

Is the Bible Trustworthy?

Selected Passages

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I don't know about you, but I do love the turning of a calendar page and the start of a brand-new year! 2025 is here whether you like it or not...whether you are ready or not! And just like the message bumper suggested a new year represents in many ways the possibilities of a fresh start and of second chances and new beginnings.

To me, the start of a new year brings with it a sense of optimism and hope...and it's a time to RESET if you will...to recenter and realign and make sure that we are living for what really matters.

Illus. TV Reset – Over the break, we were watching TV one afternoon and all of the sudden something just happened!

- The screen went blank...
- I immediately start asking Debbie and the kids what they did...
- I get the remote and just start pushing buttons...

NOTHING was working...and so I did the only thing I knew how to do and that was to unplug the television and restart and RESET it! And once I did this everything started working again.

Technology has to be reset from time to time – and so too does our lives. It's just natural. We get going and through the year and:

- our priorities get out of line...
- we get tired...
- trials and tests come our way...

AND SOMETIMES, we just need to RESET!

And that's what I hope this series will help us with. Here at the start of the new year, we're going to answer what I believe are six of the MOST important questions we can ask regarding the Christian life.

And HOW we answer these questions will determine the strength of or RESET. Questions like:

- Does prayer really change things?
- How can I know the will of God for my life?
- Can I know for sure I'm saved and can I lose my salvation?
- How can I leave a legacy – i.e., make a difference and pass my faith on?
- Does church membership really matter?

And today, we begin with the most fundamental of all questions, and it's the title of the message today: **Is the Bible Trustworthy?**

Now, this is a GREAT question...and it's one that we need to answer for one, primary reason.

See, we are a Bible-believing, Bible-loving church.

If you are a guest, you need to know that whenever you come to Champion Forest, whether it's for a service like this OR a life group OR a midweek opportunity, we may have different studies going on and different activities and ministries that we are engaging in, but we have only ONE text that governs what we do AND what we believe!

It is this B-I-B-L-E – “Yes, that's the book for me” ...and as a church, we believe that the Bible is God's FULL and FINAL authoritative word to his people.

Now, I'm going to explain to you today, why we believe this, but in believing in this, you can see why it's important to answer the question, “Is the Bible trustworthy?”

BECAUSE...we are teaching it as the authoritative word of God that speaks to the most important matters we'll ever deal with or think about!

- What we believe about life, and the sanctity of life, and being made in the image of God comes from the scripture...
- What we believe about creation and the fall of man – i.e. sin and redemption – it all comes from the scripture...
- What we believe about matters of eternal life and spiritual warfare and what happens after we die...

Our viewpoint on all of this does not originate from our own thinking OR how we feel in the moment...it all comes from what the Bible says.

Christians SHOULD be...and I say SHOULD be because not all are – Christians SHOULD be Bible-centered and Bible-focused.

You come here; you are going to get the Bible! And so, I encourage you to make sure you have a copy of God's Word. If you don't have one, we'll help get you one! Go by our Library after the service today or ask someone at our welcome desk – we will get you a copy of God's Word.

The greatest sound in all of the earth to me, is at the start of these messages – I start them ALL the same! If you are listening close, you will hear me say, “Take your copy of God's Word and turn with me to...” – And I LOVE hearing the pages of the Bible turn.

Talk about RESET! And this is all introduction by the way – talk about RESET.

You want to RESET, get you a physical copy of God’s Word so that you can underline and highlight and engage with the text...get you a journal and follow along, and take notes – and you are on your way to a great RESET to start the new year.

Illus. Vision/journals

If we’re putting such a premium and emphasis on the Bible, we need to be confident it’s trustworthy.

And by the way...we are Bible-people...we are also a Jesus people, and to prove my point on WHY the Bible and its trustworthiness is so important, listen to this quote by the late pastor and preacher:

W.A. Criswell: “You wouldn’t know God without the Book. You wouldn’t know Jesus Christ – not even his name – without the Book. You’d have no assurance of salvation or of heaven without the Book. Our whole life and hope lies in the promise and assurance and revelation of the Lord God written here in the Book...”

So, this book, the Bible – which is actually a library of 66 books, doesn’t just contain the Word of God, it IS the word of God. And therefore, we affirm and agree with the reformer, **Martin Luther: “When the Scripture speaks, God speaks.”**

We are in line with ALL the reformers who pushed for and advocated the Church to embrace “sola scriptura” – that scripture is the ultimate source of authority and truth – absolute truth!

IF we are to really believe this and walk in this and live this out, then it’s imperative we answer this question: **“Is the Bible trustworthy?”**

Now, to help me outline this message today, I am pulling from our discipleship book called, *NextStep*.

NextStep is a conversational workbook that is meant to help new believers begin to grow and lay a solid foundation as they start their Christian journey. I’ve taken scores of people through this book – from Ph.D.’s in universities to high school seniors. We actually have a middle school and high school version of *NextStep*.

Illus. NextStep – If you are interested in going through this book with someone – it’s designed to be a one on one guide – it’s got lines you can fill out, questions you can answer – if you are interested in taking someone THROUGH the book OR going through it yourself, just text the word: **NEXTSTEP** to 77379, and we’ll get someone connected with you.

This is a MAJOR way we fulfill our core value of “making disciples”. We LOVE making converts and seeing the waters of baptism move, but that’s the starting point. We want to move people along in the Christian faith and if you are just starting out OR need a RESET, let us know so we can walk with you through this workbook.

One of the sessions in this workbook, is the subject we're dealing with today – the trustworthiness of scripture. And so, in efforts to answer this question, “Is the Bible trustworthy?”, I'm going to borrow the outline that is provided in, *NextStep*.

It shows essentially: **Four Avenues of Examination**

1. Uniqueness of the Bible

There is something different about the Bible when we compare it to any other type of literature or genre or some other book out there that is considered holy...really, you can't compare anything to the Bible.

Name another book or collection of books that have been written over a period of 1500 years, by more than 40 different authors, who wrote at different time and in different contexts and settings that is contributed to from three different continents, written in three different languages, consists of different styles and genres within it has survived time and historical attempts to stamp it out and yet has stood the test of time and carries one common theme – the theme of redemption throughout its entirety – NO OTHER BOOK is like this book!

Let me give you several claims the Bible makes of itself regarding its substance and nature, and tell me what other book makes these claims? This just adds to its uniqueness!

Claim # 1 – It is inspired

NOT inspired like after you eat good Tex-Mex or see an emotional movie or something. By inspired, I mean it comes from above!

2 Timothy 3:16 – “All (notice the scope) Scripture is breathed out by God (God-inspired) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

I love how commentator, **Warren Wiersbe** puts this. He writes: **“God's Word is profitable for doctrine (what is right), for reproof (what is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right).”**

How can it do this? It's inspired.

2 Peter 1:20-21 – “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

“Carried along” is a nautical term. It's the picture of wind moving the sail of a ship. And what Peter is teaching here is that you have common men under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It's not dictation, but rather God using the personalities, circumstances and backgrounds of different people in order to compose what we know of as the Bible. They penned exactly what God wanted them to pen, and God produced through them what we refer to as the Holy Scripture, and ALL of it is inspired!

In seminary, I was taught what is called "verbal plenary inspiration" – which means ALL of the Bible is inspired – breathed out by God – Song of Solomon is just as inspired as the book of Romans as the gospel of John as the book of Job).

Claim #2 – (that adds to its uniqueness) **It is living**

Again, this is NO NORMAL book. I've used the saying a lot and it's true – when we read the Bible, it reads us!

Heb. 4:12 – **"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."**

Jer. 23:29 – **"Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"**

There is an active power in the word of God. This is WHY I fill so many sermons with SO much scripture. The power is in the Word of God. I really believe I could stand up here and simply read scripture and people would get saved and their lives could be changed – it is a living book!

I could give you so many great quotes from theologians from the past speaking of the living word of God. May I give a few?

John Owen: **"This word is said to be 'quick' or 'living' because it has a vital power, force, and efficacy... It is not a dead letter, as the law was, but accompanied with a living spirit and a quickening power."** (Rom. 10:17 – faith comes by hearing...)

F.F. Bruce: **"The Word of God probes the inmost recesses of our spiritual being and brings the subconscious motives to light...No reality about us ever escapes God's sight; everything lies naked and powerless before him."**

A.W. Pink: **"God's Word is not only living, but energetic, dynamic, operative. It has a force that is effective, producing real results. Like a sharp sword it pierces, cuts, divides."**

William Barclay: **"The Word of God is not simply something written in a book; it is something which God spoke and speaks. It is therefore alive with all the life of God."**

There is nothing that is living and powerful like the Bible. It adds to its uniqueness.

Claim #3 – It is true

Psalm 119:160a – “The sum of your word is truth...”

2 Sam. 7:28a – “And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true...”

John 17:17 – “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

God’s word claims to be flawless...perfect (Ps. 19:7) ...it’s also:

Claim #4 – It is eternal

Isaiah 40:8 – “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”

Psalm 119:89 – “Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

Matt. 24:35 – “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

The word of God claims to be inspired, living, true, eternal – ALL of this just adds to its uniqueness!

The second avenue of examination to explore as we seek to answer this question, “Is the Bible trustworthy?” is:

2. Confirmation through History

Now, we did a sermon on the scripture in our *These Things Never Change* series from a year or two ago. I’m not expecting you to remember this, but I showed you what is referred to as the “bibliographical test” that all ancient literature is exposed to...if it is to be deemed credible in ANY way, it has to go through and pass this “bibliographical test”.

Here's how this works. Using the manuscripts of what we have – copies of the text, we look at two things:

- AGE – how old is the manuscript copies do we have?
- NUMBER – how many copies of the manuscript do we have?

If we want to discover the historicity and credibility of any text – this is what we ask – how high is the manuscript authority? Do we have old manuscripts and do we have a lot of them?

If so, then we HIGH manuscript authority. This is the “bibliographical test” that all ancient literature is exposed to in order to determine exactly how credible and trustworthy it is!

Let me show it to you like this and hold it up against the Bible.

1. Aristotle's "Poetics" – this was written around 343 B.C. We have NO original autograph. The earliest copy we have is dated 1100 A.D. So again, think AGE and NUMBER – the time gap – 1400 years...number of copies or manuscripts – 49.
2. Caesar's "Gallic Wars" – no original autograph. Written somewhere between 50-60 BC. Earliest copy we have 900 A.D. (nearly 1000-year time gap between the original and the manuscript copy) – number of copies we have – 10
3. Bible – No original autographs...but we do have over 10,000 copies (part or whole) of the Old Testament, and over 5,000 copies (part or whole) of the New Testament. The earliest copy we have – 200 A.D. (time gap – 100 years).

That is what you call a very high manuscript authority! Do you want to know what comes in second place behind the Bible?

4. Homer's Iliad – No original autograph - Written 900 B.C. earliest copy we have 400 B.C. (time gap of 500 years) – copies - 643 – that's 2nd place to the Bible in manuscript authority.

Illus. Bruce Metzger at OBU extra credit – Dr. Metzger died in 2007 at the age of 93. He was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary and was a foremost scholar of Greek, New Testament.

Now, I want you to listen to the names of some of the books that he wrote:

- *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration.*
- *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations.*
- *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance.*

I went to his lecture and did not understand one thing he said! I almost blacked out reading you the names of the books he's written!

Here is the point. This man was really, really smart. Listen to what he said regarding the number of copies we have and the small-time gap that exists between the original and a copy.

Bruce Metzger - "The quantity of New Testament material is almost embarrassing in comparison with other works of antiquity."

Dr. Craig Blomberg is a New Testament Professor at Denver Seminary. He echoes Metzger writing referring to the New Testament text: (they) **"have been preserved in far greater number and with much more care than any other ancient documents."**

He concludes in his book “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament” that “97-99% of the New Testament can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt.”

The thought is often said is if it has that many copies and no original autographs surely there’s been mistakes! You can’t really trust what’s in our hands because it’s been changed due to mess-ups and human error.

In “Reinventing Jesus” by Dan Wallace (lectured at the Lanier Library) writes concerning the perceived mistakes that so many people like to attribute to the Bible. Here is a quote from the book:

“By far the most significant number of variants is spelling differences. The name John, for example, may be spelled with one ‘n’ or with two. Clearly a variation of this sort in no way jeopardizes the meaning of the text. Spelling differences account for seventy-five percent of all variants...”

He goes on to say the other 25% of the textual variants has to do with synonyms such as one copy saying “he” another “Lord” or another the actual name, but there are no differences that threaten the actual meaning of the text.

The point is that confirmation through history – how we determine the reliability of ancient texts is extremely strong when it comes to the Bible – internal evidence AND external evidence point to the veracity of scripture.

The third avenue of examination in determining the trustworthiness of scripture is:

3. Witness of Archeology

A man named Bruce Feiler wrote a NY Times bestselling book about the Holy Lands called *Walking the Bible*. I don’t know that he is a believer. He interviewed Dr. Eliezer Oren, a professor at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He’s 87 years old and one of the leading archeologists in the world.

Feiler asks how Oren’s archeological research had affected his evaluation of the Old Testament of the Bible. Oren said that when he was a young man, he was completely dismissive of the Old Testament as accurate history, but his research caused him to respect the Hebrew Scriptures.

Feiler asked him, “Can you give the Old Testament a grade in terms of archeological accuracy?” And he wrote, “For the first time all morning, he grinned. ‘A++.’”

This is from one of the leading archeologists in the world! Did you know through archeological digs and discoveries 50+ people from the Bible. 40 different kings have been identified and proven to be true. Location after location mentioned in the Bible has been unearthed and continues to this day (Pool of Siloam most recently).

Luke in his gospel and in the book, he wrote, *Acts of the Apostles* mentions 32 countries, 54 cities and 9 islands – not one historical error in his writing.

The historical accuracy and archaeological confirmation in support of the Bible is overwhelming...do the hard work of really researching it out and you'll find the Scripture to be extremely credible.

And you don't even have to go overseas to do the hard work, just take a field trip to the Lanier Library!

Illus. Lanier Library – incredible exhibits and artifacts. From an archeological standpoint, the coolest one is the Dead Sea Scroll jar or Qumran Scrolls jar - named after where it was found. It is ONE of only FOUR worldwide that is privately owned and at the library (you'll see some b-roll on the screen)

There is an Isaiah scroll facsimile that is one of only nine that have ever been made. Now, here's the cool thing about this scroll.

It was found 1947 Dead Sea Scrolls are found in a cave near the Dead Sea (Qumran)– These scrolls belonged to a group of Jewish people who took scrolls that would have been used in the temple and sealed them in these jars and placed them in these caves.

We have complete manuscripts of O.T they were reading from at the time these people lived in 145 B.C to 68 A.D. When they found these in 1947, they took them out, compared them and a passage like Is. 53 (1000-1500 years older than the earliest copy we ever had) only one word differed in the entire chapter, but it didn't change the meaning!

You can see this down the street! It's the witness of archeology, and truthfully, it really does take more faith NOT to believe than to believe. Just do the work yourself!

Fourth and last avenue of examination as it relates to the Bible being trustworthy:

4. Confirmation through Prophecy

We don't need to spend a long time on this. 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah – ALL fulfilled in the person of Jesus. We just came out of Christmas, some of these promises included how he'd be born, where he'd be born.

Scripture prophesies to his death. We mentioned Isaiah 53 – read it! It's all about Jesus, the suffering servant – and it was prophesied 700 years before he'd ever be born. In fact, on Good Friday alone Jesus fulfilled 29 separate Old Testament predictions.

It prophesied to his resurrection. It prophesies to his coming again – that's the ONLY prophecy left to be fulfilled!

Isaiah 46:9b-10 – “...for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”

Look at the whole of scripture. Study for yourself this avenue of examination and you will come to the same conclusion that so many have come to you that have gone before you.

? – Is the Bible trustworthy?

The answer is ABSOLUTELY! And THIS is why you can build your life AND stake your life on it – BECAUSE it is TRUE and TRUSTWORTHY.

So, you know we can’t close without application, and I thought long and hard about how to do this...and you know what I thought of?

I thought of our First Grade Bible Presentation. We get the privilege each year to give first-graders a Bible. And we have a dedication service.

Well, you know what? We’re going to have a Bible dedication service JUST like our first graders do to close this service out. So, if you’d do me a favor and stand...and take your copy of God’s word. If it’s a phone you’re looking at, it’ll have to do, and I want to encourage and remind you that if you need a bible head to our library and we’ll help get you one!

Illus. Bible presentation

- 1. Hold it tight** - (lifejacket)
- 2. Open it up** – (Ps. 199:130 – the unfolding of your word brings light – about a person – Jesus! John 1:1,15 – don’t be a pharisee – “you search the scripture, they speak of me!)
- 3. Live under it** (submit to it! NOT your feelings, but to the Word)
- 4. Bring it close** (Ps. 119:11 – keep you from sin)
- 5. Give it away** (81% SALT, FOX article)

Please Note: This document is not meant to be published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.