

DISCOVERY

A PLACE TO GROW



Participant Handbook

Discovery: A Place to Grow LEADER HANDBOOK
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Welcome to Discovery!

We are so glad that you are joining us on this journey to discover what it means to be a Christian and to follow Jesus. All Christians, whether you have been a Christian for 5 minutes or 5 decades, are on the same journey—to get to know God and follow Him through Jesus Christ His son.

You start this journey through an act of faith. You turn from living life the way that seems right to you to living life Jesus' way. This is a radical change! You learn to live Jesus' way through prayer, reading the Bible, and fellowshiping with other Christians who are on the same journey as you are. As you journey with Jesus He gives you a fulfilling life right now because He knows you best and He knows what truly satisfies your soul. You also have an assurance that you will be with Him in heaven forever!

Enjoy the next four Discovery Classes and know that you are on the way to the best thing that can happen in your life—to know God, live free and find purpose in Him.

OUTLINE

1. Know God

(A Real Personal Relationship)

2. God's Word For Us

(The Bible)

3. Connect With God

(Prayer)

4. Better Together

(The Church)

LESSON 1

WE CAN HAVE A REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Ice Breaker

Think of a good personal relationship that you have with someone.

What makes that relationship so good?

God's Purpose: Peace & Life

Jesus tells us that God loves us and that He wants us to have a rich and satisfying life right now! Not only that, but He showed us His love by sending His one and only son Jesus to make a way to heaven for us.

Two verses in the Bible that highlight this are:

For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

My (Jesus) purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

John 10:b

If this is what Jesus wants for us, then why are not more people experiencing a rich and satisfying life?

Our Problem: Sin

The reason that people do not experience this rich and satisfying life is because of our sin. **What is your understanding of sin?**



Sin is when we live a life that is motivated by self rather than a life that is motivated by God. We sin when we do things our way instead of God's way. This is what the Bible teaches us about sin:

For the wages of sin is death...

Romans 6:23a

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Romans 3:23

The result (wages in the previous verse) of sin is ultimately death. This is not physical death but a spiritual death, a permanent separation between us and God. We try to overcome this separation between us and God in all sorts of different ways.

What are some ways that people try to connect with God or something beyond the material world?

Our Attempts To Reach God



Ultimately, the Bible tells us that all of our attempts to reach God fail.

This is the bad news. Our attempts to reach up to God fail.

There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

Proverbs 14:12

God's Gift: Eternal Life

The good news of Jesus is that he reached down to us! The Bible verse that we looked at before about our sin resulting in death ends this way:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

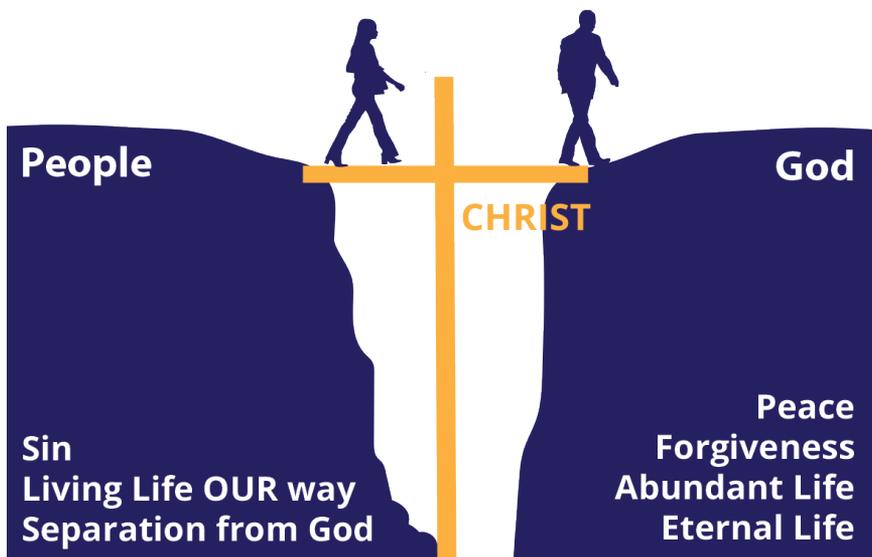


The good news of Jesus is that He gives us the free gift of eternal life!

Eternal life means that we are connected with the eternal God, not just in heaven after we die, but in the here and now of life.

What do you think of the fact that you can connect with the eternal God in the here and now of life?

One Bridge To God: Christ



The verse below tells us that the way God showed His love for us was by sending Jesus to die for us. Remember from before that our sin separates us from God and that there is a huge gulf between us and God that we cannot bridge. Jesus bridges that gulf by taking our sins upon Himself.

Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God.

1 Peter 3:18

Does this make sense? How would you understand this good news?

We can experience God's presence as we go through our day. God is our creator and He loves us, His creation, more than we could ever imagine.

This is what this Bible verse tells us:

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:8

Our Response: Receive Christ Into Our Lives

It is not enough though for us just to know intellectually that Christ died for us and offers us new life. The Bible tells us that we must receive God's gift into our lives.

Look! I (Jesus) stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.

Revelations 3:20

Here is how you can receive Christ. It is as easy as **ABC**

Admit you are a sinner.

Believe that Christ died for your sin.

Commit your life to Jesus and through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come into you and guide your life.

Pray the following prayer to receive Jesus into your Life:

Dear Lord Jesus, I **admit** that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I **believe** that you died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite you to come into my heart and life. I **commit** my life to you and to follow you as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God's Assurance: His Word

We can be sure that God is with us now and that we will be in eternity with Jesus. We can be sure because this is what the Bible tells us.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 10:13

What's Next?

- Read your Bible every day to know Christ better. A good place to start is in the Book of John.
- Talk to God in prayer every day.
- Tell others about Jesus.
- Worship and fellowship with other Christians in a church where Christ is worshipped.
- As Christ's representative in a needy world, demonstrate your new life by your love and concern for others.

Discovery At Home

Look up Ephesians 2:8-10 in your Bible

God saved you by his grace when you believed and you can not take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

What do you think God has saved you from?

What does it mean to you to that God loves you unconditionally (that's God's grace!) and that there is nothing that you can do to make God love you more and nothing you can do to make God love you less?

The Bible says that you are God's "masterpiece"! How does that make you feel?

Verse 8 tells us that we are not Christians by the good things we do and verse 10 tells us that we were created to do good things. **What is the proper role of doing good things in your life?**

Look up 1 John 1:8-10 in your Bible

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him,

he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

Who has sinned?

If we claim to be without sin what does God think of us?

What do you have to do to have forgiveness in God?

What is the forgiveness based on?

Notes:

LESSON 2

THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD FOR US

Ice Breaker

What is your favorite T.V. show, book or movie? Is it fiction or non-fiction? Does that make a difference?

The Bible

There is no other book like the Bible. Year after year it is the bestselling book in the world; 44 million copies of the Bible sell every year. The Bible has been translated into over 2200 languages! That's ten times more than any other book. It has had an impact on people and history like no other. The Bible tells us that it is God's word to His people.

The Bible Is True

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

This is how the Bible views itself. Does this line up with how you view the Bible? According to this verse, what does the Bible help us to do?

Scripture Is God-Breathed

The above verses tell us that Scripture is “inspired”. Literally in the original language the word for “inspiration” is “God breathed”. The Bible’s ultimate source is God. The Bible tells us what is true, how we should conduct ourselves, and prepares us to do good works.

The Bible is God’s Word Written Through Human Authors

Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:20-21

One Biblical Author’s View

They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write a careful account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

Luke 1:2-4

How and why did the author write the Gospel of Luke?

How Jesus Viewed The Bible

Jesus repeatedly quoted from the Bible and he viewed it as authoritative and true to the smallest detail.

I (Jesus) tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law (the Bible) will disappear until its purpose is achieved.

Matthew 5:18

If this is how Jesus viewed the Bible, then what does that say about how we should view the Bible?

The Bible Is For You

Psalm 1 is a great psalm (like a poem) that tells us the benefits for us when we meditate on the Bible:

But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.

They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

Psalm 1:2-3

What benefits are there to reading the Bible from the above verses?

Learning to Love Your Bible- Psalm 119

Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long... How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life.

Psalm 119:97, 103-104

How does the person who wrote this view the Bible?

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path...

Psalm 119:105

How is God's word like a light?

Why do you think you might need a lamp and a light as you live in this world?

How to Read the Bible like a **PRO**

Pray before reading the Bible

Remember that the Bible is God's Word to us so before we read we can ask God what He wants to show us as we read His word.

Read regularly and book by book

The Bible is made up of 66 books and it is meant to be read book by book. If you have not read the Bible before, the Book of John is a great place to start as it is about the life of Jesus.

Obey what God wants you to do as you read

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

James 1:22

Activation: *Getting Around Your Bible*

The Bible is made up of the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament is about God's relationship with His people before Jesus came to earth. The Old Testament recounts the story of creation and the stories of ancient Israel's walk with God. Here we find the Ten Commandments and the stories of God delivering His people out of slavery and back to their homeland.

Then in the middle of the Old Testament there are poetic books such as Book of Psalms and Proverbs that express the emotional aspect of our walk with God. The last part of the Old Testament contains the prophetic books which are God's word to His people when they are going through challenging times.

The New Testament is primarily about Jesus. It begins with the four gospels about Jesus' life and the Book of Acts which is about the Holy Spirit and the spread of early Christianity. Then there are the letters to various churches and individuals about what it means to be a Christian and the final showdown between good and evil in the Book of Revelation.

Discovery at Home

The Gospel of John is a great place to get started as it talks about the life of Jesus. If you read 3 pages of the Bible everyday you would finish it in a year.

Read the appendix titled, “The Bible, Fact or Fiction” at the end of the booklet.

The Importance Of The Bible To Our Lives

But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Matthew 4:4

To what do you think, “every word that comes from the mouth of God” refers?

If the Bible was this important to Jesus how important should it be to us?

Increasing our Faith

So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

Romans 10:17

According to this verse, how can we increase our faith?

Notes:

LESSON 3

CONNECTING WITH GOD

We Can Connect With God Through Prayer

Ice Breaker

Chat with the person sitting closest to you on how your week went.

If you could ask God for anything, what would it be and why?

Prayer Is Personal

Prayer is how we communicate with God. We do this through both speaking and listening.

God wants to speak to us and he wants to hear what we have to say as well. It is a two way street.

*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God.
There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to
help us when we need it most.*

Hebrews 4:16

What does the above verse tell us about how we should come to God in prayer?

What does God promise to give us when we come to him in prayer?

Jesus- "I know my own sheep (that's us!), and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

John 10:14, 15, 27

What does Jesus say about how we as sheep can know Him and about how He knows us?

When we hear Jesus speak to us what are we to do?

Pray Persistently

There are many examples in the Bible of people that prayed persistently:



Abraham (Genesis 20:17)
David (Psalms e.g. 121)
Jesus (Luke 6:12)

Paul (Acts 14:23)
God's people (Acts 12:5)

Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises. Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

James 5:13-16

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayer for all believers everywhere.

Ephesians 6:18

According to the above verses when and where should we pray or praise God?

Can you think of a specific time that you prayed to God? Do you think that God heard you?

Pray In Faith

What is faith?

The Biblical definition of faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1-3.)

Faith is not checking our brain at the door and hoping something good happens.

Faith is thinking and praying with the assurance that God is real and that He is communicating with us.

But when you ask him (God), be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

James 1:6

Why do you think that faith is such an important part of praying?

What does this verse compare a person to if their faith is divided?

One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, "Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him...Have mercy on us

and help us, if you can.”

“What do you mean, ‘If I can?’” Jesus asked. “Anything is possible if a person believes.” The father instantly cried out, “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!”

Mark 9:17, 22-24

How much faith did the father in the story have? What was Jesus’ view of the father’s faith?

Was he sure of his faith? What do you think of the father’s statement that “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!”

Activation: How To Pray

Prayer does not need to always be so formal: remember that we can pray to God anytime and anywhere. Using Bible verses can be helpful though.

Listening Prayer

Do you have a specific request to ask God? Ask Him right now and take some time to listen to His response through this exercise.

Listening Prayer- Read Psalm 23 or Psalm 139

As the leader reads the Scripture, close your eyes and listen. Picture yourself in one of the scenes described. Let the leader read the same Scripture again. Is there a portion of the Scripture that stands out to you? Since God is the author of Scripture and that he is the same God that wants to speak to us now, we can be confident that we are hearing God's voice.

Speaking

There are many different ways that we can speak to God. One structure that people have found helpful is to use the acrostic **A.C.T.S.**

- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supply

Adoration

Give God praise and honor for who he is. There are a lot of ways that we can do this. We can sing a favorite praise song, we can read Scripture that affirms God character.

Sing praises to God and to his name! Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds. His name is the Lord— rejoice in his presence! Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy.

Psalm 68:4-6

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.

Ephesians 1:19-21

Confession: Honestly Telling God Your Sin

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 John 1:9

Without saying anything out loud, just in your mind,
tell God your sin.

Thanksgiving

Tell God that you are grateful for Him and that He is working in your life.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

1 Timothy 2:1

Mention one thing that you're grateful for in your life or in the world around you.

Supply

Pray for the needs of others and yourself.

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.
Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.*

Philippians 4:6

Praying for Each Other

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if
we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*

1 John 5:14

Discovery at Home

Read Matthew 7:7-8. **Do you think God gets tired of hearing us ask for the things we need?**

Read Matthew 7:9-11. **What do we learn about God in these verses?**

Have you ever been afraid to ask God for something because you thought it was too big or too small for Him to care about? What would you these verses tell you to do?

Read Philippians 4:6. **What does this verse tell you about worrying? What should you do instead of worrying?**

Read 1 John 5:14-15. **Put these verses in your own words? How can you apply the truth of these verses to your life?**

Notes:

LESSON 4

THE CHURCH: BETTER TOGETHER

Ice Breaker

Have you ever been part of a team (sports, music, hobby, family etc.) that worked well together and had a lot of fun?

What made that group of people so effective and a joy to be a part of?

What The Church Is:

The church means a lot of different things to different people. What does the church mean to you?

Three primary images for the church in the Bible are that the Church is:

- A sanctuary;
- The family of God; and
- The body of Christ.

The Church Is A Sanctuary - A Place Of Worship

The Church is a sanctuary, a place where we can meet with God through worshiping and listening to the Word of God being preached.

We were created to worship God and to be in relationship with Him.

Worship is the believer's response to all they are; mind, emotions, body and will to what God is, says and does. It is putting God first in our hearts and minds.

When you come to church when do you feel closest to God?

There is this great story in the Bible where Jesus comes across a woman getting water at a well. The woman at the well gets sidetracked on where to worship. Jesus talks to her about worship and what truly satisfies. Then Jesus says this:

... true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

John 4:23-24

How does God want us to worship Him? What do you think “worship in spirit and in truth” means?

What things can we do to worship God practically when we are at church and when we are at home?

The Church Is The Family Of God -A Place To Love And Be Loved

The Church is more than just us and God though; we were created to connect with God and others, to be the **family of God**. When Adam was alone in the Garden of Eden, one of the very first things that God said was, ***“It is not good for man to be alone.”*** We were created to be in connection with others, to love one another, to be part of God’s family

See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!

1 John 3:1

Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Galatians 6:10

Every family has rituals and special times that bring them together in community. What types of things brought your family together?

- Entry into the church community- Baptism, Discovery Classes, Child Dedication;
- Fellowshiping Together- Home Groups;
- Break Bread Together- Communion.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:32

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

Proverbs 27:17

The Church is the Body of Christ -A Place to Serve

The Church is the **body of Christ**. It is a place where we serve one another and mobilize to serve and reach out to those outside the Church. No man is an island.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but **all** its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.*

1 Corinthians 12:12

What part do you play in the body of Christ? What part would you like to play in the body of Christ?

Foundations

Volunteer

Make Your Mark

Growing The Family Of God

Every person who has become a Christian was told about it by someone.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

In a court of law what makes a good witness?

“The problem with the world is that we draw the circle of our family too small.”

Mother Teresa

If you go to a great restaurant or event do you have to be told to tell other people about it? Or will you just automatically tell other people?

Discovery at Home

Sharing Jesus' Story through Your Story

The apostle Paul shared his story of how he became a Christian many times with the purpose of bringing that person to Jesus. The last time that he recounts his story is particular instructive. The setting is Paul is going before King Agrippa in hopes of being set free from prison. He takes the opportunity, though, to share about Jesus rather than to be released from captivity!

Read Acts 26 and note the following:

- Paul before he encountered Jesus
- Paul encountering Jesus
- Paul's life after Jesus
- Jesus' story

Other things to note:

- Paul asked questions of his audience – verses 8, 27
- Paul faced opposition- verse 25
- Paul answered questions politely and firmly- verses 25, 29
- Paul asked for a response- verse 27
- Paul didn't succeed in this encounter but he did succeed in many others
- Paul prayed that King Agrippa would become a Christian- verse 29

What things can we apply from how Paul shared Jesus' story through his story?

The Bible Fact or Fiction?

Is The Bible Historically Reliable?

Much has been written on this topic. For now, we will look to answer three questions that will help to show that we can trust the Bible to be historically reliable: what does it say, is it true and what do others say about it?

What Does It Say?

The aim of this question is to find out if we can actually know what the original manuscripts said. This question is of utmost importance because we want to make sure that we are reading the words that were written by the biblical authors and not copies that have been changed or corrupted over time.

This is no easy task because we have none of the original manuscripts.

One thing that should be clarified, since it is a common objection to the reliability of the [Bible], is the question most people wrongly ask, “How can we trust a book that was written 2000 years ago?” What matters is not the length of time between the evidence (manuscripts) and the present time, but rather the length of time between the events and the evidence (manuscripts) of those events.

So how do we know that the Bible we hold today is the same as the Bible the early church used and is the same as what the original manuscripts say? To answer this question we need to look at the evidence in the same way we would look at the evidence of other pieces of ancient literature.

First, we look at the number of manuscript copies. This is important because the more manuscripts we have, the more we can compare them. The more copies we can compare, the easier it is to

figure out what the original would have said. If scribes are copying these manuscripts, there is always a chance of a spelling error. If you only had two manuscripts and both are exactly the same except for one word, it is hard to know what was in the original. But if you had ten manuscripts and they are all the same except for one, you can easily figure out which word was in the original.

How do the number of manuscripts compare with other pieces of ancient literature? For example, if you stacked all of the manuscripts from Homer-Pliny into one stack, it would be approximately four feet tall. If you stacked all of the biblical manuscripts into one stack it would be approximately a mile high. In reality, the manuscript evidence for the Bible is overwhelming to the point that we can say that we are 99.5% certain we know what the original manuscripts said. There is no other piece of ancient literature that even comes close to the manuscript evidence for the New Testament.

If we are going to be consistent in how we answer the question of “can we know what it says” then we either have to say we can know what the Bible says or we can’t be confident we know what Homer wrote or intended to write. No one believes this, so therefore there is no good reason to think we can’t know what the Bible says as well.

Therefore, if someone tells you that it’s impossible to know what the Bible says because there are so many copies, you can say it is because of all of those copies we know exactly what was said.

Secondly, we need to know how soon events were recorded after they happened. This is important because the sooner the event is recorded, the less likely it is to be changed or legends inserted. It also allows for people who can corroborate the written message to confirm it is actually true. So how does the New Testament stack up against other pieces of ancient literature?

Again we see that when the New Testament is compared to other ancient literature, nothing comes close to the manuscript evidence

that it has. If we are to be consistent, we cannot say that we can't know what the Bible contains (because the first written evidence comes 25 years later) but in the same breath say that we can trust what's written about Caesar. It's amazing when people say they don't believe Jesus existed or that the Bible is a piece of historical literature and then say they believe Caesar existed even though there are only 10 manuscripts coming 1000 years after the originals.

In summary, there are 27 different documents confirming the New Testament consisting of Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Latin and Arabic manuscripts, totaling over 15,000 handwritten manuscripts. New manuscripts are being found monthly! The oldest manuscript fragment is a credit card sized piece of the Gospel of John called P52, and the oldest full New Testament is the Codex Sinaiticus.

Is It True?

We are not asking whether it is theologically true but rather, are the authors claiming to be recording true events. The reason this question is important is if they are claiming to be recording historical events, then the events should be able to be corroborated, meaning the authors would be concerned with accuracy. This means we need to read it as history, not mythology.

So what do the New Testament writers claim about their writings? Luke 1:1-5 says:

Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron.

Luke 1:1-5

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

John 1:1-3

It seems quite clear from these two passages and many others that the authors are claiming to be recording historical events. Their claim is that what was written has been seen, heard and touched. We can know that the text is trustworthy because it is recorded and corroborated by eyewitnesses who could still be cross-examined when the writings were being distributed.

Secondly, there is something historians call embarrassing testimony, which is used to verify the truthfulness or historical reliability of a document. Embarrassing testimony means including details that make the writers or main characters look less than perfect. Historians look for these details because they are usually included only if they have actually happened. (Normally you don't make yourself look bad by making up a story about yourself if you are trying to start a movement that requires people to trust and follow you.)

Does the New Testament include embarrassing testimony? Actually it contains quite a lot of it. For example, we know that in

the ancient world, the testimony of a woman was not considered as reliable as that of a man's. It is surprising then that the gospel writers say that it was women who discovered the empty tomb first, and they then went and told the men. If you were making this story up in hopes of convincing the known world to follow your beliefs, you would say that men discovered the empty tomb because their word was more trustworthy than the women's. The only reason you include this detail is because it is true.

The second example is Peter: Peter is called 'Satan,' deserts Jesus, is intimidated by a child when questioned about knowing Jesus and is rebuked by Paul for eating with the Jews and not the gentiles. There is no reason this information would be written of the leader of this movement unless it all happened. Again, if they were making this up, it is more probable that they would make their leader a noble, bold and trustworthy man, similar to the ancient mythological heroes and leaders.

The final piece of evidence discussed in this section on the truthfulness of the biblical authors is that of the cost of holding to the beliefs these writers held to: namely that Jesus lived, died, rose from the dead and is the Divine Saviour of the world. Very few, if none, of the people who knowingly make up a lie are willing to die for it. Church history teaches us that all but one of the disciples are recorded as being martyred for their steadfast commitment to Christ.

There is no reason for the Jewish people to make up a story about a dying and rising messiah nor is there a reason to die for something you knowingly made up; that would bring no reward, just pain and sorrow. The high cost for believing what they wrote makes it more probable that the authors were telling the truth.

What Do Others Say?

The last point to discuss in this study of historical reliability is the question of corroboration: what do the outside, non-biblical

sources say about what is written in the Bible. Do they line up or contradict what we read in Scripture?

Overwhelmingly the exterior sources have lined up with what is written in the Bible. That is not to say that everything in the Bible has been discovered or proven, but what has been found has confirmed the places, people and events recorded in the Bible. One only needs to travel to Jerusalem to see that the places mentioned in the Bible are real; the events are rooted in history and not in someone's imagination.

Archeology has confirmed much in showing that the biblical authors can be trusted; in fact, many of the things that historians have doubted and claims of inaccuracy leveled against the Bible have proven to be unwarranted and incorrect. For example, it was believed that Pontius Pilot may not have been a real person or the ruler of the region of Judea. In 1961 a tablet was found in Caesarea Maritima that states exactly that.

Another example would be the accuracy of the crucifixion. Some scholars thought the story of the crucifixion was false because historically they tied the hands and feet of the crucified, not nail them. That was shown to be incorrect when a tomb was discovered that had an ankle bone with a nail going through it. The nail was still present because it had bent upon entry and could not be removed. This showed that nails were used at times and that the crucified victims were occasionally given proper burial rights.

Much more could be said on the topic of the reliability of the scripture. Our hope is that this would give you the confidence to trust that what the Bible said is what the authors wrote and that it is trustworthy and true.

Extra Resources

Websites

[Reasonable Faith.org](http://ReasonableFaith.org)

[Cross Examined.org](http://CrossExamined.org)

Str.org

Coldcasechristianity.com

Risenjesus.com

Premierchristianradio.com/shows/Saturday/unbelievable

Chab123.wordpress.com/2012/03/28/quotes-on-the-existence-jesus/

Nancypearcey.com

Totaltruthweb.blog

Books

Hidden in Plain View

Why are there Differences in the Gospels

Cold Case Christianity

The Books and the Parchments

I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist

The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict

Notes:

