

I don't believe in the Bible. I believe the Bible but I don't believe IN the Bible. Words on paper have no power to save. The Bible is the message of salvation but not the means of salvation. This is not a magical book. You can put the Bible under your pillow at night but it cannot protect you. You can clutch the Bible close but it has no power to heal your broken heart. The Holy Bible is "holy" not because it has a conscience but because the writings that it contains are divinely inspired. In other words, the Bible is a divinely inspired collection of documents that bear witness to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. So when I say, "the Bible says," I fully understand that the Bible doesn't say anything, it reports what others said and did. Even though I do not put my faith in a book, I do believe what the Bible reports. That is what makes our question this morning so important, "Is the Bible reliable? Is the Bible the Word of God or just a compendium of human opinions? Is the Bible a faithful witness to actual historical events or merely an ancient book of fables?"

Every week we have gone to the scriptures in support of a Christian worldview. But now it's time to ask the question, "Can I trust the Bible?" Let me offer 5 steps that lead to a growing confidence in the scriptures.

1. Test it. How do we know the Bible is a trustworthy document? No book has been transmitted with the care that was taken in copying the scriptures. The Essenes bathed before writing. They wrote with a special ink. Each word had to be spoken before it was written. Before they could write the word LORD they had to bathe. They knew how many letters per line. If they made one mistake the entire document had to be destroyed.

In 1947 a Bedouin shepherd discovered an example of Essene handiwork while he was trying to coax his sheep out of a cave in the desert. He picked up rocks and threw them into the darkness. What he heard surprised him. It was the sound of shattered pottery. Following that episode, archaeologists discovered clay containers in 11 different caves that contained over a thousand manuscripts of ancient literature. The oldest one is dated at 300 B.C. The most complete manuscript is the Isaiah scroll, dated at 100 B.C. It was found in its entirety. Before this discovery our earliest full manuscript of Isaiah was dated at 1,000 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls allowed scholars to see manuscripts that were 1,100 years older than anything ever found before. Secular scholars were licking their chops. This was a chance to show how the scriptures had been embellished over the years. After all, the Bible is nothing more than a bunch of copies of copies of copies that scribes added and changed over the years. What they discovered changed the conversation.

Is. 53, written 600 years before the death of Christ, contains 166 words. In comparing the 1100 A.D. version with the 300 B.C. version found among the Dead Sea scrolls, there are only 17 letters that are different between the two manuscripts. A 10% difference sounds significant until you realize that 10 of those 17 letters are nothing more than a change in spelling like baptize and baptise. Four of those letters are simply a stylistic matter of adding a conjunction. None of these differences changes the meaning of the text in any way. The Dead Sea scrolls prove that Isaiah was part of the Hebrew scripture a hundred years before Jesus arrived on the scene.

Chart showing the manuscript support for the Bible....

There are many other reasons we can trust the scriptures other than the care taken in the transmission of the text. There are other factors that testify to its trustworthiness. I mentioned some of them last week:

The Bible contains eyewitness testimony. 1 Cor. 15 for example.

The Bible contains embarrassing testimony. If there is something embarrassing to the author it's probably true. The NT is full of embarrassing details. The disciples are uncaring, falling asleep on Jesus. Peter denies Christ. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, has to claim the body. The women were the heroes of the story. What man writes that down? "We ran away but the women, God bless 'em, went to the tomb to investigate."

The Bible is verified by extra-biblical testimony. Tacitus, Celsus, Josephus.

The Bible contains dozens of prophecies. The odds of finding one man who fulfills just eight specific prophecies about the Messiah would be 1 in 10^{off. by 27 zeroes}. Cover Texas with silver dollars 2 ft. deep, mark one and then send someone out to randomly select that silver dollar.

You don't have to believe the message of the Bible but you have to work really hard to discount what the Bible reports.

2. Taste it. Sample it. Find out what is in this book. If you are a parent you have probably experienced the frustration of a child who claims they do not like a certain food even though they have never tasted it. You have to taste the food before you can say whether you like it. The same is true of the scriptures. Some people reject the Bible before they even know what's in it. As Leonce said in the video, "If I was going to disprove (the scriptures) I had to know what they actually said." I believe Jesus would be the first to say, "You must ruthlessly follow the truth wherever it may lead you." I like what C. S. Lewis once said, "God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than any other slackers. If you are thinking of being a Christian, I warn you: you are embarking on something that is going to take the whole of you, brains and all." C. S. Lewis

In January our whole congregation will be reading through the NT together.

3. Trust it. Not just the manuscripts but the message. Once you establish the reliability of the scriptures you move to whether you believe the story. One of the most convincing reasons to trust the message of the Bible is that Jesus trusted the scriptures.

a. Jesus believed the scriptures carried authority. In His temptation by Satan, Jesus responded each time with, "It is written" and then quoted Scripture. He refuted the Jewish leaders by referring to Scripture ([Matt. 19:3-5](#); [Mark 7:5-13](#); [12:26](#)).

b. Jesus believed the scriptures to be the word of God not the words of men. He referred to Moses' writings as both the commandment of God and Word of God ([Mark 7:8, 9, 13](#)). He referred to David's [Psalm 110](#) as being spoken "by the Holy Spirit" ([Mark 12:36](#)).

c. Jesus affirmed the historicity of the scriptures. He acknowledged that God created Adam and Eve and referred to them as real people, not myths ([Matt. 19:3-5](#)). He referred to Noah and the flood as precedent for what will happen when He returns ([Matt. 24:37-39](#)). He verified the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and of Lot's wife ([Luke 17:28-29, 32](#)). He accepted the story of Jonah and the great fish as actual history ([Matt. 12:40](#)).

d. Jesus believed that even the letters in the scriptures were reliable. In [Matthew 5:17-18](#), Jesus upheld the Law and Prophets and said that it will all be fulfilled, every "jot and tittle." The yod is a small letter that looks like an English apostrophe and the tittle is a reference to a small extension that distinguishes the Hebrew daleth from resh. His point is that even the most minute details of God's Word are reliable and accurate.

e. Jesus claimed that His own words were the very words of God. He said ([John 12:49-50](#)), "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." If Jesus trusted the scriptures so can we.

4. Talk about it. How To Read The Bible class...November 1 in rm. 201.

5. Teach it. The most life-transforming decision I ever made was the decision to teach Jr. High Sunday School. I knew practically nothing about the Bible. As I studied the lesson every week I fell in love with the scriptures. So here is an idea; if you have children. Volunteer to teach in the children's area. As you learn those stories and read them in the scriptures, the light will begin to come on for you. If you can't commit to that then go to Home Point and pick up the Jesus Storybook Bible and start reading it to your kids.

John Wesley once said, "This book had to be written by one of three people: good men, bad men or God. It couldn't have been written by good men because they said it was inspired by the revelation of God. Good men don't lie and deceive. It couldn't have been written by bad men because bad men would not write something that would condemn themselves. It leaves only one conclusion. It was given by divine inspiration of God."

But let's be honest, even if I could prove that the Bible is true some would still reject its message. The truth is that a person might not want the Bible to be true. Lee Strobel was a journalist in Chicago who tried to disprove the Bible. He now says, "To be honest, I didn't want to believe that Christianity could radically transform someone's character and values. It was much easier to raise doubts and manufacture outrageous objections than to consider the possibility that God actually could trigger a revolutionary turn-around in such a depraved and degenerate life." Lee Strobel

What God did for Lee Strobel he has done for millions. And He can do it for you if you
TEST IT – TASTE IT – TRUST IT – TALK ABOUT IT – TEACH IT TO OTHERS