

Why Trust the Bible?

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[0:00] Morning, everyone. Very, very good to be back here to see all the family and I we got back from two weeks in Australia, Australia, super, super cool place. We got to enjoy a lot of good seafood got to go back to where Ellen you came from. Port Macquarie. Very, very cool. It was just it was a huge blessing. But we really, really did miss gathering. We did miss gathering here not just on a Sunday as Nathan said, our church is all about fun and games. And so just to get to get to see everyone again and to have the fun that we get to have together is really good. And actually that mission statement there as we were just reading it, the second one that we devote ourselves and using the gifts that we give that we've been given. Actually, I thought of just Erica, you just even as we were doing the statements. And of course, I wanted to bring Erica and Godfrey up together just to share a little bit because we aren't just a group of people that like to gather on a Sunday. But we do like to scatter as well. And a couple of months ago, I don't know if you remember, we invited our friend Joyce to come and share who lives in the Congo and share about the needs that they have there. And actually Erica and Godfrey and Aidan, who isn't here with us today, is he not? Aidan is not here. They answered the call and they're actually planning a trip to go to the Congo to serve with Joyce. So I thought we need to get them up to just hear why they're doing what they're doing and also what they're going to be doing.

And maybe some of you would be interested as well. Can we give them a round of applause and we bring them up? Godfrey, the tallest Chinese man that I know. Thank you, James.

Well, good to see you. If you didn't know, these two are siblings. You are in the weekends, you are playing piano. By day, what do you do? Tell us a little bit.

I'm a doctor and I do anesthesia in particular. So you put people to sleep? Yes. Excellent. Good. I put people to sleep too on a Sunday morning. Godfrey, what do you do?

Hi, James. Well, I help out at church with the slides. Yes. Because I'm not musically talented like my sister. But during the day, I'm a lawyer.

[2:19] Yeah. And I just want to hear, you guys heard what Joyce was doing in the Congo. And now you guys have signed up and presumably dragging Aidan along as well.

But tell us a little bit about why. Erica, what really resonated with you as you listened to Joyce? I think when I first listened to Joyce when she came here on a Sunday, the first thing that stood out was, oh, she's a doctor too.

And she's living in Africa. And I just thought, wow, that is such a different life from mine. And but she's basically using her life to serve God in that way.

And that kind of just moved me a little bit to start out with. And then as she was talking, I really like heard the need that she, I guess, portrayed during her talk.

And later on, she had another talk on a weeknight where she went more deeply into how difficult it is for people in in Westso, which is where she works to really just to go to get to get resources.

[3:32] So I just felt like my heart was pretty moved. And also I felt like another pull was that I've always wanted to serve with my talents because I don't really feel like I'm like very especially talented at anything, honestly.

But I don't think a lot of people do what I do. And I think there is a role in what I do where they are. So I think I was very touched by that.

So much that I actually like grabbed her at the toilet after church to just stop her and ask her if there's any need. Yeah, that's incredible. And when will you be going?

I'm going end of September, September 20th to October 7th. So if you are even mildly interested, you should look at your phone right now and go September 20th.

Am I free and available? Godfrey, why are you going? Yeah, so similar to Erica, I was quite motivated by just Joyce's story and especially how she was willing to kind of give up everything and just to follow God's calling.

[4:42] And but I mean, I'm not a health care worker. I will not be able to provide any first aid. But that's why I'm asking. What are you doing there? Well, I had two main takeaways from Joyce's story.

The first was when she looked back at how successful the clinic kind of became like a hospital. She looked back at how successful everything was and she realized like none of it she did herself. It was all God's doing. So if I go, I won't be able to do anything anyway. I'll just let God use me. And the second thing was things like, you know, like fixing light bulbs and moving boxes and whatnot. She mentioned that, you know, after she's done with a clinical work, if she has time, that's when they'll be the ones doing it themselves. So I think any extra pair of hands would be helpful. So that's really good just to hear that the lights that are especially tall will be covered for by Godfrey. But actually, Erica, you mentioned that there are some specific needs that actually you want more people to come with you guys to the Congo.

[5:48] And some of the specific things that we need. What are they? OK, so the whole I chatted with Joyce after church, after the talk. And so currently the state of what's going on with the hospital is they're originally an eye hospital and they're trying to expand to a general hospital.

And to do that, you need a lot more specialties. You need to actually accept people who are not who don't only have eye problems. Not that eye problems are, you know, like any less than other problems.

But so I talked to her and she wants me to actually do like a resuscitation course on general first aid and CPR, which is, you know, my strong suit, I guess.

But yeah, so right now we're right now I'm like talking to the team, getting mannequins to practice CPR on.

And and we're planning resources as well. So like pre-reading materials. But the main issue is that people there speak French. So we actually need a lot of help with just, you know, say, translating first aid materials to French or even just using apps to do it.

[7:06] We just need people, I think. Of course, like I'd welcome any like medical staff because I'll be really helpful when I teach CPR to be an assistant. Because, yeah, it's kind of hard on my own.

So if anyone's interested or moved, I would really, really appreciate it. And is there a date that you really need to know by in terms of people wanting to join? Hopefully as soon as possible, because we do have to get the visa going.

You need to get shots and things like that. But we do need to work with the organization to kind of plan the trip because they'll plan our route in as well.

Yeah, that's good. So if you have been interested at all in going to Africa to serve in some way, there's a new site. Congo is a trusted partner of actually Kong Folk Church for many, many years. And many of us have known Joyce. Last time we shared, Joyce has known me since I was a kid. So very well trusted. And it's a long journey. So it's a long journey to do by yourself. But if someone else is going and then you just simply need to jump on the bandwagon, then I would highly encourage you.

[8:11] So Godfrey and Erica are going to be here today after church. Please, if you're even interested or you just want some more details, then please speak to them afterwards. Is that okay? Round of applause.

Thank you. Thank you both very much. Thank you. Thank you. So Johnny, for us, last week started for us a new series.

We've been going through the book of Acts where we get to see how the church started. They gathered in a room like this, maybe around the same size of people here. And then they scattered. And that's why we're sat here today.

That's why me as a Chinese guy speaking English in Hong Kong is speaking to you about the word of God. Because there were a group of people that didn't stay put. That didn't just stay where they were comfortable and they went out.

Now, part of that is persecution. Part of that is because they couldn't stay put because their lives were in danger. But then they scattered. And when they scattered, they then would meet lots of different people to share what? To share the good news of Jesus Christ, the gospel.

[9:09] And so we wanted to take a bit of a pause in the book of Acts. And we'll carry on with that afterwards. And I'm super excited because the first sermon back will actually be on Acts 6, which will be the deacons.

And this is maybe the first time they're hearing it from me. But we're going to try and grab a couple of deacons to come up to share with us a little bit about why they do what they do as well. To understand a little bit more about the role of a deacon. And so we'll do that after the summer. But these six weeks, we're going to just basically go through, well, what does it mean when we scatter? When we go out, whether it's to the Congo or whether it's simply to Central, and we want to share the good news, then actually we need to know how to.

It isn't just, hey, Jesus died for you and so believe in him. Well, of course, that is the core truth and that's all we need. But often we get questions. We get people asking as well.

Like last week, Johnny's was, well, why is it really relevant to me now? And I found, actually, we've gone through a lot of these. I've gone through a lot of these questions. And actually, we're not here to try and help you argue.

[10:08] That's not the point. So when you're talking to people who are not believers, the point isn't to try and win the argument. That's not what we're really trying to do here. But what we're trying to do, hopefully, through this series, is exhort you and encourage you so your heart, so you can actually feel encouraged that actually what you believe is really real, truly true, and that it is worth sharing.

And that there are some key questions that maybe we can start thinking about. And so today, the one that I'm going to be doing is about the Bible itself. Maybe a few months ago, maybe half a year ago now, I shared with you guys something called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Put your hand up if you remember. I won't pick on you. Brilliant. One person remembers. Excellent. I love it when I just touch the lives of many. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral, basically what it is, is it's a theological method that John Wesley came up with, which is saying, actually, we all approach God in different ways.

There's a method that we have when we approach theology. Some of us approach it through scripture, so this. Some of us approach it through tradition. You maybe are a Christian because just traditionally, your family took you to church, so that's how you just follow the traditions.

And that's how you approach God, through tradition. Others do it through reason. Maybe you had a whole debate with someone, a discussion with someone, like C.S. Lewis did with J.R. Tolkien, and he got to the point where it just turned.

[11:26] And he's like, that's why I believe in God. And the others are experience, whether it's you actually experience the Holy Spirit or whether it's actually you. For me, my own experience is I experience God through community.

I mean, Sean has actually been in the church that I grew up in, Christina grew up in, Joe grew up in, England, where you go to church. You really are a Christian, not really because you believe in God, but it's because you want to be with Chinese people.

And you like Chinese food, so you turn up on a Sunday to hang out with these people. That's kind of why you go to church. And then when I was in university, actually around the same age as Sean, he's just finished second year, something turned for me.

I read this book called Why Trust the Bible by Amy or Ewing. And it just completely flipped my faith on its head because what had originally been all about experience and community suddenly stepped into the realm of reason.

And I was like, whoa, this book isn't just boring, it's real. And I was like, this changes everything. And so actually what we're going to be doing today is going through the Bible.

[12:33] I just realized my tablet is 3%. So here we go. Why trust the Bible? Society talks a lot about Christians, what we're allowed to do, what we aren't allowed to do.

There's some controversial topics that we talk about. Why? Why do we believe that? Oh, because the Bible says so. Well, then have you ever questioned why? Is that it? We just believe it because the Bible said so?

Why did the Bible say so? Why did God say so? If God said, actually, you're here to multiply and to flourish in this world, he gives us this to allow us to multiply and flourish.

And it isn't just to give us some rules so that he can spoil all the fun. There is actually more to it.

And actually, when I read why I should trust the Bible and actually the authenticity and the reliability

and the validity of the Bible, it suddenly made me realize, wow, my faith isn't just something that Uncle Tom made up at church.

But it's actually a very real thing that has been passed down from generation to generation. The Bible itself, of course, as it says here, it is God breathed. Actually, it's inspired by God through the authors of the Bible into what we have today.

[13 : 46] And it is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword in the sense it can pierce the very depths of your soul. What the Bible does is give you a mirror to look into your own heart and show you what's actually in your own heart and show you what you need to do to be saved.

And I'm going to focus on a passage and then I'm going to share a little bit about why we should trust the Bible. Is that OK? So I'm going to go to 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 12 to 17.

Can I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord? Holy Spirit, as we read your word, we ask that you would highlight something new to us today.

Well, we know this isn't just a boring book. This is your word. This is your message to us. And so we receive it.

As Paul says to Timothy, Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

[15 : 05] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. Thank you. Thank you, Kelly. So I picked up this book just after second year of university, and I looked over, let me read it.

And I found out that this is not just a storybook. It is not just a book about Noah. It is not just a book about Jesus necessarily, but it is a historical document.

That this here has been passed down for many, many, many, many years. And that it is real. Of course, as you look at the scripture itself, it says that it is breathed out by God.

[16 : 26] And maybe we'll focus a little bit on this passage first, and then I'll tell you a little bit about some of the evidence that really inspired me as a young person when it comes to the Bible. So it starts off here. It says, Paul's writing to Timothy. Timothy is a young pastor, mid-30s, starting a church and running a church in Ephesus.

And he's facing a lot of different challenges. The first challenge he's facing is just persecution from the Jews and from the Romans. So outside, the walls are caving in. So they're having to find safe spaces to actually gather together.

That's one. And then the second is that they were starting to have teachers within the group here who were starting to basically spread false heresies. They were starting to say, well, did Jesus really rise from the dead?

Is it really what it is? Does Jesus really mean that? That we really need to sell everything that we have? That we really need to give everything to him to follow him? Is that, did he really say that? Are you sure we can't still do the same things that we've done? Are you sure we can't just believe in the Jesus and take the good things, but then still keep the pleasurable things that we have in this world? Are you sure? So he had pressure from outside and from inside.

[17 : 31] And then Paul writes to him and says this in verse 12. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. You will run into trouble. And notice here, it's not all who live a godly life.

It's even just wanting to live a godly life is hard. You probably experienced this. I definitely experienced this. Even wanting to be a godly person is hard because there are so many, so many temptations that you have.

So many things that you want to give into. So many frustrating people around you to stop you from being the godly person that you want to be. Right? And so even wanting to do it, as a wife taps husband on the knee about the frustrating people.

Even wanting to do it is hard. It's like Romans 7 when even Paul, the great apostle Paul, the greatest church planter evangelist ever known, says, I know what I should do, and yet I still don't do

it.

I know what I shouldn't do, and yet I still do it. I am such a wretched man. How can I be saved? What hope do I have? Thank God for Jesus. So Paul says here, he says, okay, Timothy, what you're going to be facing is going to be hard because there's going to be people in your congregation and you yourself as a young pastor, actually who had stomach ailments, who actually physically was weak.

[18:49] You're going to have some troubles. Indeed, those who want to live a godly life will be persecuted. They will run into trouble. Verse 13, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

This book, the best-selling book of all time, five billion copies apparently, or at least around that number of books, Bibles that have been sold.

You know, I'm sure you've heard that fact before because you've probably seen Bibles tucked into your hotel room there. And actually that doesn't really excite me when I hear that it's the best-selling book of all time because maybe being a little bit more cynical here, I'm like, well, out of those five billion copies, how many are actually being read?

How many of them have been read once? How many of them have been read ten times? And then out of that group, how many people, how many readers are actually following it? Do you realize that people have died for this book?

People have sacrificed their lives for this book, and yet we try and convince ourselves to use an app for five minutes, and it's just excruciating. I think I started to understand there's something about this book that I was missing.

[20:02] It's teaching us how to live. Verse 13, as it says, And those who don't follow it, things go from bad to worse. So this isn't a book just to stop people from having all the fun.

It's a book to actually help you live a life that is fulfilled, that is satisfying, that is content. Do you treat this book seriously? Did I treat this book seriously back in those days?

Maybe not so. Verse 14 continues. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with these sacred writings, which were able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, that sounds a little bit like just spiritual jargon that you've heard Paul talk about a lot. What he's saying here is this. He's saying, Timothy, young Timothy, I've known you since you were a teenager. But actually, I didn't introduce Jesus to you.

Who did? Your grandmother Lois did. Your mother Eunice did. They brought you up in the faith. What he's saying here is truth is real and it's relational and it can be experienced. So he's saying, remember who taught you about this book.

[21:07] And now he wasn't talking about the New Testament. Timothy would have only read the Old Testament. So he's saying, remember what you have learned and whom you have learned it from. I feel particularly connected to Timothy because he was a second generation Christian.

Well, third actually with grandmother Lois. He was bicultural. His dad was Greek. And then he was picked up by Paul as a teenager and took on these missions trips. You see it in Acts 16.

And so he'd grown up with Paul. He'd learned from Paul. And Paul's saying, don't forget. Don't forget where you came from. It's kind of like, is it Rafiki or Mufasa saying, remember who you are. What he's saying here is the life that you're living now isn't something that someone made up only just a few months ago. The life that you're living now has been passed down from generation to generation.

How seriously do we take this word? Or actually, okay, so when I hang out with people and sometimes they tell me, oh, I saw this really cool encouraging thing from an IG reel about a Bible verse.

[22:15] And I'm just like, ah, I kind of love that it's about the Bible. But I kind of hate that it's just an IG reel is where we're getting all our information from. Do you realize that we pay more attention to what we see on social media?

We're more inspired by little snippets from an IG reel than the actual word of God. And all it takes is for someone who doesn't believe, oh, no, the Bible isn't true.

I saw it in a reel. Do you realize what you're doing? Do you realize how little you are looking at this and how small you're looking at it when actually it's so significant?

And I'll tell you why later. So Paul's saying, Timothy, do not forget. Continue what you've learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it. And actually, for me, as a parent, that's huge.

Because I'm like, actually, I need to know that when I'm teaching my kids the word of God, that actually what they see is integrity and not hypocrisy. Because imagine if Grandmother Lois and Mother Judas were actually hypocrites.

[23 : 19] This statement would have been completely false or it would have been useless.

Because they would have been like, he would have been like, well, yeah, I do remember who taught me the Bible. And they completely didn't follow it and basically were two-faced and did what they said they wouldn't do.

No. But as people who are teaching the word, as parents who are teaching the word, this should really encourage us, hey, let's actually do what we say we believe and actually put our money where our mouth is and actually live that way.

We have a 12-year-old here who's now suddenly focused. I remember when we first had him and we were wrestling with the idea of, okay, should we go into ministry?

Should we quit my job as a teacher and Christina's job as a cardiophysiology? Does God really want us to do this and how is he going to provide for us? And it came down to this, it's like, actually, what do we want to show him?

That God can be believed and trusted and followed? Or that he's someone that we just basically pop by on a Sunday morning just to see a little bit and then we don't let it affect the rest of our lives? It came down to that.

[24 : 20] And you see, Timothy was the beneficiary of a grandmother and a mother at the very least who were filled with integrity. And then he carries on. Let's see, let's see. Actually, this is really important.

Verse 15, And from how childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We get to see from the Bible why the Bible was written, what the whole purpose of the Bible was.

It was to make you wise for salvation. It was to show you, it was to show you, it was to put a mirror up into your face and go, actually, look at your heart, your heart is filled with deceit, but you can be saved and you are loved.

And this is how you are saved. It'll make you wise for salvation. This book gives you the words of life, as Jesus said in John 6. This book will show you how to flourish, which is what God promised if you follow, because it shows you how you are saved.

That's why this book was written. And then it carries on. And it says, verse 17, And that the man of God may be complete, saved, completely made perfect, equipped for every good work. This Bible tells you how to be heavenly minded, but also earthly good.

[25 : 30] This book tells you how to live for eternity, yet still make an impact in your today right now. Why aren't we taking this more seriously? Why aren't we looking at this?

Now, some of you are sat here going, well, James, I have tried. I really do want to read the Bible, but man, it is just so hard. I put a reminder down, then I read it, and then I'm in Leviticus again.

And it's about cattle, and it's about, I just don't get it. And it doesn't impact my life. And I'll say to you, I totally get it. I am that person, too.

I've tried everything to make myself interested in the Bible. And it was actually only, and I've shared this before, it's only a few years ago where I really started to make some progress and some steps, which terrifies you a little bit because I've been a pastor for longer than that.

But I got to the point where I was like, Holy Spirit, this is my profession.

[26 : 31] I don't want to be a hypocrite. I want to understand, and I want to know, and I want to hunger for your word. Can you help me? Can you help me? And then it started.

Actually, it happened in a hotel room when I was on a retreat, and I was so fed up. I was like, everyone else is hearing from you, God. Everyone else is being blessed by your word, and I'm just sat here trying to just squeeze out anything that I can.

And I said, if you don't speak to me today, then I think we're going to have to reconsider what my life is about. And if you're not going to speak to me, then I'm going to read your word, and I'm going to memorize your word.

And that was the first time I memorized his word. And I was inspired by a pastor friend of mine who was in Hong Kong at the time. And so I memorized the whole book of Philippians, the whole book. It took me maybe about two weeks or so.

Praise God, it's actually still in my head. If you are doing scripture memory, if you're part of Paul's scripture club, one tip I'll give you. If you want to memorize scripture and you want to remember scripture afterwards, you have to do it for 100 days.

[27 : 34] It's after 100 days of doing it every day, it will then move from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. So if you've done it for 20 days and you wonder why it's gone, it's because you've got 80 more days to go.

Just FYI. And I realized when I did that, and honestly, it was out of spite. It was like, God, if you're not going to speak to me, I'm just going to memorize your word. I mean, it's the lamest kind of threat. But I experienced something that I had never done before.

I started hearing him speak. Not just through his word here, but actually just in my life in general. And I realized that actually his word and his spirit are just working hand in hand. I need to take both seriously.

And so I started that, and that's been a journey for me. And I'm praying that as I speak to you about this, it will become a journey for you too. Verse 16 says this, All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Maybe this is the biggest critique of the Bible. It's like, well, what has a book that was written so many years ago really got to do with life right now? How is it really able to help me in my life right now?

[28 : 35] And I'm here to tell you, it really does help you. I mean, it says so. So it is actually applicable and profitable for teaching, for reproof, basically for anything in life that comes at you.

The Bible will have something to say. It has something to say about how you handle your relationships. It has something to say about how you handle conflict. It will have something to say about what your life goal should be, what you were made for, who made you.

If you think about society, what we live in right now, most of the things, most of the decisions and the actions that we make, the biggest three idols that I've talked about, that Richard Foster writes in his book, are money, sex, and power.

I think you'd be hard-pressed to find any decisions and actions that are not really directly connected to these three things. And yet the Bible talks specifically about these three things.

So how can you tell me that it is not relevant? It talks about money, how actually every good gift comes from God, that money itself is neutral, but the root of all evil is the love of money.

[29 : 40] And you don't need me to convince you of that as you just look around at society right now. That's where it comes from. The Bible teaches about this. Actually, it's probably the most taught topic in the Bible, if you look, about money.

Yet somehow we don't use it. We don't consult it when we're talking about money. Jesus says, you can store everything up here, but you're not really taking it away. And we all know that in our heads, but somehow, maybe especially in a city like Hong Kong, we just can't help but accumulate more and more.

You know how many people I've sat across the table from who I can see have a significant level of affluence and wealth, who have their driver waiting for them outside, and they're sharing with me about the worries that they have about money?

I just wish that we would consult the Bible when it came to an important topic like this. That we would actually discover how we can actually use it.

How we can be wise with our money. You talk about sex. Sex is brought up a lot in the Bible. If you think that God doesn't really want to talk about it, then you'd be wrong.

[30 : 50] Then you need to read Song of Songs. But you can see what sex was really for. To fill this earth. To multiply. For intimacy.

For joy. For pleasure. And you might say, well, the Bible's old-fashioned because it still has people who have many, many wives and still seems to be talking about polygamy. Well, if anything, the Bible is showing you why polygamy is a bad idea.

Can you see any example in the Bible of someone who married more than one wife and it ended well for them? No. No. It's showing you how to live.

What a marriage should be. Whether we consult it or not is a different thing. It shows us about love. 1 Corinthians 13 talks about what love should actually be.

Not the fleeting emotions. Not the self-serving kind of love. But the sacrificial one. There is one only one greatest kind of love. And it's in John 15 when you lay down your life for someone else.

[31 : 48] When you are willing to go out of your way for someone else. That is the love that holds. And we know that. Popular culture knows that. Why else did Tony Stark have to die?

In any way. We know that sacrifice is necessary. And yet the Bible has been telling us that all this time. And yet somehow we always just settle for a cheaper version of love.

We just settle for the one that just satisfies us in the moment. And we know that tomorrow we will regret. The Bible teaches us about that. It teaches us about power. It teaches us about submitting to power.

It teaches us about a benevolent king. Who we can trust. Not about democracy. But about a loving king who laid down his life for his people.

It talks about submitting to authorities in Romans 13. And that's not a popular passage. But why do you submit to the earthy authorities? Because you know that there is a godly authority behind them.

[32 : 51] That you submit ultimately to the sovereignty of God. The Bible talks about how we should look after those who don't have power.

Who are weak and vulnerable. The Bible is able to speak into any and every situation. The psalmist says it is the one that guides your path.

It's a lamp unto your feet. It gives you life. It pierces you. It heals you. It restores you. And yet we treat it like a National Geographic on the side of our coffee table.

So, the Bible is important. You kind of know that. I hope I've been able to convince you of that today. But maybe some questions then. Why don't people trust the Bible? Two questions, especially when it comes to the authenticity and the reliability, would be two questions that maybe I'll boil down to very simple.

Is it real and was it changed? Is it real and was it changed? The Bible is not a collection of just stories and fables and myths. It is not a human book. It's actually God revealing himself to us through many, many different authors throughout a long, long, significant time.

[34 : 03] But if you look at the claims of the gospel, if you look at what Jesus is actually claiming here, it's not saying that this is going to be a story. It's not just a legendary story.

In fact, actually, C.S. Lewis talks about this. He himself was an expert in literature. And he said, if the Bible is simply just a story, it is a completely terrible story. If it's just a myth, if it's just a legend, it is a completely terrible story.

And he said something else. He said, actually, it means you don't truly understand the time that the Bible was written. During that time, there was really no such thing as realistic fiction and prose. It wouldn't be an imaginary world where you are, but is the equivalent of the modern day.

That kind of literature didn't really exist during the times when the Bible was written. Back then, it would be apocalyptic legends and myths and fables about far-reaching places.

That would be the kind of literature that would be written. And it wouldn't be the story that would be so close to the reality of the people at that time. So C.S. Lewis says, if it's simply just a made-up story and a fairy tale, it is a very poor one.

[35 : 08] Because if you look at some of the facts that are included in the New Testament, you'd be like, well, why is that there? That's not very important. If you're trying to build a story for people to believe during that time, you wouldn't use female witnesses.

Because at that time in society, they wouldn't be trusted. And if Peter was trying to build a name for himself, why would he include the embarrassing stories about him betraying himself?

So as an actual piece of literature, it is basically completely based on historical facts. And actually, this is probably the biggest point that really inspired me as a 20-year-old.

It said, as a historical document, it really is incomparable when it comes to the evidence. Everything that we know about Julius Caesar was written actually maybe 900 years after he existed.

And we actually don't have that many manuscripts. Let me see. Manuscripts for Julius Caesar, who lived around 100 B.C., are 240 manuscripts. All written in the 9th century.

[36 : 10] So nearly 1,000 years after he existed. Everything we know about Julius Caesar and his writing comes from these 240 manuscripts. Homer's Iliad, another very well-known piece of literature. 2,700.

2,700. What about the New Testament? Over 25,000. 25,000 manuscripts.

Basically, all pointing to the fact that this man, Jesus, lived. He died. And then he rose again. To the point where it wasn't even just the Christians who mentioned the existence of Jesus.

Historians. A famous one is Josephus, who actually wrote about the fact that these Christians, Christians were starting to grow and gain momentum. And that they were following, they were worshipping Jesus as Lord, as Christ.

Historians outside of the church were starting to chip in and basically confirm the accounts of those within the Gospels. For me, I was like, wow. If Julius Caesar's manuscripts were only written 1,000 years after him, and yet all the Gospels were written by 1890 AD.

[37 : 17] What that means is that actually, as they were written, the eyewitnesses would have still been alive. Do you know how hard it would have been to make up a story when the people who were still alive were still there?

It would have been virtually impossible. If you look at scripture, if you look at even Luke 24, when Luke is documenting the walk to Emmaus, he's mentioning people that he didn't really have to mention. Because if you're trying to make up a story, you're trying to keep it as vague as possible. And yet he's actually saying, these people actually did exist. 1 Corinthians 15, Paul talks about the resurrection. He says, Jesus first appeared to the 12 and then to the 500. And here are some of the people that still live.

What he's saying is, go and ask them. Go and ask them. They saw him. We're not lying about this. The historical evidence is hard to dispute when it comes to the Bible.

The question for us is, are we willing to pay attention to what it actually has to say? Some other people will dispute the canon. Does anyone know when the actual Bible was kind of confirmed and established as the Bible?

[38 : 20] Any brave souls? Near, close. So the Council of Nicaea in 350 AD is when basically they were like, okay, we're getting so many manuscripts and so many different documents being shared around.

We need to kind of keep things basically quality control. And so a group of people who sat down. And actually, if you look at the Bible, especially the New Testament, they are all basically either written or closely connected to the apostles.

Those who were outside now, during around that time when I was reading Why Trust the Bible, there was also a film that came out called The Da Vinci Code. And that took me on a rabbit hole. Oh, this is so fun. Dan Brown. And then the movie came out. And he talked about all the Gnostic Gospels, the other documents that came out. Why were they discarded?

Well, the truth is, those were all written much later. As I said, the Gospels were all written by 90 AD, connected to the apostles. There were some that came in the second century, the third century.

[39 : 24] Maybe the most famous one is the one by Thomas. And so these were written. And actually, the problem with those ones is that actually they basically taught very different theology. See, another question that people have when it comes to the historicity of the Bible is, hey, what about some of the mistakes?

I mean, what about some of the small things that happened between the Gospels? They say different things at different times. Well, let's put it this way. If we all sat together in this room and we had an afternoon together, we do different things.

Maybe we do baking over here and we just suddenly do Muay Thai over there. And then we all leave. And then we all wait for a week. And then we all write down what happened today. Do you think it would be the same?

Absolutely not. There would probably be differences. But none of those differences are down to core doctrine. Those differences were just simply smaller things. Some of them were just simply translations. In fact, you would be more worried if all of us, maybe, and actually some of the Bible was maybe 10 years, 20 years after it actually happened.

If all of us sat down together and say, hey, let's write the story back out again and let's make stuff up. You would have kept it all together and tight. So it's actually more realistic that as people left, they wrote down what they remembered and that there are some of the small minor discrepancies that came out.

[40 : 41] I find that easier to believe than a watertight account of someone basically making it up. The historical evidence of the Bible is hard to ignore.

Thousands of years of textual criticism lead us to this book. And you're telling me you will trust an IG reel that you saw about someone saying something about an earthquake in Japan on July 5th. And that came from a manga that was written in 1999. You're telling me you would choose to believe that than this. Can you see how fickle we've become?

Oh, I read online. This has been passed down for thousands of years. And it is still here.

People have given up their lives for it. People have committed their lives to trying to dispute it. And yet it still remains. Why don't we take it seriously? So is it real?

[41 : 49] Well, I'm very happy with saying that it's real. Was it changed? Now, again, the gospel was written with eyewitnesses all around. The process of basically translating and passing those, transmitting those scribes on, those manuscripts on, those 25,000, was such a stringent process, a strict process.

It is real. It wasn't changed. And how do I know that? Because through the accounts of the gospels, through the accounts of the Bible, we see people's lives being changed as well.

If this was all a hoax, you would not see a coward who was terrified of a teenage girl asking him whether he knew Jesus to being someone who stood in front of a whole council.

And Peter, you saw lives completely transformed. That itself. Paul, famous for being someone who's trying to persecute the church, to basically shut the whole operation down.

Yet somehow turns and completely transforms. These people saw something and they were willing to give up their lives for it. I was talking to a friend one time who told me that his, I think it was his great, great, great grandmother, lost her life and was martyred in China because she was trying to take Bibles into the country.

[43 : 17] And then the next, within five minutes, our conversation went to, yeah, I'm really struggling with my devotionals. Just like the YouVersion app and sometimes it's not intuitive.

It's just hard to use. And sometimes the devotions are unapplicable and very cheesy. And I'm like, with all due respect, my dear friend, you just told me there's someone in your family who gave up their life for this.

How does it make you feel that actually that now you're just treating it like this? And I'm not saying that I'm perfect. I've just said that I'm not. But we should try.

But we should try. Thomas Merton says this, the very desire to please God is what pleases God. If all you can do today is read five minutes, then just do five minutes.

If all you can do today is 10, then just do 10. The gospel is one of grace as well as it is truth. That's all you need. But something we were talking about as a weekend with a couple of friends was, can we just live intentionally?

[44 : 25] Whatever intentionally looks like. Maybe there's some people here who actually need to take on the challenge of memorizing a whole book. Then the Lord be with you. Some of you just need to memorize one verse.

Some of you just need to start reading. Do you realize how special, how powerful this book is? If you truly believe it, if you truly read it, you should follow it.

Otherwise, there really isn't any point. But Paul talks about this. If you just read the Bible, and just also I can reference where they come from, where verses come from, then that is just knowledge. And knowledge is really useless.

Knowledge just simply puffs up. But if you read it, and then you follow it, and then you apply it, then you can watch your life flourish. Doesn't mean you won't have hardship.

Doesn't mean you won't have challenges. But you will know how to face those challenges. You will know how to live the life. So many of us are wandering through life, wondering, what did God make me for?

[45 : 23] How am I supposed to live? What am I supposed to do? And yet somehow we don't consult the manual, the instruction manual. We don't spend time in the instruction manual.

You'll see that the Bible is real, and that it wasn't changed. It wasn't a human invention, but it was a divine introduction. A God who loved his people, introducing himself to his children.

There is nothing more real, nothing more impactful than that. Would you please consider the significance of this book?

And knowing full well that this isn't just a fairy tale that you're committing to. That there is historical evidence backing this book.

There's a reason why it's still here today. And verse 13, 14, the passage that we just read. We can see what it's like when you don't read this book properly.

[46 : 23] Or when you don't read it. When you just live a life according to your own wisdom. How's that working out for the world? It's not. I encourage you.

I exhort you. Follow this book. And if you want to look more into those things. If you've never done it before, I encourage you to do it. Because as you read and you look, oh my goodness, this is actually for real.

It lifted my heart. It made me think, oh, I have something to talk about when people tell me the Da Vinci Code says that Jesus isn't real.

I now have something to push back with. Again, not to just argue with people. Ultimately, ultimately it is the spirit of God that transforms. It is the spirit of God who convinces.

It is the spirit of God who lets you read. Who allows you to understand. Allow it to penetrate into the very depths of your soul. And you will receive healing.

[47 : 22] You will receive restoration. You will receive direction. If you're sat here going, okay, well, I want to. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. How do I even start?

Let me give you a few personal things that I've tried that have worked. If you're sat here going, okay, I want to try. First thing is, find someone. I'm not sure the Bible was meant to be just read alone.

For many, many years it wasn't. And yet somehow we've reduced it back to just being an individual thing. Find someone. I really want to read. But I'm lazy. Or I'm busy.

Would you hold me accountable? Second is, the app is great. I know I talk a lot of trash about Bible apps. They are good. I do like them. But they do not replace a real book.

Get a real book. And then put the phone away. We live in a society now that is just so inundated with just notifications and things popping up. Just watch, just unplug and watch yourself enjoy it more.

[48 : 26] And when you open the book, before you open the book, say, Holy Spirit, I need your help. This is hard to understand. I need your help. Another tip that comes to mind is, it really depends on the translation.

Now, I'm using the ESV here, which is the English Standard Version, which I think is probably amongst the most common. But there are other ones to read. There are passages that I read, and I'm like, I don't understand what that just said.

Then I go to my New Living Translation, and it helps me understand a little bit, a part of what it means. Find a different version. And another tip, if you are in the process of buying a Bible and you struggle with reading because it's hard to understand, buy one that has a commentary just beneath it.

Because we've all been there. When we read something in Scripture, we don't really understand what it says, but we're too lazy to go and find out more information. And so we're just kind of like, oh, cool story.

And they're just going to leave it. Find one that has a commentary that doesn't go into too deep, just enough to kind of go, oh, okay, now I understand what that was saying. There will still be parts that are hard to understand.

[49 : 35] But at least it will be a start. Find someone. Find a book. Highlight a book. Don't be afraid to scribble on the book.

This helps me focus. Maybe it will help you. All these little things, I pray, will help you see that this is just the ultimate source and authority of life to help us navigate this world here.

Jesus, we come to you. The word that became flesh. Filled with grace and truth. Will we repent?

Forgive us. For far too long, we have chosen our own way. We've chosen to navigate life without looking at the instruction manual. Without looking at your very words spoken to us.

Lord, we thank you that the Bible as a historical document is reliable, authentic.

[50 : 55] For we thank you that you also leave us room for faith. That we get to choose to believe.

We get to choose to read. We get to choose to follow. Lord, here we are declaring. Lord, we believe.

Help our own belief. We want to read. Help us to read. We want to understand. Help us to understand. You've warned us that those who try to build their lives on sand, as soon as the storms come, our lives will fall apart.

But if we build our lives on your word. Your word that is steadfast and remains forever. We will flourish.

We will know how to navigate the challenges of life. We will know how to live for you. So we finish now with just the prayer of the psalmist.

[52 : 07] Lord, our souls, they yearn for you. They want to yearn for you as the deer pants for water. Our souls, we want you. Holy Spirit, would you be our guide?

Thank you, Lord. Thank you. So Jesus, we know that as we look at the Bible, as a historical document, as the word of God, you don't really leave us with much choice.

We either take you seriously or we don't. you either are real or you are not. You are either a liar, a lunatic, or you truly are Lord.

There is no halfway house. There is no lukewarm following. There is no dabbling into your word.

Whenever we are sad, Lord, we commit to basing our whole lives on you.

You know our flesh is weak. So would your spirit strengthen us. You know that we cannot do it alone. So would this community draw us to you.

[53 : 57] And we start just as we ended. Lord, would you be the one thing we desire, one thing we seek after, to gaze upon your beauty, to inquire in your temple all the days of our lives.

We thank you, Lord. In your name we pray. Amen.