
The Authority of the Bible

Into Thy Word Ministries www.intothyword.org

Before we can get into what the Bible says about itself, we need to clear the skeptics away. First, you need to remember that the Bible is not merely one book, but a library of 66 books, all with a unifying theme and purpose that is all divinely inspired by our Lord. This is important because the primary objections for using the Bible to claim authority for itself is considered a logical fallacy by academia and educated skeptics. To them, it would be just plain dumb to consider the Bible relevant because of its age and using just “one source” (itself) to prove itself. It would be like quoting a single magazine article which says it holds all of the truth, and using that same article to prove it, versus using scores of separate research and information to state the case. Using one source is what crazy people and cult leaders do! But, the Bible is not just one book! So, there is no logical fallacy in using Scripture to support Scripture!

Let me give our scientific friends a thought; in the scientific field of physics, the *Holy Grail quest* is to find a theorem to unify all the fields of physics and natural law, to tie all of these scientific statements of facts such as gravity, things measured, and things observed together in one neat package. Sound easy? Well, all of these fact-based sciences contradict one another, and sometimes even themselves! This would include quantum mechanics, Newtonian law and string theory, to Einstein’s relativity. This quest is called the “Unified Field Theory.” Some of the brightest minds that have ever existed, such as Steven Hawking and Einstein himself, spent all of their professional lives in search of it, but no one can find it. Why is this important or relevant? Because, all those disciplines of science “facts” contradict one another! The Bible does not; and it was written over a 1,500-year period of time. Even Shakespeare, author of the greatest English works of literature of all time, does not come close! So, we can take a confident look into God’s Word to see what the Bible says about itself!

Why should we listen to a Book? Why is the Bible to be our authority for faith and practice—for life? Because, God tells us so! God is the author and has given it to us so we can, as the Army says, “be all you can be!” So, again, some would ask, *why should we heed this instruction; what right does the Bible have to rule over us?* Well, it does not rule over us; God, as Creator, has chosen His right to exercise divine guidance and authority, and has given us the institutions in written form, the Bible. As it is “God breathed,” the Bible is the only infallible, authoritative truth we have; thus it is true in all that it says and what God requires of us. The Bible is actually the voice of God to His children—us. Thus, because He is God and we are not, we should, we must, submit to His authority through His Word. He has the right to command, and we are his troops called to proclaim His glory.

On the dark side, we must be aware that many people, including some Christian leaders, misuse the Bible for their own gain and pronounce their authority into it. The Reformers freed the Bible from the captivity of those who would not allow her pages to

be read. We have to remember that the Bible can never say what it does not, or mean what it does not. Yet so many replace the truth of His Word with human lies, manipulation, and deception. We must free the Bible from those who dare tread their will upon its pages, and hide its truth for self-gain and self-gratification. We must claim God's Word for what it is, His Word, His authority, and His right to command and teach us.

So, what about all the objections?

There are three primary objections to the Bible. They all fall under the premise that people generally do not want to venture into it because of a fear of being convicted. I had a good friend who was a committed Christian who said he did not like to read the Bible. His fear was he would be convicted to become a missionary in a far off place and be miserable. I told him that God would never call you to something that you are not gifted and suited for and that if he did indeed receive a call to go to Outer Mongolia (his greatest fear); he would also have the burning desire and the gifts to go there. But, we like to cover up our fears of being convicted with arguments of reason and logic. That is to say, if we can prove our point, we do not have to listen to it. If we can put down the Bible, then we can elevate ourselves, so we can think and do as we please. We do not need to be convicted by a book that is untrue. As for my friend, he dove into the Bible, and learned all that he could. What I find so funny is, he ended up in Russia, and he loved it!

First: The objection that the Bible is full of contradictions and myths.

As did so many others, I set out early in my liberal-mind-set life to prove that the Bible was full of contradictions. I majored in Psychology and Comparative Religions in a secular University to prove the Bible's irrelevance. I believed that all religions were the same—as my professors taught. So, I looked and looked, read all of the “scholarly” books that refute the Bible, and came to the conclusion that there are no real contradictions in the Word of God. And, believe me I tried hard to find them. There are none! I had to rethink my theology, and go from a “wrong” flaming liberal to being a down “right” conservative!

So, when somebody tells me that the Bible is full of contradictions, I politely ask them to show me. Most of the time, they get louder in their objections (as I once did) but provide me with no examples of contradictions. When there is a verse or passage that they feel is a contradiction, we look it up and discover it was either out of its context, or just not there. You may not have the expertise and savvy to answer such objections; that is OK! I get stumped occasionally and have to research it. That is why there are so many good books out there on Apologetics, such as Josh McDowell's “Evidence that Demands a Verdict.” We have lots of great links for apologetic websites on our *Links* channel.

Second: The Bible is too difficult to understand.

This was my first objection. I became a Christian and tried to read the Bible and I was stuck. I did not understand it. I found it confusing. And, I was no idiot; in fact, I was taking graduate courses in Nuclear Theory, Relative Field Theory, and Quantum Mechanics. I was 16 at the time (yes I was an egghead- geek), and the Bible was mysterious to me. The Bible I was reading was the one my Grandmother gave me at my confirmation. It was a beautiful leather Bible with very thin parchment. The text font was very small and you could see the back side almost as well as the front. It was also the King James Version. The combination of antiquated language, small print, and paper that was hard to read compounded with my dyslexia caused an unreadable document. No wonder I found it difficult. Then, a friend gave me the “Good News” Bible and the words and precepts flowed like a well-written, exciting novel. However, for years I refused to read the Good News Bible or any translation that to me did not look like a “real” Bible.

The objection I have heard over the years is, “the Bible is for pastors; I just do not understand it”. When I ask them to tell me about the Bible that they are reading, I find as it was as with me, that the translation is too old and the print too small. And, sometimes they start with Revelation, and get confused. Yes, there are parts of the Bible that are hard to understand, but over 95% is as crystal clear as the daily newspaper. So, if you can read the newspaper, you can read the Bible!

Third: The Bible is boring.

This always dumbfounds me. The Bible is filled with stories of wonder and excitement. What grand Hollywood epic has more special effects than Genesis or Exodus? What TV soap opera has more excitement, sex, and betrayal than that of Judges? What novel have you read that has the elements of passion, wonder, crime, betrayal, lust, remorse, and heroism, with deep philosophy and truth? Shakespeare himself said he could never top the Bible; no one ever has; no one ever will. So, if you find the Bible boring, then life and death are boring. The excitement of love and the remorse of death are of no consequence. There has never been anything in all of human history that has so much for so many. The fears, struggles, problems, and solutions that the Bible characters face are what we face. They may not have had a flashing 12:00 on their VCR, but all that there is in life that matters, such as relationships, life, death, and the pursuit of life is what they had, and is what we have and deal with daily, too. The Bible is alive and incredibly exciting; if you find it boring, then switch to a better translation, and reboot your attitude.

The objections concerning the Bible are neutered, castrated from any threat to the reasonable mind. There are no contradictions in it, it is as readable as any magazine, and it is definitely not boring. The Bible has been relevant and impacting throughout history, and without it, humanity is destined to destruction. The question is, what is stopping you from examining its pages?

The Bible requires an effort.

There are three forces that pound and tear at the foundation of a growing Christian: pride, laziness, and dishonesty. And, the result of those three is usually the lack of motivation. I struggle with it. Sometimes I just do not feel like reading the Bible or even getting out of bed, and I am a pastor, and the director of a ministry that promotes Bible reading. Yet, we all can be besieged with the lack of desire. That is when we need to drop to our knees in prayer and seek His face!

There is also a labor factor that is required for any endeavor, and the Bible is no different than any other reading. To read a novel, you have to first be willing to sacrifice the money to go buy it, then set aside precious time for its reading, and then gather the necessary effort to be able to begin. Then, after all that expense, time, and effort, you still need to remain committed so you will be able to finish it. It is the same with the Bible!

As for study, well, study is even more labor intensive. So, when we fail to get into His Word, it is more of an unwillingness to work at it. Are you committed to a magazine or a novel? Is the time and effort put forth for *People* or *Hot Rod* the same as for your devotions? How much time do you spend watching TV? Did you know that half of a sitcom is 15 minutes, and all it takes is 15 minutes a day for you to read though the entire Bible in a year?

The above objections are mere excuses that cloak us from responsibility. Our fallen nature is to be lazy and seek the easy way out, and it will get in the way of being His disciple more than any other hindrance we could ever face. Even in the mist of harsh persecution, the Bible and Christian growth flourishes. I used to sneak Bibles into Russia, and would see hunger for the Word as I never have felt or seen personally—in others or myself. Now, the long iron curtain has fallen and we are training those once hungry Christians to teach the Bible. Do you have that hunger to know His Word? If not, what is stopping you? With me, it was pride and the thought that I already knew it!

It is when we are comfortable and complacent that our lack of willingness clouds us from growing in our Lord. The problem is our neglect, not the Bible!

Why should we study the Bible?

Do you realize that if you are a Christian, and have read the entire Bible, you are in the minority? Does this scare you? Well, it should! If you study the Bible yourself, you are in an even greater minority that even most pastors do not fall into! Yet, all of them would have an opinion of the Bible, teach, and make decisions based on their understanding of the Bible. If you were not scared before, you should be now! Do you realize that most seminaries are turning out pastors who are Biblically illiterate? They may, at best, have taken just a couple of classes in Bible—if any at all. I took all of the Bible courses that were offered when I was in seminary, but I felt poorly prepared. Fortunately, I undertook the study of His Word myself. I was fortunate to go to a good

seminary—Fuller, in Pasadena—that gave me a good foundation and the tools to be a good exegete (how to study the Bible), but they did not teach me all that was in it. It was up to me to take the tools that I had learned and apply them so I could be a good exegete. But, many pastors are going into their pulpits ignorant, either not knowing the tools or how to use those tools.

This is why a lot of pastors are not leading Bible studies in our churches, and why so few churches even have a Bible study. In one church I served, there was only one adult Bible study, and an ex-missionary led it. Everyone else felt they were too old and/or busy to lead one. A godly woman, who was 100 years old at the time, led the one and only Bible study at that church! She was a true saint and committed to Christ as Lord; the rest of the church simply did not get it! It is sad that a lot of pastors feel that they are not able to lead Bible studies, and even discourage others from doing so, lest they may be “shown up!” Now, you should be terrified!

I recently was on a committee to examine seminary grads seeking ordination *Preparation for Ordination exam*. I saw several seminary graduates unable to answer simple Sunday school questions. I had high school students in the inner city that would blow them away (in Bible knowledge). So many pastors are attending seminary, but then are leaving ill prepared to teach His most precious Word. (Now, you should be hiding under the bed!) I knew one pastor who lived in mortal fear of teaching the Bible! He felt that he was a fraud; his sermons came from a magazine or the internet and he concentrated on counseling (at which he was good). It took a lot of arm-twisting to get him to learn the Bible. He was embarrassed that people would find him out. Now, the pastors overseas whom we are reaching have the same problem with the lack of Bible knowledge. But, their reason is that they do not have seminaries or those great resources that we have!

Do not get me wrong; I am not seminary, or even pastor, bashing, I am pointing out a critical problem in a lot of our churches today. They create “pew-sitters” who go to church in name only, but do nothing with their faith, even refusing to learn and grow in the Word. This is a problem both in our leadership and in the pew, where the people do not want to follow a good leader. They allow pride and laziness get in the way of knowing His Word. Or, they seek sensationalism and personality over truth and relevance. Not learning and adhering to the precepts of Scripture effects every decision and action that the church faces and makes.

The Bible has been debated much and read little over the centuries. All kinds of theology have been excavated from its pages. Great nuggets of inspiration have been found in the precepts of its truth, while other schemes, falsehoods, and crazy doctrines have been cleverly placed where they do not belong. The quest for grandstanding and sensationalism to gather as many followers as possible has clouded the pulpit and airways from the Truth. Where truth once reigned, comes confusion and spurious doctrines. Yes, people follow the personalities and charisma of its leaders, but where is the Truth; where is the Word; where is the discipleship?

On the positive side, we have seen the rising interest in home Bible studies since the early 1970s, which, for some strange reason, were a rarity in the U.S. beforehand. We have seen the development of dozens of new translations, Bible helps, resources, and even software that cuts research time to a mere fraction compared with the past. There are more ministries (including *Into Thy Word*) that are teaching and distributing His precious Word more than ever before in history. On the dark side—at the same time, more and more people are going astray from His Word more than ever before.

So, what has happened? We have the same Spirit, the same Word, more and greater resources, more translations, more ministries, and more Bible studies than ever before. Yet, many churches close their doors every year, and people are leaving the church. More false doctrines are spreading and taking over the truth more than ever before, too. So, we have more resources and more Bible studies, yet fewer churches and more false doctrine; this does not make sense. Or, does it? To the committed disciple and Bible lover, this is extremely frustrating. I sometimes even wonder if it is worth the time and effort to teach truth when false teaching is so enticing and claiming so many.

So, why? How do two contradictory events make sense? When something good of God begins to work, Satan and our evil, fallen nature will synergistically combine to thwart it. We may not sit down in a dark, smoke filled room in the back of a bar to hedge a deal with a guy in a red suit smelling of brimstone, but nevertheless, the results are the same. Satan pulls out all the stops, and we seek to glorify ourselves and try to get into the action, even if we have to make stuff up to get our piece. This, too, synergistically combines with the lack of solid Bible leaders and Bible knowledge to produce a weak church, ripe for false teachings and political power plays. (I can only guess that all those great resources just look good on the shelf, when they need to be put in action.) All these factors, joined together, result in thousands of people each year leaving the church hurt, confused, and disillusioned.

So, when all the home Bible studies and resources were spreading, Satan was too, and is there in force with his entourage (demons) to manipulate the results. And, many leaders were there too, arguing, spreading confusion, backstabbing, and engaging in their own manipulation. The home Bible studies and the expository preaching from the pulpit are to teach the truth of God's most precious Word. And, this has been happening, as many great churches have sprung up while others rekindled their call. In the most part, the home Bible studies have been essential, and must build and continue. But, we need to be aware that at the same time of growing Bible studies, human, fallen thinking is walking hand in hand with Satan to spoil the work of our Lord. Personal political agendas and power quested individuals are entering in the Bible study and pulpit with a self-purpose mentality to take the spotlight away from God in most of His churches. How many sermons have had the pastor's experience and stories as their central focus; how many Bible studies have been led by leaders with their own agenda? As I travel around and speak and teach in churches, I am astounded at the degree of "self-worship" and "pastor worship" that is in the church. Either the pastor is worshiped or the pastor is on trial in the court of pew sitters who do not want to be convicted. And,

there is lack of Christ's shed blood being lifted up and preached. We have to not only continue home Bible studies, but also reform them, train the leaders, and infuse a passion for the truth of His Word so that the focus becomes growth and discipleship, not personalities, personal agendas, or even programs.

Those of us in ministry are never to look at ourselves as above others! We are not, we serve Him who serves. A prideful church leader is a heinous sight before our Lord and they are the ones who are truly blind! Blind to His Word! A leader is to lead others into the depths and precepts of Christ and is not superior in anyway. We do this with our love for the Lord empowering our love for others (Matt. 20:20-34; John 3:30; Gal. 2:20-21; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil 3:10-14; 4:12)!

I have to confess; I too have struggled with this, as I was very arrogant and condescending in my early pastoral days. In the opposite sense of Biblical ignorance, I overpowered people with the Word. I figured since I was so much smarter and educated, I had all the answers. I would engage in conversations with my rhetoric skill, while my ears took a break. Maybe I had good answers, but I was not listening or being encouraging to people. And, when I taught, my teaching came across as patronizing. I even swooped in to take over Bible studies that were defective instead of discipling those already in the lead. I may have even crushed hearts and calls when I was supposed to lift up and glorify Christ. I would speak so highly above people's heads that no one understood what I was saying. God had to swat me a few times before I got it right. I had to learn—it is about Christ and not about me. It is His Word, and I am just His servant.

The result of our political games and lifting of ourselves instead of the Lord has created an enigma in place of the Word. In the early days of Billy Graham's ministry, all he had to do was say, "the Bible says..." and people had a general grasp of its contents and that it was indeed His Word. Today, when Billy Graham says "the Bible says..." most people will wonder what Bible; what is in it; whose opinion; whose interpretation. Has Billy changed his message? No. Has the Bible changed? No. We have created the enigma of argument in place of a solid, comforting foundation of truth—as it is. No longer does the Bible present a unified identity. To the non-Christian, it is a document of conflicting and changing meanings. It no longer makes sense; it is a piece of clay that can be sculptured to our own image and needs.

This not only hurts our outreach endeavors, but the church as well! Because, even though we have all these wonderful ministries and resources, very few people are actually reading the Bible and using those resources, especially the leaders in the church! As a former church growth consultant, I was amazed at the lack of basic Bible understanding when I conducted leadership retreats and had church leaders develop vision and direction from God's Word. Many could not find the books of the Bible nor had even a basic understanding of the theological principles of the denomination that they were representing. That is why people in denominational conventions promote crazy stuff such as homosexuality and re-imagining God, because they do not know better. They infuse their agenda over God's. The church has forgotten to train and

disciple its people so they can know Him better and be poured out to Him (John 14-15; Gal. 2:20; Phil.1:6; 3:10).

While in seminary, I worked as a cooperate trainer for a major bank; one of the things I did was train tellers how to detect counterfeit money. I received my training from the American Secret Service who not only guards the President but whose principle duty is to track and thwart counterfeits. I was commissioned to train the managers of bank branches. In our training, I had them feel real \$100 bills with their eyes closed to get to know the real one. Then I gave them sample counterfeits; just by the feel of them, they were able to quickly detect phony \$100 bills. We also had elaborate displays of various counterfeits from the Treasury Department as well as all kinds of things to memorize, electronic gadgets, ink dabs, and other ways to detect the counterfeit bills. But, I found if you spent the time to know the real one, the fakes were easily spotted; the gadgets were not necessary. As Christians, we must be willing and able to stop the phony teaching and the apathy that is rampant in our churches. The best way we can do this is by knowing the real One, and spreading the real message and Truth.

If the leaders are not grounded Biblically, then we are in trouble. Because, they are making decisions based on human reasoning and not God's—for God's house! This scares me. I sat through many, many committee and council meetings over the years and listened to some of the most foolish discussions and circles of rhetoric—with nothing getting done for Him. These same elders had no devotional life, did not know the Word, and, I would guess, did not care. Their position was political—as whom they were in society and not who they were in Christ. So, the decisions they made seriously hampered the church. It amazes me how this goes on and on; I guess people just do not get it, and are blinded by their arrogance and Satan's influence.

Why should we study the Bible? Because, to be a growing, effective Christian, we need to get what is in the Bible. We can avoid the counterfeit by knowing the real One. We have to end the apathy, arrogance, confusion, and falsehoods coming out of the church. We have to stop our self-grandstanding and keep preaching the message of Christ crucified, because it is about Him—not us. We are the recipients of His truth and grace. We are not the message, nor are we the opinion. We are the means by which He chooses to work. We have to give away our self-motivations, leaving them at the foot of the Cross.

The *why* of studying the Bible is to bring our mindsets in line with His truth. We cannot do that when we refuse to yield ourselves to our Lord. We cannot do that when pride and arrogance are piloting at the helm, or apathy is running the bridge. We can not ignore the Bible's relevance in history or in our personal lives. If we do, we will have closed off churches and will reap corrupt governments and broken and hopeless lives. Remember, He is Lord—not co-pilot, or vice president, or divine bellhop. He is God and Creator and King of the universe who loves us and desires the best for all of us. Thus, when we yield ourselves to His precepts, we are giving Him glory which is the primary fruit from studying the Bible.

More thoughts on why should we study the Bible

- The study of the Bible matters! We must study the Bible because it is the foundation for life. God even commands us to study His Word as the priority before we do anything else (Deut. 6: 6-9).
- Because we are to love Him (Deut. 6:4-5).
- Because He demands we teach others the Word (2 Tim. 3:14-17).
- Because we are to fear, trust, understand, and respect Him (Prov. 1:7; 3:5: 9:10)
- As a Christian, we need to live a life of distinction; and the only way to receive the knowledge of that distinction is to get into the Word!
- We do not want to be “barcode” Christians who do not care what is in the box because only the label matters, or that Christianity is just “fire insurance” from hell!
- We must seek out the truth and the answers that we need from the final authority, and not the ways of the world!
- If we do not study the Bible, then we set ourselves up as the final judge and authority, and not God. We will lead ourselves to societal corruption and personal loss of freedom and hope—all leading us down the road to hell made from the paving of false truths and distractions.
- The point of Christianity is to be a transformed person through self-surrender to our Lord's holiness, through His Word and prayer! This is what glorifies our Lord!
- The response of grace is to be a transformed person, through self-surrender to our Lord's holiness and through His Word and prayer!
- REMEMBER: *THE BIBLE IS GOD'S LOVE LETTER TO YOU!!!*
- We need to get into the Bible ourselves. One of the problems of Christianity today is that we are conditioned to be taught from the Scriptures but not to do it for ourselves.
- The cults place their authority elsewhere, and not in the Word!
- The Bible brings us in line with His Holiness, and with reality! Science may have explanations, but they change completely every few years. However, the Word of God never changes. What a great comfort!
- Science can never explain love, justice, peace, goodness, purity, or sin because you cannot quantify it in a microscope or scientific instrument! *Why we do what we do*

cannot be scientifically measured and hypothesized; that is why there are so many theories in science and psychology and they are always changing!

- The Bible is read much, but studied little! Be the person who reads and studies it, and apply the precepts to all aspects of your life!
- The truths of Scripture will transcend any other subject, discipline, or passion!
- The Bible gives us a greater reality that cannot be seen, but is clearly felt, and to deny it would be like living in Huntington Beach in Southern California and never seeing the ocean!

Yes, indeed the study of the Bible does matter so we do not become the counterfeiters to His truth!!!

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