

05 | Word The Bible



Introduction

Imagine a group of people in a foreign land, with a single book as their guide to survival. How valuable would that book be to them? How much would they study it and treasure it?

We are that group of people in this foreign land. This earth is not our home... we are just passing through. We have a book in our possession, the Bible, which contains everything we need to know to live long, prosper and accomplish our purpose here on earth...

¹Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.1 Peter 2:11 (NLT)

How valuable is the Bible to us? What is so special about the Bible anyway? This study will cover why the Bible is *The Book of Books*.

I have guided my life by the Bible for more than sixty years and I tell you, there is no other book like it. It is a miracle of literature, a perennial spring of wisdom, a wonder of surprises, a revelation of mystery, an infallible guide of conduct, an unspeakable source of comfort. Pay no attention to people who discredit it, for I tell you that they speak without knowledge. It is the Word of God itself. Study it according to its own direction. Live by its principles. Believe its message. Follow its precepts. No man is uneducated who knows the Bible, and no one is wise who is ignorant of its teachings. Samuel Chadwick

No.1 Bestseller

The Bible is the bestselling Book of all time. Every year more copies of the Bible are sold than any other publication worldwide and the number of sales is increasing. Below is Wikipedia's list of the ten best-selling books of all time (2010 estimates).¹

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. The Holy Bible | Estimates as high as 6 billion |
| 2. Quotations from Mao Tse-tung | 900 million |
| 3. The Qurān | 800 million |
| 4. Xinhua Dictionary | 400 million |
| 5. Chairman Mao's Poems | 400 million |
| 6. Selected Articles of Mao Tse-tung | 252.5 million |
| 7. A Tale of Two Cities | 200 million |
| 8. Scouting for Boys | 150 million |
| 9. The Lord of the Rings | 150 million |
| 10. Book of Mormon | 150 million |

Note that the second most popular book trails by 5 billion. No book comes remotely close to the 6 billion Bibles that have been sold to date!

How was the Bible put together?

The Bible was not written directly by God, but God inspired men to write it. To be precise, forty men, over a period of 1,600 years, on three continents, in three languages, by authors with different educations, cultures, and professions, and finally not just one subject, but hundreds.

The 39 Books of the Old Testament have long been established as the inspired Word of God, but in the years that followed the birth of the early church many instructional books and letters were written about Christianity and it was necessary to determine which Books were legitimately inspired by God, and which ones weren't. The 27 books that make up our New Testament were accepted by the early Church fathers as genuinely inspired by God, and together with the 39 Books of the Old Testament, these 66 Books have been recognized as The Holy Bible by Christians ever since.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books

All 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 straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

Characteristics of the Bible

The following characteristics are proofs that the Bible is truly a phenomenal book...

1. Unity

Find ten people in your local area who have similar educational backgrounds, that all speak the same language and are from basically the same culture. Separate them and ask them to write their opinion on only one controversial subject, such as the meaning of life. When they have finished, compare the conclusions of these writers. Do they all agree with one another? Of course not! But the Bible does not consist merely of ten authors but forty. It was not written in one generation, but over a period of 1,600 years, on three continents, in three languages, by authors with different educations, cultures, and professions (e.g. shepherd, king, servant, priest, prophet, doctor, tax collector, Pharisee), and finally not just one subject, but hundreds. And yet the Bible is unified! There is complete harmony, which cannot be explained by coincidence or collusion.²

2. Survival

Many people are unaware that each of William Shakespeare's 37 plays (written in the 1600's) have gaps in the surviving manuscripts, forcing scholars to fill in the blanks. Compare this to with the 5,300+ copies and fragments of the New Testament that, together, assure us that nothing's been lost (nearly 800 of which were copied before 1000 AD, some dating back to the early second and third centuries).³

The survival of the Bible is nothing short of supernatural.

The books of Moses were written 500 years before the earliest Hindu Scriptures. Moses wrote Genesis 2,000 years before Muhammad penned the Koran. During that long history, no other book has been as loved or as hated as the Bible. No other book has been so consistently bought, studied, and quoted as this book. While millions of other titles come and go, the Bible is still the book by which all other books are measured. While often ignored by those who are uncomfortable with its teachings, it is still the central book of Western civilization.⁴

Also consider the attempts throughout history of those that have tried to destroy the Bible. Many nations have vehemently tried erasing the Bible from existence, with no success. It seems as though the more the Bible is hated in areas, the more people desire and treasure it.

3. Honesty

When someone writes a true account of their lives (autobiography) for all to read, very few actually say it exactly the way it was. The story usually undergoes slight modification at times to save the face of the author. After all, if an accurate account were being written about your life, would you really want all your dirty washing hung out for the entire world to see? And yet the Bible makes absolutely no attempt to cover up the failures and deceit of its heroes.

The Bible is painfully honest. It shows Jacob, the father of its "chosen people," to be a deceiver. It describes Moses, the lawgiver, as an insecure, reluctant leader, who, in his first attempt to come to the aid of his own people, killed a man, and then ran for life to the desert. It portrays David not only as Israel's most loved king, general, and spiritual leader, but as one who took another man's wife and then, to cover his own sin, conspired to have her husband killed. At one point, the Scriptures accuse the people of God, the nation of Israel, as being so bad they made Sodom and Gomorrah look good by comparison. The Bible

² Adapted from a Josh McDowell statement, cited on numerous websites

³ A General Introduction to the Bible, Ch. 24

⁴ Ten Reasons To Believe The Bible, <http://gospelcom.net>

represents human nature as hostile to God. It predicts a future full of trouble. It teaches that the road to heaven is narrow and the way to hell is wide. Scripture was clearly not written for those who want simple answers or an easy, optimistic view of religion and human nature.⁵

If a story were not true... would the author really be willing to die a horrible death defending the authenticity of it? Somehow I doubt it. But many of the writers of the Bible did just that. They were martyred because of their belief that what they had written about was true. They lived and died for what they believed in.

4. Historic accuracy

The Bible is often ridiculed by highly educated atheists when it is proclaimed as an accurate historical record.

The Bible's multitude of historical, cultural and Geographic details are accurate to the highest degree. Sir William Ramsey, an atheist with a Ph.D. in Archeology from Oxford, set out to disprove the Bible by disproving the Book of Acts. He chose the Book of Acts because of its many detailed descriptions of events and locations in the Middle East during the first century. He felt that it would be easy to find inaccuracies and inconsistencies that would bring the accuracy of the whole book into question. After twenty-five years of digging, he finally declared that Luke was accurate down to the minutest detail. In his attempt to disprove the Bible he discovered literally hundreds of relics that proved the historical accuracy of the Book of Acts. He stunned the world when in one of his books he finally declared himself a Christian! William Ramsey's work was so scholarly and commendable that the Queen of England knighted him for his work. Ramsey described Acts as the most perfect historical document of all time.⁶

Just one of the many examples of this is the site of the ruined city of Jericho. After numerous archaeological digs at the site of the discovered ruins of the city of Jericho, every discovery at the site led to only one conclusion... that the Biblical account of the fall and destruction of Jericho is absolutely accurate down to the finest detail. For example, the virtually impregnable double wall of Jericho had fallen outwards, as if in a sudden collapse, there hadn't been a long siege as much food was found inside the city, pottery evidence dates the fall of Jericho at exactly the same time as the Bible does, and there is only one small portion of the wall of Jericho left standing, and that portion had rooms inside. We know from the Bible that Rahab, the prostitute was spared by the attacking Israelites, if she stayed in her house (which was part of the wall) at the time of the attack!⁷

5. Scientific accuracy

For centuries the Bible was scorned as just a fictional story, that it could not possibly be scientifically accurate. Time and time again scientists are discovering that in fact, the Bible has been right all along... it is their beliefs that have been in error (but you won't read that in a secular textbook). Consider the following...

Ancient Egyptians believed that the Earth floated in a river. Greek culture believed that the Earth was carried on the back of a god called Atlas. Hinduism teaches that the Earth balances on the back of four elephants, who in turn were standing on the back of a giant turtle, who is swimming in a sea of milk, and all are encircled by a giant snake. Buddhism teaches that the Earth rests on the back of a giant catfish. What does the Bible say about who or what carries the Earth?

⁷*God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.*
Job 26:7 (NLT)

The following list, compiled by Dr. Henry M. Morris⁸, shows what the Bible does in fact say about science.

| SCIENCE | PHENOMENON | SCRIPTURE REFERENCE |
|------------------|--|---|
| Hydrology | Hydrologic Cycle Evaporation Condensation Nuclei Condensation | Ecclesiastes 1:7; Isaiah 55:10 Psalm 135:7; Jeremiah 10:13 Proverbs 8:26 Job 26:8; 37:11, 16 |

⁵ Ten Reasons To Believe The Bible, <http://gospelcom.net>

⁶ The Bible? You're Kidding Right?, <http://www.wuzupgod.com>

⁷ Creation Magazine, Vol 21 No2, March-May 1999, Pg 36-40

⁸ Many Infallible Proofs, by Henry M. Morris

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Precipitation | Job 36:26-28 |
| | Run-off | Job 28:10 |
| | Oceanic Reservoir | Psalms 33:7 |
| | Snow | Job 38:22; Psalm 147:16 |
| | Hydrologic Balance | Job 28:24-26 |
| | Springs in the Sea | Job 38:16 |
| Geology | Principle of Isostasy | Isaiah 40:12; Psalm 104:5-9 |
| | Shape of Earth | Isaiah 40:22; Job 26:10 |
| | Rotation of Earth | Job 38:12,14 |
| | Gravitation | Job 26:7; 38:6 |
| | Rock Erosion | Job 14:18,19 |
| | Glacial Period | Job 38:29,30 |
| | Uniformitarianism | 2 Peter 3:4 |
| | Dinosaurs | Job 40,41 |
| Astronomy | Size of Universe | Job 22:12; Jeremiah 31:37 |
| | Number of Stars | Genesis 22:17; Jeremiah 33:22 |
| | Each star's uniqueness | 1 Corinthians 15:41 |
| | Precision of Orbits | Jeremiah 31:35,36 |
| Meteorology | Atmospheric circulation | Ecclesiastes 1:6 |
| | Protective Effect of Atmosphere | Isaiah 40:22 |
| | Oceanic Origin of Rain | Ecclesiastes 1:7 |
| | Relation of Electricity to Rain | Job 28:26; Jeremiah 10:13 |
| | Fluid Dynamics | Job 28:25 |
| Biology | Blood Circulation | Leviticus 17:11 |
| | Psychotherapy | Proverbs 16:24; 17:22 |
| | Biogenesis and Stability | Genesis 1:11,21,25 |
| | Uniqueness of Man | Genesis 1:26 |
| | Chemical Nature of Flesh | Genesis 1:11,24-2:7; 3:19 |
| | Cave-men | Job 12:23-25; 30:3-8 |
| Physics | Mass-Energy Equivalence | Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3 |
| | Source of Energy for Earth | Psalms 19:6 |
| | Atomic Disintegration | 2 Peter 3:10 |
| | Electrical Transmission of Info. | Job 38:35 |
| | Television | Revelation 11:9-11 |
| | Rapid Transportation | Daniel 12:4 |

6. Impact on society

Throughout history, wherever the Bible has been taken, accepted and lived by, it has had a revolutionary effect on the culture into which it has been brought. When one looks at the evidence without partiality, it becomes plain to see that the Bible has been foundational in bringing social change, improved standard of living, moral reformation, and a better life. Everywhere the Bible has been embraced it has made a phenomenal change for good.

In lands where slavery was practiced, the power of the Word of God brought conviction of wrong and emancipation for those in bondage. In places where women were treated little better than animals, the preaching of the gospel brought them new respect and freedom from tyranny and debasement. In areas where cruelty and severe oppression were common, the coming of the Bible brought kindness, toleration, and humane treatment. The plight of children and the handicapped, who were sometimes shamefully mistreated, improved greatly when the Bible came and its truth was accepted.⁹

When one observes the state of cultures and nations that have totally rejected the Bible, the exact opposite of the above statement can be plainly seen. Poverty, fear, crime, perversity and abuse on all levels, occult bondage, disease, famine and war are all prevalent in cultures that have rejected the Word of God.

7. Prophecy

Dr Hugh Ross world-renowned astrophysicist says that approximately 2000 of the 2500 prophecies which appear in the Bible have been fulfilled to the letter with no errors (The

⁹ Ten Reasons To Believe The Bible, <http://gospelcom.net>

provide healing to the sick, make demons scream, bring deliverance to captors, comfort the broken-hearted, and give guidance to the seeker. That book is the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. Absolute Truth.

Yet there are some ministers of the Word of God that believe and teach that some of the Word of God is in fact untrue. Dr. Harry Mac Arthur shares the following story...

For two years a faithful member of a liberal church had taken note of the various passages the pastor had pronounced fictitious or unscientific. He then cut them from his Bible. A short time later he became seriously sick. The minister called on him. "Shall I read and pray with you?" he asked. The sick man motioned to his wife to bring his Bible. It was in shreds and only fit for the wastebasket. "Don't you have a better Bible?" asked the liberal pastor. The dying man replied: "No, this is all I have left after cutting out the parts you said were not inspired by God. If I should live another year, I'm sure I'd have nothing left but the covers."

9. Power to change lives

*¹²For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. **Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)***

Out of the characteristics of the Bible that demonstrate its divine and absolute true nature, the most significant one is the Bible's power to change lives. It is one characteristic that no one can deny.

Unbelievers often point to those who claim to believe in the Bible without being changed by it. But history is also marked by those who have been bettered by this book. The Ten Commandments have been a source of moral direction to countless numbers of people. The Psalms of David have offered comfort in times of trouble and loss. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount has given millions an antidote for stubborn pride and proud legalism. Paul's description of love in action has softened angry hearts. The changed lives of people like the apostle Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Newton, Leo Tolstoy, and C. S. Lewis illustrate the difference the Bible can make. Even entire nations or tribes, like the Celts of Ireland, the wild Vikings of Norway, or the Auca Indians of Ecuador have been transformed by the Word of God and the unprecedented life and significance of Jesus Christ. Not only has the Bible had an impact on society, it has also changed individuals. Despairing, helpless, wicked men and women on the brink of madness have found rescue in hearing and believing the message of the Bible. It has provided new hope to the despondent. It has brought quiet peace to the restless. It has led lowly people to greatness. It has raised morality to its highest levels.¹¹

Which Bible translation is the best?

There are many different translations of the Bible available today. Some translations are excellent, and some aren't so accurate. Find a Bible translation that is easy for you to understand and that is Scripturally accurate. Every sword is powerful and effective in any language, and any translation also, if it is truly God's Word.

Examples of 'Word-for-word' translations:

The translators have translated each word, sentence etc. Word for word translations are accurate, and excellent for Bible Study.

- ¹⁰For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. **Luke 11:10 (King James Version)**
- ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. **Luke 11:10 (New International Version)**
- ¹⁰For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. **Luke 11:10 (New living Translation)**

¹¹ <http://www.70x7.com/10reasonsbible.htm>

Examples of 'Paraphrase' translations:

The translators have translated the meaning of each phrase. Paraphrase translations are very inaccurate, but can be useful for additional reading. Most people do not consider paraphrase translations as true Bible versions, and in reality they are not.

- ¹⁰*Everyone who asks, receives; all who seek, find; and the door is opened to everyone who knocks.* **Luke 11:10 (The Living Bible)**
- ¹⁰*Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This is not a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in.* **Luke 11:10 (The Message Bible)**

Different people prefer different Bible translations. My advice is to find the translation that is the most relevant to you, and your reading ability.

The Study Bible

Sometimes a Bible verse will be difficult to understand, and you think to yourself, 'If only that could be explained to me in a way I could understand!'

Study Bibles have been designed for the purpose of providing all the necessary helps to enable the reader to get the most out of the Bible. A good Study Bible will have explanatory notes on verses, a topical index, small dictionary, maps etc. The best Study Bible I have seen is 'Life Application Study Bible', available in many different Bible Translations.

Bible reading plans

The Bible makes many amazing promises to those who love, study and follow its guidelines.

⁷*Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.* ⁸*Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.* ⁹*This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* **Joshua 1:7-9 (NLT)**

⁹*How can a young person stay pure?*

By obeying your word.

¹⁰*I have tried hard to find you—
don't let me wander from your commands.*

¹¹*I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.*

¹²*I praise you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.*

¹³*I have recited aloud
all the regulations you have given us.*

¹⁴*I have rejoiced in your laws
as much as in riches.*

¹⁵*I will study your commandments
and reflect on your ways.*

¹⁶*I will delight in your decrees
and not forget your word.* **Psalms 119:9-16 (NLT)**

It is necessary therefore to take regular Bible reading seriously. So many Christians are easy pickings for the enemy, prone to deception and backsliding, simply because they do not read and study their Bible.

There are many Bible reading plans freely available online.

Conclusion

Of all the amazing stories about people's love of God's word, the following may be the most shocking...

Hien Pham was a Vietnamese Christian, who in 1971 was an interpreter for an American who was in Vietnam preaching the Gospel to our servicemen when he was speaking to the local Vietnamese. When South Vietnam fell to the communists, Mr. Hien was arrested and accused of helping the Americans. His captors pounded him daily with Communist propaganda and indoctrinated him against the Bible. Finally the teachings of evolution, Marx, and Engles began to take their toll. Mr. Hien thought perhaps he was lied to, and maybe God didn't exist because if He did, He would not allow him to be tortured like this. He then decided not to pray any more. The next day, he was assigned to clean the prison toilets. His eye caught a piece of used toilet paper with English words on it. He grabbed it, washed the human waste off from it and put it in his pocket. After everyone was asleep, he took that piece of paper out of his pocket and read it. "...and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God... For I am persuaded that... nothing... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Hein wept. He knew his Bible and he knew there was not a more relevant passage for one on the verge of despair. He cried out to God asking forgiveness for his plan not to pray any more. But God had other plans. What his tormentors were using for toilet paper, the Holy Scriptures, Hein found to be his precious treasure. The next day he volunteered to clean the toilets regularly. It was then that Mr. Hien found that an officer was using the Bible as toilet paper so each day Hien found another page of Scripture, cleaned it off, and added it to his growing collection and read it with unspeakable joy.¹²

How much do you value the Bible?

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For additional studies and resources please visit our website: www.christianrenewal.org.nz



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¹² <http://www.shatteredmen.com>