



YEAR OF THE BIBLE

The Bible Instructs Us Year of the Bible – Week 1

01. INTRODUCTION

I want to welcome everyone to week one of our **new series – Year of the Bible!** Throughout this series together we will be looking at how the word of God truly is a lamp for our feet, a light for our path and a guide for our lives. Throughout this series we will see how the word of God has the power to transform our lives by transforming our minds.

- **If there's ever been a year that we need to commit ourselves to living according to God's will and God's ways, it's this coming year.**
- **In order to know the will and the ways of God, you have to know the word of God. You have to prioritize the word of God and let it be the final authority over your life.**

Over the next few weeks we're going to look at How the bible **Speaks** to us, how it **Connects** us, how it **Protects** us, and today, we're going to start off by looking at how **The Bible Instructs Us.**

02. TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

TRANSITION: I'm not sure what your personality is but I like control. I like to know what's coming, I'm a planner and when I don't know, I get insecure, anxious. I learned something that really helped me years ago. A friend saw this cycle, something would be disrupted in my life and it's like my whole life would shake, he pulled me aside and gave me some of the best advice ever!:

When you don't know what you don't know - go back to what you do know.

Wow! How tempting is it for us to forget in moments where we lose control. It is actually in those moments it is most important to go back to our foundation, what we do know... why?

Isaiah 55:8–9 (NLT)

⁸“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

⁹For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Focus on higher, when you're higher your perspective changes. **How do we get God's Perspective: The Bible.** This week you're going to learn about the Gospel “The Good News” about Jesus... Where do we learn about Jesus? God's Word.

03. MESSAGE

As we start our journey together, I want to look at how the bible instructs us – and why we can trust it's instructions.

THE BIBLE INSTRUCTS US

In order for the bible, the word of God to have its effect on you – you have to surrender to it. A lot of people struggle with this – **instead of surrendering to the Bible they surrender to skepticism.**

So, the first thing we want to look at is the fact that:

1. The Bible can be trusted.

As a work of literature, the bible is unparalleled.

- Written by nearly **40 authors** (kings, priests, farmers, lawyers, tax collectors, fisherman, etc) **over 1500 years.**
- **Three** different **languages** on **three continents.**
- **Best-selling book every year, best-selling book of all-time. Nothing else is even close.**

PROBLEM: World is full of people trying to discredit the bible.

The truth is, **most people who don't like the bible**, don't like it because they **don't like what it says about them**.

They will point to all sorts of things in the bible they don't like as justification for hating it, but at the end of the day... **when people actually read it, there is a convicting element that repulses people who want to stay as they are - Being their own god**.

But I know when critiques come, especially if you're new in the faith, critiques can affect you, so I want to help you out today and look at:

Three Common Objections to the Reliability and Authority of Scripture:

1. Condoned Wickedness
2. Historical and Textual Criticism
3. Translation and Transmission Errors

Responses:

1. Condoned Wickedness – **The bible doesn't condone wickedness.**

The bible **does include a lot of stories** that **show the consequences of sin**. Even among the people of God. Stories of **slavery, adultery, polygamy** and **mistreatment of women and children** are included to show us what happens when people live as if there is no God. This is summed up in the final words of the book of Judges that says:

Judges 21:25 (NLT)

²⁵.... all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

Simply put, the bible never says: Hey, these are all good ideas, you should go do them.

Instead, it persistently shows us: What happens when we go our own way.

It is true that God will give the people what they want – but **he's always teaching** them, **instructing** them and **letting consequences be a schoolmaster**.

He **never condones evil**, even though at times he allowed evil to occur.

Additionally – People must have a moral basis for their moral objections. People who reject the morality of scripture have no footing to criticize the morality of scripture.

2. Historical and Textual Criticism – **Biblical writers don't approach history the way we do.**

Postmodernism, specifically western post-modernism approaches fact-based history and reality in strict terms. At least that's what they claim to do. So, if someone says something occurred on a particular date – it better have occurred on that date or it is dismissed as being "wrong".

Biblical writers were less concerned with reporting history and facts the same way we do. This isn't unique to biblical writers. Writers of antiquity were more interested in big ideas, concepts, and their focus on what was important was different than ours.

Christmas Illustration:

We just finished Christmas. There is a big debate about exactly when Jesus was born. **We celebrate in December** and there is a good case to be made for that. There are other **compelling cases** that he could have been born in the **spring pascal season**, and other compelling information suggests he was born in **September**.

You know what matters? – **HE WAS BORN!**

Biblical writers focus far more on his divinity and fulfillment of prophecy than facts and dates and weather data for postmodernist to later deconstruct.

Four Gospels designed to show different perspectives and aspects. Different details do not conflict – they harmonize.

Like two people **singing two different notes** of a song, that compliment each other and **sound better** than if they all were on the exact same note. **Post Modern people struggle with understanding the way biblical writers approached facts and details.**

Postmodernism Defined:

- A **philosophical and cultural movement** that **challenges traditional perspectives** and emphasizes the **relative** nature of **truth** and knowledge.
- **Characterized by skepticism** towards grand narratives and ideologies, arguing that **reality is subjective** and constructed through language, power structures, and cultural contexts.
- This approach often leads to an **emphasis on plurality**, diversity, and the **deconstruction** of established categories and concepts.
- Postmodernism **questions the assumptions and values of previous era's, including biblical assertions and worldviews.**

While **postmodernism** has a **built-in skepticism towards grand narratives, grand narratives are what the bible is all about.**

What's actually remarkable is how many facts and dates and scientific data points can be found in scripture, when that wasn't even the point of why they were writing.

3. Translation and Transmission Errors – **Manuscript Variances Strengthen the Case for Reliability.**

First, you need to understand that like all ancient texts, the scriptures were copied and recopied by hand for centuries. This process inevitably leads to errors and variances in the texts.

ILLUSTRATION: If we were to play a **written form of the telephone game** and I were to write down a story by hand and pass it to first person on front row, then they copy and pass theirs. By the time we got the last persons copy back up here, we would find multiple variances. Especially of the type we find in scripture.

Facts about textual variances:

We have over **5700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.** Ranging from small papyri fragments to complete scrolls and manuscripts.

The **next highest attested works of literature** in all of antiquity are of **Homer's Iliad and Odyssey** – of which there are a few hundred fragments. No complete copies. **No one is running around telling you**

the Odyssey isn't a real book and can't be trusted. They only do this with the bible.

In those 5700 manuscripts of scripture – It is true there are over **400,000 variances**.

But- Over **99% of known variants are not viable.** Meaning they **have no impact on the text.**

99% of them are related to **punctuation**, differences in **spelling**, differences in **word order, smudges** etc.

Of the **viable variances** in the text- meaning they impact the text – they still **do not impact the meaning.**

Most are things like:

- One **copy has two columns** of text, and the **other has only one.** Because a scribe got tired and missed a column.
- **Grammatical errors.** – similar to if I was writing and said **"I want to eat a apple"** vs. **"I want to eat an apple."** It's a mistake, and everyone knows it but everyone knows what I'm trying to say.
- **Homoeoteleuton Errors** – Where two separate phrases or lines have identical endings and the copyist's eye slips from one to the other and omits the intervening words. In English – **if one line ended with the word "Singing"**. Then the **next line ended with "bringing"** but the scribes eye, moving quickly saw the "ing" from "singing", thought it was there for bringing – left it off "bringing" by accident leaving it with "bring" instead.
 - **Again, a meaningful error but not enough to change the meaning.**
- Errors of site or hearing – often times scribes would sit and listen to someone read and they would write. All inevitably produces errors.

Not a single error ever pointed out by a single skeptic has ever changed the character and nature of God, of Jesus, of sin and salvation.

This is the beauty and the reliability of having so many manuscripts of freely transmitted text. Unlike the Koran – which is a highly controlled and

redacted text – the bible was freely transmitted resulting in thousands of copies.

No person or group could ever take the entire bible and remove or add pet doctrines because of how the text has been transmitted. There are simply too many manuscripts with too much agreement for that to be possible.

Even if someone tried, there were other copies buried in the sands of Egypt and the caves of Qumran that would be found to set the record straight.

But... **when we found these additional texts** in Egypt and in what is referred to as the **Dead Sea Scrolls**... guess what we found – **MORE CONFIRMATION.**

When **chief biblical critic, skeptic and atheist Bart Erman** was asked to provide one place where the original reading of the New Testament is no longer found in the modern translations of the New Testament – **all he could point to** was a **difference in 1 name of 1 person in First Peter.**

**Why do we go through the trouble to tell you all this:
So that you can trust the bible and what it says about God,
about Jesus and about us.**

Ultimately the bible has to be more than information – it has to be revelation that leads to relationship with the hero of scripture – Jesus.

Why are people so afraid of the bible that they would rather discredit it than believe it?

Because the bible changes our perspective – challenges our worldview – and refutes our assumptions about life.

Two More Excuses for Not Reading The Bible:

- **I don't understand.** Understand – the Bible is one big story that shows us who God is. That's why we're here to understand. God gave the Bible to ordinary people. It is simple.
- **I don't have time.** Time – we all have the same time and we make time for what matters most.

I want to encourage you to make time!

2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)

¹⁶All 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.

At some point you have to move from being a skeptic, to believing the bible is true and then get in the practice of reading and applying it. As Paul wrote to Timothy – every last word of scripture is useful to correct us and teach us.

With all of that – let me quickly show you 2 more ways that the bible instructs us:

2. The Bible Teaches Us God's Perspective

Everyone has an opinion about what you should do. Everyone wants to tell you how to live but only God's way works... why? Because He created you.

Proverbs 14:12 (NLT)

¹²There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

You will never be fulfilled apart from a relationship with God. We want God to orbit us, but it isn't how he made us.

Isaiah 45:9 (NLT)

“What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who

shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you're doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be?'

You don't just read the Bible. It reads you. Teaches you. Our heart should be, not just "teach me"...but "change me!"

James 1:25 (NLT)

²⁵But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

**The third and possibly most important way the bible instructs us –
3. The Bible teaches us the story of Jesus.**

We talked earlier about big picture and what matters – **Here's what matters – who is Jesus to you?** Here's what John has to say about him:

John 1:1-5 (NLT)

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He existed in the beginning with God. ³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. ⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

Here's what everyone in here knows: There's **darkness in the world**, in **others** and yes, **even in us**. We only overcome darkness with light. No other way...

Before we leave today, I want to bring some light into your life. Some good news... or what the bible calls "The Gospel"

Let's quickly look at:

Four Aspects of the Gospel (Good News) Found in the Bible:

- 1. God created you to belong.** We are created to belong... the desire to be known by others and to know others...for relationship. To know

that our lives matter, that we are worthy, we are good enough, we are loved and acceptance.

Question: **Do you ever feel like you don't belong?**

What if I told you that God made you to belong—to him and to others. When you look around our world, it seems like we are more connected than ever before and yet more isolated and alone at the same time.

To move forward sometimes we have to go back... in this case back to the beginning. Why? because this desire to belong comes from our creator, it comes from God. What do we learn when we go back?

2. Sin separates us from God.

Romans 5:12 (NLT) When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

- The consequences of this decision was far reaching - changing how we relate to God and to others. **The truth is, we can't get back without God's help and his plan.**

Romans 5:17 (NLT)

¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus brings us back to God.

Jesus Restored our relationship with God. For the those who believe in His name he covers us with his righteousness, clothes us with himself—and makes us new. He saves us and calls us family.

Romans 10:9 (NLT) If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

04. CLOSING AND PRAYER

As good as it is to be brought back to God – as we say often, **salvation may be personal, but it isn't private.** We know this because:

4. Jesus brings us back to each other.

John 1:12-13 (NLT) But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become **children of God**. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

What a blessing to be called a child of God. All people are made in his image, but only those who believe and accept Jesus are the children of God. But beyond that, God has made us a people – a new nation. Look what Peter says:

1 Peter 2:9 (NLT)

⁹... For you are a chosen **people**. You are royal priests, a holy **nation**, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

Jesus died and was raised to life to give us a new family, a new community and it plays out in his church. Some of you today haven't experienced that because you haven't experienced him. Maybe you've been too busy, maybe you've been too skeptical. But today he is putting his finger on your heart and calling you home.

Let's Pray