

The five tests of canonicity, or what constitute the rules whereby books are included or excluded from the Bible.

They are:

1. **Authority.** Does this book speak with authority? A "thus saith the Lord?" Does it have a self vindicating authority that commands attention as being the voice of God as it communicates? Does it speak and present itself as the word of God? Does it use such phrases as "Thus saith the Lord..." or "the word of the Lord came to me..."? If it does not claim itself to be the word of God, then why should we view it as such?

2. **Authorship.** Was it written by a man of God? It says in 2 Pet 1:20 that when Scripture was given "...holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. What was the person's character and reputation who wrote this? Was he a prophet of God, an apostle of God, or a close associate of them? Was he an authorized messenger of God, called of God to represent His mind and will? See Galatians 1:1 No unsaved person ever wrote any portion of the Scriptures.

3. **Accuracy.** Does this book tell the truth about all it addresses? Was the author who he claimed to be, or was he writing under a false name? 2 Thess 2:2 Did it tell the truth about God and man and sin and salvation in a way that is in harmony with previous revelation? Acts 17:11 Is it historically and chronologically accurate? Does it record the facts as they actually occurred? Titus 1:2 "...God cannot lie..." Any errors invalidate any writing as being the word of God. The God of truth does not inspire any error of fact in His writings; they are inerrant.

4. **Activity.** Does it have the power to change lives by transforming them? The word of God is living and powerful, Heb 4:12; it regenerates, 1Pet 1:23; and it transforms, Joh 17:17, 2 Tim 3:16-17. A true message of God is backed by the power of God. If a message is of God, it *works* - it is dynamic - it has power. There is a freshness, an originality, a depth, and a clarity to it that cannot be matched by any other human writings. Jer 23:28-29, Joh 6:63

5. Acceptance. Has this book been accepted by the vast majority of the true people of God as being the very word of God? It must have been accepted as the word of God by the early church, eg, 2 Peter 3:16. It must have been accepted as the word of God subsequently by the church over time and in its broad consensus. The collective voice and wisdom of the people of God across time and around the world carries great weight in recognizing writing that is inspired of God, and that which is not. In a multitude of counselors there is safety. Jesus said in John 10:27, My sheep hear my voice... the people of God recognize the voice of God when they read it. That is why the so called "lost books of the Bible" are not lost at all. They were found, read, and rejected - just like we reject the book of Mormon.

So - Both the outward witness of objective principles (points 1-3) and the inward witness of the Spirit (point 4) combine to produce consensus (point 5) as to what writings are inspired by God and thus are the word of God, and thus deserve to be included in the canon of scripture - the Bible.

So to summarize: Look to see if a book

1. Came with the Authority of God
2. Was written by a Man of God
3. Told the truth Regarding God
4. Came with the Power of God
5. Was accepted by the People of God.

If so, it belongs in the Bible, if not, it doesn't.