

Front Door Doctrine (part 1)

The Bible is Reliable and Authoritative

And it better be or we should all walk away right now and go do something else with our lives!

What's the Bible about? What's the Bible's purpose?

Do you *trust* the Bible? Is it reliable?

Do you know who wrote the Bible?

How did we arrive at the Bible we have today?

What does it mean that the Bible is *inspired* and *infallible, inerrant*?

Does the Bible *dominate* your life? What holds ultimate authority over your decisions, thoughts and actions?

Is the Bible your authority? OR are you your own authority?

Why does this even matter?

- The Bible contains all kinds of writings: history, poetry, prophecy, songs, biography – but whatever the style, the underlying message is the same: **The revelation of God and the great length He has gone to rescue mankind from his sin!**
- The Bible enables us to *know* God personally.
- The Christian's delight is in the "*law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night.*"
- The Bible shapes us – our thinking and living. It is authoritative.
- The Christian is refreshed and strengthened by reading the Bible.

You're basing your life on whether or not this book is true, so it should be important enough to investigate WHY you believe *what* you believe!

The Word *bible* comes from the Greek word for "book."

Holy Bible therefore means "Holy Book."

- There are 66 separate books. 39 in the OT alone – which is a record of God creating the world and our first parents Adam and Eve until the coming of Jesus Christ into human history.
- Prior to the 3rd century AD the early church would have known the "Old" Testament as the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (or the Scriptures).
- Most of the OT was originally written in Hebrew (some Aramaic).
- It was written over the course of more than one thousand years.
- The NT speaks of the OT as Scripture - the Greek word for Scripture is *graphe*, meaning "writing."

Christianity is concerned with factual history, not myth (Luke 1:1-4).

Christianity starts with a person, and historical occurrences.

Christianity isn't based on blind faith.

We don't ask people to believe in Christ without reason; instead we give significant reasons—evidence—of who Christ is, and then ask for a response.

The New Testament is our primary source of evidence about Jesus.

- It was written by eyewitnesses, and distributed to eyewitnesses. Those who wrote it believed it and they were willing to give their life for it.
- The 27 books of the NT begin with the life of Jesus and end with instructions to various Christians and Christian churches about how to think and live in light of who Jesus is and what He's done.
- Authors of the NT include a doctor, tax collector, fishermen, a former persecutor of Christians and Jesus' own two brothers.
- Chapter divisions in the Bible were created in the 1200's.
- Verses were fully developed by 1551 in an effort to help us find our way around the Bible.

Who wrote the Bible?

"Holy men got taught by the Holy Spirit!"

OT authors include David, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, etc.

NT writers include Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, Luke, James, Jude, etc.

BUT the human authors of Scripture are not the only authors of Scripture. God communicated through the human authors of Scripture in a real and miraculous way so that his divine truth could be perfectly communicated through men.

We could think of it a lot like Jesus himself – both fully man – fully God.

God chose to work through human authorship – through their personalities, writing styles and experiences, through quotes of godless men and pagan poets, through historical accounts, through trials and tribulations, prophecy and more – ALL to communicate who He is and what He's done - to reconcile sinful man to himself!

The belief that God wrote Scripture together with human authors who he inspired to perfectly record his words is called **verbal** (the very words of the Bible) **plenary** (every part of the Bible) **inspiration** (divinely inspired revelation). This word inspired doesn't mean that the biblical writer just felt enthusiasm, like a composer before creating a beautiful musical piece...

This means that God the Holy Spirit inspired not just the thoughts of Scripture, but also the very details and exact words that were perfectly recorded for us as Scripture in the original manuscripts.

They composed and recorded without error God's revelation to mankind in *the words of the original manuscripts*.

God didn't use these men like keys on a computer to mechanically reproduce His message.

They were "carried along" as a ship is driven or carried along by the wind – The

Spirit fully active and the human author fully engaged.
This doctrine of inspiration is tied to the character of God himself.
He is truthful; He doesn't lie. Because God is the author, the Bible is unlike any other book: it's utterly unique and completely reliable.

1. The Bible is Reliable

ALL Scripture claims to be God-breathed or *inspired*

2 Timothy 3:16-21

It originates with God!

Paul is teaching us that the very words are miraculous revelation.

Driscoll and Breshears: *"It is profitable, or helpful. It is not helpful like a phone book, but helpful as a person who loves you, care for you, converses with you, counsels you, comforts you, and confronts you. The Bible is how God speaks to us."*

He is including the two sources of Timothy's knowledge just mentioned, namely 'what you have learned' (from me) and 'the sacred writings.'"¹

- Even if this passage specifically refers to the Old Testament and does not actually apply to the New Testament directly, it is true for the NT by implication or extension. In other words, if true of the Old Testament how much more so with the New Testament.

John 10:35 – Jesus himself said that Scripture cannot be broken.
Why? The Scriptures come from God and come with authority and power.

Jesus himself confirmed the authority and reliability of the OT.

He spoke of it's individual books, it's events, it's letters and parts, He called it "The Word of God," committed it to memory, confirmed it was written by the HS, read from it, taught from it, used it to resist the Devil, confirmed authorship of most disputed OT books (Moses, Daniel, Isaiah, Psalms), he confirmed most disputed miracles (creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Jonah and the great fish). Jesus considered Scripture the final authority (Luke 16:17; Matt 4:4). He opened the eyes of his disciples to see how His life, death and resurrection was a fulfillment of the OT – how the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms were really about him (Luke 24:44-48).

John 5:39-40 – the OT bears witness to Jesus.

Jesus said His teachings would be remembered and understood and that one

¹ Stott, p. 101.

day he would leave his disciples and send the HS to perfectly remind them of his life and teachings (John 14:25-26; 16:12-15).

Jesus established apostolic leadership and authority...in time the apostolic preaching of the gospel and its implications would take on written form in the books of the NT.

There's additional NT evidence that all the prophetic writings of the OT are divinely inspired and perfect

1 Peter 1:10-21

The NT itself makes claims to be divinely inspired prophecy

Eph. 3:4-5; Rev 22:18

In the OT we're repeatedly told that the "Word of God" will stand the test of time - because it is *from* God.

Psalm 18:30; Prov. 30:5; Is. 40:8

The NT speaks of itself as the Word of God in several places.

Hebrews 4:12; Eph 6:17;

1 Thess 2:13 - And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

The writers of the NT believed they were writing divinely inspired Scripture.

- Paul claimed Jesus was speaking through Him in 2 Cor 13:3
- The NT writers claimed their writings were *holy* in 2 Tim 3:15
- In 1 Cor 14:37 Paul says, "*These things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.*"
- Paul declared that His writings were to be read in the churches and obeyed; his teaching was to be commanded and taught to others; and used for exhortations and rebuke.
- Paul understood his teaching to be from Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:1; 12
- The NT writers claimed that God was speaking through them in a divinely inspired way just as he did the authors of the OT.
- In 1 Tim 5:18 Paul quotes Luke 10:7 and calls it Scripture!

Peter believed that Paul's writings were divinely inspired.

2 Peter 3:15-16

15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. **16** He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

To equate their writings with that of the OT would have been very serious claims for a Jew to make.

They fully understood what they were saying and writing - and many died brutal

deaths for what they wrote, believed and lived out without taking back what they said.

The early church treated the Apostle's teaching as authoritative just like the OT teachings of the prophets.

Acts 2:42; 15

Paul himself said that the church was built on the apostles (the NT) and the prophets (the OT), Christ himself being the cornerstone.

Again, who wrote the Bible?

God did, through human authors whom God the Holy Spirit inspired to perfectly write out His truth.

We have to remember that the NT was written because Jesus rose from the dead and proved to be God - the only way to eternal life.

Nothing else could explain:

- The widespread worship of him as God
- The transformation of His disciples from fearful cowards to fearless preachers
- The transformation of Paul
- Jesus' own mom and brothers worshipping Him as God.

This belief that Jesus is God did not benefit those who believed and wrote about it in any way from an earthly perspective yet they never waived from their message, they lived lives in shame and poverty – most ending in cruel persecution and death.

How do we know that what we have in the Bible hasn't been changed over the years?

God's Character upholds the reliability of the Bible

He is perfect. The Bible is without error and contradiction. It's infallible – in other words, it's not misleading.

RC Sproul: "If we say God cannot produce an inerrant Bible, we must then conclude that all Scripture is suspect. If so, perhaps it's teaching is wrong with regard to the deity of Christ, the completed atonement and other vital areas of belief."

Though the Bible is infallible, sometimes our interpretation of it is not (this happens for a variety of reasons).

Textual Criticism upholds the reliability of the Bible (the science and art that seeks to determine the most reliable original wording of a text by comparing the available manuscripts)

- **The Bibliographical test** (the number and quality of manuscripts)

- **The internal test** (the consistency of the text not to contradict itself – fulfillment of prophecy)
- **The external test** (the accuracy of the text in relation to other works of history from that period – men like Josephus the Jewish historian, Suetonius the Roman historian alive in the first century)

We can know with great confidence, through the science of *textual criticism*, and because of the character of God, that what we have (in these Bibles) is what the OT and NT writers wrote.

At the time the Bible was written texts were copied from one another, there were no photocopiers or computers, or printing presses.

The more texts you have the simpler it is in determining if any errors have crept in and what the original material looked like...and determine reliability.

The New Testament was written between 40 and 100 A.D.

- We have full manuscripts of the whole New Testament dating from as early as 350 A.D.
- No other book of ancient history even compares.
- We have some parts dating from as early as 130 A.D. (a time span of only thirty years from the original manuscripts).
- We have writings containing most of the New Testament dating from the third century.
- There are over 5,700 Greek manuscripts, 20 to 25,000 handwritten copies of the NT in various languages. Over 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and 9,300 other manuscripts, as well as over 36,000 quotes in the writings of the early church fathers.
- This means that the NT could be reproduced almost entirely by quotations of it in sermons, tracts, and commentaries written by ancient teachers of the church.

Compare this number to that of the chart handed out to you!

The copies of the average ancient Greek or Latin author's writing numbers fewer than 20 manuscripts! The NT has 1,000 times as many manuscripts...

Although it's true that there is some doubt as to the precise wording of the original manuscript in some places, NT textual criticism has an abundance of material to work with...nothing else comes close.

We can trust that our English translations accurately represent the original authors intended meaning.

Professor Berkeley Mickelsen notes, *"From the standpoint of literary evidence,*

the only logical conclusion is that the case for the reliability of the New Testament is infinitely stronger than that for any other record of antiquity.”

This is amazing when you consider that governments of the time were set on destroying the NT, and were arresting people who would prevent Bibles from being destroyed!

We can know that the Bible we have today has been accurately handed down to us.

You’ve probably played the phone game where someone whispers a message in the ear of another person at the beginning of the room, and each person passes it on the same way. By the time it gets to the end of the room you can’t recognize it.

Some people attempt to use this to illustrate why we can’t rely on scripture. Scripture wasn’t passed down through the process of whispering into people’s ears! There was a special class of men whose occupation was the copying of the texts.

They would write a line, and at the end of the line add up the assigned value of each letter in the alphabet, totaling the line.

Then at the end of the page, they would add up the total of the lines.

If there was a difference in any line, or in the total, they would locate the error and correct it.

Until 1947, the oldest Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament were from about 1000 AD.

But with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we have complete copies of the book of Isaiah dated from about 150 BC, making them over 1000 years older than previous manuscripts. The result?

Gleason Archer says, “Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered...were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript known (AD 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.”

In fact, in all of scripture, no key doctrine of the Christian faith is in any way threatened by textual uncertainty! Intended meaning is upheld.

The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is a description of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This description is stunning and detailed. It was originally penned over 700 years before Christ came, and the manuscripts found at the Dead Sea were copied prior to Christ coming. **Isaiah 53:3-6**

Why would God go to the trouble of having men record such words 700 years prior to their occurrence?

Because these words are the central theme of the Bible!

FF Bruce: *“By the singular care and providence of God the Bible text has come*

to us in such...purity that even the most uncritical edition of the Greek and Hebrew, or the most incompetent...translation of such an edition, cannot effectively obscure the real message of the Bible or neutralize it's saving power."

How did we arrive at the Canon of Scripture we have today?

Canon is a word meaning "a rule; measuring rod."

The canon is the standard that all scriptural books must meet.

The books of the NT were authoritative and shared particular traits that set them apart from other books:

The original apostles, apostolic associates or Paul wrote the entire NT.

1. They were written based on eyewitness testimony to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **1 Cor 15:6-8; Luke 1:1-4**
2. They told the truth about God and agreed with the rest of what Scripture teaches.
3. They were received (accepted) by God's people and showed God's power in changing lives. In other words, authoritative.

The church didn't create the canon; the church didn't determine which books should be called "Scripture." **The church merely recognized the divine authority that God gave to each book already.**

There wasn't a pressing need for this recognition in the early years of the NT church, but, as the years passed, the church needed to know which books should be read, revered and applied to their lives.

They needed to know what to die for.

Preservation and protection was important.

The rise of heretics and their doctrines along with the circulation of other writings of influence spurred this on.

The Bible is a testimony to the unity of God's people and the leading of God the HS.

Despite geographical, cultural and theological differences Christians in the early church came to an agreement on what should and should not be recognized as canon.

By the year AD 397 the entire NT canon that we have today was accepted at the Third Council of Carthage (attended by Augustine).

The Bible is *reliable*.

There's nothing irrational in the belief that these are the words of life.

If a personal God does exist, then it's likely He would give a record of Himself, and if He were all-powerful, then this record would endure the attacks of its enemies and stand the test of time - and it would speak to us of how we can be restored in relationship with Him.

Consider the life of John Wycliffe (1330-1384)

William Tyndale (1495-1536)

Voltaire, a noted French author who died in 1778, said that 100 years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. Voltaire has passed into history, and only 50 years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of bibles...

2. The Bible is authoritative

Authority = The right or power to require obedience.

- God has taken the initiative. He has made himself and his will known to us. He has spoken and continues to speak through His Word.
- God has come to us in the God-man Christ Jesus; the eternal Word and Wisdom of God.
- Our knowledge of God comes through the Bible and as we submit to its authority we place ourselves under the authority of God.

Your Kingdom is being attacked.

Your world is being turned upside down.

You can't live indifferent to God and the Bible and call yourself a Christian.

God is calling you to live under His authority.

He's calling you to live for His glory. To submit to His Word.

Psalm 119:9-16, 18, 20

20 My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.

What could be more important in the life of a believer than drawing near to God through His Word? *"Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet...of Scripture."*

"Many people find the Bible hard to understand because they have never really taken the time to carefully, prayerfully, and frequently read it."

Read it in large portions as a single, unfolding story!

In the Bible God tells us about Himself, who He is, what He's done, what He's going to do and what He desires from us.

The Scriptures are:

- Given by God's inspiration
- The very words of God
- All we need to know God
- A perfect guide for life
- Pure
- True
- Trustworthy
- Perfect
- Effective
- Powerful
- Not to be taken from or added to
- For everyone
- The standard by which all teaching is to be tested
- To be obeyed

Recommended books

“Is the New Testament Reliable?” by Paul Barnett

“A Book You’ll Actually Read On The New Testament” by Mark Driscoll

“Can I trust the Bible” by RC Sproul

“The New Testament History” by FF Bruce

“The Canon of Scripture” by FF Bruce

“The Origin of the Bible” by multiple authors

Questions for discussion and Application

1. How important is it that we believe in the reliability of Scripture? What would happen if we didn’t?
2. Has this teaching challenged, encouraged or provoked you in any way? If so, how?
3. What is meant by “the inspiration of Scripture”?
4. How did we arrive at the 39 OT and the 27 NT books we have today that make up the Holy Bible; the Canon?
5. How would you answer the objection, “The Bible is full of errors” and “Intelligent people no longer believe the Bible is true”?
6. Does this whet your appetite to learn more about the Bible? Does it strengthen your faith in the reliability of the Bible?
7. Describe the Christian’s view of authority. What is this really about?

Proverbs 30:5-6 *Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*