

FEARLESS CONFIDENCE

- A. Introduction: In recent years we've opened the year with a series on the Bible. This year is no different.
1. The Bible can be a difficult book. It's lengthy, and it's hard to know where to start. It's filled with strange names for people and places, and has lots of boring and seemingly irrelevant information.
 - a. It seems like everyone has a different opinion about the meaning of specific passages. How can we know whose opinion is correct? Can we really trust the information in the Bible? Has it been corrupted through the centuries? Is it true that certain books were purposefully been left out?
 - b. We're living in a time when, not only is Bible reading at an all time low, so is confidence in the Bible. A recent Gallup poll revealed that 29% of Americans say that "the Bible is (simply) a collection of fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man".
 2. We just finished a series on the second coming of Jesus Christ. According to Jesus and the apostles (His eyewitnesses) mass abandonment of the faith will precede the Lord's return (Matt 24:4-5; I Tim 4:1; II Thess 2:3-4). Departure from faith begins with rejection of the Bible as the Word of God.
 - a. We need to address issues related to the Bible's trustworthiness so that we can have confidence in this wonderful Book as we face the increasingly challenging years that are ahead for this world.
 - b. We need to understand the purpose of the Bible, why we need to read it, how to read it, and what we can expect it to do for us when we read. We're going to deal with these topics in this series.
- B. The term Bible comes from a Latin word that means books. The Bible is actually a collection of 66 books and letters written by more than forty authors over a 1500 year period—from the time of Moses (1440 BC) to the death of John the apostle (AD 100).
1. These books are divided into two parts—the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written, mostly in Hebrew, before Jesus came into the world (there are some Aramaic passages). The New Testament was written in Greek, after Jesus returned to Heaven.
 2. The theme that ties the books of the Bible together is God's plan for humanity. God created human beings to become His son and daughters, and He made earth to be a home for Himself and His family.
 - a. In the opening pages of the Bible we learn that God created the heavens (atmosphere, sky, outer space) and the earth with His Word. He spoke, and the material universe came into being. Gen 1
 - b. When the earth (the family home) was completed, God created men and women in His own image (Gen 1:26). God made humanity as much like Himself as a created being can be like His Creator, so that relationship is possible.
 1. The Bible narrative moves quickly to the downfall of mankind when Adam chose independence from God through sin (Gen 3:1-6). As the head of the human race and earth's first steward, Adam's act of rebellion brought a curse of corruption and death to the entire race and to the family home. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; Rom 8:20
 2. Immediately following this turn of events, God promised that a Savior or Redeemer (Jesus) would one day come, to undo the damage and restore the family and the family home. Gen 3:15
 - c. The rest of the Bible is a gradual unfolding of God's plan of redemption—His plan to restore the family and the family home to what He created us and it to be. Every book and letter adds to or advances the story of the lengths the Lord has gone to, to reclaim His family through Jesus.
 3. The Bible is unlike any other book ever written because its writings were inspired by God. The Bible truly is a book from God—All scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Tim 3:16, KJV).
 - a. The term scripture comes from a Greek word that means a document or writing. The term is used to refer to both the Old and New Testaments. Inspiration is translated from a Greek word that is made up of two words, *theos* (God) and *pneo* (to breathe); *theopneustos* means God-breathed.
 - b. God breathed words to men, and they wrote them down. The writers didn't go into a trance, nor

did God make their hands move. He revealed to their minds what He wanted them to write, and they wrote down His words and thoughts. God imparted something from Himself to these men.

1. II Pet 1:21— No true prophecy comes from human initiative but is inspired by the moving of the Holy Spirit upon those who spoke the message that came from God (TPT).

2. The Greek word that is translated moving means to bear or carry (lit or fig). *Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words* gives this comment: “They were borne along or impelled by the

Holy Spirit's power, not acting according to their own wills, or simply expressing their own thoughts, but expressing the mind of God in words provided and ministered by Him.”

4. The Bible is a supernatural book because it is a book from God. Supernatural means “of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible, observable universe” (*Webster's Dictionary*).

a. God works in us by His written Word when we hear and read it. He strengthens and changes us through His written Word. He imparts wisdom, hope, and joy to us through His written Word. I Thess 2:13; Matt 4:4; Jer 15:16; I John 2:14; Rom 15:4; etc.

b. The Bible is not a self-help book or a book of principles meant to help us live a good life. It is a revelation of God and His plans and purposes for mankind. The Scriptures give us “the wisdom to receive the salvation (from sin, corruption, and death) that comes from trusting in Christ Jesus” (II Tim 3:15, NLT).

c. Almighty God says: People need more than bread for their life; real life comes by feeding on every word of the Lord (Deut 8:3, NLT). Jesus echoed those words: They must feed on every word of God (Matt 4:4, NLT).

C. To appreciate the value of this wonderful Book, we need to consider some facts about this awesome Being who wants to reveal Himself to humanity and be in relationship with us (each point deserves its own lesson.)

1. The Bible doesn't prove the existence of God. It presumes He exists and then tells us about Him. The Bible is the record of God's revelation of Himself to mankind. The Bible reveals that:

a. God is infinite (without limits of any kind). He is eternal (having no beginning or end). He is not derived from something else. Everything derives its existence from Him. He is the Creator of all (Isa 42:5; 44:24; 45:18). God is omni (or all).

1. God is omnipresent, or present everywhere at once (Jer 23:23-24; Ps 139:7-10). But He is not necessarily present in the same way everywhere; there are places where He is specially present.

2. God is omniscient, or all knowing (Ps 147:5; Isa 46:9-10). God is omnipotent or all powerful. Nothing is impossible for Him (Gen 18:14; Luke 1:37).

3. God is immutable (ever the same). He cannot be untrue to Himself (II Tim 2:13). He does not change. What He is, He will always be (Mal 3:6; James 1:17).

b. God is Spirit and He is invisible (John 4:24; I Tim 1:17). Although He can't be discerned with the physical senses, when He chooses, He can give an appearance of Himself (Gen 18:1).

1. God isn't confined to a form. He is without a body. The Bible uses anthropomorphisms—statements where He is spoken of as if He were a man. Ex 31:18; Ex 33:23

2. But He is not a man. These kinds of statements are made to help us know something of His Being, since they are terms we can relate to.

2. God is a Being with personality. Personality exists where there is mind, intelligence, will, reason, self-consciousness, and self-determination.

a. An important side note. Pantheism is an ancient, but false, teaching that has become increasingly popular in the western world in the past fifty years. Pantheism purports that God is an energy or force that is present in everything and, everything is God.

b. God is not a Mind or Energy. He is not an unconscious force. The universe is not God. God is a Being, the Creator of the universe. We see His personality (mind and will) in operation in creation.

1. Ps 19:1-4—The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or a word; their voice is silent in the skies; yet their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to all the world (NLT).
2. Rom 1:20—From the creation of the world, the invisible qualities of God’s nature have been made visible, such as his eternal power and transcendence. He has made his wonderful attributes easily perceived, for seeing the visible makes us understand the invisible (TPT).
3. God is transcendent (above and beyond anything we can imagine) and incomprehensible (beyond our understanding and comprehension).
 - a. Isa 55:8-9—My thoughts are completely different from yours, says the Lord. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts (NLT).
 - b. Rom 11:33—Who could ever wrap their minds around the riches of God, the depth of his wisdom, and the marvels of his perfect knowledge? Who could ever explain the wonder of his decisions or search out the mysterious way he carries out his plans (TPT).
4. Yet this transcendent, infinite, eternal Being is knowable, and wants to be known by the men and women He created. Through His revelations given to us in His Word we can know Him. Because He is eternal and infinite we, as finite beings, cannot know Him fully. But we can know enough of what He has revealed of Himself to respond with awe, reverence, gratefulness, and love.
 - a. We can know something of His Being and His dealings with humanity—what He is like and why He created us, and what He has done, is doing, and will do for us.
 - b. True life, joy and satisfaction, come from knowing God. We were created for relationship with Him. Note what God says about us and man’s relationship with Him.
 1. Jer 9:23-24—Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord (ESV).
 2. Jer 9:24—But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me (personally and practically, directly discerning and recognizing My character (Amp).
 - A. He wants those who know Him to boast about the fact that they do know Him. The Hebrew word (*halal*) means to shine, make a show, or shout. It is often translated praise.
 - B. This is what God wants us to know about Himself—that He practices (does, accomplishes) steadfast love (kindness, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, and love that lasts forever). And He practices righteousness and justice (what is right) in the earth. Note that Almighty God delights in, takes pleasure in, these things.
5. Because God is Spirit and He is invisible, we cannot know Him (perceive or discern Him) with our physical senses. Neither can we know God through our emotions or circumstances.
 - a. If your relationship with God is based on your feelings or your circumstances, you will be up and down in your relationship with Him as your emotions and circumstances change.
 - b. We can only know God through the revelation He gives us in His written Word. That’s why it is so important that we know read it and that we have confidence in what we read.
 1. Rom 10:17—Faith (or trust and confidence in God) comes to us through the Word of God because it shows us what He is like as well as what He has done, is doing, and will do.
 2. Ps 9:10—And they who know Your name [who have experience and acquaintance with Your mercy] will lean on and confidently put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek...You (Amp).
 - c. Knowing God as He truly is, according to His Word which reveals His character and power, is vital

if you're going to live with confidence before God and fearlessness in the face of life's challenges.

6. The Bible is progressive revelation. God gradually revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture until we have the fullest revelation of Himself and His plan of redemption, given in and through Jesus.

a. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14), the Living Word of God. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. (We will discuss this in more detail in later lessons.)

1. Heb 1:1-2—Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son... (Jesus) reflects God's own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly (NLT).

2. Heb 1:3—He sustains the universe by the power of his command (NLT); He now upholds and maintains, guides and propels the universe "by His mighty word of power" (Heb 1:3, Amp).

b. Notice something that Jesus said to His original twelve apostles the night before He was crucified.

As Jesus celebrated His last Passover meal with them, He began to prepare them for the fact that He was soon going to leave them. John 14:19-21

1. Jesus told them that the world would see Him no longer, but they would. He assured them that He would continue to reveal or manifest Himself to those who keep His commandments.

2. Jesus' listeners would have connected His statements with the written word of God. He was talking to first century Jewish men who knew from their history that God writes His commands in His Book. Jesus promised to continue to make Himself and His love known to them through His written Word—the Living Word revealed through the written Word.

D. Conclusion: Lessons like these don't seem practical when people are facing major issues and challenges in their lives. Let's close this lesson with some thoughts about the practicality of the information given.

1. When you become convinced of the goodness and bigness of God, and of His love for you, it will make you fearless and confident in even the worst of circumstances.

a. But that kind of confidence and fearlessness comes only through seeing God as He truly is—bigger than everything that can come against you, greater than any problem you face, and more loving and compassionate than you can imagine. Nothing is impossible for Him who loves you.

b. The Bible (the written Word of God, His revelation of Himself to you) will give you that kind of confidence and fearlessness—if you become a regular reader.

2. People struggle with the Bible because they don't know how to approach it. Let me offer a suggestion that worked for me and has worked for many other people—regular, systematic reading.

a. Set aside a short period of time to read on a regular basis (15-20 minutes a day, 4-5 days a week). Start with the New Testament. (The Old Testament is easier to understand once you are familiar with the New). Read each book from start to finish as quickly as you can.

1. Don't worry about what you don't understand. Just keep reading. You're reading to get familiar with the text. Understanding comes with familiarity, and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading.

2. The Bible wasn't written in chapters and verses. Those were added centuries later to serve as reference points. Each book and letter was meant to be read from beginning to end. That's how you get the context of the specific sentences and words, which helps with understanding.

b. If you will commit to reading in this way, you will be a different person a year from now. The Bible is a supernatural book. If you will eat it (read it effectively) on a regular basis, fear will diminish and your confidence will grow. You will become persuaded of God's love and concern for you. You will have hope for the future.

3. Over the next few weeks, I'm going to give you information and tools that will help you read the Bible effectively, and increase your trust in this wonderful Book and the God it reveals. More next week!