

WHY DO YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

Icebreaker Question

What is your favorite book of the Bible and why? If you're not too familiar with the Bible, what is your favorite book or type of book to read?

Series Introduction

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” 1 Peter 3:15-16, NIV

In an age of skepticism, rejection of absolute truth and morality, criticism of Scripture, disbelief in God, and promotion of post-modernism, one should expect there to be arguments, objections, and challenging questions posed to the Christian faith. According to 1 Peter 3:15, we are to be prepared to respond in a winsome and respectful way to anyone who asks us what we believe and why we believe it. This series on Christian Apologetics - the discipline that deals with a rational defense of the Christian faith - is designed to boost your confidence in your ability to respond well to questions posed about your faith.

This week we answer the question: *Why Do You Believe the Bible?*

Why Do You Believe the Bible? 2 Peter 1:16-21

Of the many questions a Christian can be asked, the most important one is *“Why do you believe the Bible?”* It's the right question to ask because all answers to other questions will be based upon the authority of the Bible. The Bible is a controversial book that evokes both devotion and derision. It has inspired some of the greatest leaders this world has ever known and has equally attracted the hostility of others. The Christian faith requires belief in the Bible. This is a big stumbling block for many people, so it's important that we provide a response to this question in a winsome and respectful manner.

So, why do you believe the Bible? Some responses might be:

1. *“I believe the Bible because that is how I was raised...”*
2. *“I believe the Bible because I tried it and it changed my life...”*
3. *“I believe the Bible because it is the Word of God...”*

Those responses may be true for you; it does, however, come up a bit short in providing an appealing and engaging answer. This may be a better response:

“I choose to believe the Bible because it’s reliable collection of historical documents written by eye witnesses during the lifetime of other eye witnesses and they report supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claim that their writings are divine rather than human in origin.”

This response is derived from Peter’s response in 2 Peter 1:16-21

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. 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 1:16-21, ESV

Discussion

1. Prior to this message, how would you have responded to the question, “Why do you believe the Bible?”
2. Charles Spurgeon said, “*The Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself.*” What does that mean to you?
3. Unlike any other holy or religious books, the Bible is a collection of 66 books. It’s not just one individual who says they heard from God but 40 other writers from multiple walks of life, written over a span of 1,500 years on three separate continents (Asia, Africa & Europe) and three languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic). How does this add to the authenticity and reliability of the Bible?
4. How would you answer someone who says they don’t believe the Bible because it’s been translated too many times over? Or because we do not have the original copies of the Bible?
 - **Translation Response:** Some think the Bible translations came to be similar to the telephone game. First player comes up with a message and whispers it to the ear of the second person in the line. The second player repeats the message to the third player, and so on. In reality, those translating came to the original Hebrew/Greek/Aramaic manuscripts to translate the message and not from another translator.
 - **Original Copies (NT Focus):** We have 6,000 partial and complete manuscript copies of the New Testament in the Greek language ranging from 30-300 years from the original texts. The shorter the time span between the original and copy, the more dependable the copy. The longer the interval between the original and copy, the more room for error, embellishments, and distortions. To compare, the second-most-supported work behind the New Testament is Homer’s Iliad with more than 1,900 manuscripts with a time span of 400 years. It doesn’t even come to the Bible’s number of manuscripts and time span.

5. How do you know that the Bible was written by eye witnesses during the lifetime of other eyes witnesses? Read 1 John 1:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.
6. Give an example of how having multiple eyewitnesses adds to the credibility of a testimony. What if there was only one eye witness?
 - **Response:** Multiple eye witnesses could testify to the veracity of the message.
7. 2 Peter 1:17-18 speaks of a supernatural event: Matthew 17's account of Jesus being transfigured on a high mountain with Peter, James and John. Can you name other supernatural events that are recorded in Scripture? What supernatural events have you witnessed personally?
8. Many of the supernatural events took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies. Which prophecies in the Old Testament do you know of have we seen fulfilled in the New Testament?
 - 2 Samuel 7:12-13 | Jesus' throne will be established forever.
 - Micah 5:2 | Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (prophesied 700 years prior to His birth).
 - Psalm 22 | Jesus would die on a cross (prophesied 1,000 years prior to His birth and before the invention of crucifixion)
9. Read 2 Peter 1:20-21. How might you challenge and at the same time encourage an unbeliever with this verse?
10. Read 2 Timothy 3:16. We believe the Bible is the divinely-inspired Word of God. How can we be sure?
 - **Response:** *How is it possible that you have a collection of 66 books, written over the span of 1,500 years, on three different continents, in three different languages with 40 different writers from all walks of life and still tell a consistent, congruent and cohesive redemptive story? It's because there were 40 writers but only one author - God Himself.*

Salvation Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thank You that Your Son Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life, and died on the cross for my sins. I believe He rose from the dead so I could receive forgiveness, become Your child, and receive the gift of eternal life. I come to You now and repent from all sin. I not only receive Your gift of forgiveness, but I give You all of my life and all of my heart. I believe You have accepted me because Jesus said, "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." You also said, "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Thank You for saving me, making me Your child, and helping me live for you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for revealing the intricate details of Your plan through the prophecies of the Bible. Thank You for the evidence that Your Word is trustworthy and reliable. Help me to spend time in Your Word and to meditate on it even more. Thank You for Your Son, Jesus, who is the Word made flesh. All glory and honor are Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.