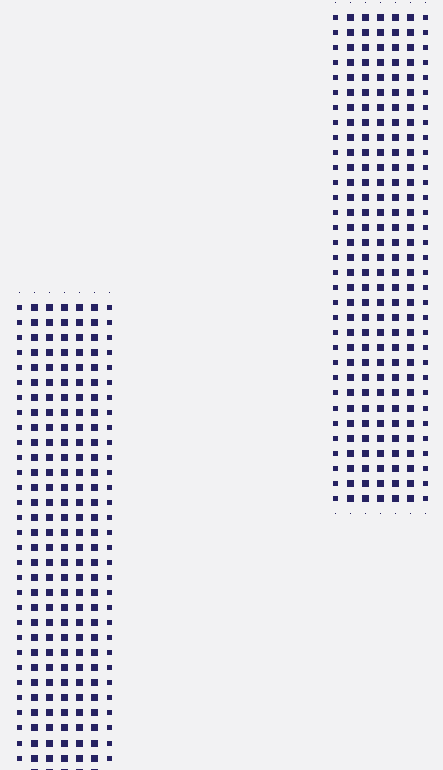




A SIX-WEEK
DISCIPLESHIP
MINISTRY
FOR STUDENTS

STARTING POINT



INTRO PAGE

WHY STARTING POINT?

Whether you have recently accepted Christ or you have been walking with Him for a while, we pray this six-week study will give you a foundation and an outline as you begin a discipleship relationship. When you are finished, we also pray that this will be something you can use to disciple someone else.

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Let's define it by looking at one of the most well-known passages in Scripture, the Great Commission, in which Jesus says,¹⁹ *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"*²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Here we are commanded to do three things:

- Evangelize ("make disciples")
- Baptize ("baptizing them")
- Teach ("teaching them")

Discipleship can be defined as "investing into others by teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded of us in order to multiply ourselves into them." This is what *Starting Point* is designed to do!

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM THIS?

First, you are going to get out what you put into it. If you invest yourself into this and read/study what you are supposed to each week, you will get much out of it. If you come unprepared and don't spend any time on it, you won't get much out of it.

Second, you will memorize a verse each week. You may be thinking, "I don't know how to memorize six different verses!" In order to help you accomplish this, scan the QR code to the right and you will find helpful apps and methods to aid you in your memorization.



Third, communicate. If you are going to be late or miss a session, text and communicate that. If you need to reschedule, call and let us know. If you have questions about something in this book, ask about it.

Lastly, you will be launched to disciple a younger believer after this. Begin thinking and praying about whom that will be.

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Faith Formation

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Knowing Who You Are in Christ

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Making Disciples

**CAN YOU
TRUST THE
BIBLE?**

2

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 18-21 Day 4- 35-38
Day 2: 22-27 Day 5- 39-42
Day 3: 28-34

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Pages 33-34
- Pages 37-39
- Pages 35-36
- Pages 40-42

HERE WE GO

This session will help you develop a better understanding of the divine origin and authority of the Bible. As you gain a better understanding of the purposes of the Word of God, you will develop a greater appreciation for the Bible and how you can use it in your own life.

MEMORIZE *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Write the verse to help memorize it.

Remember...

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE AS THOUGH GOD'S WORD IS TRUE, REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, EMOTIONS AND CULTURAL TRENDS.

***Core Concept:** God has given us the Bible so that we may know who He is and be equipped to do what He says because of who He is.*

Knowing that 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is true, how do you live it out?
Write your answer below.





CONSIDER THIS

Joan and Oliver were typical friends at school. They were close in age and they would be friends at times, and rivals at times. In high school, Oliver started to get up early every morning to read his Bible. His friend, Joan, was confused about why he would lose sleep just to read a book. She, too, had tried to read the Bible at different times throughout her life, but its references to the “Holy Spirit” and “the Lamb of God” made it seem so strange and irrelevant. Even though she liked some of the stories in the Old Testament, she felt it was always better to talk to a live person rather than try to search the Bible’s pages for answers when she really needed guidance and help. Sure, it had some good stories and morals, but she believed that it must have been altered and modified throughout the years. Now that Oliver seemed to enjoy his morning reading times, and he seemed joyful and content, she felt even more confused. *I never felt that way about my Bible. What’s wrong with me?* She began to wonder. Oliver, on the other hand, could not understand why Joan was having such a problem with the fact that he wanted to read God’s Word. Oliver was growing tired of Joan’s skepticism. Plus, he was frustrated that she did not seem to notice how much his daily time of reading the Bible was helping his relationship with her. Oliver wondered: *Can she not see that I am more patient and content than ever? Why is it so hard for my friend to see that I am learning how to be a better person through my daily time reading the Bible?*

How does Oliver feel about Joan’s confusion concerning his Bible reading? How would Joan feel about Oliver’s frustration toward her?

Before going further in the session, read “Can We Trust the Bible?”

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

It has been called “The Greatest Book Ever Written.” Kings and rulers have sought to destroy it with intense fervor. Men, women and children have been put to death for claiming its teachings. Scholars have devoted their lives to proving or disproving its contents. It claims to be the Word of God and the source of absolute truth. If this book has made such astonishing claims about itself, one must ask, “Is it reliable? Where did it come from? Did the events described in the Bible really take place? Can I trust that it is God’s Word?”

In order to answer these questions, the Bible needs to be examined in terms of its uniqueness, preparation and confirmation through history, archeology and prophecy. These avenues of exploration will demonstrate the reliability of the Bible and why it has earned the respect and allegiance of millions throughout history.

UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

The study of the reliability of the Bible begins with its uniqueness. Webster defines unique as “different from all others; having no like or equal.” The Bible is different from all other human writings in its continuity, circulation and survival.

A. ITS CONTINUITY

The first area of uniqueness of the Bible is its continuity. It is an amazingly unified document, despite factors which would lead to great disharmony in ordinary writings. Josh McDowell, noted author and lecturer on the historical evidences of the Christian faith, outlines some of these factors. He explains that the Bible was:

1. Written over a 1,600-year span;
2. Written by more than 40 writers from every walk of life – from king to peasant; philosopher to fisherman;
3. Written in different places – from the wilderness, to a comfortable room, to a dungeon;
4. Written at different times – from war to peace;
5. Written during authors’ different moods – from the height of joy to the depths of despair;
6. Written on three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe;



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ARTICLE

7. Written in three languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek;
8. Written concerning hundreds of controversial issues.¹

Although the Bible contains this much diversity, its authors speak with harmony and focus on one theme: “God’s redemption of man.”² F.F. Bruce, Professor of Biblical Criticism at the University of Manchester, England, summarizes the Bible’s continuity:

“The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types. They include history, law, religious poetry, didactic treatises, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries. For all that, the Bible is not simply an anthology; there is a unity which binds the whole together. An anthology is compiled by an anthologist, but no anthologist compiled the Bible.”³

B. ITS CIRCULATION

The second area of uniqueness for the Bible is its circulation. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other work.⁴ At the end of 1993, United Bible Societies reported that 2,062 languages had access to at least one book of the Bible. The Cambridge History of the Bible reports, “No other book has known anything approaching this constant circulation.”⁵ Although the widespread circulation of the Bible does not prove it is the Word of God, it does substantiate further the uniqueness of the Bible.

C. ITS SURVIVAL

The survival of the Bible is the third way it is unique from all other books. Composed before the invention of the printing press, it was written on perishable material such as papyrus and parchment. For hundreds of years, it was copied and recopied by hand. Yet, this did not diminish its soundness. It has more manuscript evidence than any other piece of classical literature. John Warwick Montgomery, former Chairman of Church History at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, makes this statement:

“To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”⁶

The accuracy of the Old Testament manuscripts is the result of the Jewish system of preservation. Bernard Ramm explains this system:

“Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their massora [methods of counting] they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity. ... Whoever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?”⁷

Not only has the Bible weathered the elements, but it also has withstood constant scrutiny and persecution. John W. Lea, author of *The Greatest Book in the World*, cited H.L. Hastings’s explanation:

“Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before ... So the hammers of the infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If the book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die, and the book still lives.”⁸

TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

Not only does the uniqueness of the Bible support its reliability, but the methods of translation of this book also support its dependability. As previously outlined, the Bible was written over centuries by a variety of people. The original writings were composed in Hebrew (most of the Old Testament), Aramaic (parts of Ezra, Daniel and Jeremiah), and Greek (the whole New Testament).⁹

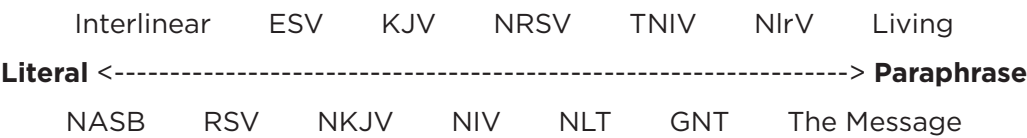
These writings have since been translated into most of the world’s known languages. This causes some to question the accuracy of the Bible. They ask, “If the Bible has been translated so many times, version upon version, how can one possibly trust its reliability?” The answer to this question is found in the translation process. While the Bible has been translated into

numerous languages, these translations are only one, or at most two, steps removed from the original text.

The Bible was translated into other languages soon after it was written. The Old Testament was translated into Greek during the third century B.C. From A.D. 383-400, Jerome, the secretary to the bishop of Rome, translated the Bible into Latin.¹⁰ In 1382, John Wycliffe translated the Bible from Latin into English so the people could study the Bible in their own tongue. The Renaissance brought a renewed interest in the classics and the desire to study them in their original languages.¹¹ William Tyndale, who studied Hebrew and Greek, translated the Bible into English directly from ancient Greek texts.¹² Other English translations followed in quick order, but probably the greatest of all English translations was commissioned by King James of England in 1604 and was first published in 1611.¹³

Each of these works was taken carefully from the oldest writings of the Old and New Testament. Since the study of Greek and Hebrew was revived in the 15th century, scholars have been able to work directly from ancient manuscripts. Therefore, the belief is unfounded that today's Bible is based on a series of previous translations. We can be confident the Bible translations we have today are accurate and based directly on ancient manuscripts.

Bible Translations



A further question arises, “Why are there so many current translations and why do they seem to vary at times?” Wycliffe produced his work because of his desire to present a translation in the common tongue.

Current translations are made with a similar motivation to produce a fresh version in the language of today. A careful comparison of a translation from 1960 with a more current translation would show subtle differences in word choice. Comparing both to the much older King James Version would show even greater differences.

Today's translations also will vary somewhat based on whether the translators made a word for word (NASB, KJV, NKJV, ESV) translation or one based on a thought for thought (NIV, NLT, TM) concept. The meaning remains the same, but word choices will vary.

CONFIRMATION OF THE BIBLE THROUGH HISTORY

A. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

The third means for verifying the reliability of the Bible is its confirmation by historical test. Josh McDowell argues that the Bible should be subjected to the same tests as any other historical document to determine its reliability. These tests are the bibliographical test, the internal evidence test, and the external evidence test.

1. **New Testament bibliographical test.** McDowell describes the bibliographical test as "... an examination of the textual transmission by which documents reach us."¹⁴ This is accomplished by examining the number of manuscripts and the time interval between the original and the existing copy. The manuscript evidence of the New Testament is astounding. Today there are more than 5,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in Greek and at least 15,000 more in other languages. No other ancient writing has anywhere near this abundance of existing manuscript evidence. Additionally, the interval of time between the composition of the New Testament books and the date of the earliest existing manuscripts is the shortest of any work of antiquity. Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, who was the Director of the British Museum, summarizes the manuscript evidence as follows:

*"The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant [existing] evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."*¹⁵

2. **Old Testament bibliographical test.** This test for the Old Testament is more complicated. Given the age difference

between the New and Old Testaments, the number of surviving manuscripts for the Old Testament is much smaller.

Despite the small number of manuscripts (as compared to the New Testament), the accuracy of the Old Testament documents has been verified through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. The Scrolls consist of approximately 40,000 inscribed fragments. More than 500 books have been reconstructed from these pieces. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide confirming evidence that Old Testament manuscripts date from before the time of Christ.

Gleason Archer, Chairman of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, reports that the Isaiah copies "... proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling."¹⁶ Dr. Henry Morris, President of the Institute for Creation Research, concludes,

"There is thus no reasonable doubt that our present Old Testament ... is practically identical with the text in use several centuries before Christ, practically extending back to the time when the last books of the Old Testament were originally written."¹⁷

B. INTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

The second test for the historical accuracy of the Bible is the internal evidence test. This test determines whether the written record is credible by analyzing the ability of the writer or the witness to tell the truth. The New Testament relies upon men who were eyewitnesses of the actual events and teachings of Jesus, or men who related eyewitness accounts of these details. Throughout the New Testament, the writers refer to what they had seen and heard. Many of their contemporaries also had witnessed Jesus' life. If they reported the facts incorrectly, these people would have challenged their writings. F.F. Bruce explains, "The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so."¹⁸

An additional indication of the sincerity of the New Testament writers is their willingness to record incidents that portray themselves in a negative light, such as their flight after Jesus' arrest, their competition for a high place in the Kingdom of God, and Peter's denial of Christ.¹⁹ Given these facts, we can trust the New Testament writers' portrayal of Christ.

C. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

The external evidence test is the final one that historians use to verify the reliability of a document. This test seeks other historical material to substantiate the information contained in the document under review. One example of such confirmation is the testimony of a friend of the apostle John (who wrote five books in the New Testament). Irenaeus, who was the Bishop of Lyons in A.D. 180, was a disciple of John and wrote the following:

*"Matthew published his gospel among the Hebrews ... in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure ... Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John ... himself produced his gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia."*²⁰

Along with the testimony of contemporaries, archeology also provides powerful external evidence for the reliability of the Bible. (This confirmation will be discussed at length in the following section.) Archeologist Joseph Free reports, "Archeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts."²¹ Finally, the weight of historical evidence clearly upholds the reliability of the Bible as Dr. Clark Pinnock states:

*"There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excelling a set of textual and historical testimonies and offering so superb an array of historical data on which an intelligent decision may be made. An honest [person] cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational (i.e., antisupernatural) bias."*²²

THE WITNESS OF ARCHEOLOGY TO THE BIBLE

Archeology provides the fourth avenue of exploration of the reliability of the Bible. Archeology not only verifies certain biblical references, but it also provides a background for the message of the Bible.

A. THE OLD TESTAMENT RECORD

William F. Albright, one of the world's greatest Near East archeologists, states, "There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."²³

With more than 25,000 sites already discovered that show connections to the Old Testament period, the amount of archeological support is overwhelming. To demonstrate how archeology has confirmed the Bible, the controversy surrounding Abraham can be cited. Critics in the 19th century felt that Abraham could not have existed as he is described in the Bible. For example, they felt he would be unable to read and would lack knowledge of law and history.

Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur of the Chaldees show that it was a highly developed city. They discovered clay tablets that served as books and receipts for business transactions. Therefore, "it became clear that Abraham was a product of a highly developed culture. ..." ²⁴ Sir Frederic Kenyon concurs:

*"It is therefore legitimate to say that, in respect of that part of the Old Testament against which the disintegrating criticism of the last half of the nineteenth century was chiefly directed, the evidence of archeology has been to re-establish its authority..."*²⁵

Another example of the contribution of archeology is the discovery of the Ebla tablets in 1974. For years, the Genesis 14 account of the victory of Abraham over Chedorlaomer and the Mesopotamian kings has been held to be fictitious and the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar as mere legend.²⁶ However, the Ebla tablets refer to all five



of these cities and in one document even lists them in the same sequence as Genesis 14.²⁷

Lastly, in August 1993, it was reported that an Israeli archeologist had discovered the first known reference outside the Bible to King David. The inscriptions were found on a broken monument in northern Israel. Hershel Shanks, editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, said, "The stele [monument] brings to life the biblical text in a very dramatic way. It also gives us more confidence in the historical reality of the biblical text."²⁸

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORD

The New Testament has also been substantiated by the archeologist's spade. The Acts of the Apostles most readily lends itself to archeological investigation because it contains so many references to customs, places and events of that time. Therefore, Luke, the author of Acts, has been subjected to intense scrutiny. For example, in his Gospel, it was believed that he was wrong about the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Critics maintained that there was no census at that time; people did not have to return to their ancestral home; and Quirinius was not governor of Syria.²⁹

Archeological discoveries have upheld Luke's account on all three fronts. First, the evidence shows that the Romans held a census every 14 years and that the practice was initiated under Augustus. Second, an inscription in Antioch names Quirinius as governor of Syria in 7 B.C. and A.D. 6. Finally, a papyrus found in Egypt reads this way:

"Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residents for any cause away from their homes should at once prepare to return to their governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment."³⁰

*Sir William Ramsay, who has completed the most extensive study, thus far, of the data recorded in Acts, concedes, "Luke is a historian of the first rank ... In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."*³¹

Other references in the New Testament to certain cities and regions, customs and political situations have also been confirmed

through archeology. In fact, Morris says, “...no statement in the New Testament has to this date been refuted by an unquestioned find of science or history. This in itself is a unique testimony to the amazing accuracy and authenticity of the New Testament records.”³²

CONFIRMATION OF THE BIBLE THROUGH PROPHECY

The final area of confirmation of the reliability of the Bible is prophecy. The inclusion of many specific prophecies sets the Bible apart from all other works. The fulfillment of these prophecies points to the reliability of the other information presented in the Old and New Testaments. The number of prophecies is astounding. Therefore, the following analysis is limited to a few messianic prophecies and prophecies related to a specific city. The fulfillment of these prophecies will amply demonstrate the reliability of the Word of God.

A. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE MESSIAH

The Old Testament contains more than 300 prophecies of the coming Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus. For purposes of this discussion, a few of these prophecies have been selected. Their fulfillment is explained in the New Testament excerpts that are included.

It should be remembered that the prophecies were written by a variety of men over several centuries. At least 400 years passed between the last of these prophecies and the appearance of Jesus.³³

PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
<p>#1 BORN OF A VIRGIN</p> <p><i>“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”</i></p> <p>—Isaiah 7:14</p>	<p><i>“... she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... Joseph...knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”</i></p> <p>—Matthew 1:18, 24, 25</p>

PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
#2 BORN AT BETHLEHEM <i>"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."</i> —Micah 5:2	<i>"... Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea ..."</i> —Matthew 2:1
#3 HANDS AND FEET PIERCED <i>"... they have pierced my hands and feet."</i> —Psalm 22:16	<i>"And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him ..."</i> —Luke 23:33
#4 GARMENTS PARTED AND LOTS CAST <i>"they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."</i> —Psalm 22:18	<i>"When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be ..."</i> —John 19:23, 24
#5 BONE NOT BROKEN <i>"He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."</i> —Psalm 34:20	<i>"But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."</i> —John 19:33 <i>(Historical note: The executioners normally broke the criminals' legs to hasten their death.)</i>

(All Scripture quotations in this chart are from the English Standard Version.)

Given the fulfillment in Jesus' life of these and many other prophecies, it becomes evident that God directed what has been written by the prophets. Josh McDowell makes this conclusion:

“Certainly God was writing an address in history that only the Messiah could fulfill. Approximately forty major claims to be the Jewish Messiah have been made by men. Only one— Jesus Christ – appealed to fulfilled prophecy to substantiate His claims, and only His credentials back up those claims.”³⁴

B. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE CITY OF TYRE

In addition to the messianic prophecies, the Bible also contains many prophecies regarding the fate of certain cities and nations. As an example of the astounding accuracy of these biblical prophecies, the following is an analysis of the predictions related to the city of Tyre. This city of ancient Phoenicia is now in southern Lebanon. It was once an enemy of Israel.

In Ezekiel 26 (KJV), written between 592 and 570 B.C., the Lord declares His anger toward Tyre for her extreme arrogance. He predicts her invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and her ultimate destruction. Verses 7, 8 and 14, declare her fate:

“For thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will bring upon Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon... and he will make siege walls against you ...’

‘And I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I, the Lord, have spoken,’ declares the Lord God.”

The fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy is explained by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. It states, “After a 13-year siege (585-573 B.C.) by Nebuchadnezzar II, Tyre made terms and acknowledged Babylonian suzerainty [sovereignty].” It goes on to say:

“In his war on the Persians, Alexander III ... marched southward toward Egypt, calling upon the Phoenician cities to open their gates ... The citizens of Tyre refused to do so, and Alexander laid siege to the city. Possessing no fleet, he demolished old Tyre, on the mainland...”³⁵

Philip Myers, a secular historian, summarizes the fate of Tyre:

“Alexander the Great ... reduced [Tyre] to ruins. She recovered in a measure from this blow, but never regained the place she had

previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare as the top of a rock – a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry.”³⁶

The record of history regarding Tyre makes it obvious that each prophetic detail recorded in Ezekiel was fulfilled just as the Bible predicted.

CONCLUSION

The Bible’s uniqueness, its preparation, and the testimony of history, archeology and prophecy, all work together to confirm beyond reasonable doubt that it is totally reliable. Sir Frederic G. Kenyon makes this conclusion:

“... it is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scripture, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.”³⁷

** The preceding article is taken from the Practical Christian Living curriculum. Used with permission from Mentoring One 2 One.*

END NOTES

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31. Morris, p. 26.
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35. Ibid., p. 61.
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37. Morris, p. 23.



TALK IT OUT

Write your answers below each question.

What new information did you learn from reading the article *"Can We Trust the Bible?"* What information was the most surprising to you about the article?

What questions or concerns did you have regarding the reliability of the Bible prior to reading the article? Which aspects of the uniqueness of the Bible did you find most helpful?

Refer to page 19 and the story about Joan and Oliver. Now what would you say to Oliver and Joan?

Is the Bible the Word of God?

Jesus and the authors of the Scriptures clearly claim that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. These claims by themselves do not establish the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. However, since the Bible clearly claims divine inspiration, it must either be inspired or be in error. Consider the following:

2 Timothy 3:16 states that all Scripture is inspired by God (NASB), and *inspired*, when translated from the original language means “God-breathed.” This gives us the mental picture of God breathing His life into the writings of the authors. Just as the wind fills the sails of a sailboat and propels it, so the Spirit of God filled and moved the authors to write what they did. Naturally, the words in the Bible reflect the personalities, education and cultures of the people who wrote them, but the result is exactly what God intended.

Take time to fill in the following charts based on 2 Timothy 3:16. If necessary, refer back to the similar chart in the first lesson. Note the perception of your experience in the left box, and the truth of God’s Word in the right box:

What the World Says about the Bible	What the Bible Says about Itself in 2 Timothy 3:16

**DO THE OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORS CLAIM
THEIR WRITINGS ARE THE WORD OF GOD?**

Old Testament writers used many phrases to indicate that they believed they were writing God's words. For example, hundreds of times, Old Testament writers used the phrase, "Thus says the Lord..." Read the following verses and fill in the spaces with words or phrases that indicate that the authors believed they were writing the words of God:

Exodus 7:17

2 Samuel 23:1-2

**DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT CLAIM THE SAME
DIVINE AUTHORITY AS THE OLD TESTAMENT?**

New Testament writers also claimed that they were writing the words of God. Read 2 Peter 1:16-21. What did Peter believe about Old Testament prophecy? Write your answer below.

Read 2 Peter 3:16 below. What does Peter call Paul's writings?

... as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. —2 Peter 3:16

Just as Peter saw the Old Testament as Scripture, he also talks about Paul's writings in the same light.

DID JESUS ACKNOWLEDGE THE RELIABILITY AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES?

Jesus made extensive use of the Scriptures. Read Matthew 5:18. What did Jesus say in this verse to indicate that the Bible is reliable? Write your answer below.

Read Matthew 22:23–32. What did Jesus say in verse 31 to indicate that the Bible is God’s Word? Write your answer below.

Note on Matthew 22:23-32: The Sadducees were a Jewish religious group. They often asked Jesus questions with the intention of tricking Him. Jesus put an end to their hypocritical inquiries by quoting from the Old Testament book of Exodus. During the time of Jesus, the book of Exodus was already several hundred years old. Jesus boldly said that Exodus was not just God’s revelation to those who were alive in the days of Moses, but also to those who were alive then.

IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

The Bible attests numerous times to its correctness, trustworthiness and flawlessness. For examples of these claims, read the following verses in an ESV Bible and fill in the blanks:

Psalms 18:30 “The word of the Lord proves _____.”

Psalms 19:7 “The law of the Lord is _____.”

Psalms 119:160 “The sum of your word is _____,
and every one of your righteous rules endures _____.”

Given all these facts, you must still come to the place where you have to make a faith decision to accept the Bible as true or untrue, divine or fake, powerful or insignificant. You must choose of your own free will to have the faith to believe that the Bible is God’s divine Word to you.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE BIBLE PLAY IN MY LIFE?

Why did God give us His Word? The Bible plays a variety of roles in our lives. The following list is not comprehensive but addresses some important topics. Read the following verses and fill in each blank with the appropriate word.

God's Word lets us know that we have _____
_____ (1 John 5:13).

God's Word is useful for _____, _____,
_____ and training us in _____
(2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God's Word is a _____ for our feet and a
_____ for our path (Psalm 119:105).

Which of these three stick out to you the most? Why?

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Review 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Notice that the Bible is useful for our teaching, rebuking, correcting and training.

WHAT PLACE SHOULD GOD'S WORD HAVE IN MY LIFE?

PRIORITIZE GOD'S WORD

Read Deuteronomy 32:44-47. What did Moses call God's Word?

Knowing that Deuteronomy 32:44-47 is true, how do you live it out? Write your answer below.

Read Psalm 119:9-11. Where did David say he kept God's Word? Why?

Knowing that Psalm 119:9-11 is true, how do you live it out? Write your answer below.

TALK IT OUT

What does it mean that God's Word is in your life?

What things in your life are most important to you?

How can you give God's Word a more important role in your life?

OBEY GOD’S WORD

Read the following passages and fill in the chart:

	Luke 6:46-49	Psalm 1:1-6
What are the results of obeying God’s Word?		
What are the consequences of not obeying God’s Word?		

Obeying God’s Word helps you build a strong spiritual foundation (Luke 6:46-49) and produce spiritual fruit even in times of trial (Psalm 1:1-6). If you do not obey God’s Word, your spiritual foundation will be weak and unsteady (Luke 6:46-49) and you will not be able to produce lasting spiritual fruit (Psalm 1:1-6).

READ GOD’S WORD

It is impossible to develop a friendship with someone that you never talk to; in the same way, it is impossible to grow in your relationship with God if you do not spend time reading the Word of God.

BEFORE YOU FINISH

H.E.A.R. METHOD

An easy way to learn how to study God's Word consistently is by using the H.E.A.R. method. The following section explains how to do this.

HOW DO I DO A H.E.A.R. JOURNAL?

- The H.E.A.R. journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. No longer will your focus be on checking off boxes on your daily reading schedule; your purpose will instead be to read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.
- The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for ***Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond***. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak. After settling on a reading plan and establishing a time of studying God's Word, you will be ready to H.E.A.R. from God.
- Notice that all of the words in the H.E.A.R. acronym are action words: Highlight, Explain, Apply, Respond. God does not want us to sit back and wait for Him to drop some truth in our laps. Instead of waiting passively, God desires that we actively pursue Him.
- For an illustration, let's assume that you begin your quiet time in the book of Daniel, and today's reading is the first chapter of the book. Before reading the text, pause to ask sincerely for God to speak to you. It may not seem like a big deal, but it is extremely important to seek God's guidance in order to understand His Word. Every time we open our Bibles, we should pray the simple prayer that David prayed: ***"Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from your instruction"*** (Psalm 119:18).

HIGHLIGHT

- After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, open your notebook or journal, and at the top left corner, write the letter "H." This exercise will remind you to read with a purpose. In the course of reading, one or two verses will usually stand out and speak to you. After reading the passage of Scripture, Highlight each verse that speaks to you by copying it under the letter "H."

- o Write the following:
 - Name of the book
 - The passage of Scripture that you read
 - The chapter and verse numbers that spoke to you
 - A title to describe the passage

EXPLAIN

- After you have highlighted the passage, write the letter “E” under the previous entry. At this stage, you will Explain what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of the Holy Spirit you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse. Here are a few questions to get you started:
 - o Why was this written?
 - o To whom was it originally written?
 - o How does it fit with the verses before and after it?
 - o In your own words, describe what this text is about.

APPLY

- After writing a short summary of what you think the text means, write the letter “A” below the letter “E.” Under the “A” write the word “Apply.” This application is the heart of the process. Everything that you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally.
 - o How can these verses help me?
 - o What does this mean today?
 - o What would the application of these verses look like in my life?
 - o What is God saying to me through this passage?
- These questions bridge the gap between the ancient world and your world today. They provide a way for God to speak to you through a specific passage or verse. Challenge yourself to write two to five sentences about how this text applies to your life.

RESPOND

- Finally, below the first three entries, write down the letter “R” for Respond. Your response to this passage may take on

different forms. Here are some potential questions for you to consider after reading the passage and applying it to your life:

- o In what ways does this passage call me to action?
 - o How will I be different because of what I have learned?
 - o Write a prayer to God in response to what you have learned today.
- This is a resource from Long Hollow Baptist Church and Pastor Robby Gallaty.

Be Accountable for Your Bible Reading Plan

Discuss your Bible reading plan for the next week with your discipleship partner.

What are you going to read?

What's your goal on number of days of reading?

What do you hope to get out of it?

Write the faith definition from memory.

What did you learn from this session?

RESOURCES

After reading this guide, you may have further questions. That's not unusual! Salvation is just the beginning; most Christians spend the rest of their lives growing in their relationship with Christ. Below are some wonderful resources that will help you navigate this journey as a Christ-follower.

PRESTONWOODSTUDENTS.ORG

The Prestonwood Students website is a great resource when it comes to your walk with the Lord, the church, and other believers. With resources from salvation to baptism to devotionals, it's a one-stop shop for many of your questions and needs.

PRESTONWOOD STUDENTS DEVOTIONALS

Need somewhere to begin your daily walk with Jesus? Take out your phone and text DEVO to 74788. When you do this, we will send a short devotional to your phone every morning Monday through Friday. This is just the beginning but we pray it's a launching point for you each day.

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