

## The Fundament List - Week 2 - What We Believe about the Bible

### Discovering the Essentials of Our Faith

What you believe about God and what He has done will determine how you live your life.

This is not just a philosophical conversation but a practical one because what you believe about God and what He has done has a practical application to your life.

What you believe about God and what He has done answers the question, “Who am I?” It has an enormous influence on your relationships and the decisions you make.

Understanding what you believe, however, requires both curiosity and humility. Curiosity motivates us to ask even the most difficult questions about our faith and humility creates this posture that says, I don’t have all the answers; there are things I still need to learn.

Knowing what we believe grounds us and keeps us from being led astray when faced with competing ideas about God and what He has done.

One of the first questions we ought to be asking is ...

What do we believe about the Bible?

2 Tim 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

What does it mean that scripture is “inspired by God?”

θεόπνευστος (theopneustos), inspired of God, God-breathed

This Greek word means that Scripture is a divine “spiration” that which God has breathed out, the product of His creative breath.

When we see God speaking the universe into existence in Gen 1 and 2, essentially God breathed out the universe. It is the same idea here.

In other words: the Bible was created by the activity of God. Every book of the Bible in it's original form came about by the providence of God. God caused it to happen.

Paul's point, then, is not that Scripture is inspiring to read (it is that), or that the authors were inspired when they wrote (they were), but that Scripture's origin was the product of God's creativity, which means it is God's very Word.

The Bible clearly claims to be the very Word of God. If that is true, if the Bible is God's way of communicating with His creation (or one way, but the most important way), then that clearly has some implications for us. If the creator of the universe is saying something, we should probably pay attention.

He tells us things about himself.

He tells us things about us.

He tells us how He designed us to live.

He warns about what to avoid and how to prosper.

So if we believe the Bible is the **inspired Word of God** it should have an enormous impact on my life, from how I view myself and other people to how I live my life every single day.

So why would we believe this is true?

If I am willing to order my life around what I believe is the Word of God, I should have a pretty high confidence that it is indeed the Word of God.

To some degree this simply requires faith.

I can't go back and interview Moses about his crossing the Red Sea.

I can't go back and ask the prophet Elijah about raising a boy from the dead or about his encounter with the prophets of Baal.

I can't go back and question the guy who was healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda or someone who was present the day Jesus feed 5,000 with just a few loaves of bread and fish. And I can't go back and ask Mary what it was like seeing the Jesus she saw crucified and killed on the cross, raised from the dead three days later.

But my faith in the authenticity of those encounters and my faith in the legitimacy of the message of the Bible is in **no way a blind faith**.

We exercise faith all day, every day.

Every time I buy a cup of coffee at Starbucks I trust that it is not a cup of poison that is going to end my life right there on the spot. I don't take a sample of the coffee, send it off to a lab for analysis to confirm that it is indeed coffee. It is safe to drink. No, but because of past experience, (I have yet to be poisoned by a cup of Starbucks coffee) I exercise faith, I trust that the cup of coffee I ordered is indeed a cup of coffee. It's not a blind faith, it is an informed faith.

My faith in the authenticity of those encounters and my faith in the legitimacy of the message of the Bible is in no way a blind faith.

**Why do I trust that the Bible is the inspired Word of God?**

**1. Because of the unified message of the Bible.**

When I was a youth pastor in Lebanon many years ago, I was the boys varsity head soccer coach. As a soccer coach, getting kids in shape was not hard and teaching and honing skills was not hard, what was really hard was teaching them to work together as a team. Moving the ball up and down the field, supporting your team mates, knowing that when you passed the ball to this space someone was going to be there to receive the ball. Teams that played well together, that played unified, were the teams that were successful and the teams that won games.

The Bible is utterly unique in the unity of its message.

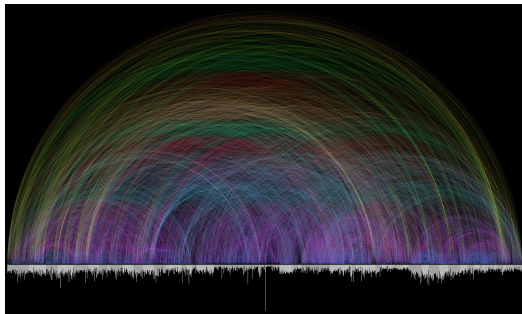
The Bible is actually comprised of 66 individual books, written over a period of nearly 2000 years on 3 different continents, in three different languages.

It was written by shepherds, kings, scholars, fishermen, prophets, a military general, a cup-bearer, and a priest. They had different immediate purposes for writing, whether recording history, giving spiritual and moral instruction, or pronouncing judgment. They composed their writings from palaces, prisons, the wilderness, and places of exile while writing history, laws, poetry, prophecy, and proverbs. In the process, they laid bare their personal emotions, expressing anger, frustration, joy, and love.

Yet despite this amazing array of topics and goals, the Bible displays a flawless internal consistency. It never contradicts itself or its common theme.

The Bible talks about **justice** and **sin** and **grace** and **forgiveness** and **judgement** and **redemption**, but all of those themes seamlessly coalesce to form this overarching theme, this unified story. It is the story of God getting His children back.

Perhaps you have seen Dr. Jordan Peterson's graph of Bible cross references.



Professor Peterson described the Bible as the first “hyperlinked text,” that is, the first text that complexly references itself throughout the entirety of its structure in a vast series of internal interconnections. Think of Wikipedia, in which the articles all reference and interlink to one another in a vast web of knowledge.

There are over 63,779 cross-references in the Bible.

Every single one of the lines on the bottom of the image is a Bible verse. The length of each line is proportionate to the number of times that verse is referred to in some way by some other verse in the Bible. The colored lines on top show how those verses intersect. Every time one of the colored lines intersect with another line, it is a cross reference.

To say the Bible is unique amongst all of the writings of humanity, is an understatement.

Why do I trust the Bible is the inspired Word of God? Because of its unique unified message.

The second reason I trust the Bible is the inspired Word of God is

## **2. Because of the dates of the New Testament.**

Most of the New Testament was written between AD 40 and AD 65. Thousands of people who were eyewitnesses to the events of the New Testament were alive at the time these books were written.

They were the people who witnessed everything from Jesus' birth, the miracles He performed, to His death and resurrection. Yet there is no record of anyone coming forward and saying nope, that was not true or that was inaccurate or that was an exaggeration.

And so we have these eyewitness accounts written down for us. They weren't second or third-hand accounts that were influenced by myth or exaggeration but things that were written by the people who were actually there.

The third reason I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God is

## **3. Because of the impact of the gospel.**

Many who followed Jesus were devout Jews. Despite the fact that following Jesus would mean persecution, being ostracized from daily Jewish life, and for some following Jesus meant being martyred. You would think that under intense scrutiny and persecution maybe just one of the Apostles would have cracked.

Maybe just one of them would have said, nope, you're right it was all just a big joke, none of it really happened.

Consider the Apostle Paul whose name was Saul before he began following Jesus. Saul was a Pharisee and a zealot when it came to persecuting Christians. He is the one responsible for the stoning death of the Stephen who was a Deacon in the church in Jerusalem. Saul was all in when it came to persecuting the early church.

What causes a successful, respected, religious leader like Saul to suddenly start following Jesus? How do you explain that the guy trying to stamp out the church suddenly became the guy who was, in many ways, responsible for the gospel reaching every corner of the Roman empire?

Not only that but Paul is responsible for writing 13 books of the New Testament. How do you explain the about-face? How do you explain the changed life?

The inspired, Word of God tells us how it happened in Acts 9. Saul has this crazy encounter with the resurrected Jesus. And Saul's life is forever changed.

Here is how Paul describes it in his letter to the Philippian church.

#### **Phil 3:3-8 (NLT)**

For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, 4 though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! 5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. 7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

The final reason I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God is

#### 4. Fulfilled Prophecy

Reasons to Believe

<https://reasons.org>

Unique among all books ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events-in detail-many years, sometimes centuries, before they occur.

Approximately 2,500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2,000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter—no errors.

(The remaining 500 or so reach into the future and may be seen unfolding as days go by.) Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten (figured very conservatively) and since the prophecies are for the most part independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in 10 to the 2000 power (that is 10 with 2,000 zeros written after it)!

Here some examples from this book by Robert Jeffress: What Every Christian Should Know

In about 700 BC, the prophet Isaiah predicted that Babylon—a relatively minor player on the world scene at the time—would conquer Judah and take its people captive (Isa. 39:5–6). His prediction came true in 586 BC when Babylon prevailed over Judah. Isaiah also predicted that Babylon would be conquered by another nation (21:9). What's more, the prophet identified by name the king who would allow the people of Judah to return from exile in Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem. Isaiah 44:28 refers to Cyrus as the king of Persia—one hundred years before Cyrus was born! History tells us that Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon in 539 BC. In 538 BC, King Cyrus decreed that the Israelites could return to their homeland, just as Isaiah had predicted 150 years earlier.

Here is another one for you:

The mathematical probability that one man in history could fulfill all sixty-one biblical prophecies of the Messiah is so astronomical it can't be computed. So

one mathematician cut the number to just eight prophecies. He calculated the probability of one man in history fulfilling eight specific prophecies as 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That's a 1 followed by 17 zeros. Imagine covering the state of Texas in silver dollars two feet deep. On one of those silver dollars, you draw an X. You blindfold a person and let her roam the entire Lone Star State until she reaches down and picks up one silver dollar. The odds that she would choose the one with the X on it is roughly 1 in 10<sup>17</sup>—the same odds of one man fulfilling just eight Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah.<sup>10</sup> Jesus's fulfilling all sixty-one prophecies cannot be chalked up to coincidence—or anything other than nearly irrefutable evidence of the Bible's truthfulness.

Evidence that it is the inspired Word of God.

These are just four reasons but there are a number of others.

Scientific

Archeological

Historical

And Literary

Some people might object to the reliability of the Bible and say it can't be the inspired Word of God because there are so many contradictions.

First, no seeming contradiction in the Bible changes any Bible doctrines, but there are places in the Bible where the Bible seems to contradict itself.

Jeffress, in An example of something that may seem like a contradiction is in

■ In 1 Corinthians 10:8, Paul described a plague in the Old Testament that killed 23,000 Israelites. Yet the account by Moses in Numbers 25:9 says 24,000 died. Contradiction? Not necessarily. Paul said 23,000 Israelites “fell in one day,” while Moses said the total number of victims was 24,000. Perhaps not everyone who contracted the plague died within twenty-four hours.

■ In his account of Jesus's resurrection, Matthew said there was an angel at the tomb. In John's account, there were two angels. Contradiction? Not necessarily. Perhaps Matthew decided to focus on the one angel who spoke, while John was



more interested in the total number of angels Mary witnessed when she arrived at the empty tomb.

■ Matthew 5–7 and Luke 6 record two versions of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. Contradiction? Not necessarily. It could be that Jesus preached the same message in two locations at two different times. But a more probable explanation is that some Gospel accounts offer accurate paraphrases of what Jesus said rather than direct quotes. So both accounts capture the essence of Jesus’s message.

How many of you remember the 9/11 attacks?

The news televised dozens of accounts of the planes striking the buildings, but none of those accounts were exactly the same. Does that mean the accounts were wrong? No. It just means that people witnessed the event from different perspectives but when you harmonize the accounts you get a full picture of what happened that day.

That same thing is true for the gospels. Even though Matthew, Mark, Luke and John’s accounts of Jesus’ life may seem to differ on some details, the reality is that each author had a different perspective and when you bring those perspectives together, you get the full picture.

We could literally talk all day long about what we believe about the Bible.

But if you were to ask what I think the most important thing to know about the Bible is, I would say this: The most important thing to know about God’s Word is it has the power to change our lives.

God’s presence in you coupled with an understanding of what His word says, will change you.

God, through His Word

Has taught me how to be a husband

has taught me how to be a friend

has taught me how to a neighbor

has taught me how to be father to my daughters

And most importantly, it has taught me how to be a son of my Heavenly Father

I got my hair cut on Saturday and the dude that cut my hair ...

Are you longing for change in your life? That change begins by inviting Jesus in.

**Rev 3:20**

See! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

**Rom 10:9**

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.