

Understanding Inspiration

Inspiration relates to understanding, as indicated by its usage in scripture:

But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. (Job 32:8)

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (2 Timothy 3:16)

These are the only two places where the word *inspiration* occurs in the Bible.

In Job 32 a young man named Elihu is speaking, and in 2 Timothy 3 a (probably comparably) young man named Paul is speaking. In both cases they were not merely men...

but holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:21b)

We're all probably very familiar with Paul, but maybe not so much with Elihu. It would be most enlightening, for us believers, to read Job chapters 32 through 37 to become more familiar with Elihu as a holy man of God, and to seek the Almighty's inspiration to give understanding of Elihu's words – God's words – to our spirits.

If we are to compare scripture with scripture, or as God says, spiritual with spiritual (1 Cor 2:13), as part of our studying (2 Tim 2:15), then we should compare these two verses ((Job 32:8 and 2 Timothy 3:16, in their immediate and remote contexts) to see if God has something deeper for us to learn from him. From scripture, it is clear that our understanding comes from scripture and ultimately from the teaching thereof by the Holy Spirit:

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; (Colossians 1:9)

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

In a prior study on "understanding the deep things of God", the following prerequisite and requirements were reviewed:

Mandatory

Prerequisite: Ye must be born again (John 3:7)
(Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God) (John 3:3)

Requirements:

Fear God (and God's words, not man's words)
Believe the Bible (that it is the very word of God)
Be meek (not wise in your own eyes)
Pray (that God will give you spiritual understanding)
Obey (desire to obey that which God teaches you)
Meditate on memorized scripture (memorize scripture)
Read the Bible again and again (and again and again...)

Regarding our study of the scriptures, sometimes “rightly dividing” the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15) involves dividing between different words in the scriptures. Examples might be like dividing “example” from “ensample”, or dividing “interpret” from “translate”, or related to this study, dividing “inspiration” from “breath”.

Inspiration, as used in the two occurrences in the Bible, is related to God’s Spirit inputting understanding into man’s spirit (like, in-spirit-ing?). Even though 2 Tim 3:16 might seem (on first glance, out of context) to be referring to God giving the original written word, a closer look (comparing spiritual things with spiritual) reveals it to be indicating differently – that it is the spiritual understanding of scripture that is given by inspiration of the God – of the Almighty. Otherwise, without spiritual understanding, how could it be *profitable* for anything like doctrine or reproof or correction or instruction in righteousness?

A perspective for consideration

We should not equivocate or look outside the Bible for synonyms or secular definitions. The Bible’s definitions of the Bible’s words come from the Bible’s usage of the words, and they should never be equivocated with secular definitions from secular usages of the words.

Consider the following admonition from a letter written in the 1390’s:

“He who •importeth any equivocation •out of any of the doctors expounding, •for the colouring of his text, •his equivocation is always to be left.” (from Foxe, Vol III, p.188)

A paraphrase: He who...

- brings to the scriptures a lexical (e.g., Greek-English dictionary) definition for a word (e.g., saying “in the Greek, that word a-c-t-u-a-l-l-y means...” – or – “could a-l-s-o mean...”)
- from any of the expositions of the scholars or theologians or text critics (who cite, say, Strong’s, or Vine’s, etc.) ,
- for the purpose of adding varieties and/or shades of meaning to God’s words,
- his “extra-biblical word study” is always to be rejected.

For example, God’s word says “all scripture is given by inspiration of God”. He who...

- says that “in the Greek, that word is theopneustos, which a-c-t-u-a-l-l-y means “God-breathed”
- based on an exposition by (say) John MacArthur (who might have cited the definition of theopneustos given in the back of Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible),
- for the purpose of improving upon God’s words by offering a different shade of meaning,
- his claimed “theopneustos = God-breathed” is to be rejected, and God’s words retained.

If anyone (a preacher or teacher, etc.) does this, we should be like the Bereans, who searched... not lexicons or systematic theologies or theological treatises by Hebrew or Greek scholars) but rather... the scriptures:

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (Acts 17:11)

Today, we have become so flippant with God’s words, or else we have become so used to hearing others being so flippant with God’s words, that we find ourselves wondering “what’s the big deal if it’s ‘*given by inspiration of God*’ or ‘*God-breathed*’? Isn’t it the same thing? Why all the fuss?”

Well, a-c-t-u-a-l-l-y, no, it’s not quite the same thing.

- If you read today’s “doctors expounding”, you’ll find them saying that “God-breathed” means God breathed-out the scriptures at various points in the past, and it is in only those original writings that the pure inerrant word of God actually existed. Thus multiple modern versions saying things slightly differently is no concern – i.e., flippant – we can flip from one to another as we see fit.)

- If you study the Bible only (the KJB), and compare only spiritual things with spiritual, you'll find that "given by inspiration of God" is related to our understanding of the scriptures, not God's once-off-in-the-past breathing-out of them as the text critics falsely claim. And you'll understand that this means we have the scriptures. They are not, in their purity and inerrancy, relegated to only the original writings (which no longer exist). All scripture is given (not was, or has been, given) by inspiration of God. The inspiration of God giveth (not gave, or has given) man understanding.

In reality, "is given by inspiration of God" is not related to the writing of the scriptures (that were spokenn by the Holy Spirit to the prophets and apostles in the past). Instead, it is related to the understanding of the scriptures (that have been kept pure by the Holy Spirit for us in the present). Recall that God speaks other tongues than just Hebrew and Greek (1 Corinthians 14:21, Isaiah 28:11-12, Mark 16:17, Acts 2:1-11), and this certainly includes English¹.

Back to the study

Hence,

... there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. (Job 32:8)

All scripture is given [to man's understanding] by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it [of the Colossians' faith in Jesus Christ], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; (Colossians 1:9)

In closing, keep in mind that sometimes we who believe still need help even beyond the understanding that God has thus far inspired into our spirit...

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26)

So, we should trust God, and trust his word, and lean not on our own understanding, but on his inspiration by his Holy Spirit. And when we find our understanding to be lacking, we should rely on his Holy Spirit to make intercession for us. Trust God, at all times.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

Amen.

¹ For more on tongues, a prior talk on "understanding interpretation" identifies that the God-given scripture in English is embodied in the "authorized version" commonly known as the King James Bible. This is the one voice with which God speaks to the English-speaking world today. The King James Bible, which is descended to us from the Gothic tongue in the time of the Acts of the Apostles, is the "perfect law of liberty" in English (James 1:25), and is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). All modern versions include departures from the perfect law of liberty, with some degree of deadening, weakening, and dulling of the word of God. Yet even so, the word of God is so very quick, powerful and sharp, that what scripture the modern versions still retain is still quick, powerful and sharper than any (other) two-edged sword. But if we have the quickest, the most powerful, the sharpest two-edged sword *in existence* – the KJB – why would we ever want to read or hear *anything* else?

Linguistic Supplement (or, Detraction, if truth be told)

Those who want to go to “the” Greek to “correct” the English, saying (for example) “that Greek word, theopneustos, a-c-t-u-a-l-l-y means God-breathed” ... will go to extra-biblical sources such as...

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, whose listing for inspiration is:

Inspiration

Job 32: 8 the *i*’ of the Almighty giveth them *5397

2Ti 3: 16 scripture is given by *i*’ of God *2315

In the front matter, the asterisks are explained as follows:

* Note: an *asterisk* (*) calls attention to the fact that in the text quoted the leading word is changed for some other in the Revised Version**.

** Note: the Revised Version (1881) and the American Standard Revised Version (1901) have fallen into relative disuse.

(Which begs the question: why would we want to replace the leading word (in this case, inspiration) with a word in a version that has fallen into relative disuse?)

The un-italicized reference numbers are for the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary (lexicon) in the back of the concordance.

The *italicized* reference numbers are for the Greek Dictionary of the New Testament (lexicon) in the back of the concordance.

5397. **n^eshâmâh**, *nesh-aw-maw*’; fr. 5395; a *puff*, i.e. *wind*, angry or vital *breath*, divine *inspiration*, *intellect*. or (concr.) an *animal*:– blast, (that) *breath* (-eth), *inspiration*, *soul*, *spirit*.

2315. **thēōpnēustōs**, *theh-op-nyoo-stos*; from 2316 and a presumed der. of 4154; *divinely breathed in*: – given by inspiration of God.

Note that a word does not carry all listed varieties of meaning with it into each usage. A word’s meaning in any individual context is determined by its usage in that context. Therefore, just because Strong says theopneustos could mean “divinely breathed in”, that is no reason to insist it does mean so in 2 Timothy 3:16.

Note also that James Strong says “breathed in” whereas the “doctors expounding” mostly prefer to say “breathed out”. So, the scholars, theologians, and text critics (“doctors”) disagree amongst themselves as to whether they think it’s in or out.

Note also that James Strong wasn’t sure of the origin (thus the meaning) of 2315 (theopneustos), but merely said “presumed” to be a derivative of 4154. But 4154 is pneo (breathe hard, breeze, blow), not pneu, which is in theopneustos, and also in the preceding 4151 through 4153 words, each of which includes spirit or spiritual in its meaning. Why would James Strong go with such a presumption contrary to what was staring him right in the face? Could it be due to a darkened understanding (Eph 4:18)?

It’s actually sad to even feel the need to do this type of Greek “detraction” study in the first place. But, there is a need because of all the indoctrination from the “doctors” who disagree with God’s word and train their listeners/readers to regurgitate the mantra “theopneustos: God-breathed” when such is not the case. Scripture – and especially the understanding thereof – is “given by inspiration of God” and we should seek to understand it, not “correct” it.

Samplings from a couple popular modern versions reveal the following “equivocations” or “colorings” that come from their translation committees’ adopting of the “doctors expounding”:

- The Lord inspires
- Man inspires
- Understanding inspires
- Man is inspired
- Endurance is inspired

NIV

Inspire:	Jeremiah 32:40 Jeremiah 49:16	(the <u>Lord</u> inspires man) (<u>man</u> inspires terror)
Inspired:	Hosea 9:7 1 Thessalonians 1:3	(<u>man</u> is inspired) (<u>endurance</u> is inspired)
Inspires:	Job 20:3	(<u>my</u> understanding inspires me)
Inspiration:		

ESV

Inspire:	Isaiah 47:12 Jeremiah 49:16	(<u>man</u> inspires terror) (<u>man</u> inspires horror)
Inspired:	Exodus 35:34	(the <u>Lord</u> inspired man)
Inspires:		
Inspiration:		