

# The truth about the Bible: part 6 in *Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable*

Message for Sunday, November 25, 2018  
by Bruce Fraser

## Children's Message:

Psalms 119:102-105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and light for my path.

Do you get scared when it's dark? Even if you don't get scared, it can be difficult walking somewhere when it's dark. You might bump into something—ouch!

That's where flashlights are handy. It helps us see where we're going.

The reading we just heard tells us that the Bible is like a light to show us the right path to follow. When we follow what the Bible teaches, we know we're going the right way.

**Message:** The truth about the Bible, part 6 in *Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable*

Over the last month, we've been considering some of our culture's myths about God, faith and life. Today's message is the last in the series, and it occurred to me that perhaps I should have put this one first. You see, each Sunday we looked at a myth, and then we looked to see what the Bible tells us about that topic. But someone might say, "Why should we believe what the Bible says?" Well, today I'd like to answer that question.

## Myth: The Bible is a fairy tale

This is a very common way of thinking today. Many people consider the Bible to be a bunch of ancient legends pulled together. Then male church officials edited it to put themselves in positions of power, holding control over the Christian religion.

They would say that it has no value in the areas of history, science, and morals. In fact, it has negative value: it is full of inaccuracies about history and science. And as far as morals go, it supports slavery, demeans women, and promotes child abuse. Far from being a trustworthy source of teaching, it is a dangerous book which has caused untold suffering and wars. Only dummies who can't think for themselves would bother with the Bible.

I remember when Jef Kohlsmith was speaking here last year, he told how a friend said to him, "I didn't know you were a Christian. I always thought you were, well, um, intelligent." That is how people may judge you if they see you reading the Bible.

## Truth: The Bible is reliable

### 1) Truth: The Bible is reliable in history

Starting in the 1800s, many professors who taught Bible courses in universities and seminaries did exhaustive analysis of the wording in the Bible. Anywhere there was a word that seemed unusual, they determined that this was evidence of one or more people making changes to the text. Here's an example:

Genesis 1:1, New International Version:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 2:4, New International Version:

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens...

In the first passage, the Hebrew for "God" is *elohim*. In the second passage, the Hebrew for "Lord God" is *yhwh elohim*. Adding *yhwh* was "proof" that changes were made.

Taking this further, look at this passage often called "the Suffering Servant"

Isaiah 53:3-5, New International Version:

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

People have often been startled by how this seems a perfect description of what happened to Jesus during his trial and crucifixion. *Too* perfect: "Obviously the result of someone tampering with the text, so that it makes Jesus fit this prophecy."

But then in 1947 a young Bedouin looking for his lost goat tossed a stone into a cave where he thought

the goat may have wandered. Instead of hearing a goat bleating, he heard pottery shattering. He had discovered what has come to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. There were ancient manuscripts of the books of the Old Testament and other writing. Included was a manuscript of Isaiah, including that wording. But here's the thing: they traced those scrolls back to their origin, and found those manuscripts were written around 100 B.C.—*before* Jesus was even born.

Those Bible scholars were also saying that Moses could not have written the parts of the Bible describing his era: writing with that much detail didn't happen until 900 years later, around 500 B.C. But in the 1970s, archeologists in Syria uncovered Ebla, an ancient city in Syria. They found thousands of clay tablets containing elaborate legislation and court cases. Ebla was flourishing 1,000 years *before* the time of Moses.

Over the last two centuries, there have been hundreds of archeological discoveries in the area of the Bible. Many, many times passages of the Bible which were thought to be mistakes or outright fiction were found to be accurate recordings of history.

## 2) Truth: The Bible is reliable in science

This may surprise you. It surprised me, when I started doing the research on this. Now I'm not referring to the stories of creation and flood. I think of those more as metaphors, than as exact descriptions of what happened. They tell us where we came from, and of God's disappointment over our sin. I'm looking at later passages in the Bible.

For centuries, people have looked up at the stars and wondered about them. People made maps of the night sky; that's how we designate constellations. Some even counted the stars. Around 150 B.C. Hipparchus counted them and found there were 1,022 stars in the universe. 300 years later, 150 A.D. Ptolemy repeated the task, and found that Hipparchus was all wrong. It turns out there are 1,026 stars in the universe!

But the Bible, written centuries before telescopes were invented, says the stars are infinite in number:

**Jeremiah 33:22, New International Version:**  
... as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

From 1347 to 1353, the Black Death struck Europe. One-third of the population of the entire continent were killed by the plague. The disease was devastating because people didn't understand how germs carry disease. So people who were sick with the plague were sleeping right next to other family members.

Thousands of years before that, the Bible records God's commandment:

**Leviticus 13:4, New International Version:**  
Put the infected person in isolation for seven days.

## 3) Truth: The Bible is reliable in morals

In ancient times, it was common for someone who was offended to seek vengeance upon the offender, and to give back twice as good. The fight would escalate until one was killed. Then that person's family would retaliate, and it would turn into a blood feud, and so on.

But the Bible records God giving a commandment to stop that in its tracks:

**Leviticus 24:19-20, New International Version:**  
If anyone injures his neighbour, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured.

If I knock out your tooth, you get to knock out my tooth. But no more. That's the end of it.

Jesus took that to an even higher level.

**Matthew 5:38-39, New International Version:**  
"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Time and again, Jesus commands us to follow a standard for life which is breathtaking in its courage.

Martin Luther King Jr. took his inspiration from Jesus' teaching, especially the commandment about loving your enemies. King had plenty of

opportunities to practise obedience to that command! In one of his talks he said, “I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.” What King accomplished in the fourteen years he was involved in the civil rights movement is amazing.

So we see that the Bible *is* reliable. But that’s not the reason for trusting it as a guide for life. For that, we go back to the reading from 2 Timothy we heard just before this message.

**2 Timothy 3:16, New International Version:  
All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.**

Some versions of the Bible use “inspired,” but “God-breathed” is literally what it says in the original Greek text. The idea is that when the various people who wrote portions of the Bible were writing, God gave them the idea for what to write. Not that God controlled them like robots; they still wrote using their own words, their own style of writing.

So the reason we can trust the Bible as a reliable guide for life is that God is behind it all.

One of the biggest reasons people are not willing to accept the Bible as the authority for life is their bias against the supernatural. Here’s an example of what I mean. Josh McDowell has spoken at many universities around the world, presenting the evidence for a rational belief in Jesus as Lord. He was speaking to a philosophy class when the professor interrupted him and said, “This is all ridiculous. We all know there has to be some other explanation for the empty tomb.” In other words, “My mind is made up; don’t confuse me with the facts.”

The challenge for us today is: What is going to be the final authority for your life? Will it be public opinion? Your own opinion? Or God’s message in the Bible?

When I say, “I’m not ready to accept this book to direct my life,” it’s because I want to be the boss. I want to be Lord. I don’t want God telling me what’s right and what’s wrong; I’ll do it my way.

If that describes you: How’s that working for you? Is that solving all your problems? How is your stress level? Isn’t it time to try a better way?

I invite you to pray with me:

God, I want to settle this matter. I admit that my way of doing things doesn’t work very well. So I’m turning it over to you. I will trust you, and I will trust the Bible you have given to us, to direct my path. Thank-you for your patience with me as I try my best. Forgive me when I fail, but don’t leave me there. In my heart I really and truly do want to follow you and your way. Fill me with your Holy Spirit to help me day by day. Amen.

### **Next Steps:**

- Read the Bible!
- Make a plan: a time of day, a place to do it, which part of the Bible to start with.
- Pray when you read. Ask God to show you how to apply in your life the principles you learn in the reading.