

Session 4: Is the Bible Worthy of My Trust?

Revised 5/11b/10

Introduction

Last time we explored five ways God has revealed himself to be worthy of trust. These are his five “fingerprints” on our world: Creation, Reliable Word, Fulfilled Prophecy, Jesus’ Claims, and Jesus’ Resurrection. We discovered that God has revealed himself in varied, powerful, and reliable ways. The first one, creation, is evident for all to see. But did you notice that all of the other ways come from the Bible? What if the Bible isn’t true? What if it wasn’t reliably recorded and transmitted to us today? *Then* what would we know about God for sure?



The crucial question is: Is the Bible really worthy of my trust? If the Bible really is true, then what better way to know who God is than through the book he has written for us? It is here, through written words, that God speaks to us most fully. But if the Bible is *not* true, it should never be called a “good book.” A book that claims to be the very word of God, but isn’t? What a hoax! It would be a horrible book, filled with lies and deceit.

So how can we know if the Bible really is true? How can we know it is really worthy of our trust? Where can we go to find reliable answers to these questions that are more trustworthy than blind faith, religious dogma, the media, or how we were raised?

In this session, you will explore how the Bible can claim to be the “Word of God” and what evidence we have that this is true. As you walk through the session, you will have **three opportunities** to make a faith response and take a faith step. There is a lot of material to cover. But our goal is not to dig too deeply into any one topic. That can be done later. Here it will be enough just to give the highlights. We hope you will see in the **simplest way possible some clear answers to three questions** that are vital for spiritual survival.

1. Do you believe the Bible is trustworthy?
2. Will you trust the Bible as the supreme authority in your life?
3. Will you take steps to strengthen that trust?

At the end of the session you will be asked to pick the faith response that needs the most work and take steps to work on it.

PREVIEW OF SESSION: CHART THE COURSE

Here is what to expect in this session:

1. **Connecting with others: Link up with a person and idea (pairs).**
2. **Reviewing past concepts: Where are we? (group)**
3. **Exploring the topic: Is the Bible Worthy of My Trust? (group and pairs)**
4. **Teamwork/Prayer Partner: How can this topic affect your life this week? (group and pairs)**
5. **Assignment for next week: Be ready to report on this.**

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: LINK UP WITH A PERSON AND IDEA

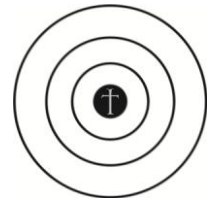
Before we begin, briefly discuss the following in pairs:

- Share one positive or negative experience from the past week (in any category).
- What was helpful from the last session?
- Any progress in understanding or applying it?

REVIEWING PAST CONCEPTS: WHERE ARE WE?

Session 1: *What Does It Take To Survive? Am I Ready?*

Success or survival in any difficult task requires a set of essentials—core things you must focus on (like a bull’s eye). Mountain climbers have skills they learn before tackling the big climb. Doctors look for vital signs to assess someone’s health. It is foolish to start these things without testing to make sure you are ready. And it is equally foolish to focus on secondary issues (high cholesterol) when core issues are wrong (no pulse). *Life is the same—including the spiritual world.* We all need certain spiritual essentials to make it in life. There are certain core questions we must focus on instead of other secondary things. We need to test ourselves or be tested by others in order to know for sure we are ready. And if we care about someone else, we will ask to be sure they have what they need too.



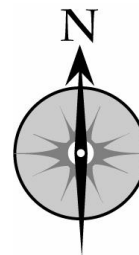
Session 2: *How Are My Foundations?*



When a contractor begins a new home, the first things he builds are the footings and foundations. If footings are not in place and a solid foundation not established, everything above the surface (walls, ceilings, windows) will be thrown off. There will be cracks, and people could get hurt. *Life is the same way—including the spiritual world.* When we have visible cracks in our lives (broken relationships, marriage conflict, financial trouble) we tend to try to patch things up above the surface. We fix the relationship, get a divorce and move on, get another job, etc. But the underlying causes of those cracks remain. Therefore, in order to go about life in a healthy way, we must be willing to look at our footings and inspect our foundations for flaws—or to have someone help us take a look under the surface. We must test our core convictions about God, the Bible, Jesus, etc. Even if we have already chosen to believe in Jesus, we may still have cracks that need to be fixed.

Session 3: Is God Really There?

Have you ever wondered if God is really there? Perhaps on the surface you believe in God, or if someone asked, you would say God does exist. But deep down, if you are really honest, do you wonder if God is just an idea people have invented? Have you created God in your mind, or did God really create you? Many have wrestled with this question, even those who have made religious commitments. *However, from the very beginning, God has made it clear that He is eager to reveal Himself.* In fact, he has revealed himself in five ways: Creation, the Bible, Fulfilled Prophecy, Jesus' Claims, and Jesus' Resurrection. And as He reveals Himself, He does so in a very personal, powerful, and passionate way. He declares to all people everywhere not only that He exists but also that He is reliable and wants us to know Him.



The second foundation to inspect is your confidence in the Bible. The Bible is one of the key ways God has revealed himself, but can we really trust the Bible? Isn't it just a book written by humans? How do we know it is true?

EXPLORING THE TOPIC #4,: IS THE BIBLE WORTHY OF MY TRUST?



Exploring the Topic: Overview

In order to explore this concept we will look at six things:

Warm-up Questions:

1. Are there examples in my experience or in the natural world of something worthy of trust because of its source?
2. Are some things worthy of trust regardless of people's opinions, and could this be true of the Bible as well?
3. How confident am I that I can trust the Bible? How did I form my opinions? What information have I accepted without testing?

Core Questions:

1. Is the Bible *really* worthy of trust? What reasons do I have for believing the Bible is accurate and from God himself?
2. Will I trust the Bible as the supreme authority in my life over all other voices?
3. How can I increase my trust in the Bible?

For the rest of the session, you will explore each of these six questions in more depth.

Warm-Up #1: Examples From Our World: What Can We Learn Here?

Personal Experience: In your experience, where have you seen something that was worthy of trust because of its source? Here are two examples that can help. Discuss these and other examples you can think of with your teammate. Your experience may help them understand the concept better.

1. **Owner's manual:** Every car comes with an owner's manual, a book that describes the car and how to take care of it. We trust the owner's manual because we know the designer and producer of the car wrote it.
2. **Doctor's Prescription:** When a doctor writes a prescription, we trust it enough to put an unknown chemical in our bodies. The reason we trust the prescription is that it came from a doctor. Because the doctor is reliable, we know the prescription is reliable as well. We trust it enough to take action and follow the prescription.

The Natural World: Where in the natural world do you see something that is worthy of trust no matter how we feel? Here are a couple examples to get you started. Discuss this as a group. Your leader will help the group identify a few key examples.

1. **Electricity:** The principles of how electricity works are true regardless of how we may feel on any given day. We know it is wise to stay away from hot power lines, and we would never stick a butter knife in a live outlet.
2. **Agriculture:** Whether you have a vegetable garden or you are a farmer, you know that there are certain natural principles at work: water, fertilizer, working the soil, when to plant, etc. No matter how you feel you need to follow those principles in order to have healthy fruit.

Warm-Up #2: Transition to the Spiritual World: Could this also be true of the Bible?

We have discussed how we trust owner's manuals and prescriptions because we trust their designers. And you have explored principles in the natural world that are worthy of trust regardless of how you feel. *Could it be that the Bible is also worthy of your trust because of its Designer? Does it really depend on emotions, circumstances, and cultural trends, or is the Bible truly God's inspired Word?*

You may have heard that it is bad to question the Bible. But did you know God welcomes your questions? He has left His fingerprints all over the Bible. He wants you to base your opinion, your life, and your actions on solid, reliable information—not on emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends. If the Bible is *not* trustworthy, it is foolish to try to live according to it. But if God really has spoken to us through the Bible and it *should* be trusted, it is equally foolish (and dangerous) to ignore it.

Session Highlights



1. *Key Questions:* Can I Trust the Bible?
2. *Key Scripture:* 2 Timothy 3:16
3. *Key Illustration:* Bible Filter
4. *Key Faith Prayer:* "Lord, I choose today to live according to reality and trust your Word and obey its teachings."
5. *Key Faith Step:* Choose the faith response you need to work on most and commit to the recommended faith step.

Warm-Up #3: Inspecting My Foundations: How confident am I that the Bible can be trusted?

Just as God welcomes your questions about the Bible, he also has some questions for *you* about his book. These five questions can help you assess your confidence in the Bible. Answer them from 0-100% as honestly as you can:

1. How confident am I that the Bible is **reliable** or accurate? _____
2. How confident am I that the Bible is the **Word of God**? _____
3. To what extent will I **trust the Bible when other sources disagree**? _____
4. To what extent do I **apply the Bible to every situation** in life? _____
5. How well can I **help others with all the above**? _____

Look at your answers. Can you explain why to someone you care about?

Which questions need the most focus for you? Which one are you least confident in?
Briefly list reasons why you struggle with this?

Which ones do you think **other people** may need to focus on? How prepared are you to help them?

Core #1: Examining the Bible: What reasons do I have for trusting the Bible?

As we have said, God welcomes scrutiny. He invites you to bring your questions and investigate the truth. In this section, you will have a safe place to ask your deepest questions about the Bible.

In the right column below, you will explore five evidences that the Bible truly is the reliable words of God. Every time you have an objection or a question, write it in the left column. The questions in the left column will help you explore your current perspective on the Bible.

Your Current Beliefs/Assumptions

What do YOU think about the Bible? Is it reliable? Do you trust it?

How have you formed your opinion (e.g., family, teachers, circumstances)?

Were they reliable sources of spiritual insight?

Five Evidences that the Bible is Reliable (UMAPS)¹

1. **Uniqueness**: If God has truly inspired the Bible, it only makes sense that it would be unique from every other book on earth. We can see this from its diversity, continuity, influence, circulation, amazing claims and message.
 - ✓ *Diversity*: The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years, by more than 40 authors, in 3 different languages in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. It has history, law, poetry, song lyrics, wisdom sayings, prophecy, biography, personal diaries, and correspondence.
 - ✓ *Continuity*: These diverse writings communicate the single story of God's creation and restoration of all things. No one final editor put this material together. But despite the varied circumstances, cultures, and purposes of its writers we can see a unity and wholeness that astonishes the mind. (Need example? Check Gen. 2:8-9 and Rev. 22:2.)
 - ✓ *Influence*: Skeptics and believers alike agree that the Bible has shaped history, culture, beliefs, politics, families, and legal systems around the world. People have lived by it, fought over it, died because of it, and testified to its role in changing their lives. *Honesty* about the flaws of its heroes. If men created it they would have excluded their failures and removed controversial portions.
 - ✓ *Circulation*: The Bible has been circulated more widely for a longer period of time than any other book in history. The Bible (or parts of it) has been translated into over 2,000 languages.
 - ✓ ***Amazing Claims, Credentials and Message***: *Claims to be the very words of God, Confirmed by thousands of manuscripts and archeology, Foretells the future, Communicates a message like no other message in all of history.*

The Bible is like no other book on earth. But its uniqueness alone does not prove that it is reliable. It does however get our attention. It makes us wonder what's behind a book like this. If the Bible is truly this unique, could it be that it was written by a living God? Just might this God have left plenty of evidence that he did write it and that it is worthy of trust? What are some more evidences?

¹ Adapted from "Can We Trust the Bible?" in *Destined for Security*, pp. 64-73.

Write your objections or questions in the space provided.

2. **Manuscripts:** You may have heard that the Bible is unreliable because it was primarily passed on by word of mouth in stories with room for lots of changes. But that is not reality. The Bible has survived thousands of years with **more manuscript evidence than any other ancient writing**. Ancient professional scribes believed they were handling the living word of God itself. So they were **extremely careful to copy it with great precision**. The existing copies were produced and preserved over many years, through many cultures, and over a large geographic region. But they are remarkably accurate. When you compare them you find **amazing consistency**, with only minor differences that affect no major teaching (e.g., missing words, duplicated words, and misspellings). *What kind of writing would remain this consistent and accurate over this many years unless it was truly special, even miraculous, written and designed by a divine Author?*²

Examples: Consistent recording, transmission and translations

Can you see the reliability of how the scribes preserved the Bible? What remaining questions do you have?

3. **Archaeology:** When we read about people, places, and events in the Bible we may wonder, are these all fiction? Or were they real? The good news is people like Abraham and David, places like Sodom and Gomorrah, and events like the census at Jesus' birth have been confirmed by archaeology. As archaeologists have mined the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, they have uncovered an overwhelming amount of evidence show these things are real.

Here's one example: The Walls of Jericho. You can read about how God miraculously knocked down the walls around this city in Joshua 5:13-6:27. Archaeologists have uncovered these walls and found that they were not knocked in like most conquered cities. These walls actually fell out!

*If these things are supported by archaeology, doesn't it make sense that you can trust the rest?*³

² For more information on the manuscript evidence for the Bible, see *More Than A Carpenter* by Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell (Tyndale, 2009).

³ For more information on archaeological evidence, see *The New Evidence that Demands A Verdict* by Josh McDowell Revised Edition (Thomas Nelson, 1999).

Write your objections or questions in the space provided.

4. **Prophecy**: The Bible contains thousands of prophecies, many of which can be lined up with historical events. For example, the Bible predicts the destruction of some ancient cities, and today we can read about those actual events in our secular encyclopedias. The predictions came true! Plus, there are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about a Messiah that would come to save Israel. Although they were written by different men over several centuries, all of these prophecies were fulfilled at least 400 years later by Jesus Christ.

For example, consider these predictions fulfilled by Jesus:

<u>Prediction</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
Rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3)	John 1:11, Luke 23:18
Kept silent (Isaiah 53:7)	Mark 15:4, 5
Buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9)	Matthew 27:57-60
Born of a Virgin (Isaiah 7:14)	Matthew 1:18, 24, 25
Born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)	Matthew 2:1
No Broken Bones (Psalm 34:20)	John 19:33

Where would this kind of advance knowledge of events come from? What are the odds of these being fulfilled by one person? 1 X 10 to the 17th power... Silver dollars spread over Texas

Read 2 Peter 1:20. Who but God could know what's going to happen, tell you what's going to happen, make it happen, and then accurately preserve records of what happened?

All of this for one reason: He wants you to trust him.

Even if the Bible is surprisingly reliable, do you believe the Bible came from God, that it is his words?

How have you formed your opinion (e.g., family, teachers, circumstances)?

Were they reliable sources of spiritual insight?

5. **Statements and amazing message**: The Bible may be reliable, but does that mean it's really the words of God? Did the writers of the Bible really believe they were writing the authoritative word of God himself? *At least five biblical writers specifically did.* And their message was like no other message in history.

- a. **Moses** claimed that God himself penned the Ten Commandments *with his own finger!*

"When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).

- b. **Jeremiah** explicitly claimed to be speaking and writing the words of God. He wrote:

"Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'Now, I have put my words in your mouth'" (Jeremiah 1:9).

Write your objections or questions in the space provided.

And Jeremiah said, “thus says the Lord” or “declares the Lord” over 300 times. For example:

*“Thus says the LORD,
Restrain your voice from weeping
And your eyes from tears;
For your work will be rewarded,” declares the LORD,
And they will return from the land of the enemy”
(Jeremiah 31:16, NASB).*

The Old Testament prophets as a whole used these phrases *over 700 times*. These men were convinced they were speaking the very words of God.

- c. **Jesus** elevates his own word to the same authority and *even more* permanence than the Old Testament Scriptures (“the Law”).

“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 5:18).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

And he explained that what he said came directly from God.

“I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me” (John 8:28).

- d. **Peter** explicitly states that Scripture came directly from God. Just like wind driving the sails of a boat, the Spirit of God moved the human authors to write what they did.

“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” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

By the way, Peter also referred to Paul’s writings as “scripture” making them equally authoritative as the Old Testament!

*“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him...His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, **as they do the other Scriptures**, to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:15-16).*

- e. **Paul** made the most explicit statement about Scripture when he wrote that **all** Scripture is actually **breathed out** by God himself!

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

More amazing claims and messages:

Deuteronomy 30, “these words are life...Proverbs 30:5

Ezekiel , . I will write My word upon their hearts.

Acts 20:32 able to build us up...

Hebrews 4:12, word is alive...Hebrews 10:16, I will put My laws in their hearts, and write them on their minds.

Where else do we find such reliability coupled with such radical messages? Has anyone else written such a book about such amazing events and messages?

If it is clear that the Bible is *distinctively reliable* because of UMAPS (above), what should we conclude? Is it not possible that the Bible is in fact the reliable Word of God, given to us by God himself?

Recall the Reality Principle: *“Biblical faith is choosing to live according to reality not according to the fantasies of my emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends.”*

Here you have an opportunity to apply this principle. Consider what your emotions, circumstances, and culture (the left hand) say about the Bible, and compare that with what you have learned above (the right hand)?

Faith Response #1: This is your first opportunity in this session to respond to God in faith about the Bible. **Is the Bible objectively true whether people believe it or not? It is worthy of your trust?**

<p><u>What do your emotions, circumstances, and culture say about the Bible?</u></p> <p><i>For example: “You cannot know for sure.”</i></p> <p><i>(Go back to your notes in the left column above.)</i></p>	<p><u>What does the Bible say?</u></p> <p><i>See UMAPS above.</i></p> <p><i>Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and Psalm 19:7</i></p> <div data-bbox="1211 1646 1406 1780" data-label="Image"> </div>
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Faith Step #1: Choose to believe that the Bible is truly accurate, reliable, and inspired by God, regardless of other people's opinions.

You can pray a prayer similar to this one:

*“Lord, I still have questions. Not everything is entirely clear.
But I can see now that the Bible is more than I thought it was.
I can see that you are behind it. There are many things I do not understand. But I do I know enough now
to say I believe that the Bible is accurate, reliable, and inspired by you.”*

If you are able to take this faith step, you can continue to bring every question to God, by faith.

You can pray something like this, *“Lord I still want to trust You and the Bible. But this (question, challenge, trial, temptation,...) makes it really hard I am asking You to show me how to trust You in this situation”*.

If you are unable to take this step, we want to encourage you. God is willing to give you time to sort through your questions, and your teammate will help you.

You may say, “These five evidences are just small samples. I want to know more.” There is a mountain of evidence waiting for you to explore if want to go deeper. Here are a few places to go next:

“Can You Trust the Bible,” Destined for Security. Session 5. Published by Campus Crusade for Christ in 2003.

More Than a Carpenter by Josh and Sean McDowell. Revised and Updated Edition. (Tyndale, 2009).

The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell. Revised Edition (Thomas Nelson, 1999).

The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 1998).

A Word to the Wise

Please know that **there will come a time when you must choose.**

If you don't come to a place of faith on this, you really cannot take any further steps in your spiritual journey. Think about it. If you're not confident here, how will you trust the Bible in other areas when other voices disagree? Unless you can say “yes” to God about trusting that the Bible is accurate, reliable, and inspired by him, you will have great difficulty trusting him about anything else.

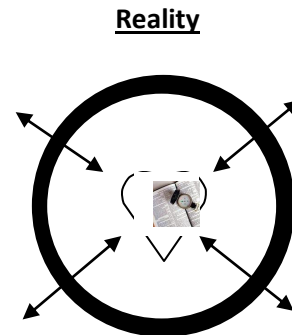
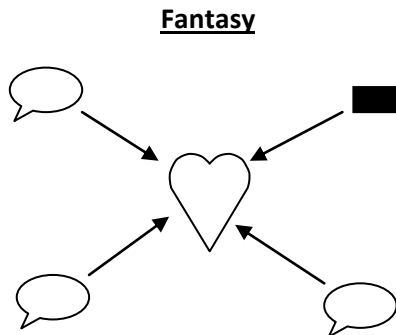
And if you do not have an objective base of truth beyond your own ideas, what are you passing on to the next generation?

*Take the time you need to wrestle with your questions about the Bible, but do so with a real sense of **urgency**. Your spiritual journey and your life depend on it.*

Core #2: Scrutinizing My Trust: Will I trust the Bible even when other “voices” disagree?

This is a choice everyone must make. **We cannot remain neutral about the Bible.** It’s either a good book or a horrible book. So, what will you choose? We have many influences to sift through: parents, peers, priests, professors, pastors, media, culture, and experts. They all tell us what to think and what to do, but who is more reliable—these voices or God’s Word? ***Will you allow the Bible to guide your thoughts, feelings, and decisions, or will you follow other “voices”?***

We must choose to *do life in one of two ways* represented by the two diagrams below:



You can choose to...

Use God’s Word as one of many voices and only follow the parts you like.

This choice requires you to:

- ✓ Filter and evaluate the thousands of messages you hear yourself.
- ✓ Respond to all of these voices yourself, from your own wisdom.
- ✓ Shape your life according to your own wisdom.

If you ever lack the necessary information or wisdom to make a decision, you will be left the whims of your emotions, circumstances, and cultural trends.

Many have found that in the end others will shape your life for you.

The assumption here is that you (or whatever voice you follow) are the most reliable source of wisdom and decision-making in the universe.

Here, YOU are central and authoritative.

Does that seem like fantasy or reality?

Or you can choose to...

Submit to God’s Word as the guiding voice and follow all of its teachings.

This choice allows you to:

- ✓ Filter and evaluate the thousands of messages you hear with God’s Word.
- ✓ Respond to all of these voices from the authority and power of God’s Word.
- ✓ Shape your life according to God’s wisdom.

If you ever lack the necessary information or wisdom to make a decision, Scripture guides you. All your actions and thoughts will be shaped by God’s Word.

Many have found that this is the only authentic way to live as you were designed to live.

The foundation here is that the Bible is more reliable than you or any other voice in the universe.

Here, the BIBLE is central and authoritative.

Does this seem like fantasy or reality?

Which way of doing life seems most consistent with what God intends? Which seems more reliable?

Real Life Examples: Here are two examples of how this decision looks in real life.

1. Billy Graham is known as one of the most influential Christian leaders of the twentieth century. However, before one of his early crusades he was faced with this very decision: *Will I trust the Bible?* He was preparing to preach a message to thousands of people, but internally he was wrestling with whether or not the Bible is truly reliable. He made the decision that day to trust the Bible more than any other voice. And then he experienced more fruit in his ministry than ever before.
2. John was thinking of leaving his wife. His emotions, circumstances and friends told him to leave her and get the freedom and respect he deserved. But then he considered the Bible teachings; that God will never leave us or forsake us, that marriage is a reflection of our relationship with God, that God gives us the power to forgive and keep our commitments even when it is tough. He made the choice to submit the Bible rather than his friends because he knew God's Word is more reliable. Because of this choice, John started working on his relationship with his wife rather than withdrawing. After several years of hard work and rebuilding, their marriage is stronger than ever. His kids and friends have seen how lives are changed by trusting God's word.

Each of these men realized that the Bible is more reliable than they are. They trusted God's Word more than other voices. And this decision led to real benefits.


Trials and Temptations will challenge your belief and submission to God's Word.

1. **Trials** are difficult circumstances that cause us to question God's Word. For example:
 - a. Cancer: You or a loved one is suffering from cancer. Is God still good? Can you still have hope? Your circumstances may suggest otherwise. But the Bible says despite our circumstances, God is good, He gives hope and power even in the worst of circumstances.
 - b. Job loss: You have lost your job. Will God provide? Your emotions say you are all alone. Your culture tells you are disposable. The Bible says God is with you and will provide if you obey.
 - c. Spiritual leadership failure: Your pastor failed morally, and your church has split as a result. Seems like Christianity is hypocritical and unreliable, but the Bible says Jesus Christ is the truth.
 - d. Can you add one from your own experience?
2. **Temptations** are situations or thoughts that draw us away from God's Word. For example:
 - a. Affairs: You are attracted to someone you work with and are thinking of having an affair. The people around you and your culture are saying, "Leave your wife and kids. You deserve better." The Bible says to be faithful to your wife and kids.
 - b. Depression: You are experiencing depression because life seems pointless. Your circumstances tell you to give up, but the Bible says to find your joy in the Lord.
 - c. Stealing/Dishonesty: You are thinking about embezzling money through your company. Your emotions say you are all alone. You must act quickly to provide for your family. The Bible says to trust God to provide for you.
 - d. Addictions: You are addicted to pornography. Each time you are tempted by it your emotions and culture say you deserve to enjoy yourself. The Bible says lust will enslave you, is sinful, destructive to you and unfaithful to your spouse.
 - e. What others can you think of?

Recall the Reality Principle: *“Biblical faith is choosing to live according to reality not according to the fantasies of my emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends.”*

Here you have another opportunity to apply this principle. Consider what your emotions, circumstances, and culture (the left hand) are saying, and compare that with what you have learned above (the right hand)?

Faith Response #2: No matter what you are facing, you have a choice to make. Today is the day that you decide God’s word is the only voice worthy of trust. Are you going to trust the Bible more than any other voice?

<p><u>What are your emotions, circumstances, and culture saying?</u></p>	<p><u>What does the Bible say?</u></p> 
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Faith Step #2: Choose today to trust the Bible more than any other voice and submit all of your life and decisions to what the Bible teaches. Decide, now, before trials, temptations and other issues challenge you. You can communicate this choice to God in a prayer like this:

“Lord, today I choose to submit my life and all my decisions to your Word. The Bible is more reliable and more worthy of my trust than any other voice I may hear. I know I will be challenged by trials and temptations, but by your grace I will only trust your Word.”

If you are ready to take this step, sign and date the line below. Today is a new beginning for you.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

If you cannot sign the line:

Ask yourself why? If not now, when? What will it take to help you?

Perhaps you are not ready, but until you do this, please know that you are in danger. The voices of emotions, circumstances, culture, greed, lust, anger, depression, and many more are in constant competition for your trust.

Core #3: How Can I Increase My Confidence in the Bible? See Destined for Security, #5, for more

Now that you have committed to trusting the Bible over all other voices, now what? You may be wondering, “What if the trust I have now is not enough? How do I strengthen it?”

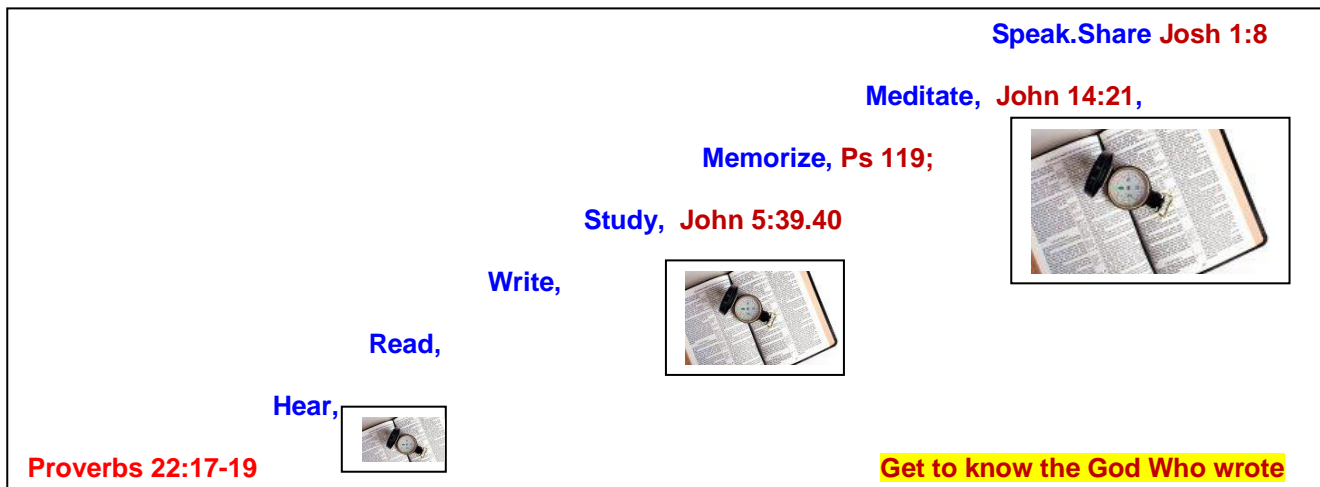
There are some **practical steps you can take to increase your confidence in the Bible**. It takes time, but as you prioritize, obey, and study God’s Word you will steadily get to know the God who wrote the Bible, and your confidence and trust will go up. You will increase your **awe, amazement, and love** for the Bible. And your feelings of intimidation and confusion will decrease.

How does this happen? Remember, as you read and study you will constantly be choosing whether or not to trust and obey what you learn. Consider this promise: **As you read and obey, God will reveal himself to you.** *Jesus said,*

*“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and **show myself to him**” (John 14:21).*

Just imagine: As you read the Bible and take steps to obey just what you understand, **God promises to make himself known to you in new ways**. As you get to know the heart of God more fully, your awe, love, and confidence in his Word will increase. The Bible will become less intimidating and more inviting.


The following diagram presents some practical, daily steps you can take to strengthening your trust in God’s Word. As you move through each step, you will more fully know the God who wrote the Bible.



Recall the Reality Principle: *“Biblical faith is choosing to live according to reality not according to the fantasies of my emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends.”*

Here you have a third opportunity to apply this principle. Consider what your emotions, circumstances, and culture (the left hand) are saying, and compare that with what you have learned above (the right hand)?

Faith Response #3: Commit to strengthening your trust in God’s Word.

<p><u>What are your emotions, circumstances, and culture saying?</u></p> <p><i>“Will God really reveal Himself to you in powerful ways as you trust and obey His word?”</i></p>	<p><u>What does the Bible say?</u></p> <p><i>Taking practical steps to build your faith and encourage others</i></p> <div data-bbox="1230 373 1427 520" style="text-align: right;">  </div>
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Faith Step #3: The 2x7 Experiment

One practical way to do this is the “2 x 7 experiment.” For the next seven days, call your prayer teammate for 2 minutes each day and ask, “What did you read in God’s Word today? How did you apply it? What scripture is ready on your lips?” You will be amazed at how this simple exercise will dramatically change your view of the Bible and change your life.

A Word of Encouragement

God welcomes your scrutiny, and the worst thing you could do is blindly reject or accept these teachings. We encourage you to thoughtfully consider them, and if they prove true, wholeheartedly embrace them. Remember, the purpose of trusting God’s Word is trusting God himself.

TEAMWORK/PRAYER PARTNER: HOW CAN THIS TOPIC AFFECT YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK?

Discuss the following with your partner. Start now, and check in with each other through the week.

1. *Re-Assessment:* Write your previous answers from page 5 below. Then, answer the self-assessment questions again. How has your confidence in the Bible changed through this session? Discuss.

Before:

- _____ How confident am I that the Bible is reliable or accurate?
- _____ How confident am I that the Bible is the Word of God?
- _____ To what extent will I trust the Bible when other sources disagree?
- _____ To what extent do I apply the Bible to every situation in life?
- _____ How well can I help others with all the above?

After:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. *General:* What is most helpful from this session? What is difficult? How clear am I?
3. *Specific:* How does this affect specific areas of my life?
4. *Faith steps:* How much do I live as though this is true? Which faith step from this session needs the most work? What should I do next? Who else can I share this with?

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK: BE READY TO REPORT ON THIS.

Before next week's meeting, do the following to help you further understand and apply this session.

1. *Keep Your Eyes Open*: Look for other things in your life or the natural world around you that are worthy of trust simply because of its source. Write down any examples you see.
2. *Reinforce Your Learning*: Review the five evidences that the Bible is God's reliable Word. You know you understand them if you can explain them to a 10 year old. Can you?
3. *Ask others, (0-100)* "Do you think the Bible is reliable? inspired? Worthy of totally surrendering your life to? Can you explain why?"
Listen carefully, and seek to understand their points of view.
4. *Share With Someone Else*: If you are convinced of the reliability and authority of the Bible, *share this with someone else*. If you are not, *ask someone else what they think*. It will help you to talk this out with others who are interested in the topic.

Forecasting Session 5: Who Is Jesus Really?

In session 5, we will inspect the next foundation or core conviction, Jesus Christ.

Team exercise: Bring examples from your experience or the natural world which illustrate how we trust certain people or equipment which have proven credentials?

Or are betrayed by people or equipment which seem trustworthy but are not.

What makes us think Jesus might actually be more than a good teacher or prophet?

What did Jesus really say and believe about himself?

How did He back up His claims?

To prepare:

Read Gospel of John, 1-7 write down His colossal claims and how He demonstrated them...

Consider these questions:

1. Who or what do you think Jesus was?
2. How did you form your beliefs?
3. Do your actions reflect these beliefs?