

# HOLY BIBLE

EISEGESIS  
STANDARD  
VERSION

*Looking at the  
"I"  
in your bible*

By Bevin Hayward and Lincoln Forlong

## ***Contents***

Who, Me?	2
Whose Book Is It?	5
The Test	6
Quick Fixes	7
Selfish Reading	10
Narcissistic Eisegesis	12
Tampering With Truth	15
The Opportunity	18
Predicament A	20
Predicament B	23
Conclusion	25

All Bible verses are highlighted in *Italic text*.

By Bevin Hayward and Lincoln Forlong

## *Who, Me?*

**M**ost of us have strong opinions of it, we refer to it from time to time, we even slip in convenient quotes from it occasionally, but how often do we allow the Bible to do the talking and have the final say?

We hear of God’s whisperings, we hear of visions, we even occasionally get swept away by an unexpected and unexplainable spiritual experience. Fearful that the experience may have had foreign authorship, we scramble in search of validation. Some even turn to the Bible in search of anything that could possibly give a sense of divine authenticity or approval to their experience. Is this really the best that God has?

*Hi, our concern is that in spite of what people say, they do not actually treat the Bible as “The Word of God”.*

As Christians, we recognise that our natural and cultural focus is on self. We typically think it’s our right to have whatever we want, whenever we want it, and delivered in the package of our choice. While this

hedonistic (devoted to pleasure) way of thinking may work well if wanting ice in a drink, or sugar in coffee, it fails miserably when applied to God and His Word.

God, as expressed through the Lord Jesus Christ, does not exist for us, rather, as stated in Colossians 1:16 *...all things were created by him and for him*. Therefore, just as Jesus gave the disciples advance notice that one of the Holy Spirit’s primary roles would be to *...remind you of everything I have said to you* (John 14:26), so the Spirit’s working today is to bring the recorded words of Jesus to our attention.

As Jesus said, this is how *...the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, ...will testify about me* (John 15:26). *He* (the Spirit) *will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you* (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit directs us to Jesus Christ who in turn leads us to glorifying the Father. All glory belongs to the Father through our relationship with the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is precisely the Holy Spirit’s non-attention seeking ministry in our lives today, no exceptions.

However, we live in a time when the Holy Spirit’s divine ministry, along with the Scriptures, are unconsciously presented as a secondary source of God’s authority. It is assumed, and mostly goes unchallenged, that the primary source of authority is personal

revelation. It's also assumed that these diverse revelations that take our thinking captive should go unquestioned and should automatically be received as if they were of divine origin. Why? Because two foundational truths have slipped from our Christian focus.

**First**, the Bible is Sovereign God speaking.

**Second**, the Bible is God's primary, and totally authoritative, written truth that surpasses and supersedes all other human experiences of Him.

*God doesn't ask us to interpret  
His Word through our human  
experiences or explanations*

## *Whose Book Is It?*

**T**he fact is, the Bible is God’s primary revelation of Himself to mankind. God never asks for our opinion or approval of Scripture.

God doesn’t ask us to interpret His Word through our human experiences or explanations. He never requires us to read it from our point of view or to go looking for what it means to us. He simply tells us His single objective truth with black and white clarity. Plus, He tells us that the central, most significant person of the Bible is Jesus Christ! *...he (God) has spoken to us by his Son...* (Hebrews 1:2).

The apostle Peter, wanting to *stimulate wholesome thinking*, wrote that a believer should *recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles* (2 Peter 3:1-2). Therefore, according to Peter, we should only recall as divine revelation the words spoken by the holy prophets, the Lord Jesus, and the apostles. Peter was eager to shut down people who were introducing alternative sources of authority as well as twisting Scripture and teaching destructive heresies. He does this by drawing his readers back to the authoritative supremacy of Scripture alone.

As we Christians know, *prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21). The Bible was authored by God Himself through human penmen energised by the Holy Spirit. "If you want to hear from God, read your Bible. If you want to hear Him audibly, read it out loud." - Justin Peters (Strange Fire Conference 2013, Grace Community Church, Los Angeles, USA).

The Bible remains, first and foremost, how God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit speak today.

### ***The Test***

Unfortunately, many believers are paralysed by such a low view of Scripture, that even though it may be denied, our biblical literacy is at a crises level.

Let's take a quick literacy test. Using what you know from Scripture, how many of the following attributes of God's nature can you explain?

God's Aseity (self-existence), Sovereignty, Holiness, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Immutability (unchanging nature), Truthfulness, Wisdom, Goodness, Grace, Love, Foreknowledge, and His Wrath.

Perhaps a more revealing question is, can you give a clear explanation of the Gospel from Scripture,

showing an unbeliever how to identify what separates them from God and how God has made restoration possible?

How'd you do? Be honest now. Ask yourself this question, “Do I genuinely treat the Bible as God’s first and foremost means of revelation”?

*We struggle with being lured  
into the Christian culture of  
quick fix expectations of God.*

### *Quick Fixes*

We struggle with being lured into the Christian culture of quick fix expectations of God. We gravitate towards expecting instant answers from God that fit our way of thinking, without going through the time consuming and sanctifying study of His Word. We’ve made it difficult to spend the required time to read what God has already spoken. Instead of desiring the riches of Scripture, we seek personal spiritual nudging, and base our decisions upon promptings, fleeces, feelings and experiences. This style of Christian living is foreign to Scripture.



King David, having learned from God the significance of His Word, responded in praise to God by acknowledging that *...you have exalted above all things your name and your word* (Psalm 138:2). God has NOT exalted our experience of His Word, nor our opinion of it, rather, it is His actual written Word alone that is exalted above all else, along with His very name.

David was awakened to God's declaration that Scripture is God's primary written expression of who He is and His authoritative truth that surpasses all other human oriented perceptions of Him.

The apostle Paul, wanting to pass on to young Timothy the most important truths that would carry him through the harshest of life's difficulties, instructed; *...continue in what **you have learned** and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, (15) and how from infancy you have known the **holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (17) so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped for every good work*** (2 Timothy 3:14-17). The Apostle Paul's point is clear; a believer goes to Scripture to find what God wants them to know. Like Timothy, we need to be corrected and trained in righteousness by Scripture which fully

equips for effective spiritual living. This is why Paul instructed Timothy to *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction* (2 Timothy 4:2).

Hearing God’s voice is not a matter of personal experience or revelation, not some muted whispering which is difficult to hear. Rather, to hear God, you only have to read God’s Word, the Bible. Ensure you attend a church where God’s Word is actually read, and listened to as the authoritative Word of God that has no equal. If the Lord expected us to hear His voice as the prophets and apostles did we would find this teaching in Scripture. However, we don’t find it anywhere in Scripture. What the Bible does teach, is that *all Scripture is God breathed* (2 Timothy 3:16), and God the Holy Spirit is the one who breathed it. Scripture is fully and divinely sufficient!

*God has NOT exalted our  
experience of His Word*

## *Selfish Reading*

**R**eading the Bible while asking God to somehow directly reveal Himself experientially to you from the passage is not recognising what you're reading as God's inspired Word. Rather, your expectation is for your personal experience of that reading to authenticate the Bible as God's Word.

Consider Matthew 15:1-6, *Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, (2) "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" (3) Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? (4) For God said, 'Honour your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' (5) But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' (6) he is not to 'honour his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.*

Here, Jesus is correcting the Pharisees for invalidating what God had already spoken through His Word for the sake of their own personal tradition and gain.

Imagine how misguided a response it would have been for the Pharisees to say: “Well, I never *heard* God say that”. They didn’t respond that way because Jesus pointed to the written Word of God. Jesus taught that the Pharisees stood under the judgement of God’s Word, not the other way around.

*Scripture is fully and  
divinely sufficient!*

As you read this booklet, do not make the Word of God (Scripture) void and of secondary value by requiring God to give you some personal, unbiblical, even traditional experience or revelation. ...*like new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by **it** you may grow up in your salvation* (1 Peter 2:2). Scripture is God’s “*pure spiritual milk*” that fuels spiritual growth and maturity.

Some argue that individual sensing of God speaking is more significant than reading the Bible. After all, personal revelation is current and relevant to our life and environment. Unfortunately this mind-set is pervasive, and its popularity serves to expose the seductive attitude of biblical narcissistic eisegesis.

## *Narcissistic Eisegesis*

**N**ow there’s a mouth full. Biblical narcissistic eisegesis is when someone’s attitude toward the Bible is characterised by an inflated sense of self-importance. This is expressed when applying personal interpretation of the Bible, using ideas and values which first promote self. It’s also displayed when presenting so-called personal revelations from God as being equal to the Bible in authority, or even taking priority over the Bible.

Instructing the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul exhorted them to *...not go beyond **what is written**. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.* (1 Corinthians 4:6).

The danger of ignoring Paul’s simple advice is that human sinfulness invariably empowers us to infuse our desires into our experiences of God. Some even claim to be prophets and apostles, self-appointed obviously, using revelations for self-fulfilment, personal gain, and popularity. This man-centred thinking of revelation allows the personal revelation to be isolated from God’s written Word. Some even quote the Bible to show some degree of agreement, or partial alignment between their revelation and Scripture. Seeking to validate their

experience or revelation, the individual simply ends up promoting self, even in God’s name.

Look again at 2 Timothy 4:2-4, ...Preach **the Word**; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. (3) For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (4) They will turn their ears away from **the truth** and turn aside to myths. Here, Paul identifies “the truth” as being synonymous with “the Word” (Scripture). As Jesus told the Jews in John 8:32, ...*the truth will set you free*. It’s not our experience or explanation of truth that sets us free. Rather, it is the actual truth itself that brings spiritual freedom.

Therefore, it’s critical that we do not interfere with God’s accurately written Word of truth. Jesus didn’t send mixed messages on this subject. When praying for the disciples preceding His crucifixion, Jesus asked His Heavenly Father to, *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth* (John 17:17). Notice what Jesus did NOT pray for. He didn’t ask for ongoing spiritual revelation until eventually they would stumble upon something they could call truth. No! He definitively states that the Word

of God is that truth which does the work of sanctification and nothing else.

*It's not our experience or  
explanation of truth that  
sets us free*

## *Tampering With Truth*

Unfortunately, it's remarkably easy to abuse God's written, sanctifying Word of truth. All you have to do is go to the Bible, look for whatever it is that will fulfil your desires or expectation of God, particularly when you stand to benefit. Insert into the passage what you want it to say. Remember to ignore the context. This way you can change the meaning of words to accommodate what you want the passage to say, or not say. The god of this philosophy will always serve you, whenever and however you see fit because you are the one in the driver's seat. He's on demand 24/7, always at the ready to fulfil your pleasures, make you feel good, even making you popular with others - apparently.

*The Word of God is that truth  
which does the work of  
sanctification*

Rest assured, the god of this philosophy is NOT the God of the Bible. He is NOT the Lord Jesus Christ who fully and accurately expresses God the Father.



There's a clear warning about such narcissistic (having an inflated view self-importance) practices found in 1 Timothy 6:3-5, *If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain (ESV).* As those claiming to respect the authority and sanctity of God's Word, we should continuously examine ourselves. Do we violate Scripture by adding personal revelation or personal interpretation? If so, this should be confessed and turned from.

Instead, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).* *I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles (2 Peter 3:2).* In-so-doing, *Let the word of Christ dwell within you richly... (Colossians 3:16).* Wanting to be like the Berean Jews, who were *...of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great*

*eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true* (Acts 17:11).

Paul warned Timothy against having anything to do with people who have *a form of godliness but [deny] its power* (2 Timothy 3:5). They are the sort of people who are *always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth* (2 Timothy 3:7).

Our standard of authority is the unchanging words breathed out from an unchanging and unchangeable God, recorded in the Scriptures, the Bible. It is this Holy Spirit breathed truth which brings an end to man’s vain striving for experiences and rests in the certainty of God’s fully sufficient and final truth found in Scripture alone.

*Do we violate Scripture by  
adding personal revelation or  
personal interpretation?*

## *The Opportunity*

**S**urrendering to the authority of God’s Word as the sole source of God’s revelation sets us free from the many man-made traps of placing ourselves in control. Liberation from self-induced spiritual vulnerabilities is as close as your Bible.

*It was the power of the  
Scripture that gave the  
Reformation its enduring  
impact*

### **An excerpt from “What caused the Reformation?”**

It was ignorance of Scripture that made the Reformation necessary. It was the recovery of the Scripture that made the Reformation possible. And it was the power of the Scripture that gave the Reformation its enduring impact, as the Holy Spirit brought the truth of His Word to bear on the hearts and minds of individual sinners, transforming them, regenerating them, and giving them eternal life.

Near the end of his life, Luther declared: "All I have done is put forth, preach and write the Word of God, and apart from this I have done nothing. . . . It is the Word that has done great things. . . . I have done nothing; the Word has done and achieved everything."

Noting Scripture's foundational place in his own heart, Luther wrote: "No matter what happens, you should say: There is God's Word. This is my rock and anchor. On it I rely, and it remains. Where it remains, I, too, remain; where it goes, I, too, go." (The Cripplegate. 28 Oct 2014, by Nathan Busenitz. <http://thecripplegate.com>)

When Jesus questioned the 12 disciple's loyalty, *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life* (John 6:68). So, it's to Jesus Christ and His written words of eternal to which we look and in which we put our hope. Be encouraged in your devotion to the Word of God, the Scriptures. Do not settle for man's second best, nor trust in personal experiences but give yourself fully to the living and active written Word of God (Hebrews 4:12).

Perhaps you realise that your faith has been misplaced? Trusting in experiences *associated* with Jesus rather than in the Lord Himself and His Word alone? We encourage you to *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding* (Proverbs 3:5).

To the Jews who had just believed Him, Jesus said, *If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (John 8:31-32). Holding to Jesus teaching of truth is what sets us free, not our experiences of discovering His truth, or even in response to His truth.

Being awakened to the possibility of your faith not being as God-centred as you once thought can be a haunting realisation. You may find yourself in 1 of 2 predicaments.

### ***Predicament A***

Lacking desire to seek God through His Word may reveal a deeper, more urgent personal issue.

*"Many think they are Christians because they claim to believe in Jesus, or they attend church. Some hang their hope on a 'decision' they made, or a 'prayer' they prayed at a church service. Possibly, they grew up in a Christian family, attending Sunday School, or some other Christian run program as a child, saying they have always believed the Bible and God. They may have been christened, confirmed, or baptised into a church organisation as an infant."* (Except from, 'For My Friend - 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition', page 10, by Lincoln Forlong).

However, these experiences do NOT bring new life in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, we need to be cautious of

a false conversion. Responding to the Corinthians, Paul asked them to “*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith*” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

If the desire to know more about God from His Word is absent from your life, you may have been fooled into wrongly thinking you are a Christian (See John 3:1-18).

*Are you secretly hoping that  
your spiritual experiences will  
earn you favour with God?*

### **Realise you need a Saviour**

Salvation, being saved, being Born Again, believing, repenting, receiving eternal life, are all Bible names used for the same life-changing work that God does in a sinner’s life to bring about spiritual regeneration. However, if we come to Jesus because of an experience we had and not because of guilt over our sin that separates us from God, we have got it all wrong.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

True salvation takes place when a sinner confesses (says the same as God says), that Jesus Christ not only took *our sin* upon Himself, but actually became sin *on our behalf* and through His crucifixion took the judgement we deserved (Romans 6). In response to our humble trust in Jesus Christ taking our place on the cross of judgement, God gifts us with the righteousness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul elaborates on this in Romans 3:19-31. He explains that observing laws, man-made rules and experiences, cannot save us from our sin or get us declared righteous in God's sight. Paul reasons in Romans 3:22-25 that we sinners are justified (acquitted of guilt and deemed to be right) through our faith in God having graciously (undeservedly) presented Jesus as a sacrifice on the cross in payment of our sin. God displayed His justice against our sin by sacrificing His Son to achieve propitiation (pacifying God's wrath) on our behalf.

The outcome of a sinner choosing to place faith in what God accomplished through His Son on the Cross activates redemption (Being delivered by a ransom payment). Consequently, instead of God being angry with our sin, He is now at peace with the repentant sinner.

Have you put faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sin? Or, are you secretly hoping that your spiritual experiences will earn you favour with God?

### ***Predicament B***

Saved, a child of God, yet deceived into spiritual distraction - a common method used by God's enemy for dishonouring the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our concern is, although Born Again, many Christians are being distracted from the full council of God, resulting in inaccurate, contradictory, and crippling beliefs of God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Could you have an imbalanced understanding of God?

- How often do we study or listen to sermons on God's love and acceptance compared to studying or listening to sermons on God's wrath and justice?
- How often do we hear or quote verses like John 3:16 or Psalm 86:15 compared with verses like John 3:18 and Hebrews 10:31?
- How often do we study or listen to sermons about increasing our personal wellbeing and happiness compared with humility and decreasing our self-promotion? (John 3:30).



Many claim to believe in the God of Scripture while their very beliefs about God don't even align with Scripture. Ask yourself: am I bypassing the full counsel of God and using only the parts of Scripture that I like? Or, do I find it easy to make the Bible say what I want? Could I be avoiding the fullness of God and instead, be wrestling to present Him in a way that I find more suitable to my way of life?

Consider this appeal from R. Kent and W. Carey Hughes: “According to your ability, you must apply yourself to the reading and study of God’s Word. If you refuse, you are in effect ‘editing God’...” (Disciplines of a Godly Young Man, page 67, by R. Kent and W. Carey Hughes, published 2012 by Crossway).

Our concern is that some may be editing God to such an extent that they're crippling their spiritual growth, their testimony, and ability to serve the Lord. Or, worse yet, their lives resemble one more like what was spoken of in 'Predicament A'.

## *Conclusion*

**W**e encourage you to surrender your will to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of God’s written Word, the Bible.

If you find yourself in *‘Predicament A’*, we invite you to come to the Christ of Calvary who died for your sin.

He didn’t die so you could enjoy greater pleasure. He didn’t die so you could enjoy greater financial gain, and He didn’t die so you would have the ability to plug into God for direct revelation.

No, Christ died for your sin! Christ died to appease His Heavenly Father of His wrath against your sin so that the Father would be at peace with you. Christ died so the Father would be glorified in His Son and in you (John 17). And Christ died so you could know forgiveness.

*Some say knowledge puffs up. But, a lack of knowledge will see you seeking and serving a god that's made up*

- **Confess and repent** of your sin. Turn to living for Jesus Christ as your Lord (Master).
- **Believe in Jesus Christ alone** as the one who paid for your sin, buying your forgiveness with His life on the cross of Calvary. Believe that Jesus Christ took your place on the cross.
- **Believe that you**, with your old way of life, died with Jesus on the cross of Calvary and that God is giving you a new life, eternal life, in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you find yourself in *'Predicament B'*, we invite you to surrender afresh your mind and heart's affections to the authoritative truth of God's Word alone.

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (Romans 12:2a), be made new in the attitude of your minds (Ephesians 4:23), take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5b).*

If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, or want more help with growing in Christ, may we suggest you speak with the Christian friend who gave you this booklet.

Read God's Word daily and pray. Ensure you are attending a Bible teaching church or Home Group.

If you want to share your story, or, if you have something we can help you with, we’d love to hear from you.

Visit [www.bbf.net.nz](http://www.bbf.net.nz)

Email [info@bbf.org.nz](mailto:info@bbf.org.nz)

## **Bay Bible Fellowship**

PO Box 15478

Tauranga, 3144

New Zealand

By Bevin Hayward &  
Lincoln Forlong

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

First Printed February 2015