salvation, but it is not exhaustive of every help in Christian living handed down from the early Church.
12. Ancient Churches like Catholic and Orthodox have traditions that predate the written New Testament, and were so well established there was no need to write them down.