FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

BIBLIOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Word of God

UNIT 5: THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

Lesson 12

SUFFICIENT FOR ALL OF LIFE AND GODLINESS

The Doctrine of Scriptural Sufficiency

Key Texts: 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3–4; Psalm 19:7–11

> *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*
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> **2 Timothy 3:16–17, NASB 1995**

Dr. Joshua Nichols
Pastor, Theologian, Author
faithfultotheword.com

Introduction

Unit 4 established the authority of Scripture: God's Word alone is the infallible and ultimately governing norm for the faith and practice of the church, and this authority must be embodied not merely in confessional affirmation but in the actual practice of preaching, worship, counseling, ethics, and governance. Now we turn to a closely related but distinct doctrine: the sufficiency of Scripture.

Authority and sufficiency are neighboring convictions that reinforce each other but must not be conflated. The authority of Scripture tells us that the Bible governs, that it is the supreme norm over all other norms. The sufficiency of Scripture tells us that the Bible is enough, that it provides everything God intends His people to have for knowing Him, being saved, and living as His covenant community. A Bible that is authoritative but insufficient would be like a king whose decrees are binding but whose kingdom lacks the resources to sustain his subjects. The sufficiency of Scripture means that God has not merely commanded His people through the Word; He has, in the Word, provided everything they need to obey that command.

This doctrine is under quiet but persistent pressure in the contemporary church, not always from those who openly deny it but from those who, while formally affirming it, treat Scripture as a starting point that must be supplemented by other sources of wisdom: psychological research, management theory, cultural analysis, therapeutic frameworks, or claimed prophetic revelation. In each case, the implicit message is the same: Scripture is not quite enough. Something more is needed. This lesson will demonstrate why that message, however well-intentioned, contradicts the explicit claim of the God who breathed out His Word for exactly this purpose: to make His people "adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17, NASB 1995).

I. DEFINING SUFFICIENCY: EVERYTHING NEEDED FOR LIFE AND GODLINESS

The doctrine of scriptural sufficiency is the claim that Scripture contains all that God intends His people to have for the knowledge of God, salvation from sin, and the living of a godly life in covenant with Him. The Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 states it with characteristic precision in Chapter 1, Paragraph 6:

> *"The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."*

Three features of this statement deserve careful attention. First, it identifies the scope of sufficiency: all things necessary for God's glory, man's salvation, faith, and life. The sufficiency claim is not that Scripture addresses every conceivable human question; it is that Scripture addresses everything necessary for the ends God has in view for His people: His own glory and their salvation, faith, and obedience. Second, it includes both explicit statement and good and necessary consequence: Scripture's sufficiency encompasses not only what it directly says but what valid theological reasoning from its statements yields. Third, it closes the canon against two specific sources of supplementation: new revelations of the Spirit and traditions of men. Both are excluded as additions to a sufficient Word.

The apostle Peter provides the most direct biblical statement of this doctrine:

> *"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."*
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> **2 Peter 1:3–4, NASB 1995**

The phrase "everything pertaining to life and godliness" is comprehensive and emphatic. God's divine power has granted everything. Not most things, not the spiritually important things, not the core doctrinal matters, but everything that pertains to life (the whole of human existence before God) and godliness (the whole of Christian moral and spiritual formation). And this everything is granted through the true knowledge of Him who called us, knowledge that comes through the Word He has given (cf. 2 Peter 1:19–21).

II. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SUFFICIENCY AND EXHAUSTIVENESS

One of the most important clarifications in the doctrine of sufficiency is the distinction between what Scripture is sufficient for and what it does not claim to be. This distinction, if not carefully maintained, leads to two opposite

errors: an overreach that treats Scripture as a resource for every conceivable human question (a kind of proof-texting imperialism that finds biblical answers to everything from architectural principles to dietary choices), and an underreach that dismisses sufficiency as an overstatement because the Bible clearly does not address every topic.

The distinction is this: Scripture is sufficient but not exhaustive. God has revealed everything we need to know for His intended purposes; He has not revealed everything there is to know on every subject. Deuteronomy 29:29 draws this line with remarkable clarity:

> *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."*
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> **Deuteronomy 29:29, NASB 1995**

God has kept secrets. There are things He has not revealed. And those hidden things belong to Him; they are not available to us through any means, whether through additional Scripture, through prophetic utterance, or through the exercise of reason or the accumulation of religious experience. But the things revealed (and this is the point) belong to us and to our sons forever. The revealed things are sufficient for the purpose they serve: that we may observe all the words of His law.

This means that the doctrine of sufficiency does not prevent Christians from learning botany, studying history, practicing medicine, or engaging in the natural sciences. These are all proper exercises of the image of God in the domain of general revelation and common grace. Scripture does not claim to be the textbook for every academic discipline. What Scripture claims is that in the domain of knowing God, being reconciled to Him, and living as His people, it is fully and finally sufficient. No supplement from any source, whether scientific, philosophical, psychological, or experiential, is needed or expected.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUFFICIENCY AND CESSATIONISM

One of the most significant theological implications of the doctrine of scriptural sufficiency is its relationship to the question of the continuation or cessation of the miraculous gifts of the apostolic era, particularly the gifts of tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healing. The sufficiency of Scripture provides a theological ground for cessationism: if God has, in the completed canon of Scripture, provided everything pertaining to life and godliness, then there is no ongoing need for supplementary revelatory gifts to add to or correct or extend what the Spirit has already given in the Word.

A. The Apostolic Foundation

The New Testament consistently presents the miraculous sign gifts as functioning in a specific redemptive-historical context: the foundational period of the church, when the apostles were establishing the gospel and when the New Testament Scriptures were being produced. Paul describes the church as "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20, NASB 1995). A

foundation is laid once; it is not repeatedly re-laid throughout the construction of the building. The apostolic and prophetic foundation was unique and unrepeatable.

The author of Hebrews grounds the authority of the apostolic proclamation in the miraculous signs that accompanied it: God bore witness to the apostolic message "both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:4, NASB 1995). The signs functioned as divine authentication of the apostolic message, not as permanent features of Christian ministry but as the credentials that validated the new covenant message being proclaimed for the first time. Once that message was established, authenticated, and inscripturated, the authenticating signs had accomplished their purpose.

B. Sufficiency as the Theological Ground

The sufficiency of Scripture is the theological nerve of the cessationist argument. The question is not primarily "can God still perform miracles?" The answer to that is yes; God can do whatever He pleases, and He continues to work providentially in remarkable ways. The question is whether the ongoing gift of tongues or prophetic utterance, as described in the New Testament, serves a function that the completed Word has not already fulfilled.

If Scripture is sufficient, if it contains everything pertaining to life and godliness, and if the whole counsel of God for salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in it or necessarily deduced from it, then there is no remaining function for a continuing gift of prophecy that adds to or supplements what the Word has already provided. The gift was the Spirit's instrument for the production and authentication of the Word; once the Word is complete, the gift has served its purpose. Cessationism is not a doctrine that limits the Spirit's power; it is a doctrine that honors the Spirit's own completed work of inscripturating the Word.

The pastoral implications are significant. A church that maintains the sufficiency of Scripture will not create a culture of anxiety about "hearing from God" beyond what He has spoken in the Word, will not elevate the impressions or claims of prophetic individuals to a status alongside or above Scripture, and will not encourage its members to seek spiritual guidance through means that the completed Word has rendered unnecessary. The believer who has the whole counsel of God in the sixty-six books of Scripture has, in that Word, everything God intends to give him for the living of a godly life. That is not a limitation; it is a gift.

IV. THE 1689 CONFESSION: THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

We have already cited the 1689 Confession's statement of sufficiency above. But the full chapter on Scripture develops the doctrine with additional nuances that deserve extended attention.

The phrase "the whole counsel of God" comes from Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:27: "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Paul is describing the full scope of his apostolic preaching: the entirety of what God has revealed in Scripture for the salvation and sanctification of His people, without selection, omission, or softening. The whole counsel includes the hard texts and the comfortable ones, the demanding ethics and the gentle promises, the warnings of judgment and the announcements of grace. To

preach the whole counsel is to submit the congregation to the full authority and sufficiency of the Word, without filtering it through the preferences of preacher or audience.

The 1689 Confession's statement that the whole counsel is "either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture" introduces the important principle of good and necessary consequence. The sufficiency of Scripture is not limited to its explicit propositions. Doctrines that are not stated in so many words but that follow necessarily from what Scripture does explicitly say (the doctrine of the Trinity, the eternal generation of the Son, the full deity of the Spirit) are part of the whole counsel of God and are therefore within the scope of Scripture's sufficiency. The implied theology of Scripture, rightly derived, is as authoritative as its explicit theology.

The Confession's exclusion of "new revelations of the Spirit" from the sphere of additions to Scripture is particularly significant. It is a direct claim that the Spirit's revelatory work was completed with the closing of the canon. Any claim to new Spirit-given revelation, whether in the form of prophetic utterance, visionary experience, or personal impression elevated to the status of divine communication, is to be rejected on the grounds of sufficiency. God has spoken sufficiently. The Spirit has inscripturated sufficiently. No addition is needed, and no addition is authorized.

V. SUFFICIENCY IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

The doctrine of scriptural sufficiency has direct and practical implications for the practice of pastoral ministry. In three specific areas (counseling, preaching, and church governance), the sufficiency of Scripture defines what the pastor's ministry is built on and what it can and cannot be supplemented by.

A. Sufficiency in Counseling

We examined the authority of Scripture in counseling in Lesson 11, but sufficiency adds a further dimension. Authority tells us that Scripture governs the counseling process; sufficiency tells us that Scripture provides everything needed for it. Paul's claim in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 is that Scripture is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be "adequate" (artios): fully outfitted, lacking nothing necessary for his work. The word artios means complete, fully prepared, needing no supplement. If the pastor who is saturated with Scripture is adequate for every good work, then the pastoral work of soul care is among the works for which the Scripture-equipped minister is adequate.

This does not mean that every pastor needs to be ignorant of psychology or that medical questions are to be answered by Scripture rather than medicine. The sufficiency claim applies to the domain of spiritual and moral formation: the domain of sin, repentance, sanctification, suffering, and the life of faith before God. In that domain, the Word is sufficient. The pastor who knows his Bible, who can apply it with precision and pastoral sensitivity, who understands the human heart as Scripture describes it, has everything he needs for the ministry of soul care. He does not need to import a Freudian or Rogerian or Jungian framework to do what the Spirit-filled, Word-saturated pastor has always done.

B. Sufficiency in Preaching

The sufficiency of Scripture is also the theological ground for expository preaching as the normative form of Christian proclamation. If Scripture is sufficient, containing everything God intends His people to have, then the preacher's task is to unfold and apply what Scripture says, not to supplement it with insights from other sources. The sufficient Word is also the governing Word: it sets the agenda, defines the content, and determines the application of faithful preaching.

This is why the Psalm 19 description of Scripture's work on the soul is so important:

> *"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether."*
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> **Psalm 19:7–9, NASB 1995**

Notice what the psalmist attributes to the Word: it restores souls, makes the simple wise, rejoices hearts, enlightens eyes, endures forever. These are not modest claims. They are claims about what the Word does, about what it accomplishes in those who receive it. The preacher who trusts these claims will preach the Word with confidence that it is doing something that no other content can do. The preacher who doubts these claims will supplement the Word with content that he believes will produce results the Word alone cannot deliver, and in doing so he will implicitly deny the sufficiency of what he claims to proclaim.

C. Sufficiency in Church Governance

The sufficiency of Scripture also applies to the governance of the local church. The New Testament provides principles, patterns, and explicit instructions for the ordering of the church's life: its offices (elders and deacons), its discipline (Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5), its ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper), its worship (1 Corinthians 14:26–40), and its mission (Matthew 28:18–20). These provisions are sufficient for the governance of the church in every cultural context and every historical moment. The church does not need to import corporate management theory, institutional growth strategies, or organizational development frameworks to know how to order its life, though it may, with discretion, use such tools in the realm of circumstances rather than elements.

A church that governs itself by Scripture will look different from a church that governs itself primarily by what market research says attracts and retains members. The difference is not merely stylistic; it is a difference about authority and sufficiency. The church governed by Scripture trusts that the God who ordained its offices, ordinances, and disciplines knew what He was doing and provided what was needed. The church governed primarily by pragmatism has implicitly concluded that God's provision is insufficient and that human wisdom must supplement it.

VI. THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: ALL OF CHURCH LIFE NORMED BY SCRIPTURE

The doctrine of scriptural sufficiency is not a specialized academic conviction; it is a claim about every dimension of the church's common life. Paul's statement that Scripture equips the man of God for "every good work" (2

Timothy 3:17) is unrestricted. The following is a summary of how the sufficiency of Scripture applies across the full range of the church's ministry:

- **Preaching and Teaching:** The content of the church's proclamation is the Word: not an amalgam of Scripture and cultural commentary, not the Word as a launching pad for the preacher's own ideas, but the Word itself, exposited and applied. Scripture is sufficient for the instruction, correction, and formation of the congregation.
- **Discipleship:** The formation of disciples takes place through the Word, prayer, and the community of the covenant people. Discipleship programs that are built on secular developmental psychology or personal growth philosophy as their primary framework have not trusted the sufficiency of Scripture for the formation of mature believers in Christ.
- **Counseling:** The ministry of soul care is grounded in the Word's account of human nature, sin, grace, and the Spirit's sanctifying work. Biblical counseling (counseling that is thoroughly Word-saturated, prayer-dependent, and community-embedded) is sufficient for the spiritual and moral struggles of the congregation.
- **Worship:** The elements of corporate worship are prescribed by Scripture, and Scripture provides everything needed for the church to worship God acceptably. The church does not need to import entertainment culture, therapeutic ritual, or aesthetic spectacle to worship the God who has told us what He requires.
- **Church Government:** The New Testament's provisions for the governance of the church (its offices, its discipline, its ordinances) are sufficient for the ordering of the covenant community in every cultural context. The church that governs itself by these provisions trusts the sufficiency of the God who gave them.

The common thread in all of these applications is the willingness to trust that God has given what is needed and that the church's task is to receive and deploy what He has provided, rather than to supplement it with the wisdom of the age. This trust is not naïvety about the complexity of human life and ministry; it is confidence in the character of the God who, having breathed out His Word for exactly these purposes, would not have breathed it out inadequately.

Key Texts (NASB 1995)

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16–17

"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

2 Peter 1:3–4

"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether."

Psalm 19:7–9

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

Deuteronomy 29:29

Theological Terms and Definitions

Sufficiency of Scripture	The doctrine that Scripture contains all that is needed for the knowledge of God unto salvation, for the life of faith and obedience, and for the governance and worship of the church. Scripture is sufficient not in the sense that it contains all possible information on every subject, but in the sense that it provides everything God intends His people to have for knowing Him, being saved, and living as His covenant community.
Exhaustiveness	A property Scripture does not claim for itself. Scripture is sufficient but not exhaustive: it tells us everything we need to know for salvation and godliness, but not everything there is to know about every subject it touches. God has not revealed all things; He has revealed all things necessary (Deuteronomy 29:29). Confusing sufficiency with exhaustiveness leads either to frustration (when Scripture does not address every question we bring) or to improper additions to Scripture.
Tota Scriptura	Latin for "the whole of Scripture." The companion principle to Sola Scriptura, affirming that the sufficiency of Scripture means all of Scripture, not just selected portions. The whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) is to be proclaimed and received. A church that avoids difficult texts or restricts itself to favored passages has not received the sufficient Word in its fullness.
Good and Necessary Consequence	The hermeneutical principle stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the 1689 Confession that the whole counsel of God is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture. Scripture's sufficiency includes not only its explicit statements but the valid theological inferences that careful reasoning from the text yields.
The Whole Counsel of God	Paul's phrase in Acts 20:27 ("I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God") describing the full scope of scriptural teaching that a faithful minister must proclaim. The whole counsel includes not only the gospel of grace but the hard texts, the unpopular commands, the demanding ethics, and the difficult doctrines that a comfortable pulpit might be tempted to avoid.
2 Peter 1:3–4	The key New Testament text for the sufficiency of Scripture for life and godliness: "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." The "everything pertaining to life and godliness" is mediated through Scripture (vv. 19–21), grounding the doctrine of sufficiency in the divine provision of the prophetic word.
Cessationism	The theological position that the miraculous sign gifts of the apostolic era, including tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healing, ceased with the close of the apostolic age and the completion of the New Testament canon. Cessationism is grounded in part in the sufficiency of Scripture: if the Spirit has now given us everything pertaining to life and godliness in the completed Word, no supplementary revelatory gifts are needed or expected.
Nouthetic Counseling (Biblical Counseling)	The model of pastoral soul care that grounds all counseling in the sufficiency of Scripture rather than in secular psychological frameworks. The term nouthetic (from the Greek noutheteo, "to admonish") was introduced by Jay Adams to describe counseling that addresses sin, suffering, and spiritual struggle through the Word, prayer, and the community of the church, without importing the presuppositions of secular therapeutic models.
The 1689 Confession Chapter 1 Paragraph 6	The key confessional statement on the sufficiency of Scripture: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any

	time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." This paragraph defines both what sufficiency means and what it excludes.
Deuteronomy 29:29	The "secret things" text: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." This verse establishes the proper epistemological posture toward Scripture's sufficiency: God has revealed what we need; He has withheld what we do not need; our task is to receive and obey what has been given, not to seek what has been withheld.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that God has provided, in the sixty-six books of Scripture, everything His people need for knowing Him, being saved, living as His covenant community, and conducting the ministry of the church. This belief is not a claim about the Bible's exhaustiveness on every conceivable subject; it is a claim about the divine adequacy of what God has chosen to reveal for the purposes He has in view. Scripture is enough because God made it enough, for exactly the purposes He has identified: His glory, our salvation, our faith, and our obedience.

We must also understand the distinction between sufficiency and exhaustiveness clearly enough to apply it. The sufficiency of Scripture does not prevent the Christian from being a doctor, a scientist, a lawyer, or a business person who draws on the wisdom of their respective disciplines. It means that in the domain of knowing God and living as His people, no supplement from any other source is needed or warranted. The disciplines of natural inquiry serve their proper purposes in the realm of common grace; they do not supplement Scripture in the domain Scripture claims as its own.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

The doctrine of sufficiency should produce in us a profound contentment with the Word God has given: not the contentment of complacency, but the contentment of those who know that what they have been given is enough for what they have been called to do. There is a restlessness in Christian culture that perpetually seeks the next prophetic word, the next spiritual technique, the next counseling model, the next church growth methodology, as if the Word already given were somehow inadequate for the demands of contemporary life and ministry. The doctrine of sufficiency is the antidote to that restlessness. God has given what is needed. The Word is adequate. The Spirit who inspired it will apply it. Rest in the sufficiency of what God has provided.

At the same time, let the sufficiency of Scripture produce in us a deepened hunger for the Word itself. If Scripture is sufficient for life and godliness, then every hour spent in the Word is an hour investing in what God has identified as the instrument of His purposes. The believer who understands what Scripture is for will not be content with occasional or superficial engagement with it. She will want to know it thoroughly, to be saturated with it, to meditate on it day and night, because she understands that this is the Word through which the Spirit does His transforming work.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

1. Trust the Word for ministry. Whatever ministry you are engaged in (preaching, teaching, counseling, discipleship, leadership), build it on the sufficient Word rather than on frameworks imported from outside. This does not mean ignorance of the world's wisdom; it means that the Word governs the framework and the world's wisdom serves within it.

2. Resist the supplementation impulse. When you feel the pull to supplement biblical teaching with the latest psychological research, management theory, or claimed prophetic insight, ask the sufficiency question: Is the Word adequate for this purpose? The consistent answer, in the domain of knowing God and living as His people, is yes. Receive what God has given.

3. Preach and teach the whole counsel. The sufficiency of Scripture requires the whole counsel: not the comfortable parts, not the currently popular texts, but everything God has revealed. Commit to a pattern of preaching and teaching that ranges across the full canon, trusting that every part of the sufficient Word serves the purposes for which God breathed it out.

4. Pray for the Spirit's illumination. The sufficiency of Scripture does not operate automatically. The Spirit who breathed out the Word also illumines it for the believer who comes to it in faith and prayer. The doctrine of sufficiency is not a reason for confidence in your own ability to extract what you need from the text; it is a reason for prayerful, Spirit-dependent engagement with the Word that God has made sufficient.

5. Commend the sufficiency of Scripture to those who are seeking supplementation. When believers in your congregation feel drawn to prophetic movements, therapeutic frameworks, or spiritual techniques that claim to offer what Scripture does not, engage them with the doctrine of sufficiency, not as a rebuke but as a gift. God has given what is needed. The sufficient Word is more than adequate for every situation they face.

D. *For Every Season of Life*

For the believer facing a complex and painful situation that no single text of Scripture seems to address directly: The sufficiency of Scripture does not mean that every life situation has a proof text. It means that the whole of Scripture (its character portrait of God, its account of human nature and sin, its promises of grace and provision, its descriptions of suffering and lament, its vision of redemption and hope) provides everything needed to navigate that situation with wisdom, faith, and obedience. Bring the whole Word to the complex situation, not just one text.

For the pastor overwhelmed by the complexity of contemporary ministry: God has not called you to a ministry for which He has failed to provide. The whole counsel of God is sufficient for the people He has given you to shepherd. You do not need to be a therapist, a business consultant, and a cultural commentator as well as a preacher of the Word. Know the Word. Preach the Word. Pray for the Spirit to apply the Word. That is the ministry for which you have been given the sufficient resource of the God-breathed Scripture.

For the believer who has been told that Scripture alone is not sufficient for the complexity of their particular struggle: Receive this gentle but firm correction. 2 Peter 1:3 does not say "His divine power has granted to us most things pertaining to life and godliness" or "everything pertaining to the simpler problems of life and godliness." It says everything. The God who knows your struggle better than you do, and who breathed out His Word precisely for you, has not left you without what you need. Trust the sufficient Word in the complex situation.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. In your experience, what is the most common way that Christians, or churches, implicitly treat Scripture as insufficient? What do they add to it, and why do they feel the addition is necessary?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

2. Read 2 Peter 1:3–4. What specifically has God's divine power granted? Through what means is this provision made? What is the purpose of the "precious and magnificent promises" mentioned in verse 4?
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17. What word does Paul use in verse 17 to describe the man of God who is equipped by Scripture? Look up the Greek word artios (if resources are available). What does it communicate about the sufficiency of Scripture for ministry?
4. Read Deuteronomy 29:29. What are the "secret things" and what are the "revealed things"? What is the purpose of the revealed things? How does this verse establish the proper scope of Scripture's sufficiency?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

5. Explain the distinction between sufficiency and exhaustiveness. Why is this distinction important for a proper understanding of what the doctrine of scriptural sufficiency claims and does not claim?
6. How does the doctrine of scriptural sufficiency provide a theological ground for cessationism? Trace the argument from the completed canon to the cessation of the revelatory gifts.
7. The 1689 Confession says Scripture's sufficiency includes both what is "expressly set down" and what is "necessarily contained" (by good and necessary consequence). Give an example of a doctrine that is necessitated by Scripture rather than explicitly stated in it. How does this doctrine's authority relate to the authority of Scripture's explicit statements?
8. The lesson argues that a church governed primarily by pragmatism has implicitly denied the sufficiency of Scripture for church governance. Do you find this argument compelling? Where does the proper use of organizational wisdom end and the functional denial of sufficiency begin?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

9. Psalm 19:7–9 attributes remarkable effects to the Word of God: restoring souls, making wise the simple, rejoicing hearts, enlightening eyes. How does a genuine belief in Scripture's sufficiency change the expectations you bring to preaching, Bible study, and personal Scripture reading?
10. The lesson argues that the supplementation impulse (the persistent sense that Scripture needs something added to it) reflects an implicit denial of sufficiency. Where do you feel the supplementation impulse most strongly in your own Christian life or ministry? How does the doctrine of sufficiency address it?
11. Read Acts 20:26–27. Paul declares himself "innocent of the blood of all men" because he "did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God." What does this passage teach about the pastor's responsibility with respect to the sufficient Word? What are the consequences of not declaring the whole counsel?
12. If the doctrine of scriptural sufficiency is true, what would need to change in the way your church approaches counseling? Preaching? Discipleship? Governance? Be as specific as you can about one concrete change that would reflect a deeper trust in Scripture's sufficiency.

Prayer Focus

Spend time in prayer as a group, thanking God that He has not left His people without what they need, and that His divine power has granted everything pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him mediated by His sufficient Word. Thank Him for the completeness of His provision: a Word that restores souls, makes wise the simple, rejoices hearts, and enlightens eyes. Ask the Lord to deliver your church from the supplementation impulse: from the restless search for what the Word has not given and the quiet distrust of what it has. Pray for a deepened contentment with the sufficient Word, a more thoroughgoing trust in its adequacy for every good work, and a renewed hunger to know and apply the whole counsel of God in every dimension of your common life.

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Dr. Joshua Nichols

josh@faithfultotheword.com | faithfultotheword.com