

# Why We Trust the Bible as Our Guide in All Matters of Faith and Practice

Message 1 of 6 in the series: "Apologetics: The Defense of Christianity Through Rational Argument"

## A. It's important for us, as Christians, to be able to explain what we believe and why we believe it.

"...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, **always be ready to explain it.** But do this in a gentle and respectful way." 1 Peter 3:15-16a (NLT)

"apologia" (Greek) = "defense" = a lawyer defending a client.

1. When we're able to explain the reasons for our faith, we can:
  - help remove intellectual barriers that prevent people from coming to faith in Christ.
  - help other believers strengthen their faith against doubts.
  - more effectively share the hope we have through a personal relationship with Jesus.
2. An important part of the ministry of our church is equipping our people with sound teaching so we can give ready answers for the hope we have. "Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. **Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work** and build up the church, the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-12 (NLT)

## B. Seven reasons why we trust the Bible as our guide in all matters of faith and practice:

1. The Bible is inspired by God. ("inspired" = "God-breathed.")

**"All Scripture is inspired by God** and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

"Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, **those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.**" 2 Peter 1:20-21 (NLT)

*Note:* The Bible is a collection of 66 books that were written in three different languages by 40 authors from three continents over a period of more than 1,500 years. Moses was a shepherd, Isaiah was a prophet, Ezra was a priest, Matthew was a tax collector, John was a fisherman, and Luke was a physician. These authors wrote from palaces, prisons, the wilderness, and places of exile. They wrote history, poetry, prophecy, proverbs, moral and spiritual instruction, and words of rebuke. Yet, the Bible is without error, does not contradict itself, and has complete unity in its overall message. It is inspired by God, and there is no other book like it.

2. Great heroes of our faith viewed the Bible as reliable and authoritative.

Moses: "These instructions are not empty words—**they are your life!**" Deuteronomy 32:47a (NLT)

David: "**Your word is a lamp to guide my feet** and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105 (NLT)

Paul: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the **endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide** we might have hope."

Romans 15:4 (NIV)

3. Jesus viewed the Bible as reliable and authoritative.

"...I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, **I came to accomplish their purpose.** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved." Matthew 5:17b-18 (NLT)

"Make them holy by your truth; **teach them your word, which is truth.**" John 17:17 (NLT)

4. The people and places mentioned in the Bible are real and historical, not mythological. Archaeological discoveries confirm rather than refute the Bible.

"Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the **headquarters of the Roman governor.** His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. So, **Pilate, the governor,** went out to them and asked, 'What is your charge against this man?'" John 18:28-29 (NLT)

*Note:* While excavating an ancient theater in Caesarea Maritima, Israel in 1961, an Italian archaeologist discovered a limestone block with an inscription referring to Pontius Pilate as the Prefect (governor) of

Judea. The stone was part of a dedication to the Emperor Tiberius, who appointed Pilate to be the governor of Judea in AD26 where he served until AD36. This supports the Biblical timeline of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

5. The Bible contains a remarkable number of fulfilled prophecies.

"For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. **Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.**" Isaiah 46:9b-10 (NLT)

"King Herod... called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, 'Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?' 'In **Bethlehem in Judea,**' they said, 'for this is what the prophet wrote: "And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'""

Matthew 2:3-6 (NLT) (See *Micah 5:2* written 700 years earlier)

6. The Bible documents are unquestionably reliable when compared to other ancient documents.

"Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. **Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write a careful account for you...**"

Luke 1:1-3 (NLT)

"The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning . . . And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt." – F.F. Bruce, *The New Testaments Documents: Are They Reliable?*

7. The Bible changes people.

**"For the word of God is alive and powerful.** It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires."

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

"So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly **accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.**" James 1:21 (NLT)

- C. **The Bible was written so that we might believe in God, have a personal relationship with Him, and understand His wonderful plan for our lives.**

"The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But **these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.**" John 20:30-31 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT!** It makes no difference how well we can defend the Bible if we don't do what it says.

"But don't just listen to God's word. **You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.** For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it."

James 1:22-25 (NLT)

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### Connect Group Questions:

1. What is your favorite story/passage/promise in the Bible? Why?
2. Discuss the following statement: "The sole basis for our belief is the Bible – the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is God's word to all people in all times. The entire Bible is uniquely God-breathed, without error, and the final authority on all matters of faith and practice." Centerpoint Statement of Beliefs (Hebrews 4:12-13, Isaiah 55:10-11, & 2 Peter 1:20-21)
3. How did the following people view the Bible?
  - Jesus (Matthew 5:17-18, John 17:17)
  - Paul (Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 2:15 & 3:15-17)
  - David (Psalm 119:9-16)
  - Moses (Deuteronomy 32:47)

4. Why do you think many people accept the reliability of ancient documents like Caesar's *The Gallic Wars* without question but believe that the Bible must have been corrupted over time, even though there is much more evidence for the reliability of the Bible? (Luke 1:1-3)
5. Share one insight God has given you through your Bible reading lately. Pray for each other. Ask God to give everyone in our church a hunger to read the Bible and do what it says. (James 1:22-25) Also ask God to help us equip our people so that we will all be able to explain the hope we have in Jesus. (1 Peter 3:15-16)

## Bonus Material:

### Inscription on the "Pilate Stone" found in Caesarea Maritima, Israel in 1961

<i>Latin</i>	<i>English</i>
"[DIS AUGUSTI]S TIBERIÉUM":	"To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum"
"[... PONTI]US PILATUS":	"Pontius Pilate"
"[... PRAEF]ECTUS IUDA[EA]E":	"Prefect of Judea"
"[... FECIT D]E[DICAVIT]":	"Has dedicated"

## The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 in caves on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. A shepherd boy randomly tossed a rock into one of the caves and heard the rock break a ceramic pot containing leather and papyrus scrolls that were later determined to be nearly 2,000 years old. These scrolls included manuscripts or fragments of every book in the Old Testament except the Book of Esther, and all of them were copied by scribes nearly one thousand years earlier than any previously known biblical manuscripts. By comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls to later manuscripts, it can be shown that the OT books of the Bible were faithfully copied through the centuries with only minimal differences. We can have great confidence that Old Testament books in our Bibles are the same as those read by Jesus and His disciples.

## A Comparison of New Testament Writings and Other Ancient Documents

Author	Book	Date	Earliest Manuscripts	Gap (years)	# of Copies in existence
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425BC	AD900	1350	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400BC	AD900	1300	9
Aristotle	<i>Poetics</i>	343BC	AD1050	1400	5
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	58-50BC	AD900	1000	10

### *The New Testament*

Matthew	<i>Matthew</i>	AD70-80	} AD125-150 (fragments) 50-75 AD200 (NT books) 100-150 AD250 (Most of NT) 150-200 AD325 (Complete NT) 225-275 }	} 5,500
Mark	<i>Mark</i>	AD50-65		
Luke	<i>Luke / Acts</i>	AD60-65		
John	<i>John / Rev.</i>	AD80-100		
Paul	<i>Paul's Letters</i>	AD50-66		