

WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE REALLY IS THE WORD OF GOD
I Timothy 3:16-17

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Americans annually spend something like \$400 million on Bibles and we have plenty of versions to choose from: approximately 450 of them (Time, Sep 89, 1996)
- B. A recent survey yielded the opinion that 80% of the people believe the Bible is the most influential book in human history, followed in distant second place by Dr. Spock's baby book with 4.7% of the votes. (Servant, Spring 1997, p.4)
- C. **Mark Twain** wouldn't have agreed. He revealed his own prejudice toward the Bible in this fictional piece from a devil in Letters from the Earth: *"It is full of interest. It has noble poetry in it; and some clever fables; and some blood-drenched history; and some good morals; and a wealth of obscenity; and upwards of a thousand lies."*
- D. Next Sunday we embark on a 16 week journey through the Bible to discover what it means to really live like Christ in practical ways. But how do we really know what it means to live like Christ? Who says that that's a good way to live? Who says that we even know what Christ lived like or that we are under any moral obligation to follow His example?
- E. In other words, How do we know the Bible really is the Word of God?

I. BECAUSE BIBLE PREDICTIONS HAPPEN

- A. They Are Unlikely Predictions
 1. One of the frequently repeated prophetic formulas in the Old Testament is, *"Then they will know that I am the Lord."* **68x** that appears, usually tied to a prophecy of judgment and destruction against some sinful nation: Ammon, Philistia, Egypt, Edom and even Jerusalem. None of these countries expected disaster to really come. They laughed at the divine message. They felt safe and secure, like the city of Tyre on the Mediterranean coast. God spoke to them in Ezekiel **26. 3** *therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations,*
 2. How about the prophecy about Cyrus sending the Jews back to Palestine after the 70 year captivity? (**Isaiah 44:28**)
 3. How about Jeremiah's prophecy that the Jews would return from Babylon after 70 years? (**Jeremiah 29:10**)
 4. How about God's prophesied preservation of the Jewish race through thousands of years of intense persecution? **Frederick the Great of Prussia**, a famous Doubter, once asked his court chaplain, *"Give me in one word a proof of the truth of the Bible."* *The answer was simply, "The Jews."* (Can I Trust the Bible, Howard F. Vos, ed., Moody, 1963, p. 114)
- B. They Are Specific Predictions
 1. Not like Chinese Fortune Cookies or the Horoscopes in the newspaper every day. My Seattle Times horoscope for today reads, *"Be on the alert - subterfuge figures prominently. Spotlight on organization, priorities, participation in big business transaction. Deadline does exist - meet it and beat it."*
 2. The Jews were released after 70 years.
 3. Cyrus was born and was God's agent of restoration **150** years after Isaiah's prophecy.
 4. And one of the most stunning examples of detailed prophecy is that about Tyre. (**Vos p111ff**)
- C. They Are Verifiable Predictions

1. And they are 100% accurate, unlike America's most celebrated prophets, Jeane Dixon. Although she has made some pretty impressive predictions, people seem to overlook the false predictions she had made. Here's a brief sampling:
 - That the Russians would be the first to put a man on the moon
 - That Fidel Castro would be removed from Cuban leadership years ago
 - that the Chinese would provoke a world war in 1958
 - That a comet would strike the earth in the mid-1980s causing earthquakes and tidal waves
2. But God had a much higher standard for His prophets: 100% accuracy or death. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)
3. But much has already happened and is empirically verifiable. "Then they will know that I am the Lord."

II. BECAUSE THE BIBLE WORKS

A. The Bible Changes Lives

1. **II Corinthians 5:17**, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

3. *Do you remember the story of the five missionaries killed by the Auca Indians in Ecuador, 1956? Well, here's one of those, "Rest of the Story" kind of stories. One of those missionary's sons is now a missionary to those same people. He is Stephen, son of Nate Saint, the pilot who was killed. Last spring he published the story of a visit he witnessed between some of the Auca [actually the proper name is Huaorani] Christians and a secular tour group of 34 students from the University of Washington and Western Washington University. After a long trip by jungle bus, 14 hours of trekking and a dugout canoe ride deep into the Amazon basin, they were resting around an evening campfire. Stephan says that the students had really enjoyed their native guides and one of them asked where the savages were. He explained that the people they had been "traveling, eating, sleeping and hunting with were, in fact, these 'savages.'"*

They couldn't believe it, so he asked some of the natives to tell their stories. Ompodae pointed "at old Dado, who was listening to our conversation a couple of feet away. 'He killed my father and almost all of the rest of my family, too. Living angry, he speared them all.'"

"My God, I was just sitting next to him," exclaimed one of the young men from the tour group...."

"...Dawa spoke up. Pointing to her aging and gentle husband, Kimo, who was sitting by me, she stated, 'Hating us, he speared my father, my brothers, and my mother and baby sister whom my mother was nursing in her hammock. He took me and made me his wife.'"

"...Now I put my arm around Kimo's shoulders and informed them, 'He killed my father, too.'"

"Silence. At last, the question on everyone's mind found a voice: 'What changed these people?'"

..."Then they explained to our 34 highly educated young people from the most technologically advanced society in history how they learned from the missionaries that the Man Maker sent his Son to die for people full of hate, fear, and desire for revenge.

"Badly, badly we lived back then," Dawa said. 'Now, walking God's trail which he has marked for us on paper [the Bible], we live well. All people still die, but if living you follow God's trail, then dying will lead you to heaven.

But only one trail leads there. All other trails lead to where God will never be after death.’”

...”As I flew out of the jungle a few days later with the tour leader, I asked him what the students had said they liked best about the tour. ‘Living with the Huaorani and helping in the tasks of their Stone Age lives,’ he replied. Then he added: ‘What made the biggest impression on them, I think, was the realization that Christianity has the ability to change people’s lives. I’m not a Christian myself, but I would say this was a radical realization for most of these young people. Until this trip, they saw Christianity as just another code of conduct.’” (Stephen E. Saint, “The Unfinished Mission to the ‘Aucas’”, CT, March 2, 1998, pp. 42-44)

B. The Bible Changes Cultures

1. Chuck Colson tells *“When I was at Buckingham Palace last year, Prince Philip asked me, ‘What can we do about crime here in England?’*
“I replied, ‘Send more children to Sunday School.’
“He thought I was joking. But I pointed out a study by sociologist Christie Davis, which found that in the first half of the 1800s, British society was marked by high levels of crime and violence, which dropped dramatically in the late 1800s and early 1900s. What changed an entire nation’s national character?
“Throughout that period, attendance at Sunday School rose steadily until, by 1888, a full 75 percent of children in England were enrolled. Since then, attendance has fallen off to one-third its peak level, with a corresponding increase in crime and disorder. If we fill the Sunday schools, we can change hearts and restore society.” (Quoted in “To Illustrate Plus,” Leadership Journal, Spring 1998, p. 81)
2. Why have things gone so well for America in our 200+ year history? It is clearly because our country has been built upon biblical principles. **Charles Malik**, one-time Ambassador to the United Nations from Lebanon said, *“The good (in the United States) would never have come into being without the blessing and the power of Jesus Christ...I know how embarrassing this matter is to politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and cynics: but, whatever these honored men think, the irrefutable truth is that the soul of America is at its best and highest, Christian.”* (quoted in The Rebirth of America, The Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, 1986, p. 21)
3. Look at the invariable record of the Old Testament. When Israel followed God’s laws, God blessed them. When they forgot God’s laws, their society disintegrated: violence increased, judicial unrighteousness increased, the poor and helpless were ignored or abused, families broke down, graft and greed flourished.

C. The Bible Solves Problems

1. The Bible helps people get along peaceably and graciously. Matthew 18 demonstrates a remarkable model for solving interpersonal offenses. The Sermon on the Mount and Philippians 2 teach how to selflessly put the needs of others before your own desires. Ephesians 4 teaches how to be kind and to forgive people who hurt you.
2. The Book of Proverbs brims with people solutions to the tune of hard work, integrity, a controlled tongue, patience and dozens of other practical real-life issues.
3. Remember what our text said: The Bible is **“profitable!”**
 As **Warren Wiersbe** points out...it is profitable for
 - doctrine - what is right
 - reproof - what is not right
 - correction - how to get right
 - instruction in righteousness - how to stay right

(Warren Wiersbe, Preaching and Teaching with Imagination, Victor Books, 1994, p.218)

III. BECAUSE THE BIBLE MAKES SENSE

A. The Bible Makes Sense About How We Got Here

1. The possibilities:

- The God of the Bible made us
- Some other god made us
- We evolved by some chance evolutionary process
- Extraterrestrials put us here: Getting something out of nothing requires a supernatural miracle. Even more incredible is the idea of some infinitely-into-the-past seminal source, sort of an impersonal, secularized deity. This question of ultimate origins is so inexplicable and unavoidable, that Nobel prize winner **Francis Crick**, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, has advanced a theory he calls “directed panspermia.” Attorney Phillip E. Johnson in his book, Darwin on Trial, explains, “*The basic idea is that an advanced extraterrestrial civilization, possibly facing extinction, sent primitive life forms to earth in a spaceship. The spaceship builders couldn’t come themselves because of the enormous time required for interstellar travel; so they sent bacteria capable of surviving the voyage and the severe conditions that would have greeted them upon arrival on the early earth.*” (p.108)

But that just begs the question! Where did the extraterrestrials come from? Who or what made them?

2. The bathroom light and the teleological argument: Design requires a Designer. Actually, the Bible itself employs the design argument: **Psalm 19:1**, “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” and **Romans 1:20**, *For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*
3. Now for those who claim that evolution is more scientific and that a belief in creation is a blind leap of faith, think about the faith required to believe in evolution. Evolution had to start from something, even if it was just pure energy. Where did the energy come from? Evolution requires either some incredible something out of nothing miracle or an infinite regression of causes. But now we’re back to something eternally existing into the past, which is a very supernatural concept. You must either believe in a personal deity or an impersonal deity. Nothing else makes sense. And I am convinced that the only reason anyone rejects biblical creationism is because either he just hasn’t thought through the implications, or he has thought them through but is morally running away from the God of the Bible.
4. Dr. Isaac Asimov, “I am an atheist, out and out. It took me a long time to say it. I’ve been an atheist for years and years, but somehow felt it was intellectually unrespectable to say one was an atheist, because it assumed knowledge one didn’t have. Somehow it was better to say one was a humanist or an agnostic. I finally decided that I’m a creature of emotion as well as of reason. Emotionally, I am an atheist. I don’t have the evidence to prove that God doesn’t exist, but I so strongly suspect he doesn’t that I don’t want to waste my time.” (Isaac Asimov, in Paul Kurtz, ed., “An Interview with Isaac Asimov on Science and the Bible,” *Free Inquiry* 2, Spring 1982, p. 9)
5. Charles Darwin started out a creationist and even earned a divinity degree at Cambridge. But after his voyage on the HMS Beagle he changed to a theistic evolutionist and then an agnostic. “I had gradually come by this time to see that the Old Testament, from its manifestly fake history of the world...was no more

to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindus, or the beliefs of any barbarian.” (Charles Darwin, The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, with Original Omissions Restored. Nora Barlow, ed., New York: Norton, 1969. P. 87)

B. The Bible Makes Sense About What We’re Like

1. Secular Humanism certainly doesn’t. The **Humanist Manifesto** (revised 1973) states, “*We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species....No deity will save us; we must save ourselves....*”
2. **B. F. Skinner** in Beyond Freedom and Dignity (1971) wrote, “*It is hard to imagine a world in which people live together without quarreling...and come to know themselves accurately and. Therefore, manage themselves effectively. Yet all this is possible....We have not yet seen what man can make of man.*” (p. 214-215)
3. “*And the crowd was stilled. One elderly man, wondering at the sudden silence, turned to the Child and asked him to repeat what he had said. Wide-eyed, the Child raised his voice and said once again, ‘Why, the Emperor has no clothes! He is naked!’*” (The Emperor’s New Clothes)
Humanism is like the Emperor’s clothes. Naked but doesn’t know it.
4. But the Bible makes sense about us. It shoots square with us about our sin nature and our flight from God’s righteous standard. We are sinners and we need to be made righteous and forgiven.
5. **Jeremiah 17:9**, *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*
John 3:18-20, 18 *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

C. The Bible Makes Sense About God

1. Ravi Zacharias took a question from a member of the audience as he spoke at the University of Nottingham, England...
“*‘There cannot possibly be a God,’ he said, ‘with all the evil and suffering that exists in the world!’ I asked him if we could interact on this issue for a few moments. He agreed.*
“*‘When you say there is such a thing as evil, are you not assuming that there is such a thing as good?’ I asked.*
“*‘Of course,’ he retorted.*
“*‘But when you assume there is such a thing as good, are you not also assuming that there is such a thing as a moral law on the basis of which to distinguish between good and evil?’*
“*‘I suppose so,’ came the hesitant and much softer reply....*
“*‘If, then, there is a moral law,’ I said, ‘you must posit a moral lawgiver. But that is who you are trying to disprove and not prove. If there is no moral lawgiver, there is no moral law. If there is no moral law, there is no good. If there is no good, there is no evil. I am not sure what your question is!*
“*‘There was silence, and then he said, ‘What, then, am I asking you?’*” (Ravi Zacharias, Cries of the Heart, Word, 1998, pp. 67-68)
2. Here’s an even more chilling conversation **Ravi** had, this one with a businessman in a meeting in Hong Kong. *The man “stood up and proposed that all values were just contrived and had no bearing on ultimate reality....I said to him that by inference one could assume that he denied that any act was intrinsically evil.*
“*‘That is a correct inference,’ he said.*

“Hardly believing the hole he had dug for himself, I asked him the obvious. ‘Suppose I was to take a newborn baby, bring it to this platform, and proceed with a sharp sword to mutilate that child. Are you saying to me that there is nothing actually wrong or evil in that deed?’

“To the stunned expressions of those listening in he shrugged and shifted and then said, ‘I may not like it, but I cannot call it morally wrong.’

“There was only one thing left to say. ‘How incongruous it is, even by your own philosophy, that while denying the fact of evil you are unable to completely shake off the feeling...for even you, sir, said you would not like it. An understatement I hope.’” (Ravi Zacharias, Deliver Us From Evil, Word, 1996, pp, 181-82)

3. The only idea that makes sense is that there is a God to whom we are morally accountable. A God who does make the rules. A God who has communicated with us. A God who loves us enough to do something about our sin rather than letting us self-destruct and rather than blasting us to oblivion in His righteous wrath against our sin. The God of the Bible meets and exceeds our highest ideals of what is right. And He meets and exceeds our wildest dreams of someone greater than us who is gracious toward us.
4. In that sense, the Bible is a *friendly voice in a lonely universe*.

IV. BECAUSE THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE

A. The Bible Is Internally Consistent with Itself

1. The grounds of salvation
 - a. Paul and James. In Romans 4, Paul is dogmatic: Abraham was saved not on the basis of good works, but on the basis of faith in God’s gift of salvation. James says (2:14), “What god is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” (2:17) “...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”
 - b. No contradiction. Two sides of the same coin. Paul is looking at the **birth certificate** and James is checking for **spiritual vital life signs**.
2. Alleged contradictions
 - a. Annihilation of Canaanites (cf. Gen 15:16; Lev. 18:24-30) See Saucy, p.86-87 vs. Jesus’ command to love your enemies (see Kaiser p. 174)
 - b. First of all, remember that Jesus spoke words of stern judgment. Cf. **Matthew 25:41**, speaking of His future judgment of unbelievers at the Second Coming, “*The he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’*”
 - c. And take note of the almost unbelievable depravity of the Canaanite cultures.
Genesis 15:16, “*In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.*”
Leviticus 18:24-25, “*Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because that is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out the inhabitants.*”
 - d. There are no genuine, supportable contradictions in the Bible. Because it is God’s book, God doesn’t cross Himself up.

B. The Bible Is Externally Consistent with the Facts

1. Science
 - a. While the Bible is not a science textbook, it is always accurate whenever it speaks on matters that touch science.

- b. Of course, the Bible speaks like we do, for instance, saying that the sun sets. We know, as God has always known, that the sun doesn't really set, but we all say that because it is the language of appearance.
- 2. History
 - a. Skeptics questioned the details of Joshua's conquest of Hazor in Joshua 11 but site explorations found the biblical record to be thoroughly accurate. (Harold Lindsell, God's Incomparable Word, World Wide Publications, 1977, p.46)
 - b. Luke was suspect for applying the title "His Majesty" to Nero (Acts 25:26). But research has verified that the title was indeed used. (Ibid, p. 47)

CONCLUSION:

- A. A couple of years ago, chaplain and professor **William Willimon** of Duke University, preached a sermon in Duke Chapel. Afterwards a person spoke to him, saying, "*I have never heard anything like that before. Where on earth did you get that?*"
"I replied, 'Where on earth would you have heard this before? After all, this is a pagan, uninformed university environment. Where would you hear this? In the philosophy department? Watching Mr. Roger's Neighborhood? No, to hear this, you've got to get dressed and come down here on a Sunday morning.'" (William Willimon, "This Culture Is Overrated, CT, May 19, 1997, p. 27, excerpted from Leadership, Winter 1997)

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