



Has the Bible Been Corrupted?

Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Bible Teacher Ben Stuart

1. As Ben posed the question, "Can we trust the bible?" Could you relate to asking that?
2. Many of us know someone that has questioned the validity of scripture. Has this historically been a speed bump that you have had a hard time answering for yourself or others? In what ways did this message answer the questions you may have had? Or help you better understand Scripture? (See Postscript for more information) (See Study Deeper for Bible Translation information)
3. Read Psalm 119:89-112.
 - a. How are the words and laws of God regarded by the psalmist?
 - b. What is the value of God's word?
 - c. How did Ben's talk shift or effect how you may view/value God's word?
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - a. How is Scripture different from speech or writing?
 - b. In what ways does this passage tell us that Scripture is useful?
 - c. How does it equip us?
5. Read Hebrews 11:1-3. It is very valuable to know all that can be known concerning the text through which God has chosen to reveal himself, but simply having the facts does not make you a believer. You must believe them to be Truth.
 - a. How have the combination of facts and faith played into your own story?
 - b. Supplying others with facts is pretty straight forward, but how do they get the faith component?
 - c. What role can we play in that?

Challenge: Did talking about this topic bring to mind others areas you want to grow in understanding or confidence in regard to following Christ? Talk with your leader or grow group coordinator about what steps and resources could be helpful.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for sending the Lord Jesus to be my Savior and for dying for me on the cross and paying the price for my sins. Thank You for giving us the Word of God that so beautifully opens up Your plan of redemption for mankind and thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to live in me and to lead and guide me into all truth.

I pray Lord that You would give me a deeper understanding of Your Word. I pray that You would continue to grow my desire to learn more, read more, and treasure more the great gift you have given us in Your Word. I pray that as I read and study the scripture that my hearts would be flooded with light so that you can understand all that You would teach me, that I would live in a way that honors You. I pray that I would draw closer to You with every passing day.

Father, open the eyes of my heart as I read, study and meditate on Your Word – so that I may see You more clearly and love you more dearly in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

WHAT Bible We Study

How to study the Bible, session one. I want us to read Psalm 19:7-11 together. You have it listed there on the front page of your notes. Let's read this out loud together.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure, and all together are righteous. They are much more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

We have a treasure in our hands with the Bible. The Word is perfect. It is perfect. This book and the words contained herein are perfect. The Word is relevant. We are going to see all these unfold tonight. The Word is good. It is very, very good. The Word is clear. It is not hard to understand. I hope that we see that tonight. The Word is eternal. It lasts forever.

"Heaven and earth pass away. My words will never pass away." The Word is true, and here is the deal: The Word is available. It is available, and I want us to pause for a second here and remember that we are indebted to a man named Jerome. I don't know if you realize it or not, but Jerome has had a pretty big impact on your life. Jerome, back around 400 A.D., took the Bible and translated it into Latin. It is a huge moment where the Bible was being translated into another language and being made available to more people. Then came along a man named John Wycliffe. John Wycliffe took that Latin translation, and he began to translate it into English. He was accused of being a heretic. He suffered persecution for his willingness to take the Bible and put it into the language of the common people. Those who got it were threatened for even pulling it out. Then came a guy named William Tyndale. Tyndale took Wycliffe's translation of the Latin and made the first translation of the English from the Greek and the Hebrew and the Latin, pulling them all together. He intended to complete the whole Old Testament and the New Testament, but he didn't finish the Old Testament. He died in 1536. He was executed, and his body was burned because of his commitment to translate the Bible. His associate John Rogers completed his work of the Old Testament. His associate John Rogers was martyred.

The point is this: the Bible we hold in our hands is a result of men and women who have laid their lives down to give it to us. Far be it from us today to take this Word and leave it on our doorsteps or on our chest by our beds at night and not dive into it and see what it means for our lives. We have a treasure that is in our hands called the Bible. It is worth giving our lives to study it. This is the Bible that we have. Now, all that picture, the Word is available.

Not only that, but there is a need for translations. The total world languages in the world are 6,912. Do you know how many languages still have no Bible? 2,286. 2,286 languages in the world still do not have a translation of the Bible. I am praying that the reason that some of you are here tonight is so that you will

experience a conviction from the Spirit of God to rise up and say, “I am going to learn a language, and I am going to translate this Word into that language.” I pray that will be a reality across this room. This is a non-negotiable for a church that believes that we are looking forward to a day when a multitude that no one can count from every tribe, people, nation, and language will bow around the throne and sing the praises of our Savior. If we want that, if we are looking forward to that, then we will take 2,286 languages and make the Bible available to those people.

The question of translations. Many people ask me all the time, “Pastor, which translation should I use?” We all know that there are just tons of English translations. I listed some of them. The Open Bible, The Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible, the NRSV Access Bible, The Life Application Study Bible, the Holman Christian Standard Bible, also known as the hardcore Southern Baptist Bible, the NIV Study Bible, the Ryrie Study Bible, the NKJV Women’s Study Bible, the KJV Promise Keepers Men’s Study Bible, The Spirit Filled Life Bible, The Living Bible, and then we have The New Living Bible. So, what do you do with all these different translations?

I want to encourage you, as you think about which translation you use of the Bible, to look at the process behind the translation. There is a process that goes behind any translation, and here is how it works. It starts with a divine author, God. God breathes his Word through human instruments. So, you have a divine author and human author. The book we hold in our hand has dual authorship: the Spirit of God and the men who have put these words down that God has breathed into them. You have a divine author, human authors, and then you have what they wrote, the original text, but then you have from there copies of the original text, and what we have is a book that was written literally thousands of years ago, and we have copies of the original text that go as far back as possible, but not to the very, we don’t have the exact letter that this person wrote on or that person wrote on, and so, we want to get back as far as we can to the copies of the original text.

This is, personally, why I don’t recommend the King James Version of the Bible. If you just love the King James, then please don’t take offense to this. However, since the King James was translated in 1611, we have found texts that went back further than that. So, we have got more accurate pictures of the text before that. Not that the King James is bad, but we want to get as close as we can to the original copies of the original text.

That leads to a critical text. What I mean by that is that you have this fragment of this text here, and this fragment of this text here, and you put them all together and you have a critical text, which basically means that there is maybe a little difference here, a little difference there, and you put them all together and try to figure out as best as possible how we know what the original text was saying. So, that is what I mean by critical text. Then, you have people who take the critical text, either a translator or a translation team, and bring that text into contemporary culture. Some people do this on their own, one translator.

Some translations that I gave you were one translator. It is wisest to look for Bible translations that have a translation team. A pool of scholars that have worked together, and not just one person trying to figure out what this whole deal means, but leaning on each other. Different experts on different parts of biblical history and biblical portraits and biblical books, you bring all those experts together. I think it is important to look at who is the translation team behind any translation that we have of the Bible. Then that leaves the translation to the contemporary reader.

Now, what you have is, with all these different translations that I mentioned, you have a continuum that is basically from one side to the other. One side is the formal approach, which is a “word-for-word” approach to translating the Bible, and basically, it is saying,

“Here is the Bible. We are going to translate it word-for-word as best we can.” A very literal translation. Examples might be the King James or New King James Versions or the New American Standard version. Very literal. Sometimes even wooden because it is word-for-word. Then on the other side, you have a more functional approach. A “thought-for-thought” approach for translating the Bible, which basically means instead of doing every word by every word, they kind of take all the words together, look at the thought and try to translate the thought. The extreme on this side would be The Message or The Living Bible. More of a paraphrase, many times, than a translation. So, you have this continuum, word-for-word and thought-for-thought.

My recommendation, this is my personal recommendation when it comes to English translations or any translations along this continuum, is to find either somewhere in the middle or somewhere towards the word-for-word. That is why I would recommend, and why I put in there, the NIV, which is what I use, which is pretty close to the middle. That is what I use to preach from. When I study the Word, many times I use one step over toward the word-for-word, which would be the English Standard Version, which I highly recommend. It is a great translation. It is more word-for-word, but it is still not quite as wooden as the next one to the right, which would be a New American Standard version. So those are just some thoughts on translations. It is an overview about how I think we need to think about translations. Word-for-word, thought-for-thought, if you are going to lean anywhere, lean toward the word-for-word. Now, that is the Bible we study.

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