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PURPOSE CHURCH 

GREAT QUESTION

HOW THE BIBLE ADDRESSES OUR BIGGEST ISSUES WITH GOD | 





***GREAT RESOURCES FOR GREAT QUESTIONS
ABOUT GOD, FAITH, AND THE BIBLE***

- ***Sermon Slides + Notes:*** purposechurch.com/greatquestion
- ***The Problem of God*** by Mark Clark
- ***I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist*** by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek
- ***The Reason for God*** by Tim Keller
- ***Confronting Christianity*** by Rebecca McLaughlin
- ***Simply Christian*** by N. T. Wright





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***GREAT RESOURCES FOR GREAT QUESTIONS
ABOUT GOD, FAITH, AND THE BIBLE***

- ***10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) About Christianity*** by Rebecca McLaughlin
- ***The Case for Faith: Student Edition*** by Lee Strobel
- ***The Case for Christ: Student Edition*** by Lee Strobel
- ***Case for A Creator for Kids*** by Lee Strobel
- ***Case for Christ for Kids*** by Lee Strobel





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GREAT QUESTION #1:

***HOW CAN YOU
TRUST THE BIBLE
IS RELIABLE?***





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“I’m finally free to admit I haven't
believed any of this for years.”

-18 year old





4 QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ANSWERED REGARDING THE BIBLE'S RELIABILITY?

Q1: What Makes the Bible Different From Other Religious Texts?

Q2: Has the Bible Really Predicted the Future?

Q3: Isn't the Bible Full of Contradictions and Inaccuracies?

Q4: How Can I Get the Most out of the Bible?





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***THE BIBLE IS GOD'S INSPIRED
GOOD NEWS AND AUTHORITATIVE
REVELATION TO HUMANITY ABOUT:
WHO HE IS,
WHO WE ARE,
AND HOW HE DESIGNED US TO LIVE.***





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All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting** and **training** in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly **equipped** for every good work.

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17**





20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. **21** For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but ***prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.***

- 2 Peter 1:20-21





4 Jesus answered, “**It is written**: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (**Deuteronomy 8:3**)

7 Jesus answered him, “**It is also written**: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (**Deuteronomy 6:16**)

10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! **For it is written**: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (**Deuteronomy 6:13**)

- **Matthew 4:4, 7, 10**





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The **Bible** was written
over a **1,600 year time period**,
using **multiple genres**,
40 diverse authors,
in various **locations on three continents**,
and tells one unified story,
the story of God:

CREATION —> FALL —> REDEMPTION —> RESTORATION





WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- The word “Bible” literally means *books* or *library of books*
 - **Bible Genres:** *history, poetry, story, wisdom, songs, prophecy, letters*
- 66 books (39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament)
- 40 different authors from three different continents
 - **Authors:** *Shepherds, poets, soldiers, scholars, servants, tax collectors, fishermen, entrepreneurs, and kings*
 - **Writing Locations:** *hillsides, in the wilderness, cities, dungeons, palaces, on the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe*





HOW CAN WE TRUST THE OLD TESTAMENT COPIES ARE TRUSTWORTHY?

- The Dead Sea Scrolls:
 - **1946** - Oldest copy of the Old Testament dated back to 900 AD
 - **1947** - 223 Old Testament manuscripts discovered dating back to 125 BC
 - Older manuscripts matched newer manuscripts by over 95% (variants were small spelling or grammar mistakes)





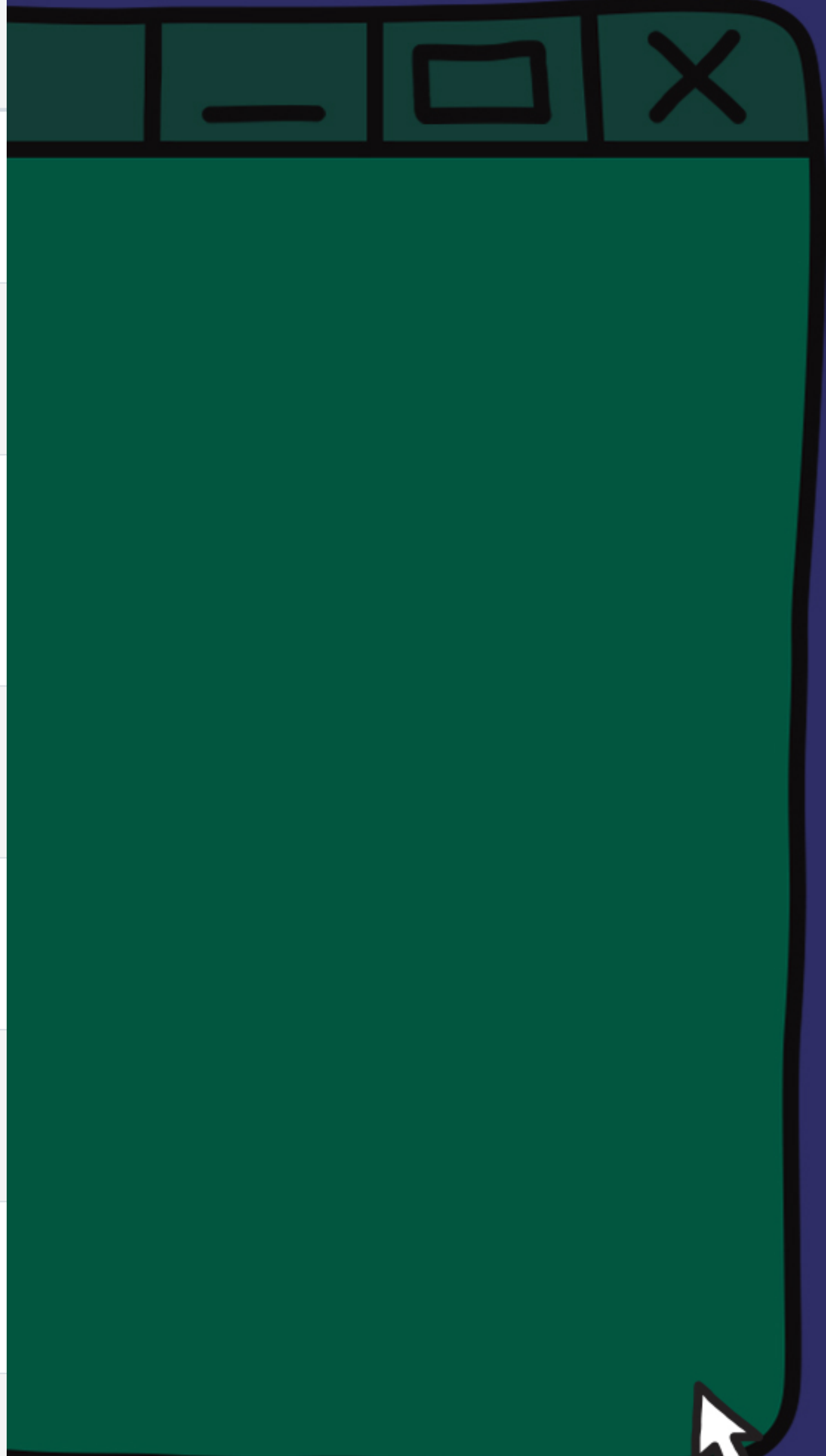
HOW CAN WE TRUST THE NEW TESTAMENT COPIES ARE TRUSTWORTHY?

- 5,800+ Greek New Testament manuscripts (25,000+ including other languages)
- Earliest copies are within 50-100 years of originals
- No ancient book comes close to the Bible's level of preservation
- *Early Manuscripts of the New Testament include:*
 - P52 (fragment of the Gospel of John) - 125 AD
 - P66 and P75 - 175-225 AD (preserve large portions of the Gospels)
 - Codex Vaticanus - 325-350 AD
 - Codex Sinaiticus - 330-360 AD (contains nearly the entire Bible)





Ancient Work	Earliest Copy	Time Gap	Number of Copies
Homer's Iliad	500 BC	~400 years	1757
Caesar's Gallic Wars	900 AD	~1,000 years	~10
Pliny	850 AD	~750 years	~7
Plato	900 AD	~1,200 years	~7
Suetonius	950 AD	~800 years	~8
Tacitus (Annals)	1100 AD	~1,000 years	~20
Aristotle	1100 AD	~1,300 years	~49
New Testament	125 AD (fragment)	~30-60 years	5,800+ Greek, 25,000+ total





DO TEXTUAL VARIANTS PROVE THE COPIES CANNOT BE TRUSTED?

- There are about 400,000 known textual variants in New Testament manuscripts (across more than 25,000 total manuscripts in multiple languages).
- More than 99% of those variants are **simple spelling differences** or **word order shifts** or **accidental repetitions**.
- For example, some manuscripts spell '*John*' as '*Ioannes*' while others have '*Iohannes*'. Others might say '*Christ Jesus*' instead of '*Jesus Christ*'.
- **Less than 1% of all known variants are meaningful and viable.** And even among those, none change any major doctrine.





Two additional reasons we trust the New Testament copies are mirrors of the originals...

1. The names mentioned in New Testament copies are consistent with the most popular names of people in first century Palestine when originals were first written (Simon, Joseph, John, Mary, Salome, Martha, Joanna, and Priscilla).
2. The gospel writers often provide enough information about individuals (names, locations, family members) for verification and follow up, for example, Mark 15:21 mentions “Simon of Cyrene” who was “the father of Alexander and Rufus.”





HOW CAN WE TRUST THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS ARE INSPIRED BY GOD?

- After the death of Jesus (33 AD), the early Christians circulated the Gospels, Paul's letters, and some other New Testament writings.
- By the end of the first century, most of the New Testament books were already being circulated and read together in home churches. Paul's letters were **read in worship of God** (Colossians 4:16) and Peter refers to Paul's letters as **Scripture** (2 Peter 3:15-16).
- Paul quotes the Gospel of Luke alongside Deuteronomy, calling both **Scripture** (1 Timothy 5:18).
- The recognition of inspired writings was happening within the New Testament period itself.





HOW CAN WE TRUST THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS ARE INSPIRED BY GOD?

- By the second century AD, church leaders were quoting the Gospels and letters as authoritative and the early believers evaluated whether texts were inspired based on several key factors:
 - **Authorship:** Was it written by a recognized prophet or apostle with divine authority?
 - **Miracles:** Did the writer's ministry include supernatural acts affirming their legitimacy?
 - **Theological Consistency:** Did the content align with God's truth and character without contradiction?
 - **Spiritual Impact:** Did the text transform lives and reflect divine power?
 - **Widespread Use:** Was it widely accepted, preserved and used in early Christian communities?





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“John, who obviously knew all of the apostles, had a disciple named Polycarp (69-155 AD), and Polycarp had a disciple named Irenaeus (130-202 AD). Polycarp and Irenaeus collectively quote 23 of the 27 New Testament books as if they are authentic—and in some cases they specifically say they are authentic. Irenaeus explicitly affirms the authorship of all four Gospels. Furthermore, through the historian Eusebius, we know that Papias (60-120 AD) affirmed the authorship of Matthew and Mark.”

- Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist*

Note: *By the Council of Hippo (393 AD) and the Council of Carthage (397 AD), the canon was formally affirmed, not invented.*





WHY AREN'T THE 'LOST' GOSPELS INCLUDED IN THE BIBLE?

- Texts like the *Gospel of Thomas* (150 AD) or the *Gospel of Judas* (170-200 AD) or the *Gospel of Mary* (180 AD) were written well after the New Testament era (60-100 AD), in the 2nd or 3rd centuries, long after the eyewitness generation had passed.
- They were produced by fringe groups influenced by Gnostic philosophy, which taught that salvation came through secret spiritual knowledge rather than faith in Christ.





WHY DOES THE BIBLE NOT INCLUDE THE APOCRYPHA

(texts included in the Catholic Bible)?

- The Protestant Reformation (started in 1517 AD) challenged corruptions they were seeing in the church (indulgences, lavish lifestyles of clergy, and a lack of emphasis on Scripture).
- Scholars and reformers wanted to return to the Bible as the ultimate authority (*Sola Scriptura*) and to emphasize salvation by faith alone (*Sola Fide*).
- To counter this and justify its practices the Catholic Church convened the Council of Trent (1545-1563 AD) and decided to change the original canon and add a few books from the Apocrypha (included in the current Catholic Bible).





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“[The New Testament gospels are] the oldest and best sources we have for knowing about the life of Jesus, and this is the view of all serious historians of antiquity of every kind, from committed evangelical Christians to hardcore atheists.”

- **Bart Ehrman, *Atheist and New Testament scholar***





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“The Bible contains **2,500 prophecies** and **2,000 of them have already been fulfilled**. The odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is **less than one in 1 in $10^{1,000}$** .

One chance in $10^{1,000}$ is equivalent to the probability of winning the California lottery 125 consecutive times purchasing just one ticket each time!”

- Dr. Hugh Ross, Astrophysicist and Apologist with Reasons to Believe





JESUS FULFILLED OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE PROPHECIES

- **2100 BC** - The Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).
- **1050 BC** - Jesus would be a descendant of King David (2 Samuel 7:16).
- **1000 BC** - Jesus is the begotten son of God from eternity (Psalm 2:7).
- **700 BC** - Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).





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In approximately **750 BC**, the prophet Micah named the tiny village of **Bethlehem as the birthplace of Israel's Messiah.**

Jesus was born around 7-4 BC in **Bethlehem**, making the fulfillment of this prophecy one of the most widely known and widely celebrated **facts in history.**

Sources: Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1





Some **400 years before crucifixion was invented**, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, **they said his body would be pierced and that none of His bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion.**

Sources: Psalm 22, 34:20; Zechariah 12:10

Historians and New Testament writers confirm that Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross, and **his extraordinarily quick death eliminated the need for the usual breaking of bones. A spear was thrust into his side** to verify that he was, indeed, dead.

Sources: John 19:31-34, Josephus (Jewish Historian, 93 AD), Tacitus (Roman Historian, 116 AD)





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“Never ***isolate*** a Bible verse.
Always read the Bible in ***context***.”

- **Alan Shlemon, Apologist with Stand to Reason**





FOUR ERRORS CRITICS OF THE BIBLE MAKE

Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek

#1 - Assuming that divergent accounts are contradictory

Example: One angel (Matthew 28:2) or two angels (John 20:12) at the empty tomb.

#2 - Failing to understand the context of the passage

Example: Psalm 14:1b - "there is no God." Complete verse: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

#3 - Presuming that the Bible approves of all that it records

Example: The Bible records Solomon and others practicing polygamy but commands monogamy (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6).

#4 - Forgetting that the Bible is a human book with human characteristics

Example: Acts (narratives), Song of Songs (poetry), Psalms (prayers), Isaiah (prophecy), Romans (theological treatises), 1 Timothy (personal letters), etc.





ADDRESSING ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

The Creation Account

Order in Genesis 1:

1. Light (Day 1)
2. Sky / waters separated (Day 2)
3. Land and vegetation (Day 3)
4. Sun, moon, stars (Day 4)
5. Sea creatures and birds (Day 5)
6. Land animals (Day 6)
7. Humans (male and female together) (Day 6)
8. Rest (Sabbath) (Day 7)

Order in Genesis 2:

1. Man (Adam) is formed from the dust (2:7)
2. Garden of Eden planted (2:8)
3. Trees grow (2:9)
4. Animals formed and brought to Adam (2:19)
5. Woman (Eve) created from Adam (2:21–22)

Genesis 1 gives a broad, chronological account of creation.

Genesis 2 is not a second chronological timeline, but a zoomed-in, thematic retelling of creation.



ADDRESSING ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

Differing Genealogies of Jesus

Matthew 1:1-2

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of **David**, the son of **Abraham: Abraham** was the father of **Isaac**...”

Luke 3:23-24

“Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of **Joseph**, the son of **Heli**, the son of **Matthat**, the son of **Levi**, the son of **Melki**,...”

These **genealogies differ** because **Matthew** traces Joseph's legal line (through Solomon), while **Luke** traces Mary's biological line (through Nathan, Solomon's brother).





ADDRESSING ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

Two Angels or One at the Tomb

Matthew 28:2, 5

“There was a violent earthquake, for an **angel** of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it...

The **angel said** to the women, ‘**Do not be afraid...**’”

John 20:11-13

“Mary looked into the tomb... and saw **two angels** in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot... **They asked** her, ‘**Woman, why are you crying?**’”

There's **no contradiction**, **both** accounts are **true**. **Matthew** focuses on one angel and what was said to the women at the tomb and **John** focuses on what both angels said.

Saying “one angel” does not mean a second angel wasn’t present. For example, just because you said “I talked to a police officer at the scene” doesn’t mean there was only one officer there.





ADDRESSING ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

The Ascension of Jesus

Luke 24:50-51

“When he had led them out to the **vicinity of Bethany**, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.”

Acts 1:10, 12

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going... Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem **from the hill called the Mount of Olives**, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.

“This appears contradictory, until you realize that **Bethany** is traditionally associated with the West Bank city of al-Elzariya, which lies on the **southeast slope of the Mount of Olives.**”

-Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*





ADDRESSING ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

The Quran's Version of Jesus' Death

4:157 Quran by Muhammad (610-650 AD)

“And [for] their saying, ‘Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah.’ And **they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him**; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain.”

Antiquities 18:63 by Josephus (93-94 AD)

“When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had **condemned him to be crucified**, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him.”

Note: *Jesus' crucifixion is also mentioned by Tacitus (56-120 AD), Lucian (125-180 AD), Mara Bar-Serapion (73 AD), The Talmud (200 AD).*

Gerd Lüdemann (atheist and New Testament scholar): “Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.”

John-Dominic Crossan (skeptic and New Testament scholar): “That [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both Josephus and Tacitus agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact.”

Bart Ehrman (atheist and New Testament scholar): “One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate.”



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***WE READ **THE WORD OF GOD**
TO GET TO KNOW
THE GOD OF THE WORD.***





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39 You *study* the *Scriptures diligently* because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, **40** *yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

- John 5:39-40





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13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching... **16** Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

- 1 Timothy 4:13, 16





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For the word of God is **alive** and **active**.
Sharper than any double-edged sword, it
penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints
and marrow;
it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
- Hebrews 4:12





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“The Bible is not only a historical book
but also a ***history-making book***.”

- **Jason Jimenez, Apologist with Stand to Reason**





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When people **rightly interpret** and **rightly apply** the **Bible**, individuals are drawn closer to God, and historically those impoverished, suffering, women, children, men, and slaves have been freed from oppression and their lives improved.

*What about passages that seem to condone **genocide, slavery, and misogyny**?*

You'll have to keep coming to Purpose because we are going to address those passages head on!





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Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose ***delight is in the law*** of the Lord, and who ***meditates on his law day and night***.

- Psalm 1:1-2





When people engage with the Bible four or more times per week:

- ***Loneliness*** drops by 30%
 - ***Anger*** drops by 32%
 - ***Bitterness in relationships*** drops by 40%
 - ***Alcoholism*** drops by 57%
 - ***Feeling spiritually stagnant*** drops by 60%
 - ***Viewing pornography*** drops by 61%
 - ***Sharing your faith*** increases by 200%
 - ***Discipling another person*** increases by 230%
- The Center of Bible Engagement, 40,000 participants ages 8-80, 2021





Practical tips to help you engage with the Bible...

1. Get a physical Bible (NIV Life Application Study Bible) or audio Bible if necessary, and choose a daily time and place to read/listen to it.
2. Pick one book (start with the Gospel of John) and read or listen to it from start to finish, striving for one or two chapters a day.
3. Pray before engaging with the Bible asking God to reveal Himself to you.
4. Join a Life Group to discuss the Bible, share insights, and learn from others.





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S.O.A.P. METHOD

S = SCRIPTURE [What verses are standing out to me?]

O = OBSERVATION [Who? When? Where? What? Why?]

A = APPLICATION [How does this apply to my life?]

P = PRAYER [What should I pray in response to what I've read?]





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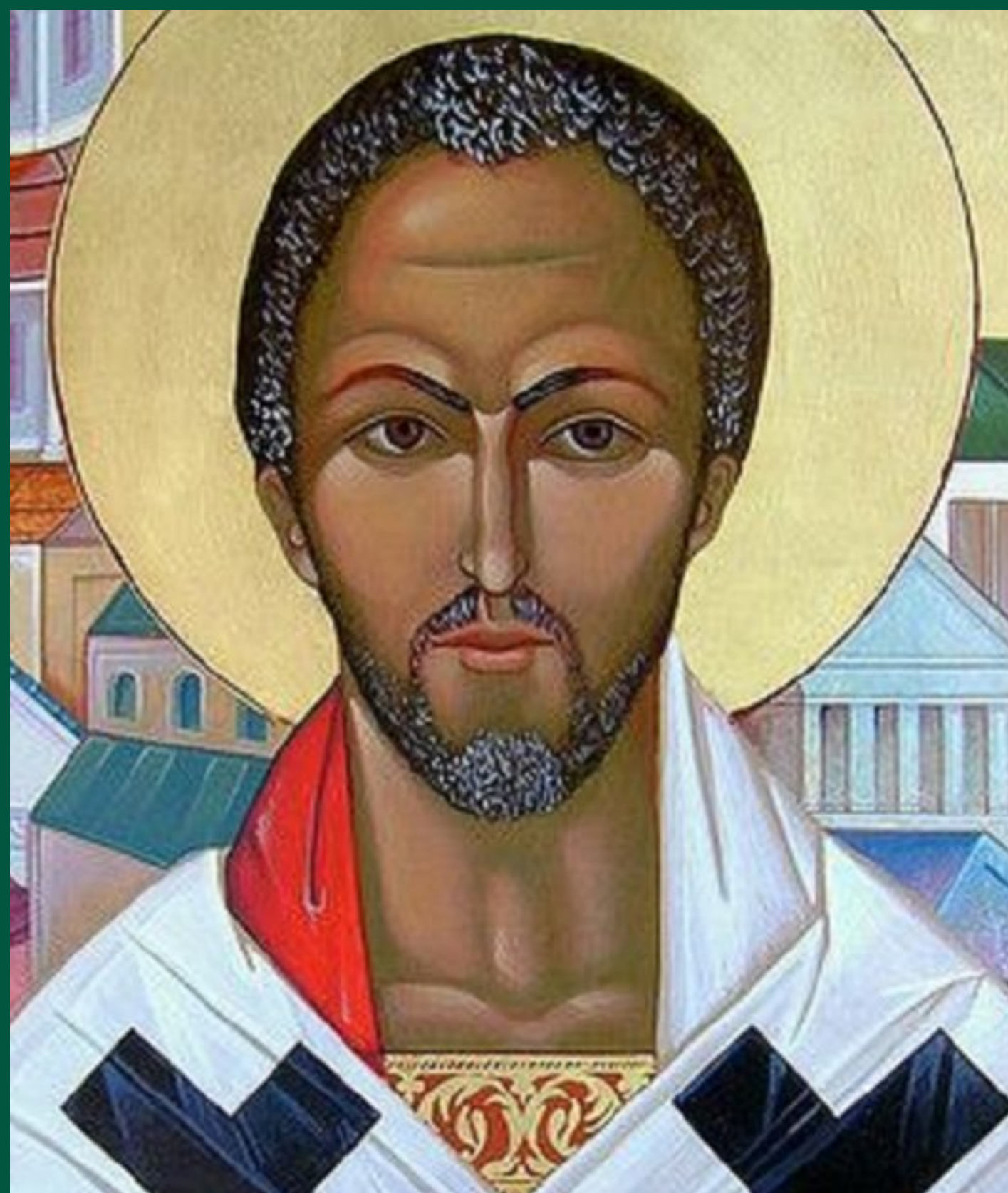


Listening to or reading the **Bible daily**
will **change** your **life forever!**





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“For now, treat the **Scripture** of God as the **face of God**. Melt in its presence.”

- **Saint Augustine**

North African Theologian, 354-430 AD

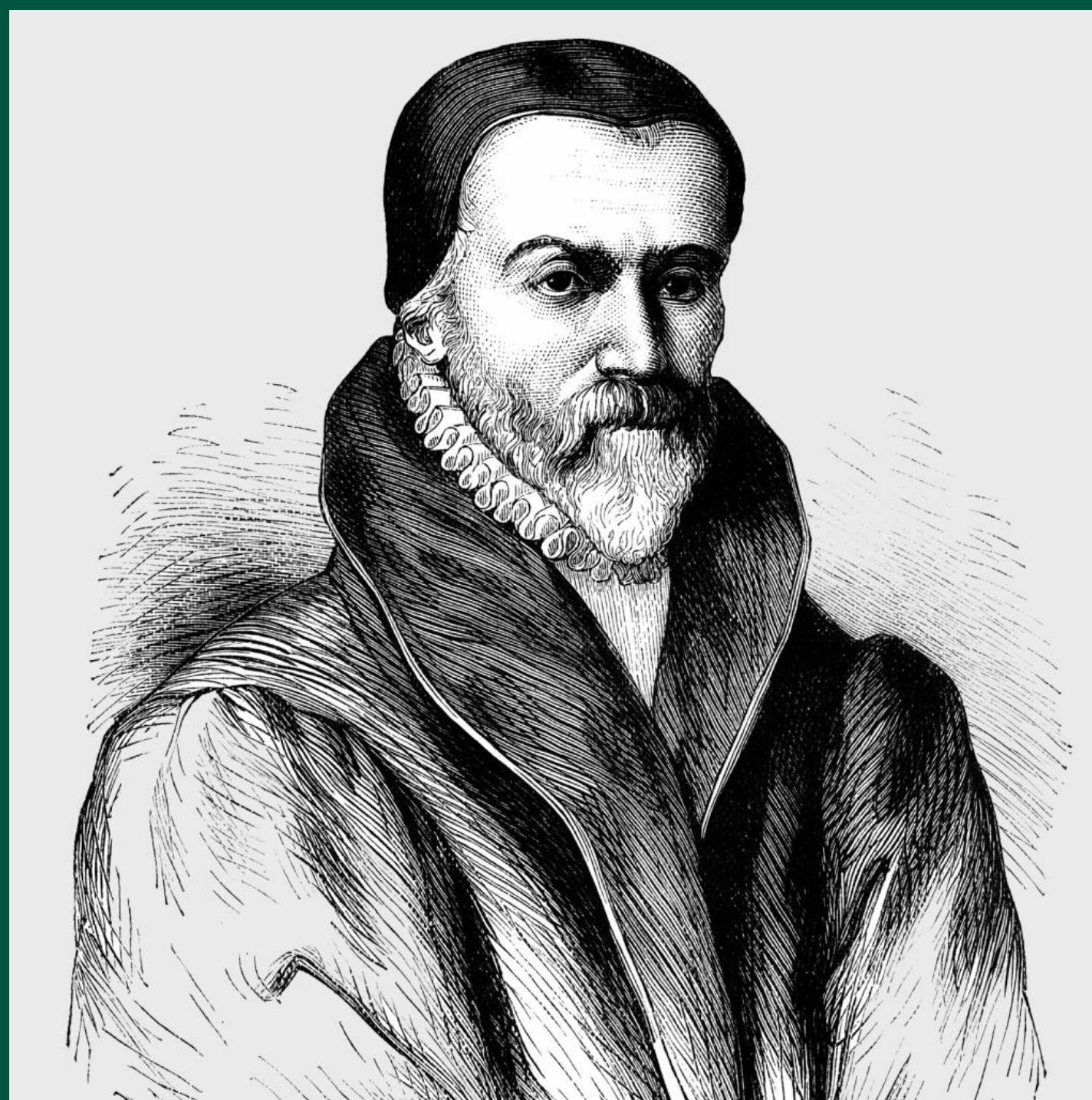




As Greek and Hebrew manuscripts found their way into the hands of church reformers, it was decided that they should be translated into a language that the common people could read.

In 1522, William Tyndale determined to translate the Bible into English. A fellow clergyman challenged Tyndale, suggesting people “might be better without the law of God than the law of the Pope,” and Tyndale quickly replied, **“If God spares my life, before many years pass I will make it possible for a boy behind the plow to know more Scripture than you do.”**

In 1526, Tyndale began smuggling, from Germany, printed copies of the English Bible, into his homeland of England. William Tyndale was eventually captured, tried by the Holy Roman Empire as a heretic, and executed by hanging and burning.





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SPIRITUAL PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK:

For the next 7 days, fast from social media, music, movies, other media, and print—and instead, only read or listen to the Bible.*

**Unless you'll get fired from your job or fail your class.*





REFLECT | DISCUSS | PRACTICE

1. **REFLECT:** Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How have you personally experienced God's Word teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, and equipping you to obey and follow Christ?
2. **DISCUSS:** Read 2 Peter 1:20-21. If someone asked you why you believe the Bible is reliable, what evidence would you provide and how would you explain the impact it's had on your life?
3. **DISCUSS:** Read Psalm 119:65-68. Many in our world claim the Bible is harmful and unhelpful, what historical evidence and personal experience do you find most convincing to refute that claim?
4. **DISCUSS:** Read Psalm 1:1-2. Why is it important for Purpose Church to anchor our teachings, practices, and authority in God's Word, the Bible?
5. **PRACTICE:** For the next 7 days*, fast from social media, music, movies, other media, and print—and instead, only read or listen to the Bible.

**Unless you'll get fired from your job or fail your class.*





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NEXT SUNDAY:

***HOW CAN YOU
BELIEVE THERE'S ONLY
ONE TRUE FAITH?***



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GREAT QUESTION

HOW THE BIBLE ADDRESSES OUR BIGGEST ISSUES WITH GOD | 

