

Disciple of Christ Study: Lesson 11 Why the Bible is Trustworthy

Purpose of study: *Live life as a disciple of Christ and intentionally make disciples for the glory of the triune God. A disciple is a “student” or “follower” who learns, studies, and acts in accordance to the teachings of Christ, the Master.*

Lesson 11: Why the Bible is Trustworthy (Day One) *The Bible and Its Name*

It is easy to read and study about relationships, but difficult to put into practice. In fact, it is impossible without remaining in Jesus. We learned in *Lesson 10: Godly Relationships* that Christ's death and resurrection made it possible for us to be reconciled with God and each other.

In Christ, believers are able to participate in a spiritual union with God and with other believers. It is our relationship with Christ that allows us to bear fruit in good works and in good relationships. Without Jesus, we cannot bear acceptable fruit in deeds *or* relationships.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

1. Read John 15:5. What is Jesus teaching about our relationship with Him?

****See end of lesson for repeat of questions and blank spaces for you to write your answers.**

In John 15:5, Jesus is talking to His disciples, then and now. He is using figurative (symbolic) language to emphasize this truth. The vine, which represents Jesus, has the life-giving power of the root. Although we cannot see the root of the vine, like we cannot physically see Jesus, He is the One who supports and supplies all the nutrients to us, represented by the branches.

We (branches) are weak and need what Jesus (vine) supplies for spiritual life and growth. There are no independent branches; there are no independent disciples. Our spiritual health is designated by fruit. A healthy branch will produce fruit, such as grapes. A healthy disciple will produce supernatural fruits of good words, good works and harmonious relationships.

Healthy branches still need pruning¹ to be even more fruitful. In living or dealing with others, we have certain expectations of how we are to be treated. When someone fails to act in the way we have anticipated, we become offended, disappointed, and even angry. Allow Jesus to supply the grace and strength needed to persevere in the forgiveness process. It may be painful but the deadness of unforgiveness will be cut away.

¹ Prune: trim (a tree, shrub, or bush) by cutting away dead or overgrown branches or stems, especially to increase fruitfulness and growth.

Recognize that your expectations may be false or unrealistic. Recognize also that you may be dealing with your own pride issue. Stop expecting family members or friends to act in a certain way toward you. Place yourself in God's hands and trust Him with all of your needs, including to be loved and appreciated.

The more you forgive, the more you honor God. So, forgive others for their indifference, hate or disrespect. Remember, in Jesus, you have the ability to forgive. Review the *New Covenant Promises* in Lesson 6 for strength and courage to forgive and live in harmony with others.

Read 1 Peter 3:8-9 and answer questions 2-4:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 1 Peter 3:8-9

2. How are we to live with one another (v. 8a)?
3. List 6 ways we are to live in harmony with one another (vs. 8b-9):
4. How will you learn to repay evil and insult with blessing?

The above teaching and instruction came from God's word, the Bible. In fact, we become disciples by learning about Jesus from the Holy Scriptures and putting His teaching into practice (James 1:22). Therefore, let us look more closely at the Bible and its trustworthiness.

We get the word "Bible" from the Greek word *biblia* (βιβλία). *Biblia* is a plural noun meaning books, scrolls and written statements. "The earliest Christian use of *ta biblia* ('the books') in this sense is said to be 2 Clement 14:2 (c. AD 150)."² 2 Clement is a non canonical Christian writing on self-control, repentance, and judgment. The author is thought to be different from 1 Clement, which is usually attributed to Clement of Rome.

Definition: Canon is defined as a set of religious writings regarded as authentic and forming a religion's body of scripture. Non canonical means that a writing is not part of the canon.

Biblia is translated as books, scrolls, statements and even letters in most English translations. Synonyms (same or similar meaning) are writings and scriptures. The Bible is the collection of books considered part of the Christian canon.

There have been differences of opinions as to what books should make up the canon. However, all but a few Protestant denominations accept 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament. These are the books represented in the vast majority of Bible translations. Protestants do not accept any of the 15 books known as the Apocrypha.

² Douglas, J.D., New Bible Dictionary, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, Wheaton, IL, 1982, p. 137.

The Catholic Church accepts 12 of the 15 apocryphal books into their canon. The word apocrypha is derived from a Greek word and means “things that are hidden.” These books were written between 200 BC and 100 AD. All of these books, except 2 Esdras, are included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. These additional 15 books have never been part of the Hebrew Bible.

"Since Catholics consider these books canon, therefore they do not call them Apocrypha but deuterocanonical, meaning later canon. The Council of Trent in 1546, declared the Apocrypha as canon, except for 3 Esdras, 4 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh which they call apocryphal."³ The names for these writings can differ between Protestants and Catholics.

Apocryphal Books:

	Protestant Names	Roman Catholic Names
1	Tobit	Tobias
2	Judith	Judith
3	Wisdom of Solomon	Wisdom
4	Ecclesiasticus / Sirach	Ecclesiasticus
5	I Maccabees	I Maccabees
6	II Maccabees	II Maccabees
7	Baruch	Baruch 1-5
8	Epistle of Jeremiah	Baruch 6
9	Additions to Esther	Esther 10:4-16:24
10	Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young men	Daniel 3:24-90
11	Susanna	Daniel 13
12	Bel and the Dragon	Daniel 14
13	I Esdras	3 Esdras (sometimes called I Esdras)
14	2 Esdras	4 Esdras (sometimes called 2 Esdras)
15	Prayer of Manasseh	Prayer of Manasseh

Although part of the Vulgate, the official Latin translation of the Bible, the apocryphal books were excluded by the Protestants at the time of Reformation. Historically, Protestants have not considered them inspired by God but useful for study and edification. It should be noted that there are scholars who believe Jude 1:9 and 1:14 made references to apocryphal works. This is not to prove that these extra biblical works belong in the Bible, but only that they were used by the early church and are still useful today. The cultural and historical aspect can be particularly helpful in understanding the people, their concerns and ways of doing things.

Lesson 11: Why the Bible is Trustworthy (Day Two) *Recognized as the Word of God*

³ http://truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/6_The_Apocrypha_The_Septugint/index.htm

The word canon is derived from a Greek word *kanon* (κανών) meaning rule. “Since the 4th century *kanon* has been used by Christians to denote an authoritative list of the books belonging to the OT or NT.”⁴ “The doctrine of biblical inspiration is fully developed only in the pages of the NT. But far back in Israel’s history, we already find certain writings being recognized as having divine authority and serving as a written rule of faith and practice for God’s people. This is seen in the people’s response when Moses reads to them the book of the covenant (Exodus 24:7).”⁵

The writings that we include in the Protestant Canon were not the only ones in existence during biblical times. There were other ideas about the creation of the world and gods in general. How did the people know what was truth?

The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses. He lived among the people and was God’s prophet. God not only spoke through him, but also performed miracles through him. The nation of Israel was an eyewitness to the miracles and to the fact that what Moses said came to pass. If Moses had written anything that was not true, the Israelites would not have accepted these books as the word of God. They would not have allowed these writings to have divine authority over them.

Not only is this true of the books in the Old Testament, it is also true of the books of the New Testament. The books about Jesus were included because He lived among the people. He performed many miracles and was raised from the dead. There were many eyewitnesses both from the Jews and the Gentiles. Many of these people were still alive when the writings about Jesus appeared. If anything was false or inaccurate, the believers would not have used the writings as the divinely inspired word of God. They would not have allowed these writings to have authority over them.

The consistency of the books of the Bible was certainly another factor. Statistically, this is a miracle in itself! There are 66 books in the Bible written by approximately 40 different authors over a period of 1,600 years, in 3 different languages and yet its message is uniform and constant. Its invariable message is the redemption of mankind by the Messiah or the Christ.

Five Principles that guided the recognition and collection of divinely inspired books:⁶

I. Was the book written by a prophet or spokesperson of God?

II. Was the writer confirmed by acts of God? Frequently miracles separated the true prophets from the false ones. (Remember Satan can also work supernatural acts so be careful.)

After the Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites for 500 years, Moses was called by God to speak His words. God would tell Moses what to say to Pharaoh and he would say it. Ten times Moses told Pharaoh to let God’s people go so they could worship Him. Ten times Moses told Pharaoh

⁴ Douglas, JD, “New Bible Dictionary,” Tyndale Publishers, Wheaton, 1962, p.166.

⁵ Ibid. P.167

⁶ McDowell, Josh, “The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict,” Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1999, pp. 21-22. (Quoting Geisler/Nix, GIB, 223-231)

the consequences that would happen if he did not do as the Lord commanded. Ten times the words of the Lord through Moses came true in the form of miracles and signs.

Read Exodus 9:20-24 and answer questions 5-8:

Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside.²¹ But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field.²² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt-- on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt."²³ When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt;²⁴ hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Exodus 9:20-24

5. Who is speaking to Moses (v. 22a)?
6. What did the LORD tell Moses to do (v. 22b)?
7. When Moses stretched out his hand/staff toward the sky as the LORD told him, what happened (vs. 23-24)?
8. How would this miracle confirm Moses as a prophet of God?

III. Did the message tell the truth about God?

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? Numbers 23:19

9. Read Numbers 23:19. How is God different from men and women?
10. Based on Numbers 23:19, can you discern whether a message about God is true or false?

Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth." 1 Kings 17:24

11. Read 1 Kings 17:7-24. How does the woman know that Elijah is a man of God?

Read Mark 12:14 and answer questions 12-14:

They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Mark 12:14

12. In trying to trick Jesus by asking him a difficult question, these men make two statements about Jesus. No one in the crowd disagrees. What are these two statements of truth?
13. Was Jesus concerned with popularity? Yes No Maybe (Circle One)

14. What do you do when you are not sure about the truth of a statement or teaching about God?

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen. Romans 1:25

15. Read Romans 1:25. How can you help those who exchange the truth of God for a lie?

16. Think of someone who does not know the truth about God. Prayerfully reach out to that person this week with a nugget (piece) of truth about God. Share what happened:

IV. Does it come with the power of God?

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. Acts 4:33

...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David,⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 1:3-4

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

17. Now it's your turn. Write three questions, one from each of the three verses above, regarding principle number IV of recognizing that the books of the Bible are divinely inspired because they come with the power of God. Then, answer the questions that you have written.

V. Was it accepted by the people of God?

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

18. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Why does the apostle Paul thank God continually?

Lesson 11: Why the Bible is Trustworthy (Day Three) *The Word of God to Others*

19. List the *Five Principles* that guided the recognition and collection of divinely inspired books:

20. Share those *Five Principles* with the men or women that you are discipling. Explain how you shared the principles and how they received it:

It is important to have confidence in the Bible and to be able to share that confidence with believers and nonbelievers, alike. All of our knowledge about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, begins with the Scriptures. Also, remember to share the truth with patience and in love.

God's plan for giving out His word is the same as giving out the gospel. It is relational. For example, in the case of the Bible, it was translated into your native language, edited, published and distributed. Then it was purchased and given out personally or placed where others could find it. God used human hands and talents in the process of making His word available.

21. How were you introduced to the Word of God?

22. How are you introducing others to the Bible?

Created for Commitment: Audrey Wetherell Johnson (1884-1907)⁷

Audrey Wetherell Johnson trusted the Bible as God's word. She believed it with every fiber of her being. She committed her life to sharing God's wisdom and plans through His word.

Audrey was born in Leicester, England, and raised in a Christian home. After she trusted Jesus as her personal Savior, she enjoyed a personal relationship with God and allowed Him to lead her life. She was led to join the China Inland Mission as a missionary.

Before leaving for China, she and other missionaries were taught how to study and teach the Bible. Miss Johnson was a serious student of the Bible. She reveled (took great pleasure) in her studies and in later years would attribute her success in teaching to these principles that she learned in preparation for mission and diligently put into practice.

Miss Johnson served in China during the Japanese invasion of China in 1942. She was placed in a crowded Japanese prison camp that had been a horse stable and given little food. Nevertheless, Miss Johnson's memory of those days was of God's daily provision and loving kindness.

After the war, Miss Johnson returned to England for a brief furlough (leave of absence from duty). Then she returned to China where she began training teachers at the Bible Seminary in Shanghai. She had hoped to reach the millions of unsaved Chinese through instructing others. With every person trained and sent out, the Kingdom would be greatly advanced.

The Japanese were gone, but now China was now fully communist and she was put under house arrest for her beliefs and work for Christ. After eighteen months of imprisonment, she was forced to leave China permanently in 1950.

At an invitation, she traveled to the U.S. While she continued to pray and seek God's plan for her life, she received invitations from churches eager to hear of her experiences as a missionary. She included the importance of studying the Bible in all her presentations. The Bible was crucial to all, not just the unsaved in China.

In Southern California, she spoke at a church where a few of the women's hearts were stirred. Afterward they approached Miss Johnson and asked her to teach them the Bible in the way that she described. Miss Johnson admits in her book that her first thoughts were sinful and prideful.

⁷ Johnson, A. Wetherell, "Created for Commitment," Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, 1982.

She thought, *Why should I teach a few ladies the Bible when I have been a missionary and teacher in China? I'm too important for that.*

The Holy Spirit immediately convicted her and she fell before the Lord in confession. She told the Lord that she would do anything that He wanted. The Lord made it known to her that He did want her to teach these few ladies in the friend's home where she was staying.

She met with the ladies and told them the good news. But she also made it clear that this was going to be a serious Bible study. She expected a firm commitment. They would be expected to complete homework and study purposefully. She asked them to pray about their decision to join the Bible study under the conditions that she outlined and return with their answer.

In 1952, Miss Johnson began teaching five ladies from her friend's living room. It was not long before all she saw were the tops of their heads as they studiously and furiously wrote notes from her teaching. It was important for them to be listening and not writing, so she made a decision to type her notes each week so that the ladies would have the notes *and* pay attention in class.

Soon others heard of her excellent Bible knowledge and teaching. More and more women joined the group until they outgrew the living room. They moved to a church to accommodate all the participants.

In 1958 Billy Graham was holding revival meetings in San Francisco and asked Miss Johnson to conduct Bible classes for those saved during these large gatherings. With the growth of her studies and God's leading, Miss Johnson formed her nonprofit ministry *Bible Study Fellowship* (BSF) in 1959. She led this ministry until her retirement around 1980.

Miss Johnson wrote, "My aim had always been to ensure that *every* member of the class *was living by the reading of God's Word*. God gave me a profound conviction that the way to know Him intimately as a Person related to me was through study of His Word with the help of the Holy Spirit."

BSF has classes for men, women and children. It is still a serious Bible Study and has helped millions of men and women grow deeper in the Word. Currently there are over 1,000 BSF classes worldwide in 39 nations and across 6 continents. They all study the same book of the Bible at the same time. For example, if you are enrolled in BSF in Raleigh, North Carolina, and have to travel to San Francisco, California, you may go to the class in San Francisco and you will have the same lesson that is being taught in Raleigh. The classes and locations are listed on their website.

23. Pray: O God, Please give me a love of Your *Holy Word*. Make me trust it as the truth it is and apply it to my life. Holy Spirit, illuminate (enlighten, clarify) Scripture so I may understand it and teach it to others. Lord Jesus, help me to use the Bible in telling others about you. Amen.

Lesson 11: Why the Bible is Trustworthy (Day Four) *Studying the Bible*

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever. Isaiah 40:8

24. Read Isaiah 40:8. How long will God's word be effective and true?

The Bible is true and will remain true forever. However, technology is changing the way we receive and study it. God's word is now accessible through the Internet or software programs via a computer, tablet or smart phone. This opens up opportunities and unique ways the Lord may lead you or others in sharing His word.

Of course, the instrument of distribution is not as important as the words themselves. We need to apply ourselves to learn and memorize Scripture to fill our minds with truth. While we are learning, we should help others do the same.

Definition: Study is a verb meaning to apply one's mind purposefully to the acquisition of knowledge or understanding of (a subject). Study also means to read carefully and to memorize. Studying the Bible is applying our minds in an organized fashion that helps us understand God and His ways without predetermined (decide in advance) conclusions.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26

25. Read John 14:26. Why are you never alone when you are studying God's word?

There are various methods in studying and interpreting the Bible. It will make a difference if you are studying to teach, learn or edify (improve mind or character). There are many biblical tools to help you in your study: commentaries, Bible dictionaries and other books written in the past and present (Luke 1:1-4; Joshua 10:13; Acts 17:28 and Jude 1:14).

Definition: "A Bible commentary is a written, systematic series of explanations and interpretations of Scripture. Commentaries often analyze or expound on individual books of the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Some commentary works provide analysis of the whole of Scripture."⁸

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you discernment (ability to judge) in using other resources. The Holy Spirit may have caused the words of some authors to be true and worthy of use but we must still be diligent to distinguish truth from error. Only the Bible can claim infallibility (never wrong) as the inspired word of God. In the same way, ask the Holy Spirit to give you discernment regarding sermons or messages by preachers and pastors (Acts 17:11).

Subject Study

One of the best ways to study is to choose a subject that you are interested in or having difficulty with. For example, if you want to know God better, study His attributes or characteristics. Feeling a shortage of patience, study patience.

⁸ <http://christianity.about.com/od/glossary/g/Commentary.htm#>

I want to know Jesus in a more personal way. One of the ways the Holy Spirit led me to grow closer to Jesus was by choosing a subject about Him. I wrote seven "I am" verses on index cards in order to think about and meditate on what Jesus says about Himself. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the gate, I am the good shepherd, etc."

In order to find the verses, I looked up "bread" in my concordance. After I found the "bread of life" verse, I was able to cross reference and find the other "I am" statements. Some Bibles have cross-reference sections on each page of the Bible referring the reader to similar concepts, specific words or parallel passages.

Definition: A concordance is an alphabetical list of the words present in a text, usually with citations of the passages concerned. If a Bible includes a concordance, it will be located in the back of the book and entitled Concordance.

If you want to study or teach on a particular subject, look it up in your Bible concordance and write down all the verses that relate. Then study what the Bible says about it, checking study Bible notes and other cross references. Check out Bible dictionaries for words that you don't understand. Read other books on the subject or look up some of the verses in a commentary. If you do not have these extra books, please do not be concerned. They are helpful but not indispensable.

Book of the Bible Study

You may also want to study a particular book of the Bible. Read it all the way through once to get an understanding of the author's goal or reason for writing the book. Why is this book in the Bible and what does God want His people to understand? You can also make use of other resources to study word meanings, definitions, cultural differences etc.

The Bible is literature! God ordained for His word and His truth to be handed down through the written word. It makes use of figurative language and other literary concepts. Understand that there are different forms of literature and the form may influence the meaning.

Read Matthew 16:6-9 and answer questions 26-27:

"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."⁷ They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."⁸ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"⁹ Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?"

26. Did any of the disciples have enough faith to understand Jesus' words? Yes No (Circle One)

27. Why did Jesus say their lack of understanding had to do with a lack of faith (vs. 8-9)?

The disciples' lack of faith and understanding was serious. They may have missed an important warning against certain religious leaders of the time. If we are not careful to learn figurative language, we also may miss warnings and important lessons necessary for our spiritual health.

Definition: "Figurative language refers to all uses of words that are metaphorical or symbolic in nature, conveying a meaning different from their common, literal sense. In biblical interpretation, understanding the meaning of figurative language often involves the study of its cultural, historical, and literary contexts."⁹

*How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*¹² *Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

28. Read Matthew 16:11-12. What did Jesus mean when He warned against the "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (v. 12)?

Jesus also used parables or stories to make a point or clarify His instruction. The parables usually illustrated a moral principle to follow. As Jesus' disciples, we have the Holy Spirit to help us understand the reason behind the stories, difficult words and complex passages of scripture.

Definition: Literal is an adjective meaning to conform or to uphold the exact or primary meaning of a word or words. It can also be defined as word for word or verbatim. Literal means avoiding exaggeration, metaphor, or embellishment; factual.

When the literal sense seems right and appropriate to the context of the passage, accept it unless there is a good reason not to. We want to get the clear meaning of Scripture using the rules and tools of grammar. Take care not to "spiritualize" or look for meaning that is not in the text.

Figures of Speech in Language:

An expression in which words are used in a non-literal way to achieve an effect beyond the range of ordinary language. There are many figures of speech but here are a few:

Anthropomorphism – an-thro-po-mor-ph-ism (àn'thre-pe-môr fîz'em) *noun*

A description or depiction of God as if He were a human being, sharing some human characteristic or function. As a result, anthropomorphic language helps the author convey truth about God in human terms, ascribing to God some attribute or action that belongs to humans. Biblical example: *Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.* Isaiah 59:1 Anthropomorphism can also mean assigning human motivation, characteristics, or behavior to inanimate (lifeless) objects, animals, or natural phenomena.

Hyperbole - hy·per·bo·le (hî-pûr¹be-lê) *noun*

A figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect, as in *I could sleep for a year* or *This book weighs a ton*. Biblical example: *Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.* John 21:25

⁹ Hernando, James D., *Dictionary of Hermeneutics*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2005, p. 22.

Irony - i·ro·ny (î re-nê) *noun*

The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning. Irony is also a literary style employing such contrasts for humorous or rhetorical effect. Biblical example: *Then Job replied: "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!"* Job 12:1-2

Metaphor - met·a·phor (mèt¹e-fôr[˘]) *noun*

A figure of speech wherein an implicit comparison is made, one thing being spoken of in terms of another. A metaphor suggests a strong symbolic image that communicates not so much what is true to fact but as to feeling.¹⁰ Biblical example: *He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' "* Luke 13:32

Personification - per·son·i·fi·ca·tion (per·sòn^é-fî-kâ¹shen) *noun*

Occurs when personal qualities or activities are attributed to something that is impersonal such as animals, things or ideas. Biblical example: *Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* Psalm 24:7 This literary technique is used to create vivid and colorful images and is sometimes referred to as "figures of humanization."

Simile - sim·i·le (sîm¹e-lê) *noun*

A figure of speech that explicitly compares one thing to another by using the words "like" or "as." What is being compared may be either objects or actions, but the nature of the comparison is formally expressed and easily identified. Biblical example: *...and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.* Luke 3:22a

The Bible is not only God's word, it is a literary masterpiece. Within its 66 books are poetry, prose, letters, narratives, proverbs, parables and satire. It also contains history, biographies and future revelations. Understanding these different forms of literature and the various figures of speech gives us a more accurate meaning of the text and how to apply it to our lives.

We want to know God's intended meaning of the Bible so we can know Him better and follow His commands. Sometimes it is necessary to think deeply about certain scripture passages. This is called meditating. Meditate is a verb meaning to reflect upon or to consider at length. Two reasons to study and meditate on the words in the Bible are: (1. The words are inspired by God (2. The words are historically accurate.

Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.
Psalm 119:27

I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.
Psalm 119:48

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Psalm 119:97

29. Read Psalm 119:27, 48, 97. Why will *you* study and meditate on the words in the Bible?

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

Meditation offers wonderful spiritual benefits to disciples. It opens up communion with God and builds confidence in Him. It is also an act of worship and an avenue for spiritual truth and renewal.

Lesson 11: Why the Bible is Trustworthy (Day Five) *The Bible and History*

Those who ignore history are bound to repeat it. George Santayana ¹¹

Definition: History is defined as past events of a period in time or in the life or development of a people, an institution, or a place.

We Study History for Two Fundamental Reasons:

I. History Helps Us Understand People and Societies.

“How can we evaluate war if the nation is at peace—unless we use historical materials? How can we understand genius, the influence of technological innovation, or the role that beliefs play in shaping family life, if we don't use what we know about experiences in the past? Some social scientists attempt to formulate laws or theories about human behavior. But even these recourses depend on historical information, except for in limited, often artificial cases in which experiments can be devised to determine how people act. Major aspects of a society's operation, like mass elections, missionary activities, or military alliances, cannot be set up as precise experiments. Consequently, history must serve, however imperfectly, as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behaves as it does in societal settings. This, fundamentally, is why we cannot stay away from history: it offers the only extensive evidential base for the contemplation and analysis of how societies function, and people need to have some sense of how societies function simply to run their own lives.”¹²

II. History Helps Us Understand Change and How the Society We Live in Came to Be. ¹³

“Sometimes fairly recent history will suffice to explain a major development, but often we need to look further back to identify the causes of change. Only through studying history can we grasp how things change; only through history can we begin to comprehend the factors that cause change; and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persist despite change.

The importance of history in explaining and understanding change in human behavior is no mere abstraction (idea). Take an important human phenomenon such as alcoholism. Through biological experiments, scientists have identified specific genes that seem to cause a proclivity (tendency) toward alcohol addiction in some individuals. This is a notable advance. But

¹¹ The original text written by George Santayana, “Reason in Common Sense, The Life of Reason,” Vol.1, wrote “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” However, Santayana was misquoted and the new quote became popular.

¹² Stearns, Peter N. America Historical Association, <http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/WhyStudyHistory.htm>

¹³ Ibid.

alcoholism, as a social reality, has a history: rates of alcoholism have risen and fallen, and they have varied from one group to the next. Attitudes and policies about alcoholism have also changed and varied. History is indispensable to understanding why such changes occur. And in many ways historical analysis is a more challenging kind of exploration than genetic (genes; hereditary) experimentation. Historians have in fact greatly contributed in recent decades to our understanding of trends (or patterns of change) in alcoholism and to our grasp of the dimensions of addiction as an evolving social problem.”¹⁴

Most likely you studied history in school. It may have been your favorite subject and you may continue to have an interest in your own people as well as the history and development of other tribes and nations. However, it may not be your preferred topic, and that is all right. It can still serve you on a more personal level. For example, it contributes to your identity, moral choices, and understanding of good citizenship. *It also confirms the reliability and accuracy of the Bible.*

The Bible makes reference to events in history placing them in time and geographical locations. Nothing in the Bible has ever been proven inaccurate. Even when the Bible seems to be wrong about an ancient fact or reference, a new archeological site will be discovered and prove that the Bible was right after all.

“For example, the Old Testament mentioned a people known as the Hittites nearly 50 times. But for centuries, those who studied the ancient world questioned the Bible because they had discovered no evidence of such a people. In 1906, however, the Hittite capital was uncovered about 90 miles east of Ankara, the capital of Turkey.”¹⁵

The men who recorded the historical facts were organized and careful to write about what was happening in their culture and world at the time God was speaking. They were not confused or mentally unstable but knew exactly what was taking place and how it was affecting the people and the environment. The authors placed their writing in a context that could be proved thousands of years later.

+Since history is so important to mankind, we have developed tests for the reliability of historical documents. There are three tests: bibliographical, internal evidence and external evidence. Let’s look briefly at the Bible through the lens of these tests.¹⁶

A. Bibliographical Test: Examines the textual transmission (communication) of documents.

Definitions: Bibliographical in this context is defined as the history of books and other publications, and the work of classifying and describing them. Text refers to a book or other written or printed work.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sper, David, “Can I Really Trust the Bible?” Thomas Nelson Publishers, Grand Rapids, Mi, 1986, p. 19.

¹⁶ McDowell, Josh, “The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict,” Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1999, pp. 34-93.

We look at the Bible today and say okay, here it is, but how did it get to us? We do not have the original words written on stones, animal hides or papyrus (paper made from papyrus plant), so do we have an accurate account of what we are reading? This is what the bibliographical test seeks to answer. This test looks at the date and reliability of the copies that are in existence.

New Testament

The New Testament books were the most frequently copied of any ancient manuscripts. Recall the New Testament was originally written in the Greek. It was the universal language from about 300 BC to 200 AD because of Alexander the Great and his world conquests.

“There are now more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate¹⁷ and at least 9,300 other early version (MSS)¹⁸, and we have close to, if not more than, 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such number and attestation (evidence). In comparison, Homer’s Iliad is second, with only 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the thirteenth century. (Leach, OB, 145)”¹⁹

Most of the ancient manuscripts survive with only a few copies. The sheer number of our copies makes it possible to reconstruct the original text with accuracy and precision. We know that we have received God’s word in the way He divinely purposed.

30. Explain in your own words why the New Testament books are historically reliable using the **Bibliographical Test**:

Old Testament

The Old Testament is much older and by that fact alone has fewer copies. In addition, the Jews today hold their Scripture in such reverence that old or damaged copies are buried.²⁰ Therefore, it is likely that the Israelites buried theirs as well.

The first five books of the Bible (Pentateuch) written by Moses were most likely written during his time in the desert with the Israelites (1446-1406 BC). Nevertheless, when comparing the accuracy of the Old Testament to other ancient literature of its time, it stands as a far superior work in every way. The Hebrews were relentless in their pursuit of accuracy. They were faithful to the original text as they kept and protected it from all attacks. One of the ways that we know this truth about the Hebrews is the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*.

The Dead Sea, also known as the Salt Sea, is 1,300 feet below sea level and is one of the world’s saltiest bodies of water. It is located 13 miles east of Jerusalem and 8 miles south of Jericho.

¹⁷ The Vulgate is the principal Latin version of the Bible, prepared mainly by St. Jerome in the late 4th century, and (as revised in 1592) adopted as the official text for the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁸ MSS is an abbreviation for manuscripts.

¹⁹ McDowell, Josh p 34.

²⁰ Source: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ask-the-expert-burying-the-genizah/>

Fish and plants cannot survive in it because of the high amounts of salt and this is the reason for its name.

In 1947 a young shepherd boy was looking for a lost goat near the Dead Sea and the ancient ruins of Qumran. He stopped along the way to throw some stones into a small cave opening. The stone did not make the kind of sound he expected. It sounded like shattering pottery. He went into the cave to investigate and found several large jars containing leather scrolls.

Eventually scrolls would be discovered in 11 caves in the area; scholars have identified the remains of about 825 to 870 separate scrolls. Fragments of every book of the Old Testament have been discovered except of the book of Esther. The scrolls are the oldest group of Hebrew canon (Old Testament) manuscripts ever discovered.

Scholars date the scrolls from about 200 BC to 68 AD. They were most likely copied and written by the Jewish sect known as the Essenes.²¹ The scrolls were probably hidden in the caves about 66-70 AD during the Jewish revolt against Rome. Recall Roman soldiers put down the revolt and the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

When scholars compare the Dead Sea scrolls (for example the Isaiah scroll, 125 BC) with the next oldest known Hebrew text (Isaiah scroll 916 AD) the accuracy is remarkable. There is over a thousand year period between the two scrolls and yet there is little difference. Plus, the 5 percent differences are simple scribal (copyist) errors, such as variations in spelling, that do not change the meaning of the text.

31. How does this information about the Dead Sea Scrolls build up your faith in the reliability (trustworthiness) of the Scriptures?

B. Internal Evidence Test: Claims the writer himself makes in the document.

For the Bible's internal test, we might ask a couple of questions:

“What do the writers of the Bible say about it?”

“Do the writers agree with one another?”

We know that the authors of the Bible all agree and maintain that it is a message directly from God. The authors were told what to say and what to write by God Himself. The Bible is not only historically accurate, it also claims to be inspired by God.

Definition: Inspired or Inspiration of Scripture is defined as the "actions of God leading to the writing, preservation, and collection of His words to His people into the Bible. The English word inspiration comes from the Latin word *in spiro* which mean 'to breathe in.' Inspiration,

²¹ The Essenes were members of a Jewish sect that existed in Palestine during the time of Christ, but not mentioned in the New Testament. They were ascetics who lived in a separate community and attached great importance to the study of the Scriptures. Ascetics practice severe self-discipline and abstinence.

then, is the influence of the Holy Spirit upon individuals for the purpose of producing an authoritative record of person, teaching and events."²²

New Testament (underlining for emphasis by author of study)

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Hebrews 1:1-2

how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. Hebrews 2:3

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 2 Peter 3:15-16

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

Old Testament (underlining for emphasis by author of study)

Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed on sides, front and back.¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. Exodus 32:15-16

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. Isaiah 1:2

Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. Isaiah 30:8

They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.¹³ "'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 7:12

32. The Bible is consistent in claiming to record God's words. True False (Circle One)

We are establishing that the Bible is the word of God and without error (inerrant). Nevertheless, there are challenges in understanding God's word. We are human and can make mistakes in interpreting the text and missing the point of God's revelation (disclosure).

²² Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 703.

Keep in mind that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew about 1400 BC in the ancient Near East. Today, this area is roughly equivalent to the location of the Middle Eastern countries (such as Israel, Iraq, and Jordan). The New Testament was written in Greek about 2,000 years ago in the confines of the Roman Empire (Spain to Syria including many modern day countries).

Yes, the Bible was written a very long time ago in different cultures. Even today Middle Eastern cultures are different from our Western ways. Plus, just think how much our own culture and language has changed in the last 100 years and then you will appreciate the need for care. There are people who will say that the Bible has scientific errors and contradictions. Ask them to show you where and help them to see that an error or contradiction is not actually present. Get help from others and if something does not seem to have a satisfactory answer, remember that just because something does not currently have an explanation does not mean that it will not be explainable in the future.

Also remember that the Bible records human frailties and sin but it does not mean that God approves of it. God also gives us new revelations or words to live by in the Bible, and this may replace older revelations. An example is Jesus' death on the cross replacing the animal sacrificial system.

The Bible does not claim to be a science book. However, there are no scientific errors in it. People will point to the fact that the Bible talks about the rising and the setting of the sun and claim this as scientific error because everyone know that the earth revolves around the sun. This is poetic language and today, we still talk about the sun rising and setting. Remember the Bible is literature and uses figurative and other forms of language.

C. External Evidence Test: Claims other writers (in other documents) make about the manuscript in question.

Publius Tacitus (56 –117 AD), considered one of the greatest Roman historians, wrote the “Annals” and “Histories.” In “Annals” Tacitus mentions that Christ suffered *the extreme penalty* under Pontius Pilate. He also stated that Christians get their name from Christ.

Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD) was a Jew working on historical documents under Roman authority. His book “Antiquities of the Jews” had references to Jesus, John the Baptist and the beginnings of Christianity. He also wrote “Jewish Wars” and both these works confirm geographical and historical accounts listed in the Bible.

Suetonius Tranquillus (69-135 AD) was secretary to the Emperor Hadrian and his writings or reports confirm the use of punishment on Christians. His writings also confirm Acts 18:2, in which Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome.

There are also early Christian writers, such as Eusebius, Polycarp, Papias and Irenaeus, who confirm the reliability and authenticity of the Scriptures. In fact, there is an unbroken line of Christians since the time of Christ who have trusted and followed the Holy Scriptures as the true word of God. Not only do we have an unbroken line of writings affirming God's word, but we have an unbroken chain of witnesses willing to give their lives for this truth.

My (Kathleen's) Story of Study

Within weeks of being saved, I felt the Lord telling me to get into a serious Bible Study. This was radical! Although I was familiar with the stories in the Bible through weekly sermons, I had little contact with the Bible itself. I also felt the Lord saying the Bible study at our church did not have the depth He desired for me. I really did not know where to begin.

As divine appointments go, a friend gave me a ride home from our women's circle meeting one May evening. I really do not remember why I needed a ride, but on the way home I mentioned that I was interested in a serious Bible Study. She told me about BSF (Bible Study Fellowship). Recall the story of founder Miss Johnson earlier in this lesson. It is an interdenominational organization with classes across the United States and the world. Everyone studies the same book of the Bible at the same time. Volunteers teach and manage the study groups at all their locations. My friend was both attending and volunteering at one in Raleigh.

At this particular location, they only allowed women to sign up once a year during the month of May for the following September. She was concerned that the May sign-up had already been completed but she would check. As it turned out, the following Monday was the last sign-up. I attended, was accepted, and studied with this group over the next four years.

After I learned that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, the Lord put a desire in my heart to learn these ancient languages. I wanted to be able to interpret the Bible for myself and not rely on other people telling me what God was saying. Someone told me that it was possible to take Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary without enrolling in seminary.

That sounded good to me, plus the seminary was only about 30-40 minutes from my home! However, when I called I was told that I could not just take one course but had to enroll in a program of study at the seminary. The woman on the phone sent the information and application to me and it arrived at a convenient time. So I thought, *I'll apply and see what happens.*

After I had completed most of the application requirements, I was talking on the phone to a different person at the seminary. I said, "This really is a lot of work to take one class!" She replied, "Oh, you do not have to enroll in seminary; we have a simple application for that. Do you want me to send it to you?"

The first person on the phone had given me the wrong information! But now I did not see any purpose in starting over. I was accepted and not only took the Hebrew and Greek courses but after twelve years of taking one or two classes at a time, I completed my Master of Divinity.

33. How effective can you be as a disciple if you do not know the truth of Scripture?

34. How has Jesus opened your mind so that you can understand the Scriptures?

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 1 Peter 1:23

35. Memorize 1 Peter 1:23.

---End Lesson 11---

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Lesson 11

CLI Disciple of Christ Study: Why the Bible is Trustworthy

Return your answers to your Discipler for discussion and review. Include a personal letter with your answers. This study is designed to forge a close, yet professional, friendship between you and your Discipler. Even short notes help bridge the distance and connect hearts in Christ.

Name: _____ Number: _____ Date: _____

Name of Institution: _____ Street address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

1. Read John 15:5. What is Jesus teaching about our relationship with Him?

2. How are we to live with one another (v. 8a)? _____

3. List 6 ways we are to live in harmony with one another (vs. 8b-9):

(1. _____ (4. _____

(2. _____ (5. _____

(3. _____ (6. _____

4. How will you learn to repay evil and insult with blessing? _____

5. Who is speaking to Moses (v. 22a)? _____

6. What did the LORD tell Moses to do (v. 22b)? _____

7. When Moses stretched out his hand/staff toward the sky as the LORD told him, what happened (vs. 23-24)? _____

8. How would this miracle confirm Moses as a prophet of God? _____

9. Read Numbers 23:19. How is God different from men and women? _____

10. Based on Numbers 23:19, can you discern whether a message about God is true or false? _____

11. Read 1 Kings 17:7-24. How does the woman know that Elijah is a man of God? _____

12. In trying to trick Jesus by asking him a difficult question, these men make two statements about Jesus. No one in the crowd disagrees. What are these two statements of truth?

(1. _____)

(2. _____)

13. Was Jesus concerned with popularity? Yes No Maybe (Circle One)

14. What do you do when you are not sure about the truth of a statement or teaching about God? _____

15. Read Romans 1:25. How can you help those who exchange the truth of God for a lie? _____

16. Think of someone who does not know the truth about God. Prayerfully reach out to that person this week with a nugget (piece) of truth about God. Share what happened:

17. Now it's your turn. Write three questions, one from each of the three verses above, regarding principle number IV (4) of recognizing that the books of the Bible are divinely inspired because they come with the power of God. Then, answer the questions that you have written.

(1. Question: _____

Answer: _____

(2. Question: _____

Answer: _____

(3. Question: _____

Answer: _____

18. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Why does the apostle Paul thank God continually?

19. List the *Five Principles* that guided the recognition and collection of divinely inspired books:

(1. _____

(2. _____

(3. _____

(4. _____

(5. _____

20. Share those *Five Principles* with the men or women that you are discipling. Explain how you shared the principles and how they received it:_____

21. How were you introduced to the Word of God?_____

22. How are you introducing others to the Bible?_____

23. I prayed this prayer: Yes No (Circle One)

24. Read Isaiah 40:8. How long will God's word be effective and true?_____

25. Read John 14:26. Why are you never alone when you are studying God's word?

26. Did any of the disciples have enough faith to understand Jesus' words? Yes No (Circle One)

27. Why did Jesus say their lack of understanding had to do with a lack of faith (vs. 8-9)?

28. Read Matthew 16:11-12. What did Jesus mean when He warned against the "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (v. 12)?_____

29. Read Psalm 119:27, 48, 97. Why will *you* study and meditate on the words in the Bible?

30. Explain in your own words why the New Testament books are historically reliable using the Bibliographical Test:

31. How does this information about the Dead Sea Scrolls build up your faith in the reliability (trustworthiness) of the Scriptures?

32. The Bible is consistent in claiming to record God's words. True False (Circle One)

33. How effective can you be as a disciple if you do not know the truth of Scripture?

34. How has Jesus opened your mind so that you can understand the Scriptures?

35. Write 1 Peter 1:23 from memory without referring to the Bible or notes:

Next: Lesson 12: Fear the Lord

