



Exploring the Evidence: Why Are Christians Losing Confidence in the Bible?

Dr. Paul M. Elliott, ASF president

Transcript of a video available on our website

Today, the major source of weakened confidence in the Bible is the evangelical church itself.

...Here we are at the end of Mark and we've got this long textual variant stuck on the end of Mark, that we know did not appear in the original autograph written by Mark. – Dr. John MacArthur

There's another attitude that is pernicious among evangelical Christians, and that is the attitude of absolute certainty... We can't have absolute certainty that what we have in our hands today is, in every respect, the Word of God. – Dr. Daniel Wallace

Consequently, most Christians, most thoughtful Christians, believe what's in the Bible – Are you ready for this? – because it's in the Bible, and you have to help them change that... “Why do you believe that?” “Because the Bible tells me so. Because it's in the Bible.” That is the wrong answer. – Dr. Andy Stanley

Today the Christian church faces a major crisis of confidence in the Bible. Growing numbers of self-described evangelical pastors, teachers, and church members are making public statements that show they are either doubtful of – or often openly reject – truths about the Bible that have been foundational throughout the history of the church.

Reliable surveys, and postings all over social media, are telling us that many evangelical Christians no longer believe that they can rely upon the Bible to be totally accurate in all that it says. Growing numbers say they believe that the Bible may contain the Word of God, but it is not entirely the Word of God. Growing numbers do not believe that the historical accounts in the Bible are completely trustworthy or even literally true. Growing numbers do not believe that God is the Author of all of Scripture, or that the Bible alone



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is the Word of God. Professing evangelical Christians are seriously questioning the rightful place of the Bible as the sole authority for the Gospel message, for doctrine, and for Christian conduct.

Why Is This Happening?

In earlier generations it was accurate to say that the source of such unbelief was outside the church. In earlier generations, there were always some evangelical young people who abandoned their spiritual anchors when they left home to go to secular colleges and universities, or into the working world.

But today, the major source of dangerously weakened confidence in the Bible is the evangelical church itself, and evangelical Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries.

Professing Christian young people are being told – in their churches, and in their colleges and seminaries – that the Bible contains words, verses, and even entire sections that are not authentic. They are being told that they cannot know what the human writers of Scripture actually wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They are being told that relying on the Bible as the Christian's sole authority for the Gospel message may have been acceptable in past generations, but to assert that "the Bible says" is the "wrong answer" today.

A rapidly growing body of evidence supports these facts. For this video we have selected just three examples among vast numbers. We have chosen to present the words of three particular men because they represent three successive generations of influence. Each of these men trusted their teachers in the generation before them, and each of these men is massively influential today.

Dr. John MacArthur: Denying the Ending of Mark

"I'm telling you this because here we are at the end of Mark, and we've got this long textual variant stuck on the end of Mark, that we know did not appear in the original autograph written by Mark... Remember verse eight from this morning? This is Mark's closing statement: "They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Period.

"I like that. Verse eight says, 'they said nothing to anyone' and that was good enough for Mark. He didn't either. He just shut it down."¹

¹ Dr. John MacArthur, "The Fitting End to Mark's Gospel", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmudwnVPQ7A>, telecast 15 June 2011, accessed 3 June 2025.



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As he tells his congregation in this sermon, Dr. MacArthur's diminished view of the authenticity of Scripture was shaped during his college and seminary years by the teachers he trusted to tell him the truth. And those teachers had in turn been influenced by an earlier generation.

Dr. MacArthur has been, and continues to be, massively influential.² From 1985 to 2019, he was president of The Master's University in California, which currently has 2500 students. In 1986 Dr. MacArthur founded The Master's Seminary, which instructs nearly 600 students each year. Dr. MacArthur's Grace to You radio program reaches over two million people each week via radio and podcasts. He has written over twenty books.

In this video, Dr. MacArthur makes a claim that is taught in most Christian colleges and seminaries, and from most evangelical pulpits today – that the closing verses of the Gospel of Mark are not part of authentic Scripture, but were added centuries later. But here are the facts: Only three known Greek New Testament manuscripts – out of thousands – omit these verses. But beginning in the 19th century, unbelieving textual critics began a campaign, which continues to this day, to discredit the overwhelming evidence that the ending of Mark is authentic Scripture.

Questioning the authenticity of the ending of the Gospel of Mark is just one of the ways in which the door has been opened to massively question the authenticity of the New Testament. Sadly, Dr. MacArthur and many other evangelical pastors and teachers have aligned themselves with this erroneous view. Thus they are undermining the confidence of untold numbers of Christians in the authenticity and reliability of the Word of God.

Dr. Daniel Wallace: We Cannot Be Certain About the Bible

"There's another attitude that is pernicious among evangelical Christians, and that is the attitude of absolute certainty... We can't have absolute certainty, that what we have in our hands today is in every respect the Word of God."³

In this video, Dr. Wallace makes another false claim that is taught in most Christian colleges and seminaries, and from most evangelical pulpits today – that because we do not have the original manuscripts of the New Testament in the original Greek, we therefore do not know what the inspired human writers actually wrote, and therefore we

² Dr. MacArthur passed away a few weeks after our video was produced, but remains highly influential.

³ Dr. Daniel B. Wallace, "Is What We Have Now What They Wrote Then?" – a 2023 chapel presentation at Dallas Theological Seminary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5AKPiBZcis>, accessed 3 June, 2025.

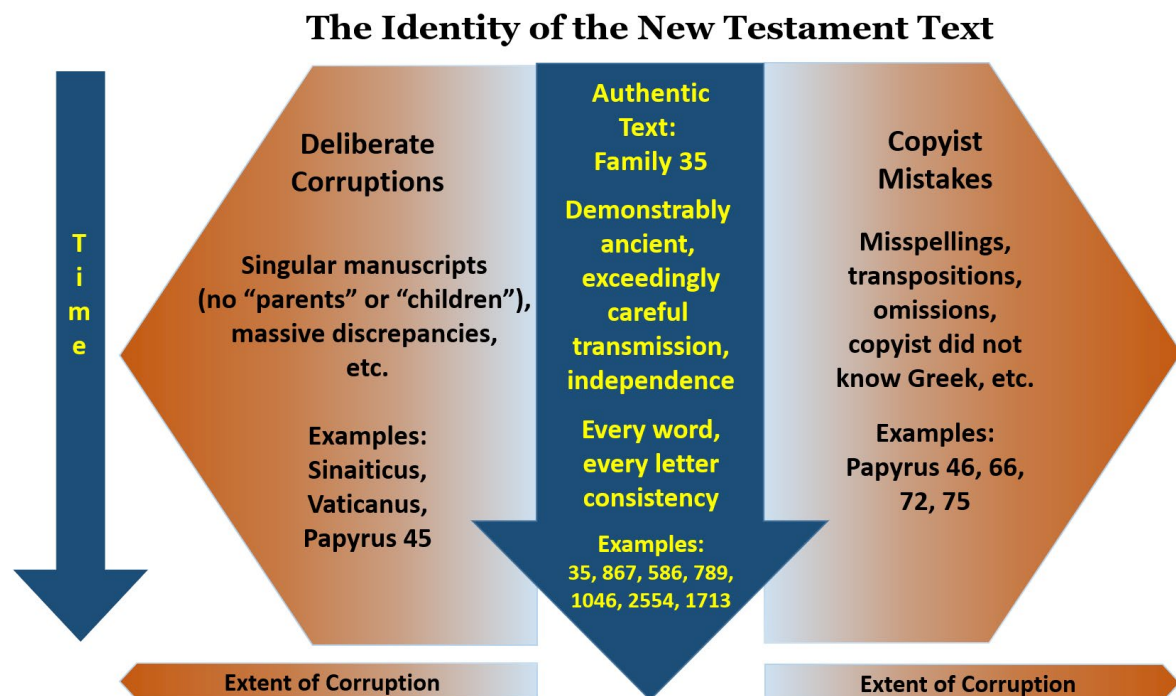


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cannot say with absolute certainty that the actual Word of God is available for translation into the languages of our world.

Elsewhere on the Authentic Scripture Foundation website we present the overwhelming empirical evidence against this false viewpoint. God has preserved the original wording of the New Testament – every word, every letter – and it has come down through the centuries to the present day in the mainstream of New Testament manuscripts, known as Family 35.



Once again, like Dr. MacArthur, Dr. Wallace is massively influential. He is Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, and has taught there for more than 32 years. He is also Executive Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts. Dr. Wallace has trained over 75,000 pastors, missionaries, and college and seminary professors, and has influenced many more around the world.

Sadly, Dr. Wallace and many other evangelical pastors and teachers have aligned themselves with the erroneous view that the Scriptures have not been preserved pure through the ages in the original languages. And thus, once again, they are undermining the spiritual confidence of tens of thousands of Christian pastors and teachers, and countless numbers of Christians in the churches they lead and the schools where they teach.



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Dr. Andy Stanley: “The Bible Says” Is the Wrong Answer

“But the Christian faith does not rise and fall based on the accuracy or the inerrancy of sixty-six ancient documents that we call books of the Bible...

“...but because of the way that pastors have leveraged ‘the Bible says, the Bible says, the Bible says’ – like saying, ‘the Constitution says,’ ‘the company handbook says’ – we’ve said that the Bible is the authority. ‘The Bible says’ – ‘the Bible teaches’ – ‘the Word of God’. Because of that language, consequently, most Christians, most thoughtful Christians, believe what’s in the Bible – Are you ready for this? – because it’s in the Bible, and you have to help them change that.

“For illustration: Ask the average person in your church, or your uncle, or your aunt. or your grandmother who loves Jesus, ‘Hey, do you believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead?’ ‘Yes, I do.’ ‘Why do you believe that?’ ‘Because the Bible tells me so. Because it’s in the Bible.’ That is the wrong answer.”⁴

Dr. Andy Stanley represents a third generation of men whose influence has weakened confidence in the authenticity of Scripture.

In this video, Dr. Stanley makes another false and dangerous claim that is taught today in most Christian colleges and seminaries – the claim that Christian teaching and evangelism need not, and indeed cannot, be based on confidence in the existence of Authentic Scripture – because, he claims, Authentic Scripture does not exist. Dr. Stanley is speaking to students at Dallas Seminary. He is telling them that, “The Bible says” may have been a good answer for your grandparents and all the generations before them, but it is the wrong answer for your generation.

This assumes that mankind has changed. But man is still the same sinner the Holy Spirit describes through the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter one. It also assumes that the Bible has changed – that we do not have the Word that Jesus declared would be preserved for ever – every word, and every letter. But the fact is, we do.

Once again, like Dr. MacArthur and Dr. Wallace, Dr. Andy Stanley is massively influential. He is the senior pastor of North Point Community Church in metropolitan Atlanta, with a weekly Sunday attendance of over 43,000 people at 8 locations. He has

⁴ Dr. Andy Stanley, “Your Assumption Is Showing” – a 2019 lecture given at Dallas Theological Seminary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMi9pOiBwCw>, accessed 3 June 2025.



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written over 25 books, and over one million viewers watch his television program each week. In 2017 the readers of *Outreach* magazine voted Dr. Stanley one of the ten most influential pastors in America.

A Spur to Our Research

The three video segments you have just seen show the undermining of confidence in an authentic Bible in three generations of Christian teachers. When the Authentic Scripture Foundation was in its formative stages several years ago, as we began to focus on these things, two of our key research areas were, first of all, How did this happen? What influences brought about this decline?

And our second key research area was, How far back does this go, and who was involved? How many generations? Who were the key figures in past generations who influenced this decline in confidence? Where were they? What were the lines of influence in various schools, churches, and Christian organizations?

In another video you'll find on our website called "What's Been Done?" we talk about those issues, and the startling and often little-known facts we have uncovered in our research. In a third video called "What's Next?" we describe the research, publishing, and educational work yet to be done, God willing and by the Lord's provision, as we seek to have a part in restoring complete confidence in the authentic Word of God in this generation, and generations to come.