

# THE BIBLE

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Most people have a Bible. In fact, most people have many Bibles! They are given as gifts or given at important events in your life, but they usually collect dust on bookshelves or bedside tables. But whether or not you have a Bible, do you trust it? Do you believe that the words written inside the Bible are God-inspired and are applicable and relevant to you and your life today? Or is the Bible a random book with human ideas that a bunch of people put together? With all the crazy stuff out there that is so unreliable, how do you know what to trust? How many times have you read something on the internet that sounded crazy, but you believed it, and then later you found out that it was a hoax?

This lesson is where everything starts. Without the Bible, you won't know the God that loves you like crazy. Without the Bible, you won't understand His amazing plan of saving sinful humans. Without the Bible, you are in the dark about why you are here and what your purpose is. And my prayer is that as you go through this lesson, that you'll believe with all your heart that the Word (a.k.a. the Bible) is God's incredible, trustworthy message to **YOU!**

Grab a Bible, and check out these verses to see how God composed this letter for you. (By the way, all the verses through these study guides will be from the NIV unless otherwise stated, but you can use whichever version you like best.)

**2 Timothy 3:16:** "All scripture is \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_..."

That means that God was involved in **every** part of the Bible. It is a book that has the very breath of God in it. As He inspired (breathed into) men with thoughts and ideas, they wrote (breathed out) down their words from His inspiration. It's like a connected God/Human thing as they worked together to bring this incredible message to you.

**2 Peter 1:20-21:** "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the \_\_\_\_\_ will, but prophets, though human, spoke from \_\_\_\_\_ as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Isn't it cool that God chose to work hand-in-hand with humans to create a message for you? He could have spoken and a large book would have appeared in libraries and on the shelves of Barnes & Noble, but instead, He used humans to give their testimony of a God that loves humans so much, that He'll even let them be a part of His message. And the beauty of the Bible is that, although the writers were human, they didn't write from their own inspiration. Nope! God spoke to them and allowed them to put His inspiration into their own words that would reach all humanity. You **CAN** trust the Bible! In fact, here are several reasons that will help you know that it can be trusted.

- 1. Manuscript Evidence:** There are more manuscripts (original copies) of the Bible than any other book.
- 2. Archeological Evidence:** All over the place, evidence is discovered that proves that the stories in the Bible actually happened. (Example: Nabonidus Cylinder)
- 3. Eyewitness Accounts:** The Bible was written by real people that really saw what happened. It isn't a book full of fictional stories, but the stories were experienced by real people!
- 4. Historical Evidence:** History agrees that the Biblical events really happened..
- 5. Consistency:** The Bible, all 66 books, were written by over 40 different authors over 1,500 years, and they all tell one big story. That's amazing that they agree with each other!
- 6. Prophetic Evidence:** There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that came true in the New Testament.
- 7. Cultural Critique Evidence:** The Bible accurately critiques cultural practices that we know to just bring drama and issues. (Example: Polygamy)
- 8. Personal Testimony Evidence:** Throughout the centuries, people's lives have been changed by the experience and interaction that they have had with the Bible.

And if that's not enough to help you believe, then spend some time reading the words of this incredible book! It will change your life as you discover Who the Bible points to...an all-knowing God that deeply cares about you.

## BASIC POINT

The Bible is trustworthy because it was inspired by an all-knowing God that deeply cares for you.

But here's the thing, the Bible is way more than just something that you can trust. It's an incredible love letter from a supernatural God that wants to have a relationship with you.

Think of it like this... You've got a long distance girlfriend or boyfriend that is working at summer camp way up in the mountains. You can't see them, because they are across the country. You can't talk with them over Skype or Facetime, because they don't have good cell service, and they don't have wifi. Pretty much the only way to communicate with them is the old school method of writing hand-written letters. It takes a week for your letter to get to them, and it's another week for their letter to get back to you. So, you write with passion and love-filled words so that they will know how much you care about them, how often you are thinking about them, and how much you miss them.



That's essentially what the Bible is...a love letter from God to you so that you know how much He cares about you and loves you. Just listen to some of these verses...

**Romans 8:38-39:** "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the \_\_\_\_\_ of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**1 John 4:9-10:** "This is how God showed his \_\_\_\_\_ among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

**Jeremiah 31:3:** "The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have \_\_\_\_\_ you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'"

How incredible is it that there is a God that cares enough about you that He was willing to write out a love letter to you more than 2,000 years ago, JUST so you would know?

- He wanted you to know that He is a relational God that always wants to communicate with you.
- He wanted you to know that He loves you enough that He would do whatever it takes to be with you.
- He wanted you to know that no matter how tough life gets, He is right there next to you, holding your hand and guiding your life.
- He wanted you to know that you are special and valuable.

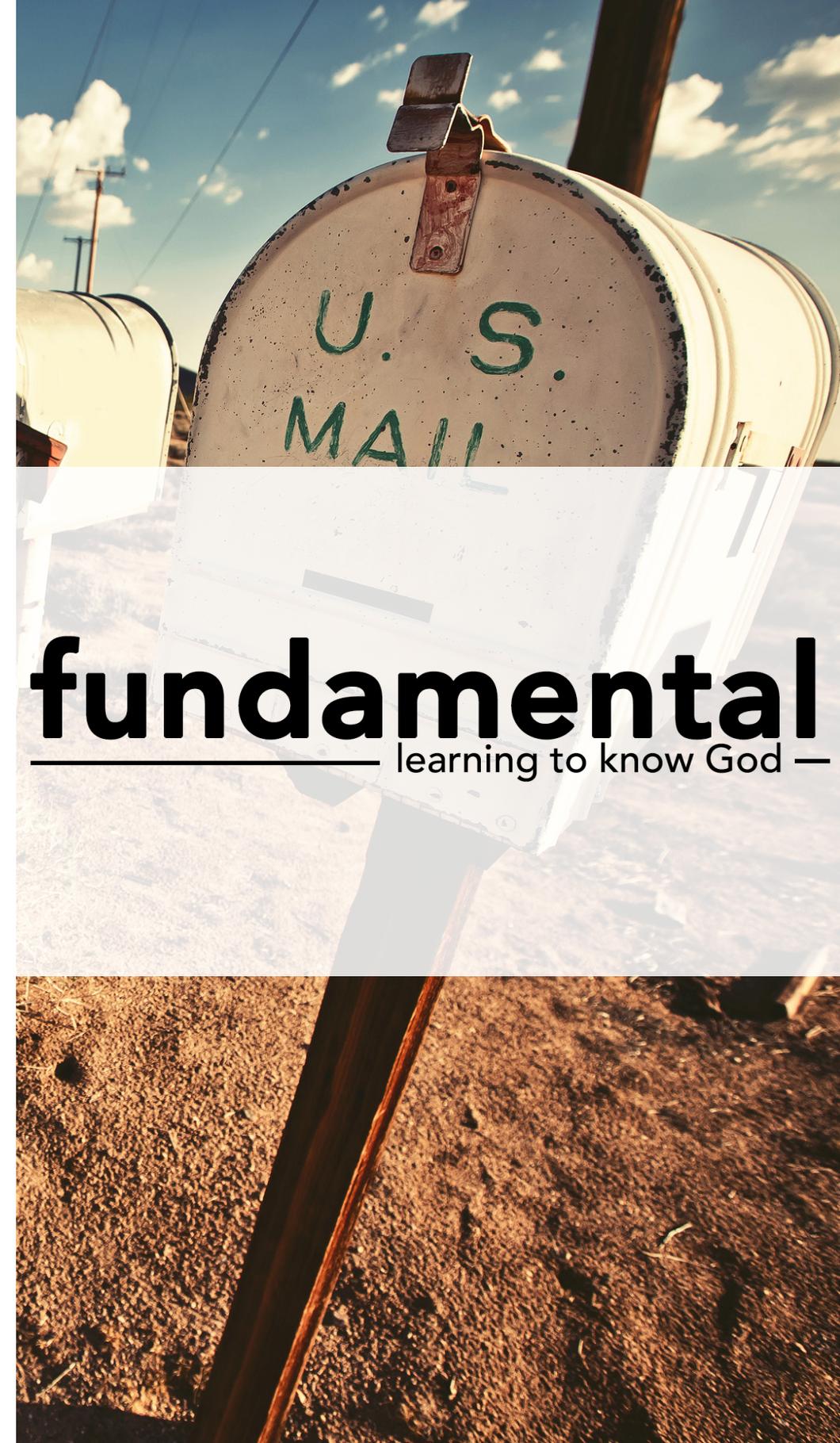
And that's why He gave us the Bible.

## FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

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1. How have you experienced that the Bible is real?
  2. How has God spoken to you through the words of the Bible?
  3. What are some of your favorite Bible promises?
  4. What is your favorite version of the Bible?
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Have you ever wondered why there are so many Bible translations? It's a really good question, with a simple answer...sort of. Basically, the Bible was originally written in Hebrew (Old Testament), and Greek (New Testament) and a little Aramaic in there too. Well, to translate it to English, translators did their best to use words that represented to text. The difference in the versions comes from the process of the translators. Some tried to use the exact literal words in English that matched the original text. That sounds like a good plan except for when there isn't an exact matching word or it just doesn't make sense that way. Versions like the KJV and the ESV used a process that was more "word-for-word." Other translators used a process that was more "thought-for-thought" as they tried to get the main idea of the author. This sometimes is easier to read, although it leaves the interpretation up to the translator. Some of these versions are The Message, NLT or Living Bible. Everyone will have their own preference, but generally a version in the middle is a good place to start when studying the Bible. Some of the "middle-of-the-road" translations are the NIV, NRSV, or the TNIV. Whatever the version, you can be sure that God's message gets recorded loud and clear. His message of love goes beyond translations or human translators. It is an eternal message that can never be stopped!



**fundamental**  
learning to know God —