

You Asked For It-1

“The Bible Tells Me So”

Hey Newsong!

I'm so excited to kick off our brand new series called You Asked For It! Now you may be asking the question...what? What did we ask for?

Well A couple of months ago, we started asking you to give us some of the questions you or your friends had about God, faith, the Bible and how it all fits in with our culture...and what we've done, is taken those questions and turned them into a series of messages that we pray will be helpful to you as you continue your walk with Jesus!

Now here's what you need to know about the topics we're going to unpack in this series...

Some of them are controversial. Anytime that we're dealing with delicate topics, topics that we're passionate about, topics that we're still wrestling with...you can feel the tension...

So, in this series...

Expect Tension...

Over the next couple of weeks, expect it to get a little uncomfortable at times...if you expect it, then you won't be surprised by it!

You also need to know that we will be diving into the Bible for our answers...Now that shouldn't surprise you since you're in church today, but just in case you didn't realize that...now you know!

Here's my promise to you...

Everything I say will be said in a spirit of pastoral love and affection for you...If you get upset by something, if you get offended by something...

Just know that was never my intention...I'm your pastor, I love you very much, I want God's best for you and your family...If you don't agree with me, or what I share with you, that's cool...in fact, here's my email

mtolone@newsongchurchnyc.org let's talk about it...

I believe that it's possible to not agree on something and still be friends! So let me know!

The other thing you need to know is that this series is going to be a little bit different.

Normally, I'll say "please turn to a specific chapter and verse, and we go through it bringing out points from the text.

Because I'm going to do my best to answer your questions...we're going to be looking at multiple texts...So if you're a note taker, you're going to love this series...if not...you're **STILL** going to love this series!

The questions we'll be answering today are general questions that you've asked about the Bible and the God of the Bible...

Now I realize that you might be here, and you're skeptical about the reliability of the Bible...You're not sure if you can trust it...You're not sure if it really is "The Word of God."

Which would also mean that you're probably not going to be completely satisfied with getting our answers from the Bible that you're not sure you can rely on...

First of all, If you're here today and you are a skeptic...I want to say thanks for being here...and I totally get why you would feel that way...

I don't have time today to break down how the specific tests that historians use to verify that a document is reliable or not...

But I can refer you to a great book...called "Evidence that demands a verdict" by Josh & Sean Mcdowell. I would also be more than happy to sit with you over a cup of coffee and talk about it...

So with all of that being said...let's start out by showing you why we as Christians, try to live and build our lives according to the Bible...

We believe the Bible is God's **WORD**

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

17 so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.-2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NIV)

Notice that Paul says “All Scripture” The Greek word for all is **pâs** it means “a totality of the whole” in other words all means all...

Paul’s using it as an adjective, and he’s referring to every passage of scripture, and every word in every passage of scripture...

He says that every word of scripture is **theópneustos** (theh-op'-nyoo-stos) God-Breathed they are inspired by God

The Scriptures...the Old & New Testaments are prophetic, God breathed...He spoke, He inspired, and men wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...

This is why Peter tells us

20 *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.-2 Peter 1:20-21 (NIV)*

How is the Bible different from other sacred texts? I'm glad you asked!

Take for instance the sacred texts of Buddhism & Islam. They were each written by one man in his lifetime.

The Bible is 66 books...

Written over a period of 1,500 years...

By more than 40 different authors, from every walk of life from kings to peasants...

It was written on three different continents
(Asia, Africa, Europe)

It was written in three languages; Hebrew, Aramaic & Greek...And yet it flows from beginning to end unpacking a beautiful love story...

We believe it to be the very word of God for us because it's been supernaturally protected...

Look how it's survived over time...

Through persecution...it's been burned, it's been banned, but it just keeps coming back!

We believe it to be the Word of God because of all of its fulfilled prophecies...

Think about this...

The prophet's Isaiah & Micah prophesied about Jesus 700 years before Jesus was born...

Isaiah declared the virgin birth of the Messiah...
Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born Bethlehem! (***Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2***)

David wrote about crucifixion 500 years before crucifixion was even invented, and 1,000 years before Jesus was crucified (***Psalm 22***)

I can go on and on and on...specific people, empires, cities named hundreds of years before they were born or even came into power!

This is an amazing book...It's God breathed
It's God speaking to us...revealing Himself to us...

From Genesis to Revelation it tells us that God exists, that He loves us, that He wants a relationship with us, and how we can have that relationship with Him through His Son Jesus...

We don't just read this book, this book read's us...This book speaks with authority because it's God breathed...it speaks with wisdom and truth, because it's from God...who is all powerful and knows everything...

This isn't an outdated book, it's an eternal book...

It speaks to every culture and generation...

It gives us everything we need to live a God-First Life (***2 Peter 1:3***)

This book is living and active... (***Hebrews 4:12***)

It challenges us, and is brutally honest...

Its words are strong enough to melt hearts (***Jeremiah 23:29***) and yet it encourages us, equips us, and transforms us...

These are just a few reasons why we believe and stand upon the Bible...

“Why is the Bible so hard to understand?”

Now this is a question that I've heard a lot over the years... And I like what Pastor and Author A.W. Tozer wrote in chapter 6 of his book “Man: The Dwelling Place of God”

“To the question, Why is the Bible hard to understand? no snap answer can be given; the pert answer is sure to be the wrong one. The problem is multiple instead of singular, and for this reason the effort to find a single solution to it will be disappointing.”

Now if you find yourself reading a passage that's hard to understand, you're not alone... In fact, the Apostle Peter admitted that he struggled to understand some of Paul's writings...

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.-2 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV)

It wasn't just Peter who struggled to understand Paul...it's possible that the young pastor Timothy had a hard time as well, which is why Paul wrote this to him...

7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this-2 Timothy 2:7 (NIV)

Paul's saying look, some of what i'm writing to you isn't going to make sense right away and that's okay. Don't fall into the trap that you're not smart enough to understand it...Don't assume you'll never understand, instead assume that God will open your understanding!

Remember, the Bible isn't just another book...You can't read it like it's a novel. It's the Word of God for the children of God...Which is why unsaved people read it and don't really understand it, or are transformed by it because they don't have the Holy Spirit to help them...

Paul says it this way...

**14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.-1
Corinthians 2:14 (NIV)**

But if you are born-again...you can understand it because you can see things that an unsaved person can't see...

See you can read the Bible and even memorize some of it...but without the Holy Spirit it's just information...it's what my uncle who led me to the Lord calls "head knowledge"

The Holy Spirit brings it from my head to my heart...now it's "heart knowledge"...Now it goes from information to revelation...

Have you ever looked for something in a dark room?

You know it's in there...so you've got the information...but there's no light so you can't find it. Then you remember that you have a flashlight on your phone...And boom! It's revealed!

The Holy Spirit is the light that reveals the word and then helps us to apply that word to our life...So the information becomes revelation and that leads to transformation!

Think about this...God gives us His Word because He wants us to understand it and apply it...He gives us His Spirit who will help us to understand it and live by it...

So no matter where you are on your spiritual journey with Jesus...you can start to understand and apply the Word to your life!

I've heard it said that Scripture is shallow enough for a child to wade, and deep enough for an elephant to swim in...I love that!

7 The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living.-Psalm 19:7-8 (NLT)

God wants us to know about Him...that's why He's given us His Word...

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.-Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

And it's God's Word that helps us stay on the path...

9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. 10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:9-11 (NIV)

Now there are parts of God's Word that are more difficult to understand...and the Holy Spirit helps us to understand those deeper things...

So I will give you one reason why most Christians don't understand the Bible...

They don't **READ IT**

For the Christian reading God's Word isn't optional...it's the food that we eat...Jesus said...

***4 ... 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*-Matthew 4:4 (NIV)**

I've never met a strong Christian who said "I never read the Bible" No!

Every strong, mature Christian that I know reads the Bible every single day...

They don't just read it...they study it...they meditate on it...they talk about it...they ask others what a text means...

Now the opposite is also true...

I've met many weak and fruitless Christians who all have one thing in common. They do not read, study, meditate or memorize the Bible.

So I could give you a few reasons why you don't read your Bible every day, but you already know why you don't...so instead

I found an article entitled "Ten Reasons to Read the Bible every day by Pastor John Piper" and let me give a couple of them to you...

Scripture **SAVES**

16 Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.-1 Timothy 4:16 (NLT)

Scripture **FREES** us from satan

31 Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. 32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”-John 8:31-32 (NLT)

So here’s the context...Jesus is having a conversation with the Jewish leaders, who don’t think that they are enslaved by the devil. He tells them...

44 For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does...-John 8:44 (NLT)

As I said last week, the devil is not your friend...he’s your enemy...

When Jesus was tempted by the devil...He fought back with the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (**Ephesians 6:17**)

Scripture gives **JOY**

6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.-1 Thessalonians 1:6 (NIV)

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.-Psalm 1:1-2 (NIV)

This life brings with it suffering and sorrow...but through it all God gives us lasting joy...through His Word...and in His presence!

The bottom line is this...

Start reading your Bible...Start memorizing verses...get on the Bible in a year reading plan...attend Bible Study...Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you're reading!

“Why is God so violent in the Old Testament? If God is compassionate why does He speak harshly?”

Another variation of this question would be “why does God seem different in the old testament then in the new testament?”

In the Old Testament He's ordering the destruction of a whole nation...in the new testament He's saying love your neighbor...

The reality is the God of the Old Testament is the SAME God in the New Testament...

17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. -James 1:17 (NIV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.-Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

Throughout all of scripture, we see that God is consistent in His character...He's not just a loving God in the NT and a God who is full of judgment and wrath in the OT...He's perfectly balanced...

King David wrote

8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

***12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;-Psalm 103:8-13 (NIV)***

Now you could push back and say well what about the flood? God wiped out the whole world except for Noah and His family?

And that's very true...He did judge the world. But He gave them 120 years to repent! That's grace!

But what about the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah? He did righteously judge those cities because of their wickedness...but remember, God told Abraham that He wouldn't destroy those cities if He could find 10 righteous people in them...

Think about the Exodus when God is leading His people out of Egypt and through the desert...

His own people are whining and complaining and yet we see that God is patient with them...He serves them...provides for them! Yes we see His judgment, but we also see His mercy...

God loves people...He wants them to choose to follow Him...He says through the prophet Ezekiel...

23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?-Ezekiel 18:23 (NIV)

He says through the Prophet Jeremiah

7 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, 8 and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. -Jeremiah 18:7-8 (NIV)

Now when we flip to the NT we don't just see God's grace and mercy we also see His judgment...

How about Jesus flipping the temple tables?

12 Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. 13 "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,'[e] but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'-Matthew 21:12-13 (NIV)

This is an example of God's judgment...

We won't turn there but in Acts chapter 5 a husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira are caught lying and it costs them their life because they lied to the Holy Spirit...

In the book of Revelation we see the judgment and the wrath of God led personally by Jesus...

So again...we see God's mercy & grace and His judgment and wrath in both the old and new testaments...

Which is why the Apostle Paul writes

22 Notice how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who disobeyed, but kind to you if you continue to trust in his kindness. But if you stop trusting, you also will be cut off. -Romans 11:22 (NLT)

As we come to a close today, I want to let you know that the God of the Bible loves you! He cares for you! He has a purpose and a plan for you! You can get to know Him personally...

You may be thinking...

God can't love me, or forgive me for the things I've done in my life...and that's a lie! He can forgive you, because He forgave me!

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,-Romans 3:23

God doesn't tell this to us to offend us, He tells this to us because He loves us...He wants us to recognize our sin and repent of it...turn away from it.

Why? Because He wants us to know that there really is a heaven and there really is a hell and all of us will spend our eternity in one of those two places...

The only way to Heaven is through Jesus, and Jesus said

5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”-Luke 13:5 (NIV)

If you want to have a right relationship with God and go to Heaven one day you have to come to Him in prayer and admit that you're a sinner...

You've fallen short of His holiness...you've broken His commandments...You've said and done things in your life that grieve Him

But because God loves you He's giving you a chance to repent, to turn your back on sin and turn towards God...

To repent means that you're going to re-route your life...turn your back on sin and with child-like faith give your heart to Jesus Christ...Ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior...

***16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.-John 3:16-17 (NIV)***

Again...notice that God doesn't want you to perish...the word perish means face the wrath of God for unrepentant sin...

The reality is, all who refuse God's gift of salvation...will one day perish...

No one goes to hell by accident. God doesn't send people to hell, when people reject Jesus, they choose hell. There's only two things that you can do with Jesus...you can receive Him or reject Him!

Jesus says that He stands at the door of your heart and He's knocking...He's waiting for you to let Him in. He stands ready to forgive, ready to heal, ready to deliver, ready to restore, ready to fill you with His Spirit!

What's the Holy Spirit Saying To You Today?