



A N N O U N C E M E N T S

Engaged and married couples of The Rock:

Join us this Saturday, April 9 for our Marrieds Social! 12 – 2 PM in the Sanctuary.

Women of the Rock: S.I.S.T.E.R.S. begins this Monday, April 4 from 6:30 – 8:30 PM in the Children's Building. For more information, contact: womensministry@therocksandiego.org.

S M A L L **G** R O U P **Q** U E S T I O N S

Memory Verse: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.- 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Note to Facilitators: *When you are ready to dig into the study, go over the following questions first and see how much information your group has retained from this weekend's service.*

1. How many books in the Bible?
2. Over how many different authors?
3. What makes a book considered ancient?
4. All New Testament writers were what?
5. What does 'canon' mean?
6. What does 'logos' mean?
7. What is one proof from archeology that confirms the bible?
8. What is the supernatural test of the bible?
9. What was the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls?
10. Who wrote the first book in the New Testament and when?

(Check out the following pages. You will find more information and a variety of questions for your group to discuss)



Who Is Jesus Really? – Is the Bible Trustworthy?

Want to know what to say when your friends challenge the Bible’s authority? The following will give you answers to some of the most common challenges to the validity of the Bible. In the left column you will find a commonly offered challenge. In the right column, you will find a sound, tried and true response. Study up!

Challenge:	Response:
The Bible is too old to be reliable.	<p>For a work of antiquity, like the Bible, to be counted as reliable, there are two criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing copies have to be written within 1000 years of original writing.• And there have to be at least 10 copies produced within this time. <p>In the case of the New Testament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25,000 copies and counting! All copies have been made within 1000 years of the original.• Earliest copy is a scrap of the Gospel of John, within 15 years of the writing! Experts say that it is probably a 2nd hand copy—copied from the original.• NT can also be entirely reproduced based on church fathers quoting it (like in a Max Lucado book, for example).
The Bible is not supported by archaeological findings.	<p>Here are just a few of the archaeological evidences supporting the Bible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chariot wheels from the Red Sea crossing were found at the bottom of the Gulf of Aqaba.• Luke goes from town to town writing what he sees and who’s in charge. Everything he says is verifiable by ancient documents found in ancient ruins.• A cylinder was found called the “Cyrus Cylinder” and on it is a written account of his victory over Babylon.• Numerous other archaeological discoveries from ancient manuscripts to ancient ruins continually confirm the veracity of the Bible.

Challenge:	Response:
<p>The prophecies the Bible makes either are not fulfilled or are too general.</p>	<p>No single prophecy the Bible made has failed, and only the end-times prophecies remain to be seen.</p> <p>Example 1: Ezekiel 26:5 & 6, Here Ezekiel is prophesying against Tyre. <i>“She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets...and her daughters of the mainland shall be killed by the sword.”</i> And also in verse 12, <i>“They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy our houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters.</i> Here’s what happened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar besieged the mainland city for 13 years until it was totally deserted. • Then 241 years later Alexander the Great marched in and took the city for Greece. • To this day it now stands bare as a rock, and is only inhabited by small fisherman villages. It should be noted that they use the bareness of the island to spread their nets to dry. <p>Example 2: Prophecies of Jesus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place of birth, time of birth, manner of birth, betrayal, manner of death, people’s reactions, casting lots, piercing, burial. • These are only a handful of the prophecies about Jesus, but there is no way that he could have purposefully orchestrated even these few!
<p>The prophecies that have been fulfilled are simply a matter of coincidence.</p>	<p>Order of Creation in Genesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you break it down into only 10 steps the chance that Moses got it correct is 1: 4,000,000 odds. 8 prophecies of Christ • If you take just 8 of the prophecies fulfilled by Jesus you get a probability of 1:10¹⁷, or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000! • Something with the same odds would be this: Fill the state of Texas with silver dollars 2 feet deep. Then color one red, mix them up, and have a blindfolded person wander around a pick it on the first try. But wait! That’s only based on 8! There are at least 48 we can prove • This would make it 1:10¹⁵⁷! That’s a 1 with 157 zeros! • This is way beyond what scientists have deemed scientifically impossible... so then there must be something else going on.



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Challenge:	Response:
<p>The decisions about which books are included in the Bible were mostly based on the politics of the time. Lots of other books and teachings were left out!</p>	<p>The books chosen for the canon were already all being used within the lifetimes of the apostles.</p> <p>Nothing was left out of the Bible that was not written by an apostle, or someone close to one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means that anything written by someone other than an apostle or someone very closely linked to one was not included • The Gospel of Thomas, for example, cannot be dated any earlier than the middle of the 2nd Century, which means that it could not have been Thomas! This particular book begins to lie to you starting with the title! • Every other book “left out” is also very late authorship and not written by an apostle or anyone with authority, nor was it widely accepted by the church. • The eleven books of the Apocrypha were not considered scripture at the time of Jesus. They were only considered good references for teaching—kind of like the notes found in your study Bible. During the Protestant Reformation, however, the Catholic Church declared it to be Holy Scripture. The Reformers disagreed.
<p>There are many spiritual books out there – the Bible is just one of them. It is not any different from the Koran or any other spiritual book.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bible is the only book that tells a story where the god is reaching down to man, rather than man reaching out for the god. Through the sacrifice of the god’s son, Jesus Christ, and by the shedding of his blood, the people are saved. No other book tells a story even close to this. • The Bible is a book of 66 books, written by over 40 authors, over a period of over 1500 years, in 3 different languages, on 3 different continents, and talks about 100s of the hottest topics in the world without any contradiction!
<p>Before the advent of the printing press, Scribes simply copied an existing Bible by hand to generate more copies. There must be many errors in their transcription.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During their work, scribes could only have one word in their mind at a time for transmission—in other words, they could not memorize a whole sentence and then write it. They must only do it word for word. • If any of the rules were broken the entire scroll was then either burned or buried. • ____ With close to 30,000 manuscripts of the Bible for reference, any scribal error that happened to slip through can be corrected by checking what the multitudes of other manuscripts say.



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Challenge:	Response:
<p>We can't verify that the Bible isn't just man's opinions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are over 40 authors of the Bible including a political leader, a fisherman, a herdsman, a military general, a servant, a prime minister, a king, a doctor, a tax collector, and a rabbi. It is unlikely that opinions from authors with such huge differences in culture and background would all happen to write hundreds of pages of material without any major contradiction. • Prophecy proves that the Bible is far more than man's opinion. Opinions cannot bring forth a prophecy over and over again and have them fulfilled precisely.
<p>There are too many contradictions in the Bible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often what appears to be a contradiction is simply a matter of the details that were recorded by one author vs. the details recorded by a different author. One account might have more details than another, but that does not make it a contradiction.
<p>The Bible was written way after Jesus walked on earth. It is probably more legend than truth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul started writing first, and that was in the 50s. All the other books of the New Testament were written between the 50s up to about 90AD. This is hardly enough time for any legend to have formed. • Paul wrote I Corinthians between 55-57AD. In chapter 15 he references a creed about Jesus dying, rising from the dead, and appearing to 500 witnesses. He also says that he had already given them this creed. His first visit was in 51AD. However, the creed itself has a structure and literary style that resembles Hebrew origin, so we can only assume that Paul would have received this creed while in Damascus or Jerusalem. This then places Paul's reception of the creed between 32 and 38AD. This is only a handful of years after the crucifixion, and way too early for a legend to start.
<p>The authors of the Bible were uneducated fisherman.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authors included folks besides just fishermen; there was a political leader, a herdsman, a military general, a servant, a prime minister, a king, a doctor, a tax collector, and a rabbi. • If it was all an elaborate hoax the conspirators would have selected authors with higher titles than these. The fact that the list includes fishermen, a tax collector, a herdsman, etc. only proves the fact that there <i>was</i> no conspiracy.
<p>We don't know if we should take the Bible literally so how can we believe it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many different genres, or literary styles, found in the Bible; each literary style needs to be read appropriately. • Some of these styles are as follows: poetry, songs, narrative, private dialogue, public dialogue, teaching, law, parables, prophecy, etc. • Each style has its own rules for study, and taking it any other way is to abuse the text.



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Additional Study Resources

- . • McDowell, Josh, *The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Thomas Nelson.
- . • Bruce, F.F., *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, InterVarsity Press.
- . • Geisler, Norman L. and Nix, William E., *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody Press.
- . • Guthrie, Donald, *New Testament Introduction*, InterVarsity Press.

A P P L I C A T I O N

How to Study the Bible – What does it mean to me?

Step ONE – Know it!

Charles Spurgeon was asked how a Christian could obtain a thorough knowledge of the Bible. He replied, “there are three rules to follow in order to have a deep understanding of the Word of God:

1. **FIRST**, read the **BIBLE**.
2. **SECOND**, read the **BIBLE**.
3. And **THIRD**, read the **BIBLE**.

The Bible does not need to be rewritten, just reread. If you don't understand it, that's your fault! Study it and get someone in your life who will hold you accountable.

Step TWO – Trust it!

The Bible is our weapon of defense as well as offense.

1. It is flawless.
2. It is our solid foundation.
3. It is completely reliable.
4. It should be used in battle (Ephesians 6) Here we see it as the only offensive weapon when it comes to the armor of God. And never forget the example Jesus gave us when he was tempted by the devil after his forty day fast ... remember his words – “It is written!” He quotes Scripture!

Step THREE – Use it!

Obedience to the Word demonstrates our love to God

Look up the following - Matthew 22:34, John 14:15, John 14:21

Jesus said that if we are going to show our love to God, we are going to do it by having and keeping the commandments.

*Do you have them? ... Do you know them? ... Do you keep the commandments?
Don't say you love God if you don't keep His commandments!*

Finally, remember that the Word of God is essential in witnessing.

Romans 10:17 “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God.”

It's the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word that's going to make a difference, not us.

DID YOU KNOW?

Our Predicament

Over the past 30 years, our population has increased 41%, but our Gross Domestic Product has tripled, and our social spending has had the benefit of a 500% increase. Impressive by any standard.

And yet, we have had a 500% increase in violent crime, a 400% increase in illegitimate births, a 400% increase in the divorce rate, a 300% increase in single parent homes, a 200% increase in teenage suicides, and a 75% decrease in SAT scores.

Each day in America there are 2,795 teen pregnancies and 4,219 teenagers who contract a sexually transmitted disease. Every 64 seconds a baby is born to a teenage mother; five minutes later, a baby will have been born to a teenager who *already* has a child. Ten hours later, 560 babies will have been born to teenagers.

Over the past 30 years, we have conducted over 31 million abortions; every day there are 1,106 teen abortions alone! (When John the Baptist began his ministry, he was only 9 inches long and weighed about a pound and a half. In the womb, he was Spirit-filled, and leapt for joy).

We are a nation in peril. We lead the industrialized world in murder, rape, and violent crime. In elementary and secondary education, we are near the bottom in achievement scores. There is a coarseness, callousness, cynicism, banality, and vulgarity signaling the decivilization of our nation.

An analysis of these, and virtually every social and cultural indicator, clearly shows a marked deterioration since the early 1960s. What event transpired then to cause this rapid and catastrophic destruction of our American culture? ***We outlawed God from our schools!***