

## WEEK 3:

One of the ways we know we can trust Jesus is through the Bible.

# START

In this lesson, we will discuss God's Word. We've talked about how God pursues us and the Trinity.

The **Word** of God. When you have a relationship with Christ, when you first start one, there are things you need to know in the beginning. The Word of God is our **guidebook**.

We have a book which tells us about God from the beginning, through Jesus' Life, death, and resurrection. It carries on through the first hundred or so years of the early church, when Jesus's disciples were processing and then relaying what their teacher had taught to them. We can utilize the early Christians understanding of God, Jesus, and his purpose to impact our mindset today.

John 1:1,14 (NIV) says, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Thanks to verses like these, we know that Jesus and the Bible are similar in nature. We know that the Word of God has been something that's been around forever. It's the truth of God. What we have in the Bible is God's truth contained in word. The word of God came into the world as Jesus and is ultimately recorded for us in Scripture.

The Bible is more than some ancient writing, more than a book. It's not a novel, not fiction, not a children's book, and it's not a self-help book. The Bible is something more. It's something bigger.

We call it, **God-breathed**.

The words contained in it are God-breathed. God put them into the minds of the men that wrote them. The writers wrote them down as God shared them. As we look at the truth of Scripture, we have to understand that it has the same power as Jesus to teach us, equip us, model for us what a life looks like with Christ. It teaches you how to love God and love people.

Why do you think God gave us the Bible?

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2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV) says, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

The Bible is not only God-breathed. It’s useful for teaching, for training, and correcting. It’s something that allows us to understand salvation in Christ Jesus—if we crack it’s pages.

One of the difficulties of someone who is early in their walk with the Lord, if they’re not invested in God’s word, is they don’t understand Scripture. They don’t truly understand salvation, and they don’t understand what it means to have a real relationship with Jesus.

The Bible is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training.**

The purpose of the Bible is to teach and train you. It also equips other more spiritually mature Christians, so they can help correct and rebuke you when your behavior falls out of line with the Bible. As Christians we’re called to act like Christ, and when we’re not acting like Christ, someone who is called to pour into our lives can tell us, “Hey, maybe that’s not what the Bible is telling you to do. Maybe that’s not how you have the best relationship with the Lord. Maybe that’s not how you should live in the world.”

To be in relationship with Christ, you have to read the Bible.

How often do you read the Bible each week? \_\_\_\_\_

The translation of the Bible doesn't matter either. We'll talk about translations in a bit. But you've got to read God's word. You've gotta open it up, experience it for yourself.

Do you know which version of the Bible you own? If so, which?

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The Bible can be difficult to understand. I've been pastoring for twenty years and there are things that still don't make sense to me. The original language is difficult to understand. It's not always easily structured or easy to process. Ever try to read the King James Bible? It's difficult.

As Christians, the Bible is tantamount to our experience with Christ. As a believer, **you need to think about God's word regularly.**

It's an important part of your relationship. This isn't just something that's advised for you. It wasn't like people in ancient times were saying, "You people 2,000 years from now need to know all this stuff, even though we're not living it out ourselves."

No, they lived it.

The ancient people of God had been engaging with God's words for over 1500 years.

Joshua 1:8 (NIV) says, *"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

All throughout the recorded history of Scripture, we see people who engaged with God's words. When Joshua was written, we didn't have all the books of the Bible, but the books that had already been written were important. They had priority. Not only in society, but in people's lives. As the verse says, people *believed* that if you followed God's lead from Scripture, you would be prosperous and successful.

Because in Scripture, God shares with us how to live our lives.

When we look at **the Bible**, we have to understand the purpose of what God is trying to do in our own lives.

Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV) says, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."*

I love this verse because it tells me, as a husband, how I'm supposed to love my wife. Like Christ loved the church. It's more than just loving my wife—buying her candy on Valentine's Day.

Since we're KETO, my wife got a nice card and pistachios.

This isn't about romance. It's about loving people to a better tomorrow. God loves his church. Through the word, God is able to cleanse the sin that we have. Through the washing of that sin, we can be presented before God without stain, wrinkle, or blemish.

The Bible plays an important part in the church's reclamation through God the Father, but the process of our redemption is through our interaction and experience with God's Word.

Husbands are charged to love their wives so much that they help make their wives better people who are more positioned to have a right relationship with God. That's a powerful way to look at a marriage relationship. God loves his church that much also.

### **God cleanses his church through his word.**

We are able to be spotless and without blemish before our God, because of how much God loves us and how much his son sacrificed for us.

### **God's word allows for you to become more like Christ.**

When we live according to God's word, we become more like Christ. That process makes us holy. We become set apart and sanctified—sanctification is the process of us becoming more and more like Christ. For you, it's less and less and less like \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert your name). You are an imperfect, broken, and sinful being.

Instead, you want to be more and more like Jesus Christ.

You can become more like Jesus by reading God's word and engaging with its teachings. You can't sit and have a personal one on one conversation with Jesus. That's not how it works. You can't just sit across the table from Jesus and say, "These are all the things I need to know."

But, God had a plan for you. You can read his word, study it and apply it to your life to become more like Jesus. And less like \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert your name). And the way he engineered that for you is through giving you the Bible.

### **The Bible is 66 books that were put together over 1500 years.**

There are lots of ways the Bible came together, but we're not going to get into all that. We do have one aspect I'm going to focus on—and for that we need **marshmallows**.

Marshmallows are going to help us explain Pascal's Law of Common Probability.

Picture 66 volunteers standing spread out across a very large room. Each of those volunteers is holding a marshmallow, which represent one of the 66 books of the Bible. Far away, but still within throwing distance, stands a basket. After every volunteer is blindfolded, they are going to be instructed to throw their marshmallows in the basket. All of the volunteers have to land their marshmallows in the basket to succeed.

No one can miss.

Everybody misses. The chances of all 66 landing in basket were infinitesimally small. I don't know the probability number, but it would be ginormous. When we use the law of common probability to decipher the chance that 40 different authors, from three continents, separated by 1500 years, still came up with one consistent message, the numbers are so big our minds can't even comprehend them.

Humans can't even get 66 marshmallows in one basket, let alone write common Scripture all over the world, on three different continents without telephones, email, Netflix, or the Internet.

This is one of the ways we know the Bible is God-breathed. The probability of just 17 prophecies coming true is **1 in 10x<sup>157</sup>**—that's one followed by 157 zeroes. There are over 300 different prophecies in Scripture that came true with Jesus. And even secular scholars acknowledge that Jesus *was* a real person.

One of the reasons people believe in the probability of Scripture is because the chances that we would have Scripture are so slim, that there has to be something special about it. When you hold the Bible, you have to realize this is more than some printed resource or book.

We have it because God breathed it.

Which book of the Bible is your favorite and why?

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There are **40** different authors who wrote and edited the Bible. We know **35** of them by name. **Five** are priests, **four** are kings, **13** are musicians.

The person that wrote the most words was **Moses**. He wrote about 125,000 words, about 20% of the Bible. The person wrote the most documents (13) was **Paul**. The longest book in the Old Testament is **Jeremiah** (33,000 Hebrew words). In the New Testament, it's **Luke** (19,000 Greek words).

I have a personal favorite author in Scripture. Mine is **Heman**, because I used to love this cartoon as a kid—

“By the power of Grayskull!” I raise a pretend sword above my head.

Wait, that's the wrong He-Man.

The Bible's Heman was renowned for his wisdom. Heman also had the smallest contribution to Scripture. He coauthors Psalm 88, only 233 words.

One of the great things about this guy was the way he was talked about in Scripture. He was an extremely wise person. He lived somewhat around the time as Solomon. He was not as wise as Solomon, but they revered this Heman for his wisdom, and so he participated in writing the Psalm.

Let's look at how the Bible is broken down.

Moses: 20%  
Ezra: 6%  
Luke: 6%  
Jeremiah: 6%  
Paul: 5%  
Unknown: 23%  
Other: 32%

As we look at all of this, we go back to Pascal, the French philosopher and mathematician who created the modern theory of probability. Pascal said this, "I prefer to believe those writers who get their throats cut for what they write."

Is there anything in the world you would risk death to write about? If so, what?

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When you look at Scripture, **the first Christians died to make Jesus Christ known to all men.**

They gave their lives for it. Most of them died miserable deaths. They didn't just die because it was a fad. None of them said, "I want to go risk my life for something I don't know to be true." They knew what was real and true. The disciples saw Jesus die on a cross, and they saw him raise from a grave, and they saw him ascend into heaven. They met him, saw the nail holes, and touched him. Then they decided to go tell the entire world about what happened.

And they died sharing that truth.

If any of you died and came back, that means something. It would be transformative for you if it happened today. For the disciples, their best friend died, he came back, and ascended into heaven. And because of that, they risked their lives—they wanted to be with him.

They wanted to live out what he'd talked about, and that's how the Bible came together. They fought for it, and died for it.

Pascal is saying, "Why would someone die for something that's not true?" The truth is we wouldn't. I wouldn't die for something I didn't know to be true, and neither would you.

Psalms 119:105 (NIV) says, "*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*"

It's very clear the Bible plays a tantamount role in our lives. We need the Bible to light the way for us, to show us where to go in life, to give us a path forward. And it does. So much so that the ancient Jews had a strong understanding of how important the word of God is.

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 (NIV) says, "*Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.*"

The Jews had a **Phylactery** where they would take the above verses literally. They'd tie a phylactery on their head and secure it with leather straps. The box contained sacred verses of scripture inside. They'd also wrap leather around their hand and forearm and secure a similar box around their bicep. This was all done in obedience to the aforementioned verse.

They did this because **God's word is living and active.**

The Bible is not just some stuffy book. It's words are life-changing, and when you embrace God's Word, it changes your everything. When you read the Bible it's important to ask God to reveal what the verses are supposed to mean for you. That's where the Holy Spirit comes in to your spiritual journey on a regular basis—to help you process and understand the scripture that you read.

I know some people do not like to read. But there's no Scripture in the Bible that says, "Well, if you don't like to read, you don't have to read the Bible."

Is it hard for you to read the Bible? YES NO

We have the Holy Spirit that helps us understand and process God's word, even when it's tough. Even when we don't like to read. The Holy Spirit is a supernatural helper who can give you a passion to read God's word, and can help you to understand it also.. God wants you to understand his word, that's one of the reasons he sent the Holy Spirit. God's word is living and active. It will not return void.

If you give it a chance.

If you engage with God's word, the Holy Spirit will work in you and change you.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV) says, *"For the word of God is alive 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."*

The Bible is written for us as a way to assist us with life. To understand God, to understand Jesus, and to understand how we're to live in the world.

As believers, **you need to engage with God's word daily.**

That can be difficult because we're all busy. We are focused on sports, hobbies, and things on TV. But, our society has the Bible more readily available to us in this culture than any other time in history. There is no excuse for believers not to engage Scripture. I've got six different Bible apps on my phone. I even have one with 35 different translations.

And they're free.

There's one called, YouVersion, where you can set up daily devotionals and Bible reading plans. If you don't have the Bible on a device, get it. If you don't have a device, grab a physical copy.

Ultimately, we can take a few moments to read the Bible each day. I read the Bible when I'm in the bathroom. That may sound funny, but I'm alone and I have a few minutes to spare. If you're struggling to find a time in your schedule, read the Bible during those times when you can't do anything else. If you're at work and you've got a fifteen minute break, read the Bible.

Can you make time to read the Bible daily? If so, when?

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Matthew 6:11 (ESV) says, *"Give us this day our daily bread."*

Our bread is the sustenance of Jesus Christ. For us as Christians, the bread that we have is God's Word.

You don't have to know all the big words in the Bible to read it. There are translations for every different reading level. I like to read the NASB because I like the way it's put together, but it's a very difficult translation to read. You also have the ESV and NIV which I use through this Start book. They're pretty easy to understand, but they're not necessarily the easiest translations.



The NIRV is a great one, it's written for people who don't like to read.

What you need to find is a Bible version that works for you.

Romans 15:4 (NIV) says, *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*

Scripture was given to us so we'll **experience hope**.

Hope that there's something better yet to come. Jesus was the hope that we could be saved from our sins and reintegrated into a relationship with him. The Bible gives us hope that we'll have an eternity in heaven with Jesus. We understand that through Scripture. And we experience it as we deepen our relationship with Christ.

Where in your life do you need more hope?

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### **Where do I start reading?**

If you want to know more about the good news (The Gospel message of salvation):

Start in the Book of Romans. It has a very clear Gospel presentation. It tells you about sin. It also tells you that a relationship with Jesus allows you to be forgiven from sin.

If you want to know more about the history of the church:

Start in the Books of Luke and Acts. It's actually one book that overtime was divided into two. The purpose of the text was to be a record of history. The history of Jesus and the history of the church. Bonus: Read the Book of Romans.

If you want to know about the history of the world:

Start in Genesis. Then Exodus. Skip Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy for a while and come back to those much, much later.

If you want to know about Jesus being revealed as God:

Start in the Gospel of John or The letter to the Colossians. John is the fourth and last book written in Gospels. As the disciples experienced the relationship with Jesus Christ, overtime the picture became clearer. When they were closer to him in time, they didn't really get it. They asked a lot of dumb questions. John reveals the clearest picture of what the early Christ followers understood about Jesus. The Book of Colossians gives a distinct picture of the divinity of Jesus.

If you want to know about Jesus' life:

Start in the Gospels. Read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The key is to find somewhere in the Bible and just start reading. Figure out what works for you. Everyone you talk to is going to give you a different place to start reading. Just pick one.

I know some of you have never really experienced the Bible, and it's time to change that reality.

### **How do I find Bible verses?**

Do you have a hard time finding Bible verses when you look in a physical Bible?

YES NO

When you see a verse listed, (for example) Psalm 23:1. That means it's in the 23rd chapter of the book of Psalms and it's verse one.

There's also a table of contents on the first page.

Genesis 1:1-8 (ESV). That's Genesis, chapter one, and covers verses 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, and 8. And it's from the English Standard Version (ESV) translation of the Bible.

If you have a different translation, it might read a little different, and that's okay. There's just going to be a word or two difference in the passage.

John 1:1,14 (NIV). That means it's John 1, verse 1 *and* verse 14, but not the verses in between 1 and 14. The passage is also from the New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible.

Matthew 28:16b (KJV). This is a little tricky. When you see a "b", it means the verse is only referencing the second half of the mentioned verse. This verse is from the King James version (KJV) of the Bible.

You don't have to have every version of the Bible. You just need one that you can actually read and enjoy. If you don't have a Bible and need one, your home church will make sure you have one. It is that important to pastors and churches, because we know the word of God is alive and active.

Do you have a home church? If so, what do you love about it? If not, list some churches you can begin visiting this coming Sunday.

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### **What does this mean for you?**

You need to **hear the word of God as often as you can.**

Romans 10:17 (NIV) says, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*

Part of the reason Christians go to church on Sunday is so you can hear the word. Bible studies, life groups, and Sunday school are all opportunities where you can hear the message in God’s word.

**That doesn’t mean going to church one or twice a month.**

**Once a week also isn’t enough.**

Your relationship with God isn’t determined by how you worship on Sunday. **It’s determined by how you live and love Monday through Saturday.**

The Bible should be an active part of your life every day. You can read a daily devotional or have an app that texts you a verse a day. Or maybe you open up your Bible when you use the restroom—whatever works for you. You need to find a way to interact with God’s word on a regular basis.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV) says, *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”*

We as Christians are called to be workers who are unashamed of our God and who correctly handle the word of truth—the Bible. You’ve been given the Holy Spirit to help you, so you don’t have to go it alone. You’ve also been given a church family and other Christians to help you on your spiritual journey.

The challenge for you is—even if you’ve been a Christian for a while, but never really got into God’s word—**are you ready to start?**

Are you ready to commit to reading your Bible daily?      YES    NO

Are you ready to understand the significance of the empty basket of marshmallows? The probability that we would have the Bible is so infinitesimally small, yet we have it. God gave it to you and me. It's a gift for all of us.

It's something you should cherish every day.