

Class Objective: To reaffirm, renew and expand the believer's understanding of and confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible.

### Class Overview

1. Clarify the role of the Bible in evangelical Christianity
2. Understand the factors that make the study of the Bible's reliability a critical necessity
3. Address the charge of circular reasoning in defending the integrity of Scripture
4. Remember that conversion is not primarily a product of logic but a work of the Spirit
5. Identify common attempts to discredit Scripture
6. Explore alleged contradictions in the Bible
7. Examine the formation of the Bible
8. Describe the history and importance of the copying of the Bible
9. Consider the principles and place of interpretation of Scripture
10. Explain the purpose and value of translations of Scripture
11. Reflect on the ultimate confirmation of the Bible's truthfulness
12. Delineate the practical implications of believing the Bible is trustworthy

### Notes

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- I. The Christian faith is a revelatory faith.
  - A. Christian belief is ultimately based on the supposition that God has revealed himself and his will in the words of the Bible.
    1. New Testament writers believed that written (Old Testament) Scripture was given by God.
      - a) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16
      - b) . . . 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. 2 Peter 1:20, 21
    2. New Testament writers appeal to Old Testament Scripture to validate the identity of Jesus
      - a) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." Acts 17:1-4
      - b) Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. . . . he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus . . . . for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. Acts 18:24,25, 28

c) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

B. Historic confessions of the church affirm the ultimate authority of Scripture.

1. "The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. The light of nature and the works of creation and providence so clearly demonstrate the goodness, wisdom, and power of God that people are left without excuse; however, these demonstrations are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation. Therefore, the Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church. To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. . . ." The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

II. The study of the reliability of the Bible is a necessary study.

A. It is necessary because of our condition.

1. Like our predecessor Eve, we are human beings vulnerable to our spiritual adversary who is given to questioning the authority and character of God.

a) Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" Genesis 3:1

b) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Ephesians 6:11

c) "Exactly half of those who are Christian or who have some Christian background or experience say they have gone through a "prolonged" period of doubt at some point in their life." Barna Research

B. It is necessary because of our culture.

1. We are exposed to implicit and explicit attacks on the Bible.

a) "Either God is a monster, condemning people to eternal torture for being what he made them, or the Bible—with its endless contradictions, its magicians turning sticks into snakes, its celebration of slavery and genocide—was not handed down by a deity." Kurt Eichenwald, Newsweek, May 5, 2015

b) "Isn't it time we questioned the entire Bible? The Bible is a book of symbolic literature. It's a fusion of stories, ideas, chronologies, and traditions woven together over at least 1,000 years. The authors, editors and the massive organization of people that followed set out to control the world through their view of morality under the threat of eternal damnation for noncompliance, and it worked. This wouldn't be

surprising 2,000 or even 200 years ago, but in 2014 it's almost unbelievable.” Steve Siebold, Huffington Post, December 24, 2014

c) “One of the few worthwhile statements in the Bible is, ‘You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.’ Knowledge of the Bible is hindered by the informal censorship imposed by religious leaders who would rather their followers didn’t know what’s in it. The innumerable contradictions, historical errors, plagiarism, absurdities, meaningless prophecies, myths represented as historical fact, countless instances of divinely ordered or approved atrocities. It is true that the Bible has some worthwhile material including entertaining stories, inspirational sentiments, and astute observations about human behavior. However, those worthwhile parts could probably be contained in a pamphlet.” Minneapolis Star Tribune

2. Christians are being increasingly attacked for believing a normal reading of the Bible does not support the values of the current culture.

a) After referring to Bible passages that condemn homosexuality as “texts of terror,” Bishop Gene Robinson said, “I think that 90 percent of the pain and struggle we have experienced as the LGBT community can be laid at the feet of religious people.” Bishop Gene Robinson

b) “As a Christian theologian, a minister, and the president of a seminary with many transgender students, I am horrified by the continued use of Christianity and the Bible to viciously attack the transgender community. The Bible never said that being transgender is wrong. This extremist, wrong-headed belief is simply based on shaky extrapolations of the text.” Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President of Union Theological Seminary

C. It is necessary because of its claims.

1. The Bible claims to be the Word of God. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Jn. 12:49; Ex. 31:18

2. In addition, the Bible claims to explain the origin of the world, the nature, plan and purpose of God, the origin and purpose of human beings and the future of the world.

3. “It’s fair game to raise questions about the Bible’s accuracy concerning sin, salvation, miracles, Jesus, etc. It’s fair game precisely because the Bible makes audacious claims that, if true, change everything. And it’s fair game because the Bible places these claims in history. Indeed, the Bible is the only major sacred text that subjects itself to historical verification. It’s the only major sacred text that puts itself at risk. And Jesus is at the center of those claims and that risk.” Daniel Wallace

4. The Bible itself contains the implicit invitation to consider the reliability of Scripture!

a) And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:14-19

b) Paul is saying everything about the Christian Gospel depends on its historical accuracy. If the resurrection of Jesus did not take place, Christian faith and ministry is a sham.

III. Is circular reasoning invalid when defending the truthfulness of Scripture?

A. In this case, circular reasoning would say, “The Bible is true because the Bible says it is true.”

1. “Yet when you think about it, it’s impossible for any of us to avoid this kind of circularity in our arguments: we all appeal to authority of one kind or another, even when we don’t realize it. If I say, “The Bible is my highest authority because it can be proved rationally,” the argument would be self-defeating. I’d be appealing to an authority other than the Bible (rationalism), implying that it (and not God’s Word) was the real measure of trustworthiness. This level of candor is refreshing in any book on the subject, and much needed. We don’t have to deny that, yes, we’re using circular logic. Why? Because finally appealing to anything other than the Bible implicitly places ultimate authority in something other than the Bible.” Barry Cooper

2. Though such reasoning is not our only appeal (secondary arguments will certainly be used), it is a necessary affirmation about any source that claims ultimate authority.

IV. Conversion to Orthodox Christian belief is ultimately the result of spiritual regeneration brought about by the Holy Spirit and not the result of the deductions of human reason.

A. In regeneration, the dead heart (Eph. 2:1) is made alive and the blinded mind is given sight (2 Cor. 4:4-6).

1. <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

B. “Unless men may come to a reasonable, solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the gospel, by the internal evidences of it, . . . by a sight of its glory; it is impossible that those who are illiterate, and unacquainted with history, should have any thorough and effectual conviction of it at all. They may without this, see a great deal of probability of it; it may be reasonable for them to give much credit to what learned men and historians tell them. . . . But to have a conviction, so clear, and evident, and assuring, as to be sufficient to induce them, with boldness to sell all, confidently and fearlessly to run the venture of the loss of all things, and of enduring the most exquisite and long continued torments, and to trample the world under foot, and count all things but dung for Christ, the evidence they can have from history, cannot be sufficient.” — Jonathan Edwards, The Religious Affections

C. This does not imply that Christian faith is unreasonable but that belief itself is not finally generated by reason.

- V. Attempts to discredit Scripture usually concern three areas:
- A. How was the Bible formed into its current 66-book configuration?
  - B. Is the Bible accurate in what it says about matters related to science, history and itself (consistency)?
  - C. How can certain events recorded in the Bible be considered moral?

VI. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. John 3:19, 20

VII. eternity on this. Why?" That's what we're doing here, and it's really, really significant to ask that question.

VIII.

- IX. The law of the Lord is perfect,
- X. reviving the soul;
- XI. the testimony of the Lord is sure,
- XII. making wise the simple;
- XIII. the precepts of the Lord are right,
- XIV. rejoicing the heart;
- XV. the commandment of the Lord is pure,
- XVI. enlightening the eyes;

- XVII. the fear of the Lord is clean,  
 XVIII. enduring forever;  
 XIX. the rules of the Lord are true,  
 XX. and righteous altogether  
 XXI. More to be desired are they than gold,  
 XXII. even much fine gold;  
 XXIII. sweeter also than honey,  
 XXIV. and drippings of the honeycomb.  
 XXV. Moreover, by them is your servant warned;  
 XXVI. in keeping them there is great reward (Psalm 19:7–11).  
 XXVII. Blessed is the man  
 XXVIII. who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
 XXIX. nor stands in the way of sinners,  
 XXX. nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
 XXXI. but his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
 XXXII. and on his law he meditates day and night.  
 XXXIII. He is like a tree  
 XXXIV. planted by streams of water  
 XXXV. that yields its fruit in its season,  
 XXXVI. and its leaf does not wither.  
 XXXVII. In all that he does, he prospers.  
 XXXVIII. The wicked are not so,  
 XXXIX. but are like chaff that the wind drives away.  
 XL. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
 XLI. nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;  
 XLII. for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
 XLIII. but the way of the wicked will perish (Psalm 1:1–6).

#### Can we know the original words?

Cooper writes:

Although we no longer have access to the original biblical documents, all is not lost. The truly enormous number of surviving copies enables experts to reconstruct the original with great accuracy. This process of comparing copies is called textual criticism, and as a result, scholars are able to say: “For over 99 percent of the words of the Bible, we know what the original manuscript said.”

#### Role of Bible in Christian life

[Timothy Paul] Jones concludes with a clear articulation of the gospel and this challenge to millennials who would say I follow Jesus, not the Bible: “It’s simply not possible to follow Jesus faithfully while believing the Bible selectively” (145).

Here’s what you can’t get around: If the resurrection happened, then the rest of the fundamental superstructure of Christianity comes together like clockwork—including the authority of the Bible, both New Testament and Old. If it *didn’t* happen, then never mind any of it. So the question is: can the biblical authors be trusted when they claim to have seen Jesus alive after his resurrection? In the final three chapters, Gilbert masterfully unpacks the familiar but solid arguments for why the Gospel writers were not aiming to write fiction (83–87), nor intentionally deceiving their readers (87–91), nor participants in a mass delusion (91–96).

Instead, they wrote what they had seen, believed what they had written, and died for what they believed.

Justin Dillehay on Greg Gilbert's book, *Why Trust the Bible*

Ultimate proof of truthfulness of Scripture

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. Westminster Confession of Faith 1:5