
BIG IDEA – God uses the Bible to teach us who He is

scripture focus - [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) 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**.

There is an interesting phenomenon taking place. The global pandemic shut down large public gatherings, leaving us uncertain if events like sports, concerts, and rallies would ever return. Four years later, people are flocking back. Why? It's more than entertainment; it's about belonging. People seek connection and a sense of not being alone. At the core, it's a search for their own story and how it relates to others. What is your story? Let's explore how our stories connect with God's story. The Bible, can I trust it?

[Slide 1] Public gatherings. [Slide 2] **2024 Olympics, [10,500 athletes](#), [743,000 spectators](#) and 9.5 million tickets sold.** [Slide 3] **[Greg Laurie's Harvest Crusade](#) had 50,000 in the stadium and 200,000 online—with over 5,000 people making professions of faith in Jesus Christ.** [Slide 4] **Last year, 2023, Greg Laurie hosted a public baptism in Corona Del Mar's "pirate's cove." 4,500 people professed their faith and were baptized.** [Slide 5] **A month ago, 2,000 people did the same.**

People are seeking, searching for meaning and purpose, something more than the lacking-lies of culture making promises they cannot keep!

This series "ON THE TABLE," is for us to explore questions people ask, but we may have been too afraid to engage in discussing them openly.

The Church, which is us, should be thrilled when people ask questions!

But why are we talking about the Bible when many of us believe already know so much about it? Isn't this pretty basic stuff?

FUNDAMENTALS!

But first I have to remind myself that, in life and in competition, it's the basics that great coaches continue to make us focus on – why do pro Basketball players run layups or practice free-throws? Why do pro Football players run plays,

passing, tackling or kicking hundreds of times? Why do coaches make players constantly do the fundamentals of the game? Because it's how they win.

Why are we asking the question, "Can I trust the Bible?"

Maybe, it's because I am not the only one that needs an answer!

Maybe we are talking about it so that each one of us can have better conversations with those who are seeking God and asking honest questions!

Absolutely every follower of Jesus should know why the Bible was written because it gives them an opportunity to talk **about why they believe it is eternal, true and valuable.**

As a part of our mission to BE one and MAKE one - This series is not just for you to know and to learn, it is for you to be able to have a conversation with anyone that is interested.

What? I can't prove the Bible is real! Then why do you quote it as though you believe it is real?

This is not about arguing your beliefs, it's about owning and living your own faith!

Why teach on the basics of the Bible? The notes may be helpful for you to understand why the Bible is trustworthy.

- A general understand is good for us to know. Bible reading is at an all-time low, even though the Bible is still the [number one book printed](#) and there are more resources available now than any time in history! Almost [26 million Americans reduced or stopped](#) their interaction with Scripture in 2022.



Many of us know very little about the Bible in terms of how it came to be:

- **There are 66 books in the Bible (Old Testament: 39 books, New Testament: 27 books. This is the standard set of books in the Bible, known as the "canon of Scripture")**
- **Who wrote it!** The Bible was written by as many as 40 different authors over a period of nearly 2,000 years. The Bible, in its current form has existed for 1,500 years.
- **The first 39 books, known as the Old Testament, were written in Hebrew, and the second 27 books, known as the New Testament, were written in Greek.** The authors came from different backgrounds, cultures, and writing styles, including fishermen, physicians, shepherds, prophets, priests, and tax collectors.

These are just facts about the Bible. The real issue is **why the Bible was written?**

The Bible is God's story about Him, written for us!

The Bible is not only how we know God, it's for us to know where we came from, who we are, and what God wants for us and from us.

The Bible is a miracle that many try to deny. It's eternal and indestructible. Isaiah told us long ago, "The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever." Isaiah 40:8



Some tried to destroy it, others preached its inevitable doom.

[Theodore Beza, the 16th century Swiss theologian](#), wrote, "The Bible is an anvil that has broken many hammers."

In AD 303, the Roman [Emperor Diocletian issued an edict](#) to destroy Christians and their Bibles. The persecution that followed was brutal. Over a burned and extinguished Bible, Diocletian built a monument on which he wrote these triumphant words: "Extincto nomine Christianorum" ("The name Christian is extinguished"). Diocletian fashioned a medal with the engraving: "The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored."

[French philosopher Voltaire](#) (1694-1778) declared in 1776: "One hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." One hundred years later, Voltaire was dead, and his own house and press were being used to print and store Bibles by the Geneva Bible Society.

[In 100 B. C., Antiochus IV](#) (King of the Seleucid Empire who brutally persecuted the Jews) burned all the scriptures he could find and decreed death to all owners — yet, the scriptures survived.

The [American political leader Robert G. Ingersoll](#) (1833-1899) once proclaimed, "In 15 years, I will have this book (the Bible) in the morgue." Fifteen years later, Robert Ingersoll was in the morgue.

Yet...

Mark writes, quoting Jesus, "Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear. Mark 13:31

Peter wrote, quoting Isaiah 40:6-8, "People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of the Lord remains forever."

So why can I trust it?

There are overwhelming facts about the reality and reliability of the Bible.



Is the Bible Reliable?

[Article by Craig Etheredge.](#)

- The uniqueness of the Bible
- The exposure of the Bible
- The authenticity of the Bible
- The historicity of the Bible
- The accuracy of the Bible
- The prophetic nature of the Bible
- The potency of the Bible

[Got Questions.](#) Great quote, **"If the Scriptures don't pass a test for trustworthiness, no records from ancient history can."**

[Focus on the Family article](#) – research links included.

In the end, the answer, as with so many aspects of the supernatural, is "faith." For you to believe Scripture is God-breathed is going to take faith. But it's not a blind faith. It's a reasonable faith.

This belief is a reasonable faith step, rooted in the reality that God's Word is God-breathed.



I like to think of this simple example. Let's just say I know nothing about electricity and how it actually works. For folks that know the difference between A/C (alternating current) and D/C (direct current), they may be able to explain the technicalities, but for most folks they don't care about how it works, they just want it to work when they go over to a switch and turn on a light. **Ah, but every time we do that, we are applying faith. We don't know how it works or why it works, but we believe when we flip that switch a light will come on. We constantly use faith in our lives but think nothing of it or completely take it for granted.**

When it comes to spiritual realities, we may not understand all the technicalities, but there are hardcore truths that exist even if we don't believe in them or sadly, take them for granted.

Paul, writing to young Timothy, gives us the most powerful reasons to believe that we can trust the Bible.

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) 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**.

The Bible is [God-breathed](#) and useful. For what?

- Teach us what is [true](#).
- Make us realize what is [wrong](#) in our lives.
- [Corrects](#) us when wrong.
- [Teaches](#) us to do [right](#).
- [Prepares](#) and [equips](#) us to do God's [good work](#).

The Bible is a living document, it may be written on dead, wood-pulp paper, but the author behind the authors put Himself into the words we read or listen to.

For the word of God is **alive** and **powerful**. It is **sharper** than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between **soul** and **spirit**, between joint and marrow. It **exposes our innermost thoughts and desires**. [Hebrews 4:12](#).

- The Bible is [alive](#). It is powerful.
- The Bible is [sharp](#) or precisely accurate & surgical. Easily [penetrating](#), even [dividing](#) into the unseen spaces of our psyche [soul](#) and [spirit](#).
- The Bible exposes to [judge](#) the concealed secrets of innermost [ponderings](#) and [moral intentions](#) of our heart.

How do I have a conversation with someone who does not believe the Bible is true?

#1 Be respectful.

Don't mock or belittle people who question God. [Respect their intelligence](#). Instead, try to relate to their situations.

#2 Be a good listener.

Give people space to process what you say and ask questions. Listen to their concerns, questions, and misconceptions, and actively engage with their words. Without asking, [you never know someone's history with the church or religion](#), and it is not fair to put any preconceived notions onto them.

#3 Be curious, ask questions.

Instead of presenting your views aggressively, ask people what they believe. You can also ask them to show you any alleged errors or contradictions in the Bible.

#4 Be willing to admit you don't know.

You can say things like, "[I don't know](#)" or "Maybe my interpretation is wrong". You don't have to throw out your faith because you can't answer a difficult question. Neither do you need to be bullied, intimidated nor defensive because you don't have the answers they need.

#5 Be open to finding common ground.

You might disagree about God and religion, but you can still find common ground. Be open to why God may have you there talking to this person. God is likely at work or has been actively speaking into their life. Sometimes their frustration isn't with you at all, it might be with God himself! Maybe God doesn't want us to see our neighbor as a believer verses a non-believer? God wants us to see people as He does!

#6 Be ready to encourage them.

Suggest to them they would benefit to read the Bible for themselves. [Point them to Jesus](#) in the Bible, most folks find it hard to actually disagree with what Jesus said and how he treated people.

What about your own story? Have you sat down and thought about how you came to Jesus? How did you come to believe? When did you first discover how important the Bible was for you to learn about God? Why do **you** believe the Bible is true and trustworthy?

NOTES

Scriptures

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) All Scripture is **inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true** and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. **It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people** to do every good work.

[Hebrews 4:12](#) For the word of God is **alive** and **powerful**. It is **sharper** than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between **soul** and **spirit**, between joint and marrow. It **exposes our innermost thoughts and desires**.

Further Notes for Study

You are looking for a story.

Whether you recognize it or not, you were in fact, created for a story and you long for a story to build your life around. Psychologists, philosophers, theologians, scholars, and researchers all agree that we humans look for stories on which to center our lives. We long for a story to give meaning to our lives.

Early in the pandemic, people wondered aloud, “Will fans ever return to stadiums?” Some said college football stadiums would never again be filled, but then LSU beat Ole Miss at home on a Saturday night and the fans who had crammed into the seats rushed the field in a frenzy. Not only did they pack out the stadium post-pandemic, but they flooded the field in their excitement.

Why do we do things like that? **Rich Luker, a sports psychologist, says the reason fans do that is that we’re looking to belong. We’re looking for a story. We’re looking to find ourselves a place, a sense of identity, and that’s why we are drawn into being a fan.¹ We rush the field because when our team wins, we feel like we’ve won.** Their victory becomes our victory. And when they lose, we have other people we can mourn alongside. We are pulled into the story, the drama, and that’s what we want because we’re all looking for a story.

We also see this desire in the world of business. Story Wars, a popular business book in recent years, says consumers are more likely to buy a product when it fits into a story. That idea has led to marketing professionals going to great lengths to offer the best story so they can sell the most products. **They know we are looking for a story.**

We see this need in literature as well. Perhaps you’ve heard of Harry Potter? **In 2020, there was a podcast released called, Harry Potter and the Sacred Text.** Each episode of this series involves the host bringing a topic to discuss, placing a topic on the table, and then they use the “sacred” text of Harry Potter books to inform their view of that topic. They are essentially allowing the story of Harry Potter to be their authority on all the different issues of their lives. A reviewer of the podcast said, “There are billions around the globe who hold their culture’s holy text so important that they discuss it regularly, learn lessons from the book, and even live their lives based on its teachings. Why not try to do the same with the Boy Who Lived?”²

WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY IS

You are looking for a story to be your authority. **And what I want to help you see is that the Bible offers itself as the supremely authoritative story. Scripture is actually the greatest story there is, and it tells the story you were created for.**

Some have viewed Scripture primarily as an instruction manual for life. And yes, there is great wisdom and instruction in God’s Word, but that is not primarily what Scripture is.

Some have viewed Scripture as a long list of heroes to emulate. And sure, there are great people to consider in Scripture, but it is not a list of heroes to emulate, because they, just like us, are broken and in need of God’s grace.

The Bible is not a get rich scheme or a business plan for your life.

Ultimately, it is God’s story. God knows you and God wants you to know Him, so He gave us a story. His story.

Think about when you meet someone for the first time. You’re wanting to get to know them, and they’re wanting to get to know you. What do you do? You lead with a story. You don’t lead with stats. *Hi. Nice to meet you. I’m 5’10”. I have hazel eyes. Do you want to see my driver’s license?* No, you don’t tell stats; you tell your story. You share where you’re from, your hopes, your dreams. And Scripture is God’s story, declaring that He created you, that He loves you, and that all of us have wandered away from Him. As a result, He sent Jesus to this world to take away

our sin and our shame. And, because Jesus is the ultimate hero of the story, we now live our lives in response to Him.

You were created for a story. More specifically, you were created for the biblical story. **The Bible is a stunning story, written across 1,500 years by 40 different authors who were directed by God. The Bible is 66 different books telling one thrilling story of God pursuing us for Himself. It is the ultimate story. If you are looking for a story to be your authority, then you've found it, because this is the story you were created for.**

THE BIG QUESTION

Throughout this study, we are going to put big questions on the table. And the foundational question for us to consider, in light of our need for a story, is: **"Can I trust this Scripture?"**

Can we really trust the Bible? Perhaps you've wondered things like:

What makes the Bible different from other books? Is the Bible true? Is it really God's Word? Is the Bible authoritative, or is it just an ancient text to be placed alongside other ancient texts?

To answer these critical questions, let's first look and see what Scripture says about itself.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Notice that these two verses tell us the Word is authoritative. It also tells us why. **The Bible is the authoritative Word of God because it is breathed by God. This means that when we consider the Bible, we find more than mere words—we find the thoughts of God Himself. The Bible is God's words, His direction, His story, and therefore it carries His maker-of-the-universe authority.**

Verse sixteen also teaches the Bible has profitability. The Bible is good for you. The words of Scripture help the man or woman of God to be equipped for every kind of good work.

BREATHED BY GOD

"All scripture is inspired by God." This is a big statement. In the original language, that phrase means, *breathed by God*. The Bible claims, about itself, that God breathed Scripture.

When you read the very first book in the Bible, Genesis, you see God created us and He breathed physical life into humanity. Scripture says of itself that God also breathed the Word, and the Word gives spiritual life.

In a similar way that God **spoke** and all that we know, see and experience came into existence. So it is with the Bible. In the **most mysterious, supernatural way possible, God spoke to and through flawed humans to create the story of who He is and what He is going to do to restore us to himself.**

If you really believe this, it changes your view of Scripture. This breathed-outness makes the Bible vastly different from every other book and undoubtedly superior. Because, if this book is breathed by God, then it must be true. If it is breathed by God, it must be good and loving for us. Why? Because God is true, and when He breathes His word, His word is true. God is gracious and compassionate and loving and kind toward us, therefore the Word He breathes out is gracious and kind and loving and good for us. Even when Scripture confronts us and challenges us, it is good for us. If the Bible is God-breathed and God is good, then even the verses we don't like are good for us.

Now, let's ask a fair question: **Why would we believe Scripture is God-breathed?**

Sure, the Bible claims of itself that it is God-breathed, but what if another text says of itself that it is God-breathed? Why would we believe that one is God-breathed and not the other?

To help you with that step, let's look at three reasons you can trust the Bible is breathed by God—the reliability of the manuscripts, fulfilled prophecies, and archaeological evidence.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

When historians study ancient writings, they try to decide how reliable the ancient texts are. One of the factors they look at to measure reliability, is the number of manuscripts available. A manuscript is a copy of the original, and the more copies scholars have, the more they can compare the content of the copies together, and the more they can determine the consistency and reliability between the manuscripts.

A second factor they look at is the amount of time that passed between the writing of an original document and the creation of the copy. The closer the date of the original writing to that of the copied manuscript represents, generally speaking, a more reliable document.

Now remember that when talking about ancient writings, we're talking about a time before the printing press. For manuscripts to be copied in the pre-printing press era, scribes would take an important document and meticulously hand write a copy of the original and then pass that document into the community. If you've ever copied something down by hand, then you know errors are possible. You might miss a word or a punctuation mark. When scholars compare the multiple manuscripts and consider the elapsed time between copies and the original, they are doing so to determine what they can trust to be an accurate representation of the original document.

Let me share a few examples. There was a Roman senator named Tacitus whose writings are viewed as reliable. People still study his writings, believing them to be a trustworthy reflection of what Tacitus wrote, and we have 31 manuscripts dated around 1,000 years after the original was penned.

For Plato writings, we have 210 manuscripts from about 1,300 years after the original writing.

We have 251 manuscripts of Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, and the manuscripts were dated at 950 years after the original.

There is another ancient writing historians and scholars marvel over. Its reliability shows an incredible commitment to its preservation as it was passed from generation to generation. We have 1,757 manuscripts of this work, and they're only 500 years after the original. What ancient text has so impressed the scholars? It's Homer's *The Iliad*. This text was so important to the Greeks that they shepherded those words with such great care that we have 1,757 manuscripts.

And then there's the New Testament. There's nothing like it. We have 5,700 manuscripts dating to less than 100 years after the works were originally written, causing historians and scholars to declare the New Testament manuscripts to be 99.5% accurate. The reliability of the biblical manuscripts is unprecedented, and the small differences are related to word order or spelling.

If you include the ancient copies of the New Testament written in other languages, we have 24,000 manuscripts. This total dwarfs that of any other ancient text in the world. The reliability of the manuscripts points us to the truth that God's Word can be trusted.

FULFILLED PROPHECY

Not only do we have reliable manuscripts because God keeps His Word, we also have fulfilled prophecy.

The Bible consists of the Old Testament, written before Jesus came, and the New Testament, written after His life. Prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in Jesus help us trust in the authority of Scripture.

For example, the Old Testament recorded that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, and He was. The Old Testament prophesied that He'd be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and He was. The Old Testament actually predicted that Jesus would be crucified before crucifixion was even invented . . . and then Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross, in our place, for our sin.

There are also fulfilled prophecies within the Old Testament itself. For example, it was promised that Israel would be divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, and that Israel would be dragged away into Assyrian captivity and Judah into Babylonian captivity. That happened.

It was even prophesied that the Babylonian captivity would last for 70 years. That happened. It was even prophesied the name of the King of Babylon would be "Cyrus," one hundred years before Cyrus actually became Cyrus. We don't know who's going to be president in a few years, but Scripture prophesied who was going to be the king a hundred years before he became king. Fulfilled prophecy reveals the authority of Scripture and helps us trust that it's true.

BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGY

The Bible is a story. The Bible is the ultimate story. The Bible is a true story. But, it's also a story full of real facts and real places. The writers of God's Word weren't writing about the Death Star or Hogsmeade, they were sharing details related to actual places you can visit. In fact, Archeologists have visited these places and have repeatedly discovered evidence pointing to the truthfulness of Scripture.

In the late 1800s, there was a famous archeologist and professor at the University of Edinburgh named William Ramsey. William Ramsey said the Bible was "sloppy" historically and Luke, who wrote the Book of Acts, was a particularly sloppy historian. He said he was going to prove that Scripture isn't true.

So, William Ramsey went to Asia Minor which is where the events of the Book of Acts occurred. He went there and instead of disproving Luke's account, he was blown away at the insight of Luke's work. He was overwhelmed by the historical accuracy and the archeological evidence. William Ramsey went to Asia Minor to disprove the Bible and came back a believer. He left a skeptic and returned a Christian, because, as he said, "I confronted the evidence and it was overwhelming. This is true." William Ramsey discovered the truth of the Bible and it became the story and the authority of his life.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

Jesus also had an opinion on God's Word. Jesus grew up in a Jewish culture in which the scribes would copy biblical manuscripts with great care. In Jesus' culture, the Old Testament was believed to be God-breathed. And Jesus agreed. In fact, Jesus taught from the Old Testament as though it were God's Word (Luke 4:16-21). His disciples believed the Old Testament was God's Word. Even Jesus' opponents, who tried to find fault with Him and take Him down, agreed with Him that the Old Testament was breathed, by God, for us.

Jesus even said this in Matthew 5:18. "For truly, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished." Jesus believed the Old Testament was breathed by God. Jesus believed Scripture is breathed by God and it's going to be kept and fulfilled. And Jesus' opinion matters.

I'm going with Jesus' opinion, not just because of the reliability of manuscripts, fulfilled prophecy, and archeological evidence, but because Jesus walked out of the tomb and gave me life. Jesus died and rose to bring me into His story. The Bible, breathed by God, tells me God's story and gives me my story. The Bible is historically true. It is scholastically true. It is prophetically true. It is archaeologically true. And, more than that, it has made me new. The Bible is the God-breathed truth that tells us the story of the world and the story of our lives.

FOOTNOTES

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhN7kWvkXHM>

2 <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/harry-potter-and-the-sacred-text/id1096113994>

Devotional Reading and Reflection

Day 1: Read Hebrews 4:12-16

- What's the main point of this text?
- What does it mean that the Bible is living? What does it mean that the Bible is effective?
- What else do these verses reveal about God, His Word, or yourself?
- How will you respond in prayer or application?

Day 2: Read Luke 8:4-15

- What fruit have you seen the seed of God's Word grow in your life?
- What thoughts or questions did you have when reading this text?
- What important truth does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or encountering His Word?
- How can you help your heart be prepared to receive God's Word in a way that produces fruit?

Day 3: Read 1 Peter 1:13-25

- Which words in these verses speak to the permanence of God's Word?
- What thoughts or questions did you have when reading this text?
- What do these verses reveal about God, His Word, or yourself?
- How will you respond in prayer or application?

Day 4: Read Psalm 119:97-105

- What's the main point of this text?
- Which verse or phrase best reflects your experience with God's Word?
- Which verse or phrase least reflects your experience with God's Word?
- How can you make the truth of verse 105 a more consistent part of your life?

Day 5: Psalm 19:1-14

- What's the main point of this chapter?
- What thoughts or questions did you have when reading this text?
- What do these verses reveal about God, His Word, or yourself?
- How will you respond in prayer or application?

MAIN POINT

The Bible prepares us to live in and enjoy God by telling us His story. God uses Scripture to teach us who He is, how we are rescued by Him, and how to live in right relationship with Him.

LEAN IN

- What makes for a good story? Who do you know that is a great storyteller and what's a story that you have been captivated by?

Leader note: We saw in this week's chapter that we are drawn to being fans because we long to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We strive for a sense of identity and belonging, and we are pulled into the story of the team we root for. Scripture agrees that we are in search of a story. God created us to long for a story, an overarching view of the world that will help us discover our place and give us meaning in the pain and the mundane. Not only did He create us with the longing for story, but He intentionally and beautifully crafted the story that we need. Scripture is the telling of His story because He wants you to know Him. The Bible is 66 books penned over 1500 years by 40 different human authors, and yet it does not tell a bunch of disconnected stories but one overarching story of God Himself creating us, loving us, and bringing us back to Himself through Jesus. This means that the Bible is the supreme and true story that should guide our lives.

LOOK DOWN

- Which passage of Scripture from your daily reading this week meant the most to you. Why?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

- What does Scripture claim about itself in this passage? What do you learn about the role and power of Scripture?

Leader note: As we learned this week, Scripture prepares us to live in and enjoy the story of God. God uses Scripture to teach us who He is, how we are rescued by Him, and how to live. Scripture rebukes and corrects, meaning God is not only saying, "Don't go that way," but also saying, "Come this better way." God is not just a coach rebuking, but also our loving Father correcting. The fact that Scripture claims to be God's Word for this purpose is something that only it can claim about itself. No final, authoritative source can point to another source to validate its claims of authority, otherwise it would cease to be truly authoritative.

- Which of the reasons for trusting in the reliability of God's Word impacted you the most? Why?

LOOK OUT

- What responses to the validity and authority of the Bible might we expect from someone who does not believe in God? How might insights from Eric's message and today's passage help us have those conversations?
- Where do people turn to instead of Scripture for ultimate authority? How do those sources compare to Scripture?

Leader note: The common narrative today in our generation is that we are the authority in our own story. If we believe that, then we will only believe parts of the Bible that support our plans and our desires. We will fashion a Bible around ourselves instead of Him—a story we breathed, not the story He breathed. Furthermore, we will miss out on His blessing if we are the authority in our own lives. Life is much better and fuller when we gladly place ourselves under the authority of the God-breathed Word.

LOOK IN

- What would change for you if you didn't believe Scripture was divinely inspired for the purposes we've discussed today?
- How does seeing yourself within the biblical story change the way you think about your past? Your future? Your present needs? Your hardships?

RHYTHM REMINDER: DAILY DEVOTION

- How do you plan on spending time with God in Scripture this week/month/year? What practical tips or habits have proven helpful and meaningful in your own time of daily devotion?

Leader note: Encourage everyone to practice the rhythm of daily devotion. Point out the five scriptures and personal reflection questions on the pages following each week's chapter. Explain that the suggested reading for each daily devotion is related to the weekly topic—most are referenced in the corresponding chapter (or video). Remind everyone that while pastoral wisdom is a valuable gift to the Church and helpful in understanding, applying, and experiencing biblical truth, God-breathed Scripture is our ultimate authority. Spending time in God's Word is a way to spend time with God—He wants to be known.

Finally, encourage everyone to look over The 7 Rhythms of a Disciple this week (in the "Getting Started" section). Emphasize the fact that spiritual growth as followers of Jesus is more than just increasing in biblical knowledge—it's maturing in Christlike character. Our character is both shaped by and expressed through the rhythms of daily life.

PRAYER

Always close your time together in prayer. Use this space to make note of requests, needs, and answered prayers.