



JOURNEY BASICS: TOTAL TRUTH

WHAT DOES PLUM CREEK BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE?

The Bible Is the Inspired Word of God

The Old and New Testament are verbally inspired by God, the only written revelation from God to man. The Bible is infallible and the authoritative rule of faith and conduct for mankind (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 1 Thessalonians 2:13 & 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

-From PCCC Statement of Faith

DEFEATER BELIEF

"The Bible is a collection of fantastic legends without scientific support."

- The Communist Dictionary issued by the Soviet State Publishing

Does the quote above surprise you? Have you heard similar things? If so, what and from who in your life?

Does this sound familiar?

How do we know the Bible is true? Isn't the Bible full of contradictions? Didn't men write the Bible, not God?

In our post-modern, post-Christian culture, there is no such thing as total or absolute truth. Relativism is king: What is true for you may not be true for me, but, as long as we believe it sincerely, we can both be right.

- Read Psalm 19:7-11 (focus on the first part of each phrase) and Psalm 119:160.

Journal: What does the Bible say about the Word of God?

God's Word claims to be total truth. We can not logically side with relativism and say that God's truth is right for me if it totally contradicts the belief system of another. Even if I believe it sincerely! For example: The Bible teaches that God is knowable. However, Buddhism believes there is no God and Hinduism, while believing there is a supreme God, does not believe he is knowable. So logically, both belief systems cannot both be correct. Today we will look at why we can have confidence that the Christian scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) are the total and absolute truth of God. Remember, whenever we speak of the Word of God, we are theologians. We are theologizing!

A Brief Response: The Bible is the Inspired, Authoritative and Complete Word of God

Inspiration The words of Scripture are spoken by God.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16a and 2 Peter 1:20-21

Journal: Who is the author of Scripture? How do these verses explain the origins of Scripture?

Read Psalm 19:7-11 again

Journal: What promises are found in these verses as a result of knowing and embracing God's Word? (focus on the second part of each phrase) What from those promises stands out to you for your personal life?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Journal: What authority does Scripture have in our lives? Has the authority of Scripture been used in your life in any of the ways mentioned here?

Read Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19

Journal: What do we learn about Scripture from these verses?

How do we know the Bible is the Inspired Word of God?

The Bible towers in content above all earlier religious literature; and it towers just as impressively overall subsequent literature in the direct simplicity of its message and the catholicity of its appeal to men of all lands and times.

~ W.F. Albright (archaeologist)

As we have just read in 2 Timothy and 2 Peter, the Bible claims to be the Word of God. We will now briefly consider both external and internal proofs of such a claim.

External Proofs

1. Christ accepted the Old Testament as God's Word and frequently quoted Scripture
2. The Early Church read the Old Testament Scripture and added the Gospels and Epistles as they were written
3. The Bible has endured through centuries of persecution
4. The Bible changes the lives of the people who read it

Journal: Which of these true statements if any do you believe is strong external evidence the Bible is the Inspired Word of God? Why?

Internal Proofs

1. The Bible claims to be the Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
2. Fulfilled prophecy is strong evidence to show that the Bible is the Word of God.

Prophecy Biblical prophecy foretells the future, and it explains what the positive or negative results will be in future events.

- The Bible is full of examples of prophecy about historical events, the Jewish people and the coming Messiah - Jesus Christ. After Jesus had risen from the dead, he refers to the predictive prophecies about himself in what must have been one of the most exciting Bible studies in history! Read Luke 24:25-27 (for greater context begin with verse 13).
 - Read these examples they must have read from the Old Testament about the coming Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled them in the New Testament:
 - The Messiah's eternal existence (Micah 5:1-2; John 8:58)
 - The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1)
 - The Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-35)
 - The Messiah is the Son of God (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17)
 - The Messiah would live in Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:14-15)
 - The Messiah would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:13-16)
 - The Messiah would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12-16)
 - The Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 1:12-13; Matthew 26:15)
 - The Messiah would be crucified (Zechariah 12:10 and Psalm 22:16-18; Matthew 27:35)
 - The Messiah's death would atone for the sins of humanity (Isaiah 53:5-7; Mark 10:45 and John 1:29)
 - The Messiah will be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-32)
 - Dozens more!

Journal: Which of these spoke most clearly to you that the prophecies of Scripture (at least in regards to Jesus the Messiah) are true? Why?

3. The unusual unity of the Bible

- 40 different writers of Scripture from various backgrounds
- Written over a period of 1,500 years
- Written on 3 different continents (Europe, Africa and Asia)
- Written in 3 different languages (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic)
- One unified message:
 - Old Testament theme: Christ the Messiah is coming!
 - New Testament theme: Christ the Messiah has come!
 - Revelation theme: Christ the Messiah is coming again!

What are the implications of the Authority of Scripture?

“Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand.” ~ Mark Twain

Read Numbers 23:19; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 119:89; Matthew 24:35, John 17:17 and Hebrews 4:12-13

Journal: Since God's Word is the total and absolute truth, what kind of authority should it have in our lives?

The Bible offers us the eternal principles of God, which are authoritative for all doctrinal, moral, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social issues. For those in whom the Spirit of God lives or is working, there is recognition these words of the Bible are God's words and have authority in our lives. They are to be the final authority on every decision we make and on every belief we affirm.

Journal: Agree or disagree? Does that change your view of the Bible's authority in your life personally? If so, in what way?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:13-16; Ephesians 1:17-19; John 16:7-15

Journal: What is the role of the Holy Spirit in regards to Scripture?

“The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.” ~ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology

Read John 14:15-21

Journal: Why do you think God equates our obedience to Him with our love for Him?

HOW DID WE GET THE 66 BOOKS WE CALL THE BIBLE?

The word *canon* comes from a Greek word that means *standard of measure*. It is used of the Books of the Bible that came to be accepted as authoritative in matters of the Christian faith.

At the Council of Carthage in 397 AD, the early church was in final agreement on the 66 books of the Bible we have today. But it is important to note that the writings of Scripture were canonical at the moment they were written. Scripture was Scripture when the pen touched the parchment.

Canon The complete list of books in the Bible which came to be accepted as authoritative in matters of the Christian faith.

Concerning a measure or standard used to determine which books should be classified as Scripture, a key verse to understanding the process and purpose and perhaps timing of the giving of Scripture is Jude 3, which states that a Christian's faith "was once for all delivered to the saints."

Since our faith is defined by Scripture, Jude is essentially saying that Scripture was given once for the benefit of all Christians. Isn't it wonderful to know that there are no hidden or lost manuscripts yet to be found, there are no secret books only familiar to a select few, and there are no people alive who have special revelation requiring us to trek up a Himalayan mountain in order to be enlightened?!! We can be confident that God has not left us without a witness. The same supernatural power God used to produce His word has also been used to preserve it.

Old Testament Canon:

- 1) The New Testament quotes from or alludes to every Old Testament book but two.
- 2) Jesus effectively endorsed the Hebrew canon in Matthew 23:35 when He cited one of the first narratives and one of the last in the Scriptures of His day.
- 3) The Jews were meticulous in preserving the Old Testament Scriptures, and they had few controversies over what parts belong or do not belong. The Roman Catholic Apocrypha did not measure up and fell outside of the definition of Scripture, and has never been accepted by the Jews.

Most questions about which books belong in the Bible dealt with writings from the time of Christ and forward. The early church had some very specific criteria in order for books to be considered as part of the New Testament.

New Testament Canon – specific criteria:

- 1) Was the book written by someone who was an eyewitness of Jesus Christ?
- 2) Was the book written by someone who knew an eyewitness of Jesus Christ?
- 3) Did the book pass the "truth test"? (i.e., did it concur with other, already agreed upon Scripture?).

The New Testament books they accepted back then have endured the test of time, and Christian orthodoxy has embraced these, with little challenge, for centuries.

Confidence in the acceptance of specific books dates back to the first century recipients who offered firsthand testimony as to their authenticity. Furthermore, the end-time subject matter of the book of Revelation, and the prohibition of adding to the words of the book in 22:18, argue strongly that the canon was closed at the time of its writing (c. A.D. 95).

Important

There is an important theological point that we should not miss. God has used His word for millennia for one primary purpose—to reveal Himself and communicate to mankind. Ultimately, the church councils did not decide if a book was Scripture; God decided that when the human author was chosen by Him to write.

In order to accomplish the end result, including the preservation of His word through the centuries, God guided the early church councils in their recognition of the canon.

Journal: Why is it important to your Christian life to know which writings are God's words and which are not? How would your relationship with God be different if you had to look for His words scattered among all the writings of Christ-followers throughout church history?

THE BIG IDEAS

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and ultimate standard for Truth
2. The Bible is the final authority on every issue and decision of life
3. God speaks to us directly through His written Word

Special Terms

Inspiration A term referring to the fact that every word of the Bible is inspired and given by God.

Inerrancy A term referring to the fact that every word of the Bible is without error in the original writings.

Prophecy Biblical prophecy foretells the future, and it explains what the positive or negative results will be in future events.

Canon The complete list of books in the Bible which came to be accepted as authoritative in matters of the Christian faith.

Sources: Answers to Tough Questions Skeptics Ask About the Christian Faith, J. McDowell and D. Stewart; Systematic Theology, W. Grudem; Bible Instruction Course, E. Bender and J. Forstrom; www.gotquestions.org

JOURNEY BASICS: TOTAL TRUTH NOTES

THE BIG IDEAS

1. The Bible is the _____ Word of God and the _____ standard for _____.
 - a. *Inspiration*: _____ of the Bible is inspired and given by God.
 - b. *Inerrancy*: _____ of the Bible is without error in the original writings.

2. The Bible is the _____ on every issue and decision of life.
 - a. *Canon*: The _____ list of books in the Bible that have been accepted as _____ in matters of the Christian faith.

3. God _____ to us directly (and _____) through His written Word.
 - a. *Illumination*: When the Holy Spirit _____ our minds so we can truly _____ God's Word.