

Essentials for the

JOURNEY



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WHAT SHOULD I BELIEVE?

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

One of the names for a Christian is 'Believer'. Christians are "believers" and non-Christians are "unbelievers". Why? Because we *believe* in Jesus Christ and in certain truths concerning Him. Believing in Jesus is also called "having faith" in Him. Faith in Jesus is expressed by trusting Him with our lives and our future.

If a Christian is one who trusts in Jesus and believes certain truths about Him, what is it that a Christian should believe? The Bible makes the answer to this simple by giving a name to what we must believe. It's called The Gospel. The Apostle Paul said The Gospel *"is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes"* (Romans 1:16) That sounds pretty important to me. How about you?

What, then, is meant by The Gospel? The word 'gospel' means 'good news' and that's what it is. The Gospel is the 'Good News' of God's love for us. What is this Good News? The Good News is that *"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16)

John 3:16 is, without a doubt, the most familiar verse in the entire Bible. It has been called 'the Bible in a sentence' because it captures the central message of Scripture. Martin Luther said, "John 3:16 is the heart of the Bible - the Gospel in miniature." Therefore, the most direct route to discovering what a believer must believe, is to examine this verse and embrace the wonderful truths it contains.

As we look at John 3:16, we discover 7 Truths Christians should know and believe...

GOD EXISTS!

"God so loved the world"

Guess what? The Bible doesn't try to prove God exists. It assumes it from the very first verse - *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* (Gen. 1:1)

HOW DO WE KNOW THERE IS A GOD?

He reveals Himself Through Creation

Creation is God's first revelation of Himself to us. *"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."* (Romans 1:20) When we look at Creation we know there is a Creator. King David wrote *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."* (Psalms 19:1) Because of this, each of us has a special appreciation for nature. This is also why many people try to find God through nature. Unfortunately, they often end up worshipping creation itself, rather than the One who created all things. It's like trying to get to know a great painter by studying their paintings. Although we can learn much about them that way, we'll never be able to truly know them personally.

He Reveals Himself Through Our Conscience

God has given each of us a conscience. The dictionary defines conscience as *"The awareness of a moral or ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong."* God has given us this awareness so we might intuitively know and recognize the authority of His standards - His Law. The Apostle Paul said, *"I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."* (Acts 24:16) Our conscience instinctively tells us that The 10 Commandments are right! It is wrong to steal or lie or murder. By writing the requirements of the Law on our hearts (Romans 2:15), the Lord has left the imprint of His handwriting upon each of us. Thus, by bearing witness to the truth of God, our consciences also testify to the existence of the God of Truth.

*"The fool says in his heart, "
There is no God."
(Psalm 14:1)*

*Remember the former things,
those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none
like me."
(Isaiah 46:9)*

*"And without faith it is impossible
to please God, because anyone who
comes to him must believe that he
exists and that he rewards those who
earnestly seek him." (Heb. 11:6)*

He Reveals Himself Through The Bible

If we are admiring a beautiful painting and want to know the artist better, the first thing we'd do is look for his signature on the canvas. The picture reveals his existence, but we need a signature to discover who he is. Once we've discovered who he is, we can see if he has written any books, journals, or letters by which we might know him better. Through these we could learn where he lives and how we might find him.

This is what God has done through the Bible. It is called 'God's Word' because He is the Author.

1Timothy 3:16 says *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,"*. Elsewhere we read, *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. "* (2Peter 1:20-21)

God has written a Book through which we learn about Him and discover how to find and approach Him. His book, The Bible, reveals Who God is and presents the plot and purposes of His eternal plan. Paul reminded Timothy *"... from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* (2Timothy 3:15) It's the same for us. God's Word contains the wisdom of God for leading us to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

He Has Revealed Himself In His Son - Jesus!

Just as the final step in getting to know the painter of a beautiful masterpiece is to meet him and spend time together, so the final step in getting to know God is in meeting Him personally. The problem for us is that no one can approach God themselves. No one meets the qualifications necessary for coming before Him. So what can be done? God took care of it Himself. Since we could not come to Him, He came to us in Jesus Christ.

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being... " (Hebrews 1:1-3)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known." (John 1:1-3, 14, 18)

GOD LOVES YOU!

"God so loved the world"

One of the greatest discoveries we can make about God is that He Loves Us! When we come to Jesus, He doesn't forgive our sins reluctantly but joyfully. Salvation wasn't wrestled from the Father by the Son. God doesn't love us because of the Cross - Jesus went to the Cross because God loves us.

God's love is so great - He so loved the world - that we cannot even begin to grasp it without the help of His Spirit. That's why Paul prayed that God would help us to grasp just how much He loves us. *"I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."* (Eph. 3:16-19)

GOD DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE BY SENDING JESUS!

*"God so loved the world, that
He gave His only begotten Son."*

A popular saying goes, "I asked God 'How much do You love me?' and He stretched out His hands on the Cross and said *"This Much!"* The Bible puts it this way: *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8) and *"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* (1John 4:9-10) Jesus said, *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* (Matthew 20:28).

There was a man who courageously saved a little child from a fierce fire. In the process, the man's hands were severely burned. Some time later, after the child's

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lam. 3:22-23)

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1Jn. 4:7-8)

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1Jn. 3:1)

guardian died, he was put up for adoption. There was a court hearing to determine who should raise the child. After others had spoken and presented their arguments, the man who had rescued the child had his turn. Instead of speaking, he displayed his scarred hands to the court and the child became his.

The Cross is the proof of God's love for us. The wounds of Jesus settle for all time the issue of His right to our allegiance. Whenever there are doubts concerning God's love for us, all we have to do is point to the Cross. *"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* (Romans 8:31-32)

GOD OFFERS LIFE TO EVERYONE

*"whosoever believeth in Him
should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

The good news is that God does not show favoritism in either judgment or mercy. Just as all of us are sinners and deserve His judgement, so also, all of us are offered His mercy. Jesus invites everyone when He says *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Mt. 11:28)

THE GIFT OF GOD IS RECEIVED BY FAITH IN JESUS!

*"that whosoever believeth in Him
should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

This brings us back to the key issue: A believer is one who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior. Believing in Jesus means personally trusting Him; not just intellectually agreeing about Him.

A tightrope walker amazed a crowd by crossing Niagra Falls on a steel cable with just a balance pole. After he again reached the crowd, he asked "Who

"... there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:12-13)

"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (Rev. 22:17)

Part of the reason that He "whosoever" receives life.

"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

"Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires? Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (Jn. 6:28-29)

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, ... " (Heb. 11:6)

believes I could do it again with someone on my shoulders?" The crowd cried "We believe!". So he asked for volunteers, but only one man responded. Then the tightrope walker said to the crowd, "You say you have faith in me, but this man is willing to trust me with his life!"

Living faith means trusting Jesus with our life. It means putting the whole weight of our dependence upon Him and letting our hearts find rest in His faithfulness and love.

IF WE REJECT JESUS, WE WILL PERISH

"whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Whoever rejects Christ cannot benefit from Him because it is faith that links the sinner to the Savior. We are all guilty before God, because there is not a one of us who have kept His commandments in complete perfection. If we break even one point of the Law, we have failed to keep all of it - so we are guilty and condemned. The Bible tells us that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* and that *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Rom. 3:23; 6:23) Immediately following the 'Gospel in a verse' the Bible says *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 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."* (Jn. 3:17-18) In other words, Jesus doesn't condemn us, we are already condemned by our sins. Jesus calls us to come to Him and receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1).

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." (James 2:10)

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1Tim. 1:15)

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

FAITH IN JESUS BRINGS EVERLASTING LIFE!

*"whosoever believeth in Him should not perish,
but have everlasting life."*

This is - the *really* Good News of the Gospel! Because of God's love and what Jesus has done for us, we receive Everlasting Life as a gift. Life is what Jesus is all about. Life is why He came. John 17:3 says, *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."*

What is this Life in Jesus like?

First of all, it is New Life. God's Word says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* (2Corinthians 5:17) When you give your life to Jesus He starts His work on the inside by giving you a new heart. God promised, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*

(Ezekiel 36:26) This new heart from God means you begin to change from within. You begin to see things differently and respond to situations in a new way. In some areas of your life this will happen very quickly - almost immediately. In others, it will be part of a slow, steady process the Bible calls sanctification.

Sanctification is the life-long action of the Holy Spirit making us more like Jesus and bringing us into greater harmony with God's purposes for our life.

Secondly, it is True Life. The life that Jesus gives us is not just new, it is true life. This is life of the highest quality and experience because it is sharing in the life of God in Christ. Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* (John 10:10)

Thirdly, it is glorious Everlasting Life. Everlasting life means "ageless or endless life, beginning now and lasting forever". God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die for you so that you will never die. Yes, your body will die, but the Bible says our bodies are just like old tents. When a believer dies, they go to be with Jesus, leaving their old 'tent' behind. Then God gives us a glorious, incorruptible spiritual body to have for all eternity. God's love brought heaven to us and His love will carry us to heaven. Wow!

"The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (1Jn. 2:17)

"We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20).

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1Jn. 5:11-12)

THE BOTTOM-LINE IS ...

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Δ GOD _____

Δ GOD _____ YOU

Δ GOD DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE BY SENDING _____

Δ GOD OFFERS LIFE TO _____

Δ THE GIFT OF GOD IS RECEIVED BY _____ IN JESUS CHRIST

Δ IF WE _____ JESUS, WE WILL _____

Δ FAITH IN JESUS BRINGS _____

"For God so loved _____ that He gave Jesus, so that _____ should not perish but have everlasting life."

HOW CAN I BE SURE?

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

1John 5:11-13

If you were asked "Are you a Christian?" or "If you were to die tomorrow, would you go to Heaven?" How would you answer? Many people respond with answers like: "I hope so." - "I do the best I can to be a good church-goer." - "It would be presumptuous for me to say I know for sure." - "I'm just as good as most church members I know." - "I don't think there's any hope for me; I've done too many bad things." or "I wish I knew for sure!"

But is "I wish I knew for sure?" the best we can do? Or can we know for sure? what is the answer? The answer is that the Gospel is Good News! Every believer can *know* that they have Eternal Life. This blessing is called Assurance of Salvation and having it makes a tremendous difference in our Christian Walk. Without Assurance our joy is conditional. With it, our joy is certain.

What is Assurance? It's knowing that we know that we know...

1John 5:13

"These things I write to you in order that you may know with an absolute knowledge that life you are having, eternal (life), to you who believe on the name of the Son of God." - [Wuest]

"I write this to you who believe in (adhere to, trust in and rely on) the name of the Son of God - that is, in the peculiar services and blessings conferred by Him on men - so that you may know (with settled and absolute knowledge) that you [already] have life, yes, eternal life." - [Amplified]

"I have a great need for Christ. I have a Great Christ for my need." - Spurgeon

"Assurance is a fruit that grows out of the root of faith." Stephen Charnock

"To have grace, and to be sure that we have grace, is glory upon the throne, it is heaven on this side of heaven."
Thomas Brooks

Assurance: "Freedom from doubt; certainty."

Certainty: "Something that is clearly established or assured."
Synonyms: assurance, certainty, conviction.

Assurance is a feeling of confidence resulting from personal experience. Certainty implies confidence based on a thorough consideration of evidence.

Conviction is certainty arising from the elimination of doubt: "

The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved"
(Victor Hugo).

Three things that give us Assurance of Salvation are: 1) The Word of God 2) The Witness of the Spirit, and 3) The Working of a New Life.

THE WORD OF GOD

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

1 John 5:13

The first and foremost assurance we have of our salvation is the clear promises given in the Bible. For example, in John 5:24 Jesus said "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." When it says here that the believer "has crossed over", the original language of the New Testament (Greek) uses the perfect tense which is the strongest way of saying that something has definitely and completely taken place. In other words, believers have "completely, once-and-for-all, without a doubt, already crossed over from death to life."

HERE ARE A FEW VERSES ABOUT ASSURANCE

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." - 1Jn. 1:3

The perfect tense in Greek corresponds to the perfect tense in English, and describes an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated. Jesus' last cry from the cross - "It is finished!" - is a good example of the perfect tense used in this sense, namely "it [the atonement] has been accomplished, completely, once and for all time."

- John 6:37 - *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."*
- John 10:27-29 - *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."*
- John 11:25-26 - *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"*
- Colossians 1:13-14 - *"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*
- Acts 16:31 - *"... 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.'"*
- Hebrews 7:24-25 - *"Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."*
- 2Tim. 1:12 - *"... I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."*
- Job 19:25-26 - *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;"*
- Romans 8:38-39 - *"I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

Romans 8:16

What does this mean? How does the Holy Spirit "testify" with our spirit? In the first place, remember that the Holy Spirit is a person, not just an influence or impersonal "force".

When a person becomes a child of God through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit immediately comes to live within them. That's why the Bible tells us that each believer is a "temple of the Holy Spirit" [1Cor. 6:19-20]. When the Holy Spirit lives within you, He makes Himself known. We begin to sense His promptings, feel His peace, and experience His power. This is the Holy Spirit "bearing witness" that we are God's children.

Have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit? Have you sensed His help in making the Bible come alive for you in a new way? Have you sensed a new awareness of His influence in your life? If so, then you have good reason to be assured of your salvation.

THE WORKING OF NEW LIFE

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

2Cor. 5:17

The moment you gave your life to Jesus and trusted Him as your Savior, the Holy Spirit came into your innermost being and gave you a new heart. This makes you a whole new person with a new relationship to God and a brand new outlook on life.

The working of this new life begins immediately and continues throughout a believer's life-time as the Holy Spirit causes us to grow in Jesus.

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?..."
(1 Corinthians 6:19).

1John 4:13 - *"We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."*

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26).

In Philippians 2:12-13, we are shown the two sides of growing in the Lord: *"12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed— not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence— continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."*

In verse 12 we see that our part is to "continue to work out our salvation". This reminds us that giving our lives to Christ includes becoming His disciples. A disciple is one who is a dedicated student and follower of Jesus. Working out our salvation is not working *for* salvation, it's working like a miner who is digging for gold or precious gems. The treasure is already there, provided by God Himself. Some of the gold and jewels are on the surface where they're easily seen and acquired. But others are only half exposed or even beneath the surface where we must apply ourselves and "work out" these additional blessings of our salvation. By the way, when it says we are to do this "with fear and trembling", this doesn't mean that we are to be fearful, but that we are to apply all our strength to discovering and applying the blessings and resources we have in Jesus.

In verse 13, we are shown the other side of the equation: God works in us giving us a desire to do those things that please Him. So you could say that the way to continue growing in Jesus is to keep working out what God has worked within (see 2Peter 1:3-8).

The presence of new, godly desires and responses, plus the enjoyment of things like the companionship of other Christians, worship, and Bible study are evidences of our new life in Christ. They assure us that we are, indeed, children of God.

Salvation in Christ is sure!

The Bible Says so; the Holy Spirit tells us we are Christ's; and our changing lives tell us so. That means that Jesus has said we can't run away, He won't throw us away, and we can't be taken away. Once you're in, you're in! Let us believe it and rejoice in it. *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* (1John 5:13)

Phil. 1:6 - *"... He Who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

"3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:3-8).

"... My heart has always assured and reassured me that the gospel of Jesus Christ must be Divine Reality. The Sermon on the Mount cannot be a mere human production. This belief enters into the very depth of my conscience. The whole history of man proves it."

Daniel Webster (1782-1852), U.S. lawyer, statesman. Spoken on the eve of his death and carved as his epitaph.

FACT-FAITH-FEELINGS

How do feelings fit into the fact that you have been born again? We must never put our Faith in our Feelings or we'll wind up in big trouble. Our Feelings are never a reliable source for Assurance.

FACTS: The Bible is the Word of God. In it we find the FACTS in which we base our FAITH. These FACTS include the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the promise of eternal life through FAITH in Him.

FAITH: Our confidence and trust in the FACTS of God's Word is our FAITH.

FEELINGS: Our FEELINGS are a response to putting our FAITH in the FACTS of God's Word.

We will only move forward in our walk with Jesus if we place our faith in the facts of God's Word.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS ...

Every believer in Jesus Christ can have absolute assurance of their salvation because of...

Δ THE _____ OF _____

Δ THE _____ OF THE

Δ THE _____ OF
NEW _____

I write these things to _____ so
that _____ may know
_____ that _____
have eternal life.

"To make sense and feeling the judges of our spiritual conditions, what is it but to make ourselves happy and miserable, righteous and unrighteous, saved and damned in one day, ay, in one hour... What is this but to toss the soul to and fro, and to expose it to a labyrinth of fears and scruples? What is this but to cast a reproach upon Christ, to gratify Satan, and to keep yourselves upon the rack? Well, doubting souls, the counsel that I shall give you is this, be much in believing, and make only Scripture the judge of your condition; maintain the judgement of the Word against the judgement of sense and feeling... If you resolve to make sense and feeling the judge of your conditions, you must resolve to live in fears, and lie down in tears." Thomas Brooks

CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?

"16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Becoming a Christian is the start of a new life. As we follow Jesus, we quickly discover that walking by faith is an exciting adventure full of new challenges and wonderful discoveries. We also soon encounter the fact that we need clear instructions for living a fulfilling life in Christ. Where do we go for reliable information? We go to the Bible! It's important to understand that there is only one infallible source of spiritual information. It isn't a pastor, a priest, church tradition, or any other source. These can make mistakes. The only source to depend upon is the Bible.

Remember, the information you or I receive on any subject is only as good as the sources, so check your sources first. The ultimate source for knowledge about God and Christ is the Bible. While books about God are useful, they are no substitute for the Bible itself.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

"All Scripture is God-breathed"

The word 'bible' means 'book'. But the Bible is not just any book. It is the book of God. The Bible is also referred to as 'The Scriptures', which means that it contains holy writings. That's why we usually find Holy Bible written on the front.

However, of all names given to the Bible, The Word of God is, in many ways, the best. It reminds us that the Bible is not only a book about God - it is the book that comes from God. "All Scripture is God-breathed" means that the Bible is inspired by God. God directed the writers of the Bible in such a way that they communicated exactly what He intended.

Actually, the Bible is a collection of sixty-six books written by over forty different authors over a period of

"11 The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd. 12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body." (Ecclesiastes 12:11-12).

"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11).

1500 years. The type of people who wrote the books of the Bible vary from common laborers to world leaders. They included kings, statesmen, the heir to the throne of Pharaoh, prophets, rabbis, a physician, a tax collector, a farmer, fishermen and others. And yet, this 'spiritual library' has such a divine unity that it is rightly considered as one book - The Book - The Word of God!

So, because it is so important for every believer to trust the Bible and look to it as the ultimate authority and final word on all issues of life, let's consider...

THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE THE WORD OF GOD

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17).

Expressions such as "The LORD said," "The LORD Spoke," or "The Word of the LORD came," are found over 3,800 times in the Old Testament.

JESUS CONSIDERED THE BIBLE TO BE THE WORD OF GOD

Jesus considered the Scriptures to be the unbreakable Word of God. *"17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."* (Matthew 5:17-18). He also considered all of the events described in Scripture to be true. For instance, consider His attitude towards Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark, and Jonah and the Fish...

Δ *"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female'."* (Mark 10:6).

Δ *"37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."* (Matthew 24:37-39).

Δ *"40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* (Matthew 12:40).

How was this accomplished? By the Spirit of God. In 2Peter 1:21 we're told that *"men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"*.

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23).

"9 As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:9-11).

John 10:35 - *"... the Scripture cannot be broken--"*

Lu 18:31 - *"Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled."*

Mt 4:4 - *"Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

Mt 24:35 - *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*

THE BIBLE IS CREDIBLE AS THE WORD OF GOD

If we look at the credentials of the Bible, we discover that there is tremendous evidence to support its claim to be the Word of God.

UNITY

66 books written over 1600 years by many people of different countries, languages, occupations, character, and position. Yet it is one book with a unity that can only be explained as supernatural.

THE TEST OF TIME

The Bible has stood the test of critics throughout the ages. Voltaire [1694-1778] - French philosopher and writer - boasted that "Before the beginning of the 19th Century, Christianity will have disappeared from the earth." Today, the very house in which he made that prediction is filled with Bibles, being used by a Bible Society.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Critics of the Bible persistently attack Biblical accounts of history when there is no other information to confirm the Bible's record. However, archaeological discoveries confirm the reliability of the Bible time and time again.

For example, the Hittites were a people described in the Bible as having a highly developed civilization. Yet, for many centuries, there was no other evidence of their existence. This led many 'scholars' to proclaim that the Hittites were a mythical fabrication of the Bible and a proof that the Scriptures should not be taken as literal history. However, in 1906, their royal library was discovered and many additional discoveries have since confirmed the Bible's record.

"Garstang [archaeologist] found evidence that Jericho was destroyed about 1400 B.C., Joshua's date; and that the walls had fallen flat, outward, down the hillside."
Halley's Bible Handbook

CREDIBILITY OF RECORDS

Aristotle wrote his poetics in 343 BC - yet earliest copy we have is dated A.D. 1100 [1,400 yr gap] - with total of only 5 manuscripts in existence.

Caesar wrote his 'Gallic Wars' @ 58-50 B.C. and authority rests on 10 manuscripts dating 1,000 yrs after his death. Homer's 'Iliad' written before 800 B.C., has 643 manuscripts in existence dating 2,200 years after first written. According to Geisler and Nix [1968], there are 5,000 Greek N.T. manuscripts in existence (McDowell [1977] puts the

total number of copies of N.T. manuscripts in existence at 20,000) . There are complete manuscripts dating to within 300 years of the originals, as well as fragments dating to within a generation of the originals.

FULFILLED PROPHECY

God Himself declared that the best way to test and prove His Word was by looking at fulfilled prophecy.

"3 I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. 4 For I knew how stubborn you were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. 5 Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, 'My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.' " (Isaiah 48:3-5).

"21 "Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. 22 "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, 23 tell us what the future holds, so that we may know you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. 24 But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable." (Isaiah 41:21-24).

"8 I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. 9 See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you." (Isaiah 42:8-9).

Here are just a few examples...

THE VIRGIN BIRTH: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14).*

BORN IN BETHLEHEM: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2).*

DESCRIPTION OF THE CRUCIFIXION: *"1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ... 16 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. 18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." (Psalms 22:1-18)*

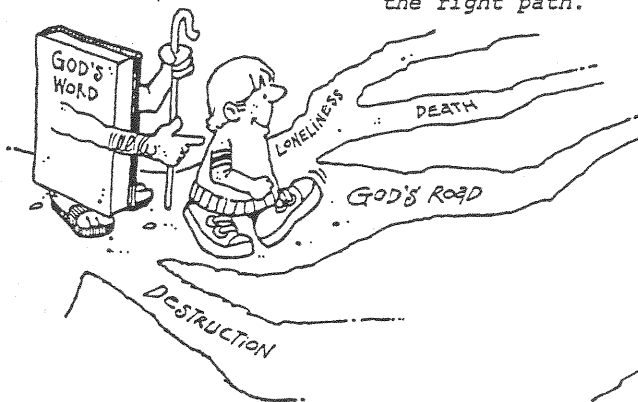
THE APPLICATION OF THE BIBLE

"useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"

This passage shows us that the practical purpose of God's Word in our lives is to Teach us, to Reprove us, to Correct us, and to Train us. The following illustrations from 'Discussion Manual for Student Discipleship - Vol. I, pages 70-72, communicate this very well.

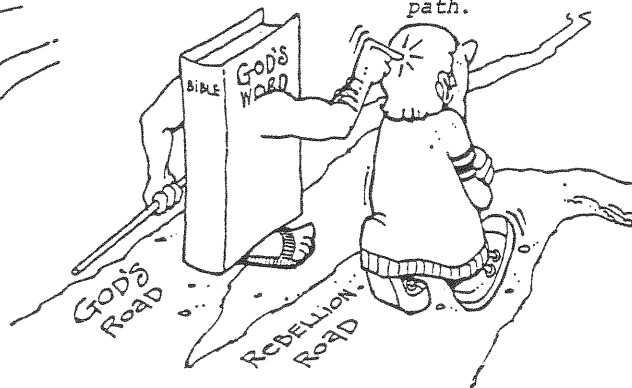
1. Teaching

There are many paths in life that a person can take --some are disastrous... God and His Word teach you to take the right path.



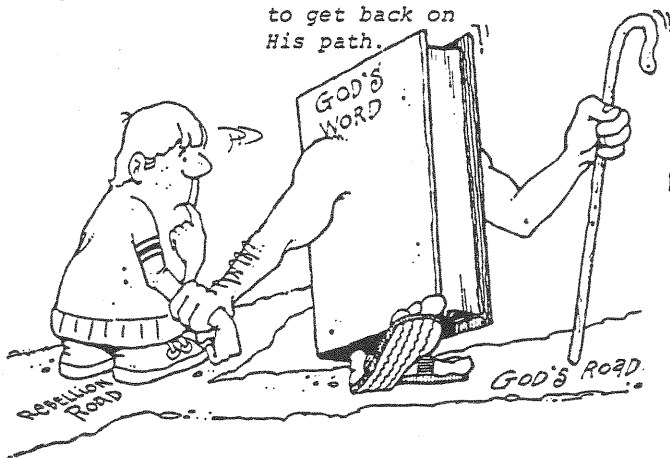
2. Reproof

Sometimes in walking down God's path you rebel and get off the path... The Bible tells you where you have gotten off the path.



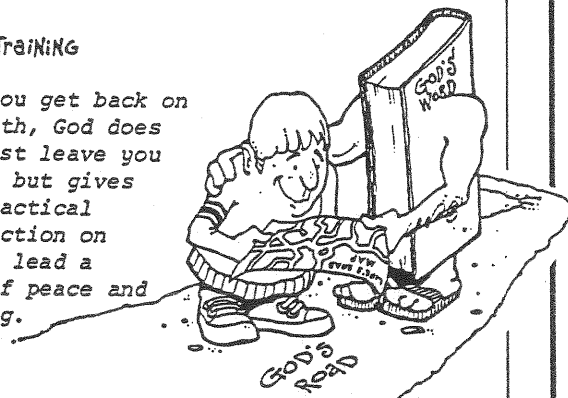
3. Correction

God corrects you through His Word and shows you how to get back on His path.



4. Training

Once you get back on the path, God does not just leave you there, but gives you practical instruction on how to lead a life of peace and meaning.



THE EFFECT OF THE BIBLE

"so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

The personal application of the Bible produces men and women of God who are prepared to serve the Lord in every good work. As we follow Jesus, we discover that He has a purpose for us, a calling to pursue, a ministry for us to fulfill. *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Ephesians 2:10).

No matter what your gifts and ministry may be, the way to be thoroughly equipped for every good work is to grow in your understanding and application of God's Word.

HOW CAN WE GROW IN THE WORD?

There are five ways we can get a firm grasp on God's Word: **hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating.**

HEAR: Romans 10:17; Luke 6:45-49; Luke 11:28

"He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:28)

READ: Deuteronomy 17:19; Revelation 1:3

"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near." (Revelation 1:3)

STUDY: Acts 17:11; 2Timothy 2:15

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

MEMORIZE: Psalm 37:31; Psalm 119:9-11

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalms 119:11).

MEDITATE: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:8).

We need to hear, read, study and memorize the Word of God. Then, we should meditate on what we hear, meditate on what we read, meditate on what we study, and meditate on what we memorize.

Benefits of reading God's Word:

- Δ Joshua 1:8 - Makes us prosper; gives us success
- Δ Psalm 19:7 - Restores our soul; makes wise the simple
- Δ Psalm 19:8 - Rejoices the heart
- Δ Psalm 19:11 - Provides warnings; provides rewards
- Δ Psalm 37:31 - Keeps us from "slipping"
- Δ Psalm 119:9,11 - Keeps our way pure; keeps us from sin
- Δ Psalm 119:24 - Provides delight; provides counsel
- Δ Psalm 119:50 - Gives comfort in affliction
- Δ Psalm 119:98; 2Timothy 3:15 - Makes us wise
- Δ Proverbs 6:22 - Guides us; watches over us in unguarded moments
- Δ Matthew 4:4 - Provides spiritual nourishment
- Δ John 15:3; 17:17 - Sanctifies us
- Δ John 20:30,31 - Helps our faith
- Δ Romans 15:4 - Gives us hope for the future
- Δ 2Timothy 3:16,17 - Teaches, rebukes, corrects, trains and thoroughly equips
- Δ 1Peter 2:2 - Makes us grow to spiritual maturity

What we do with God's Word:

- Δ Joshua 1:8 - Meditate on it
- Δ Psalm 119:11 - Hide it in our hearts
- Δ Proverbs 6:20-22 - Stay in constant contact with it
- Δ Mark 4:3,20 - Sow it
- Δ Luke 24:25 - Believe it
- Δ John 8:31 - Continue in it
- Δ John 14:21 - Obey it
- Δ Acts 17:11 - Study it diligently
- Δ Colossians 3:16 - Let it "dwell" within us
- Δ 2Timothy 3:15 - Handle it correctly

**The 3 Basic Rules For
Successful Memorization:
REVIEW • REVIEW • REVIEW**

THE WORD QUIET TIME - #1

SUBJECT: THE BASICS OF THE BIBLE

Who is the central figure of the entire Bible?

Lk. 24:44

Jn. 5:39-47

What is the name for Jesus Christ in Jn. 1:1, 14?

Who is considered the author of the Bible?

Daniel 9:2

2Pet. 1:20-21

Heb. 1:5

Jer. 1:4, 11, 13

What is Jesus' attitude toward Scripture?

Mt. 24:35

Mt. 5:17-18

What is God's attitude toward Scripture?

Isa. 55:10-11

Jer. 23:28

God takes notice of what type of person?

Isa. 66:2

What part of the Bible should you base your life on?

Prov. 30:5-6

What do you need in addition to God's Word to be fully equipped spiritually?

Ecclesiastes 12:11-12

2Tim. 3:16-17

THE WORD QUIET TIME - #2

SUBJECT: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE IN YOUR LIFE

What do the following verses say concerning the bible and growing as a Christian?

1Pet. 2:2

Jer. 15:16

Acts 20:32

What do the following verses say concerning the Bible and overcoming sin as a Christian?

Eph. 6:17

Ps. 119:9

What do the following verses say concerning the Bible and how it prepares you to serve God?

Josh 1:8-9

1Tim. 4:6

2Tim. 3:16-17

What does God promise to those who love and study the Word?

Ps. 1:1-2

1Kings 2:1-3

As you sit down to study the bible, how should you prepare?

James 1:21

1Pet. 2:1-2

List one new truth you have learned about the Bible and yourself below:

THE WORD QUIET TIME - #3

SUBJECT: THE NEED FOR THE WORD OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE - A STUDY FROM PSALM 119

What does the psalmist call God's Word in the following verses:

v. 1 _____

v. 2 _____

v. 3 _____

v. 4 _____

v. 5 _____

v. 6 _____

v. 7 _____

v. 43 _____

v. 72 _____

v. 91 _____

v. 123 _____

What did the psalmist find that respecting and learning God's Word resulted in?

v. 7 _____

v. 8 _____

v. 9 _____

Who are to be your companions?

v. 63 _____

Why is adversity sometimes good for you?

v. 67 _____

v. 71 _____

What value does the Word have for you?

v. 72 _____

What is necessary in order to learn the Word?

v. 73 _____

Knowing and memorizing the Word makes you...

v. 98 _____

Meditating on the Word makes you...

v. 99 _____

Obeying the Word makes you...

v. 100 _____

Why is this?

v. 105 _____

How are your steps to be ordered?

v. 133 _____

When God's Word is not kept you feel...

v. 136 _____

v. 158 _____

How can you have great peace?

v. 165 _____

Essentials for the
JOURNEY

