

HABITS- Bible Study, "Can we Trust the Bible?" 4/8/18

What is the key to life-long spiritual growth as a Christian? Is it listening to powerful sermons? Is it going to Christian conferences or camps? Is it having spiritually and emotionally powerful experiences? Is it avoiding the big sins or bad influences? I think all of these things are good and maybe even important... But I am convinced that the key to a time-tested, fruit-producing, vibrant Christian faith is in the development and regular exercising of spiritual disciplines. This process is what we call sanctification, where the Holy Spirit, which indwells all believers, works in us and with us to make us more like Christ. Scripture tells us that the Spirit gives us the power to be self-disciplined, and works through these disciplines, practices and habits to enable us to grow. This is not an exhaustive list but a good base, from which we can build. We have already walked through 3 of these.

H.A.B.I.T.S.

H- Having a Prayer Life

A- Accountability

B- Bible Study

I- Investing in Your Community

T- Tithing

S- Sharing Christ

Over the next few weeks we are going to talk about the spiritual HABIT of Bible Study. We are going to discuss why we study the Bible, How we study the Bible and the role of the Holy Spirit in Bible study. But before we do that we need to back up and ask a more foundational question, "Can we Trust the Bible?" After all, virtually everything we know about God comes from the Bible. If the Bible is not reliable we have no real assurance about God, heaven, Jesus, salvation. If we are going to tell you to spend time studying it, memorizing it and obeying it...we should demonstrate that it is reliable. This is what we want to discuss today, a tall order in 25 minutes...but here we go!

What does the Bible claim about itself?

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.

This is the foundational verse among many others for the doctrine of Divine Inspiration.

What this does NOT Mean.

1) Doesn't mean that it is the result of superhuman achievement of man...Shakespeare's Hamlet or Beethoven's Symphony #9

2) Doesn't mean God gives general idea and then the authors flesh it out for themselves.

3) Not God inspiring me while reading the Bible. "I read this imperfect book and God zaps me, gives me the tingles and I say Aha!" We call that illumination, which we will get to later in this series.

"God-breathed"- Divine Inspiration, the words God wanted in the Bible are there. God divinely influenced the human authors of the Scriptures in such a way that what they wrote was the very Word of God.

2 Peter 1:20-21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. 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.

The fact that the Bible is from God gives us the basis to believe that it is true in everything that it addresses (Inerrancy), it is authoritative- it is designed to be our rule of faith, obeyed and the measuring rod of our lives.

OK, well that's nice but the Bible saying it's trustworthy and from God doesn't make it true. I've never been a fan of "Because I said so!" kind of answers. Are there other reasons that we can trust the Bible? Great question! 4 Reasons To Trust the Bible

1) Historically Reliable

The last 100 years of Archaeology in the Middle East have demonstrated with amazing accuracy the historical reliability of the Bible. When the Bible discusses people, places, events, customs and culture over and over again it has proved to be true. While there are hundreds and hundreds of examples of this I just want to share a few...Indiana Jones

Customs of Abraham

Completely out of step with the customs of the Ancient Near east in 2000 BC...Until, Two archaeologists, between 1920-1940s uncovered the ancient city of Nuzi in Modern day Iraq, where Abraham came from, 1000s of tablets telling of the customs, the comparison is so exact...

The greatest scholar and archaeologist of ancient near east, William F. Albright- *It is now becoming increasingly clear that the traditions of the patriarchal age preserved in the book of Genesis reflect with remarkable accuracy the actual conditions of the ancient near east in the middle bronze age.*

Hittites

Critics of the Bible said they never existed and certainly not a huge empire as the Bible claims. Hugo Winckler, dug up Bogazkale, modern day Turkey- Incredibly strong empire.

King David

Critics say he didn't even exist. Only record is in the Bible...like Hercules, made up.
1993 Northern Israel, Tel Dan Stele- Assyrian Military leader mentions King David.

Pontius Pilot

Never existed, never mentioned in Roman records, **1961, Caesarea- Stone-** Name shows up!

High Priest, Caiaphas

Never existed, legend...until 1990, accidentally breaks into tomb during dig for house foundation. Found tomb, **bone box**...Jesus is alive and we have the bones of the guy who sentenced him!

Roman Crucifixion Practices

Dr. Huett in Harvard Theological Review- Astonishingly no evidence that the Romans crucified using nails on the feet or hands- until 1967, found in a 1st century tomb the remains a **man crucified with a nail still** in the foot, just like the Bible said.

Sir William Ramsey- Prof at Oxford, classical art, critic of the Bible. Sick of students arguing with him about the Bible. He went to Turkey and Greece and take the book of Acts and trace it and prove that it is inaccurate and unreliable so the students are proved wrong. He became convinced the book of Acts was so right, became a Christian.

Nelson Glueck- "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical descriptions has often led to amazing discoveries."

Lon Solomon- the more you dig out of the ground the more the Bible proves to be right.

2) Early writings

With ancient writing, the test of reliability- **How close in time were the writings to the actual events?** If you have authors giving eyewitness accounts within a few decades while the people who lived and witnessed those events are still alive that gives you far greater credibility than if it was written much later. As J. Warner Wallace says, "If you are going to tell a lie, tell it late and in a different region." That way no one could disprove it. Leading historian- takes around 80-90 years at the shortest to develop. People must die off, a story can't grow until everyone their dies off. OJ Simpson- 20 years ago... No one thinks Nicole came back alive, or never existed, or OJ was a super hero... we would all know, because eye witnesses! Eye witnesses were everywhere. However, Evidence has shown that **the writers of the New Testament wrote within 15-30 years after Jesus died.** This means that at the time of their writing, all the people who witnessed Jesus and what he did, and Paul's ministry, and the miracles, and the growth of the church- they were still alive to

verify it. Luke introduction... These writings would have been immediately proven false. In comparison, the earliest biography for Alexander the Great was 400 years after he lived. In the test of reliability of ancient writing the NT passes with flying colors.

3) The Abundance and Accuracy of Ancient Manuscripts

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 mark the biggest biblical discovery in modern history. 40,000 fragments of the Old Testament were discovered, fragments of every book, except Esther. An entire ancient Isaiah Scroll was found dating back to 125 BC, a thousand years older than the oldest previous manuscript we had...guess what? It reads the same, just translated from Hebrew to English, as your Bible you hold in your hand.

NT- 24,000 ancient Copies, 5800 greek copies of 27 books. Oldest P52, fragment from Gospel of John, dated within decades of original, complete copy 300 years.

The Iliad- 643 copies, Oldest 500 years after original.

Plato- 7, Oldest is 900 years after original... NT is in a category of it's own in reliability.

What about the errors in the Bible? You will hear things like there are so many errors and the copies don't say the same thing, you can't know that your Bible is what the originals even said? Now, I want to equip you with how to answer that question.

Scribes would take a letter and copy it, while this copy process was painstakingly detailed and done with great precision, among the 24,000 New Testament ancient copies ranging in locations, dating, etc. there are differences, what are called textual variants. Here's what you need to know about these variants.

99% of them fall into these categories:

- 1) Spelling errors- Johannes, 1n or 2ns
- 2) Word order changes- Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus.
- 3) "The" article, which is used far more in greek than English.

What about the 1%?

Change the meaning of a text

1 Thess. 2:7

*But we were **gentle** among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*

*But we were **infants** among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.* Reason- Greek one letter difference- Napeoi, Apeoi...

This is the substance of the NT errors... Where are the big ones? Jesus death on cross, vs. camel accident. They don't exist and None of the differences affect one belief of Christians.

So because we have so many copies, and copies from very close to the originals that we have great confidence that we can reconstruct the original and we have what God desires for us to know. As time goes on, the more we discover the greater reliability we have.

4) Fulfilled Prophecy

Predicting future...One of the greatest objective truths.

Isaiah 13, fall of Babylon in such great detail 200 years before...

Daniel 2, 11- Political fortunes of 500 years in Middle East- Fall of Babylon, rise of Persia, the meteoric rise of the Greeks under Alexander the Great, the death of Alexander, splitting of his empire into four divisions, rise of Rome. So accurate the only thing critics can do with it is say it was a hoax. Written in 50 B.C. somebody knew it, sent it back into time... Qumran, Dated 160 BC.

Just the prophecies of the Jesus alone. 60 prophecies of Jesus, Virgin birth, born in Bethlehem, betrayed for 40 pieces of silver, method of death, resurrection.

Odds that someone could have actually fulfilled even 8 of the 60 major prophecies about the Messiah:

1 in 1×10^{17}

1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 chance

Mathematician, Peter Stoner illustrated the meaning of this number. He asked the reader to imagine filling the State of Texas knee deep in silver dollars. Include in this huge number one silver dollar with a black check mark on it. Then, turn a blindfolded person loose in this sea of silver dollars. The odds that the first coin he would pick up would be the one with the black check mark are the same as 8 prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of Jesus.

4 Reasons to Trust the Bible

Historically Reliable

Written Early

Abundance and Accuracy of Ancient Manuscripts

Fulfilled Prophecy

Northstar- example everyone needs one for our orientation in life. So that wherever we are we can identify true north. That's what the Bible is. We can trust it!

Come to **Christianity 101** today at 4pm, we are going to talk more in detail about all of this...

For me, the greatest reason I trust the Bible is because it accurately tells me what is in my heart, what's wrong with the world and the only solution. Communion.