



BIBLE CONFIDENCE SERIES

Can We Trust the Bible?

A beginner-friendly guide to what the Bible claims—and why Christians believe it is worthy of trust

Questions are not the enemy of faith.

The Bible welcomes careful reading and honest questions. Christians trust it first because God is truthful. That confidence is also supported by the Bible's message, its preservation through history, and its fulfillment in Jesus.

WHY THIS MATTERS

If Scripture is truly God's Word, it deserves more than an occasional glance. It deserves to be opened, studied, tested carefully, trusted, and obeyed.

"The very essence of your words is truth; all your just regulations will stand forever."

Psalm 119:160 NLT

Faith does not require pretending that good questions do not exist.



START HERE

What does it mean to trust the Bible?

Trusting the Bible does not mean every passage is easy or every question has a quick answer. It means believing that God has spoken truthfully through Scripture, reading it carefully, and allowing His Word to teach and shape us.

The short answer

Christians trust the Bible because God is truthful, Scripture says that He spoke through its writers, Jesus treated Scripture as God's Word, and the biblical writings have been preserved so their wording and history can be examined.

Begin with four simple truths

01

God is truthful

The Bible's trustworthiness begins with God's character. He does not lie, and His words are true and dependable (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; John 17:17).

02

God spoke through human writers

God used real people with different personalities, experiences, and writing styles. He guided them so Scripture communicates what He intended (Luke 1:1–4; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

03

Jesus trusted Scripture

Jesus quoted Scripture as authoritative, affirmed that God's Word is truth, and taught that the Scriptures point toward Him (Matthew 4:4–10; 5:17–18; John 10:35; Luke 24:25–27, 44–45).

04

The message centers on Jesus

The Bible's many books tell one unfolding story of creation, rebellion, promise, redemption, and restoration. The story reaches its center in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Genesis 3:15; 12:1–3; Luke 24:27; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).

A healthy starting posture

Bring both faith and careful attention. Ask God for wisdom, read complete passages, write down questions, compare Scripture with Scripture, and verify what teachers say (Psalm 119:18; Acts 17:11; James 1:5).



REASONS FOR CONFIDENCE

The Bible has been carefully preserved

Long before printing presses, biblical books were copied by hand. Many ancient copies still exist. Scholars compare them carefully, which helps identify copying differences and understand the earliest wording.

The important point

We are not depending on one hidden copy of the Bible. The surviving evidence can be examined, compared, and discussed openly.

Ancient copies help us look back

The Dead Sea Scrolls preserve very early copies of Old Testament books. The New Testament is preserved through Greek manuscripts, early translations, and quotations from early Christian writers. Together, these sources give scholars evidence to study rather than leaving them to guess.

Do all handwritten copies match perfectly?

No. Copyists sometimes made small differences in spelling, word order, or repeated lines. Modern Bible footnotes may tell you when an important difference exists. These differences do not erase the Bible's central message about God, Jesus, sin, salvation, and faithful living.

The Bible speaks within real history

Scripture names rulers, cities, customs, journeys, and public events. Archaeology and other ancient records help us understand that world and sometimes confirm people, places, and practices mentioned in the Bible. They cannot prove every spiritual claim, but they can help us examine the historical setting.

Keep the main thing central

You do not need to become a manuscript expert before you can read and trust the Bible. Christian faith centers on the God revealed in Scripture and on the crucified and risen Jesus (John 20:30–31; Romans 10:17).



COMMON QUESTIONS

If we have copies, how can we know what the originals said?

Scholars compare the surviving copies and notice where they agree or differ. Having many copies makes differences easier to find and study. We are not being asked to trust one unknown copy that appeared centuries later.

Do textual variants change Christian belief?

Most differences between copies are minor. A few involve several verses and deserve careful study. The Bible's central teachings do not depend upon one disputed wording. Jesus' identity, death and resurrection, salvation by grace, and faithful discipleship are taught in many passages.

Read the footnotes

Footnotes are not a reason to panic. They are a sign of honesty: translators are showing readers where copies differ or where an English phrase could be translated in more than one responsible way.

For now, remember this

No central Christian teaching depends upon one uncertain wording. When you encounter a manuscript note, keep reading the full passage and use it as an invitation to learn—not as a reason to fear.



MORE COMMON QUESTIONS

Why are there so many Bible translations?

The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic, and the New Testament in Greek. Translators must decide how to express those languages clearly in English. Some translations stay closer to the original sentence structure; others use more natural English.

A practical translation habit

Use a clear translation for regular reading and compare one or two additional translations when a passage is difficult. A different English wording does not automatically mean one Bible is untrustworthy; it may reflect a different responsible way of expressing the same Hebrew or Greek.

What about apparent contradictions?

Begin by slowing down and reading the full passages. Ask whether they describe the same event, from the same viewpoint, and for the same purpose. Two writers can include different details without disagreeing. Some questions have clear explanations; others remain difficult because we do not have every historical detail.

Do not force an answer

Trust does not require a hurried explanation. Record the question, read the full context, compare parallel passages, consult careful resources, and remain willing to say, "I do not know yet."



HOW THE BIBLE CAME TOGETHER

Why do we have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?

These four Gospels come from the time of the apostles and are connected to eyewitness testimony about Jesus. They were read and received widely among early Christian churches because they faithfully presented the Jesus proclaimed by the apostles (Luke 1:1–4; John 19:35; 20:30–31; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).

How did the books become the Bible?

The word canon means the recognized collection of books received as Scripture. God's people did not make a book inspired by placing it on a list. They recognized writings connected to God's prophets and Jesus' apostles, consistent with the faith they had received, and already being read among believers.

Recognition happened over time

The Old Testament Scriptures were already treated as authoritative in Jesus' day (Luke 24:44–45). New Testament writings were shared and read publicly among churches (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Later church decisions confirmed books that believers had already been receiving and using; they did not create the books' authority.

A simple distinction

A writing can be old, religious, or interesting without being Scripture. The Bible's books have a unique connection to God's work through Israel, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles.



WANT TO GO DEEPER?

A closer look at manuscripts and the canon

When you are ready, textual criticism studies differences among manuscript copies to identify the earliest recoverable wording. Canon studies examine how biblical books were written, circulated, received, and recognized. Both subjects involve real evidence, careful reasoning, and some questions on which scholars disagree.

Two well-known manuscript questions

Modern Bibles often include notes at Mark 16:9–20 and John 7:53–8:11 because these passages are absent from some early manuscript witnesses or appear differently within the manuscript tradition. Christians should read the notes and study these passages carefully. No central Christian teaching depends only upon either passage.

What about Thomas and Judas?

Writings now called the Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Judas appeared later, were not received widely as apostolic Scripture, and contain ideas that differ from teaching found throughout the New Testament. They were not equally qualified accounts secretly removed from the Bible.

Why do Christian Bibles differ?

The Protestant Bible contains thirty-nine Old Testament books and twenty-seven New Testament books. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions include additional Old Testament writings or arrange them differently. This guide follows the Protestant canon used by 3Nails; studying the history of these differences is a worthwhile next step.

Confidence should produce humility

Historical evidence can help us ask responsible questions, but it cannot force love, repentance, worship, or trust. Christians should neither exaggerate evidence nor fear careful questions. We honor Scripture by representing the facts honestly, admitting what we do not know, and returning to the text itself. Confidence in God's Word should make us teachable—not defensive or proud (Proverbs 18:13, 17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15–16).



YOUR NEXT STEP

Examine the central claim

Christianity stands or falls with Jesus—especially His bodily resurrection. Begin with one Gospel, notice what the writer claims to report, and examine the resurrection accounts carefully (Luke 1:1–4; John 19–20; 1 Corinthians 15:1–20).

A simple reading path

Read Luke 1:1–4; Luke 24; John 20; 1 Corinthians 15:1–20; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; and 2 Peter 1:16–21. Ask: What is being claimed? Who is presented as a witness? What would follow if the claim is true?

Questions to carry with you

- What does this passage claim about God, Jesus, and truth?
- What is the historical or literary context?
- Am I responding to what the text actually says—or to something I have heard about it?
- What question should I investigate further?
- If this is true, how should I respond?

Primary resources consulted

Institute for New Testament Textual Research (INTF): official international recording list and research on the Greek New Testament manuscript tradition — uni-muenster.de/INTF

Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM): manuscript preservation and introductory explanations of textual variants — csntm.org

Israel Antiquities Authority, Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library: biblical scroll content and manuscript images — deadseascrolls.org.il

Israel Museum, Jerusalem: the Great Isaiah Scroll and Shrine of the Book collections — imj.org.il

The goal is confidence—not dependence

Use this guide as a starting point, not a substitute for Scripture. Open your Bible, examine the passages in context, and continue asking thoughtful questions. God's Word is not weakened by careful reading.

Made to be shared

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