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Series: Summer Q&A
Message: Is the Bible Trustworthy?

Transcribed Message
June 21, 2026
2 Peter 1:19

it was just last year that LifeWay did a survey that they do every so often with Ligonier Ministries, and they call it the state of theology in America. There were two questions in particular that had to do with how Americans view the Bible, how they view the Word of God. The first question was, the Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful things, but is not necessarily true. About 48% of Americans, almost half of all Americans, said, yeah, the Bible's a holy book, but it's certainly not a perfect book. Interestingly, 17% of evangelical Christians said they agreed with that statement. I don't know if they know what an evangelical Christian is by definition. The second question: Is the Bible 100% accurate in all that it teaches? Not surprisingly, almost the same percentage, 45%, said that they did not believe that the Bible was 100% accurate in all that it teaches. What they have found over the years of doing this survey is that skepticism and a lack of belief or understanding about what the Bible claims to be is in decline. People just are not necessarily thinking the way you and I might think about the Word of God. Even though over half of all homes in America have a Bible, there is a decline in the appreciation for God's Word.

So we are, in these summer months, stepping away from our study in the Gospel of John. We've been working our way through the Gospel of John. We're pausing it for these summer Sundays, and we are doing a summer Q&A, which really has kind of evolved into a Q&A largely focused on the Bible and the truth of God's Word. Last Sunday we looked at the question: is the Bible true? And this Sunday we want to look at the question: is the Bible trustworthy? Next Sunday I want to answer the question: how do we make sense of the Bible? How are we to understand it? So, the Bible is self-evidently the Word of God. It is its own authority. When our eyes are opened to believe, we can see it. And I think we'll see that at the end this morning, hopefully.

Very quickly, our review of what we looked at last week. The Bible is extraordinary, and it's extraordinary for all kinds of reasons. It's a library of books, 66, even though we have it in just one volume, right? It's 66 books written by over 40 different human authors over a period of some 1,500 plus years, three different languages, three different continents. And yet, no other book could lay claim to anything like that.

And then finally, the Bible is revealed, inspired, inerrant, and sufficient. I think there's a progression there. If you believe the Bible is revealed, that this is in fact God making known to us what was before unknown, and then He is the one who has inspired it, He's the one who's breathed it out, then a holy, righteous, truthful God certainly can't produce something that's not truthful. And so it is inerrant. And then all of that added together means it is sufficient. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, all of Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and all of it is profitable for us. It teaches us, it rebukes us, it corrects us, it trains us in righteousness. So, you can trust the Bible this morning.

I want to begin just by giving some counter thoughts of those people who would be skeptical of the Bible. Some of the common objections to why it is that they would see the Bible as they do, as being less than the Word of God, might be simply to say, well, the Bible is a human book. It's written by human authors. And yet we know, as I just said, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God through human authors, but not written from their own words.

The Bible is outdated. I mean, man, here we are, we're in the 21st century, are you kidding me? We're supposed to live our life by a document, by a book, that is literally thousands of years old? How could you expect me to do that? And so it's very common for people to think, well, simply the Bible is outdated.

Thirdly, the Bible is offensive. The Bible is offensive. And I suppose a lot of people, when they would think of the Bible as being offensive, might think in terms of social issues, like, you know, the Bible says that marriage is between a man and a woman. The Bible says that there are only two genders; you know, those kinds of issues today. the Bible offends a lot of people in the things that it says, and so that would be a very common objection. Maybe the most offensive verse in the Bible is the very first one, in the beginning, God. And

you know what? God declares He's the Creator. He declares He's the Sovereign One. He declares in that statement that we're all accountable to Him, and that offends a lot of people. They don't want to be accountable to anybody.

And then number four, the Bible is full of errors, and we won't go into all of what that usually refers to.

Lastly, the Bible is fiction. People simply do not see it as being truthful. I mean, really? There's a talking serpent, a talking snake in Genesis 3. There's a man who gets swallowed by a whale. People are rising from the dead, all kinds of things that just press credulity. So many people would say the Bible is simply fiction.

So why do you, as a follower of Jesus Christ, if that is in fact your conviction, why do you believe the Bible is trustworthy? So let's look at that this morning. We have a lot to accomplish, and so I want to put before you nine reasons that support the trustworthiness of Scripture, and we're going to be flying not only at 30,000 feet, but we're going to be flying at about Mach 2, so buckle in, right? You could literally spend a Sunday on any one of these if you wanted to, and we will not be able to do that, so let's look.

Sometimes I think the very first reason given for why the Word of God is as it claims to be might very well be fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy. It's perhaps the most powerful and convincing of all of the arguments that we can put forward. We live in a day and a time when sports betting is just everywhere, about everything, right? Betting in general has captured our culture. We spend billions and billions of dollars betting on things about the future, and I don't know if you know this, but predicting the future is very difficult. You can't oftentimes tell what's going to happen in the future, can you? And yet that's what much of our culture has given themselves over to. But what we have in the Bible is something that is unique to any other book in all of human history. We have a book that predicts the future in so many ways, on so many levels, on so many events and so many things that are going to happen. I don't think there is another religious book that lays claim to the things that the Bible does with regard to this singular area of predictive prophecy.

Someone has suggested that almost 27% of the Bible is prophetic when it was written. Let's just take one small category, the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Just work your

way through Scripture. In Genesis 3, you have the first promise that the Messiah is going to come through the seed of the woman. And then you go to Genesis 12, and it's going to come through Abraham. Then you go to Genesis 49, and it's going to come through Judah. Then you go to 2 Samuel 7, and it's going to be the tribe and lineage of David, out of the household of David. Micah tells us that Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem, right? Isaiah says that when the Messiah comes, he's going to open the eyes of the blind. He's going to open the ears of the deaf. He's going to cause the lame to walk. Psalm 22 says that there is going to be a terrible and tragic death that the Messiah is going to experience in detail that nobody could have ever written about before it happened. And then in Psalm 16, it speaks of the fact that he will be raised again.

Well, if you just take those, there's some 300 Old Testament prophecies about just the first coming of Christ alone. Someone has said mathematically, if you just take eight of those prophecies, and if they were all to come true in one man, after they had been prophesied hundreds and hundreds of years before, the odds would be one in 100 quadrillion. Now that's more money than even Elon Musk has. One in 100 quadrillion just to prophesy correctly eight of those things. And yet, that's just about Jesus.

There are prophecies about the rise and fall of nations hundreds of years before it happened. There are prophecies about the Jewish people in the past, there are more yet to come, and there are all kinds of prophetic events that the Bible speaks about yet still future. So, you look at that, and you say there isn't any other book in all the world like the Bible in the way that it states events that are yet to come and realizes the fulfillment of those.

The second one is what we simply call archaeological evidence. There are literally hundreds and hundreds and thousands of examples that we could give with regard to archaeological evidence. I want to pick just one. If you believe the Bible is the Word of God, and you cherish it, and you read it, you know that one of the great Old Testament characters is, of course, King David. For many, many decades, skeptics and critics of the Bible simply were of the belief that because there was no archaeological evidence for a man named David, that he was a myth. At very best, they said David was a small-time

leader of a band of renegades, and so they just dismissed all that the Bible says, which is a lot about David, doesn't it? And so that whole prophecy and that whole revelation about this man David was simply called into question until, in an archaeological dig near the city of Dan, they uncovered inscriptions that talked about David, the king of Israel. Time magazine even went so far as to say the idea that David no longer exists can no longer be held as a credible view.

All of these things are supported by archaeology. The Hittites were an unknown people group that the Bible speaks about but had not been understood historically until archaeology uncovered inscriptions that talked about the Hittites. You know, in Luke chapter 3 and verse 1, Luke is a historian, he's a researcher, and he goes through a litany of names of political leaders. A man named Lysanius is one of the ones that Luke mentions, and again, critics of the Bible pointed to that and said, that guy doesn't even exist. We've never even heard of him. He couldn't possibly be who Luke says he is. And yet archaeology uncovered evidence with Lysanius's name linking him to the very thing that Luke said he was. Even the Roman historian Tacitus wrote about Pontius Pilate and gave the incorrect word for what it was that Pontius Pilate did in terms of the kingdom that he ruled over. Luke tells us exactly that he was a procurator and he was not the procouncil.

Here is the statement that one archaeologist made, there have been no archaeological finds that have ever contradicted the Bible. Contradicted. Now there are a lot of things that we still would want to see discovered, but every archaeological discovery to this point has been those that give support and affirmation of what the Bible says.

The third one is internal consistency. The internal consistency. Again, just go back to where we started. From Genesis to Revelation, we have 40 different authors over a period of 1,500 years writing from three different continents. A lot of these guys never even knew each other. They didn't even live within the age range that they could have known each other. And yet here they are, the internal consistency of the Bible.

Just take for example, if I were to pick 40 people out of this group this morning and say, I want you guys to all write an essay on this, but what I want you to write on is a controversial subject of some kind, whatever that might be. What are the chances that 40

people just randomly would write something that was all in harmony and agreement? Because that's what the Bible does. The Bible isn't just dealing with small things, is it? The Bible is dealing with and answering the biggest questions of life. Is there a God? Where did all of this come from? How did this universe get here? Who are we? Why are we here? Where are we going? What are we supposed to be doing? All the biggest questions that humans can actually ever think of the Bible speaks to and the Bible addresses.

Take the most significant one that we can think of and that is, how is it that we, after we die, can have any sense of certainty that we're going to live with God forever? I mean, it's the most pressing question that humanity can answer, right? Everybody is going to die at some point. It is appointed unto man once to die. How do you know what's on the other side of death? Well, the Bible uniquely answers that. It answers that from Genesis to Revelation with an internal consistency that tells us that these authors aren't just giving their ideas, they are under the inspiration and breathing out the Word of God.

In Genesis chapter 4, Abel brings an offering by faith. You get to Genesis 15:6, maybe the most significant verse in all the Old Testament, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. That's all he did. He just believed. He believed God and God imputed and gave to him his own righteousness. Habakkuk 2:4 says the same thing. The just shall live by faith. You get to our study of the Gospel of John, right, and 98 times John says what you need to do to have eternal life is to believe. What has happened? Down through human history, humanity has a way of messing things up, don't they? And they've wanted to add to the simplicity and the beauty of the Gospel of just believe and receive eternal life. We've accomplished and managed to come up with a whole list and litany of things that people have come up with. It started in Acts 15 when people said, you know what, I think circumcision is necessary for salvation. That was the first theological issue the early church grappled with, adding something to simply believing. And so today we have all kinds of things that get added by churches and individuals, whether it's obey the Ten Commandments, or believe and go to church, or believe and be baptized, or believe and walk forward. Add whatever you want. No, the internal consistency of the Holy Spirit's message is one of the things that speaks to why this book is unique.

The fourth one. External verification. And here we're simply talking about other historical documents, other historical documents outside of the Bible, verifying and speaking about the very things that the Bible speaks of – names and places and events. One of the most named thing in all ancient literature is the flood. The flood is one of the most commonly referenced events in ancient literature. The flood. A mass of people coming out of Egypt is something that is spoken of in other ancient documents outside of the Bible. A Jewish historian by the name of Josephus said he was not a believer, he was not a Christ follower. He lived contemporarily in the first century, not with Christ, but immediately after. He said, this man Jesus is a wise and good man who did many miracles. He talked to people who saw what Jesus did. He was a Jewish historian.

Number five, scientific accuracy. Now when you say scientific accuracy, the first thing is the pushback of, whoa, I think you misspoke there. Scientific accuracy is in some way going to be a statement of the trustworthiness of the Bible? I didn't think the Bible and science agreed with each other. I thought they were opponents of each other. Well, I think you could fairly say the Bible doesn't agree with evolutionary materialism. The Bible doesn't agree with evolutionary uniformitarianism. That's true. There is a conflict. But the Bible does not disagree with science.

Just this one example. The Bible obviously was written before microscopes and telescopes and satellites and any kind of technology. And Jeremiah says in chapter 33 and verse 22, the host of heaven, the stars of heaven cannot be numbered. Okay, that's what Jeremiah said. For decades, for centuries, scientists were convinced they could count the stars. They could count the stars, and they did it, they thought. Hipparchus said there was 1,026 stars. Johann Kepler said no, no, that's not right, there's 1,006. Today that sounds funny, but they literally within the scientific community were convinced that they could map the heavens. They could count the stars, and they knew with certainty how many there were. Even though Jeremiah said they are innumerable, and now we know, of course, that there are billions upon billions, not just stars, but galaxies that extend beyond what we could ever imagine.

The sixth one, manuscript evidence. You know, one thing that the critics often say about the Bible is the Bible has been transcribed and transmitted and copied and passed down so many times that we don't really know what it is that we have. We don't know what is true. And actually, just the opposite of that is true. Just the opposite of that is true. Because we have so many copies, we can with great certainty look back and discern and discover and see what it is that these writers and these copyists have given to us.

We have, just for the New Testament, over 5,000 manuscripts just of the New Testament. Of the books of the New Testament, 5,000. That's more than all the other ancient documents combined. God has preserved His Word. There are 25,000 plus portions and pieces of the Scriptures that we have in various museums and places around the world. Some within 100 and even perhaps as close as 50 years to the original writing. So, we have manuscript evidence for the Word of God unlike any other ancient manuscript or holy book.

Number seven, I mentioned this last week, I'm just going to say it again, just this whole matter of honesty and transparency regarding failure. I mean, you know, the writers of Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they just put forward the truth. They were concerned only about the truth, and they were putting everything out there about themselves even though it wasn't very positive. I mean, today we have public relations groups that whenever there's a problem, they move into action and they put as good a spin as they possibly can on whatever's happening. God didn't do that. God just shows us how His people made their way through life and all the challenges that go with that. Their failures, their shortcomings, their sins – they're all there. And they're there because we don't count on those people to save us. We count on God to save us and to redeem us. They're in one sense, yeah, they're the heroes of the story in a limited sense. God's the hero of the story in the biggest sense. And He shows to us with great honesty and integrity who He is and how He redeems even the most challenging situations.

Number eight, the Bible is the most published and it's the most indestructible book in the history of humanity. Anywhere between five and seven billion copies of the Bible have been printed. There's about a hundred million copies of the Bible that are printed

every year. And that doesn't even count the fact that just last year, the You version of the Bible experienced their one billionth download. One billion. The Bible is like no other book. And that in the light of what? In the light of people who have been committed down through history to destroy it, to wipe it out, to make certain that the Bible was no longer available. I mean, there were men who committed their life to just doing that, destroying God's Word. And yet God's Word prevailed because Jesus said, heaven and earth may pass away, but my Word is going to remain forever.

And then last one, changed lives. Changed lives. Just think of the global influence of the gospel. The global influence of Christianity, of the Word of God. The writer of Hebrews says the Word is alive and powerful. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. I mean, it pierces and divides. It causes us to see ourselves as we really are and the world as it is. And it is unlike anything else.

I'm going to share with you one paragraph of a testimony that I received this week. This is the testimony of a person from Covenant. The context of this is the hardness of their life for many, many years and just the difficult upbringing they experienced and many, many challenges. And then this happened. "One night, I was distraught because of another failed relationship and somehow found the little green Gideon Bible I received when I joined the service. On September the 3rd, I made the decision to receive Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I started to read that little Bible. I still have it. It was the King James Version. I did not know what I was reading, but that little book began to change me."

Is that amazing or what? That's the story of so many. That's the story of all of us, obviously. But some of you that came to Christ later in life, that is a reflection of your story too, isn't it? Because it's the life-giving, life-changing power of the Word of God and of the gospel in our life. Here this person is reading this little green Gideon New Testament. They don't even know what's in their hand in terms of the preciousness, the value, the greatness of this little book. But somehow, because the Holy Spirit is at work in their life and opening their eyes and giving them understanding of this eternal truth, their life takes a significant turn, and they walk with God today.

Let me give you two concluding thoughts. The first one is the Bible is beyond human reasoning. The Bible is beyond human reasoning. Now, I don't mean by that that the Bible is unreasonable. And I don't mean by that the Bible is intellectually indefensible. What I mean by that is this, the Bible does not derive its authority from human reasoning. The Bible does not derive its authority from human reasoning. Listen to what Peter says in 2 Peter 1 and verse 16. For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. We didn't follow cleverly devised myths.

I say to you today, there's a lot of cleverly devised myths, just as there was in Peter's day. That's just the nature of things, right? So, what dominates our culture today? What is it that lays claim to saying that is true, that might not be true? That's true. We can accept that. We believe that. We don't believe that. How do we know something is true? I can help answer that question if I know the presuppositions that you bring to whatever it is that we're talking about. If I know what your worldview is, then I can almost certainly understand where you're going to go in answering the question, how do we discover truth? Because if your worldview is there is no God, or I don't know if there's a God, then I kind of know where you're going to land about how do we understand and know truth. If you believe there's a God and He's the creator and sovereign and He rules over all, then I have a pretty good idea where you're going to go to answer that question too.

But in our 21st century culture, two things dominate our world, science and technology. Science and technology. And what do science and technology demand? They demand that we see it to believe it. How is it that you can possibly prove anything that is supernatural by a natural means? How can you naturally prove anything in the supernatural realm? You can't. You can't. And that's why when we talk about science and the Bible, or science and Christianity. There isn't a conflict between science and the Bible as we understand science. But there's a conflict between a pursuit of truth that begins with there is no God and I'm just here to figure it out on my own, and one that believes that there is a God and he has spoken.

Our problem, you see, is not intellectual. Our problem is moral. It is spiritual. It is what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, for the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest they do believe and they come to see and understand the glory of the gospel. So, there's this spiritual warfare going on in which the enemy is blinding people. Sometimes he's blinding them through things like science and technology. We can put forward nine reasons as we did this morning for the trustworthiness of scripture. We can put forward 19 reasons. We can go to 29. We can go to 59. But you will not believe if the Holy Spirit of God does not give you understanding and open your eyes to see and believe.

It was just a couple weeks ago that I mentioned that scientist and I put some articles out there. There's another article out there about a scientist. This article I came across yesterday was entitled "How Science Led an Atheist Harvard Physicist to Christ". This man, maybe you have heard of him, Michael Guillen, believed that science explained everything. This guy got his advanced degrees at Cornell. He taught physics at Harvard University. He has a PhD in physics, a PhD in mathematics and a PhD in astronomy. And he was an Emmy award-winning science editor for ABC News. He was on ABC News a lot in the years past. While studying astrophysics at Cornell, Guillen became fascinated by what scientists called the missing mass problem. He said, I realized I couldn't live by this motto, seeing is believing. It just doesn't hold up to scrutiny.

The discovery launched what he called a scientific and spiritual quest. He studied Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Confucianism, transcendental meditation, nothing satisfied and then a fellow Cornell student, an attractive young woman named Laurel, challenged him to what? Read the Bible. I read it grudgingly because I wanted to spend more time with this pretty co-ed, he said. They've been married for 34 years. He said, the Old Testament initially struck me as familiar, echoing themes that he had encountered in other religions, he said, but when I came to the New Testament, it was entirely different. He said it was like the curtains parting and birds chirping and the sun shining. More surprising, he said, was the connection he saw between the teachings of Jesus and the quantum mechanics he was simultaneously studying in graduate school. I have had that same thought many times.

It took 20 years. It took 20 years from those initial encounters and the reading of the word, 20 years later, he was moving through some elite scientific institutions in the world and surrounded by brilliant scientists who scoffed at Christianity. Gideon recalled standing among fellow physicists at Harvard discussing the Nobel Prize winning physicist Robert Millikan. During the conversation, one distinguished colleague dismissed Millikan's accomplishments with a cutting remark, too bad he is such a lowbrow. He's a Christian. The comment stunned him, he said. Mentioning God in scientific circles often produced awkward silence, so for years, he concealed much of his growing faith, choosing, as he put it, to go along to get along. He said, as he looked back, I wish I had been braver. He made this statement. There has been nothing in the Bible that I have read that contradicts anything I've learned as a scientist about the universe. It is not going to be realized by human reasoning. It's going to be realized because the Holy Spirit opens our eyes.

One last thing. The Bible is better than hearing God audibly speak. And you say, wait a minute. I want to hear God audibly speak. Where did you get an idea like that? Well, I got it from a guy named Peter. Because in 2 Peter chapter one, he says, we saw the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter, James, and John, they saw it. They heard the voice of the Father saying, this is my beloved Son into whom I'm well pleased. Peter writes, in 2 Peter chapter one and verse 19, that the word of God that we hold in our hand is more reliable than any human experience we could ever have. He had the most amazing experience that almost any human, maybe other than Moses, had. And yet he said, I would rather read the truth of the word of God and put my trust in it than in any human experience I might have. I have often said, people frequently say, I wish God would speak to me. I'm convinced that God thinks so very often, I wish they would read what I have written, heed it, and believe it, and do it.

What do we take away? The most powerful witness to the Bible is to let the Bible speak for itself. Spurgeon is the one who said, it's like a lion. You don't keep a lion in a cage. You just let the lion out, and the lion will do its own work and defend itself. My friends, only the Bible tells us who God is, truly. Only the Bible tells us who we are. Only the Bible tells us how it is that we can live with God forever. You're going to die one day. I'm

going to die one day. You've got to know what is beyond this life. And God has given us a book in which he tells us that the most pressing question that humanity asks itself sometimes on a daily basis is how can I know with certainty what happens beyond this life? And God's given us the answer.

He has told us that when his Son Jesus came to this earth and died on the cross, and he paid for my sin and yours, that God has given to us the free gift of eternal life if we'll simply believe that what he says about his son and about what he did for us is true. Would you believe that this morning? If you haven't, just say yes to God this morning. Trust him right where you're sitting that what he has done for you and Jesus will change the trajectory of your life here and your life forever.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, thank you for this amazing and incredible book. Thank you that we have the word of God in our own language. Lord, we pray that you by your Spirit will compel us and call us and urge us to be people of the book, to be people who love your word, people who read your word, people who heed your word, obey your word, live out your word. Lord God, build up this church as you have promised that you would do by means of this word. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.