

Inspiration of the Bible
John Morrison FBC Pastor of Family Life

To say the Bible is “inspired” means that the Bible is God’s word, not man’s. ‘Inspiration’ is a translation of *‘theopneustos’* in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, meaning “God-breathed.” “God-breathed” means that God the Holy Spirit moved on specific men at specific times (*“men moved by the Holy Spirit”* - 2 Peter 1:19) to express precisely what He wanted to say. These were *not* men to whom God gave an *inspired idea* which they could express as they wished. That would be “inspired ideas” or “inspired men.” To reinforce this, Peter assures us, *“No prophecy... is a matter of one’s own interpretation”* and *“no prophecy is made by an act of human will”* (2 Peter 1:20-21). Similarly, Paul says, *“All scripture is inspired...”* Each human author expressed word for word what God wanted conveyed because every *word* was breathed by God. That is, each word in all 31,000 verses was from God – it was not that men chose how to express God’s ideas.

At times, God expressed through audible, dictated commands, such as when He spoke to Moses in Exodus 20-23 and Moses recorded it in 24:4. Other times, eyewitnesses wrote what they saw or reported to the author what happened (e.g., Luke’s gospel and most of Acts, eyewitnesses reported; part of Acts, he wrote what he saw). In each, the Holy Spirit used the different styles and personalities of the authors. For example, Mark was simple and direct; Luke was historical and exact; John was analytical and theological.

Jesus was so confident that the Bible was inspired that He said in Matthew 5:18, *“Not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”* That these “smallest strokes” (like a dot on an “i”) will not pass without being accomplished shows the Word of God is inspired right down to the smallest letter. In similar fashion, Jesus reminded the Sadducees in Matthew 22:23-40 that God said, *“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living”* (v. 32). In this case, Jesus used the *tense* of a verb (“am” instead of “was”) from the Old Testament to prove a point about the resurrection. The reason He does so is because the Word is God-breathed not only to words and smallest strokes, but even to *tenses*. His Father’s Word is therefore His confidence.

The idea of the very *words* being God-chosen (yet adapted to the style of human authors) is known as *verbal plenary* inspiration. It is an important principle to know because we can know exactly what God willed to convey. We don’t have to look *behind or under* the words for His real meaning.

You can summarize “inspiration” by saying it is “both a process and a product.” It is a *process* in that men were chosen and moved upon by the Holy Spirit to write exactly what He wanted to express (2 Peter 1:20-21) and planned to preserve. In that process, the Holy Spirit “breathed out” what He wanted said (2 Tim. 3:16) into and through human authors.

It is a *product* in that it resulted in the Bible. It is the very word of God which He expressed so **men would believe on Christ** (John 20:20-21, “...but these have been written that you may believe, and that believing you would have life in His name”), that they would **know Him** (“This is eternal life, that they may know Thee and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent” John 17:3) and that **they would teach, reprove, correct and train** each other so we could all be adequately prepared for all God has for us to do (2 Tim. 3:16-17).