

SESSION 4

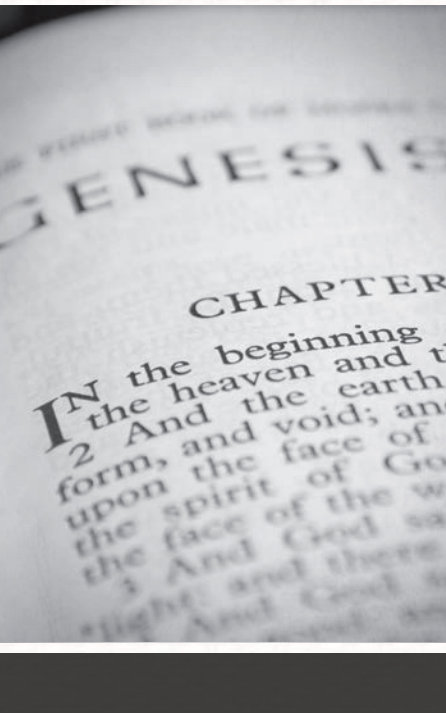
WHY SHOULD I TRUST THE BIBLE?



*What item from your childhood
still works today?*

THE POINT

The only safe place to build your life is on God's Word.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

During this study we've seen the wonders of the universe argue for the existence of a Creator. But who is that Creator? Could the Creator be Allah of the Koran, "the Force" from Star Wars, or another deity people have worshiped throughout history?

The answer is found in the Bible. It points to God as the true and only Creator. Don't other religious books like the Koran of Islam and the Bhagavad Gita of Hinduism make similar claims? Why should we trust the Bible instead of other religious books to tell the truth about God?

Regardless of what product or item we consider dependable and reliable, it will fail us at sometime. Not so with the Bible.

Polls reveal, however, that an increasing number of people do not believe they can trust the Bible to be God's authoritative message. Nevertheless, despite its dismissal by skeptics, the Bible has been proven repeatedly to be trustworthy, reliable, and accurate. We're going to look into Psalm 119, a celebration of the character and impact of God's Word, which has the power to transform lives.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Psalm 119:1-8,137-144 (HCSB)

1 How happy are those whose way is blameless, who live according to the LORD's instruction! **2** Happy are those who keep His decrees and seek Him with all their heart. **3** They do nothing wrong; they follow His ways. **4** You have commanded that Your precepts be diligently kept. **5** If only my ways were committed to keeping Your statutes! **6** Then I would not be ashamed when I think about all Your commands. **7** I will praise You with a sincere heart when I learn Your righteous judgments. **8** I will keep Your statutes; never abandon me.

137 You are righteous, LORD, and Your judgments are just. **138** The decrees You issue are righteous and altogether trustworthy.

139 My anger overwhelms me because my foes forget Your words.

140 Your word is completely pure, and Your servant loves it. **141** I am insignificant and despised, but I do not forget Your precepts.

142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your instruction is true. **143** Trouble and distress have overtaken me, but Your commands are my delight.

144 Your decrees are righteous forever. Give me understanding, and I will live.

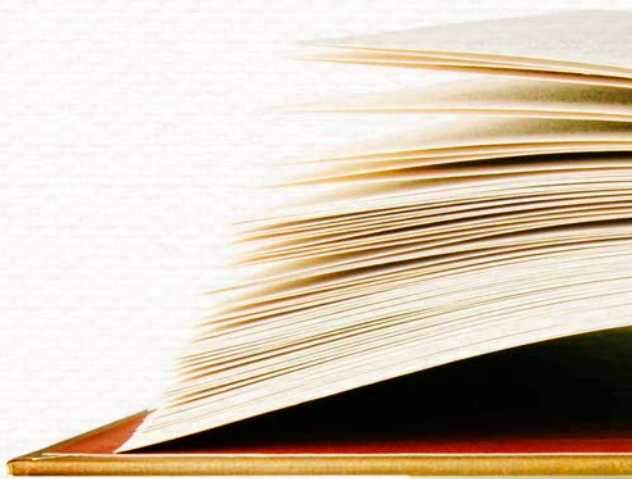
Key Words

judgments (v. 137)—Verdict in a court of law. Here it refers to God's decisions about right and wrong.

decrees (v. 138)—Covenant stipulations, often translated "testimony." God's decrees bear testimony to what is true.

precepts (v. 141)—A precept is a properly appointed principle, a mandate, a guideline for covenant living.

instruction (v. 142)—Also translated *Torah*, refers to a statute, the Ten Commandments, and even the first five books of the Bible.



Psalm 119:137-144

Psalm 119 is loaded with claims for the reliability and truthfulness of the Bible. We refer to this as internal evidence. Relying on claims the Bible makes about itself is circular reasoning (a method of false logic in which "A" is used to prove "B," and "B" is used to prove "A"). Many wonder if there is evidence outside of the Bible that confirms the trustworthiness of Scripture. Consider this external evidence.

- ▶ **Archaeology.** Archaeological discoveries have confirmed many locations and events in the Bible such as the location of Nineveh, the pool of Siloam (where Jesus healed the blind man), the Davidic dynasty, and the rule of Pontius Pilate. Archaeology has not disproved any event, person, or location in Scripture.
- ▶ **Multitude of manuscripts.** There are vast numbers of both Old and New Testament manuscripts, compared with the relatively few manuscripts of other works of antiquity. For example, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 included a nearly complete copy of the Book of Isaiah from 100 B.C., and demonstrated how accurately scribes had copied the text for almost a thousand years. The manuscript support for the New Testament is even more impressive. Today, there are more than 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament.

Contrast that to Homer's *Iliad*, which is next in terms of the number of available manuscripts. Only 643 ancient copies of *Iliad* are available, yet no one questions Homer's classic work. There is more—and earlier—manuscript support for the Jesus Christ described in the Gospels than for any other figure in the ancient world, including Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great.

- ▶ **The impact on humanity.** No book has changed the world more than the Bible. Kings and presidents, sailors and astronauts, and soldiers and peacemakers have invoked its words and articulated its principles. Many of us have read or heard stirring accounts that demonstrate the impact of the Bible.

Having addressed the issue of the Bible's reliability, we should ask ourselves the question, "If we believe it is reliable, are we relying on it as our guide for living?"

What are some reasons people question the reliability of the Bible?

QUESTION #1



God intends for His Word to transform every aspect of our lives. As Psalm 119 so eloquently displays, God’s Word is a treasure that illuminates the pathway to eternal life. Psalm 119:137-144 thunders forth the truth that God’s Word is righteous, pure, and true. The writer used synonyms to refer to God:

- ▶ When the writer called the Lord “righteous” he was ascribing to Him a consistency of character in which there is no deviation.
- ▶ God is upright and maintains His own unswerving standard of perfection. Therefore, His rules or judgments are altogether right, since His rules reflect His character.
- ▶ The Lord’s everlasting righteousness expresses itself in a law that is true. All that God has spoken is accurate and devoid of even the slightest taint of falsehood.

For this reason the psalmist called the Lord’s commandments his delight. Certainly the psalmist was acquainted at times with trouble and anguish. The righteous, pure, and true word of the Lord sustained and nourished him in times of distress.

In verse 144 the writer repeats his assertion of verse 142. God’s Word is righteous forever. One constant of human existence is change. God’s Word, however, is unchanging. It will never be less righteous, pure, or true than it is now or has been in the past. This is the case because God’s Word reflects His character (Heb. 13:8).

What do these verses teach us about God and His Word?

QUESTION #2

RELIABLE DIRECTION

What is a source of advice people look to on these topics?

Work/Career

.....

Marriage

.....

Finances

.....

Raising Kids

.....

Cooking

.....

Other

.....

How the Bible has proven reliable to me:

Psalm 119:1-8

Let's move to the front of the psalm and consider what happens to us when we follow God's Word. We are blessed. This happiness and blessedness is independent of circumstances. It is rooted in confidence that God produces contentment in all circumstances, good or bad.

Happy and blessed is the state of those who value God above all things. It is also the state of those who experience firsthand the joy that flows from conformity to God's Word.

The psalmist began by blessing those whose ways are blameless. These people live consistent with God's principles. Certainly, the psalmist was not sinless, and neither are we. But, like him, we aim for growing in conformity to God's Word rather than simply being satisfied with our current state.

The psalmist was determined not just to know God's Word, but to order his life by it. How do we grow in obedience and avoid what is wrong? The answer is to learn to walk—to live—in the ways of the Lord. This requires intense and diligent effort on our part. This effort is not an attempt to earn favor with God but, rather, it is a response to His gracious revelation of Himself.

According to verse 6, those whose eyes are fixed—or concentrated—on all of the Lord's commandments will not be put to shame. Others may mistreat them, but the God who knows all things and honors commitment to His word will sustain them through it all. Verse 7 makes the very powerful correlation between knowing God's Word and honoring Him with praise. As we grow in our knowledge of God's Word, we find more and more reasons to praise Him.

Finally, in verse 8, we see the psalmist's resolve and determination to keep the Lord's statutes and to obey His Word. His request to not be utterly forsaken is acknowledgement of his desperate need for divine help and restraint as he strives to live according to God's commands.

When have you seen the Bible's instruction work?

QUESTION #3

Why do we follow God's Word?

QUESTION #4

LIVE IT OUT

When the writer called the Lord “righteous,” he ascribed to Him a consistency of character in which there is no deviation. How can you build your life on this altogether right God? For starters:

- ▶ **Schedule time to read God’s Word.** To discover how God blesses, start with Proverbs and read a chapter each day for a month. Do at least one of the proverbs that very day.
- ▶ **Dig deeper.** Read chapter 2, “How Can I Know the Bible is True?” in *How Can I Know?* by Robert Jeffress. Invite others to read and discuss it with you.
- ▶ **Disciple a new believer.** Coach someone else in developing a lifelong habit of Bible reading and study.



Psalm 119 calls us to move from abstract generalities to concrete realities about the Bible. Honoring the God of the Bible means personalizing and applying His commands.

On the Same Page



Though my husband, Anwar, and I both love God’s Word, all attempts to consistently explore it together had failed rather miserably. We were both growing, though we rarely found ourselves, quite literally, on the same page. I longed for the oneness described in Genesis 2, where Adam and Eve “became one flesh.” How could that mystery translate to this portion of our relationship?



To continue reading “On the Same Page” from *HomeLife* magazine, visit BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles.



My group's prayer requests

A series of 15 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

My thoughts