

How To Study the Bible

Lesson 1 “Jesus At The Center Of It All”

I. Introduction - After coming out of a year long study on *Romans*, I want to do something a different for the next few weeks. I want to talk with you about “How To Study The Bible.”

A. Why? Common statements I hear as to why people don't read the Bible are, “I want to read it, but I don't know where to start. It's really confusing (ex: some people read it and say God heals today and others say He doesn't). The Bible is full of contradictions.”

B. If you identified with any of those statements, I know how you feel because I used to think those things. As my relationship with the Lord grew, however and I learned principles of how to study the scriptures that answered those questions. I don't pretend to understand everything in the scriptures, but I've got a pretty good handle on things so I want to impart what I've learned to help you guys so you can grow spiritually.

1. The benefit is you will be able to hear God more clearly so you can grow spiritually (and not be entirely dependent on me or another minister).
2. The second benefit is you will stay out of doctrinal error.

C. The foundational question we must answer is how we know the Bible is God's word? Some may look at the Bible in your hand and say, “This was good enough for the Apostle Paul, it's good enough for me,” but others think this is a book of man's ideas, fairy tales, and traditions.

II. Jesus At The Center Of It All

A. My story - I was really blessed that I grew up in spirit filled churches as a child so I saw people get miraculously healed and accurate prophetic words given. I didn't struggle with the existence of God because of supernatural experiences.

1. If that has not been your experience, hang around here for a few weeks and you'll see things your intellect will not be able to explain. Signs and wonders are supposed to make you wonder how did I get here? Who made me?
2. Even without supernatural experiences basic reasoning says everything that was created has to have a creator. Ex: Big Bang theory - spontaneous force caused an intense burst of energy from the tiny point in a fraction of a second distributing all the matter and energy in all directions. **Where did that force come from? Everything that is created has to have a creator.**
3. Scientists have tried to prove spontaneous generation and they can't.

B. Even though I didn't struggle with the existence of God/Creator, I did question if He was the God of the Bible. Other religions claimed miracles too, or maybe He was a force

or an energy, like the Star Wars. So I know there was something or someone that created everything and I knew there was someone or something caused miracles to happen today and spoke to people. I just wasn't sure if it was the God of the Bible? I then began to seek out how I could know for certain. I chose to follow the evidence wherever it led.

1. I got a book by Josh McDowell called "More Than A Carpenter." Josh's thesis was centerpiece of Christianity is Jesus. If Jesus didn't really exist or if the death, burial, and resurrection weren't true, Christianity wasn't true.
2. If these things were true, Christianity is true and the Bible has to be true because Jesus quoted extensively from the Old Testament (over 200 times).
 - a. In the temptation in **Matthew 4:3-10**, Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 6:16, Deuteronomy 6:13**.
 - b. **Matthew 12:38-40** The same way Jonah was in the belly of the whale for 3 days, Jesus was in the tomb for 3 days and came out. **This is the most compelling piece of evidence everything hinges on. Ex: World Trade Center - it was there and then it wasn't. Something happened.**

C. The Evidence - Was Jesus who He said He was, did He die on a cross, and was the tomb empty? Going to look at scriptural and non-scriptural evidence.

1. Did Jesus claim to be the Messiah? Who did Jesus claim He was **John 14:6** *the way, the truth, the life*. His disciples believed it, opponents confirmed (Pharisees, Romans). This is why they put Him to death. (He was either Messiah, lunatic, or liar, not just a good man).
2. Extra biblical sources - Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Talmud. Dr. G.R. Habermas points out that within 110 years of the crucifixion, 18 non-Christian sources mention more than "one hundred facts, beliefs, and teachings from the life and early Christianity. These sources mention almost every major detail of Jesus' life, including miracles, the Resurrection, and His claims to deity.

Talmud - Jesus was hanged on Passover Eve. Forty days previously the herald had cried, "He is being led out for stoning, because he has practiced sorcery and led Israel astray and enticed them into apostasy. Whosoever has anything to say in his defense, let him come and declare it." As nothing was brought forward in his defense, he was hanged on Passover Eve.

3. The enemies try to explain a cover up - **Matthew 28:11-15**
 - a. The need for a cover up proves the body was gone. The Roman soldiers had no incentive to participate in a cover up because if the body was stolen, they could have punished by death. If the resurrection occurred, they would participate in a bribe so they would have money to pay Pilate off or escape.
 - b. Why would the disciples steal the body? They were afraid.

4. The Disciples Claims - **Acts 5:28-30** These are the same disciples who scattered when Jesus was arrested. This means something happened that changed them so much they were willing to risk their life. 10 died martyr's deaths.
5. 8 Post resurrection appearances - **1 Corinthians 15:3-6** - 500 eye witnesses - implication is you can go ask one of them. Many of them are still living.
6. Early Reports - not legend. 1st 2 biographies of Alexander Great written 400 years after his life considered reliable. We have early reports after resurrection. The gospels and epistles were written within 40 years after Jesus's life. More copies (25,000) of early New Testament writings than the "*The Illyad*" (1,900) and no one doubts the authenticity of those writings.
7. Last, but not least there were over 300 Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfilled. This is statistically impossible unless He was who He said He was.

IV. Conclusion - The evidence is compelling that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God who raised from the dead. He had confidence that the scriptures you hold in your hand are God's word. We can have confidence they are God's word.

A. Transition to Craig