

WEEK 8: HOW CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?

ABOUT THIS SERIES

As we start the new year, join St. Mark on Sunday mornings for conversations on faith and doubt in our series *Reason for God*. Together, we'll take on some of the common questions people have about faith and Christianity.

ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- Pray for your group Read through the Discussion Guide Refreshments (optional)
 Clean meeting area Clean bathroom Crack front door

OPENING (5 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Okay, friends, for today's icebreaker let's get honest—

DID YOU EVER COPY ANYONE'S HOMEWORK OR TEST ANSWERS?

After a brief discussion, say: A lot of people think we got the Bible like a game of telephone, and after hundreds of years of copies of copies, what we have is a far cry from the original text. But, as we'll see in today's discussion, it's more like people copying test answers, at great personal risk, with a heightened attention to detail. And this changes how we read the Bible.

But first, let's pray.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE (10-15 MIN)

After a prayer, say: Because the Bible was so rigorously copied, it's unlike any other book in antiquity. We have 400 copies of Homer's *Iliad*, and the earliest copy is 400 years after the date of composition. We have 19 copies of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, and the earliest copy is 1,000 years after the date of composition. But we have 5,366 copies of the New Testament, with the earliest copies being written within 70 years from the life of Christ!

HOW DOES THE NUMBER OF BIBLICAL TEXTS WE HAVE CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK OF THE BIBLE'S ACCURACY?

After the reading, say: Then you consider the people who risked their lives to copy and smuggle the Bible. They gained nothing, they risked everything, all so you and I could have a copy of this remarkable book.

HOW DOES THE BRAVERY OF THE PEOPLE WHO COPIED THE BIBLE CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK OF THE BIBLE'S ACCURACY?

ASSERTIONS OF THE BIBLE (15-20 MIN)

After a discussion, say: The people who risked their lives to share the Bible did so because they believed some core ideas about the book:

I'M GOING TO ASSIGN A FEW VERSES, READ IT ALOUD FOR US, AND THEN WE'LL ANSWER THE QUESTION: THIS VERSE CALLS US TO BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS _____.

PSALM 19:7

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

ISAIAH 55:11

MATTHEW 24:35

After a discussion, say: These Scriptures call us to believe that the Word of God is eternal, unfailing, inerrant, and unchanging.

WHICH OF THESE VERSES HAS A PROMISE ABOUT GOD'S WORD YOU NEED TO REMEMBER RIGHT NOW? WHY?

After a discussion, say: When Billy Graham was a young student at Bible college, he struggled with some of the claims of Scripture and questions about its accuracy. Yes, even Billy Graham wrestled with doubt. But he then prayed a prayer that highlights an important point we need to remember, he prayed:

"O God! There are many things in this book I do not understand. There are many problems with it for which I have no solution. There are many seeming contradictions. There are some areas in it that do not seem to correlate with modern science. I can't answer some of the philosophical and psychological questions others are raising.

But Father, I am going to accept this book as Thy Word—by faith! I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be Your inspired Word! In Jesus' name. Amen."

At the end of the day, even if you prove the accuracy of the Bible, these assertions can only be believed in faith. Faith is more than believing that God exists, it's believing what God says is true.

When we pray at the end of our time together, we're going to start with a prayer for faith in God's Word much like Billy Graham's prayer.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Before we get to our prayers, two announcements.

One, Prosper the City is going to be coming up after Easter, so just prepare your calendars now for some more Small Group meetings in late April and May.

Two, every Small Group is going to sponsor one of the prayerwalks this summer. We'll help plan routes, plan Scripture, and bring refreshments for our particular week. So be looking at which of your Wednesday evenings this summer would be good for that.

ARE THERE ANY PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

Host, begin with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, give us faith to believe your Word is unfailing, eternal, without error, and inspired by your Holy Spirit. Hear us, also, as we pray... [continue with your prayer requests for the week.]