

IN GOOD FAITH: BASIC CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Holy Scripture: Trustworthy Witness to God

THEME: Scripture is not an end in itself. It is a means to the end (i.e., goal) of presenting Jesus of Nazareth to the world as Messiah, Son of God, and Redeemer. In order for the Bible to function as a credible and trustworthy witness to God and his plan for saving humankind, there should be distinctive marks of trustworthiness that generate confidence in it. This lesson looks at both *external* (i.e., history, archaeology, etc.) and *internal* (i.e., unity, coherence, etc.) evidences that the Bible is what it claims to be – the inspired Word of God.

ICE BREAKER

1. This is the final of six lessons around the theme “In Good Faith.” The goal of the series has been to present some of the reasons for Christian confidence in the grounding of our Christian faith.
2. What has been your experience over these six weeks? Have you learned anything you didn’t know? That was particularly helpful?
3. Is there value in occasional times of looking at these very preliminary and fundamental issues of faith by persons who have been Christians for decades? For our children and grandchildren? For persons without a background in Bible study?
4. Begin your time together today in prayer for persons who are in contexts where faith is not offered and defended – and for those who have been influenced by the anti-faith culture of recent times.

THINK

1. Faith has a strong *evidential* (i.e., intellectual) grounding. But faith is ultimately *trust* in God and his promises. How do the two (i.e., intellectual evidence and personal trust) relate to each other?
2. Revisit Hebrews 11:1 for a few minutes. Read the verse from three or more translations. Has this series helped you appreciate the significance of this text? Explain.
3. How old were you when you became a serious student of the Bible? What are some of the tools (e.g., Bible dictionary, commentaries) you have gathered that help you in your study?
4. What sort of *evidence* has been most helpful to you in having strong confidence that the Bible is what it claims to be?

EXAMINE

Read [Psalm 119:105-120](#) to answer the following questions:

1. Psalm 119 is a devotional reflection on the Word of God (*Torah*). Read the following lines to “set the tone” for the questions that follow: 119:1-2 (note: God’s words are for those who are *seeking him* with their whole hearts) and 119:9 (note: the value of God’s word for young people).

2. What are some of the features of God's words for which the writer *praises* him?
3. These verses also insist that the words of God *rescue* and *protect* those who hear and follow them. What are some of the specific situations the writer mentions in this connection?
4. What is the character of a "double-minded" person (v.113; cf. James 1:8)? Why is this trait so dangerous?
5. Finally, noting that Psalm 119 (the longest single "chapter" in the Bible) is actually an *acrostic poem* that builds off the Hebrew alphabet, try this for fun: *Using your last name, build an acrostic of key words that describe how Holy Scripture functions in your life. For example: "Time with the Bible builds Security, Help, Education, Learning, Loyalty, and Yielding into my life with Christ."*

Read [John 5:31-46](#) as background for the following questions:

1. In this account of a confrontation between Jesus and certain critics, he names several things that "testify of" or "bear witness to" him. Identify as many of them as you can.
2. Since "Scripture" is one of the witnesses Jesus identifies, what had kept these people – who prided themselves on being diligent students of the Law, Prophets, and Psalms – from accepting Jesus?
3. Is there a sense in which these men had let the Bible "get in the way" of its clear intent of leading people to the Messiah?
4. Have you ever seen people allow their study of Scripture and arguments over its fine points of interpretation keep them away from Jesus? If so, can you – without calling anyone's name, please! – recount what happened?
5. Do verses 39-40 help you unpack the opening lines of these notes: *"Scripture is not an end in itself. It is a means to the end (i.e., goal) of presenting Jesus of Nazareth to the world as Messiah, Son of God, and Redeemer"*? How had these critics of Jesus let the Bible become an end in itself? How did Jesus offer the texts of Scripture as a means to an end?

THIS WEEK: The Bible is unique in all of literature. Written by about 40 different people on three continents over a period of nearly 1,600 years, it tells the story of God's love becoming incarnate in Jesus – and how we may follow him in our times and places. Don't fail to spend time regularly in reading and reflecting on the life-giving, life-transforming message of Holy Scripture. Try to make it a *daily* practice this week.