

## Why Do We Believe the Bible Is the Word of God?

### • EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY:

✓ The **Gospels** - The gospels' records qualify under the "ancient documents rule" and would be admitted as evidence in any common law court. They contain firsthand, non-hearsay testimony of Jesus Christ. Plus, corroboration from outside the gospels is abundant.

✓ The **Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit** – the indwelling Holy Spirit (who was involved in the authoring of the Bible) bears witness with our spirit that the Bible is the Word of God.

### • SUPPORTING EVIDENCE:

✓ It's **Unity** and **Consistency** - the Bible is comprised of 66 books written by 40 authors from 3 continents, in 3 languages, over a 1,500 year time frame, yet it's themes and overall message are unified and consistent! And despite what skeptics claim, it does not contradict itself.

✓ It's **Indestructability** – the Bible has repeatedly survived and thrived despite the most vicious attacks by critics and skeptics. They die and are forgotten, yet the Bible marches on!

✓ It's **Inexhaustability** - over many centuries the Bible has been the source for millions of sermons, lessons, devotionals, and commentaries, yet it continues to this day to yield fresh insights and inspiration.

✓ It's **Universality** – the Bible appeals to people of all ages, nationalities, languages, and situations in life. From the smallest child to the oldest adult; from the most uneducated to the Phd; from the poorest to the richest; it has something to offer everyone.

✓ It's **Spiritual Power** – the Bible is a living book. It's the only book in history that actually reads you! Over time God has used it to completely transform millions of people.

✓ It's **Supernatural Wisdom** – the Bible contains unparalleled godly wisdom that is timeless.

✓ It's **Wide Acceptance** - though clearly it has its detractors, the Bible is still the best-selling book of all time. It continues to enjoy unprecedented worldwide acceptance and appeal. To date it has been translated into 1,400 languages; not other book in history even comes close to that!

### • MATERIAL EVIDENCE:

✓ Extant **Manuscripts** - we have more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than of all other ancient literature combined! The science of textual criticism has demonstrated conclusively that the Bible has been accurately transmitted over time.

✓ **Fulfilled Prophecy** - unique among all books ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events (in detail) many years, sometimes centuries, before they occur. Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter, with no errors! The remaining prophecies will be fulfilled perfectly.

✓ **Archaeology / Historical Accuracy** - though it is not the job of archaeology to prove the Bible, nevertheless, numerous archaeological discoveries do verify the historical reliability of the Old and New Testaments.

## How Did We Get the Bible?

Through several means God has revealed to us the information He wanted us to know:

- **REVELATION** – (reveal = “unveil”) God has revealed Himself to man  
**General Revelation** - Nature / Providence / Conscience  
**Special Revelation** - Bible / Jesus
- **INSPIRATION** – (inspire = “breathe out”) God supernaturally oversaw the writing of the Scriptures so that the writer, in his own personality, composed and recorded without error God’s revelation in the original autographs  
**Infallible** = “incapable of error”  
**Inerrant** = “free from error in the original autographs”  
**Verbal plenary** – “the entirety of the Bible - every word, not just concepts - is inspired by God and therefore authoritative.”
- **ILLUMINATION** – (illuminate = “shed light on”) the Holy Spirit illuminates the mind of the obedient believer to understand increasingly the spiritual truth of Scripture
- **CANONICITY** – (canon = “measuring rod; standard” – accepted as genuine writings) God sovereignly oversaw the process of the church’s recognizing the books and letters that He had inspired and collecting them into one book, the Bible

- **Old Testament Canon** – the books that make up the Old Testament were written between 1446<sup>BC</sup> and 425<sup>BC</sup>. It is not clear on what grounds the authority of a writing was determined, but by the time of Jesus, the set of books recognized as Hebrew Scripture (Law, prophets, writings) was complete. Jesus put His stamp of approval on those books that make up our Old Testament.

In 250<sup>BC</sup> 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt prepared a Greek translation of the Old Testament, the **Septuagint** (LXX).

- **Apocrypha** - a group of books judged by Jews and the early church as not Scripture. Roman Catholic Bibles contain 7 of these books.

- **New Testament Canon** – the books that make up the New Testament were written between 45<sup>AD</sup> and 95<sup>AD</sup>. By 110<sup>AD</sup> most of the New Testament canon was completed, the various books being widely circulated throughout the Christian world. In 397<sup>AD</sup> the Council of Carthage acknowledged as Scripture the books that comprise our Bible, though they had already been in wide use.

**Criteria used to determine canonicity:** Was it written by an apostle? Was it recognized as authoritative and thus widely used by the early church? Did it conform to the high standards of other books already recognized as Scripture? Was it orthodox and contradiction-free?

Over the next several hundred years the Bible was translated into various languages, Latin being the most prominent.

Relevant Scriptures: Rom 1:18-20; 8:28; Ecc 3:11; Jn 1:1,14; Rev 19:13; Heb 1:1-2; Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:12-15; 1 Jn 2:27; Luke 24:25-27

### How did we get our English Bible?

1382 – John Wycliff translates Bible from Latin to English

1525 – William Tyndale translates the New Testament into English

1535 – Miles Coverdale translates whole Bible into English

1537 – **Matthew’s Bible** translated by John Rogers (Thomas Matthew)

1539 – **The Great Bible** (“The Chained Bible”) Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury

1560 – **The Geneva Bible** (reformers) Shakespeare; Puritans; Pilgrims

1568 – **The Bishop’s Bible** translated by bishops of Church of England

1582-1609 - **Douai-Rheims Bible** Gregory Martin (Roman Catholic)

1611 – **King James Version** (Authorized Version) 54 Anglican scholars

1885 – **Revised Version** (British revision of KJV)

1901 – **American Standard Version** (American revision of KJV)

1952 – **Revised Standard Version** (revision of Revised Version)

1971 – **New American Standard** (revision of American Standard)

1971-present: TLB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV, NLT, ESV, HCSB, NET, WEB, etc....

1455 – first book printed on Gutenberg press was the Bible (in Latin). It was printed on paper.

#### Definitions:

- **Autograph** – the original writing
- **Extant** – still in existence
- **Manuscript** - a hand-written copy of a text
- **Codex** – book
- **Papyrus** – plant pressed into sheets and sewn together (used 1-300AD)
- **Vellum** – skins of calves or antelope (used 300-1400AD)
- **Parchment** – skins of sheep or goats (used 300-1400AD)

## Why So Many English Translations of the Bible?

- **The Changing Nature of Language** – for over 300 years the King James Version, published in 1611, was the prominent translation used in most Protestant churches in the English speaking world. However, as the English language continued to change, it became increasingly more difficult for people to understand the Old English vernacular.

See if you know the definitions of the following KJV words: *chambering, churl, cockatrice, callops, hoised, wimples, suretship, sackbut, froward, brigadine, amerce, blains, crookbackt, descry, fanners, glede, habergeon, neesing, tabret, and wen*. These words would have been familiar to a 17<sup>th</sup> century audience, but they are obscure to modern readers and speakers of English.

What about these KJV phrases? *“superfluity of naughtiness”* (Jas. 1:21); *“He who now letteth will let.”* (2 Thess 2:7); *“Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing.”* (Ps.5:6); *“Solomon loved many strange women.”* (1 Kn 11:1); *“The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market.”* (Ez 27:25); *“The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.”* (Job 36:33)

Another fact to consider is that words within a single language can actually change meaning over time. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the KJV was published:

The word *“let”* meant, *“to prevent.”* Today it means, *“to allow.”*

The word *“suffer”* meant, *“to permit.”* Today it means, *“to endure adversity, pain, grief, etc...”*

The word *“conversation”* meant, *“one’s behavior or lifestyle.”* Today it means, *“talking to someone.”*

The phrase *“fetched a compass”* meant, *“to sail in a circle.”* Today it means, *“go get me a compass.”*

The word *“knit”* meant, *“to lower the four corners.”* Today it is how sweaters are made.

Faced with the obvious need for our society to understand God’ Word, scholars sought to update the Scriptures into more contemporary language.

- **More Recent Manuscript Discoveries** – Since the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek autographs are lost, we must rely on copies of these originals. These collections of copies of the New Testament, for example, come in families or “text types.” Most (but not all) scholars believe that the older a manuscript is the more likely it is to be accurate to the originals.

Because our modern translations are based on earlier manuscripts than those used by the translators of the KJV, the modern translations make changes to reflect the differences.

This has been a hotly debated issue among scholars, since these older manuscripts make up less than 10% of all NT manuscripts in existence. Fully 90% of the NT manuscripts we have are of the text type of the KJV. Note also that no Christian teaching or doctrine is affected by these manuscript differences. There is greater than 90% agreement between all families of manuscripts. So, whether you use the KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, NIV or HCSB, you can trust your translation to be accurate.

New Testament Manuscript “Families”	
Byzantine	Alexandrian
• Antioch, Syria	• Alexandria, Egypt
• 5,300 extant manuscripts	• 45 extant manuscripts
• Textus Receptus (Received text, TR)	• Minority text or Modern Critical Text (CT, NU)
Not to be confused with Majority Text (MT)	• Codex Sinaiticus
Desiderius Erasmus	• Codex Vaticanus
↓	• Westcott & Hort
↓	• Nestle / Aland
↓	↓
KJV / NKJV	All the Modern Translations



## How Are English Bibles Translated?

### 4 Approaches:

#### 1. Formal Equivalence (literal, word-for-word translation)

**Examples:** King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), New English Translation (NET)

**Strengths:**

- Highly accurate because it closely reflects - in a word-for-word fashion - the texts of the ancient Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic manuscripts
- Because of its literal nature, it is well suited for serious study
- Because it was the most widely used translation method for centuries, many study helps are available

**Weakness:**

- Because it is so literal it can sometimes sound a little wooden and stilted to the modern reader. However, people who read on a high school level typically have no trouble understanding these translations.

#### 2. Functional Equivalence (non-literal, thought-for-thought translation)

**Examples:** New International Version (NIV), New Living Translation (NLT), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**Strengths:**

- Generally accurate and easy to understand
- Many study helps are now available

**Weakness:**

- Whereas the goal of formal equivalence is to translate word-for-word what the original authors actually said, the goal of dynamic equivalence is to try and figure out what the original authors *meant* by what they said, and translate *that* into modern English. This sometimes leaves the translation of the text open to the theological biases of the translators. Plus, sometimes a verse is over-translated or under-translated.

#### 3. Optimal Equivalence (balance between formal and functional equivalence)

**Example:** Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

**Strength:**

- Reads smoothly while being accurate, and thus is suitable for serious study

**Weakness:**

- Some people might find the unconventional wording difficult to get used to (*slave* instead of *servant*, *Yahweh* instead of *LORD*, "God loved the world in this way..." Jn 3:16, etc...)

#### 4. Free (paraphrase instead of a translation)

**Examples:** The Message, The Living Bible (TLB), Today's English Version (TEV)

**Strengths:**

- Usually very easy for the modern reader to understand because it is written in an informal, conversational manner
- Can be good for devotional reading or for evangelism

**Weakness:**

- Because it is a paraphrase and not a translation, it is generally not well-suited for serious study.
- The authors often take huge liberties with the actual text, resulting in a less accurate rendering

**Which Translation Of The Bible Should I Use?** Whatever translation you are most likely to read, study, memorize, meditate on, and live out! Actually, it is a good idea to consult more than one translation. This will expose you to the broader scope of available biblical scholarship, and help you understand more fully what is being said in a particular verse or passage.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

## How Do I Study the Bible?

Before you study, always remember to **PRAY**. Do so in the spirit of Psalm 119:18 “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.” (NASB)

### Step 1. Observation *What does the text say?*

Read the text repeatedly, slowly, patiently, and thoughtfully. Pay close attention. What do you see? Do you notice any key words or phrases? Anything that is emphasized, repeated, compared and contrasted? Any conjunctions? Ask yourself the 5 W's and an H: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Jot down your observations, questions, insights, etc...

### Step 2. Interpretation *What does the text mean?*

Goal: to determine precisely what the original author intended to communicate to his original audience

What was the historical/cultural setting at the time the text was written? What are the definitions of key words in the passage? What is the context of the passage (what comes before and after it)? Does a theme emerge? What does this text mean in light of what the whole Bible teaches? How does it fit into the larger story of the Bible? Is this text meant to be taken literally or figuratively? Is a particular doctrine being taught in this text?

Note: you can usually find the answers to these questions by consulting commentaries, study Bible notes, etc... You can also consult websites like: [preceptaustin.org](http://preceptaustin.org), [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com), [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com), [blueletterbible.com](http://blueletterbible.com), and others. They are usually free and user-friendly. Just be discerning. Consider the source, and remember that only the Scripture text is inspired by God.

#### Caution:

- Don't lift verses out of context
- Avoid reading something into the text that the author didn't intend
- Let Scripture interpret Scripture
- Don't base doctrine on one obscure verse of Scripture
- Don't force mystical, allegorical meanings onto texts
- Check your conclusions against reliable scholars, commentaries, study Bible notes, etc...

### Step 3. Application *How does the text apply to me?*

What does this text teach? Is it general or specific? Is it descriptive (simply describing something that happened) or prescriptive (a command I am to follow)? Does it apply to a specific people or is the application universal (applicable to all believers in all times)? Does it apply to a cultural problem of that day that has no parallel today? Did it apply to a specific time in history? Has it been superseded by a broader teaching?

Is there an example for me to follow? A sin to avoid? A promise to claim? A prayer to repeat? A command to obey? A condition to meet? An error in my thinking to correct? A sin to repent of? A challenge to face? A verse to memorize? In conclusion, remember:

**Keen observation + Correct Interpretation + Faithful Application = Life Transformation!**