

Worldview of the Christian Faith

Standing for God's Truth

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Preface

After witnessing many of the unfolding events of 2020, it became apparent to me that our country was undergoing a drastic change in direction. As I watched the news on television, the news networks were reporting many stories that were alarming to the values that I have had for many years. For me, it seemed as if everything was going out of control. First, there was Covid, then the not so peaceful...peaceful demonstrations, followed by the election, and many other events in the news. The news agencies were offering many differing viewpoints and opinions, showing the huge divisiveness happening in this country, cries of large-scale racism, and so on. It was difficult to determine what and who to believe. It seemed as if my entire value system was under attack and no longer valued or accepted. I know there have been many times in the past when certain events flared up and caused a rift in society, but this time it seemed more drastic. Especially witnessing the great divide in our country, which was very upsetting. When did we as Americans start to exhibit such hate for one another? Had things gone too far this time? Would we ever return to normalcy? As a Christian believing in Biblical values, I had a real sense that culture and society values were changing rapidly, and I wasn't optimistic that things were changing in the right direction.

I had always believed our country was formed on Christian values, and all the laws and traditions of our country were founded within these values. It has always been clear that not everyone shared my point of view, and everyone certainly has the right to their values and viewpoints.

However, the very fabric of America was under assault. From people tearing down monuments of America's founders, from people occupying cities and chanting for a change to Marxism, from widespread looting to defunding the police, from cries of widespread racism, to

cancel culture, mass media and social media blocking free speech, and on and on, there was a change all around us.

I began to wonder what was behind all these changes, and why society seemed to be moving away from the traditional values I had grown up believing in. Why was everything changing so rapidly? Was I just out of touch? Because of my Christian beliefs, I had always believed in treating everyone fairly, and that everyone is equal, but now I was being taught that because I was a white American male, I was now a racist. I was to blame for all the ills of the world. Social rules were changing in this country and I had better be in step with these changes. Are we as Americans losing our right to free speech? Are we losing the right to have and make our own opinion? Are we losing the right to believe in our values and beliefs? I had always been taught that all people and their beliefs could be different, but we were all to be treated as equals and respect each other's points of view.

We used to hear society teach about tolerance and everyone getting along. Today, this no longer appears to be the case. Society's message, whether society realizes it or not, is no longer about tolerance, but about one belief system and one set of values that everyone should agree with and comply with, if not you are to be shunned, criticized, silenced, re-educated, or canceled. This new attitude of society is no longer about tolerance but intolerance. To society, the idea is more important than the person. A person could be replaced or canceled if they don't agree with the idea of those in charge in our society. It now seems as if society is redefining the principles of right and wrong, meaning we, who are in power, are right, and you, who disagree with us, are wrong. Don't agree with society and you are canceled, period. What society doesn't realize is that everyone should have the right to have their own opinions, ideas, and beliefs. Am I wrong? Isn't this the very definition of inclusion, that we are all different individuals that have the right, in

this country, to freely express ourselves without fear of retribution? That is if society still believes in democracy, but I have strong doubts about this anymore. It's clear that socialism and Marxism are on the rise in this country and democracy may soon be a thing of the past.

Society has lost the concept of including everyone, even though this is the very message they teach. Now the focus is all about power, and whoever has the power, can dictate their influence on everyone else. If you disagree with those who hold the power then you become their enemy, and you are subject to being silenced. There is no place for the enemy in the eyes of society. There is no longer any tolerance for being out of step with the views and beliefs of those who hold the power.

But what about truth? This is another subject that I have witnessed today that appears to be changing rapidly. The very definition of truth in our society has become clouded and controversial.

Everyone has their truth or truth is what you make it out to be for yourself. It appears people today have no value for the learned experience of others. They believe something is not true unless they experience it for themselves.

The society also believes there is nothing to be learned from history or the past. Even though we used to believe that history taught us valuable lessons, and we learned that if we don't pay attention to mistakes made in the past, then we would be subject to repeating those mistakes in the future. Today society has little regard for the past or the lessons learned in the past.

The view of society today seems to be that people in the past were uneducated and unenlightened, their knowledge is outdated, and there is no way their experience would have any relevance in today's modern culture.

With this viewpoint, we are doomed to repeat all the mistakes from the past. If you look at history, you can see the causes of the decline of all the great and powerful nations of the past. When you look at America today you may see that America is already making many of the same mistakes as these nations in the past. If we want to be smart about it, we would try to eliminate these same mistakes and make whatever corrections are needed to not repeat these same mistakes. However, we continue to ignore all these valuable lessons, and blindly march down the same road as these past nations.

If we must continue learning repeatedly what we should have learned in the past, then how on earth will we ever advance? We will be continually stuck in this circle of relearning everything from scratch, without having enough time to move forward and better society. Today we are witnessing this happening in full force. Not only are we failing to advance as a society, I believe we are declining as a society.

What about truth? Society seems to have little regard and respect for the concept of truth. By that, I mean how everyone distorts the truth or just tells outright lies to promote their agenda. The opinion seems to be if it's for the greater good, whatever that may be, then it's justified to tell lies and distort the truth. You can't watch the news on American television without watching some news reporter spinning a story to make it fit their agenda. The facts don't matter, the truth doesn't matter, the only thing that matters are that the story is slanted so that it teaches the reporter's point of view, or the network's point of view, in their attempt to control what the public should believe. News is no longer news; it is now a springboard for persuading public opinion to believe in a particular point of view. Truth has no value anymore, and it testifies to how badly the morals of society have gone astray.

This viewpoint also accounts for the reasons why social media wants to be in the business of controlling and blocking free speech. If the truth differs from their point of view, then social media wants to block it and hide the truth. If you post a value or point of view that is contrary to that platform's point of view, then the post is taken down immediately so no one will see it. Social media networks do not want anyone persuaded by a viewpoint that is different from theirs, so initially, they will suppress the post. If this happens more than once, you get canceled. Your account gets closed and you are no longer allowed to post your opinion on their social media platform.

But is this right? Are we no longer allowed to speak our opinions freely? Apparently Not! Just think about it, we are losing our freedom of free speech, and very few people seemed to be alarmed. As a society, we are in danger of losing the freedoms this country has enjoyed for over 240 years. So then, what's next. What rights will we lose next? How about the second amendment? It's just around the corner. The government will now use gun violence and so-called white supremacy threats as an excuse for abolishing the rights of citizens to bear arms. If the government achieves this there will be no turning back. Our long-lived democracy will be over. The government will have full power to impose any restrictions on the public it chooses.

Views of society are rapidly changing. But how would these changes in society impact me as a Christian, and how would it impact other Christians? Christians would not be immune from the changes in society, and this caused me to wonder how strong society's influence is over what Christians believe in, their moral values, and how we view God and the Bible. As I thought about this, I soon began to realize that society has had a strong influence over Christian values for many years. The first question I wanted to look at was, what values are Christian children learning in society today? With the schools no longer teaching anything about God, children only

learn the values of the society. Sure, these children may learn about God in Church and Sunday school, spending four to five hours at most in a Church setting, compared to thirty to forty hours a week in a school setting. They are going to hear and learn more teachings at a school than they will from Church, Sunday school, or even from home. This will have a great impact on any child.

After going to public school many Christian students start to develop doubts about their faith. They are bombarded by many different cultures, viewpoints, and teachings that greatly differ from what they know from Church. Then when they move on to college, they enter a realm that does not teach anything about God, strongly rejects God, and boldly proclaims that God is a myth. By this time many Christians have completely lost their faith, or have abandoned Christianity and the Church. These Christians have now come to believe many false teachings about God, the Bible, and the Christian faith.

This is what caught me off guard the most during all the events of 2020. Many self-professed Christians were in lockstep with the views of society, even though these views are completely different than the views presented in the Bible. There are many Christians who express completely different views on society, the world, faith, social behavior, morals, and so on, views that were quite different than my own.

This took me somewhat by surprise. I had always assumed that Christians would have the same beliefs, the same moral values, would believe the words from the Bible and all stand together with one common faith. But in talking with many different people, Christians, and non-Christians alike, it became apparent that many Christians were supporting many of these new values of society instead of believing in the Godly values taught in the Bible. If we're Christians,

shouldn't we all believe in the same thing, have the same values, and see the Bible in the same way?

But again, the first thing I had to remember is that all people are influenced by society and by the views of society. Just like I mentioned earlier, going to public school and college can have a very powerful impact on anyone, even a Christian. The generation growing up in this country after 1964, is the first generation in America that hasn't been taught anything about God in the public schools. So naturally, people growing up in public schools after 1964, would certainly have a wide range of values and beliefs to pick and choose from and take for their very own. Values and beliefs no longer included any teachings of God or the Bible.

But why would a Christian ignore what is written in the Bible and reject it, and choose instead to believe in what is taught in society? Are society's views and teachings more important than God's views and teachings? How would a Christian be influenced to believe in the values of society more strongly than the values of the Bible, especially when these values differ from one another?

I can certainly understand people who are not Christians having completely different values and beliefs, but for Christians to have different values and beliefs was very puzzling. I even began to doubt myself. Was I reading and understanding the Bible incorrectly? Or is the Bible out of date and do I need to keep up with the times and reevaluate my views and values?

Then, I decided to investigate my Christian faith and see if I could discover the truth about Christianity. I wanted to know why there are so many different beliefs among people who call themselves Christians? Why would one Christian believe in one point of view, but another Christian believe in the complete opposite point of view?

So then, what exactly should a Christian believe in? What should a real Christian look like? How should a Christian act, and what should a Christian believe? Perhaps some of my beliefs and values had been corrupted by what I have learned by being a member of society. After all, I didn't grow up in Church and I went to public school, so it's possible that I could have some un-Biblical beliefs and values that are counter to God's teachings in the Bible. I decided to dig in and do some fresh research. I wanted to almost forget what I knew or thought I knew, clean the slate, and start over. Maybe my perceptions had gone awry and I needed a new viewpoint. I wanted to be like a child learning about God for the very first time.

I started looking into the basics of Christianity, asking the questions, who is God, what is the Bible, and who am I? Is there room for different beliefs in the Christian faith? As I began looking into some of these issues it became apparent, as I said earlier, that all people, including Christians, are framed by what goes on around them. It's hard to know who to trust and how to determine what is right and what is wrong. It became apparent that to truly discover what a Christian is, one would have to look at the other value systems of the world. After all, we can't help being impacted by all the things, we hear around us from people of different faiths. After starting my research, I became very surprised that many so-called Christian websites posted things I couldn't believe. These were Christian websites that posted that Jesus never claimed to be God and that the Trinity was false. So, I had to dig deep into the Bible to see what it said about these ideas.

Another huge influence in today's culture is science. It's important to look at science and what science has to say and its impact on our beliefs. Science has a strong grip on society in this modern age, and few people would be able to survive today without all the modern marvels of science. So do science and religion have a connection, or any common ground, or is science and

religion completely at odds with one another? We all are taught things about science as we go to school, and we learn about scientific advancements continually in the media. But what exactly are the real facts? Where does science get its point of view and how does science arrive at the conclusions that it does? Does science consider anything the Bible has to say or does science discredit what the Bible has to say, thusly starting with a completely different premise and set of assumptions? Is there any way to arrive at the facts, or do the preconceptions and assumptions drive the direction of how the facts are interpreted? After all, we all have the same evidence and pieces of information, so shouldn't it point to the same conclusions?

Our preconceptions about what we believe in do impact the results we arrive at? In many regards' science is looking to make assessments about the past by looking at the information and evidence we possess in the present. The Bible also investigates the past and people reading the Bible may judge the past based on their understanding of what we know about living in the present.

There are many events written about in the Bible that we need to examine. The Bible teaches us valuable lessons but many people question whether these events happened. What are these events trying to teach us today? Are these events used only to teach us a moral or spiritual lesson? Do these events impact the way we look at the modern world? Are we not able to believe in these past events because we are influenced by what society says about them? It's important to know what society has to say about these events? How does society look at these events and what does society believe about these events? These events shape the Christian perspective, impact the way Christians look at the world, and they teach us many lessons on who God is and on our understanding of what God means to us in a personal way.

What is the most important thing that God wants to teach us and for us to know, and how does that impact the way we should live in society? If you are a nonbeliever who wants to know more about the meaning of life, I urge you to keep reading. You have absolutely nothing to lose except for the time you have spent reading this. I just want to give you something to consider. If you are truly looking for the purpose and meaning in your life, you should be considering all options, even this one. You can choose to accept it or you can choose to reject it. This is totally up to you and you alone. I do not desire to force anything on you that you do not want. The Bible states that God's greatest desire is that no one should perish. God does not want anyone to be separated from Him, He chooses to have a relationship with every Human Being on this planet, past, present, and future, and that includes you. You may have been taught differently but God, by definition, is love. This doesn't mean that God is capable of love, it means that God is complete and total love. He loves you just as much as He loves anyone else. He loves the non-Christian just as much as He loves a Christian. I don't deserve His love but I freely accept it. This may all sound too good to be true, but is it? An infinite and Holy God loves every one of us with total unconditional love.

As Christians, it is our mission to seek out those who are not close to God. We are instructed to share with them God's Word. We are to do this with respect, gentleness, and kindness. We must share with them our story and what we know, but we are never to try to force them into believing what we say or what we believe in. We are messengers, not Saviors. We plant the seed, but God makes it grow. Only God saves. Why must we reach out to nonbelievers? As I mentioned earlier because God desires that no one should perish. How would the world look upon us as Christians, if we had the cure for cancer but keep it a secret? The world would think evil of us if we kept it a secret, as they rightly should. We have the keys to eternal life and we

must share it with all the people of the world. We cannot keep this a secret. All Christians have this responsibility.

I hope that all people come together in peace and love. We are all created by God, and that means we are all equal in His eyes. There should be no racism, hatred, prejudice, or intolerance. Every Human Being on this earth is valuable to God and therefore has value to us as well. People are what matter in the scheme of things, people are the most important creation in all the world, this includes every individual, not just some. All people are due love and respect. We all live on this earth, and we must all do everything in our power to help any person in need. Even though we may have different points of view, we must all unite in our common goals to help the helpless, feed the poor, and make the world a safer and better place.

It is not my intention to insult or criticize any group or individual. I know however that you may read something written here that you don't believe, or something may even offend you. I may write something here that goes against something you passionately believe in. If so, I truly apologize in advance. If you disagree with what I have to say you certainly have the right to do so. Again, it is not my intent to force my beliefs on you. I am merely trying to speak the truth from a Godly and Biblical perspective as best I can. I know I am far from perfect. I am a flawed individual that can make mistakes and I am capable of hurting others because of my sinfulness. This is not my desire or intent. We are all individuals, and as such we will certainly have our differences. It is only my intent to share with you the things I have learned and discovered for myself, and then allow you to make up your mind. After all, maybe you have also asked yourself some of the very same questions I have mentioned here? My goal is for everyone to be reconciled with God, and that no one is condemned. Every Human Being that has ever lived on this earth is valuable to God. God has a plan for everyone and desires that everyone is in a close

relationship with Him, not only in this temporary life here on earth but for all eternity. Our time here on earth is very short. We are all eternal beings that will exist after this life on earth is over and for all eternity. That's a long time. The question is where do you want to spend your eternity?

Introduction

Today Christianity is the world's largest religion, with over two billion people identifying themselves as Christians. But does proclaiming to be a Christian make you a Christian? What exactly does it take to be a Christian? Is a Christian simply a person born in a Christian family or a person you occasionally go to church with?

Many people call themselves Christians. Some people use the word, Christian, to declare their birth heritage, some say they were born a Christian, some say they are a Christian because they are a good person, and some say they are a Christian because they attend church. Some even think Christian refers to a political viewpoint. For others, the term Christian is no more than a box to check off on an application or survey form.

The Bible first identified followers of Jesus Christ as Christians in (Acts 11:26), “and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year, they met with the church and taught considerable numbers of people, and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” The word Christian literally means, belonging to the party of Christ or simply a follower of Christ.

So then, what is a Christian? When a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus came to talk with Jesus one night, he acknowledged that God was with Jesus because of all the miraculous signs Jesus performed. Jesus told Nicodemus, Jesus responded and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3).

To be a Christian, you must be born again, meaning that you make a conscious choice to turn from your sins, that you repent, and by faith believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who loved

us, and paid the price of our sins on the cross, shed His blood, died, was buried, and was raised to life on the third day. CRU, HOW TO KNOW GOD, WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN? ¹

A true Christian, not only obeys the word of God but also puts their faith and trust in the person and the works of Jesus Christ. We place our faith in the fact that Jesus died on the cross as payment for our sins and was resurrected on the third day. The mark of a true Christian is love for others and obedience to God's Word. 1 John 2:4-10 says, "the one who says, I have come to know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; The one who loves his brother and sister remains in the Light, and there is nothing in him to cause stumbling." A true Christian is indeed a child of God, a part of God's true family, and one who has been given new life in Jesus Christ.

Does this mean that Christians are perfect? Of course not. Christians are still hypocrites and sinners, just like everyone else. But remember, people don't go to hell because of their sin, they go to hell for their unbelief. The Bible says that good works do not make us acceptable to God. Simply being a good person or doing good things does not make us Christian. It's not about the good works, it's about faithful obedience to God and His word. If Christians have obedience and faith, then good works will also come.

Paul talks about the importance of love. One must love God and love their neighbor as themselves, love...even their enemies. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "Three things will last forever faith, hope, and love and the greatest of these is love." Jesus replied to the question of what is the greatest commandment as follows in Matthew 22:37, Jesus replied, "you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments. Jesus also

said in Matthew 5:43–48, “You have heard that it was said, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in Heaven.”

The core beliefs of Christianity are summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, “Now I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, by which you also are saved if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain. For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Is this what you believe about Christianity? Do you consider yourself to be a real Christian? Being a Christian is not just what you do, but what you think and how you think. Christianity is a worldview. The Bible is the first source of what God says to us and we must truly follow the teachings we receive from the Bible to be true Christians.

If you are a Christian and disagree with anything you have read so far, I urge you to continue reading and think about your stance. Ask yourself why you believe the things you believe? Have you heard something different about Christianity from people you know, or from a Church you attend? Perhaps you've heard something different from your Pastor or Priest. If you have, I urge you to dig into the Word, the Holy Bible. This is where truth begins. We should always test everything we hear and compare it to the Word of God. Remember, no human is perfect. Not even your priest or pastor. Only God is perfect. If the Word of God tells you something different than what you hear or believe, you may need to rethink your beliefs. God's Word is the source of truth. The Bible is the source you should always trust. If you trust something or someone more than the Bible, then it's time to question why! We all get caught up

in believing things that we hear and assume we are hearing the truth. It's easy to be deceived and believe what is false. People may have good intentions, but everyone is capable of speaking mistruths. It's not intentional, but it does happen. Think about the source and determine for yourself who or what you will trust. The only true unmistakable source of truth is God's word and the Bible.

Chose to follow the Word of God, and make God's Word your number one priority. When in direct contradiction to God's Word a true believer must choose to walk away from anything they may believe that is contrary to God's revelation in the Holy Bible.

I often hear that some Christians look at Christianity as a set of values and beliefs, and like a smorgasbord, they just pick and choose which of these values and beliefs to follow, and then just ignore the rest. Unfortunately, that doesn't work. As a true Christian believer, you must follow and believe in all Biblical values. If you don't believe in all of them, then how can you believe in any of them? The Bible is either all true, or all false. God has given us complete truth, not partial truth. If you are a smorgasbord Christian, I implore you to rethink this approach. If you truly disagree with anything written in the Bible, you need to make it a priority to determine why this is the case. Again, society pulls us in all directions, and we can all be influenced by this, but we must remember that the Bible is the source of truth, not the values and beliefs of society.

Once you answer the question, Am I truly a Christian, then you have the personal responsibility to ask yourself, what does this mean to me? Have I rejected or accepted God's Word, and am I following all of God's commands as I should?

If you've accepted God's gift of salvation, how has your life changed? Do you have the marks of a follower of Jesus Christ? Is your life will be characterized by love for others and obedience to God's Word. Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did.

A true Christian is a person who repents. This means to feel pain, sorrow, or regret for something they have done or left undone. It means changing your mind and determining to change your actions. It means to experience such sorrow for sin as it produces an adjustment to one's life, be grieved over one's past life, and seek forgiveness. As stated in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let every one of you is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The Bible speaks extensively about the subsequent lifestyle of believers in what it calls fruit of the spirit. For example, we read about the fruit of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such, there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:22–24). This wholesome fruit stands in contrast to the unfruitful works of darkness: "Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is

shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.” (Ephesians 5:1–12).

ALL ABOUT RELIGION, “WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?”²

Walking in the fruit of the Spirit is often a telltale sign that people are living out their Christian lives as a tribute to the Lord who redeemed them from sin and death. Identifying true Godly believers can be difficult. The book of 1st John speaks extensively about how to identify those unbelievers. A true Christian believer must not love the world. Christians must love one another.

Christians should also know that the world will probably not accept them, and a world will probably even hate them. Christians should be in the truth. Christians must know and listen to God and know that God is love. Christians must confess that Jesus is God and we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true. If someone continues to live evil lives even though they claim to follow Christ, that person cannot be a true Christian. Only in believing in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and loving others, just as He commanded us can you be a true Christian. CHRISTIANITY.COM, JACK GRAHAM, “WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN,”³

Those who belong to God practice righteousness. Those who do not practice righteousness do not belong to God. When a person is truly reconciled to God when a person is truly converted when a son is truly regenerated and born again, then when all that occurs, when there is new birth and regeneration, and redemption and conversion, a real transformation of that person takes place.

“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We used to be the slaves of sin and now we are the slaves of righteousness. This marks a true Christian. Romans 3:10 says; “There is none righteous, no not even one.” Only through Jesus does a Christian

obtain righteousness. Then righteousness is now the truest expression of the Christian believer's inner person. We are manifestly righteous, we who are truly regenerated.

We have just touched the surface of what we know a Christian is like. As we continue, we will look in more depth at the Bible to gain insight into its validity and teachings, look at God to learn who He truly is, and finally at Humanity to understand our importance and relationship with God.

Section 1 – The Bible, God, and Humanity

Chapter 1 – The Bible

In all of history, the Bible is probably the most unique book ever written. It's unique because it has forty authors, and these authors took about 1,500 to 2,000 years to write it. Also, the Bible is not just one book but sixty-six books. Each book of the Bible was written and developed completely independently from one another. John Adams, the second president of the United States, is rumored to have said; "I have examined all religions, and the result is that the Bible is the best book in the world." JOHN ADAMS, ALLEGED QUOTE ¹

The word *Bible* comes from the Latin and Greek words meaning “the books”. It can also have the meaning of scroll. By the second century BC, Jewish groups began calling the books of the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, “the scriptures,” and they referred to them as holy, and Christians now commonly call the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible, “the Holy Bible” or “the Holy Scriptures.”

The Bible has some books that concentrate on the law, some on history, some on poetry, some on prophecy, and some on biographies. Some of the books are letters, which are also called epistles. The Christian Bible has two main sections. The first section is called the Old Testament, and the second section is called the New Testament. The Old Testament was written by Jewish authors. The first author Moses, was credited with writing the first five books of the Old Testament, which is called the Torah (meaning “law,” “instruction,” or “teaching”) or the Pentateuch (“five books”). The first book, Genesis, tells the story of creation, the fall, the flood, the dispersal of people on the earth, and God’s building of a nation through Abraham. God promised to use Israel to bless the whole world through the lineage of Abraham. The Pentateuch,

together with the book of Joshua, is the history of the Jews becoming a nation and possessing the Promised Land. These books make up the first part of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament then has a second part called the Nevi'im, meaning; “the Prophets.” This section continues the story of Israel in the Promised Land, describing “the establishment of the monarchy and presenting the messages of the prophets to the people. Once Israel was established as a nation, God raised a family within that nation through whom the blessing would come: the family of David- (Psalm 89:3–4). Then, from the family of David was promised one Man who would bring the promised blessing.

The third and final part of the Old Testament is called the Ketuvim, meaning “the writings,” or Hagiographa. This section contains the psalms, proverbs, and narrative histories. The writings include speculation on the place of evil and death in the scheme of things (Job and Ecclesiastes), along with some poetical works, and some additional historical books. These three sections were written mostly in Hebrew, with some parts in Aramaic.

These books mark the completion of the Hebrew Bible. Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria and elsewhere in the Jewish movement considered additional scriptures. These additional texts were included in a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Koine Greek known as the Septuagint (meaning “the work of the seventy”), which began as a translation of the Torah. The Septuagint contained all the books of the Hebrew Bible. This Hebrew Bible is what is included in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible. Not only is the Old Testament the story of the Jews as a nation, but it is also the preview of a needed Savior. From the Jews, God brought Jesus into the world.

From this point begins the New Testament of the Christian Bible. During the rise of Christianity in the first century A.D., new scriptures were written. These scriptures were written

in Greek about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who Christians believed was the Messiah prophesied in the books of the Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible. Two collections of these new scriptures – the Pauline epistles and the Gospels – were accepted as canon by the end of the second century A.D. Between AD 385 and 405, the early Christian church translated its canon into Vulgar Latin (the common Latin spoken by ordinary people). This translation known as the Vulgate, included in its Old Testament the books that were in the Septuagint. The Vulgate introduced stability to the Bible, but also began the East-West schism between Latin-speaking Western Christianity (led by the Roman Catholic Church) and multilingual Eastern Christianity (led by the Eastern Orthodox Church).

The New Testament begins with four books, called the Gospels. The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, deal with the life, the person, and the teachings of Jesus, as He was remembered by the Christian community. Like the Old Testament, the New Testament is a collection of several books. The book of Acts begins the story of Christianity from the Resurrection of Jesus to the time of the death of Paul. Next are many letters written by various leaders of the early Christian church. Lastly, the Book of Revelation is the writing of prophecy. The New Testament developed over time, after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

Christians believe that Jesus is more than just a historical figure; and that He is more than a mere human. He is God in the flesh, and His coming was the most important event in the history of the world. God Himself became a human to give us a clear, understandable picture of who He is, and what God is like. Jesus is God in human form.

Jesus is the central character of the entire Bible. The Old Testament predicts His coming, and the New Testament describes His arrival in the world and His work to bring salvation to our sinful world.

God created humanity and placed them in a perfect environment; however, humanity rebelled against God and fell from what God intended them to be. God placed the world under a curse because of sin but immediately set in motion a plan to restore humanity and all creation to its original glory.

As part of His plan of redemption, God called Abraham out of Babylonia into Canaan (about 2,000 B.C.). God promised Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, also called Israel, that He would bless the world through a future descendant of theirs. Israel's family emigrated from Canaan to Egypt, where they grew to be a nation. About 1,400 B.C., God led Israel's descendants out of Egypt under the direction of Moses and gave them the Promised Land, Canaan, as their own. Through Moses, God gave the people of Israel the Law and made a covenant (testament) with them. If they would remain faithful to God and not follow the idolatry of the surrounding nations, then they would prosper. If they forsook God and followed idols, then God would destroy their nation. About four hundred years later, during the reigns of David and his son Solomon, Israel was solidified into a great and powerful kingdom. God promised David and Solomon that a descendant of theirs would rule as an everlasting king. After Solomon's reign, the nation of Israel was divided. The ten tribes to the north were called Israel, and they lasted about two hundred years before God judged them for their idolatry. Assyria took Israel captive about 721 B.C. The two tribes in the south were called Judah, and they lasted a little longer, but eventually they, too, turned from God. Babylon took them captive about 587 B.C. After about seventy years of captivity, God brought a remnant of the captives back into

their land. Jerusalem, the capital, was rebuilt about 444 B.C., and Israel once again established a national identity. About four hundred years later Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. Jesus was the descendant promised to Abraham and David, the One to fulfill God's plan to redeem humanity and restore creation. Jesus faithfully completed His work but was sentenced to death by the Romans because the Jewish religious leaders claimed He was a false teacher claiming to be God. Jesus died for our sin and rose from the dead. The death of Christ is the basis for a new covenant (testament) with the world. All who have faith in Jesus will be saved from sin and live eternally.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His followers for forty days. He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, to wait for what the Father had promised, and to receive power and be filled with the Holy Spirit. God's promise, as spoken by the prophet in the Old Testament, was to “pour out My Spirit on all humankind” (Joel 2:28). This event of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is the event referred to as Pentecost. After receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples responded to Jesus's instructions to spread the good news everywhere of His life and His power to save. Jesus's disciples went in every direction spreading the news of Jesus and salvation. They traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, and all the Roman Empire. The Bible closes with a prediction of Jesus's return to judge the unbelieving world and free creation from the curse.

All the books of the entire Bible flow without wavering in their message and teachings. This unity is because, ultimately, it has one Author, God Himself. The human authors wrote exactly what God wanted them to write, and the result was the perfect and Holy Word of God, (Psalm 12:6). The Bible is regarded by Christians as divinely inspired. The Bible has done more to shape literature, history, entertainment, and culture than any book ever written. Its influence

on world history is unparalleled and shows no signs of abating. With estimated total sales of over five billion copies, it is widely considered to be the best-selling book of all time. It sells approximately one hundred million copies annually.

How Society Views the Bible

Society looks at the Bible in many ways. Some view the Bible as a good book to learn some valuable lessons from, while others view the Bible as a series of unbelievable fairy tales not to be taken seriously. The truth is, most people in society don't give much thought to the Bible and place little importance on the Bible and its teachings. Many in society believe the Bible is old and outdated, merely a collection of stories from the past that have little or no meaning in today's modern world. Society will tell us that the Bible is not true. Because they choose not to believe in God, they refuse to take seriously something written so long ago that they haven't witnessed for themselves. They say the Bible is not reliable and it contains many errors. Isn't this exactly what you would expect from people who don't believe in God in the first place?

Even Christians have varying viewpoints on the interpretation of the Bible. So then, what is society supposed to believe about the Bible? If they don't believe in the reliability of the Bible, can we blame them? It becomes clear that the Bible is viewed in many ways, it can be interpreted in many ways, and just because you call yourself a Christian, it doesn't mean that we all see the Bible in the same light.

Even though many in our society do not believe in the Bible, awareness of the Bible is very high. Here are some interesting facts about the Bible from Barna Research: Barna Research, WHAT DO AMERICANS REALLY THINK ABOUT THE BIBLE? ²

- 88% of Americans own a Bible. Despite such a high number, that's declined since 1993, when 92% of Americans owned a Bible.
- On average, American Bible owners have three and a half Bibles in their homes, and 24% of Bible owners have six or more.
- 79% of Mosaics (people aged eighteen to twenty-eight) own a Bible, compared with 95% of Elders (who are aged sixty-five plus).
- 59% who have no faith or who identify as atheists own a Bible.
- 40% of Mosaics say they are interested in the Bible's wisdom on dealing with illness and death, compared to 28% of adults.
- 35% of Mosaics are interested in the Bible's perspective on dating and relationships.
- 42% of Mosaics want to know what Scripture says about parenting.
- 47% of adults said the Bible contains everything a person needs to live a meaningful life.
- 39% of Americans believe that the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths.
- 25% of Americans believe the Bible to be inspired but contains errors.
- 23% of Americans are antagonistic to the Bible.
- 17% of Americans never or rarely read the Bible.

Culture has certainly changed over the years and is far different now than it was in the time that the Bible was written. Our understanding of scripture is influenced by our cultural background and circumstances. Since culture has changed so much over the years, do we need to look at the Bible differently as we read it? In today's culture, we often focus more on ourselves. Every person has a distinct worldview, which influences their approach to the Bible. As believers, the goal is to read the Bible for what it says, not what we want it to say.

More people today than ever before are denying the truth of both God and the Bible. Society views truth as so much different today than it did in the past. Today it's all about my truth, meaning whatever is true for me is my truth and whatever is true for you is your truth.

The modern world hates authority and focuses on self-worth, which causes individuals to become more sinful and self-centered and turn away from the teachings of the Bible.

Changing culture is unavoidable. Even though culture has changed and will continue to change, there is always a way to read and understand the teachings in the Bible. As believers, we can still read and get everything we need out of the Bible no matter what the culture believes. As believers, we can still read and understand the Bible correctly despite the changing values of our culture.

How Christians View the Bible

The Bible should be the Christian guide on how to live, what to believe, and how we should conduct ourselves. The Bible gives us our moral laws and obligations. Sometimes these rules are hard to follow. As Christians, we must do all we can to follow what the Bible says, even though it can be very difficult. Even Christian, don't like following rules or being told how to act. The Bible teaches all aspects of life: how we should live, why we exist, what happens when we die, and what our meaning and purpose in life are. But as Christians, what should we believe about the Bible?

First, Christians should believe that the Bible is God's inspired source for revelation. Christians believe that God gave us a collection of writings that were inspired by God. For Christians, the Bible is the authoritative, written testimony to the highest source of revelation, Jesus Christ. The Bible is Inspired by God – The Apostle Paul, explains why the scriptures are trustworthy. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and

training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). God-breathed is the literal translation of inspired. Much more than a feeling that motivates an artist's creativity, inspiration is God working through the writer He chose to record authoritative truth. Even though the Bible is inspired we know that the Bible is written by people. Peter, described how words breathed by God can be delivered through humans. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's 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. It seems God delights in using humans as instruments for His most important work.

Second, Christians should believe that the Bible is reliable. The Bible has undergone rigorous scrutiny for centuries from skeptics and believers alike, from documentary evidence cross-referencing other historically credible sources to extensive archeological verification. The more scrutiny it undergoes, the more trustworthy it has been proven to be. Christian theologians attribute such a high degree of reliability to how the Bible came into existence. Consider these points:

The Bible is remarkably consistent, despite having been written by more than forty different writers over 1,500 to 2,000 years. God's moral laws are consistent and are the same from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Bible is consistent with the fall and humanities rebellion against God through God's plan of Salvation, never changing throughout all of scripture. is consistent throughout the pages of Scripture. We would expect this consistency if the Bible claims to be God's revelation.

The Bible is also most authentic compared to all ancient literature in terms of the number of ancient manuscripts found and the short amount of time between when they were first written

and the oldest surviving manuscripts. This eliminates any possibility of alteration from the original texts. The Bible has been accurately communicated throughout the ages, far more so than any other ancient document. Few people would doubt that Plato wrote the works identified to him, yet the Bible is far more authenticated than Plato's writings. The Bible has also been accurately translated from the past to the present.

Third, the Bible is the Ultimate Guide. The best way to understand why the Bible is such an influential book is to experience it for yourself. King David wrote; “Your words are a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” in Psalm 119:105. Christians in every generation have relied upon the Bible for...

- instruction: Knowing right from wrong, truth from error,
- inspiration: Amazing, true stories of God's work in the world,
- and insight: Discovering where we came from, what's broken, and what God has done to fix it.

Today we have a very accurate representation of the original texts. We have copies of very old manuscripts and throughout history, these copies show that the Bible has been translated accurately. Despite many skeptical claims that the Bible has often been changed through the centuries, the evidence points to the truth and reliability of the Bible. The New Testament writings are incredibly accurate. There are minor differences in manuscripts, but none of these variant's impact or change any Christian beliefs or claims.

No one could argue that the Bible's authenticity is in doubt unless they are willing to doubt all other works of antiquity because they are far less substantiated than our Bible. Mark 13:31 says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Another strong case for believing the truth of the Bible is this: If you were to set out to create a new religion and wrote a book about it, wouldn't you build the characters in that book to be almost superhuman? Well, just look at the characters in the Bible. Everyone was flawed. Adam sinned, Abram lied about his wife, claiming to the Egyptian King that she was his sister, Jacob deceived his father Isaac and brother Esau, Joseph was boastful to his brothers, Moses murdered a man, King David was adulterous and sent a man into battle so he would die. And on and on. Every single character in the Bible is flawed, none of them anywhere close to superhuman. The people in the Bible were far from perfect. If this story was just made-up, wouldn't you create better people? Look at Jesus' disciples. They all fled when Jesus was arrested and went into hiding. None of the disciples believed that Jesus was God until after the resurrection. Yet after the resurrection, they all came out of hiding to boast of Jesus and to spread the gospel. Would you do that if the resurrection was a lie? Of course not! Every disciple was put to death for spreading the gospel, except for John who was sentenced to exile. They were no longer fearful; they boldly shared their belief in Jesus Christ and died because of it. They all could have been spared if they would only admit that Jesus was not the Messiah. They would have lived by telling a lie, but they chose to die for telling the truth. They knew the truth because they were witnesses to the life of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. The change in the disciples is a huge reason to believe that the Bible is true.³ The disciples saw the resurrected Christ, and they willingly died for speaking about Him. They knew without a doubt, that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and they died to teach this to all the people they encountered. Would you choose to die to protect a lie, when you could live by staying silent? Of course not! You couldn't make this up if you tried! The Bible uses imperfect people to deliver the message of God to the entire world. But

still, we must look at the evidence of what is written in the Bible and discern that evidence as it relates to us today.

God used about forty people to write the Bible and His Spirit rested on each writer in such a way that allowed each author to write what God intended for them to write, using their own words, but the message from God was accurately captured in their writing's. If the Bible were God's Word, we would expect it to be consistent and unified, and it is.

Many prophecies were made in the Old Testament that was later proven true. The remarkable evidence of fulfilled prophecy is just one case in point. Hundreds of Bible prophecies have been fulfilled, specifically and exactly, often long after the prophetic writer had passed away.

Daniel the prophet predicted in about 538 B.C. in Daniel 9:24–27, that Christ would come as Israel's promised Savior and Prince 483 years after the Persian emperor would give the Jews authority to rebuild Jerusalem, which was then in ruins. This was fulfilled, hundreds of years later. Daniel also describes the future course of history in the Middle East for five centuries in detail. He predicts the demise of the Babylonian Empire and the rise and fall of Alexander the Great. Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue made of various materials and from the vision of ghostly handwriting on a wall at King Belshazzar's feast. These prophecies predicted that Babylon's empire would fall to the Persians, which would subsequently fall to the Greeks, themselves superseded by the Romans. As this was indeed the succession of power in that part of the world, many people take the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy as proof of the accuracy of the Bible.

The prophet Isaiah lived in the eighth century B.C. and served as an adviser to multiple kings of Judah when the major world power was the Assyrian Empire. Isaiah predicts Assyria's

failed siege of Jerusalem and warns of the threat of Assyria, with many of Judah's kings disregarding Isaiah's and God's advice. It isn't until the reign of Hezekiah, considered the first righteous king in a long time in Judah, that someone in charge listens to what Isaiah had to say. Isaiah, around 701 B.C., predicted the Assyrian king Sennacherib would come to Judah and capture many of its cities. Hezekiah would ask Isaiah for advice, and the prophet very helpfully told him to do nothing, because the siege would fail. And this turned out to be right. 180,000 Assyrian soldiers died right outside the walls of Jerusalem, and Sennacherib returned home. Only to soon be murdered by two of his sons. Isaiah correctly predicted the rise of the Babylonian Empire and Judah's fall to it, nearly a century later.

The prophet Jeremiah predicted Jerusalem's siege by the Babylonians roughly fifty years after Isaiah. Jeremiah warns the people of Judah that Babylon is coming as God's righteous punishment upon his unfaithful people. God's righteous punishment hit hard. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the capital city of Jerusalem in 597 B.C., pillaged the great temple of Solomon, and took the King and many prominent citizens back to Babylon as exiles. Jeremiah warned the King to surrender to Babylon, but he revolted, and as punishment, the temple and the whole city of Jerusalem were destroyed in 587 B.C.

The prophet Ezekiel predicts the fall of Tyre and Egypt. He lived during the time of the Babylonian exile. His prophecies promise the end of the captivity and the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple. The middle chapters of his prophecies contain warnings of destruction against foreign nations. This isn't an uncommon theme in biblical prophecy. Jeremiah named many kingdoms of the world and predicting the demise and destruction of all these nations. Ezekiel's predictions against Egypt and the great city of Tyre show proof of the prophet's accuracy. Ezekiel foretold that Tyre would be swept away by enemies, and Egypt would be a

desolate waste. Then Nebuchadnezzar's thirteen-year war against Tyre drove the Tyrian people off the mainland and onto an island, and the Muslim invasion of Egypt in the seventh century A.D. left Egypt relatively insignificant.

Many prophecies are made about Jesus the Messiah as well. Here are a few of the prophecies:

- It was predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and He was (Micah 5:2). God even used a census to bring His parents there to make sure it would happen.
- It was prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14)
- Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)
- Jesus would take our sins. (Isaiah 53:4–6)
- Jesus would be pierced. (Zechariah 12:10)
- Jesus would be a light for the nations of the world. (Isaiah 42:1–7)

We mentioned earlier that there are sixty-six different books included in the Bible. In the earliest centuries, there was little debate among Christians over which books belonged in the Bible.

The Christian community both in the days of Jesus and in the centuries following did not doubt there was a body of books that made up the records of the Old Testament. The New Testament contains hundreds of direct quotations or clear allusions to Old Testament passages by Jesus and the apostles, it is evident what the early Christians thought of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The conviction that there was a canon of old covenant books that could not be added to or subtracted from, doubtless led the early Christians to expect the same divine order for the story of Jesus, the record of the early church, and the letters of the apostles.

The earliest available list of New Testament books is known as the Muratorian Canon and is dated around AD 150. It includes the four Gospels, Acts, thirteen letters of Paul, Jude, two (perhaps all three) letters of John, and the Revelation of John. It claims that these were accepted by the universal church. By AD 240, Origen from Alexandria was using all our twenty-seven books of the New Testament as Scripture, and others referred to these twenty-seven books as the complete works of the New Testament. He believed them to be inspired by the Spirit. But it was not until AD 367 that Athanasius, also from Alexandria, provided us with an actual list of New Testament books identical to ours. STUDY AND OBEY, WHAT IS THE BIBLE. ³

God, by His Holy Spirit, has put His seal upon the New Testament. We are confident that the twenty-seven books of our New Testament are the only books that belong there. This divine intervention guards the process by which all the books, and no others, were accepted.

We can be sure the Bible we have today, is the sacred scripture that God intended for us to have. All sixty-six books of the Old Testament and the New Testament were put together as God designed them to be, the true Holy Bible, the book we can trust to teach us what we need to know about God, His people, His story, and His plan of salvation for all people. This Bible is worthy to be read and studied and regarded as God's true inspiration to all humanity.

The entire Bible claims it is written in truth. Every story, event, and prophecy in the Bible is true, if not, why would God tell us they are true? We can trust in and rely on the Bible as being accurate and reliable.