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Glossary of Terms

Term	Simple Definition	Why It Matters	Related Section
Apologetics	Giving a reasoned defense of the Christian faith.	Helps Christians explain and defend the truth of the gospel with clarity and respect.	Section 3
Atonement	Christ's work in His death to deal with sin and reconcile sinners to God.	Shows how Jesus saves, not merely by teaching, but by sacrificing Himself for sinners.	Section 2
Authority of Scripture	The truth is that the Bible has the right to govern what Christians believe and how they live.	Means Scripture stands above tradition, experience, and human opinion.	Section 1
Canon	The collection of books recognized as Holy Scripture.	Explains why Christians receive these books as the Word of God.	Section 1
Discernment	The ability to distinguish truth from error and wisdom from foolishness.	Essential for evaluating teachings, religions, and worldviews in light of Scripture.	Sections 2–3
Evangelism	Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others.	Keeps the Guide focused not only on knowledge, but on faithful witness.	Section 3
Faith	Trusting in Jesus Christ and relying on Him alone for salvation.	Faith is the means by which sinners receive God's saving grace.	Section 2
Gospel	The good news that Jesus died for sins and rose again to save all who trust in Him.	This is the heart of Christianity and the center of the Guide.	Section 2
Grace	God's undeserved favor shown to sinners.	Salvation is a gift from God, not something people earn.	Section 2
Inerrancy	The truth that Scripture, in its original writings, is without error in all it affirms.	Supports confidence that the Bible is fully truthful and trustworthy.	Section 1
Infallibility	The truth that God's Word is completely reliable and will not fail in what God intends it to accomplish.	Reinforces that Scripture is trustworthy as God's Word.	Section 1

Term	Simple Definition	Why It Matters	Related Section
Inspiration	The doctrine that the Bible is “God-breathed,” written through human authors by the Holy Spirit.	Explains why the Bible is both divine in origin and human in expression.	Section 1
Justification	God’s act of declaring a sinner righteous through faith in Christ.	Clarifies that salvation is received by grace, not earned by works or goodness infused.	Section 2
Original Sin	Humanity’s fallen condition inherited from Adam, resulting in guilt and corruption.	Explains why all people need salvation, not just moral improvement.	Section 2
Propitiation	Christ’s sacrifice satisfying God’s righteous wrath against sin.	Shows that the cross addresses both God’s justice and His mercy.	Section 2
Redemption	Christ’s work of purchasing sinners out of bondage to sin.	Emphasizes that salvation is costly and accomplished by Jesus.	Section 2
Regeneration	The work of the Holy Spirit in giving spiritual life to a sinner; being “born again.”	Explains why salvation requires new life from God, not just better behavior.	Section 2
Repentance	A change of mind and heart that turns away from sin and toward God.	Shows that saving faith includes turning from sin, not just agreeing with facts.	Section 2
Reconciliation	The restoring of fellowship between God and sinners through Christ.	Highlights that salvation brings peace with God, not merely forgiveness.	Section 2
Reformation Christianity	The stream of historic Christianity especially marked by Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, and Christ alone.	Helps readers understand the theological perspective of the Guide.	About This Guide / Section 2
Revelation	God making Himself known to humanity.	Christianity rests on what God has revealed, not what people discovered on their own.	Sections 1–2
Salvation	God’s work of rescuing sinners from sin, judgment, and death through Jesus Christ.	This is the central message of the Christian faith.	Section 2

Term	Simple Definition	Why It Matters	Related Section
Sanctification	God’s ongoing work of making believers holy in heart and life.	Distinguishes growth in holiness from the one-time act of justification.	Section 2
Scripture	Another word for the writings of the Bible, the Word of God.	Reminds readers that the Bible is not merely literature, but sacred revelation.	Section 1
Substitution	Christ taking the place of sinners and bearing the penalty they deserve.	Explains the heart of the cross in personal and legal terms.	Section 2
Trinity	The one true God existing eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	This is foundational to historic Christian belief about God.	Section 2
Worldview	The basic lens through which a person understands reality, truth, morality, and purpose.	Helps frame comparisons between Christianity and other religions or beliefs.	Section 3

About This Guide – A Note From The Author

This Guide began in a very ordinary way. A couple of Jehovah’s Witnesses came to my door while I was not home and left some material behind. I missed the conversation, but my immediate thought was simple: “I’ll be ready when they come back.” That moment stayed with me because it expressed something I had already been feeling: I wanted to be better prepared, not merely to defend what I believe, but to speak about Jesus clearly, thoughtfully, and faithfully.

I am a Bible-believing Christian, and like many believers, my walk with the Lord has had its ups and downs. I am not a trained theologian or an academic expert—just a regular guy who has felt convicted by the Holy Spirit to be more prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in me, as 1 Peter 3:15 calls us to do. Living in Seattle, Washington—in a part of the country that often feels deeply secular—has only deepened my sense that Christians need to be rooted in Scripture, steady in conviction, and ready to speak about Christ when the opportunity comes.

That desire is shaped by the neighborhood I live in. I live on a quiet street with Mormon, Sikh, Catholic, and “spiritual but not religious” families. In a place like this, conversations about faith are never very far away. They are right outside the front door, across the street, and sometimes just one unexpected moment away.

That is why I began building this Guide. I wanted something more than scattered notes, vague impressions, or half-remembered arguments. I wanted a practical, Bible-shaped framework that would help me understand what others believe, recognize where those

beliefs differ from historic Christianity, and be ready to have a meaningful conversation when the chance arises.

This Guide stands broadly within the historic Protestant Reformation, especially the convictions often summarized as Scripture alone, grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, and to the glory of God alone. Classic confessions such as the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession of Faith are helpful historical summaries of this stream, but they stand under Scripture, which is the only final and infallible authority for what Christians believe and how they live.

To be clear, this is **not** a debate tool. It is not a manual for winning arguments, collecting clever responses, or trying to trap people in conversation. It is meant to be a Field Guide for real conversations with real people—neighbors, friends, visitors at the door, coworkers, and anyone else God may place in front of me. The goal is not to argue people into silence, but to speak the truth about Christ with clarity, humility, and love.

In that sense, this Guide has also become part of my own preparation. It helps me think more carefully, listen more patiently, and return again and again to the central question in every conversation: Who is Jesus Christ, and what has He done? My hope is that it will help others do the same—not become combative, but become ready.

How to Use This Guide

This Guide is meant to live in your Bible, your bag, or on your nightstand—not on a shelf. It is designed to help ordinary Christians think clearly and speak faithfully about Jesus in real conversations, not to turn you into a professional apologist.

1. Start with your own foundations

Before focusing on other beliefs, use Sections 1 and 2 to strengthen your grasp of Scripture and the gospel.

- Read **Section 1** (The Authority of the Bible) with an open Bible.
- Read **Section 2** (What a Christian Believes) slowly, looking up at least a few of the key passages in each doctrine row.
- Aim to be able to explain, in your own words, who God is, who Jesus is, what the cross accomplished, and how a person is saved.

The better you know the gospel, the more calmly and clearly you will be able to engage any other worldview.

2. Use the “six questions” as your mental grid

Section 4 gives six core worldview questions and shows how Christianity and other beliefs answer them differently.

- Keep those six questions in mind when you talk with anyone: Who is ultimate reality? What is our deepest problem? What is the solution? How do we receive it? What is our final destiny? What is the final authority?

- As you listen, try to identify how the other person is answering those questions, even if they never say them out loud.

This helps you move from scattered details to the real differences that matter.

3. Prepare before a specific conversation

If you know you'll be talking with someone from a particular background:

- Skim the relevant "Talking with a _" section (Sections 5–8) and the mini-profile for that group.
- Note 1–2 **points of common ground** and 1–2 **clear gospel contrasts** (often about who Jesus is and how salvation comes).
- Pick one or two **Scripture passages** you can gently suggest reading together (the right-hand "Conversation bridge" column is designed for this).

You do not need to memorize everything. Focus on a small number of truths you can actually remember and use.

4. In the moment: ask, listen, and keep Christ central

When the conversation happens:

- Start with questions, not arguments: "What do you believe about God?" "How do you think people find peace with God (or with the universe)?"
- Listen carefully and, where possible, repeat back what you heard to show you understood.
- Use this Guide as a **quiet reference**, not a script. If you have it with you, glance at a table to remind yourself of one key contrast or one helpful verse, but keep your eyes mostly on the person in front of you.
- Aim to move gently toward Jesus—who He is, what He has done, and why that matters—rather than getting stuck on secondary issues.

Remember: your goal is faithfulness and clarity, not "winning" the moment.

5. Afterward: reflect, pray, and learn

After a conversation:

- Pray for the person by name and ask God to keep working in their heart.
- Jot down what they actually said in a notebook or in the margins of this Guide, especially where it differed from the summaries.
- Revisit the relevant section and ask:
 - Did I understand their view correctly?
 - Where did I feel unsure or unprepared?

- What one passage or truth could I be ready to bring up next time?

Over time, this process will help you use the Guide not just as a reference book, but as a tool for ongoing growth in discernment and love.

6. Stay rooted in your local church

Finally, use this Guide alongside your local church, not instead of it.

- Talk with your pastors or elders about questions that arise.
- Study these doctrines with others—small groups, Bible studies, or one-to-one discipling.
- Let this Guide push you back to Scripture, prayer, and fellowship, not away from them.

The aim is that you would become a steady, Scripture-shaped, Christ-centered presence in the conversations God has already placed around you.

1

The Authority of the Bible

Christians believe the Bible is the written Word of God, given through many human authors across many centuries, yet carrying one unified message because God Himself is its ultimate Author. Scripture teaches that it is “God-breathed,” and that its human writers spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In historic Reformation Christianity, the Bible is the library of sixty-six books in the Old and New Testaments. These books were written in many settings and genres, but together they tell one unfolding story of creation, sin, promise, redemption, and new creation, with Jesus Christ at the center.

Because Scripture comes from God, it is not only spiritually encouraging but fully truthful, trustworthy, and authoritative. Christians therefore believe the Bible is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

When this Guide speaks of Scripture as the final authority, it means that the Bible is the only infallible written standard for what Christians believe and how they live. Other authorities such as teachers, traditions, and confessions may be useful and respected, but they are always subject to Scripture and corrected by it when they disagree.

1.1 How Christians Understand Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Authority

Christians use the word *inspiration* to mean that the Bible is God’s Word written through human authors. Scripture is “God-breathed,” and its writers spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. When this Guide speaks of Scripture as the final authority, it means that the Bible is the only infallible written standard for faith

and life; other authorities such as teachers, traditions, and confessions are valuable only insofar as they agree with Scripture.

By *inerrancy*, Christians mean that because God is true, His Word is true in all that it affirms. Historic evangelical Christianity therefore teaches that the Bible is without error in its original writings and must be read according to its literary forms and intentions, not flattened into one style of speech. Inerrancy does not mean that Scripture always uses technical or scientific language or that it ignores figures of speech and literary style; it means that everything Scripture intends to affirm is true and trustworthy in light of its context and genre.

By *authority*, Christians mean that Scripture is the final written standard for faith and life. It is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

KEY VERSE

2 Timothy 3:16–17

All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness — the foundation for everything this Guide affirms about the Bible’s authority.

1.2 Sufficiency and Clarity of Scripture

Because Scripture is God’s Word, it is not only true and authoritative; it is also sufficient and clear. The **sufficiency** of Scripture means that the Bible gives us everything we need to know for salvation and for living a life that pleases God; nothing else—no tradition, experience, or private revelation—stands on the same level of authority. The **clarity** of Scripture means that its main message about who God is, who we are, and how we are saved is understandable to ordinary people who read or hear it, even though some parts are harder to grasp and require careful study. The sufficiency of Scripture does not mean the Bible speaks directly to every modern question or detail of life, but that it contains all that is necessary to know God, trust Christ for salvation, and live in obedience to Him in every age.

1.3 The Bible as Fully Divine and Fully Human

Christians understand Scripture to have a kind of “dual authorship”: it is both fully the Word of God and genuinely the words of human authors. The prophets and apostles were not passive scribes taking dictation, yet their writings did not originate in mere human will or imagination. According to Scripture, “prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,” so that their words are at the same time God’s words.

This means God made use of the writers’ personalities, backgrounds, and abilities rather than cancelling them. Luke, for example, explains that he carefully investigated

events and wrote an orderly account so that his reader could know the certainty of what he had been taught, yet at the same time the Spirit was superintending his work. Moses, David, Isaiah, Matthew, Paul, and John each write in distinct styles and address different situations, but behind their diverse voices stands one divine Author who ensures that everything He intends to say is faithfully communicated.

The relationship between divine and human authorship is sometimes compared to the person of Christ: just as Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person, so Scripture is fully God’s Word and fully human writing in one book. The analogy is not perfect, but it helps guard two truths at once: the Bible is not a merely human religious document, and it is not a mechanically produced transcript detached from history and personality. Because God and human authors work together in this organic way, everything Scripture affirms is trustworthy, and yet it must be read with care for language, context, and genre.

1.4 How Christians Understand the Bible

Aspect	What Christians Believe	Why It Matters
Origin	The Bible ultimately comes from God. All Scripture is “God-breathed,” and the prophets and apostles spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.	Scripture is not merely human religious insight but God’s own Word written, so it carries divine authority.
Authors	God used many human authors over many centuries, working through their personalities, backgrounds, and contexts while ensuring they wrote exactly what He intended.	The Bible is both fully divine and genuinely human, so it is trustworthy and also must be read with attention to history, context, and genre.
Message	The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments form one unfolding story of creation, fall, promise, redemption, and new creation, all centered on Jesus Christ.	The unity of Scripture shows that the Bible is not a random anthology but a coherent revelation of God’s saving plan in Christ.
Authority	Because God is truthful, His Word is true in all that it affirms and stands as the final written standard for what Christians believe and how they live.	The Bible is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

1.5 Core truths about the Bible

Point	Explanation	Key Scriptures (NIV)	Why it matters
What the Bible is	The Bible is a library of 66 books, not a single flat document. It contains history, law,	2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 1:1–2; Luke 24:27	This helps the reader approach Scripture as one coherent revelation rather than

Point	Explanation	Key Scriptures (NIV)	Why it matters
	poetry, prophecy, wisdom, Gospels, letters, and apocalyptic writing, yet it tells one unified story of God's work in the world.		disconnected religious writings.
Who wrote the Bible	The Bible was written by many human authors from different backgrounds, including kings, prophets, priests, shepherds, tax collectors, fishermen, and apostles. Christians believe that while human beings truly wrote the text, God is the ultimate Author behind the whole message.	2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1	This preserves both truths: the Bible is fully human in its writing process and fully divine in its source.
How many authors were involved	Christians commonly summarize that the Bible was written by about 40 human authors. While exact counting may vary slightly, the standard point remains: many writers contributed to one book with one unfolding message.	2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1; Luke 1:1–4	This highlights the remarkable unity of Scripture despite many contributors.
Over what time period was it written	The Bible was written over roughly 1,500 years, from the time of Moses to the apostolic age. Its consistency across centuries is one reason Christians see divine providence behind its formation.	Hebrews 1:1–2; Luke 24:27; John 5:39	The long timespan strengthens the case that Scripture's unity is not the result of one author or one era, but of God's unfolding revelation.
Why Christians call the Bible "God-breathed"	Scripture says its origin is in God Himself. Human authors really wrote, but they were carried along by the Holy Spirit so that what they wrote was truly the Word of God.	2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21; Hebrews 1:1–2	This is the heart of biblical authority: Christians do not treat the Bible as merely insightful, but as divinely given.

Point	Explanation	Key Scriptures (NIV)	Why it matters
What the Bible's central message is	The Bible's central message is God's redemptive plan in Christ: creation, fall, promise, redemption, and final restoration. Jesus stands at the center of the whole storyline.	Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Hebrews 1:1–2	This keeps the Field Guide from becoming abstract. The Bible is not mainly a book of scattered rules, but a unified revelation centered on Christ.
Why the Bible has authority for the Christian	The Bible has authority because it is breathed out by God and is therefore the final standard for doctrine, correction, and righteous living. Christians test all teachers, traditions, experiences, and religious claims by Scripture.	2 Timothy 3:16–17; Isaiah 8:20; John 17:17	This explains why Scripture stands above every church, teacher, movement, and competing worldview.