

Can We Trust the Bible?

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Tim. 3:16-17

Good morning! We're continuing our series on "Big Questions: About God, the Bible, and Life". In this series, I want to provide some answers to some tough questions that people ask. Like last week, I tackled the age-old question of "If God is good, why is there evil and suffering?" If you weren't here, you can go to our web site and read the sermon online.

Today, I'd like to answer the question, "Can we trust the Bible?" Let us read together the Scripture on your screen. As Christians, we accept the Bible as the Word of God. We stand on what the Bible says. We believe that every word that is written there comes from God himself. Or do we? Some of us, if we're honest, may entertain the notion that, perhaps, some parts of it are from God and some are not. Maybe, some stories are fictional and some are not. Especially if we read some books written by liberal people who try to poke some holes on our beliefs or you talk to someone who question the integrity of the Bible writers. Just like what happened to Billy Graham when his friend Chuck Templeton tried to persuade to not believe in the literal meaning of the Bible. He became confused but by faith trusted in God's Word.

Faith is the key. But it is not blind faith that we have. Because our faith when it comes to the authenticity and veracity of the Bible is based on facts. And this morning I want to share with you some of these facts. There are so many of them but in the interest of time I'm going to give you just three of them. Just three of them. Let me them one by one. And when we're done, there are two things you can take away.

First, I believe you'll have a much more stable ground on which to stand with respect to the truthfulness of the Bible. And second, these are facts that you yourself can share with people who ask you "Can we trust the Bible?"

So, let's start by looking at the first fact.

1. The Fact of Archaeological Proofs

Folks, for the past 100 years there have been archaeological discoveries in the Near East that prove the reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible. I wish we all could travel and look at some of these proofs but because it is so expensive and unless a person named Rey Canlas can sponsor our trip all I can do is just show you some pictures to illustrate the proofs I'm talking about.

Now, critics of the Bible once said that writing was unknown in the ancient Near East at the time of Moses, 1500 BC, and, therefore, there was no way that Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible because he didn't know how to write. Now we know that ancient people in the Near East, based on recent archaeological discoveries, knew how to write and did write all the way back to 3000 BC. We have literally thousands of documents that have been unearthed, everything from sales contracts to codes of law to sailing records, which prove that writing was common in ancient times and surely at the time that Moses lived. **This slide shows an example of writing in the ancient world.** It says that around 3400 BC, the first evidence of writing appears. It was called Pictographs. Then came Cuneiform.

So, the critics were wrong. Moses knew how to write and he did write. Remember, he grew up in Pharaoh's palace under the care of Pharaoh's daughter herself. He undoubtedly was trained under the great minds of Egypt at the time and, therefore, was fully qualified as someone who wrote the first five books of the Bible known as the Pentateuch.

Now, it used to be claimed that the Hittites, mentioned over fifty times in the Old Testament, were an invention of biblical writers. There were no historical records of them. It used to be that only the Bible mentions the Hittites. Then, in the late 19th century, several excavations unearthed a number of Hittite cities and many of their written records were recovered. These demolished every one of the critic's arguments. **That map shows the Hittite Empire as determined by archaeologists.**

Another example is the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was assumed that they were just figments of the imagination of the biblical writers. But then archaeologists found the ruins of the ancient cities southeast of the Dead Sea in modern day Jordan.

These two pictures show the devastation brought about by God on these two cities. The Bible says in **Gen. 19:24-25, “*Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land.*”**

The first picture show an archaeologist pointing to a layer of ash in an archaeological site called Bab edh-Dhra.

This second picture shows that five excavation sites reveal that houses were destroyed by fire at the same time the city was destroyed.

These three examples I've shown you are just a few of the many, many archaeological proofs that attest to the genuineness and accuracy as far as history is concerned of the Bible. I hope the fact of archaeological proofs convinces anyone that the Bible can really be trusted.

But you go, “Wait a minute. Ok the critics are wrong, I get it. They didn't do their research or they were just plain biased. Still it doesn't prove anything. The Bible may be historically accurate but it can be just as accurate any reliable historical book out there. The Bible just talks about history and nothing else.”

Ok. So, you don't want to deal with the past. Let's deal with the future.
Which leads us to the next fact which is

2. The Fact of Fulfilled Prophecies About Jesus

The books of the Old Testament contain many passages about the Messiah — all prophecies Jesus Christ fulfilled. For instance, the crucifixion of Jesus was foretold in Psalm 22:16-18 approximately 1,000 years before Christ was born, long before this method of execution was even practiced. It says, “Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.”

Some Bible scholars suggest there are more than 300 prophetic Scriptures completed in the life of Jesus. Circumstances such as his birthplace, lineage, and method of execution were beyond his control and could not have been accidentally or deliberately fulfilled.

In the book *Science Speaks*, Peter Stoner and Robert Newman discuss the statistical improbability of one man, whether accidentally or deliberately, fulfilling just eight of the prophecies Jesus fulfilled. The chance of this happening, they say, is 1 in 10¹⁷ power. That is 1 and 17 0's after it. Stoner gives an illustration that helps visualize the magnitude of such odds:

“Suppose that we take 10¹⁷ silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom.”

The mathematical improbability of 300, or 44, or even just eight fulfilled prophecies of Jesus stands as evidence to his messiahship.

On the screen are just 10 of the prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by Jesus as recorded in the New Testament. Now, critics say that Jesus could have just lived his life in a deliberate way so that he would fulfill the prophecies. They assert that he even arranged circumstances in order to make it appear that he fulfilled the prophecies. The big question is, if he did so, did he also arrange that his parents, Mary and Joseph, **while he was still in his mother's womb**, to travel to Bethlehem so that he would be born there to fulfill Micah 5:2? That seems far-fetched and wild, wouldn't you agree?

Folks, throughout history there have been literally hundreds of men and women who claimed to be the Messiah. Included in the list are Sun Myung Moon, founder and leader of the Unification Church in South Korea, and our very own Apollo Quiboloy, founder and leader of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in Davao. It's so easy to debunk all of these claimants because they don't or didn't fulfill any of the Old Testament prophecies.

Only Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, is the true Messiah, Amen?

But then, you go, so what if he's the Messiah. What does it mean to me? Maybe it proves the Bible is accurate after all. But what is its relevance to me?

Which leads us to the third and final fact I want to present to you this afternoon

3. The Fact of Changed Lives

This is something that you can attest to if you're a Christian. The Bible has changed your life and that is a fact. You know that in your heart. And people around you who knew you before you became a Christian and compared that to what you are now can say that is a fact as well. The fact of the matter is (no pun intended) the Bible really does change lives.

Let me ask you to turn to 2 Cor. 5:17. It says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” The Bible is saying if any person makes a commitment to follow Christ, that person becomes a new creature. A transformation takes place. Old things that characterize my life like my coarse language, unwholesome thoughts, destructive behavior, and such are peeled off and new things, things that are holy, wholesome, and honorable to God begin to dominate my life. And the Bible says that it is a transformation that is driven not by human energy, not by feel-good therapy or by Oprah-Winfrey-inspired theology but this is driven by supernatural transformation that happens because of the supernatural power of the Spirit of God living inside of me as a follower of Jesus Christ, a supernatural transformation that changes me inside out. This is the same story that is repeated over and over again in the lives of people who have been transformed by the power of God.

How can God effect this change in anybody’s life? It is through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. God became man in the person of Jesus. He died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. You see, the Bible tells us that we are all sinners, condemned to die and be separated from God for all eternity. You see that all around. The reason that this world is in a mess or even you as a person is in a mess is because of sin. The Bible says, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” (Rom. 3: 10-12)

But God loves us so much and he sent his own Son Jesus to die for our sins. In Romans 5:8 it says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”. He died for the forgiveness of our sins. Then, he was buried and on the third day rose again. He resurrected to declare that he has victory over sin and death.

And anyone who believes in him and what he has done on the cross will be saved and resurrect again some day. In **John 11:25 (ESV)** Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” Yes, you shall live a life that never ends in heaven if you believe in Jesus and what he has done for you. He will change your life and he will give you eternal life.

One of the most enduring hymns that we all know and sing is “Amazing Grace”. This song was written by a fellow named **John Newton**. Newton was an Englishman whose father died when he was 7 years old, then he ran away to become a sailor. And by the time he became an adult he worked his way up to owning a ship and he became a slave trader. He would go to Africa, commandeer innocent men, women, and children, stick them in the most inhumane conditions under the deck of the ship for the entire voyage across the Atlantic. Often he would lose 50% or more of his cargo because of the conditions they were in, then he would sell them like merchandise and go back for more. This was a profane man, a brutal man, a despicable creature, in fact he even calls himself a wretch in the song and he’s right. In fact, one time in his voyage he got so drunk that he tripped and fell overboard and the only way that the sailors can get him back on board was that they harpooned him in the leg and they hoisted him back up, hanging on the end of the harpoon which caused him to limp the rest of his life. That was John Newton.

One day, he was in Liverpool, England, walking through the streets, drunk as usual, and he ran into George Whitefield in the open air, the great preacher of the Great Awakening here in America back in England for a visit preaching in the open air how a personal relationship with Jesus could change someone’s life. He stood there and listened, made a decision right there to give his life to Jesus Christ and the change came into this man’s life was absolutely radical. He sold his ship, stopped swearing, stopped drinking, became a preacher, a writer of Christian hymns, and advocate against the evils of slavery. And he wrote his own epitaph.

If you go today to his tomb in England here's what you'll see written on his tombstone, his epitaph: "John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."

That is what I call a radical transformation. I'm sure that's the same kind of transformation that many of you here today had experienced. You may not have been a slave trader, you may not have been drinking the whole day but the changes in your life had been so radical that you yourself are astonished by what had happened. You realize that only God can do such a thing.

Folks, those three facts are irrefutable proofs or arguments that the Bible is true and the we can trust it. We can trust it with all our lives. And yet, all of these facts are nothings if they're all just in our heads. They should penetrate our hearts and we should let the Bible do its work in our lives. How do we that? Let me share these three things with you. Consider these three things which will help as we seek to apply the Scripture to our everyday lives.

A. Know it

God expects for us, as His children, to know His word. The man who will not read his Bible is no better off than the man who has no Bible to read. How can a person claim to be born again, to be filled with the Spirit of God who inspired the very words of Scripture and have no appetite for the word of God?

How can a person claim to have Jesus on the throne of their heart and have no desire to receive instruction from the One they claim is their Master? It doesn't add up. If you have no desire for the word of God, you need to take a long hard look to see if you are a child of God.

If we are truly in love with God, if we have really been born again, then we will say with the Psalmist who says in Psalm 119, "I have treasured Your word

with all my heart; don't let me wander from Your commands. I delight in Your commands, which I love...Instruction from your lips is better for me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. How I love Your teaching! It is my meditation all day long. Your word is completely pure and Your servant loves it." (Psalm 119:11,47,72,97, &140)

Colossians 3:16 says, *"Let the message about the Messiah dwell richly among you, teaching admonishing one another in all wisdom and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God."*

Know it. But secondly, understand it.

B. Understand it

Many people read the Scripture like literature, but fail to understand the spiritual significance of what they read. But such should not be the case for Christians.

Jesus promises us in John 14:26 that the Holy Spirit will, *"...teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you."*

In 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 says, *"But the natural man does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to know it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet for himself, cannot be evaluated by anyone. For: who has know the Lord's mind that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."*

So as Christians who have the Holy Spirit, we should be able to see clearly into the spiritual truths of Scripture.

But you see here's the problem. Our ability to understand the Scripture will ever be dependent upon the degree to which our hearts and lives are surrendered to the influence and control of the Spirit of God. The more control He has, the more illumination or insight we have. The less control He has of our hearts and lives, the more opaque and obscure the Scriptures will become.

I believe one of the reasons many Christians have difficulty understanding Scripture is because they need to get things right with God in their lives. If you are walking with Him, he will give you light;

He will give you understanding so that you can obey. But if you are not walking in fellowship, then you will find little joy in reading Scripture and its depth and meaning will be hidden from you.

To understand it you must be right with God. But not only are we to know it and understand it. The ultimate goal of Scripture is for us to put it into practice.

C. Practice it

Somewhere along the way we got the idea that all we had to do with the Bible was to study it and understand it. We substituted knowing for doing, illumination for application. But the purpose of Scripture, at the end of the day, is action oriented. It was given so that we can do it.

James 1:22 says, *"But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

Our problem is not that we don't understand what it says; our problem is that we don't want to do what we understand.

Jesus puts it about as plainly as it can be stated in **Matthew 7:24-27**,
"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

After all is said and done, will you believe in the Bible as the Word of God and let it change your life? Will you be like the wise man who built his house on the rock? Or will you be like the foolish man who built his house on sand? This morning, the choice is yours.

Let us all stand and let's sing "Amazing Grace".

[Video – Amazing Grace](#)