

With Trust
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2 Peter 1:12-21

Next Thursday is Thanksgiving. How many of you may be with friends or family who are not followers of Christ? If you got into a discussion about things of faith, how many of you would be freaked out that you don't know how to defend your faith in Christ and the Bible? We're going to try to help you with that!

Big idea: A follower of Christ must believe that the Bible is trustworthy in every way. Here's the question: How do I explain my confidence in the Bible to others when we live in a skeptical world where it seems nothing can be trusted?

¹² Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

- In verses twelve through fifteen, Peter reinforces those seven characteristics or the "blue print" for life in Christ we learned about in verses one through eleven.
- Bible teachers should love verse 13: "*I think it is right and suitable.*" It is always right to stir up the saints and remind them of the Word of God!¹
- Warren Wiersbe points out that "the verb *stir you up* means "to awaken, to arouse." This same word is used to describe a storm on the Sea of Galilee! (John 6:18) Peter knew that our minds have a tendency to get accustomed to truth and then to take it for granted. We forget what we ought to remember, and we remember what we ought to forget!"²
- That must mean it's my job to try to wake you up to remember God's truth!

- Verses fourteen and fifteen, **what gave Peter a sense of urgency?**
- God had revealed to Peter he would soon be martyred and no longer physically alive to instruct these early believers. This gave him a sense of urgency. We could learn from that.

A thought: Believers are promised eternity but we're not told when our opportunity in this life will end. We should be intentional about our influence every day as if (like Peter) it was our "last letter" to those we love.

- Now Peter shifts to reassuring us that we can TRUST our source of truth!

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹ 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.

- Peter was about to warn these early Christians about the dangers of false teaching, so he sets out to strengthen their view of God's word.
- In plain language, *"What I'm teaching you about Jesus and His power isn't something I made up! I saw it for myself."*
- In verse 17 Peter recounts for them his experience with Jesus on the "Mount of Transfiguration." (Matt. 17:1,2,6; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28, 29)
- The transfiguration affirmed whom Jesus is (God's son) and what he came to do (die for the sins of the world.) Wiersbe: *At the Transfiguration, our Lord made it clear to His followers that*

*His suffering would lead to glory and that the cross would ultimately result in the crown.*³

- Our Explore the Bible teacher's commentary tells us: *"Peter never got over his astonishment that he (along with James and John) had the unspeakable privilege of seeing Jesus' honor and glory revealed by God the Father. The opponents Peter was combating could claim no such eyewitness experience."*
- Peter was not only an eyewitness, but also an "ear witness." Verse 18 tells us that Peter heard the very voice of God confirming Jesus as His son.
- Scripture is the only reliable source of light in this "dark place" we call earthly life. As we strive to be like Jesus, scripture is the "lamp to our feet and light for our path." (Ps. 119:105)
- One day, Jesus the "morning star" will come back and He will provide all the light we need. You'll no longer need your "flashlight" of scripture to find your way to being more like Jesus because as John wrote in 1 John 3:2,

2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

- We naturally think of scripture as a light for the dark world we live in.
- Here's another idea from our lesson commentary: *"Perhaps Peter was thinking of our hearts as murky and defiled by sin; the light reveals the dirt and is necessary for cleansing."*⁴
- God's word is the light that exposes the sin in our hearts.
- In verses 20 and 21 Peter gives us some crucial information about the reliability of scripture.
- Verse 20: "...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. That doesn't mean men don't interpret the scripture. It means men didn't make it up! This also points us to the need to interpret scripture by ALL of scripture (i.e. Kay Arthur's inductive study method.)
- So, if men didn't just make up scripture. How did they get it?
- Verse 21: "...men spoke from God as they were carried along/moved by the Holy Spirit." This is a verse that should be UNDERLINED!
- The verb moved is a nautical metaphor taken from sailing a boat (Peter had been a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee). This

same verb occurs in Acts 27:15,17, describing Paul's ship as it was driven along by the wind. Here is a beautiful picture of the biblical prophets "raising their sails" to God's Spirit who filled them and carried them in the direction He wished as they wrote."⁵

- Let's clear something up. The writers of scripture were inspired by God's Spirit but they were not "robots." That's why each book reflects the different personalities and backgrounds of the writers.
- So, here is the bottom line: I need to be reminded about the power of Jesus to help me live my life in Him. Those reminders are in scripture that came from God, through men, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.
- Peter's other purpose in showing us that we can rely on scripture was to equip those early Christians (and us) against false teachers.
- The Christian who knows what he believes and why he believes it will rarely be seduced by the false teachers and their devious doctrines.⁶
- This brings us to the key question: Can I TRUST the Bible as God's word?
- **When we point others to the Bible as truth, what might likely happen? Why might that cause you to hesitate in pointing to the Bible as truth? What is it that freaks you out about it?**
- **What are some of the usual objections people give about scripture?**
- There is not time in a Sunday School lesson to address all the objections and how to respond to them. Here's the good news: there are LOTS of solid resources to help you be confident in responding to those objections.
- I want to give you the three major points of a positive case for the reliability of scripture, and a recommendation on how to get beyond your fear of someone challenging you.
- When asked how we know the Bible is true, R.C. Sproul says, "We need to ask the broader question first, how do we know that anything is true?"⁷
- Isn't it amazing that people have no trouble accepting what they're taught in school, see on TV, or read on the Internet yet they question scripture?

- How do we test claims of truth? In the case of the Bible there is plenty of reliable, historical evidence.
- When someone questions scripture's reliability, start by asking what specific parts of scripture they question (usually they don't know).
- Then offer to do some research and get back to them with information.
- Important point: Don't feel like you need to know all this from memory. It's okay to admit that you need to compile some good information for them.
- One great resource is a book I've been reading: *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask: (With Answers)* by Mark Mittelberg <https://www.amazon.com/Questions-Christians-Hope-One-Will/dp/1414315910>
- Mittelberg gives some great tips on making a positive case for the reliability of the Bible:

1. *The New Testament is, at minimum, a reliable historical record.*

- *As A Christian I believe the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God. But we don't have to ask our friends to start there. We just need to help them see it for what it clearly is: a trustworthy account of the life, ministry, and spiritual impact of Jesus Christ.*
- *...documents of the New Testament themselves are very early, dating back to the life spans of Jesus' companions – with some parts...going back to within a few years (perhaps even months) of the deal and resurrection of Christ.*
- *In addition to the early written records from the followers of Jesus, we have secular historical accounts that in many ways confirm the contours of the New Testament testimony.⁸*
- *In summary: Historical research supports who Jesus was and what He did on earth.*

2. *The historical record presents Jesus as the unique Son of God*

- *...he demonstrated that he was the unique Son of God through his sinless life, through his supernatural insights, through how he fulfilled*

ancient biblical prophecies, through his amazing miracles, and especially through his resurrection from the dead.

3. Jesus, the Son of God, taught that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

- Jesus used the Bible with confidence and based his ministry and teachings on its sure foundation.*
- We trust the Bible primarily because Jesus did. Extrabiblical sources and archaeology tell us the Bible is historically accurate and worth reading; Jesus tells us it is spiritually accurate and worth heeding.⁹*
- Mittleberg recommends an interesting approach: Suggest that the person questioning start reading one book of the Bible, say the Gospel of Mark, or Luke, in a modern translation like the New Living Translation that's easy to understand. Tell them to have a notepad handy. As questions arise, they can jot them down along with the verse numbers. Commit to them that you'll get together when they are done and go over whatever they write down.*
- This approach gets people into the Bible directly, reading for themselves the message that is, according to Romans 1:16, "the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes." If your friends are open to this, don't underestimate the power of God's Word to take the conversation to a higher and more life-impacting level.¹⁰ [Testimony of Rosaria Butterfield: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkJZSeUGzWw> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/january-february/my-train-wreck-conversion.html>]*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Don't be freaked out at the idea of someone questioning you about the reliability of scripture. You can start with some basic responses and get back to them with more information! (Some resource links are below.)
- Of course, preparing yourself to defend why you believe God's word is true starts with PRAYER. Ask God to help you grow in this area.
- One more important point: Most people challenge the Bible and don't want to read the Bible because they are afraid of what it

- will tell them about themselves. However, don't use this approach in dealing with them!!!
- Remember, no one was ever won to Christ at the end of an argument. As Peter said in his first letter (1 Peter 3:15) be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,”
 - Will you take the challenge to read a few of these articles or grab a book or two and study to be more confident in defending the Bible? I hope so!

Resources:

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/the-study-of-god/how-do-we-know-the-bible-is-true/is-the-bible-reliable>

<https://www.crossway.org/blog/2015/11/4-tips-for-defending-the-reliability-of-the-bible-2/>

<http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/josh-mcdowell-on-defending-the-bible-11628581.html>

Books:

<https://www.amazon.com/Case-Christ-Journalists-Personal-Investigation/dp/0310339308>

https://www.amazon.com/Reasons-Why-You-Trust-Bible/dp/0802413315/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1479568889&sr=1-1&keywords=seven+reasons+why+you+can+trust+the+bible

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 442). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² ibid

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 443–444). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Explore the Bible © 2016 LifeWay. Christian Resources, Nashville, TN 37234.

⁵ ibid

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 441). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ Sproul, R. C. *Now, That's a Good Question!* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996. Print. P. 77

⁸ Gary Habermas wrote *The Verdict of History*, 1988. In it he shows 39 ancient sources documenting the life of Jesus: [100 facts concerning Jesus' life](#), crucifixion, and resurrection. 24 of those sources, including 7 secular and several earliest creeds of the church, specifically concern the divine nature of Jesus. Therefore, the doctrine of the deity of Christ was present in the earliest church.

⁹ Mittelberg, Mark. *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask: (with Answers)*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2010. Print.

¹⁰ ibid