

Wouldn't it be great if new babies arrived with instructions? If cars, TVs and microwaves come with manuals, why not people? The truth is we do even if we don't realize it. The manual is called the Bible, God's guide book for our lives. But can we trust the Bible? Are we willing to build our lives on it?

People have their doubts about the Bible. Is it accurate? Aren't there mistakes in the Bible? Were the wrong books included in the Bible? Can the Bible be relevant to me today? Today we want to try answering some of these questions as we continue our series on "Pursuing Answers to Some of Lives Biggest Questions" by asking "Why should I trust the Bible?"

Since the Bible was written a long time, how can we know that our Bible is accurate? No one questions the authenticity of Caesar's Gallic Wars, or of the writings of Plato and Aristotle. We have ten manuscripts of the Gallic Wars, seven for Plato's writings and five for Aristotle's. On the other hand we have over 5,600 full or partial manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain over 800 manuscripts of the Old Testament.

The Biblical manuscripts are also much closer to the originals. The gap between the time of writing and the first manuscripts is 950 years for the Gallic Wars, 1,300 years for Plato and 1,400 years for Aristotle. The New Testament was written from 47-95 AD. The earliest manuscripts are from 117-250 AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls were copied between 150 BC and 70 AD, making them as little as 300 or 400 years after the last books of the Old Testament. A comparison of the manuscripts shows how accurately the Biblical text has been copied.

Archeology also supports the Bible. While the Mormons can't find a single scrap of archeological evidence to support the Book of Mormon, archeological studies support the historical accuracy of the Bible. No archeological discoveries discredit the Bible. While archeology alone cannot prove the Bible, it can validate the Bible. The truth is that God is the God of history. The Bible is an accurate record of God's plan to save mankind.

Some people think the wrong books were put into the Bible, that mistakes were made. *The DaVinci Code* was based in part on this false assumption. The collection of Books that made up the Hebrew Bible was already set long before the council of Jamnia. The same was true for the New Testament before the council of Carthage. In both cases books included were because of their authorship, their accuracy, their power to transform lives and their acceptance in the Jewish or Christian community. Excluded books claimed false authorship or distorted the faith.

Another key reason that the Bible is reliable is because of the internal consistency. Ask one of our youth about the Laser Tag event at church last Sunday and they will give you one version. I would give you a different account, although we all enjoyed being part of it. Writers focus on

different details. No attempt was made to unify the Gospel accounts. The personality, style and perspective of the authors come through. The Old and New Testament are incredibly unified.

Even though the Bible that we have can be proven to be authentic and accurate, does it work? Does it make a difference in the lives of people? It should. If it doesn't, why would we bother reading it? Jesus said, (Matthew 7:24-27)

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

We all know the story of the three little pigs. When they went out into the world, one built a house of straw, another of sticks, and another of bricks. When the big bad wolf came along, he blew down the houses of straw and sticks; but could not blow down the house of bricks. If we build our lives on something other than Jesus Christ and His Word, the storms of life will blow down our houses made out of possessions, power or pleasure. But when our lives are built on Christ, we have a solid rock foundation that stands through the storms of life.

The only one way for you to know that this is true is by putting God's word to the test. I have to admit that I don't read owner's manuals unless I have to. I think too many Christians treat God's Word the same way. Even though we know we should read it, we don't. But God's Word can't shape your life if you don't read it.

So here is your challenge to find out if God's Word really works, if you can trust the Bible:

1. Read it! If you have been reading the Bible daily, keep it up. If you haven't been reading the Bible, then let me challenge you to read the Gospel of Luke this month. Take one chapter a day and you will finish it before the end of the month.
2. Learn it! Make God's words your own. Our Sunday School students learn a Bible verse a week. Why not learn it with them? Last Sunday they learned Proverbs 3:5-6. **"Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, in all your ways acknowledge him."** This is great advice.
3. Apply it! Take it to heart. If you let God's Word work in your life, it will change you. Instead of holding a grudge, you can forgive. Instead of getting even, you can help. Instead of caring only about yourself, you can care for others.
4. For those of you who are married, going through a tough time in your marriage, or thinking about getting married let me give you a challenge. See the movie "Fireproof." Pick up the book, *"The Love Dare"* and take the 40 Day Challenge. It is practical application of God's Word to married life. Try it and see what happens.

You will be amazed at the difference God's Word can make in your life if and when you put it to the test. Join us next week as we ask, "Why should I believe in God in the first place?" Amen.