

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Equipping Covenant Baptist Church to Defend the Bible in a Skeptical World**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity  
In Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
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Lynchburg, Virginia

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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Dr. Jacob Dunlow, Mentor

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## THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The thesis of this research project is “If Covenant Baptist Church members are taught the reliability of the Bible, they will be equipped to defend their faith to a skeptical world.” The goals of this doctoral thesis are two-fold: to train adequate believers regarding the Bible’s reliability in a skeptical world, and honor God in the process through the equipping ministry of the church in accordance with Ephesians 4:11-16. Seven lessons were researched, formulated, and presented to a small group of believers in Covenant Baptist Church who desired to become more confident in defending the Bible to a skeptic. Entrance and exit questionnaires were shared to determine comfortability and knowledge of the reliability of the Bible before and after the seven, discipleship lessons were taught. Participants indicated an improvement in confidence and an increased willingness to use the study materials to engage a skeptic or an unbeliever in a witnessing scenario. It is discovered from this research study that intentional discipleship on the reliability of the Bible will provide positive results for those who choose to instruct believers about ways to defend the Bible.

Keywords: *biblical studies, biblical reliability, defending the Bible, inerrancy, equipping the church, church*

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## Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
LUSOD	<i>Liberty University School of Divinity</i>
CBC	<i>Covenant Baptist Church</i>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

The changing and skeptical world demands that believers in local churches take on the role of apologists in order to confront with a ready defense. With the modern attacks on God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and a Scripture-based worldview, Covenant Baptist Church must equip followers of Christ to be well-informed advocates who ably defend their faith to a skeptical, and often persecuting world. Covenant Baptist Church, (CBC) a small rural Southern Baptist congregation of sixty-three members in south Mississippi is experiencing a continual need to be disciplined. One specific area relates to biblical inerrancy in order for church members to defend their faith regarding the reliability of the Bible in an increasingly hostile, post-Christian world.

Pastor and Christian apologist, Mark Clark, argues that many skeptics doubt the existence of God because they doubt the Bible's "accuracy, its trustworthiness, and its truthfulness," seeing Scripture as "outdated," "mythological," and "irrelevant."<sup>1</sup> Statistics conclude that in 2007 alone protestant Christianity declined to 48 percent and no longer constitutes the majority religious affiliation in America with 19.3 percent of Americans claiming no religious identity in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, higher-criticism proponent, Bart Ehrman, has sparked new scholastic debate and

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Clark, *The Problem of God: Answering A Skeptic's Challenges to Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical information excerpted from Christian Book Distributor's E- Library book by James Emery White, *The Rise of the Nones* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, e-book edition, 2014), chapter 1.

spawned new skeptics from a post-modern America as his beliefs that the Bible contains “inspired literature” and is more “metaphorical,” should be taken “less literally,” and “could inspire “true and useful thinking about God” as it is the product of “human hands.”<sup>3</sup> These higher-critical beliefs of Ehrman have bled over to theological debate in the last twenty years.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it would be important for Covenant Baptist Christians to learn and appreciate the doctrine of the Bible’s reliability and understand how they might best communicate that truth to a skeptical world in a very, post-Christian era.

The goal of this action research project will be to offer a viable discipleship solution to remedy this gap in the faith of believers in the church. In order to lay the groundwork for addressing this gap, this chapter will first establish the ministry context in which the problem and solution will be fleshed out. Second, the problem that is to be addressed in the local church will be detailed for the reader to understand and ascertain the concerns among the membership as to their inadequacy in the area of biblical reliability. Additionally, the purpose that the action research project desires to achieve will be delineated. From there, the reader will be notified as to basic assumptions regarding the facilitator and congregation as to the reliability of the Bible. Definitions appropriate to the congregation and the issue of biblical reliability will be communicated so as to maintain for the reader what is meant and being discussed. Furthermore, this first chapter will also serve to address possible limitations and delimitations to the action research project in order to clearly define a true context for the problem and its appropriate

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<sup>3</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)* (New York, NY: HarperOne Publishing, 2009), 17.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion, see Craig Blomberg’s *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 16.

boundaries. Finally, a thesis statement will be set forth in order to guide the understanding and the direction of the action research project.

### **Ministry Context**

One of the early items to address for this action research project is to establish the ministry context in which the project occurs. The ministry context for this action research project is Covenant Baptist Church, a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the George-Greene Baptist Association. The church has adopted the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* as its doctrinal statement. Covenant Baptist Church is located in rural southeast Greene County in South Mississippi in a largely charismatic area of the county. The church building, a 5040 square foot brick veneer building, is nestled on 9.8 acres in a pastoral setting one hour north of the Gulf of Mexico and only a few miles from the Alabama state line. The church is a small congregation with sixty-three members who are autonomous under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. In 2005 and 2006, the church formulated and adopted a constitution and bylaws for self-governance supplemental to the final authority of the Bible. The church is primarily Caucasian with a history of some African American presence in the past. The church age group is mixed regarding with nine children, an intermittent youth population, another ten persons in the young adult range, and the remainder being forty and above. The church meets Sundays for Bible study groups, morning worship, and evening worship/Bible study. The church also meets Wednesdays for prayer and Bible study as well as for ministry for children. The church has ample parking around the church in the amount of four cleared acres. The church facility consists of a sanctuary, fellowship hall, baptistry, five classrooms, a pastoral office, and restrooms at the front and rear of the church.

CBC was born in 2005 out of a need to plant a Southern Baptist church between the cities of Lucedale and Leakesville in Mississippi. This twenty-two-mile, rural stretch of land along Old Hwy 63 between the two municipalities, had no Southern Baptist witness. Economically, the church is located in a low to middle income region with many in the area working at the regional state prison, working as farmers and nurseryman, or working in the shipyard and factory industries up to one hour away. The lower income brackets of the community have been problematic for the church to have full-time staff. After the church debt was paid, the road was opened within in a couple of years for the pastor to become full-time. As mentioned earlier, the church has faced obstacles as they were surrounded by several United Pentecostal and Independent Pentecostal churches. Many people of the community claim Pentecostal faith though they remain unchurched upon outreach by Covenant Baptist. CBC also has had some turnover in its seventeen-year existence due to people moving away and some power struggles in its first half of existence. For a small church with bi-vocational ministry for most of its history, the church has struggled to keep up with these changes in the church population and the general population of the county.<sup>5</sup>

Demographically, the population of Greene County, Mississippi is 13,586 according to the United States Census Bureau website on April 1, 2020. That population is a 5.6 percent decrease from the previous ten-year census according to the same United States census information.<sup>6</sup> Continuing in the demographic setting of Greene County, the agrarian community in which CBC is located has also felt the effects of a secularized, post-modern world. Young

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry context section is derived from church history and minutes from December 2005 and the year 2006.

<sup>6</sup> “Greene County, Mississippi” census information from the 2020 United States Census, April 1, 2020, <https://www.census.gov>

adults who have stayed in the community and church have strong family ties, firm ties to the land, and are products of farming families. The primary job sources in the county area remain a regional state prison, locally owned row crop and cattle farms, plant nurseries, local government employment, with some local businesses. Existing near the county line, the church has had to draw people resources from both George and Greene counties.

Socio-economically, many families have had to drive one hour or more for work. Many of the young men work construction jobs which are hours to several states away from home and family. The church has had a high number of individuals in the medical field, serving as nurses, radiologist technicians, or healthcare administrative personnel. Several schoolteachers and farmers also bless the church's ongoing ministry as members. The high number of people that are employed in the healthcare industry has caused a high number of people to be unavailable for regular church attendance due to working on the weekends. The core group of church members consists of middle aged to older adults Sunday to Sunday. Some of the new-coming members had inconsistent faithfulness in church attendance in their previous church history and some had a history of no church attendance at all before redemptively being brought into the fold. Still others came into the church from other denominations requiring much work in Baptist doctrinal teaching. The church has even had several families with Pentecostal backgrounds become active in the church in recent years.

Most of the community's younger generations have stayed in inland college cities and towns rather than remaining in local communities and churches upon their graduation from high school. Statistical information from the local Baptist Association and the Mississippi Baptist Convention in 2007 shows fifty-nine percent of Greene County is unchurched or claims no

religious involvement.<sup>7</sup> New estimated churched and unchurched percentages are currently being calculated and should be known soon. Greene County is three counties north of the Gulf of Mexico. The church field of CBC is within an hour's drive of the coastal cities and workplaces in both Mississippi and Alabama. Mobile, Alabama (and its surrounding municipalities and suburbs) is an additional source of income security with several paper mills, factories, chemical plants within an hour's driving distance. The Mississippi Gulf Coast has a high military base presence as well as a ship building and shipping industry that has produced less of a God-fearing mindset in the past two decades. This was validated as the facilitator of this research project saw firsthand fewer people desiring any pastoral care through hospice chaplaincy in a service area of eight and one-half counties in South Mississippi while serving as a bi-vocational minister with Covenant Baptist Church.

From a church historical perspective, Rev. Grant McLain was solicited by the local Baptist associational director of missions and the Mississippi Baptist Convention while pastoring another local church to plant a new congregation in 2004. Rev. Grant McLain felt led to leave his full-time pastorate and stepped out in faith to pastor the new congregation with a monthly salary just over what his monthly house note was at the time. On Easter Sunday, March 27, 2005, Covenant Baptist Church was formed at the Beat 4 Community Center in Southeast Greene County with six married couples pledging with the pastor to plant this new Southern Baptist Church. Within two months, several more families and children were added to the fledgling flock.

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<sup>7</sup> This statistical information is derived from page 24 of MissionInsite ([www.missioninsite.com](http://www.missioninsite.com)) in the ReligiousInsite Report 2017 prepared for the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention State Board ([www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org)) for Greene County, Mississippi and is further derived from U.S. Census Bureau reporting.



Donations of Bibles, hymnals, communion service-ware, pews and other items normal to weekly church service were donated by various churches and the Baptist Association. Several churches and individual Christians made one-time financial donations or contributed on an ongoing monthly basis. Baptist men from several associations in-state and from other states came and served God by giving a helping hand of ministry. Churches from a Baptist Association in Alabama assisted over several years in starting Vacation Bible School and Backyard Bible Clubs. After using the Beat 4 community center for six months, the church met in a store front in Leakesville, Mississippi, for another six months rent-free upon the generous offer by a church member's brother.

God's grace was quite evident in each material, financial, and service gift received by the church in these formative years. By God's grace, the pastor's wife was a piano and voice teacher with a digital piano in her studio by which she was able to lead worship services through several of the early years of the church's existence and until an electronic church piano could be purchased by the church. The pastor and wife remain the primary vocational ministers of this local church administered by a church council of various ministry leaders from the church body.<sup>8</sup>

Covenant purchased 9.8 acres of farmland in 2005 that was the exact place Baptist associational and state missionary leadership had originally proposed for a Southern Baptist church to be built. While meeting in the store front, the church secured financial assistance, broke ground, and built the church facility in 2006. Within a few months in 2006, walls and a roof were placed on the property. Within just a few more months of starting the building process, the church began to meet in lawn chairs in the church building. The church was primarily finished and dedicated in the Fall of 2006 after meeting in the unfinished building for six

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<sup>8</sup> Referenced from Covenant Baptist Church minutes and records.

months. In the early months and years, the church worked on a faith and pay-as-you-go building and material resource program.

On the tenth church anniversary, the church became completely debt free and remains so today. Eighty percent of the time period of the existence of the church, the pastor has been bi-vocational, primarily working as a pastoral counselor and bereavement coordinator with local hospice agencies to supplement income. Bi-vocational ministry has provided challenging circumstances to the growth of the church with limited volunteer leadership among the laity at the same time. In the last three years, the pastor has been able to become full-time and focus on the church ministry completely. However, the last two years have been most challenging to church attendance, outreach, and numeric growth due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Though the church has been having regular services for over a year, many continue to prefer to worship with online services provided by the church. On a positive note, the church has been involved in several overseas mission works and strongly serves as a ministry of two hundred to two hundred-fifty shoeboxes with Operation Christmas Child. The church also supports the Baptist Food Bank as well as another church start in the Mobile, Alabama area.<sup>9</sup>

Evangelistically, the church has had progression and regression with the moving of families to other areas with better financial opportunity. Some losses occurred by issues where Satan tried to attack the unity and mission of the church in at least two circumstances where individuals desired control of the church. From the perspective of evangelism, the church has been trained in the FAITH Evangelism Strategy, the Roman Road to Salvation Strategy, and incorporated outreach and visitation weekly into its ministry; however, weekly visitation has

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<sup>9</sup> Historical information can be found in the church minutes and records of Covenant Baptist Church 2005 to present.

dwindled to just the pastor in recent years. Some revival of evangelistic fervor came about in 2019 and 2020 with the evangelistic challenge of praying for and intentionally witnessing to at least one person through the Mississippi Baptist Convention. After going through several years of no conversions or related baptisms, the church baptized two young people in the last church year running from September to August. One conversion and baptism has occurred since September 2021 of an adult man in his early sixties. Naturally, the church has suffered in terms of attendance with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic with low attendance in November and December 2020 and again in August, September, and October 2021 with a resurgence of Covid cases.<sup>10</sup>

Pursuit of sports, increased opportunities for travel sports, along with general apathy and skepticism towards God and Christianity have provided obstacles to evangelism in recent years in the church and in the community. In consideration of the doctoral research project and having concern regarding the reasons why people were not witnessing regularly, church discussion took place to consider the subject and propose changes in order to improve the evangelization of the community. Upon church discussion in open forum in early 2021 and consideration of the lack of witnessing, a focused discussion occurred among church members to determine their primary obstacle to witnessing and defending their faith. Similar discussions were held by the pastor with Christians outside the church for the sake of comparison. Upon polling the present church membership, the primary obstacles to witness in this post-modern era for Christians who were members of Covenant Baptist Church and those who were not fell into the same three categories regardless of where the person was a church member. First, the major source of un-comfortability fell among those who felt inadequate to convey the reliability or inerrancy of the

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<sup>10</sup> Covenant Baptist Church records 2005-2021.

Bible. The second most popular concern arose for believers in the area of witnessing and defending their faith in regard to the authority of Jesus. Finally, the third most uncomfortable area was that of explaining the existence of God. Therefore, research and documentation began in an effort to alleviate the primary concern of communicating the reliability of the Bible with a viable discipleship solution.<sup>11</sup>

### **Problem Presented**

The problem is that Covenant Baptist Church members are inadequate to defend their faith because of limited understanding of the doctrine of the Bible's reliability as communicated to the pastor in open forum discussion and polling. In the American culture, antagonism and skepticism have become increasingly prevalent against Christianity. Many believers have grown silent in the presentation of their faith because of the hostile voice of the current culture. Skeptics do not believe the Bible, so they do not believe in God as well. Believers in the local church are, by and large, ill-equipped to engage in many of the contemporary concerns of the skeptic. This is the case at Covenant Baptist Church in rural, south Mississippi. They are inadequately prepared to defend the Bible as trustworthy to a culture that doubts the Bible and doubts the existence of God and his son, Jesus Christ. By and large, the people of God believe in the Bible's reliability by faith as it forms the church and the church itself is "doxological, logocentric, confessional, and missional."<sup>12</sup> Since the second century, Christians have been knowledgeable of differences in texts and affirming of its inerrant and infallible nature as a totally trustworthy literary source.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> CBC records and pastoral records for 2021.

<sup>12</sup> John DelHousaye, John J. Hughes, and Jeff T. Purswell, eds., *Scripture and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Wayne Grudem* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 34-35.

<sup>13</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 2-3.

As evidenced in CBC, some modern believers are unable to effectively present and defend the Bible's reliability to a person who would have concerns regarding the Bible.

This problem has increased with the secularization of the American culture. The Covid 19 pandemic has also multiplied the difficulty of reaching people for Christ. Many people now stay at home more and stay to themselves entirely whether they are church members or not. Social distancing has become an additional factor complicating evangelization of those without Christ as many are fearful of contracting or spreading the Covid virus. The pandemic has also contributed to a sentiment of online worship by many. As much as half of Covenant Baptist members attend worship online worship on a full-time or on a part-time basis since the onset of continued threat of the Covid pandemic. Though finances have held true for the most part, the church has faced two bombardments of Covid, one in the Fall of 2020 and one with the start of the school year in 2021 with the 2021 time period bringing about decreases in income. The most recent Covid threat has been detrimental to church attendance and involvement. The church now feels threatened politically as government encroaches upon the freedom to worship and the practice of the Christian faith with lockdowns and mandates. Thus, Covid 19 has complicated an already important issue in the church. Even so, a remnant remains faithful in onsite church attendance and continues to desire to want to address the doctrinal concern of the reliability of the Bible and to be better equipped to communicate the Bible's trustworthy nature in the hostile culture in which we live and minister in America.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to equip Covenant Baptist Church to defend their faith regarding the reliability of the Bible. Since the membership of Covenant

Baptist Church are inadequately prepared to engage the reliability of the Bible in an increasingly, hostile culture, the purpose of this research thesis will be to offer a viable discipleship solution to remedy this gap in the faith of believers in the church. If church members feel inadequate to defend their faith in regard to the Bible, it is obligatory that the pastor address the issue with sound doctrine and careful attention as commanded by the Apostle Paul to his pastoral ministry cohort, Timothy, in 2 Timothy 3:16 – 4:8. The Bible is full of assurances and defenses in regard to its authority as God's word and its own trustworthiness. A faithful minister will ensure that the flock of God understands relevant passages of Scripture regarding biblical reliability, arguments for and against, and helps them to communicate these facts of scriptural integrity in a loving and convincing way to the unsaved culture of today. The defense of one's faith is a personal mandate from scripture that the New Testament writers expected of their disciples. I Peter 3:15 clearly admonishes Christ-followers to set apart God first in their hearts and be spiritually prepared to give defense to one's hope with meekness and reverence.

To accomplish this task, this research thesis will start by investigating biblical reliability and the dynamics of the doctrine from academic, ecclesiastical, and skeptical conversations of the day. Second, this research thesis purposes to develop a methodology for discipleship to remedy the perceived inadequacy regarding the Bible's trustworthiness in the local church. Third, the project will disciple believers to defend their faith in an informed and decisive way from the results of the research in a Christlike manner regarding the Bible's reliability. Fourth, this research thesis will apply these findings in a professional, scholastic manner in order for subsequent believers to glean from, or to develop, in their own ministries. Finally, the church member will truly feel as a stakeholder in the entire discipleship process as well as the task of this ministry action project. Ultimately, the purpose of this research project is to glorify God

through an equipped body of believers according to Ephesians 4:11-16 that effectively defends their faith through a trustworthy Bible. After all, God has gifted the church membership with varied ministers and ministries to build the church into fullness in Christ to the eradication of any and all inadequacies whether regarding the Bible or any doctrinal or spiritual concerns.

### **Basic Assumptions**

In terms of basic assumptions for this research project, several will be considered from the standpoint of the facilitator of this project. First, it is assumed that the members of Covenant Baptist Church desire to genuinely share and defend their faith in a skeptical world environment. Second, the facilitator assumes the stakeholders in the project will take a vested interest in developing a remedy to the problem of defending the trustworthiness of the Bible through the project's entire process. Third, the facilitator commits to ensuring that stakeholders in the research project have an honest and upfront relationship that maintains integrity and respect with, and by, the facilitator throughout the time period of the project and that the project is also fully committed to their well-being. Finally, it will be assumed by the facilitator that a meaningful remedy regarding the trustworthiness of the Bible will be formulated in an apologetic appropriate to the small, rural church setting. It is also assumed that the research project will be implemented into the day-to-day apologetic of the stakeholders with passion for the revelation of Christ and the gospel message toward the end result of the evangelization of the unsaved. Volunteerism and commitment from all involved will be important to the successful outcome of the project.

These assumptions help the reader to understand the end result may or may not be successful due to factors beyond the control of the facilitator. These assumptions give hope towards a meaningful, useful, and successful project for the stakeholder and then the facilitator.

These assumptions further help to set the tone for mutual respect, dignity, and usefulness of the project in both a day-to-day setting for the stakeholder as a church member and ultimately an academic setting for the research facilitator. These assumptions will assist the researcher of this project to appropriately consider the stakeholder, their true needs regarding the conveyance of the Bible's trustworthiness, and the remedy by governing the project with integrity and beneficial information as both stakeholder and research facilitator learn and apply together the findings of said project. The assumptions regarding a sincere effort by church member and researching pastor alike will serve to secure a more confident witness by all and the ultimate conviction and salvation of those who do not know Christ in Covenant Baptist Church's sphere of ministry.

### **Definitions**

Important to any discussion, and for that matter; a research project, is the definitions that set forth the intended meaning for the participants. The infallibility, authority, inerrancy, and trustworthiness of the Bible have been long since defined, sometimes redefined for contemporary contexts, and formulated into forms by the biblical community in contemporary theology. Of course, the primary parameter for such definitions regarding inerrancy by the at-large biblical community and specifically, for this research project, are the original manuscripts of the Bible.

*Apologetics.* Apologetics is the "Christian's answer to the world's attacks directed against the truth claims of Holy Scripture."<sup>14</sup> It is a defense of the faith.

*Autographs (Original).* The original autographs refer to the "original text" of the Bible. The original texts are at times argued as the actual originals and, by some, are argued as the oldest version of a particular biblical book. Craig Blomberg would argue that the original

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<sup>14</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Faith's Reasons for Believing*, (Ross-shire, Scotland, Mentor, 2008), 18.



autographs were copied repeatedly and countless over centuries and lend credence to careful preservation of their contents.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Bible is trustworthy because of its careful preservation and transmission through history.

*Authority.* The authority of the Bible refers to its self-declared and evidential power and influence over the life of human subjects as God's truth. It is multi-faceted and purports to be God's truth because God is truth and speaks truth and records it as His written word for faith and practice. The Bible's authority is derived from the Son of God's authority who transmits it from God the Father.<sup>16</sup> Authority is the "right to command belief and/or action" which may be directly exercised or delegated.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the Bible derives its authority from God because God is the legitimate, ultimate, and final authority.<sup>18</sup>

*Bible.* The Bible is those 66 books of the accepted canon,<sup>19</sup> the written word of God. It is a divine and human book with God's Spirit doing the writing upon and through a human pen. Michael Lawrence expounds from 2 Peter 1:19-21 that the Holy Spirit is behind the human authors and inspired them to exactly what God wanted them to say in the Scripture. So, an infallible God uses a fallible human instrument to communicate recorded truth to the human race for time and eternity.<sup>20</sup> The focal matter of the Bible is the salvific story of Jesus the Messiah as it records its grand, redemptive narrative through Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration of

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<sup>15</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 33-34.

<sup>16</sup> Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 205.

<sup>17</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 268-269.

<sup>18</sup> For continued research on the authority of the Bible see Robert L. Plummer, *The Story of Scripture: How We Got Our Bible and Why We Can Trust It*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), ch.4.

<sup>19</sup> R. C. Sproul in *Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine* says that when we speak of the canon of scripture, we mean the "norm or rule." (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013 for the paperback edition), 39. The Bible is God's norm or rulebook for life.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 29.

fallen mankind.<sup>21</sup> Thus, we can “place very firm reliance on the prophetic word” as it is “more certain and more reliable.”<sup>22</sup> The Bible is God’s reliably spoken truth and is wholly God-breathed.<sup>23</sup>

*Biblical Reliability/Trustworthiness/Infallibility.* The reliability, trustworthiness, and infallibility of the Bible are synonymous terms. They all communicate the fidelity and faithfulness of the Bible from a reliable God. The Bible claims to be God’s exact communication to the human race, which by nature, is an exclusive claim.<sup>24</sup> The early church went to great lengths, almost to the point of paranoia, to reject books that they deemed unreliable and accept only books they deemed as authoritative and reliable as God’s Word.<sup>25</sup> In essence, because of careful selection, preservation, and transmission through the centuries, the Bible is to be understood to be without mixture of error and can be embraced by all as God’s true Word for all time. Because God is reliable, all that God does is reliable, and for the purposes here; all that He speaks is reliable.

*Contradictions.* When referring to the Bible, supposed contradictions are revealed in historical critical methodology according to higher critic, Bart Ehrman. They are located and evaluated when the critic compares parallel passages of Scripture against one another, especially the Synoptic Gospels. Contradictions, according to higher critics, are defined as problems or

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew Y. Emerson, *The Story of Scripture: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2017), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Jude, 2 Peter*. Vol. 50, Word Biblical Commentary, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 223.

<sup>23</sup> Chuck Missler, *How We Got Our Bible*, (Coeur d’Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 2016), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Andreas Kostenberger, Darrell Bock, and Josh Chatraw, *Truth Matters: Confident Faith in a Confusing World* (Nashville, TN; Broadman and Holman Books, 2014), 62.

discrepancies, some being unreconcilable. Some contradictions argued to be at major points and most at minor points in biblical accounts.<sup>26</sup>

*Error.* In regard to the word “error,” the understanding conveys something as faulty, inaccurate, or including mistakes. Many skeptics doubt the existence of God and the authority of Jesus because they doubt the legitimacy of the Bible, its accuracy, and its truthfulness. The challenges by the contemporary world are whether the Bible is a reliable text, whether it is true or mythological, whether it is relevant or outdated. In essence, can one trust the Bible?<sup>27</sup>

*Historical Criticism.* Historical or higher criticism refers to the school of thought that believes that one can only make “probable judgments” regarding the past.<sup>28</sup> For the higher critic, the past can only be interpreted through the realities of the present. Thus, tangible realities are embraced over the supernatural. Since the Bible is a self-prescribed supernatural book, the Bible must be in error because anything supernatural is not reality. Reason is the esteemed word of the day for the higher critic. The true higher critic rejects the supernatural nature of the Bible.<sup>29</sup> Some would define the goal of higher criticism as being concerned with the original historical context, who the authors were, and were they who they really claimed to be, their personal persuasions, and their sources of information.<sup>30</sup>

*Illumination.* Illumination is characterized by the work of the Holy Spirit in shedding light upon the intended meaning of Scripture. Illumination is not only discernment but also conveys the eliciting of commitment from the hearer of Scripture.<sup>31</sup> Illumination of Scripture is a

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<sup>26</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted*, 19-20.

<sup>27</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-47.

<sup>30</sup> Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 153.

role of the Holy Spirit as indicated in John 14:16-17.<sup>32</sup> Illumination by the Holy Spirit, enables readers and hearers to assess truth through a spiritual reasoning. It helps one to understand the Bible and brings about the conviction that the Bible is entirely true, trustworthy, and is the Word of God.<sup>33</sup> The Spirit's illumination of truth demonstrates the authority of God and Scripture to the ready listener.

*Inerrancy.* In evangelical thought, the inerrancy of the Bible refers to the Bible not being tainted with any mixture of error and that it is wholly true and makes no claims that are not true.<sup>34</sup> It is completely truthful in all of its teachings. The Bible is “fully truthful” in its statements as they are “correctly interpreted in terms of their meaning in their cultural setting and the purpose for which they are written.”<sup>35</sup> Historically, inerrancy is a modern term for a historic church concept through the centuries. Inerrancy proclaims the Bible's trustworthy nature despite sinful, finite human authors because they were inspired by a single, divine author, the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup> Terms that are often associated with the term *inerrancy* are: “inspiration, indefectibility, infallibility, indeceivability, and inerrant, or without error.”<sup>37</sup>

*Inerrancy (limited)* refers to the understanding that Scripture is only inerrant in matters referencing salvation.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, Roman Catholics include the *ex cathedra* utterances of the pope as limited inerrancy.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 889.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>34</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 259-263.

<sup>36</sup> Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> Norman Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 287.

<sup>38</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 167.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 168.

*Infallible.* Infallibility is a near synonym or alternative to inerrancy. It conveys a certainty that something or someone is unable to err or fail while also denying the possibility of error.<sup>40</sup> In the biblical sense, infallibility is the total trustworthiness of the speech and acts of God and draws the reader into understanding that they can trust the Bible because its words are true.<sup>41</sup>

*Inspiration.* The Bible itself defines inspiration as being God-breathed in 2 Timothy 3:16. Thus, God spoke his Word and brought it into being and defined it with His authority as the divine truth-giver. God did not disregard standard process for research and validation in inspiration but supervised and guided the human authors to communicate His original intent.<sup>42</sup>

*Revelation.* Revelation is the content that is disclosed in the Bible. It is God's communication to His creation. Revelation is synonymous to God's Word or the Word of God in Scripture. Since 1650, a large part of mainstream modern theologians have chosen to utilize the word revelation. Through historical-critical methodology, intellectual autonomy refers to the human right to pursue revelation without being subject to God's revelation.<sup>43</sup>

The word, "reveal," appears twenty-six times in the New Testament while the word, "revelation," appears eighteen times. For Jesus, "reveal" references His own gracious activity in declaring the Father to those who have no saving knowledge of Him. The apostle Paul would consider in Romans 1 that "revelation" was the unfolding of God's activity in terms of divine

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<sup>40</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 168.

<sup>41</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2016), 29. See also 2 Peter 1:21.

<sup>43</sup> Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 15-16.

wrath against those who suppress God’s truth.<sup>44</sup> Thus, revelation can mean different things at different times according to the context in which the author is writing or speaking.

*Skepticism.* The skeptic doubts the Bible and the Christian faith as a whole. They consider such belief as a symptom of gullibility and psychological weakness and an unwillingness to critically think and ask questions. By and large, the skeptic considers the Bible as “bogus.”<sup>45</sup>

*Word.* The Bible is God’s revelation or communication to creation, His truth, which is “real” to the mind and “rewarding to the human heart as undeniable truth, unsurpassed treasure.” It has no comparison with anything more true or more precious.<sup>46</sup>

*Witness/Defense of Faith.* Witnessing regarding God’s Word and defense of its truth and its God is an answering theology, answering the concerns of skeptics with absolute truth. Witnessing/defense of faith seeks to defend the truth of God’s word by apologetic method of making case for the Bible’s authority and reliability.<sup>47</sup>

*Worldview.* Simply put, worldview is how one views the world.<sup>48</sup> It involves a person’s life circumstances, their history, and their environment. Those elements formulate opinions and presuppositions upon which one thinks and acts. Worldview is the collective of basic assumptions regarding the nature of the world in a working system for the individual or a group.

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<sup>44</sup> Sam Storms, “Revelatory Gifts of the Spirit and the Sufficiency of Scripture,” in *Scripture and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Wayne Grudem*, ed. John DelHousaye, John J. Hughes, and Jeff D. Purswell (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 84-85.

<sup>45</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 219.

<sup>46</sup> John Piper, “The Glory of God as the Ground of the Mind’s Certainty and the Goal of the Soul’s Satisfaction,” in *Scripture and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Wayne Grudem*, ed. John DelHousaye, John J. Hughes, and Jeff D. Purswell (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 306.

<sup>47</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 21.

Conversely, Christian worldview accepts God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer through His Son, Jesus Christ, and as communicated in the Bible.<sup>49</sup>

### **Limitations**

Limitations are foregone conclusions in this finite world and among its finite population. Since limitations are universal, this research project is limited in scope, practice, and limitations of a small, rural church in South Mississippi. The nature of stakeholders as volunteers brings its own limitations. The amount of people who would volunteer or simply commit to the research project is a definite limitation to the project. The amount of time given to the project limits it because it cannot be exhaustive in approach or in remedy.

In other words, there is only so much that can be achieved. Furthermore, the rural, small church setting will likely not enable the project and its outcome to be a one-size-fits-all remedy for the subject of biblical trustworthiness and its defense in the church at large. People may leave the study at any point in the process and add to unpredictability. Participants may not share honest opinions or have reservations about sharing their concerns in the research process. The stakeholders may bring their own limitations to the table or conclude that the project is not in their level of comfort. The membership of Covenant Baptist will have to be a convenient sample made up of small group discipleship on likely the Sunday night service participants due to their willingness to volunteer and sincere commitment to the research project. Lastly, one cannot predict the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic in the future.

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<sup>49</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 20-21.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations define portions of the research project that are clearly under the control of the researcher. Covenant Baptist is a small, rural church with limited resources. Clearly, willingness to participate and stakeholder commitment will limit the choice to a small group of individuals though all church members will be invited and encouraged to be involved. Thus, the facilitator chooses a stakeholder group in a Sunday evening setting that will volunteer and commit to the integrity and veracity of the research project. The researcher anticipates control in the amount of time dedicated in research, development of an action plan according to the shared needs of the stakeholders, and the form and implementation of solution. Essentially, as the researching pastor, the facilitator will guide and teach the process according to his interpretation of information revealed by the stakeholders in hopes of providing a meaningful biblical trustworthiness apologetic for their implementation.

### **Thesis Statement**

If Covenant Baptist Church members are taught the reliability of the Bible, they will be equipped to defend their faith to a skeptical world. The goal of this thesis is two-fold: to train adequate believers regarding the Bible's reliability in a skeptical world, and honor God in the process through the equipping ministry of the church in accordance with Ephesians 4:11-16. Inadequacy regarding the issue of biblical trustworthiness among disciples contributes to the fear of defending one's faith and biblical values and brings about an unwillingness to do so. It is the distinct role of the pastor-teacher in Ephesians 4 to ensure spiritual maturity, unity, and truly equipped disciples for Christ Jesus. To negate the defense of the Bible among disciples will most assuredly leave them defenseless and unable to rightly divide the truth as II Timothy 2:15



instructs. A godly and faithful pastor will close the gap between the feelings of inadequacy regarding biblical trustworthiness and the full assurance of expressing the Bible's total trustworthiness in a bold and undeniable manner.

The remedy for the discipleship effort in biblical reliability is in understanding the dynamics of the problem of inadequacy regarding biblical trustworthiness and provide healthy biblical instruction to counter all inadequacies. Upon prayerful research and consideration of this perceived need, a series of discipleship lessons will be written to remedy the feelings of inadequacy among Covenant church members. In the process of a six-week course of instruction, Covenant Baptist Church believers will be discipled in the doctrine of biblical reliability and its defense. The church membership will understand and be able to answer the common concerns of skeptics in the American culture regarding the doctrine. The church membership will also be taught content and methods with which to communicate the trustworthiness of God's Word. They will also be able to defend the Bible's trustworthiness in various scenarios. It is the objective of this research project to correct a gap in the apologetics of believers in Covenant Baptist Church by developing well-informed followers of Christ who share the truths of God in such a way that it answers the concerns of skeptics and encourages their repentance from sin and selfishness and encourages faith in God through Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 2 will provide a literature review which synthesizes and analyzes the sources for this doctoral thesis project. The literature review will purpose to develop and detail the pertinent themes regarding biblical inerrancy. Chapter 2 will also include a theological foundation for this research thesis which provides a biblical foundation from the Bible and the contemporary, scholastic voice. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a theoretical foundation which provides suppositions regarding equipping disciples regarding biblical inerrancy and sufficiency for this action research project.

### Literature Review

The issue of the reliability of the Bible is multi-faceted and employs varied distinctives in this modern, skeptical, and sometimes, hostile world to the Christian faith. Readdressing the Bible's trustworthiness is the specific issue for our consideration because it is a prime issue for the church and the current American culture. As Mark Clark in *The Problem of God* asserts, "Many skeptics doubt that God exists because they doubt the legitimacy of the Bible. They have doubts about its accuracy, its trustworthiness, and its truthfulness. They see the Bible as outdated, irrelevant, and mythological."<sup>50</sup> Erwin Lutzer rightly addresses the hostile, "cancel culture" of this day in *We Will Not Be Silenced* when he asserts that revolutions are "cultural

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<sup>50</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 64.

moments” with a hidden agenda which begins with a dictatorial ideology that trumps rights, reason, and science; employs anarchists who accomplish the revolution’s dictates; silences all dissent; and enforces absolute submission through shame, legislation, disenfranchisement, loss of employment, and outright ostracism.<sup>51</sup>

To grasp the reliability of the Bible and to provide an appropriate apologetic to defend the Bible’s reliability, individual believers must reclaim the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, understand common themes and conceptions related to the doctrine, and be able to synthesize and analyze those themes and conceptions from a foundational and modern perspective that addresses the questions of these skeptical times regarding the reliability of God’s Word. At least nine themes or concepts were evidenced in this stage of the research process for literature review. The themes at this initial point regarding biblical inerrancy and reliability are: definitions of inerrancy; kinds/types of inerrancy in theological research; the importance of biblical reliability for faith and practice; concepts and defenses of Biblical inerrancy; ancillary issues that support the doctrine; historical considerations; epistemological considerations; the effects of sin and the use of human writers in writing the Bible; comparisons with other sacred literature; and finally, the views, concerns, and reasoning of skeptics. These themes will help to formulate the tapestry to present the Bible’s trustworthiness. It is the aim of this review to set forth and discuss the conversations on this vital doctrine for the evangelical church in a post-Christian context as this teaching is necessary for believers in a local church setting to address the concerns of their times.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Erwin Lutzer, *We Will Not Be Silenced* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), 103.

<sup>52</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 119.

## Inerrancy

Biblical inerrancy is a well-known issue in evangelical circles. The evangelical voice has mostly accepted the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scripture with some new discussions arising periodically as in the case of the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*.<sup>53</sup> As time has progressed, secular and liberal dissent has increased and has demanded answers to their skepticism regarding the Bible. It is the role of the modern church to meet these skeptical challenges with intellectual integrity as well as convictional and compassionate dialogue which answers those questions and admonishes repentant faith toward God through Jesus the Christ. For the Christian who believes the Bible as true, trustworthy, and sufficient for all of life, one must endeavor to love the Bible as God's redemptive letter to mankind, receive its knowledge through careful study and meditation, and obediently apply its projected worldview in word and action amidst a sinful world.

## Defining Inerrancy

The first theme to consider regarding the reliability of the Bible is that of the defining the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. The doctrine of biblical inerrancy has seen very vocal concerns from the skeptical, contemporary world as demonstrated in Mark Clark's book entitled, *The Problem of God*. Thus, the first thread in the biblical inerrancy tapestry regards the definition of inerrancy. Craig Blomberg concludes that biblical inerrancy is a modern term when he says that "the term itself has not always been used throughout church history, but the concept that dominated Christianity until modern times was that, of all the writings in human history, the

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<sup>53</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 123.

biblical books are uniquely accurate and reliable, historically and theologically.”<sup>54</sup> The need for re-emphasis on the reliability of the Bible is clearly needed in the this post-Christian, American culture as Barna research demonstrates that “71% do not believe that the Bible is the true and reliable communication from God.”<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, biblical inerrancy is the belief that the “Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs.”<sup>56</sup> From a foundational definition, many scholars refer back to the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (CSBI) from 1978. Timothy N. Mitchell, in the journal article entitled “*What Are the NT Autographs? An Examination of the Doctrine of Inspiration and Inerrancy in Light of Greco-Roman Publication,*” declares the spirit of CSBI in “We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.”<sup>57</sup> Mitchell added an alternative viewpoint from Michael Bird when he stated that limiting the divine autographs as solely divinely inspired is “textually problematic” and “indefensible.” Bird concludes that such limitations of inspiration interfere with secondary additions to biblical texts and suggest that some areas of the text are not inspired at all.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 10.

<sup>55</sup> George Barna, *American Worldview Inventory 2021-22: The Annual Report on the State of Worldview in the United States*, (Glendale, AZ: Arizona Christian University Press, 2022), 24.

<sup>56</sup> Geisler, Norman L. and William C. Roach. *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 13.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy N. Mitchell, “What Are the NT Autographs? An Examination of the Doctrine of Inspiration and Inerrancy in Light of Greco-Roman Publication,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 59, no. 2 (June 2016): 288-289.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

Norman Geisler and William Roach provide additional perspective on biblical inerrancy from CSBI in 1978 as they record, “We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.”<sup>59</sup> In *Five Views of Inerrancy*, John Franke sets forth a simple conviction when he says “I believe the Bible is the Word of God in human words” as integral belief of his Christian faith and that its whole content is true and not fabrication.<sup>60</sup> In consideration of this tender subject, a review of literature finds that the ways in which American evangelicals profess and define biblical inerrancy can be broad and, at times, distinctly personal and definitely convictional. A working definition and understanding of inerrancy by scholarship is an essential thread in the tapestry of the Bible’s reliability. Truly, the issue of biblical inerrancy is an important and relevant concern as believers begin to understand the facets of its meaning and put faith into practice through Christian apologetics.

As a counterpoint to conservative understanding of the doctrine of inerrancy, Bart Ehrman indicates that one cannot know the meaning of the Bible if theologians are unsure as to what the words are in the original manuscripts.<sup>61</sup> Ehrman, coming from a conservative and evangelical background at Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College, held to a verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible until his theological enlightenment at Princeton University. He describes his spiritual journey as moving from fundamentalist to evangelical to higher critical as he gradually questioned biblical inerrancy and definitely the absolute biblical inerrancy of his early

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<sup>59</sup> Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 282.

<sup>60</sup> J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett, eds. Stanley N. Gundry, series ed., *Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 200.

<sup>61</sup> Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 11.

academic life.<sup>62</sup> He argues that the Bible cannot be inerrant as we do not have the original autographs but “error-ridden copies” which are “centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways” and copied incorrectly by the scribes in most cases.<sup>63</sup>

The lack of possession of the original documents, scribal additions, and scribal errors all added to Ehrman’s view that the Bible cannot be inspired. Ehrman further argues for the lack of inerrancy of Scripture through side-by-side Gospel comparisons. For Ehrman, the lack of original autographs and their earliest copies, the oldest Scriptural copies made sometimes centuries later, and comparative analysis of Scripture to Scripture that reveals differences between biblical accounts, especially in the New Testament, that meaning in the text cannot be ascertained when the very words of Scripture are unknown.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Ehrman concludes that the original were inspired by God but were presupposed by “their own perspectives, their own beliefs, their own views, their own needs, their own desires, their own understandings, their own theologies; and these perspectives, beliefs, views, needs, desires, understandings, and theologies informed everything they said.”<sup>65</sup> Ehrman hypothesizes that there are between “300,000 and 400,000” differences or more differences than there are actual words in the New Testament.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Ehrman concludes that authorial prejudice provides an additional argument to deny the biblical inerrancy. The flaw in Ehrman’s conclusion can be countered through a perfect, Divine Being perfectly orchestrating human instruments to write and preserve the Bible

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<sup>62</sup> Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 6-7.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>66</sup> Robert B. Stewart, ed., *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart D. Ehrman & Daniel B. Wallace in Dialogue* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 21.

over thousands of years. God drives mankind to the Book and intends that we interpret the Book through the Book to best understand God and His redemption.<sup>67</sup>

### The Importance of Biblical Inerrancy

Adding to the understanding that training believers in the local church to grasp and confidently profess biblical trustworthiness in the current conversation is a second theme, the importance of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy to today's Christian in a skeptical world. Building upon the previous theme, the evangelical voice in America is inseparably linked to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Craig Blomberg indicates that the importance of biblical inerrancy as an exclusively American doctrine when he wrote that its origins were from the fundamentalist and liberal battle that started in the 1920s. He says that the focus on "biblical inerrancy" is American and the influence of American missionaries when seen overseas.

It is also Blomberg's conclusion that Christians beyond America prefer the terms biblical authority, inspiration and infallibility over the term inerrancy in their doctrine and preaching.<sup>68</sup> D.A. Carson is convinced that the subject is relevant because "we constantly need a new supply of Christian scholars who think about the nature of Scripture, not only because new questions are raised from time to time, but also because we need a steady supply of new theologians who work through the fundamentals of every doctrine."<sup>69</sup> Carson reinforced this view in observation of one of his former pupils, Andy Naselli, who found three-hundred thirty-seven new sources on biblical inerrancy in the twenty years between 1980 and 2010. Carson further expressed that

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<sup>67</sup> Frame, John M., *The Scripture Cannot Be Broken: Twentieth Century Writings on the Doctrine of Inerrancy*, Edited by John MacArthur, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 120-121.

<sup>68</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 119.

<sup>69</sup> Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 3.



much scholarship has been expressed since 2010 with many more supplementary items that enhance the argument for the reliability of the Bible.<sup>70</sup>

Craig Blomberg appears to concur with Carson as he states that the “reliability of the Bible continues to be a topic of great interest to many people. For more than two centuries, modern biblical critics have pored over almost every corner of the Scriptures in minute detail.”<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the importance of biblical reliability can be seen in the thoughts of Mark Clark that skeptics doubt the existence of God because they doubt the Bible in terms of its accuracy, truthfulness, and trustworthiness. For Clark, skeptics see the Bible as myth, outdated and irrelevant and only believed by people who act as an ostrich with their heads buried in the sand, embracing fables over the tangible and reasonable.<sup>72</sup>

*Truth Matters* by Andreas Kostenberger, Darrell Bock, and Josh Chatrow addresses the current conversation as it demonstrates the importance of biblical inerrancy to the New Testament writer when writes that the “early church was aggressive almost to the point of paranoia in making sure that no type of funny business was happening with the sacred texts. In general, their tendency was to reject than accept any book whose authorship was in question.”<sup>73</sup> Ben Witherington, III encapsulates the current importance of biblical reliability in his article, “*The Truth Will Out*” when he said that “our method of study and the system of interpretation must necessarily be dependent on the view we take of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. It will be so either consciously or unconsciously. . . Now in an inspired writing there are two

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<sup>70</sup> Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, xxi.

<sup>72</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 63.

<sup>73</sup> Kostenberger et al., *Truth Matters*, 62.

elements—the human and the divine or as it is sometimes expressed- the letter and the spirit. . .”<sup>74</sup>

Research of sources reveals that biblical inerrancy has its place at the table for the modern Christian as he/she faces questions and concerns regarding the Bible’s trustworthiness. One can conclude that biblical inerrancy is important to theologian, pastor and believer in the local church, and skeptic alike as they consider the questions of faith and deity and frame their worldview. Thus, another thread finds its place in the Bible’s infallible masterpiece.

### Conceptions or Defenses of Biblical Inerrancy

Another thread in the tapestry and theme pertinent to the research is that of conceptions and defenses of the biblical inerrancy doctrine. Jesus demonstrated the Bible’s reliability as He “showed his skeptical disciples” the facts to prove they could completely rely on the Scriptures.<sup>75</sup> As the antagonism toward the Bible and its truths escalates in the contemporary culture, one must understand that Christianity has prospered amidst confrontation and persecution. Erwin Lutzer undergirds this statement when he said, “frequently throughout history, the church has thrived in the midst of opposition and persecution that arise in a disintegrating culture.”<sup>76</sup> Lutzer also reminds the Christian of the importance of taking a strong stand on biblical convictions in this “cancel culture,” a popular phrase in the last five years referring to the cancellation of conservative or evangelical views. He writes that “God has brought us to this hour and it is time for us to take the high moral ground and say with Martin

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<sup>74</sup> Ben Witherington, III, “The Truth Will Out: A Historical Perspective in the Inerrancy Controversy,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no.1 (March 2014): 19.

<sup>75</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 64.

<sup>76</sup> Lutzer, *We Will Not Be Silenced*, 64.

Luther, “Here we stand; we cannot be otherwise.”<sup>77</sup> However, in the stand that believers take on such convictions as biblical reliability, the believer must continue to convey a positive witness that encourages healthy dialogue and encourages faith for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, In taking a stand, believers must faithfully argue for the Bible and love those whom they are trying to convince of its trustworthiness. Thus, Lutzer informs the modern Christian that Scripture admonishes love for any enemies (Mt 5:44) which would include the enemies to our Christian belief systems as well. Returned antagonism would induce further anger and close down communication in a healthy, civil dialogue.<sup>78</sup>

The Bible writers were not concerned about precise language as in the case of the modern context. For example, the gospel writers would not have been focused on higher critical methodology. As Ben Witherington leads the thought, “NT writers did not conform their writings to modern notions of historical precision. Rather they followed the accepted conventions of their day telling the truth about their subject matter in ways that would be on target in their original contexts and for their original audiences.”<sup>79</sup> Witherington argues that “The NT is truthful and trustworthy in all that it intends to assert and teach us- and its subjects include history, theology, and ethics.”<sup>80</sup> In consideration of concepts and defenses, Witherington dials the witness of biblical inerrancy into rightful focus on God and His eternal truth to a corrupted world as he said: “The Bible itself is a great thing. The canons of the OT and the NT are wonderful witnesses. But before they ever existed there was a truthful God who spoke a truthful

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<sup>77</sup> Lutzer, *We Will Not Be Silenced*, 62.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Witherington, III. *The Truth Will Out*, 24.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

word to His prophets, priest, kings, apostles, and to his own Son and His family.”<sup>81</sup> Conversely, others have concerns regarding the inerrancy doctrine. One concern is given a voice by Jerome Van Kuiken as he reports two evangelical’s discussion of inerrancy issues for some theologians: “For many evangelicals, inerrancy may be tied too closely to exact words in written forms of revelation, to original autographs, and to standards of accuracy based on modern histography.”<sup>82</sup> D. A. Carson conceptualizes biblical inerrancy as he indicates that words are not “abstract thoughts abstracted from history, nor is it historical details without entailments or anything like that, but God has disclosed himself in space-time history and has given also words, prophetic words” in order to provide truth and redemption to the human race through his Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>83</sup> Other ancillary issues add another color of thread to the tapestry of biblical reliability.

Thus, the Bible’s focus is God and His redemptive and transformational plan for creation. The concepts and defenses of biblical inerrancy appear to channel our thought process as to the divine objective of God in creation and His final glory. One can see that the Bible defends itself in such passages as 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Peter’s belief regarding the movement of God upon holy writers of old, having God’s driving them and “born in them”<sup>84</sup> in 2 Peter 1:21, and John’s definite declaration in 1 John 1 about his firsthand testimony of the truth of Christ Jesus in over a three year period.<sup>85</sup> In essence, concepts and defenses of biblical inerrancy or its trustworthiness

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<sup>81</sup> Witherington, III. *The Truth Will Out*, 27.

<sup>82</sup> Jerome E. Van Kuiken, “John Walton’s Lost Worlds and God’s Loosed Word: Implications for Inerrancy, Canon, and Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 58, no.4 (Dec 2015): 679.

<sup>83</sup> Carson, D. A., John Frame, and Ben Witherington, III, “Plenary Discussions on Biblical Inerrancy,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 57, no. 1 (2014): 45.

<sup>84</sup> Phillips, John, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series, (Grand Rapids, MN: Kregel Publications), 254.

<sup>85</sup> Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in John*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2017), 3.

are quite prominent throughout history, especially the history of the Judeo-Christian presence upon the earth.

### Biblical Sufficiency

When biblical inerrancy has been established through a good, working definition, its importance, concepts, and definitions, one can turn to establish the sufficiency of Scripture in the local church. Sufficiency of the Bible is vital to saving faith and the God-centered practice of that faith for the believer. Without faith in the Bible's sufficiency, the believer is left without ground to stand upon spiritually and as a witness among skeptics. Biblical sufficiency is a key component as well in the defense of the Bible as it conveys to the skeptic the need for personal interaction with the Bible and its Divine Author. Michael Lawrence communicates that biblical theology is the most practical thing that we can do in pastoral ministry.<sup>86</sup> It is the source for and authority for all preaching and teaching. Thus, the theology regarding a sufficient biblical text is important to the pastor's discipleship of the local church.

Additionally, one's understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture provides healthy, biblical theology to grow the church in its faith, practice, and communication of the truth to a lost, skeptical culture. In essence, God has spoken His sufficient Word to generally call humanity, and specifically His own people, to a specific life to live for His glory.<sup>87</sup> Craig Blomberg reminds us that, despite the conclusions of some, a work such as the Bible can be theological and historical at the same time, and therefore; relevant.<sup>88</sup> As Vern Poythress adds, we can appreciate the human authors and their work toward sufficient truth from God when we

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<sup>86</sup> Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 10.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, xxvi.

understand that God created these human instruments in His divine image in order to convey a sufficient, trustworthy biblical text.<sup>89</sup> Thomas Schreiner puts it this way, “both the origin of prophecy and its subsequent interpretation stem from God himself.”<sup>90</sup>

### Ancillary Issues

Like those ideas and defenses offered by writers, there are also ancillary issues that have risen in the study of the Bible’s defense. Ancillary issues provide overall support but in a secondary or supplementary way. Just as study and review of literature provide an understanding what is being said, how it is being argued or communicated, and determines the pros and cons on a given subject, ancillary issues bring a different angle to the conversation that undergirds the overall understanding of that subject such as biblical inerrancy. For instance, the seminal text of Millard Erickson supports the argument for inerrancy in this way: “We must also define what we mean by error. If this is not done, if we do not have some fixed limits that clearly separate truthful statements from false propositions, the meaning of inerrancy will be lost.”<sup>91</sup> Additionally, Erickson supports the argument for inerrancy when he writes that “The doctrine of inerrancy applies in the strict sense only to the originals, but in a derivative sense to copies and translations, that is, to the extent that they reflect the original.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, the authenticity of the original documents further enhances the argument for the trustworthiness of the translations that we hold in our hands today.

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<sup>89</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, Vol. 37, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 324.

<sup>91</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 264.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

Additionally, Michael Lawrence supports the argument for the Bible's trustworthiness by highlighting mankind's selfish, sinful nature that desires to discount and doubt God's Word for human self-aggrandizement. He applies Scripture in the church with the understanding that "our problem is idolatry" when accepting and applying the Bible. Alternatively, he argues that "our goal, and in fact the goal of all creation, (cf. Rom 8:19), is that we be conformed to the image of Christ, something accomplished only by the Spirit through the regenerating power of the gospel (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:16-19)."<sup>93</sup> As the one Who divinely inspired the Bible, God's Spirit never contradicts the eternal testimony of Scripture.<sup>94</sup> Kostenberger, Bock, and Chatrow weave their support into the biblical inerrancy tapestry as they deflect the notion that the apostles were illiterate peasants- "literacy and education were a priority of first-century Jews. By the age of six or seven, boys in that culture were expected to engage in these types of pursuits. Sociologists tell us that ethnic identity among minorities—even today—leads them to infuse their traditions hard into their children and families, making sure their heritage is preserved in a way of life."<sup>95</sup> Thus, their book, *Truth Matters*, debunks the idea that the Bible is the wild ideas of the disciples and embraces the idea that the early, rabbinic education of the disciples supports the Bible's trustworthiness in its own right. In summary, ancillary support arises as research develops. These examples are like the presence of walls in a home that do not have the intention of bearing the full weight of the overall structure but share the load, provide aesthetics, and compartmentalize the home of biblical reliability into usable rooms.

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<sup>93</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 203.

<sup>94</sup> Boyd Hunt, *Redeemed Eschatological Redemption and the Kingdom of God*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 24.

<sup>95</sup> Kostenberger, et al., *Truth Matters*, 60.

## Historical Themes

History inside the Bible, and history of the discussion regarding the Bible's inerrancy and infallibility have helped to enhance the acceptance of the Bible as truth. For instance, Sidney Greidanus in his seminal work regarding the preacher and the ancient text, reminds us of the importance of history to the inerrancy conversation when he warns that "we must be careful, however, not to get sidetracked with twentieth century standards of historical accuracy. The biblical documents need not measure up to our standards to be authoritative. Too add to this point, Richard Simmons that in most world religions that historical record is not of much importance, but Christianity is based on "historical facts."<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the biblical message does not rise or fall with historical details."<sup>97</sup> However, the history of the Bible and its preservation can be gleaned from in the history of God's people.<sup>98</sup> In contrary thinking, Ehrman, Evans, and Stewart state that because the Gospels are historical and desire to portray an authentic picture of Jesus, one must examine critically the Gospels as one would any other ancient work.<sup>99</sup>

Truly, the Bible can stand on its own and the biblical writers went to great lengths for God's glory to ensure that it could sufficiently do so. Amy Orr Ewing contributes to the recent conversation regarding the theme of history as she states, "The method is simply this: we have access to historical truth via converging lines of evidence."<sup>100</sup> She also warns of the

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<sup>96</sup> Richard E. Simmons, III. *Reliable Truth: The Validity of the Bible In An Age of Skepticism*, (Birmingham, AL: Union Hill Publishing, 2013), 29.

<sup>97</sup> Stanley Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 91.

<sup>98</sup> For further study, F. F. Bruce produced a seminal work, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1984): see also Bo Reike, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1968).

<sup>99</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, Craig A. Evans, and Robert Stewart, *Can We Trust the Bible on the Historical Jesus?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 8.

<sup>100</sup> Amy Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible: Answers to Ten Tough Questions*, (London, England: InterVarsity Press, Rev. ed. 2020), 24.



contemporary usage of deconstructionism when she writes “The content of any historical document will be entirely biased by the author’s ambition and the cultural context of the text, among other things. Therefore, the idea that the text is capable conveying a true representation of what actually happened is rejected.”<sup>101</sup> Likewise, Mark Clark supports the argument for biblical trustworthiness from the context of the Bible when he speaks of the care and conviction that went into its transmission to future generations as he said that “The Jews who copied the manuscripts cared a great deal about what they were preserving. This was a precious book to them, the Word of God.”<sup>102</sup> From the standpoint of contrast of history supporting biblical trustworthiness, Clark identifies that “another complaint skeptics lodge against the Gospels is that they are written too far after the events they record to be trusted.”<sup>103</sup> Even though the Bible’s focus is redemption rather than a historical record, it is a verifiable source of history.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the historical thread adds another dimension to the biblical inerrancy tapestry.

### Epistemology and the Bible

Adding another dimension to the biblical trustworthiness tapestry, is the theme of epistemology. Some would define the Bible as a “literary anthology.”<sup>105</sup> It is the “tale God tells.”<sup>106</sup> In its story, the Bible provides for us a biblical worldview from God’s perspective.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Amy Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 66.

<sup>103</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 75.

<sup>104</sup> For further research, see Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1980).

<sup>105</sup> Ralph Herring, Frank Stagg and others. Chapter by J. Wesley Ingles, “Unity in Diversity” in *How to Understand the Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1974). 62.

<sup>106</sup> James W. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology Doctrine*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 40.

<sup>107</sup> Edward W. Klink, III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2012), 23.

When considering the trustworthiness of the Scripture, what has been written, how it was derived, its genre, grammar, syntax, resources, and other linguistics come to the table for discussion, especially in the higher, critical method. *The Enduring Authority of Scripture* expresses that texts have “a domain within which it is authoritative.”<sup>108</sup> Geisler and Roach add their voices to the epistemological conversation by saying “the correct interpretation of any document, including the Bible, is the “literal,” or historical-grammatical interpretation.”<sup>109</sup> Amy Orr-Ewing gives scholarly and apologetic perspective that “all of us are in agreement that the context of any text is important for its interpretation.”<sup>110</sup> As with any piece of literature, context is a key component. John MacArthur sets forth that different vocabularies are needed to speak in different settings or different people due to “different circumstances.”<sup>111</sup> Thus, differences are found from the same authors. Archaeological finds such as the Dead Sea Scrolls have done nothing but enhance the veracity of God’s Word.<sup>112</sup>

Mark Clark again assists with epistemological concerns in *The Problem of God* as he challenges the biblical questioning of the skeptical world. He, along with other theologians respond to Bart Ehrman in his book, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*, that there are 400,000 errors in the Bible. Ehrman declares that there are up to four-hundred thousand discrepancies, as quoted earlier from his own work, especially in the New

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<sup>108</sup> Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 874.

<sup>109</sup> Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 361.

<sup>110</sup> Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, 8.

<sup>111</sup> John MacArthur, Jr. *1 Timothy*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, xiii.

<sup>112</sup> Martin Abegg, Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugen Ulrich, translators, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1999). For further study, see also *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1996) by Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook.

Testament, openly in that book as well as in a skeptical blog on Reddit.com.<sup>113</sup> Clark reminds his reader that there are far more manuscripts of the Christian Scripture than any other ancient text with over twenty-five thousand to date. It is in this vast collection of twenty-five thousand manuscripts that Ehrman's errors are purported.<sup>114</sup>

Craig Blomberg indicates that beginner Greek students with a very basic understanding of higher-critical method understand that these interpretive committees utilize external and internal evidence to validate and legitimize their inclusion or exclusion of wording in the sacred text.<sup>115</sup> Timothy Mitchell furthers the epistemological theme by explaining the process of composing biblical literature as often a communal effort that was a "long, drawn-out procedure of correction, editing, polishing, and rewriting." Mitchell's belief undergirds biblical trustworthiness because many times the author had helpful associations in his sphere of influence that provided suggestions for change and constructive criticism to boot.<sup>116</sup> Again, Geisler and Roach draw the distinctions between inerrancy and hermeneutics with inerrancy revealing the nature of Scripture and hermeneutics dealing with biblical interpretation while both terms being related through actual practice. Though liberals spend much time dissecting and challenging biblical truth, the context, interpretation, and consideration of the literature enhance the trustworthiness of Scripture as it always passes any test put before it.

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<sup>113</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 67.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>115</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 18.

<sup>116</sup> Mitchell, "What Are the NT Autographs?" 303.

### Human Authorship and Sin's Effects

The effects of sin and human authorship was broached by a few authors. Thus, this theme must be added to the tapestry of biblical inerrancy as well. One theme brought to the forefront in the decades long conversation is the consideration of human authors flawed by sin. Of course, the Bible is a divine-human book as God used flawed men to advance his divine truth and gospel message for ultimate kingdom transformation. The eye witness testimony of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament disciples cannot be disregarded but accepted as a reputable verification.<sup>117</sup> Vern Poythress reminds the reader that sin affects the mind of the writer as it does any other writer.<sup>118</sup> Henri A. Blocher rightly communicates in *Enduring Authority of the Bible* that the soul of the human writers was not only a channel but a source, but not the primary source which can only be God.<sup>119</sup> The control of God in conveying Scripture does not diminish the role of the human servant who recorded it in the course of time.<sup>120</sup> Though the human writers have been questioned, the church has not faithfully held it in high regard and accepted its authority.<sup>121</sup> The human dimension of Scripture adds a uniqueness and specialness as God utilized people under the operation of the Holy Spirit to direct and empower the truth of Scripture. Truly, God used the human story to write His own divine saga of redemption and restoration of fallen creation. It is the Scripture and the traditions of these divinely, guided humans that has guided

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<sup>117</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2<sup>nd</sup>., (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 5-8.

<sup>118</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 187.

<sup>119</sup> Henri Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers: The Question of Double Authorship," in *The Enduring Authority of Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 513.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

<sup>121</sup> Kostenberger et al., *Truth Matters*, 62.

the church for over two thousand years.<sup>122</sup> According to Ralph Smith, this “tradition” was accepted as both “oral and written” in Old Testament culture.<sup>123</sup> Human authorship, authorized by the Spirit’s inspiration, has salvation as its message. Human authors kept God’s redemptive theme with three main components: “the bringer of salvation, the way of salvation, and the heirs of salvation.”<sup>124</sup>

### Other Sacred Writings

Like the issue of human authorship, other sacred writings were compared by several contributors to the cause of biblical trustworthiness. Amy Orr-Ewing considers other sacred writings but declares the uniqueness and unequivocal nature of the Christian Bible. The difference between the Bible and other writings, such as the Quran and the Book of Mormon, is that God spoke through humans and inspired them to declare historical events that communicated God and His message for people to receive.<sup>125</sup> Contributing to the uniqueness of the Bible is the fact that God gave His Son, Jesus, to live among and save corrupted creation. Orr-Ewing, along with other Christians, rightly sees the Bible as more than a recorded history but a powerful book to be read in order to discover the living God and his redemptive plan through the carefully preserved canon.<sup>126</sup> She challenges the reader with the transformational

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<sup>122</sup> Clyde L. Manschreck, *A History of Christianity in the World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), 28.

<sup>123</sup> Ralph Smith, *Old Testament Theology: Its History, Method, and Message*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 58.

<sup>124</sup> F. F. Bruce, et. al., *The Origin of the Bible*, rev., (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 11.

<sup>125</sup> For further research into the topic of world religions and their sacred text, see Josh McDowell and Don Stewart’s seminal resource: *Handbook on Today’s Religions*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983).

<sup>126</sup> For a full discussion of the canon of Scripture, see the trusted work of F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988).

power of God’s Word with this statement: “The ultimate test of this is to read a Gospel for ourselves.”<sup>127</sup> The true test of comparison to other sacred writings is the Bible’s power to live and change the lives of creation bound by sin. Though Amy Orr-Ewing was the sole author that brought up the subject in this preliminary research, the power of the Bible as a living transformational document distinguishes it as the superior of all sacred writings.

### Skepticism

Current conversation reveals skepticism regarding the Bible. Skepticism is a continual attack from the “carnal wisdom of the world.”<sup>128</sup> Skepticism about the truthfulness and authenticity of the Bible in American culture is the driving force that defined this thesis as believers in the local church attest feeling inadequate to viably communicate the reliability of the Bible and combat doubts and concerns that arise in the current conversation. Much is being said about biblical reliability inside and outside the church. Mark Clark indicates the first skeptics of the Bible were the disciples in Luke 24 as they doubted the resurrection truth.<sup>129</sup> So, skepticism has been around for thousands of years. It is not new to the modern context but must be engaged with biblical truth in a compassionate yet instructional way while leaving the results to God. Pastor Mark Clark engages the skepticism of his ministry field in Vancouver, Canada, and prepped his church members to do the same. He found that “skeptics often contend the Gospel writers were trying to gain power by showing how impressive Jesus is and how impressive they are by association.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, 76-77.

<sup>128</sup> John MacArthur, *Final Word: Why We Need the Bible*, (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2019), 23.

<sup>129</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 64.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

The problem with this concern is that the disciples did not gain power and prestige from their connection with Jesus and His message but rather died giving their life for the Gospel. Fame and prestige for the disciples would diminish the Gospel and they readily declined that option for the exaltation of Jesus as Savior and Lord. Thus, the argument is not valid. Also, no variance in the biblical texts affect any basic doctrine of the Bible.<sup>131</sup> Clark boils down the skeptics' concerns to the "authority, historicity, and trustworthiness of the Bible."<sup>132</sup> He frames a picture with the several questions and concerns of skeptics so that other believers can understand their viewpoint:

Is the Bible historically legitimate? Hasn't it been proven false? Hasn't the Bible changed throughout history? Isn't there a long list of contradictions and mistakes in the Bible? Aren't the Gospels filled with legends that were filled in later? Isn't the Bible full of ancient and outdated moral teachings (regarding such things as stoning, chauvinism, homosexuality, etc.)? Isn't the Bible written by people who merely wanted power? Why does the church only include four Gospels and exclude others, such as the Gospel of Thomas? While many in our culture respect the Bible as a good story, they do not consider it good history.<sup>133</sup>

Some skeptical scholars mention an aforementioned consideration of the four-hundred thousand variants in the New Testament Scriptures. Craig Blomberg cites that "from this observation alone, skeptics conclude that it is ridiculous to imagine ever reconstructing the original text of Scripture, much less being able to affirm its trustworthiness."<sup>134</sup> The concerns of skeptics reinforce the need for contemporary Christians to be disciplined in questions of biblical reliability and to defend their faith with an apologetic that becomes the spirit of the Gospel. Truly, the works of pastors like Mark Clark and Erwin Lutzer help bring the research project into

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<sup>131</sup> James T. Draper, Jr., *Authority: The Critical Issue for Southern Baptists*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1984), 24.

<sup>132</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 65.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 12.

focus for a local church ministry by answering the questions of skeptics for everyday believers with conviction and theological integrity. Other works, like that of *Truth Matters, The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, bring to light defenses to skeptical concerns that assist in developing a lesson plan for defense to instruct local church members by addressing the pertinent questions of the day.

The disciples were the original skeptics that needed convincing by Jesus of scriptural truth regarding the Messiah with the word, “disciple” appearing 269 times in the New Testament alone.<sup>135</sup> As the matter is synthesized, one can say that the New Testament itself is the testimony of skeptics who had some faith but needed understanding and blossomed from skeptic to fruit-bearing disciples of Jesus. It is pertinent for the modern believer to increase their knowledge of the Bible in order to defend it. It is the Christian’s role to present biblical truth for the skeptic to be able to make “a meaningful commitment to Jesus as Savior.”<sup>136</sup> As Woodrow Kroll instructs, “Bible illiteracy weakens our defense of the gospel” and the “bottom line of defending your faith is evangelism.”<sup>137</sup> Discernment allows the individual to understand and apply truth. When a skeptic, inside or outside the church, rejects “right doctrine or sound reason,” they lack true discernment.<sup>138</sup> The Bible provides a quest for truth in this post-Christian era despite the seeker sensitive movement<sup>139</sup> or the skeptic.

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<sup>135</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, (New York, NY: Harper One, 2006, reprint 2014), 3.

<sup>136</sup> Woodrow Kroll, *Taking Back the Good Book*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 130.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>138</sup> John MacArthur, Jr. *Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses Its Will to Discern*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), xv.

<sup>139</sup> Andy Stanley, *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2012), 14.



## Conclusions and Gaps

A review of literature reveals that the biblical inerrancy battle is alive and well and has been actively debated and diligently rehashed with different perspectives in the modern context. One thing that is evident in this overview of literature regarding biblical inerrancy, is that there needs to be more said and done in the area of discipleship in the local church regarding this doctrine. Apologetics for biblical reliability must move out of the scholastic and ecclesiastical arguments to provide a means of a healthy dialogue for those who are trying to engage the culture with gospel transformation in everyday life. It is in this contemporary generation that it clearly appears that biblical trustworthiness needs to be defined as well as defended in the culture through Gospel witness.

This must take place not simply as an ecclesiastical battle for the Bible among evangelical Christians. It is also evident from the definitions of biblical inerrancy that people approach the subject with different angles and come to various conclusions as to the degree of inerrancy. Some use the term inerrancy with conviction while others prefer infallibility and trustworthiness to describe their stance on the Bible. It is concluded from the review of literature that the continual importance of the doctrine is affirmed by theologians, pastors, and skeptics alike in this contemporary setting. Therefore, it is the role of every pastor to ensure that the flock under that pastor's care be knowledgeable of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, the Bible's sufficiency, and its trustworthiness, but also be able to engage the subject in the post-Christian context in which America finds itself today. The battlefield of the skeptical mind must include an attack at the point of unbelief by the defender of the Bible. Unbelief is defiance of God's truth

and rebellion against the character of God.<sup>140</sup> That is why the believer must evangelistically engage the skeptic. The goal of defending the Bible must be repentant faith toward God.

Other themes bring further highlight to the need for a biblical reliability discussion in the local church ministry for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Likewise, conceptions and defenses of biblical reliability enhance the possibility of bringing a valid, succinct tool for believers who present their faith to others. Ancillary issues enhance the defense of faith. Historical and epistemological themes develop a sense of trust in God's Word. Though the reality of flawed human instruments is evident, the influence of God as the primary source and transforming force of Scripture counters any weaknesses that might be demonstrated by human authors. Other sacred literature diminishes when actively engaged with the Bible's transformative power. Finally, skepticism is real and relevant to the modern context. In order for Christianity to make a difference in the modern "cancel culture," it must be informed about this cherished doctrine, develop means for answering skeptical concerns, and lovingly engaging the corrupted creation with God's truth.

For the sake of discipleship in the local church, these authors provide a working foundation for a pastor to glean from to establish the doctrines of biblical inerrancy, its trustworthiness, and its sufficiency and to thoroughly train the church members to witness for Christ in their daily lives. This literature review reveals that much more can be said and done in order to equip the local church as disciples who are confident in the Bible's inerrancy and sufficiency in this sinful world. Editor D. A. Carson and his contributors to *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* consider theological attacks and aspects of inerrancy with

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<sup>140</sup> Tom Patton, "The Call of Repentance; Delivering the Message to the Conscience" in *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully*, Edited by John MacArthur, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 182.

well applied theology which can be utilized to formulate the theological basis for a discipleship plan in the local church and educate the church into a confident doctrine of the Bible.

Additionally, pastors like Mike Clark and Erwin Lutzer bring the arguments for the Bible's inerrant and sufficient nature down to a lay person's level with adequate force to challenge the reader beyond complacency into a healthy and compassionate apologetic. Clark and Lutzer truly laid the groundwork for the local church to engage the skeptical objections found in the culture today. The historical and epistemological themes brought out by the authors in this review give the sense of how the Bible came to be and the degree of hard work and devotion that went into the finished project. The skepticism theme provides the contemporary church member with the understanding of what concerns are current to the conversation and provides effective answers to confront those concerns. Ultimately, a sufficient Bible provides authority for one's life and the lives of others in this sinful world.

## **Theological Foundations**

### Introductory Considerations for Theological Foundations

The authenticity of this action research project regarding biblical reliability is grounded in its theological roots. Thus, one must define the Bible's reliability through the lens of the Bible itself. The reliability of the Bible must be a cornerstone for the defense of faith in a skeptical world by the Lord's churches. The Bible, is literally, "the books" which are collections of Jewish and Christian sacred texts<sup>141</sup> from which faith and practice are derived and established. It boldly asserts its own authenticity and trustworthiness. The Bible is unique in that it is divinely inspired.

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<sup>141</sup> Bruce Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, "Bible" by Bruce Metzger (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 78-79.

As the perfect and authoritative Source, God has chosen to speak through human subjects His Truth and His Commandments for the eternal benefit of both Old and New Testament hearers alike. It is only reasonable to conclude that a perfect Deity communicates perfect Truth for the human race.

According to Romans 10:17, the faith that God desires in His creation is brought about through the hearing of His Word. In order for a church or individual believer to evangelize the lost world, it must be central that churches and individual believers deliver the saving “word of Christ” to those willing to hear and believe through repentant faith in Jesus Christ as declared in this integral verse in Romans.<sup>142</sup> The Apostle Paul declares this Word as the “Word of faith” in verse eight of chapter ten, drawing from the model of the “Word” from God in Deuteronomy 30:14.<sup>143</sup> At times, the “Word of God” in verse 17 is also translated the “Word of Christ” in which God’s message to humanity only comes through preaching Christ. Thus, people hear the message and respond in faith to God through the reliable Scripture that He has provided.<sup>144</sup>

As demonstrated in Hebrews 1:1-2, God’s first activity in this particular epistle is that of locution. In these verses, God’s revelation comes to humanity in parts. As the passage records, “in the past” God spoke through His prophets and “now” He speaks to “us by His Son.” In essence, God’s inspired Word was interpreted to saints by the Old Testament prophets. Spatially, God enabled the prophets to speak Divine Truth. Therefore, God conducted His Words to followers in faith both in the prophets and by the prophets. The Old Testament saint was

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<sup>142</sup> John MacArthur, Jr. *Romans 9-16*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 87.

<sup>143</sup> Dale Moody, “Romans” In *Acts to First Corinthians*, vol. 10, The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1970), 238.

<sup>144</sup> Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, vol. XIV (London, UK: United Bible Society, 1973), 205.

dependent upon the prophets for the Word of the Lord. Those prophets often predicated their addresses to Abraham's lineage with the words, "Thus, saith the Lord" (e.g., Exod 5:1; Isa 45:11; Jer 51:1; Ezek 13:6-7; Mic 3:5).

### Foundations from the Old Testament

Those divine words were carefully delivered by the prophets to the Hebrews and painstakingly preserved by both the prophets and scribes throughout the millennia in order to put forth a trustworthy account of God's will, His commands, as well as His divine relationship with saints. The Old Testament version of the written Word of God is the collected writings of the Law, the Prophets, and the Wisdom Literature by these same diligent stewards. Careful and reverent were they in handling and transmitting the divine words. God was honored through the entire process of scriptural preservation by these original scholars. Interpretation does not succumb to a unique meaning of the text but a "plain meaning" which rightly conveys the author's "intended meaning."<sup>145</sup>

Of course, the New Testament records the transfer of God's communication primarily through the Son, the Living Word,<sup>146</sup> in the Gospels and later through Jesus' apostles in the Epistles. God has always used instruments to communicate divine revelation to the world. These human instruments were flawed because of their own sinful nature. In the ultimate revelation from God, the Living Word, Jesus Christ, was perfect. God always ensured that truth came and He guided the process with perfection so that the original autographs were perfect and reliable to

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<sup>145</sup> Daniel Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2011), 25.

<sup>146</sup> David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, vol. 35, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2010), 99–101.

speak for Him. In summary, the Bible attests that God is the Author of the Scripture, writing, directing, transmitting, and preserving through the entire process unto the sixty-six books of today's canon.

Words speak volumes. Words paint pictures. Words have meaning. Words have believability. Words communicate the heart and intention of the author. The Word of God has authority and reliably voices the heart of Holy God to sinful mankind. Specifically in the Bible, one can see the genuine intention of the loving Author. The Holy Scripture reveals a very intentional God with genuine motives for His Creation. In addition, the credibility of the entire Bible most certainly rests in the credibility of the God Who creates, sustains, and redeems His Creation.<sup>147</sup> Looking back to the Old Testament, God affirms His Word as reliable and trustworthy. The God of the Bible desired a personal relationship with His people corporately and individually. Therefore, the Bible was passed down by word of mouth at first.

Subsequently, language came into written form and with the written word came the recording of God's Word in manuscripts on common material resources such as animal skin and papyri. In Deuteronomy 6:6, God establishes the nation of Israel and His worship in that fledgling nation by indicating that these words that He was giving to the Hebrews were not simply commands but were to be embraced in the human heart. As He gave His commands, Yahweh "encompassed the full corpus of the covenant text as communicated by Moses" and encapsulated in the Shema in the preceding two verses.<sup>148</sup> So important is this trustworthy Scripture that the hearer was to utilize as symbols on the hands and head while committing it to the memory of the heart, the reservoir of the intellect or mankind's rational side. So important

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<sup>147</sup> Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, 14-15.

<sup>148</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 167.

were these commands from God, that subsequent generations were to be impressed with these same words. Therefore, the Israelites were not just to receive God's Truth but to transmit that Truth to subsequent generations with precision and accuracy as in the care of a skilled engraver as he etches a monument in stone. In activity and inactivity, at work or at rest, God's Word was to be so trusted and revered that it should be contemplated, revered, and transmitted in all of daily life.

This covenant with God must never escape their attention and must be the establishing force of the Hebrew nation and the Hebrew faith. These words were to be sign to them and their means of identity in the world and most definitely with God. Every individual and every family, every village and every tribe in the nation belonged to God. Though all the world is His, the Israelite nation, in particular, belonged to the Lord. The individual and the community of Israel were God's creatures and meant to be in divine relationship with Him through His Word.<sup>149</sup> Isaiah 34:16 terms God's Word as the "book of the Lord," as "His scroll," "measured judgment," and forever "inheritance" for Israel and was to be followed perpetually.<sup>150</sup> No part was to be omitted from Yahweh's express commandments. They were arranged by God's Spirit, even in this case, for the nation of Edom.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, the Bible mattered to God and must matter to Yahweh's Hebrew people and to the peoples of the world as the guide and sourcebook for life. It was to be trusted by Israel. It was also to be trusted by the nation of Edom. It was to be trusted by all.

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<sup>149</sup> Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary, 167-168.

<sup>150</sup> John D. W. Watts, "Isaiah 34-66." vol. 25, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 4. This note references the author's own translation of the Word of God as God's scroll, measured judgment, and perpetual inheritance.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Another concept that is promoted in the Bible is the judgmental nature of Holy Writ. Judgment by the Bible admonishes that it should be heard and heeded. God wanted all people to know that Scripture was not only trustworthy for faith and practice but also for judgment in the present and in the future. The words that God gave were eternal and final. The Bible would have importance in the present as well as the future. This understanding cannot get any clearer than the testimony of Psalm 119:89. The eternal nature of Scripture signifies a current reliability and a future usage in God's plan.

Future judgment will bring mankind in line with the holy standards of God in the Bible. Hebrews 10:26-29 furthers the concept of the God's Word used as the standard for judgment. Here, judgment moves from lesser to greater in scope with the Bible as the discriminating force and decisive standard for divine punishment. The death penalty was brought forth by Mosaic law for a multiplicity of sins. Ultimately, the Old Testament penalty of death signified the eternal rejection of God in eternal judgment. God brought the same exacting judgment and punishment for the adulterer as He did the idolater, just as He did the person who picked up sticks to make a fire on the sabbath day.<sup>152</sup> Jesus affirms the reliability of the Bible as the standard for judgment in John 12:48. God's Word was reliable for daily life and relationship with God and fellowman but is clearly given by God as reliable for the judgment of the nations in the future.

#### Foundations from the New Testament

Like the prophets of old, the New Testament writers also believed and affirmed the reliability of Scripture. Jesus taught Scripture as reliable truth as He expounded upon it to His disciples and a distinctly Jewish audience in Luke 4:16-27; 24:27; 45. Luke placed the Luke 4

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<sup>152</sup> David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, New American Commentary, 524.



account in a prominent place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in order to draw the link, as Jesus did, between the Old and New Testaments. He stood to read the text and sat to expound the text to those in the audience. As Jesus expounded on Isaiah's prophetic words, He precisely interpreted His own ministry and Messiahship to the dismay and the angering of His Jewish audience. Though Jesus outlined His purpose and ministry for the crowds, they refused to accept His link to Isaiah's message to a so-called rabbi in their day and time.

Therefore, they rejected Christ despite His faithfulness to expound widely accepted texts as prophecies about Himself as the Son of God. For Jesus, the authority and the reliability of the Old Testament text was a norm. It was so for His Jewish hearers as well.<sup>153</sup> Though the Law, Prophets, and the Writings were received as reliable in the New Testament period, the Jews simply chose to not go along with Jesus' interpretation. Later in Luke 24, Jesus would broaden His exposition to begin with Moses, then to the prophets, and Psalms to authenticate His Messiahship to His listeners. These texts were settled and accepted as reliable by the time of Jesus as Scripture.<sup>154</sup>

According to Jesus in John 5:27-39, the Father in heaven has spoken in the Old Testament in order for the Jews to whom Jesus is speaking would come to faith. The Father is the source for the truthful record of the Messiah. Transcendent God would speak through the incarnation of His Son. The Incarnation of Jesus would be the final voice of God to a rebellious world, including God's people, the Jews. Jesus offered the Old Testament canon to the Jews as God's Word concerning Himself. He boldly and assuredly declared to the Jews as they

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<sup>153</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text*. Edited by David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 156.

<sup>154</sup> Stein, *Luke*, 612.

studiously searched the Scripture for eternal life that the Scripture is that which testified of Himself as the Messiah. Understandably, the Scripture did not abide in their hearts because they failed to recognize and accept the Old Testament witness from God about His Son, the world's Savior.<sup>155</sup> Holy Writ was given by God the Father and He alone. God must be believed and accepted as one accepts His truth in Scripture. Thus, the prophets, the miracles, and the inspired Scriptures derive their authority from God. So, for the Jew, the New Testament contemporary, and future hearers, God is the authority who substantiates all of the claims of Jesus unto a helplessly, lost world, Jew or gentile alike.<sup>156</sup>

Beyond the Gospel writer's record of Jesus affirming Scripture as Scripture, the apostles speckled the tapestry of their own teaching and letters with the foundational truth of the reliability of the Scripture from the Old Testament and now with what was being written by the Spirit through their own ministries. Paul declared that Scripture was the "oracles of God" in Romans 3:2. Literally, Apostle Paul proclaims that the Jews had been given God's very oracles, but the Jews chose unbelief. He would later proclaim, "God be true and every man a liar" in verse 4, testifying to the trustworthy nature of God and His Word. The integrity of God and His Word in His covenant promises to Israel remain intact. It is only because of Jewish unbelief that the promises are not affected. It is against the nature of God to break faith though others might. Simply, Paul believed that God was always true to His Word.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> William E. Hull, "John" in *Luke-John*, vol 9, The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1970), 266.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-267.

<sup>157</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 104-105.

In addition, this view of Biblical reliability can be seen in Acts 8:32 as Phillip expounded on Isaiah to his detractors. After the martyrdom of Stephen for applying the Truth to a rebellious and persecutory Jewish audience, Paul would affirm once again in Acts 28:23 as the apostolic faith regarding Jesus as Messiah rooted itself in the accepted Old Testament canon. In chapter twenty-eight, Paul reassured the Jews of Rome, in his discourse, that he had not violated the Jewish law but that he was in chains because of the “hope of Israel” as testified about in the already received Jewish canon. Some would believe and others remained in their unbelief as reliable truth was presented to the Jews in Rome.<sup>158</sup> Paul and Peter would further affirm the reliability of the Bible in such passages as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:21.<sup>159</sup> They taught that God moved by His Spirit, directed human instruments, and gave hope and healing through the testimony of grace and mercy in Jesus Christ through His inspired and reliable Word.

2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 are bold and authoritative scriptures regarding the Bible’s trustworthiness, authority, and inspiration in the church. The Bible was written as God intended it to be written.<sup>160</sup> As the Apostle Paul conversed with his pastoral protégé in Ephesus, young Timothy, he did so with a full-throated affirmation of the Scripture as God-breathed and completely sufficient. As a young Jewish boy, Timothy would have learned, appreciated, and respected the authority of Scripture. Most Jewish boys would have started their biblical instruction in God’s Word around five years of age. These sacred writings would have not only

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<sup>158</sup> T. C. Smith, “Acts” in *Acts to First Corinthians*, vol. 10, The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1970), 150-151.

<sup>159</sup> Joining the Apostle Paul in the vein of 2 Timothy 3:16, the Apostle Peter assured believers that God’s sure word brings a solid assurance of eternal salvation. For Peter’s assurance regarding God’s Word, see *2 Peter* by Ray Summers in the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12, *Hebrews-Revelation*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1972, Clifton J. Allen, editor), 178-179.

<sup>160</sup> David Platt, Daniel Akin, and Tony Merida, authors and editors, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2013), 199.

been foundation to Timothy's Jewish faith, but his conversion and faith in Jesus as well. It was in this conviction that Paul would encourage his young protégé to stand unwaveringly upon according to 2 Timothy 3:14-15.<sup>161</sup> Tommy Lea informs that it was Paul's strong desire in the epistle for Timothy to "hold to" or "remain" as Timothy was commanded to "continue" in this high view of Scripture.<sup>162</sup>

The Scripture equipped Timothy's mind and engaged his heart unto saving faith. As Paul encouraged Timothy to stand upon the foundation of Scripture that he had received from teachers such as his godly mother and grandmother, he reminds Timothy of a conviction that they both assuredly hold to from their own childhoods, that the Bible is from God, is true, and sufficiently equips disciples to please God in word and in deed. The Bible is entirely useful for daily life and ministry and for Timothy to engage a sinful Ephesian culture.<sup>163</sup> Collectively referencing all Scripture, Apostle Paul affirms that each part of Scripture is inspired by God and can be trusted as His voice. An appropriate conclusion is that "God's words were given through men superintended by the Holy Spirit so that their writings are without error."<sup>164</sup> Therefore, Timothy could assert in the pagan Ephesian culture that the Scripture is entirely inspired and useful for faith and practice before the God Who inspired it to communicate saving grace through His Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>165</sup> In application for this skeptical culture, Kevin DeYoung asserts that the reader

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<sup>161</sup> Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, Jr. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text 1,2 Timothy*, Vol. 34 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 233.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy The New American Commentary*, 234-235. See also Gordon Fee in *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 793-794.

<sup>164</sup> A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures New Testament Edition by Dallas Seminary Faculty*, Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983), 757.

<sup>165</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy*, New American Commentary, 235.

must “stick with the Scripture,” considering one’s personal history, the Scripture’s ability, the Scripture’s originality, and the Scripture’s practicality as Timothy did in his own culture.<sup>166</sup>

Assured of the inspiration and usefulness of Scripture, Paul listed several elements by which the Scripture has lasting impact. Paul affirmed that the Bible was useful or profitable for “teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.” (See 2 Tim 3:16b) This “teaching” was that Scripture is the “positive source of Christian doctrine.”<sup>167</sup> In terms of “rebuking,” the Bible is useful to convey errors and heresy of false teachers as well as the error of a sinful lifestyle. Another positive use of the sacred writings so important to Paul and Timothy is the corrective and training aspects. The Bible assuredly convicts misguided souls, regenerates those sinful souls, and restores those souls to a useful purpose in God’s kingdom not known before due to the corruption of sin. Finally, in verse sixteen, the Bible’s sufficient and inspirational power moves beyond transformation of the soul unto a righteous lifestyle through Jesus.<sup>168</sup>

In verse seventeen, Paul would seemingly couple Timothy as a man of God and any Christian leader together, as he emphasizes the sufficiency of Scripture. The participial phrase employed in the verse elaborates that the inspired and profitable Scriptures is able to make Timothy or any believer to be “furnished completely to do whatever God has called him to perform.”<sup>169</sup> For John MacArthur, these aforementioned Scriptures demonstrated the process of sanctification by which the power of God changes and transform a sinner into a useful vessel fit

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<sup>166</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word: Why The Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, And Enough, And What That Means For You And Me*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, reprinted 2016), 113-122.

<sup>167</sup> Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy*, New American Commentary, 236-237.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

for God's service.<sup>170</sup> It is not the mere record of God's truth. It is the voice and heart of God. It is the transformative and sanctifying work of a gracious and merciful God to a fallen race.

“Scripture first of all and above all is from God and about God.”<sup>171</sup> It is not simply a collection “of the wisdom and insights of godly men. It is God's truth.”<sup>172</sup> From the testimony of its own pages, the Bible is more than a human work, it is truth for all ages as it is God-breathed, trustworthy, and sufficient from the authority of authorities, God Himself.

## Theoretical Foundations

### Scholarly Contributions

It is important to draw conclusions and develop a plan for gaps in discipleship based upon the Bible itself as well as the theological and apologetic discourse of the day. Therefore, pertinent literature of the day and the Bible's own teachings about its authority and reliability must be gleaned from in order to best ascertain and address the current issues regarding biblical reliability. The conclusions found in these two arenas will help one to offer an appropriate defense in the modern church setting. The discussion of the reliability of Scripture in a skeptical post-modern world among theologians is vital to a balanced, action, research endeavor. Like the theology of the Bible's reliability, the theory and practice of the doctrine of the Bible's trustworthiness in the ministry of the present day is also pertinent to this project and to those who would take stake in it. Previous scholarly research and defenses serve to build the concepts and

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<sup>170</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, The John MacArthur Commentary on the New Testament (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1995), 142.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>172</sup> John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, The John MacArthur Commentary on the New Testament (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 1995), 143.

ease the burden of discipleship as it breaks ground for this project to be most effective by communicating the conclusions of other theological, apologetic, and ecclesiastical stakeholders in the concern of Biblical trustworthiness.<sup>173</sup> As other's have answered skeptics at large, in communities, in churches, and in academia, it is incumbent to this research project to learn from what others have learned and implemented in order to defend the Bible at this particular time.

Due to skepticism in the world at large, communities, churches, and in the form of higher criticism in academia, the Bible's reliability is a needed topic of discussion as well as a needed topic for defense. Much of the defense of the Bible in academia of late has been related to skeptic, Bart Ehrman. It was Ehrman's doubt and claim of 300,000 to 400,000 discrepancies or contradictions in the Bible<sup>174</sup> that sparked a fire under academic apologists like Craig Blomberg in *Can We Still Believe the Bible? Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy*<sup>175</sup> led by Seminary President Albert Mohler and a band of notable modern theological voices,<sup>176</sup> and *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible* by Vern Poythress to name a few.<sup>177</sup> People are searching for answers to life's suffering and problems. People are searching for truth, for some a world of truth, for others only a window of truth. Because the Creator, gave humanity minds that inquire, investigate, test, and reason, it is necessary to address the reliability of the Bible in new generations with fresh views in order to answer the questions of the day with trustworthy answers that give hope and footing in an otherwise uncertain world of change.

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<sup>173</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 13-14.

<sup>174</sup> Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 16.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>176</sup> Merrick and Garrett, *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, 9-10.

<sup>177</sup> Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 13-14. See also the independent work of Allen Quist, *Evidence the Bible is True: The Apologetics of Biblical Reliability*, (Las Vegas, NV: Self Published, 2020), 135-136.

### Apologetic Contributions

Amy Orr- Ewing is no novice to Christian apologetics. She has served as Senior Vice President to Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and as President of the Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics. While serving in these capacities, she has been exposed to the concerns of skeptics through the years. Upon encountering the tearful happiness of Chinese people as they received a Bible of their own, she determined to investigate how many readily accept the reliability of the Bible and why others seem to reject it so easily.<sup>178</sup> She recalls a friend questioning her regarding the story of Noah's ark and whether or not she believed the story as the Bible records it. She feebly answered in the affirmative but only to the mocking of others with whom she was eating. Orr-Ewing's own speechlessness drove her to investigate how to better communicate the reliability of the Bible to those skeptics that she encountered in life. Her journey began with the problem of human suffering and the presence of other religions in the world. As she investigated the concerns of skeptics, it led her to one central question that people were asking, "Can We Trust the Bible?"<sup>179</sup>

This quest led her to a lifelong pursuit of Christian apologetics. In her book by the same title as the aforementioned question, Orr-Ewing lays out a straight-forward plan to answer ten tough questions that skeptics are asking from her relational perspective. In the book, she addresses the issues of interpretation, the contribution of history, the reliability of biblical manuscripts and their content, sexism in the use of men to write the Bible, how the Bible came to be, other holy literature, the issue of war in the Old Testament, the relevance of the Bible to a

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<sup>178</sup> Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, 1-4.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.



modern audience as in the case of the discussion on the topic of sex.<sup>180</sup> She concludes the work with answering the concern of how a person can know for sure that the Bible can be trusted.<sup>181</sup> This type of source will be invaluable to the defense of the Bible among skeptics. In summary, the personal context of an individual with acquaintances who questioned the Bible prompted her prayerful research to present a ready defense of the Scripture. Others like Alex McFarland have taken on the same mantle of responsibility for similar reasons in order to defend the Bible in a skeptical world environment with books of their own.<sup>182</sup>

### Ecclesiastical Apologetic Contributions

Another work that adds to this particular action research thesis was by Mark Clark, author of *The Problem of God: Answering Skeptic's Challenges to Christianity*.<sup>183</sup> The dynamic that makes Clark different than Orr-Ewing is that he is a pastor. Pastoring in Vancouver, Canada brings a different perspective to the table through the lens of the church serving with their own questions and encountering questions about God and the Bible from the community in which the church ministered. Mark Clark is the founding pastor of Village Church in Vancouver. Living and ministering in an already secular culture, Clark found questions regarding God and the Bible a frequent occurrence in the ministry in Canada.

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<sup>180</sup> Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, See Introduction and Chapter Divisions as Orr-Ewing outlines her apologetic.

<sup>181</sup> Orr-Ewing, *Why Trust the Bible*, 1-2.

<sup>182</sup> For comparison and similar works in apologetics, see Alex McFarland's *10 Most Common Objections to Christianity* and *10 Answers for Skeptics*.

<sup>183</sup> Clark, Introduction to *The Problem of God*.

Admittedly, Mark Clark grew up in a hardcore atheistic household with no exposure to church or a Bible.<sup>184</sup> Though not raised in church, Clark had a natural curiosity about God and the Bible. In addition to his atheistic upbringing, he was a natural skeptic. At age eight, his parents divorced, and the dysfunction multiplied into his teenage years with his father largely being absent. As a young person, experimentation with drugs led to a full-fledged addiction. Psychologically damaged, Mark developed Tourette syndrome and obsessive-compulsive disorder. After beginning to sell drugs himself, Mark Clark met a former drug dealer who was a Christian. Having met this man named Chris in a woodworking class, Chris exposed Mark to Bible study and prayer. It was this relationship with a disciple-maker named Chris that challenged Mark Clark to examine his doubts.<sup>185</sup>

Wrestling with the Bible and its supernatural themes, the dark historical periods of the church, and his own family dysfunction, Clark soon began to see the dark clouds of doubt lift so that he received Christ and the Christian faith as his own. In his search for evidence, he found not only evidence for God and the reliability of the Bible but a new-found faith in Jesus. Not long after his salvific encounter, Mark Clark felt a call to ministry. From there came a conviction inspired by his own faith journey. Though he doubted God in his early life, he later felt called God to start a church for skeptics. It was his spiritual quest for truth that then compelled him to ensure that skeptics like himself had the answers to the questions they had regarding God and the Bible. His aforementioned book approaches questions in science, God's existence, the Christ

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<sup>184</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 15.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., Introduction to *The Problem of God*.

Myth, evil and suffering, hell, sex, hypocrisy in the church, exclusivity, and Jesus as problems which God had reasonable answers for in the skeptical mind.<sup>186</sup>

It is this biblical, theoretical approach that has the most appeal to this research project and facilitator. First, because it directly relates to the local church setting and God-centered and Bible derived. Second, because Village Church was birthed in 2010 and Mark Clark continues to pastor there in that skeptical, Canadian environment, one can learn from his research.<sup>187</sup> In addition, Covenant Baptist Church is a relatively young church, being founded by the facilitator of this action research project in 2005. In essence, the basic dynamics of the issues at hand are similar even though Village Church is in the city and CBC is in rural America. The appeal of Clark's address of the problems of his skeptical church field provides a crucible for learning and comparison that hopefully achieves the same purpose as the case of his own personal and ministerial pursuit of truth; "the courage to doubt your doubts, suspend your disbelief," and to go from unbelief to belief by the transforming power of Jesus Christ.<sup>188</sup>

### Theological Contributions from the Bible

The Bible has its own authority. It demonstrates its own reliability and boldly proclaims it throughout the sixty-six books and in the New Testament. Proverbs 30:5 attests that the Scripture is flawless and able to shield those who take refuge in God. In reading the Bible, one can clearly see that the Old and New Testament believers readily accepted its authority. The Old

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<sup>186</sup> This section encapsulates the conversion and call to pastor skeptics of Mark Clark in *The Problem of God*, 15-19.

<sup>187</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 21.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Testament itself affirms the authority some 2,200 times.<sup>189</sup> Biblical knowledge lends itself to the understanding that Scripture is the primary and reliable resource for faith and practice as God’s inspired Word.

Scripture faithfully communicates redemptive and transformative grace through belief in Jesus Christ. Preaching it, in its whole counsel, brings salvation to the lost and the discipleship of the believer in Christ. (I Thess. 1:13) It boldly affirms its reliability in verses like in the Psalms, Psalm 119, the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 1 Peter 1:23-25. In the metaphor of the fading grass and withering flower in 1 Peter 1, Peter boldly declares a call to repentance and judgment on a self-sufficient world with an enduring, reliable Word from God for all generations.<sup>190</sup> As Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 2:13, it is not merely a human authored book but a spiritual book because it was written by the Spirit to impart spiritual wisdom through spiritual words. The Bible declares itself to be God’s inspired word, the perfect source of salvation, faith, and practice. As established in the theological foundations section, the Bible stands on its own, boldly declaring its infallibility, inerrancy, and authority. Jesus, Himself, affirmed the Scriptures. It is by these sacred Scriptures that Jesus is revealed. It is also this Savior, Jesus, which reveals Himself through “truth claims” in the Word of God.<sup>191</sup>

### Conclusion

Biblical inerrancy has become a renewed issue as there is distance from the theological foundations and firm convictions laid out by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in

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<sup>189</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *Why Believe the Bible?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), 23.

<sup>190</sup> Michaels, J. Ramsey, *1 Peter*, vol. 49, Word Biblical Commentary, Edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 78.

<sup>191</sup> R. Albert Mohler, *The Apostles’ Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2019), xviii.

1978. Baptists have a long-fought history of defending the trustworthiness Bible as exemplified in the statement of faith on the Bible in *The Baptist Faith and Message*.<sup>192</sup> Few people even know that these servants of God took their Bible's and theological constructs to defend the Bible's reliability decades ago. Pragmatic evangelism and church growth, psychology, entertaining worship, and simply a lack of good preaching and teaching from the Bible and on biblical inerrancy and its components have added to the lack of understanding regarding biblical reliability.<sup>193</sup> Biblical literacy and doctrine is vital to the argument as it is the beginning and ending point for all conclusions on the matter of biblical reliability. It can be concluded that one must first go to the Bible and then allow theologians and apologists to affirm the facets of biblical inerrancy in order to give a well-balanced foundation and a solid defense of Scripture. The Bible assuredly affirms for its readers that is the trustworthy, Word of God that endures forever (Ps 119:160). As John Piper concludes, the "only clear and infallible revelation that we have is his inspired word, the Bible."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, revised edition, (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, c1971, rev. 1996), 19.

<sup>193</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *Why Believe the Bible?* 10-11.

<sup>194</sup> John Piper, *Providence*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 413.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

Determining the methods by which a project is implemented is important to its success and possible duplication in other venues. Healthy and clear methodology ensures the reader understands the direction and overall aim of the project. Simply put, methodology lays out the game plan for the project for the reader to see and to become intellectually involved in the process. Second, healthy methodology ensures that the facilitator understands the goal of the project and maintains the project accordingly. Furthermore, clear methods ensure less ambiguity and a more distinct focus of the problem to be addressed and that it is dealt with appropriately. Therefore, this chapter will serve to delineate a clear and workable method to equip believers regarding the sufficiency of the Bible in faith and in practice in the context of the local church.

### **Intervention Design**

#### Methodology

Ultimately, the methodology of equipping church members in accord with Ephesians 4:11-13 will remedy the gap demonstrated in CBC members' understanding of the Bible's reliability as they witness in a skeptical American culture. The methodology of discipleship lessons will serve to actively engage the aforementioned thesis of this project that "if Covenant Baptist Church members are taught the reliability of the Bible, then they will be equipped to defend their faith to a skeptical world." In essence, the problem addressed by this discipleship

methodology is that CBC members feel inadequate to defend their faith because of limited understanding of the doctrine of the Bible's reliability. No formal permission is required for the use of church facilities as the church has affirmed the pastor in the doctoral journey and readily anticipates beginning the project when the proposed action research project is approved by the IRB (see Appendix A). A flyer will be provided to the church to solicit participation in the research project (see Appendix B).

The methodology for this proposed action research project to disciple Covenant Baptist Church regarding the reliability of the Bible will employ several elements. The first element to be employed will be an invitation to participate along with a consent form to gain permission of the stakeholders for participation in the project (see Appendices C and D). A custom-designed questionnaire will be developed to secure the understanding and needs of stakeholders regarding biblical inerrancy (see Appendix E). Third, six weeks of discipleship lessons will be prayerfully employed on Sunday nights during a church discipleship timeslot to teach biblical inerrancy and role play defending the Bible and to alleviate the burden of uncomfortable feelings of church members regarding biblical reliability as church members defend their faith in a skeptical world. The stakeholders will then be provided a second custom-designed questionnaire and a personal interview in order to ascertain their progress upon the completion of the six weeks of biblical inerrancy discipleship (see Appendix F). Finally, the project data will be gathered and reported in the action research project in Chapter 4. Therefore, this action project will involve at least seven weeks of Bible study and apologetic material that would serve to alleviate this gap in the practice of church member's faith journey in defending the Bible to a skeptical audience.

### Action Steps

**Table 3.1.** Action Steps Associated with the Project Overview and Intervention Design.

Step 1	Divide biblical inerrancy material into seven sections.
Step 2	Develop seven discipleship lessons to equip believers to defend the Bible.
Step 3	Build discussion and/or role play into each discipleship lesson.
Step 4	Proofread and revise the seven discipleship lessons.
Step 5	Produce adequate copies for each research project participant.
Step 6	Develop and produce entrance and post research questions to ascertain the level of understanding and comfort of level of stakeholders in defending the Bible.
Step 7	Disseminate the entrance questions as participants begin the first discipleship session. Disseminate notebooks for participant journals.
Step 8	Teach discipleship lessons and conduct interactive discussions and/or role play for each lesson.
Step 9	Disseminate post-questionnaires to stakeholders at the conclusion of the seven weeks of discipleship study.
Step 10	Gather, analyze, and synthesize data from the action research.
Step 11	Produce a report regarding action research findings and provide the research findings to stakeholders upon completion.

### Initial Preparation

No formal permission from the church for the use of facilities or time slot is required since the pastor is responsible for leading discipleship in this small, rural church setting. The church has affirmed the pastor in this doctoral journey and readily anticipates the action research project being done when approved by the IRB. Covenant Baptist Church would be informed of the action research project in several ways. First, the church membership will hear about the project through verbal announcement by the pastor in Sunday morning announcements and a flyer in the church bulletin. Also, the church members will receive announcements through weekly church bulletins and possibly social media written/video announcements. As they may be



needed, letters and emails will be sent to inform and encourage continued participation and feedback in the action research project. Finally, a registration sheet will be provided to enlist those who would like to participate as stakeholders in the action research project. Open forum discussions will take place as well as participant role play will be employed to ensure healthy involvement and continued participation in the project. Printed copies of material along with access to video recording of the discipleship sessions will be provided to participants to further glean from and to utilize in case of absence.

The actual intervention to remedy the problem of feelings of inadequacy regarding defending the Bible's reliability by Covenant Baptist Church members will be a seven-week discipleship process from the Bible and other apologetic materials derived from the research of this project. This discipleship intervention plan will occur at the facilities of Covenant Baptist Church on Sunday nights during the discipleship time slot. It is the goal that enhanced discipleship regarding the Scripture will eradicate any gaps between the stakeholder's understanding of biblical reliability and the actual defense of the Bible as inerrant to a skeptic or in an evangelistic scenario.

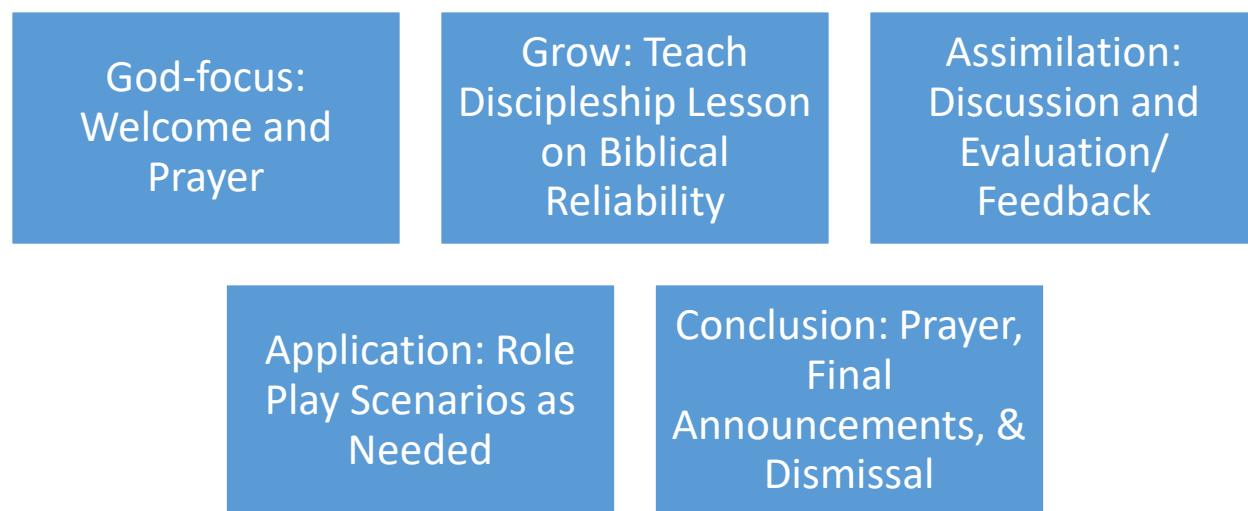
At the beginning of the seven weeks, stakeholder understanding will be ascertained through interactive questions (Appendix C). Then, the stakeholders will be given a biblical foundation for such a study from the Bible itself. Coming from a biblical basis in passages like 2 Timothy 2:15 and 1 Peter 3:15, the learner will be provided an understanding that believers are called and expected to be grounded in various dimensions regarding the witness for Jesus Christ in the world. Also, their need for training and equipping by church, ministry leadership in this hostile culture will be reinforced as a further reason for such discipleship in the church from a

biblical basis for Christian education. Ephesians 4:11-16 will provide a biblical foundation for equipping stakeholders taking part in discipleship regarding biblical reliability by their pastor.

Utilizing 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 1 Peter 1:18-25, and other passages of Scripture, stakeholders will learn that the Bible affirms its own inerrancy, infallibility, and eternity. The profit of inerrant Scriptures to Christians will also be expounded upon as a foundational element to the discipleship series as belief in the trustworthiness of Scripture enhances one's own life and faith in God as well as the lives of others who accept Scripture's reliability through a reasonable faith. This basic understanding will ensure that these believers understand that God has provided for their spiritual growth and maturity together with that of others who might become Christ followers as they live out their own personal faith journey as witnesses for Jesus. The minister's responsibility in the church and world as outlined in 2 Timothy 4:1-8 will be utilized to strengthen the biblical basis for equipping believers regarding biblical reliability and the defense of their faith accordingly to a skeptical audience.

### Discipleship Studies

During the seven discipleship studies to enhance the believer's capability of defending the Bible, many subjects will be approached. The time of the discipleship process and expectations of the facilitator will be clearly defined for the participants. The discipleship session time will be one to one and a half hours per discipleship and discussion session. Second, the stakeholders will be given the opportunity to give the research facilitator an opportunity to hear their concerns and expectations regarding the project. Once the picture of the plan of study is provided and agreed upon, the discipleship process will begin as stakeholder consent is secured in the initial meeting.

**Figure 3.1** Flow of the Discipleship Sessions

Various topics that are important to the defense of the Bible will be shared over the six-week period. The topics of the study will be delineated and expounded by the facilitator so as to provide a foundation for the defense of stakeholder's faith in a trustworthy Bible while allowing for ample discussion and questions from the participants. Naturally, the study will be bathed in prayer throughout its entirety by the facilitator and the participants with the ultimate goal of honoring God throughout the project's facilitation. First, an introduction to the Bible and how it came into being will be shared. It is at this beginning point that the believer will find knowledge regarding how the Bible defends itself to a corrupted world. In addition, the Scripture's inspiration and authority will be defined for the stakeholders. The stakeholder will also learn the reasons why the Bible is sufficient and reliable.

Also important to this equipping ministry of believers in a biblically, reliable apologetic, will be a healthy understanding of worldview, biblical worldview, and defining and dealing with higher criticism. Important terminology and concepts germane to the doctrine of biblical

inerrancy will be defined and explained for the participants. Divine and human authorship will also be discussed as well as its implications to the defense of the Bible and a witnessing faith in Christ. The nature of sin in the life of the biblical writers and the hearts of witnesses and skeptics alike will be addressed in the series. Ancillary issues to biblical inerrancy, historical, and grammatical issues concerning the Bible will also be set forth in the seven-week series and to a minor degree of the Bible's defense of itself. One session will give attention to skepticism and the concerns brought forth by skeptics. The spiritual culture of the world and the United States is diverse. The world is getting smaller as believers are increasingly exposed to people of other cultures literally in their own neighborhoods, cities, and churches. Therefore, an introduction will be provided regarding the issue of other thoughts and religious perspectives. The lessons will also make suggestions as to how to engage the concerns of skeptics in a way that is factual, convincing, and hopeful of conversion by the power of Jesus Christ. It is at this point that common defenses of the Bible will be proposed for usage by stakeholders as a tool to win persons to repentant faith in Jesus as the stakeholder gives reason for the hope that is within them in the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15-16.

From a practical perspective, several resources will be incorporated. First, ample time for discussion will be brought into each session. Discussion about the practical defense of the Bible and one's faith in those scenarios will be provided in sessions. Furthermore, the use of role-play with one person being the witness and the other being the skeptic will be provided to encourage participation, assimilation of material, and ownership of the project towards the goal of the project of defending the reliability of the Bible. Finally, prayer for the stakeholders and potential witnessing encounters will be shared as the stakeholders defend their faith and God's authoritative Word.

Discipleship brings benefits to those who are the participants in the learning process which complete in the disciple the aim of the sacrificial love and service of Jesus.<sup>195</sup> There are several ways in which a small, group discipleship setting would make a change in the problem of inadequacy in defending the Bible's reliability. First, the church member will be provided a biblical foundation as to why the Bible is reliable and without error. Second, the stakeholder will receive a grammatical and historical foundation from the Old Testament prophets, priests, and scribes regarding the careful detail in preserving the Bible through the centuries. Third, the stakeholders will be able to understand the common concerns of skeptics and the best way to answer those concerns as illustrated through modern Christian apologists. Finally, the stakeholders will be provided the opportunity to relay their concerns and fears in the small group setting and have those concerns addressed by the facilitator of the project in order to enhance the stakeholder's faith and the defense of that faith in the world. The discipleship series will culminate by bringing to the attention of participants that other people, whether a skeptic or a person who is searching for answers to life's questions, will benefit from knowing that the Bible is trustworthy and provides reliable solutions to life's problems. Stakeholders will receive a final questionnaire at the conclusion of the research project to ascertain if and how much their understanding has changed regarding biblical reliability and the Bible's defense. Through the discipleship studies, the believer will become like Jesus in His belief in the Scripture and the practice of it in the New Testament.

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<sup>195</sup> Wilson, Carl, *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building: A Study of Christ's Method of Building Disciples* (Fayetteville, GA: Christian Growth Books, 1976), 233.

## Data Collection

The data and input for this action research project will be gathered from the small group, discipleship setting on Sunday evenings and assimilated into a final report in Chapter 4. The primary resources for gaining data from the stakeholders is through questionnaires and open forum discussion in the initial meeting and seven-week training process (See Appendix E). A post-course questionnaire will provide the opportunity for stakeholders to indicate their understanding of biblical reliability and comfortability in defending the Bible in varied settings (See Appendix F). In addition, a professional panel will be utilized of at least two people to gauge, provide feedback, and analyze answers in pre and post questionnaires.

The research will be gathered and analyzed through confidential questionnaires with open-ended and multiple-choice questions utilizing the guidance from the chapter “Mixed-Methods Designs” in *Practical Research: Planning and Design* by Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod.<sup>196</sup> The questions in the questionnaires were developed utilizing the resources from the literature review, Scripture, and input from a focus group of pastors with earned doctorates. The literature review helped in the discovery of issues of common importance, examples of biblical apologetics, and common concerns of pastors, apologists, and scholars regarding biblical reliability. Realistically, the findings from the literature review served to define the content of both the discipleship studies as well as the exploratory questions found in the pre- and post-questionnaires. It is the aim that these discipleship studies and questions will give a healthy understanding and a biblical framework for the Bible’s reliability for the stakeholders. The stakeholders will be encouraged to keep a journal of their biblical reliability, research-project

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<sup>196</sup> Leedy, Paul D., and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod. “Mixed-Methods Designs” in *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. Chap. 12, 10th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2013. Printed pdf. edition.

journey. If warranted, personal interviews will be utilized to ensure that honest stakeholder perceptions are conveyed to the facilitator.

This action research project will utilize triangulation for data collection. First and foremost, questionnaires will be utilized at the beginning and the ending of the project to gain understanding of the concept of biblical reliability and its defense by stakeholders. Secondly, the stakeholders will be encouraged to maintain journals to record their notes and reflections from the course of the project reporting any concerns to the facilitator. Finally, the gathering of research information from stakeholder meetings (in open discussion) will be obtained and recorded by the facilitator in a facilitator journal. Personal interviews may be employed as needed. Facilitator journaling will take place of the process and stakeholders will be encouraged to do the same with notebooks provided by the facilitator.

#### Anticipated Outcomes

Like any solution to a problem, only time will tell if the research project solution was successful or was adequate to meet the need in the church. As in life, adjustments and continued discipleship will likely be warranted beyond this action research project. Initially, the participants in the study will be given one week to reflect upon what they have learned and report any changes in their understanding of biblical reliability as well as their comfortability in presenting the subject matter to a skeptical audience. In the long run, it could take one to six months to get a valid understanding of how successful the project has been in achieving the goal of building disciples in the area of the reliability of the Bible. It would be interesting to question stakeholders again in one year as to the retention of the material and its usage in real life

situations. A great factor affecting the time period for evaluation would be the randomness of encountering skeptics in day-to-day field settings.

There will be several criteria by which the equipping of Covenant Baptist Church in understanding and defending biblical reliability will be evaluated. Primarily, a successful outcome will have occurred when the church member/stakeholder feels comfortable enough with their knowledge of biblical inerrancy in order to defend their faith to a skeptic or in a witnessing encounter. First, the stakeholder will be evaluated regarding their feelings on whether they have enough knowledge to defend the Bible to a skeptic. Second, the stakeholder should be able to communicate a healthy response to the facilitator or skeptic when defending biblical reliability. Over time, the stakeholder will be steadfast in witnessing for Christ and defending Scripture in an increasingly hostile world. The success for the stakeholder and the overall project will be, not only being equipped to defend the Bible but actually defending the Bible as opportunities arise in a form that is acceptable to each individual participant in the project. A successful outcome occurs when the stakeholder feels equipped to defend the Bible to a skeptical audience.

## **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

### Implementation

#### Overview of the Lessons

Originally, the plan for active research included six discipleship sessions to equip Covenant Baptist Church members to defend the Bible to a skeptic. As the classes developed, it became clear to the facilitator that six weeks of study needed to be expanded to seven weeks to



adequately lay a foundation that would enable church membership to work and feel comfortable explaining the sufficiency of the Bible in a witnessing scenario or to a skeptical person.

Subsequently, seven classes were planned and taught to enhance the participants' viewpoint of the Bible's sufficiency. Further, the facilitator discerned that time would place a drastic limitation on what could be taught and discussed. In the implementation process, some stakeholders recognized and indicated that they would like further personal study into biblical sufficiency and corporate study as the church body in the future.

Seven discipleship sessions were planned and provided for the development of the stakeholders. The lessons were written in such a way as to provide a strong, biblical foundation for the participants to utilize. Establishing an argument for God necessitates using the Word of God as the basis for the argument of biblical reliability. John MacArthur, Jr. reinforces this foundational concept in the following sentences, "The only sure and safe ground of true faith is the Word of God (2 Pet. 1:19-21). It is 'the message of truth, the gospel of (our) salvation' (Eph. 1:13). For a Christian to doubt the Word of God is the grossest kind of self-contradiction."<sup>197</sup>

#### General Descriptions of Lessons

Lesson One developed the uniqueness of the Bible, initiated a biblical foundation for the Bible's sufficiency, and revealed the concept of divine inspiration and the use of human instruments in bringing the Bible into existence. Lesson One expanded on the trustworthiness of the Bible through teaching regarding the power of the Bible, issues regarding inerrancy, the

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<sup>197</sup> John MacArthur, Jr. "The Sufficiency of Scripture," in *One Foundation: Essays on the Sufficiency of Scripture*, Edited by Jeremiah Johnson, (Valencia, CA: Grace to You, 2019), 56.

Bible's relevance in its own defense, and vital definitions important to the study and to be expounded as the study progressed.

Lesson Two delved into how the Bible came into being and discussed the concepts of biblical instruction, illumination, and inspiration. Lesson Three delineated general revelation, special revelation, expounded Psalm 19, and defined what the Bible teaches about itself. Lesson Four helped the stakeholder to understand how God's purpose in writing Scripture to mankind furthers a healthy, biblical apologetic, and issues a universal call to mankind to embrace God's worldview as their own. Lesson Five demonstrated the witness of the Old and New Testaments and how they parallel and support one another. Lesson Five also discussed what constitutes the canon of the Bible and why the books of the Apocrypha, and others like them, were not included in the Bible. Additionally, Lesson Five provided methods and resources to enable the participants to listen to and answer a skeptic in a positive, ethical manner. Lesson Six concentrated on addressing common questions that skeptics employ.

As a manner of concluding the study, Lesson Seven addressed multiple issues to enhance the believer's ability to defend the Bible to a skeptic. This lesson succinctly explained how historical figures mentioned in the Bible were verified in the writings of historians in the same or subsequent time periods. This lesson provided sample arguments for divine design of the Bible, the theological argument, and rationale regarding the truthful integrity of New Testament authors. Furthermore, the session looked at messianic prophecies, parallel passages that provide internal supports, validation of the New Testament from external sources, and Jesus' own validation of Scripture. Lesson Seven continued to develop the participant's arsenal of biblical defenses with the need and use of the Bible as standard of measurement for life, the reason of truth, the testimony of the church through the millennia, the consideration of orthodoxy, and

confirmations of the Bible in archaeology and ancient manuscripts.<sup>198</sup> Lastly, this lesson provided stakeholders the understanding that the Bible is more verifiable than most authors of classical literature.

### Lesson Specifics

Lesson One introduces these Southern Baptist stakeholders to the accepted beliefs of Southern Baptists as to the nature of the Bible by virtue of *The Baptist Faith and Message*.<sup>199</sup> It is this statement on the Bible that Covenant Baptist Church embraces. This statement of faith on the Bible is the best framework for a stakeholder to build a personal defense of the Bible. It is in this first lesson the stakeholder is given the understanding that the greatest defense of the Bible is the use of the Bible as its own defense. Essentially, the theme of the seven lessons is that the Bible provides its own defense and believers need to let the Bible speak for itself as a spiritually ordained and empowered text. Here, the purpose of God in writing the Bible is shared as implementation of the plan of redemption. Lesson One also introduces the participants to biblical inspiration through Bible study on 2 Timothy 3:15-17, a seminal statement of divine origin and biblical trustworthiness. The supernatural power of the Bible is conveyed through discussion of 1 Peter 1:23-25 with a final wrap-up with discussion of what was learned through the day's instruction. Any sources that were utilized were delineated in each lesson.

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<sup>198</sup> For more information on archaeology's authentication of the Bible, see also Thompson, J. A. in *The Bible and Archaeology*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. fully revised, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982.

<sup>199</sup> Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, revised edition, (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, c1971, rev. 1996), 19.

Lesson Two complements Lesson One through a charge to stakeholders to embrace the biblical mandate to defend the faith from 1 Peter 3:15-16 as it is the responsibility of each disciple. The study then moves to a biblical perspective on how the Bible came about with some historical-grammatical conclusions from theologians of the day. Instruction from the Bible itself as to how it came about is delineated from 2 Peter 1:16-21. Lesson Two then instructs the stakeholder on the nature of the Bible as revelation, general revelation, progressive revelation, special revelation, and verbal plenary inspiration. To assist in these pertinent vocabulary discussions, a glossary of important terms is provided to be attached to the end of the lessons for information and review. Stakeholders were also informed in this lesson of the common questions that were utilized to determine what belonged and did not belong in the accepted, biblical text.

Lesson Three draws the participants into a discussion of Psalm 19. The goal of the Bible defending itself is continued in this lesson as the participant is introduced to general and special revelation through Psalm 19. It is here that God shared seven statements of the sufficiency of the Bible while concluding that Scripture is the guidebook for life. This lesson then takes the participant into a biblical overview of the reliability of Scripture through twenty-five testimonies through both Old and New Testaments. The conclusion of the lesson again invites the participant to interact and digest what has been shared.

The defense of the Bible must also give attention to the purposes of God in writing these sixty-six books to His broken creation. It is here, that the partner in this study, is introduced to the fact that God desires to redeem sinful humans and intimate Himself to them through His Son, Jesus in eschatological redemption and the Kingdom of God. The stakeholder is introduced, in both testaments, on some reasons why God desires to bring us biblical truth. This is shared to give the participant an understanding of God's expectations of Scripture as opposed to the

world's expectations of Scripture. Furthermore, the participant is challenged that God's purpose is the restoration of His Kingdom which was corrupted by sin and that His Kingdom needs to return to the divine worldview. Truly, this lesson that God reveals His true nature and mankind's true nature to redeem humanity from sin and restore intimacy with God. The discussion and reflection at the lesson's end invite the stakeholder to incorporate the purpose of God in redemption and correction to a biblical rather than sinful worldview.

The fifth lesson endeavors to introduce the participant to other types of writings that had a sense of sacredness but were not included in the accepted sixty-six book, canon. It is here that some discussion is given also to New Testament verses that affirm the Old Testament. Apocryphal works are introduced to participants in this lesson in order to give the participant a base for dealing with the skeptic's concerns as to why these books were not included in the Bible. Reasons are offered as to why the Apocrypha was rejected. This lesson offers suggestions to appropriately address the concerns of a skeptic and how some contemporary apologists deal with skeptics. The lesson leaves the stakeholder challenged to remember to love the skeptic with Scripture into the Kingdom of God through Christ.

Lesson Six introduces another way in which the Bible defends itself. The participant is prompted to see that biblical prophecy and its fulfillment enhances the view of the Bible's reliability. Verses from Old and New Testaments are given to share how God promises and then fulfills those promises. After a lengthy section of biblical prophecy fulfillments, the participant is introduced to some practical defenses of the Bible from Scripture and current apologists through short, succinct answers.

Finally, Lesson Seven introduces stakeholders to historical figures who are likewise confirmed in general history and biblical history. This lesson also declares Non-Christian sources

that confirm these historical figures in the Bible as well as parts or wholes of their stories in the Bible. As the reliability New Testament and the unlearned disciples is a primary concern for the skeptic, the participants are introduced in this lesson to some arguments for God, His design for the world, some important reasons why one can accept the New Testament as authoritative. Some ancillary discussion is given in this lesson from the standpoint of archaeology, moral arguments for biblical reliability, parallel biblical passages, manuscripts, and examples of extra-biblical sources, canons, and councils that confirmed the Bible's reliability. The study participants will be given a completed glossary to add to the end of the study. Final discussion of material is shared, and stakeholders are given the opportunity to respond.

### Observations

The implementation of the research project was conducted over seven weeks, from June 2022 until mid-July 2022. Observations were made through participant feedback in the actual seven-week study alongside input from entrance and exit questionnaires, a focus group of two pastors with earned doctorates who analyzed and made recommendations for the questionnaire process, and an insider pastor who attended the class and provided input through his own participation and observation. First, these simple sources of input provided additional understanding of the needs to be addressed from the perspectives of the stakeholders. This occurred as the discipleship sessions took place in order to analyze the learning and assimilation of the discipleship lessons and to gauge the adequacy of the overall success. Input regarding the Bible's sufficiency from the tenured, insider pastor served to strengthen and guide improvements in the entire discipleship process because of his active participation and observation in the discipleship classes. The study facilitator discerned the needs and desires of participants through

personal evaluation and adjusted accordingly in future lessons. Finally, the input of the tenured pastors with earned doctorates was incorporated into the questionnaires and enhanced the measurement of stakeholder outcomes and feelings of adequacy regarding the defense of the Bible.

As the lessons began on biblical sufficiency, the facilitator provided the initial lesson, the entrance questionnaire, and blank notebooks for journaling and notetaking. At this initial meeting, some visitors were present who would not participate in the ongoing study as they simply came to church that night. The facilitator noted some initial anxiety among the participants in the beginning session regarding the questionnaire and their lack of knowledge of a comprehensive topic like the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible. Others seem quite excited for another in-depth Bible study opportunity in the church. In this first meeting, it became clear that the participants wanted to move at their own pace in the questionnaire and with notetaking during the Bible study time. Each meeting's teaching goals were met using a deliberate teaching plan to proceed at a pace which allowed the stakeholders to feel comfortable in learning as well voicing their questions and ideas to the facilitator.

An open discussion format rather than role-play format was primarily used due to a perceived uncomfortable feeling by some stakeholders. The role-play element was reformatted to "what if" scenarios and active group discussion. Due to the depth of the material, the facilitator would ensure that the study participants felt at ease and would be eager in each class to embrace the material through a slow pace and ample time for stakeholder questions. After the initial lesson, the class settled into a steady routine with no nervousness and exhibited healthy interaction with the facilitator and the material being taught. The fear of performing through role-play by the participants and facilitator was deconstructed in the first session and never

resurfaced in subsequent meetings. The facilitator noted that the primary concern in the remaining six sessions was giving stakeholders adequate discussion and interaction time with the material.

Another observation to consider is that this study was conducted during the early summer months when vacation and family times were occurring. Due to participants sporadically missing sessions because of family time and illness, lessons had to allow time to answer questions or concerns from those participants who had been absent. The facilitator had to make additional effort to ensure that all lessons were provided to participants who missed a session. A final observation was that participants voiced a desire to see future study on the subject matter as a continued learning process in the church.

### Data Analyzation

There will be several considerations given to the analysis of the data given in the questionnaires. First, all entrance and exit questions will be inputted and graphed to show differences between the beginning understanding and the final understanding after the discipleship courses were completed. Careful attention will be given to comparison of feelings of comfortability regarding defending the Bible before and after the seven discipleship lessons. Graphs will be utilized to compare before and after differences in answers and improvements in understanding of biblical inerrancy and sufficiency among participants. In addition, the input of the pastors with earned doctorates to the questionnaire process will evaluate any difference their added questionnaire items made in the participants' responses. Finally, to enhance triangulation of data, the input of a pastor (who was on sabbatical from his church and was a willing participant in the study) will be considered in the overall report of the study results. The final



results of all the analyses will be provided in Chapter 4. Stakeholders will be provided a re-mastered copy of the seven sessions along with a synopsis of the study results.

### Themes, Slippages, and Silences

As the study took place, it became clear that a dominant theme would be training participants to handle the Bible in a witnessing or apologetics scenario. Therefore, the primary defense of the Bible was going to be instructing the participants in knowing what the Bible says about itself and how it makes its own defense. After all, the power of the Bible to change and transform lives is its greatest apologetic weapon. A possible silence, from the facilitator's perspective, is that of not concentrating heavily on theological discussion of inerrancy and sufficiency. Early in the study, it was clear that a layperson's approach would be the best learning and retention scenario for this small, rural discipleship setting. More could have possibly been done to establish a theological dimension in the study if more time could have been allotted. Time constraints meant that some material would have to be omitted to achieve the overall goal of comfortability in defending the Bible in a skeptical world. Any slippages that occurred will be delineated in the results in Chapter 4 once the data has been analyzed.









## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Before beginning this action research project, an issue bubbled to the surface in the ongoing, discipleship ministry of Covenant Baptist Church. The spiritual climate in the United States, and, for that matter, the world, has become increasingly skeptical, if not hostile, to the Bible and its Author. Thus, the membership of the church conveyed that a need existed for increased discipleship pertaining to the Bible's trustworthiness over other subjects such as the authority of Jesus and the existence of God in feedback to the pastor about personal evangelism. The hoped-for results of this project are confident disciples of Jesus Christ from Covenant Baptist Church who can confidently convey to skeptics the reliability of the Bible in various scenarios. A reasonable goal for this project is an equipped believer in Covenant Baptist Church with discipleship in the biblical reliability who feels adequate in their knowledge to defend the Bible. Stakeholders should be able to demonstrate biblical inerrancy in a fluid conversation with a person who doubts the Bible or with someone who is simply searching for answers regarding the Bible as a sacred text.

This research project had the objectives that Covenant Baptist members who participate in the project will be able to actively share in real life encounters how the Bible acknowledges its authority and trustworthiness to its readers, how God used sinful but faith-redeemed human instruments who were led and inspired by the Holy Spirit to communicate Scripture, how the history and grammar of the Bible further indicate its careful preservation, and will successfully engage the questions and arguments of those who doubt the Bible. With the Holy Spirit's

assistance, it is the expectation that Covenant Baptist Church members will utilize the knowledge gained in this project to confidently share the reliability of Scripture and lead others to saving faith in Jesus Christ as the end result. Ultimately, an acceptable improvement to this research problem of inadequate confidence to communicate biblical reliability would be a basic understanding of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy and an expressed and enhanced confidence by the stakeholder to defend the Bible over their previous feelings of inadequacy. See Figure 4.1 for a plan overview.

**Figure 4.1** Implementation and Expected Results Overview

- 
 1. Prayerfully begin discipleship sessions and share research entrance questions.
- 
 2. Provide stakeholder goals and continually receive feedback.
- 
 3. Define and implement goals and targets.
- 
 4. Equip disciples regarding biblical trustworthiness and defense strategies.
- 
 5. Engage stakeholder with discussions and role play.
- 
 6. Meet stakeholders expectations and exit questions.
- 
 7. Encourage apologetics and witness in the world.
- 
 8. Together, build God's Kingdom and celebrate the results of multiplied faith.

## **Entrance and Exit Questionnaire Responses**

At the onset of the study, a questionnaire was provided to stakeholders. Eleven respondents participated in the initial questionnaire with nine participants completing the seven-week study and exit questionnaire. Two participants who began the study were not able to complete the course of study and questionnaire due to health and family obligations. The following answers, graphs, and charts indicate the 11 questionnaires which were completed. Shaded areas indicate individual responses to the questions with double space in between each response. Multiple choice, true false, and numerical ratings are indicated by graphs and charts. Exit questionnaire responses will follow the entrance responses. All questionnaires and responses were anonymous. Stakeholders were offered the opportunity to choose either handwritten or computer-generated questionnaires for their convenience.

## **Summary of Entrance Responses**

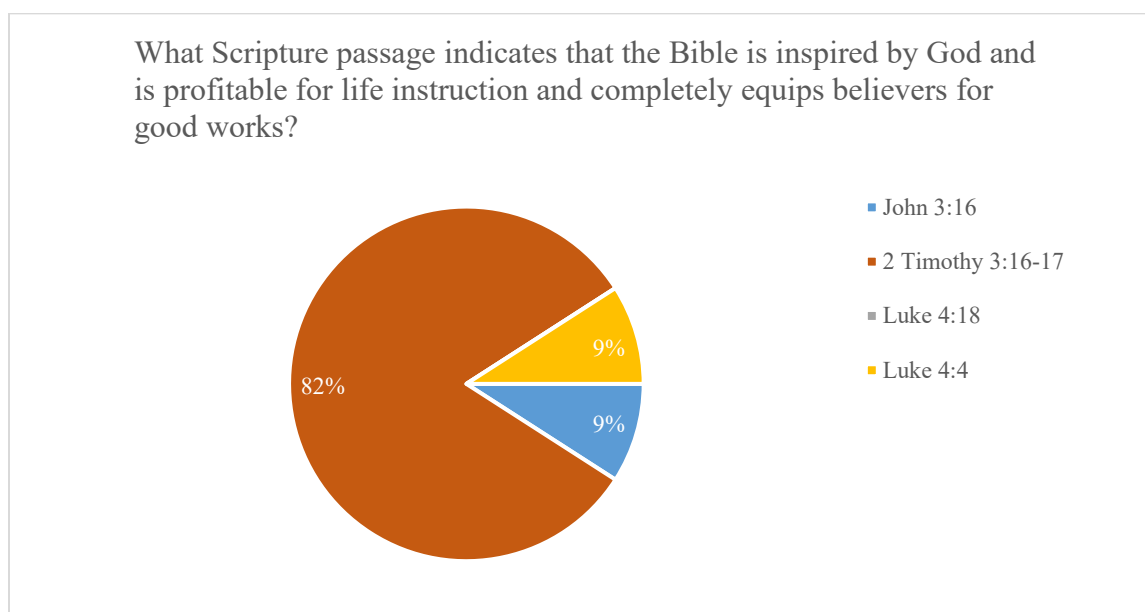
### **Quantitative Responses**

The first entrance question served to determine how long the stakeholder had been a Christian. All respondents had been Christians over five years. Two respondents had been Christians less than ten years. Nine respondents had been Christians over ten years. Of those nine, eight persons had been Christians over fifteen years. Four participants had been active believers in Jesus Christ for over forty years. One participant had been a Christian for over fifty years.

A second area of concern for this questionnaire was that of understanding and recognizing Bible passages or subjects that related to the Bible's reliability. Participants were

asked to pick a Bible verse that best conveyed the idea that the Bible was inspired by God, was profitable for the instruction of the believer, and completely equipped believers for good works for God. Possible responses were John 3:16, Timothy 3:16-17, Luke 4:18, and Luke 4:4. All persons responded, with nine choosing the correct answer of 2 Timothy 3:16-17. One person chose Luke 4:4. A second person incorrectly chose John 3:16. A true false question was given and all eleven stakeholders indicated that 1 Peter 1:23-25 declared the incorruptibility and eternity of God's Word. See Figure 4.2.

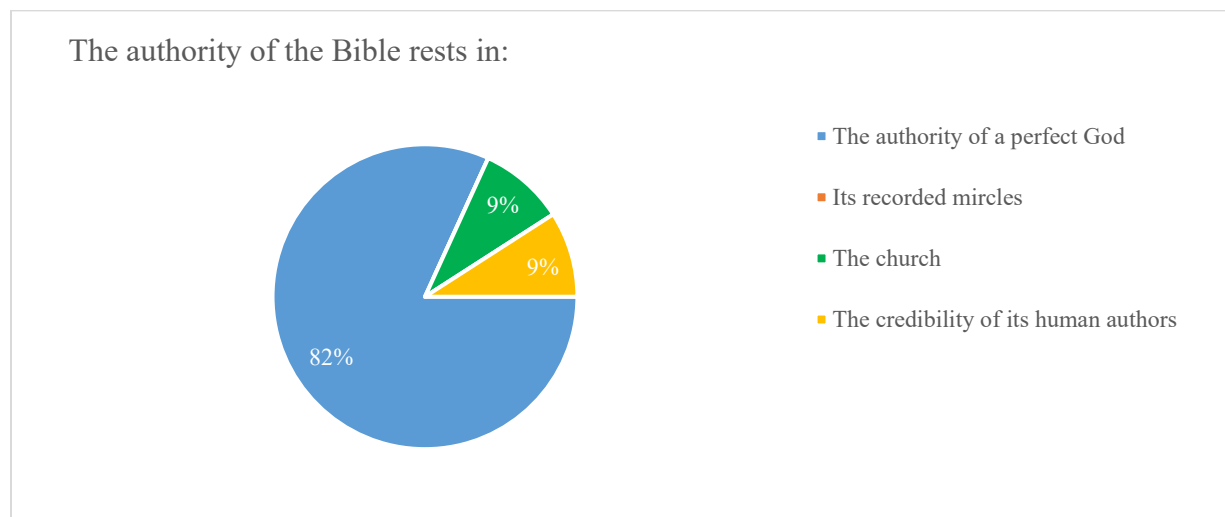
**Figure 4.2** Biblical Inspiration Chart



Another entrance question sought to determine where the authority of the Bible rests. Possible responses were the authority of a perfect God, the recorded miracles, the church, or the authority of the human authors. All participants responded to this question. Nine persons responded that the Bible's authority rested in the authority of a perfect God. One response was in favor of the church being the authority behind the Bible. The last respondent felt that the

credibility of the human authors played the primary role in the authority of the Bible. The following chart, Figure 4.3, graphs the percentages of responses to the authority of the Bible:

**Figure 4.3** The Authority of the Bible (Entrance)

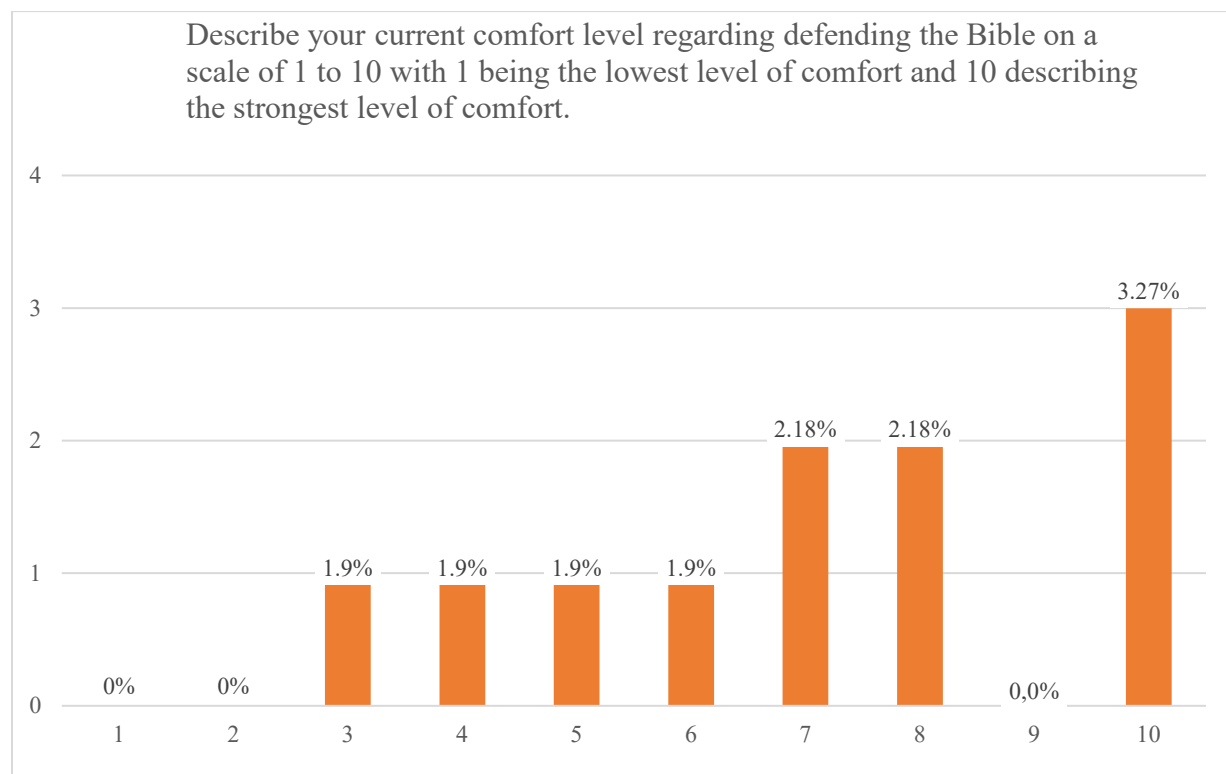


From there, stakeholders were examined regarding their personal understanding of the Bible's reliability. A secondary discussion question was integrated in this opportunity for response. This question that coupled stakeholder's understanding of the reliability of the Bible was to determine whether not biblical reliability was important to one's faith. All study participants indicated that the Bible was reliable and vital to one's faith in Jesus Christ. Participants indicated their responses using terms such as: very reliable, God-breathed, infallible, uncorruptible, inspired, undoubtedly reliable, self-declared reliability, and even scientifically verified. One person discussed the reliability of the Bible in term of its profitability to the disciple's life. Another participant indicated that Proverbs 30:5-6 says the Bible is true, pure, and a shield for believers, and that those who add to its words are in danger of being found as liars before God.

When asked to describe how the Bible’s reliability was important to one’s faith, answers varied as to personal opinion. All answers continued to voice the importance of the Bible’s reliability to an individual believer’s faith in Christ. Respondents confirmed that the Bible is one hundred percent reliable. For some, the Bible’s trustworthy nature had “encouraged” and “increased their faith,” and “built their hope.” A participant confirmed that without this vital doctrine, believers would have “no guidance for life’s journey.” All seem to believe that the Bible’s reliability “removed a person’s doubt” and left them on a “firm foundation for life.”

Another question examined the comfortability of participants in defending the reliability of the Bible on a scale of one to ten. The following chart (Figure 4.4) illustrates the eleven responses:

**Figure 4.4** Comfortability with Defending the Bible



### Qualitative Responses

The next entrance question inquired why the stakeholder answered that they had a measure of comfortability or lack of comfortability in defending the Bible. Again, responses varied based on each stakeholder's personal opinion. In this group of responses, there were several individuals that indicated that they had the ability to be convincing. One questioned their ability to speak out. Another was concerned whether they could accurately communicate that God's Word was the only source of truth. Another participant mentioned that they had a difficult time in memorizing Scripture while another person declared that they knew that he/she needed to be more diligent in scripture memorization in order to become better equipped to defend their faith. The remaining five participants indicated that their previous Christian education, prayer life, subsequent answers to prayer, time studying the Bible, and personal devotional life had brought a very positive confidence in their ability to defend the Bible.

Overall, two categories arise from this question. One category combines the stakeholders who feel they need more discipleship to adequately defend the Bible. Of the eleven stakeholders, five aligned themselves in the category of needing more discipleship. The primary reasoning for their lack of comfortability in defending the Bible was "inability to speak out," "lack of ability to make convincing arguments," the felt need of more "scripture memorization" or had a "hard time" of "memorizing scripture" (mentioned by two stakeholders), or an "inadequate understanding of the Bible" in general.

The second category of stakeholders believe that their discipleship from previous years had reasonably prepared them to defend the Bible to a skeptic. This category contained six of the eleven respondents who were more confident defending the Bible and who were tenured believers. These stakeholders had been believers longer and had a more mature faith in Jesus.



The more mature believers had walked with Jesus longer and had developed stronger spiritual discipline and study skills early on in their Christian journey. Of the responses from more mature disciples, the following were significant points of emphasis as to why their confidence in defending the Bible was stronger: strong confidence in the Bible, strong confidence in the Person of Jesus, exposure to a broad, biblical education, and finally, answered prayer.

In the questionnaire, each participant was given the opportunity relate their convictions regarding the reliability of the Bible. This question also asked for discussion concerning whether the Bible is only reliable for the matters of faith and practice. All participants affirmed the total reliability of the Bible. Answers testified as to the Bible's reliability, its authority, the truthful nature of God, historical accuracy, ability to stand on its own, and its utterance of perfect wisdom for life. Most responses were short and convictional in nature.

Additionally, participants' opinions were explored regarding how more discipleship could affect their ability to defend the Bible or witness to an unbeliever. Again, most answers were short and to the point; however, a range of opinions were shared. Several indicated that they felt increased discipleship on the subject would build their understanding of how to speak and the confidence to speak it. Out of the majority of participants who responded to this inquiry, the remainder were looking for some specific lists of defenses or arguments, more Scriptures to allow the Bible to speak for itself, and scientific facts. One answered with "unknown" as the response. One participant wanted to learn by practice scenarios, interaction, and debate.

The participants were then questioned in the context of how they might defend the Bible in a witnessing setting. One participant did not know how they would respond. One person was defensive in their answer and made an invitation for the skeptic to prove them wrong. One respondent verbalized that they would focus on the love of God. Most responded they would not

be argumentative but offer Scripture verses or testimonies of the nature of the Bible to engage the skeptic. One participant had a direct approach for the skeptic to read the Bible for themselves. As one can clearly see, the longer that a person has been a Christian, the more confident they are in defending the Bible. With less discipleship, the participants were less likely to defend the Bible or feel confident to do so.

Moving forward in the inquiry, stakeholders were asked to defend the term, “biblical inerrancy.” Three respondents did not know the term or did not have an answer. The remaining respondents concluded that inerrancy meant that the Bible was without error and true. No detailed responses were recorded by any of the participants.

Participants were also asked about their expectations regarding the research project. Responses varied in this regard. Most participants desired to see the discipleship lessons better enhance their ability and confidence to defend the Bible. These respondents were looking for tools to put in their arsenal to defend Scripture. Several respondents indicated that they wanted to become a better witness, a better servant, or a better teacher of God’s Word. Only one respondent indicated that they had no expectations at this time.

To draw some conclusions from entrance questions, several conclusions can be drawn. First, all participants knew that they were not completely adequate to defend the Bible to a skeptic. Those who had been a Christian for a shorter period of time or had less discipleship training background had less confidence in defending the Bible or in giving detailed responses on the questionnaire. The survey responses seem to indicate that those with a shorter tenure as a Christian were not as confident. There also is room to ascertain that some respondents may not have received adequate discipleship in their overall journey of faith. The more mature believers indicated more confidence in defending the Bible. Mature believers who were questioned could

cite appropriate Bible verses and offer more length in their responses to discussion questions.

Ten of eleven participants indicated that there was anticipation for the class to better equip them as disciples of Jesus and life witnesses in the world. One participant indicated “no expectations at this time.”

## **Summary of Exit Responses**

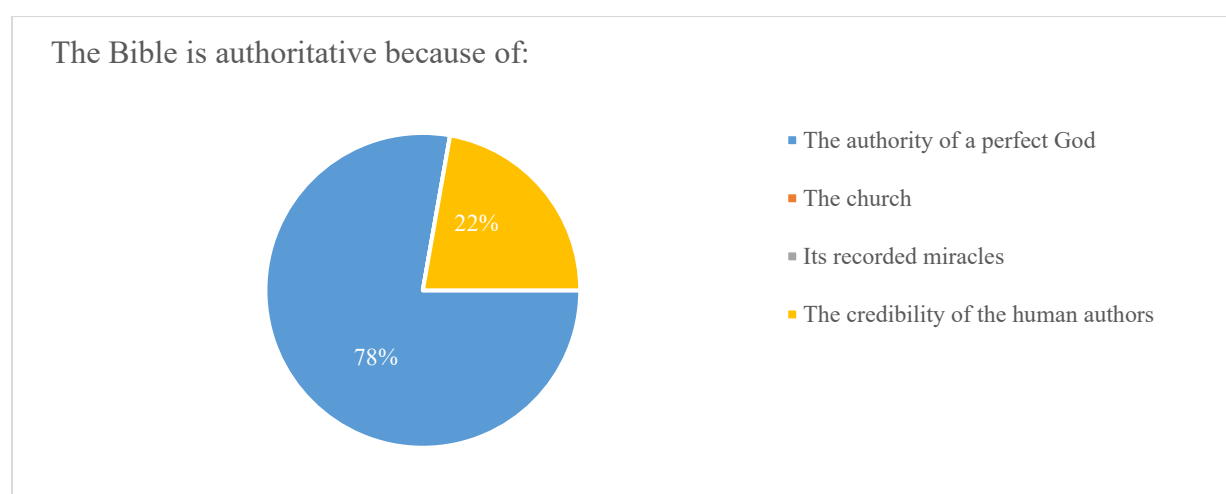
### **Quantitative Responses**

After the first class, two respondents did not complete any further classes as illness occurred and they decided to continue in visiting another church. This left nine stakeholders for the remaining six classes. Hereafter, all responses will be reflective of the nine participants in the Bible defense lessons and their exit responses. One noticeable area of improvement demonstrated in the initial item of the questionnaire showed that all nine participants could identify 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as the foundational verse from the possible choices of 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Luke 4:18; Luke 4:4, and John 3:16. This was an optimal result because it indicated the respondents had initially gleaned from the seven discipleship lessons that had been shared with them.

A second determination found in exit responses by participants is that of the authority of the Bible. Seven out of nine respondents said that the Bible’s authority rests in the authority of a perfect God. Given that two participants dropped out after the first class and had completed entrance questionnaires with no way of sorting anonymous response, these responses indicate nine persons’ opinions remained nearly the same. In the entrance questionnaire, nine stakeholders

indicated that authority of the Bible rests in the authority of a perfect God. It could be assumed that the two that did not finish study had confidence in the Bible's divine authorship. One person changed their response from the authority of the recorded miracles to the credibility of the human authors to make the remaining two responses favoring competent human authorship as the key factor in determining the Bible's authority. See Figure 4.5 below.

**Figure 4.5** The Authority of the Bible (Exit)

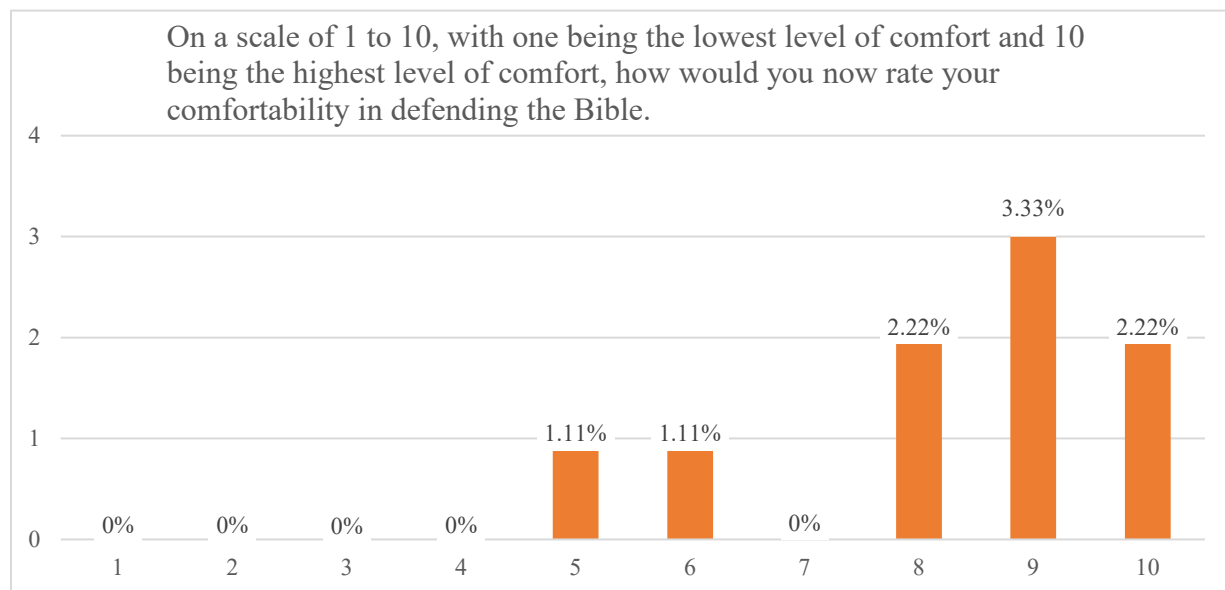


Likewise, all participants in the study affirmed that 1 Peter 1:23-25 declares the incorruptible and eternal nature of the Bible through a true or false response. Lesson Two examined the nature of 1 Peter 1:23-25 and its importance to biblical inerrancy and the defense of the Bible from God's perspective. Thus, the affirmation of this verse by all participants is a key factor in determining the retention of the lesson content and the conviction regarding the nature of Scripture.

### Qualitative Responses

In further examination of participant responses, stakeholders were asked to describe their understanding of reliability upon completion of their course of study. Short answers were given even though ample room was provided for a more lengthy response by the stakeholder. Opinions varied in addressing this descriptive question. All participants were convinced of the reliability of the Bible in their answers. Descriptive language such as “God-breathed,” “reliable,” “perfect truth,” “inspired,” “undeniable,” and “completely reliable” was used to describe participants’ feelings about the Bible. One participant felt they had a more complete understanding of the Bible from the study as it “helped me to understand the several different approaches that can be utilized in defending the Bible.” One participant went as far as to declare that they were “more convinced of the Bible’s reliability.” Scripture could be seen from these responses as not only an enhancement of faith as in one needs the “reliability to strengthen their faith by the truth.” Furthering this thought, one believer said that they “wanted to have faith in something reliable and the Bible is that!” The historical facts that were presented were pointed out as an enhancement to convey the Bible’s reliability to a skeptic to one study participant. The Bible’s enduring nature and careful preservation were also factors in improving participants’ comfortability with defending Scripture to a skeptical person. Another participant confessed that “the Bible is based on an eternal and perfect God.”

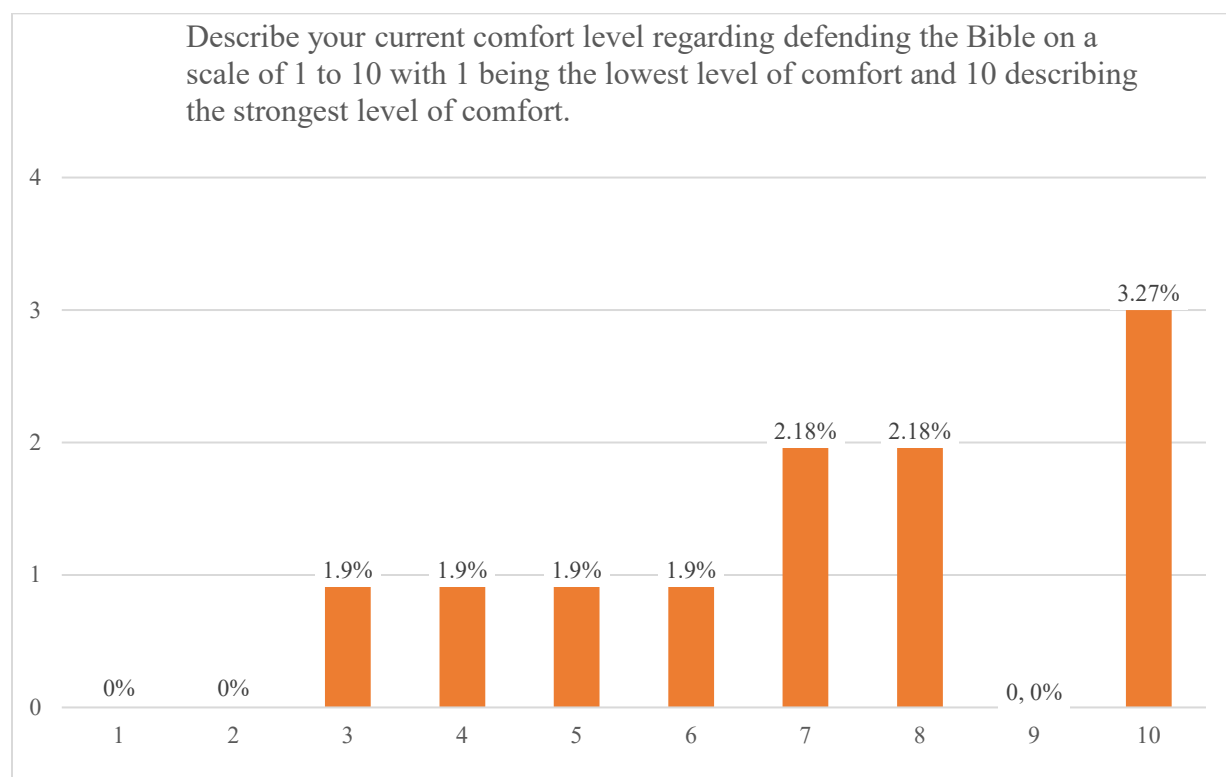
Again, participants were allowed the opportunity to rank their comfortability in defending the Bible on a scale of one to ten. The following Figure 4.6 demonstrates participant exit responses.

**Figure 4.6** Comfortability of Defending the Bible Scale

There are noticeable differences when one compares charts from the entrance and exit surveys to see the change after completion of the Bible defense lessons. There is no way to factor in the possible answers from the two participants who left after the initial class. Even so, it can be hypothesized that one person had a higher comfortability rate and one had a lower comfortability rate than those who responded to questions in their exit questionnaire who were quite affirmative in their increased comfortability with defending the Bible upon completion of the study. At the end of the research study, seven of the nine stakeholders had a higher level of comfortability of eight or higher due to the study content. Only five persons had that level of comfort pre-study. In the initial questionnaire, there were four respondents who had listed their comfortability rating at a six or below. At the study's conclusion, two persons indicated a five or six comfortability rating. Whereas, there were two responses of a three and a four at the onset of the study.

Those who indicated an eight or higher on their comfortability rating were more confident due to the biblical material and possible defenses from the the study. Twenty-two percent of respondents felt that they were at a middle comfortability rating. Seventy-eight percent believed they were more capable of defending the Bible at the end of the study compared to forty-five percent having a very strong comfortability rating in the initial questionnaire. See entrance questionnaire response chart, Figure 4.7, to gain a visual comparison from data collected in both questionnaires.

**Figure 4.7** Comfortability Scale From Entrance Questionnaire



### Further Qualitative Responses

The participants were also allowed the opportunity to discuss the effect the doctoral research study had upon their personal faith in the exit questionnaire. All nine respondents

indicated their faith had grown or that they were stronger Christians as a result of this study in their discussions. “Confidence in defending the Bible,” an “increase in knowledge,” and the impartation of Scripture for an offensive arsenal of “ammunition” were common responses in the stakeholders’ affirmation of an increased faith experience from the defense of the Bible studies. One person indicated “no response.”

Another level of feedback was from the responses regarding a description of the reliability of the Bible in the stakeholder’s own words. Responses by stakeholders reflected that believers had a stronger confidence in the Bible as they came out of the study. Most had received the reliability of the Bible by faith, but now could verbalize the defense of the Bible in a more reasonable and convictional form. Descriptors utilized in responses to describe the reliability of the Bible were “truthful,” “faithful,” “dependable,” “eternal,” “perfect,” “unified message,” “truth for daily life,” “unique in divine origin,” “relevant,” “imparts the life of Christ” (Messianic), and the “Most High God’s instruction.” From these responses, one can conclude that the participants had a better developed understanding of the doctrine of the Bible, appreciation of it, and comfortability in sharing it with others.

Akin to the previous question was the opportunity to respond how the reliability of the Bible was important to any person’s faith. Nine responses were shared and varied in how they were said, but all affirmed the necessity of the Bible’s trustworthiness to a believer’s faith. Another stakeholder agreed by saying the reliability of the Bible is of “paramount importance.” One person responded that Bible’s reliability was “very important” to “remove doubts” that might arise in a person’s faith journey. Another persons said that “We now have truth of [the Bible] being reliable to share with others to help grow their faith.” It was also concluded that “believing supposed errors regarding God’s Word would most certainly lead to doubt in the



Bible.” Additionally, a stakeholder saw the Bible as a “roadmap” and an “instruction book to live their life accordingly.” Others indicated that the Bible’s reliability gives a person a “credible source of truth in which the person’s faith in God grows and is strengthened.” A final noteworthy comment was regarding the fact that the Bible’s reliability is directly related to causing faith in a person as it is heard by the ear and the heart because “faith comes as a result of the Word” (Romans 10:17).

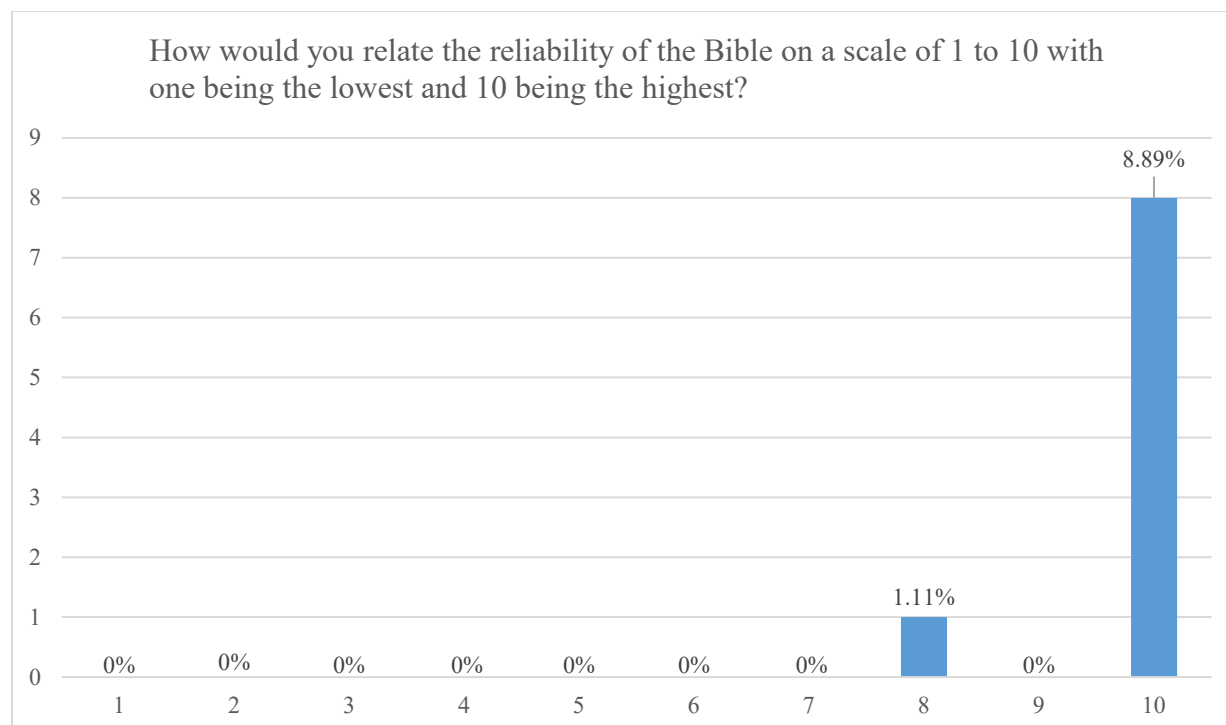
Building upon the previous exit questions, the stakeholders were asked to respond whether this study had a positive impact upon their confidence to defend the Bible. All participants affirmed that this research study had strengthened their confidence to defend the Bible to a skeptic. One person indicated that they had a better understanding of various approaches in defending the Bible. Another felt armed with scriptural knowledge to defend the Bible to a skeptic. One person indicated it was good review of previous knowledge and built upon that knowledge as well concerning the Bible’s trustworthiness. That person also felt that the fulfillment of biblical prophecies and promises serve to defend the Bible as presented in the study. One person put their comfort level into perspective in the study by saying that they did not fear sharing the study course information and their love for God’s Word with a person who does not yet believe.

#### Further Quantitative Responses

Also germane to this discussion was how each participant personally felt about the Bible as they completed the research study. Participants were also given opportunity beyond a simple response to indicate if their confidence in the Bible had changed. Most believers said they had grown. The more mature believers were reassured in the Bible’s reliability, but their confidence

remained the same in the Bible. Participants in the study were also able to rate their personal belief in the reliability of the Bible on a scale of one to ten with ten being the strongest. The chart in Figure 4.8 illustrates the results of personal belief in the Bible's reliability.

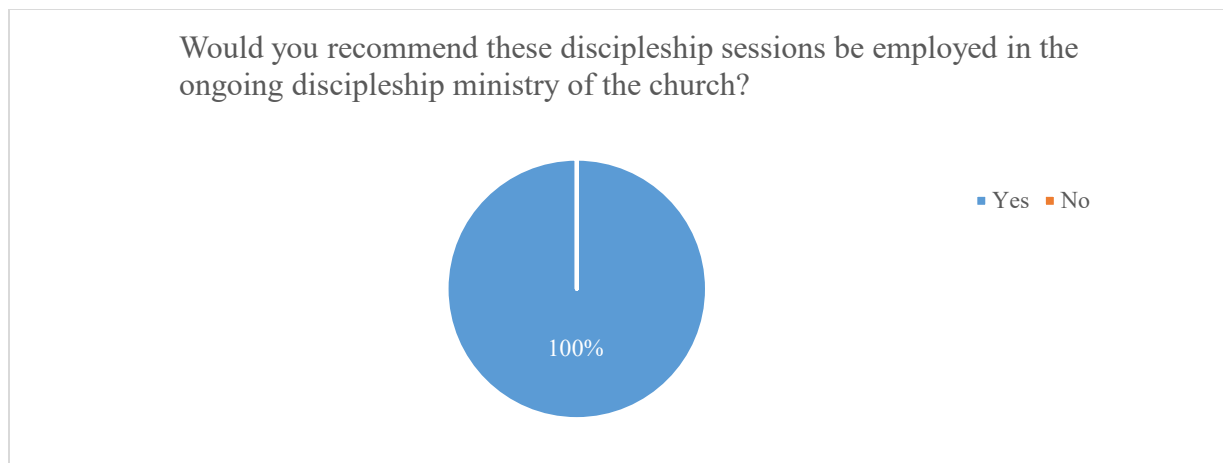
**Figure 4.8** Personal Rating of the Bible's Reliability



All participants indicated in exit responses that their expectations were met in the study. A common thread in these responses indicated their confidence was strengthened because they now had scriptural tools by which to defend the Bible to a skeptic. One person indicated that their expectations could not be completely met with this study because the study of the Bible is a lifelong journey of mining in God's revelatory gold mine. This mature believer also affirmed that the study advanced them down the road of discipleship and spiritual maturity. The overall consensus was that the study was fruitful to their faith and met expectations.

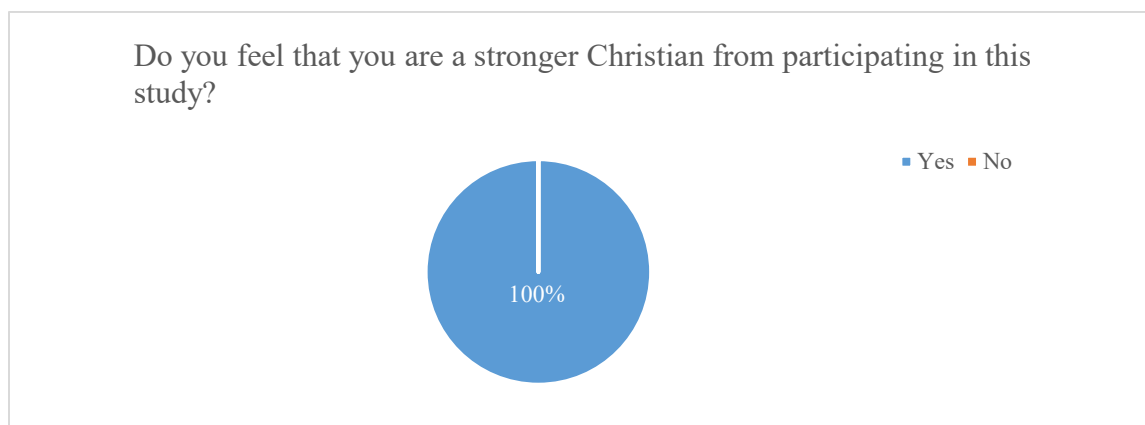
The following charts further demonstrate the effects of the research study upon participants as they affirmed the study. Figure 4.9 indicates whether the stakeholder would recommend this study to someone who wants to know more regarding biblical reliability.

**Figure 4.9** Recommendation of these Discipleship Studies



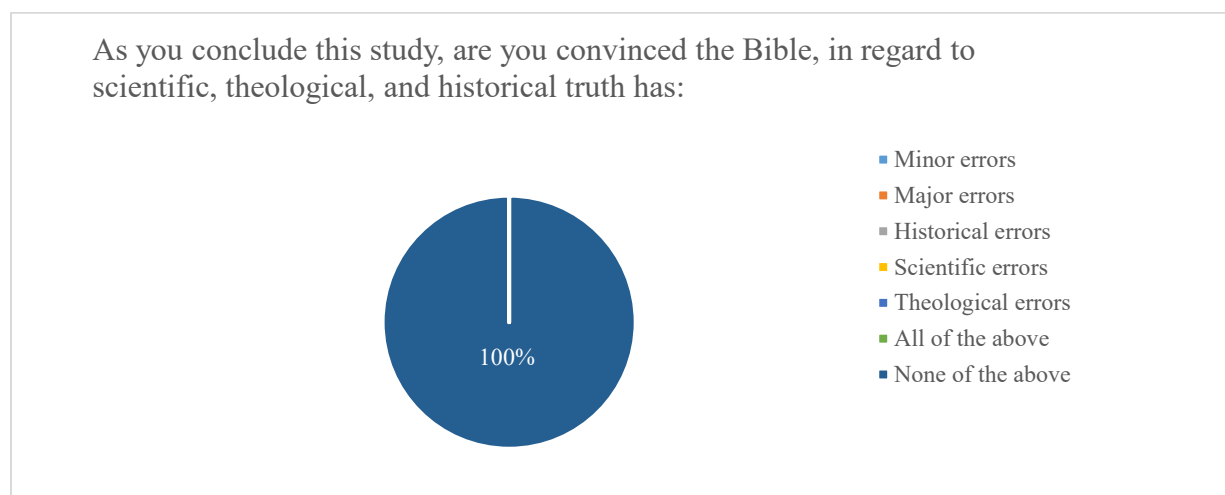
Moving from the recommendation of this study to a consideration of a future apologist for the Bible, stakeholders were asked to respond whether their personal faith was strengthened from taking this study. All nine participants gave responses which are portrayed in Figure 4.10.

**Figure 4.10** Determination of Strengthened Faith

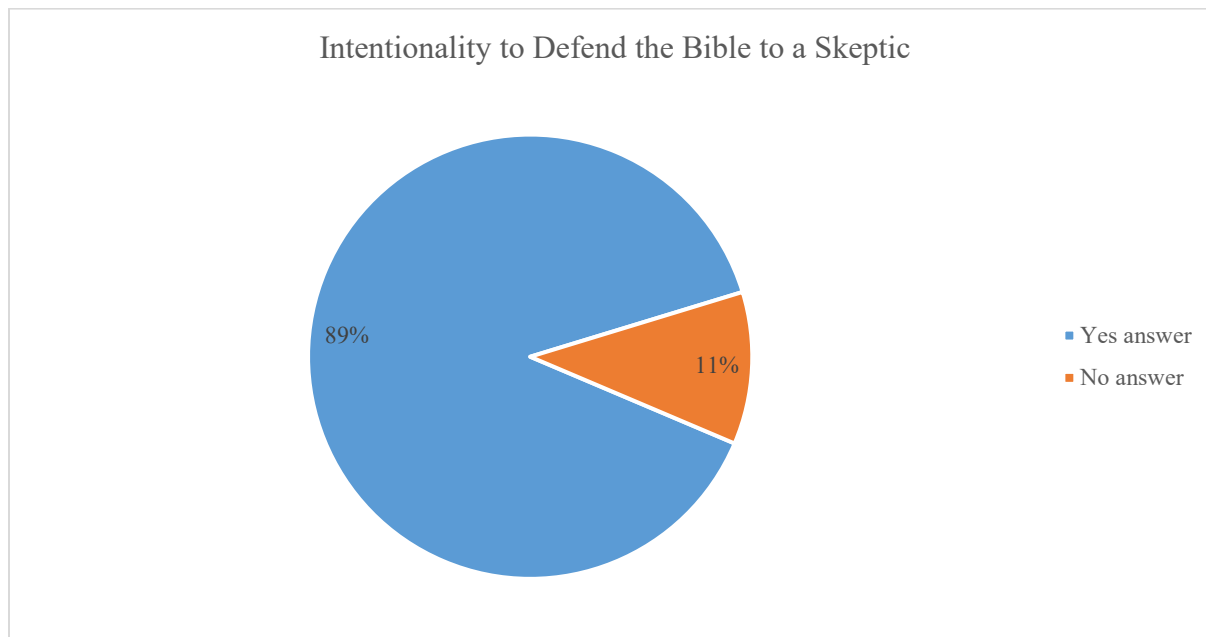


Furthering the effects of this study is the individual stakeholder's understanding of biblical reliability. Participants were invited to choose a category that best described the Bible from their understanding. The selections were the Bible has: minor errors, major errors, historical errors, scientific errors, theological errors, all of the above, or none of the above. Participant's indicated a strong belief in the Bible's trustworthiness in Figure 4.11 with all choosing "none of the above" as their response.

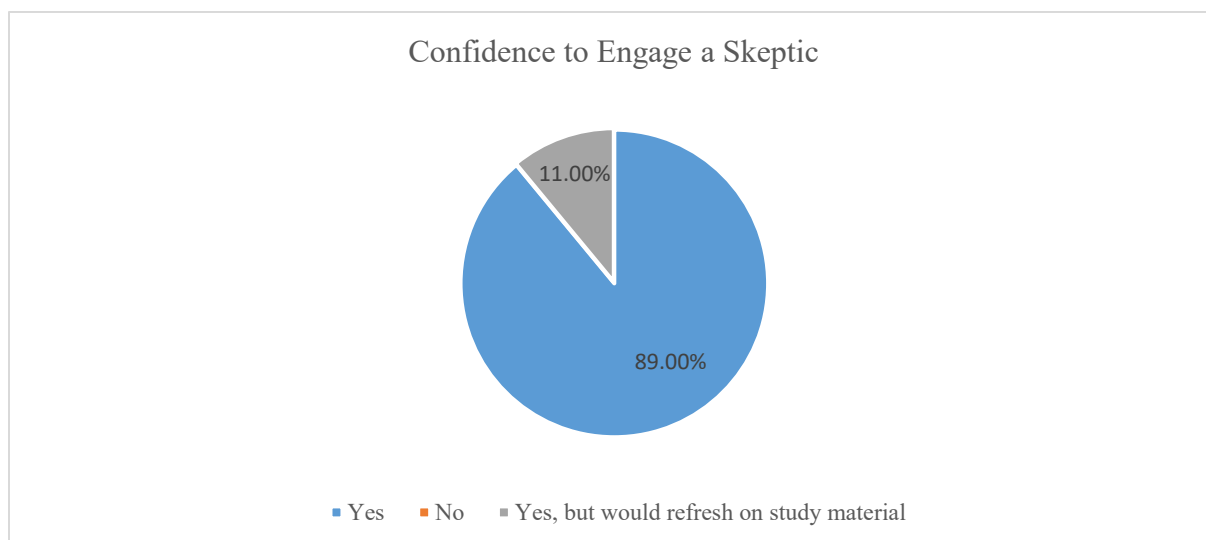
**Figure 4.11** Bible Reliability Chart



Another concern for the study was whether the participants would actively engage a skeptic with the knowledge that they had gained from the seven lessons on the Bible. Figure 4.12 reveals their intentionality to defend the Bible in the future. See Figure 4.12 on the following page.

**Figure 4.12** Intentionality to Defend the Bible Chart

Closely related to a stakeholder's intentionality to engage a skeptic is their confidence to engage the skeptic. Figure 4.13 divulges the confidence level of the participants to engage skeptics from the standpoint of Scripture's trustworthiness.

**Figure 4.13** Confidence to Engage a Skeptic

In further examination of growth from this discipleship series, all remaining participants were able to list at least two passages of Scripture that defend the Bible. The majority listed three or more Bible passages to defend the Bible's integrity. All verses were presented in the study and pertinent to the defense of the Scripture.

### Final Qualitative Responses

One final area of post-study assessment involved examination of how the stakeholder might respond to someone who felt the Bible contains errors. Opinions varied as to how they would verify the Bible in the eyes of a skeptic. Some said they would use archaeology and the Scriptures' unchanging nature to defend Scripture. Others said that they would defend the Bible through its perfect source and author. History was mentioned as a source for biblical defense. Others verbalized that they would let the Bible speak for itself through its testimony regarding itself, fulfilled promises, and prophecies, and the validation of multiple eyewitness testimonies with a complete and unified redemptive message. Some brought to the table that the Bible's supposed flaws can be eliminated when people give Scripture the chance it should have through sincere reading and diligent contemplation. Though circumstances during a period of turmoil and lockdowns limited participation in this study, it proved effective for those who stayed in the program and the study enabled them to defend the Bible at a comfortable level.

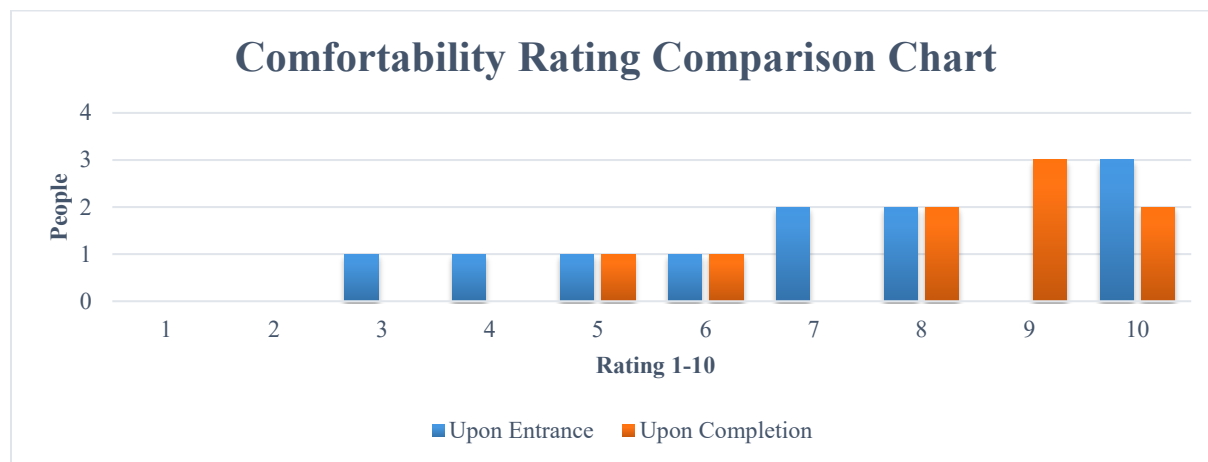
### Summary of Data

In assimilating and digesting the entrance and exit questionnaires from stakeholders, a number of lessons can be learned. First, the research project was conducted during the summer semester and lessened the participation in the research project. The already small, rural church

was hit with several illnesses and Covid-19 in some stakeholders; therefore, the number of participants was smaller for the study. Additionally, two respondents dropped out after beginning of the study. Despite being affected by Covid-19 and summertime church attendance in the small rural church, nine participants completed the study from an original participant group of eleven stakeholders.

Significant to the research study was that participants felt a greater confidence in defending the Bible to a skeptic post-study as opposed to the beginning of the seven-lesson instructional study. Out of eleven respondents, eight responded with a confidence level of 3 to 8 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being highest in confidence in defending the Bible in their entrance questionnaire. Three individuals responded with a confidence level of 10 on the scale. Upon exit, several participants no longer rated their level of confidence at a 3 or 4. Two rated their confidence at a mid-level 5 or 6 rating. However, most stakeholders rated improved confidence levels from 8 to 10 in defending the Bible on their exit questionnaires. Figure 4.14 illustrates the comparison of pre- and post-study comfortability and confidence in defending the Bible.

**Figure 4.14** Comfortability Rating Comparison Chart



In the same manner, most participants indicated that their faith was strengthened or had grown as a result of the study. Others indicated a desire for a longer study or a refresher study in the future to learn more about Biblical apologetics and further solidify their understanding of the subject. Another conclusion was that participants were very affirming in terms of the Bible's reliability; however, participants were unable or unwilling to give more than a brief answer as to the description of the Bible's reliability on the exit questionnaire.

Participants indicated several area of improvement in their understanding of the Bible's sufficiency. In addition, Bible verses that supported its reliability appeared to be indicated as learned by the participants, judging from their exit questions. Participants viewing the Bible as authoritative due to its Perfect Author did not change. Some participants did change their opinions about the church being the source of the Bible's authority due to the credibility of the human authors directly undergirding the Bible's authority. That point may prove to be a future point of needed clarification. Though the human authors are credible, a more straightforward line of demarkation must be drawn to better define the Bible's authority coming from its perfect authorship by the Holy Spirit rather than the human instruments. In summary, all nine exit responses indicated a positive impact in confidence to defend the Bible.

In continued synthesis, eight of the nine stakeholders rated the Bible's reliability with a strong 10 rating. The one participant using a lower rating, gave the Bible an 8 in overall reliability. On the whole, confidence in the reliability of the Bible increased, with most stakeholders commenting they had grown from the study and now had verses and notes to enhance their potential defenses of the Bible. At the conclusion of the study, participants could cite at least two or more Bible verses regarding the authenticity of the Bible. Most stakeholders also grew in their understanding of "biblical inerrancy." Likewise, stakeholders indicated a more



informed description of how they would defend the Bible to a skeptic from what they had learned in the past seven weeks.

In further assessment, participants indicated a 100% desire for these type of discipleship lessons on biblical inerrancy to be added to the ongoing, discipleship ministry of the church. All participants indicated they were stronger Christians from participating in this study. All participants indicated that they were convinced that the Bible did not have minor errors, major errors, historical errors, scientific errors, theological errors, or any combinations of these errors. Their responses indicated a confidence that the Bible was without any mixture of error. Only one of the nine indicated that they would not “intentionally” seek an opportunity to defend Scripture to a skeptical person. Eight persons out of nine said their confidence level was so improved from the study that they would engage a skeptic in some way regarding the Bible’s trustworthiness. The one remaining respondent said “yes” that they would engage a skeptic but would probably study a few key points again to refresh themselves from the study material. According to participants, expectations regarding the study were met, with some indicating they would want more information as they grew in their Christian journey. Due to improvement in their understanding and comforatbility, the stakeholders indicate that the seven lesson study increased their comfortability in defending the Bible to a skeptic.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### Research Implications

God is an all-powerful God. The power of God's Word is unmeasurable. The research behind this doctoral project has revealed an ongoing, vibrant discussion of the inerrancy of the Bible and its trustworthiness among theologians, Christians, and skeptics. The discussion has been heated at times. Nevertheless, the Bible has stood the test of time and skeptics continue to question with each subsequent generation. The careful preservation of the Bible by God and His human instruments brings validation to a reliable canon for all to understand. For seven weeks, church members have been discipled regarding the reliability of this very ancient and timeless Text. These stakeholders have communicated their concerns and determined personal goals to employ as they researched along with the project facilitator.

Anticipated results were confirmed in well-informed disciples that now feel more capable to defend the Bible in varied settings with more eagerness and appreciation of their investment over the past seven weeks. The conclusion of the project affirms the legitimacy of the need for the study as continued focus on biblical reliability is needed. The equipping of these individuals by their pastor will provide another cog in the wheel as they travel toward Christlikeness and obedience to God by sharing Jesus in their own faith journey. The reasonable result of the project is that stakeholders communicate effectively to defend the Bible to a skeptic as witness for Jesus in everyday life. Through synthesis and implementation of the doctrine of biblical reliability, the believer will honor the Messiah, actively defend the Bible, and give reason for the hope that is

within them with hope and grace with respect and a gentle spirit (1 Peter 3:15-16). Ultimately, the project's implementation in the daily life of stakeholders will provide facts to combat biblical skepticism and provide a healthy, evangelistic participant response that honors God and brings people to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Conclusions from the Research Project**

The results of the doctoral project bring challenges to the goals of discipling believers to defend the Scripture regarding further discipleship around the subject of biblical sufficiency. As positive results are determined, negative results or the need for further study of this doctrine or other doctrines have been revealed as the research project has been completed. Stakeholder expectations may not have been fully met. Some stakeholders may require further study or one-on-one consultation for final grasping of the subject, while other stakeholders may feel continually inadequate because of personal issues or other reasons that surface as a result of the action research project. The current trend of lowered attendance and decreased member involvement in church services due to Covid 19 complicated the intended goal of reaching people in a post-pandemic world. The next steps may be to further investigate and receive feedback from participants within a year regarding the usage of biblical inerrancy materials and their continued confidence to defend the Bible. Church members may indicate new questions or concerns that must be addressed as well in the next year. The results will be compared to Mark Clark's discipleship process in equipping his pastorate to defend their faith to skeptics in order to find similarities and differences in results. Finally, any questions or concerns that result from post-questions and feedback will be addressed in future discipleship for Covenant Baptist Church.

## Research Applications

### The Future Beyond this Research Project

As a matter of finalizing the research project, “Where does this research project go from this point for Covenant Baptist Church?” One of the discourses that must occur because of this study is where the study must go from this point forward, and what does it look like in the continued discipleship of Covenant Baptist? Also, what guidance is to be used to persist in maturing and equipping believers in a post-modern world? After all, comments prior to and after the seven-week defense of the Bible study indicate that the need for increased comfortability in biblical apologetics was validated. Initial canvassing of the church revealed inadequacy as to comfortability of defending the Bible to a skeptic.

Specifically in the exit questionnaires, stakeholders revealed a desire for continued study of the subject biblical reliability in some form in the future. In consideration of the questionnaire results of the study and how they apply to future ministry of Covenant Baptist Church, the researcher has determined several conclusions to progress forward from this point. Initially, exit responses indicate a desire for additional discipleship about biblical sufficiency. Thus, Covenant Baptist Church needs to develop additional small groups that further ground believers in biblical truth. Likewise, these discipleship groups must include several subjects that would further enhance and equip the church membership. Additional discipleship should increase the stakeholder’s knowledge of the reliability of the Bible, develop a Christian apologetic, combine role play and discussion for continued exercise and advancement of apologetic skills regarding the defense of the Bible, provide review of biblical sufficiency material already learned by stakeholders, develop and include intentional witness training, and provide witness events in the

community and marketplace to continue to solidify research participant's comfortability in defending the Bible to a skeptic.

One of the challenges that has arisen since the Covid pandemic is the decline in church attendance. That decline has affected small-group discipleship drastically at Covenant. In addition, most churches, Covenant Baptist included, have seen a decline in Sunday night or small group attendance as revealed in discussion among fellow pastors in Covenant's local Baptist association. However, this does not negate the need for further discipleship of churches or Covenant Baptist Church. It is the hope of the researcher that those who indicated a desire for additional discipleship in biblical sufficiency will afford themselves the opportunity for ongoing growth in their personal apologetic comfort zones. One stakeholder requested a simplified, fill-in-the-blank study similar to the *Journey Discipleship Series* of deceased Oklahoma pastor, Tommy Hagle.<sup>200</sup> Interest is there to merit further discipleship studies for Covenant Baptist Church about defending the Bible. Given the vast amount of material that could possibly be covered, coupled with researcher's challenge of narrowing down the material into small measurable periods of time, more research and discipleship could be done by increasing the course up to twelve weeks. Many germane avenues of study which were required to be excluded due to time constraints could be introduced through a more comprehensive study.

One further area to expand the comfortability of stakeholders and research study participants in defending the Bible is the area of apologetics in general, especially to others who were unable to participate in the research project. The stakeholder could gain from an exposure to an introduction to Christian apologetics. It would prove beneficial to the stakeholder to learn how to develop personal arguments for the Bible's reliability and then how to share those

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<sup>200</sup> See [www.journeyseries.com](http://www.journeyseries.com).

arguments rationally and passionately with skeptics. Christian apologetics would enhance the believer's understanding of absolute truth and would reinforce the most convincing ways to get that truth across to an unbelieving audience. Exposure to Christian apologists and their methodologies for the presentation of argumentation would further educate stakeholders. Recommended apologists for a stakeholder, as a layperson, to review would include some of those writers discussed in the literature review and others such as Alex McFarland, Amy Orr-Ewing, Eric Huffman, Darrell Bock, Andreas Kostenberger, Josh Chatrow, Norman Geisler, William C. Roach, Josh McDowell, and Lee Strobel. Mark Clark and Erwin Lutzer would offer argumentative benefits from the standpoint of pastors who have biblically engaged skeptical culture with success. Many of these authors have short, easy-to-read works that are affordable and easily understood by a layperson. Likewise, these authors could be further gleaned from by a teaching pastor in order to instruct a stakeholder discipleship study as to the best practices of a Christian apologist in the hostile culture of today.

With the internet at the modern person's fingertips, it is imperative that church members expand their life as Christ-followers to include skills to argue the Bible amongst a world of antagonism with a very confident faith in God and His Word. To further expand the battlefield for the modern Christian, recent George Barna research in 2022 indicates that an additional and unexpected worldview has emerged in the United States, the worldview of syncretism.<sup>201</sup> The blending of cultural viewpoints will continue to blur the understanding of absolute truth in an already relativistic culture. In addition, only six percent of disciples can be termed as "integrated disciples" who hold to a biblical worldview.<sup>202</sup> Combining stakeholder desire for more

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<sup>201</sup> George Barna, *American Worldview Inventory*, 8-9.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

discipleship respecting biblical reliability with new insights from the American Worldview Inventory 2021-2022, it is important that further study and apologetics take place in the church. It is equally imperative that Christians identify additional negative changes in the culture and develop a convictional, biblical worldview to combat the lostness and confusion of modern, American culture and win it from godlessness to God-centeredness. Thus, the church must deepen its confessional and convictional belief set in a dependable, purely preserved, sacred Scripture in the decades to come.

From a practical standpoint, another line of focus in the future is that of role play. Time constraints limited the amount of information able to be given within the initial six lessons discipleship study; therefore, the researcher increased the study duration to seven lessons to give an adequate defense of the Bible. The study and the stakeholders could have been more efficacious if more time could have been given for additional role play and discussion. Again, a six to seven-week time period appeared rushed to cover all bases for a healthy understanding and a practical defense of biblical inerrancy. Also, the stakeholders could have benefited from writing assignments where they developed their own witnessing scenarios and defenses of the Bible to use in the future. Future work in this area of study should include writing out some defenses, discussion and feedback regarding those written defenses, and role play to ingrain those defenses in the participants' minds. The church must build on the sure foundation of God's Word and communicate these truths at home and to the younger generations as taught in Deuteronomy 6.

In addition to role play, the church membership would benefit through ongoing witness training. The church has utilized the FAITH evangelism strategy<sup>203</sup> in the past. However,

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<sup>203</sup> See [www.lifeway.com/faith](http://www.lifeway.com/faith).

ongoing outreach and visitation has dwindled since the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020. It would benefit the kingdom ministry of the church to reinstitute this type of evangelism ministry of the church. In this ministry, the church could incorporate its biblical worldview through utilizing the skills and lessons learned in equipping believers for the defense of Bible. In the future, the church could implement its role play of witnessing and defense of the Bible through an ongoing, intentional witnessing Ministry. The church could implement marketplace witnessing and their apologetics of the Bible in the town square on Saturdays, at the Farmer's Market in our city, second Saturday community events, and the curbside prayer ministry in the cities of Leakesville and Lucedale, Mississippi.

Another practical, but spiritual, implementation of this biblical apologetic ministry is prayer. The church must pray for wisdom to defend the Bible. God's power and presence must undergird all the church's evangelistic and apologetic efforts. Likewise, the church must pray for opportunities to share their faith and their biblical worldview, especially that of the Bible's reliability to transform lives and be the framework for those lives. Covenant Baptist Church must not only implement a healthy, biblical worldview but pray to that effect. After all, one's worldview is a "central component in determining the health and well-being of our nation and its people"<sup>204</sup> as it is our "decision making filter"<sup>205</sup> for daily life. Worldview is a matter of application and diligent prayer as outcomes for this study because only six percent of adults in the United States hold to a biblical worldview. The practice of a biblical worldview was higher in certain populations of American Christendom. Nineteen percent of born-again believers, twenty-one percent of those individuals who attend an evangelical Christian church, and forty-

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<sup>204</sup> Barna, *American Worldview Inventory 2021-22*, 5.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



four percent of those who claimed to be to be actively engaged, conservative believers expressed that they governed their lives with a biblical worldview.<sup>206</sup> If this nation is going to have revival or be saved, the Bible must be presented as the foundation for every aspect of human existence. In order to maintain a biblical worldview in America, each church must do its part by taking biblical reliability and the ministry of prayer for saturating a lost culture so that the gospel may have its redeeming effect. If this local church, and the church at large in America, neglects prayerful engagement of this secular culture with absolute truth from the Bible, we will find ourselves in the ranks of those who are “asleep at the wheel.”<sup>207</sup>

#### Further Research

Several elements can be discerned from this research study. First, the need for increased understanding of the Bible’s trustworthiness must be impressed upon believers in the church in corporate worship and small group settings to produce informed disciples who are grounded in Bible doctrine and prepared to engage the secular mindset. Second, the church needs an awakening as to what it means to be lost. Accordingly, the church needs to determine the skeptical mindset of their local setting and America at large to develop apologetics to combat the skepticism of this age. Further research demands that the church research, investigate, and emerge as better apologists. Observations from this researcher over a thirty-year personal ministry window reflect a consumer mentality being highly prevalent in the church. Few people actively engage in the culture. Many want to worship and be fed. Churches have become broad and have lost depth in terms of true discipleship. The church must be more proactive in

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<sup>206</sup> Barna, *American Worldview Inventory 2021-22*, 7.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

witnessing and apologetics, investigating, training, and engaging its members in God-centered strategies of evangelism. The church must ensure that its congregants realize that true worship demands engagement of the culture through gospel witness. The secular mindset must be replaced with the spiritual, kingdom mindset inside and outside the church.

Due to the brevity of this research, more investigation needs to be done to address the effects of world religions, Marxism, and syncretism. Because there are more facets to biblical reliability than the ones which were covered in this project, more need to be done beyond this study to combat illiteracy as to the trustworthy nature of the Bible. More needs to be done in the area of social media to succinctly make the case for the gospel, the Bible and its trustworthiness, and faith in God through Jesus Christ. What we have learned in the past as Christians must be expounded upon to win a new generation to faith in Christ. In essence, American Christians need to better understand America so that we can adequately take the truths of God's reliable Word to a lost world. The church must learn and implement the spiritual power afforded to them through life in the Holy Spirit to activate spiritual warfare in a world of encroaching darkness. Though the canon has been completed and no more Scripture is added, the story of God's people continues as each generation writes a new chapter as they bring the gospel to their generation, expanding the kingdom of God by the power of God.

## Research Limitations

### Comparison to Findings in the Review of Literature<sup>208</sup>

To appropriately balance this research project regarding the Bible's reliability in the mind of the reader, one must compare to another's work in similar research. In the literature review section of this project, Mark Clark, as a pastor, addressed the skeptic in the very skeptical culture of Vancouver, Canada. It is important to present again the details of Pastor Mark Clark's research. The groundwork of Pastor Mark Clark's founding of Village Church, a church for skeptics like himself, and the publication of his book was as follows:

- He decided to duplicate the gospel pattern of the Apostle Paul in Acts 17-20 by taking the message of Jesus to a philosophical marketplace who had questions like he had early on in his spiritual journey.
- He then engaged the marketplace as the Apostle Paul when he took the message of Jesus being the one true God and the center of all things to Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome.
- He began the church with the house church model in his living room with thirteen people which expanded to fifty people in an elementary school gymnasium. Many of those initial church members were skeptics.
- He believed that people were asking spiritual questions.

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<sup>208</sup> From the work of Pastor Mark Clark in *The Problem of God: Answering a Skeptic's Challenges to Christianity and Biblical Theology in the Church: A Guide for Ministry*

- He developed a sermon series to answer some of the questions or problems that skeptics had as outlined in the book, *The Problem of God*. The church grew from fifty to eight hundred people with the launch of that sermon series.
- He challenged his audience with the premise that their questions regarding Jesus and the Bible, as proclaimed by the Christian faith, would hold up to “historical, scientific, philosophical, and even literary scrutiny.”
- He preached on the following problem subjects for skeptics: science, God’s existence, the Bible, the Christ myth, evil and suffering, hell, sex, hypocrisy, exclusivity, and Jesus.
- He maintained the conviction that mankind’s questions are meant to lead us somewhere; and specifically, to someone – Jesus.<sup>209</sup>

Regarding a comparison of this research project to that of Pastor Mark Clark, several conclusions can be ascertained. In terms of similarities, the overall aim of both projects was to reach the skeptic with the gospel. Second, the focus was distinctly a local church setting and concluded in the spiritual enrichment of both churches. Pastor Clark’s sermon series for skeptics began as a local church focus with spiritual development in mind rather than as an academic pursuit. His series quickly mushroomed into an evangelistic effort as church members invited people in the city to hear this engaging sermon series that sought to answer some of the main concerns of skeptics. Though both studies sought to educate the church, the Covenant study remained as a discipleship tool to enhance the comfortability of defending the Bible to a skeptic while Village Church was thrust into an opportunity to harvest souls while answering questions of skeptics on a myriad of topics. In both settings, the results were not numbers based but needs based according to each church’s context. In comparison of results, both studies found

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<sup>209</sup> Clark, *The Problem of God*, 18-21.

themselves increasing the knowledge of the stakeholders that attended. Similarly, both ministries found themselves learning that it is healthy to test one's faith, that intellectual questions are not a threat to Christianity, the Bible remains relevant, rational, and convincing no matter the concerns that are thrust at it. The results of both studies prove the Bible is still able to answer life questions, dispel doubt, compel belief, redeem mankind, and radically transform lives. Though both projects were completed in entirely different settings, cultures, and ultimately church sizes, they both served to equip the church with discipleship tools that would be used in the present and the future to lead skeptics from investigation to faith.

In terms of differences between these two works, this thesis project focused solely on the Bible's reliability and was directed to a small segment of the church population. Pastor Clark chose to address leading questions related to Christianity that skeptics may have, one of which was in consideration of the Bible. The research project at Covenant sought to find answers to share with the skeptical person by a believer in Christ. Mark Clark maintained in his sermon series that the claims of the Christian faith stood up to "historical, scientific, philosophical, and even literary scrutiny." The results of the two studies differed in terms of immediate effects as well. Village Church saw immediate evangelistic fruit due to the nature of the sermon series in an urban setting. Covenant Baptist finds itself in a very rural setting with a smaller target group. In addition, the Covid pandemic brought about social isolation as opposed to the active engagement of a skeptic while Village Church was pre-pandemic. In like manner, the results of this research project promoted the same concept that the Bible provides a reliable worldview because the lessons demonstrated how the historical, scientific, philosophical, and literary questions if the Bible is given a voice to defend itself. Both Mark Clark's book and this research project resulted in tools that the participants could utilize to defend their faith. Likewise, the

results of both studies served to illustrate that one can have a biblical worldview and answer rational and philosophical questions.

Michael Lawrence was another author whose contributions to theology in the local church were mentioned in the literature review. In his work, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, Lawrence sets forth several principles that align with the results of equipping Covenant to defend the Bible to a skeptic and simultaneously feeling more comfortable while defending it. Coinciding with the lessons of this research project, Lawrence shared that the Bible is a progressive book that records God's saving activity through human history where other religions had revelation in a specific event. Lawrence also conveyed that this progressive revelation is also historical and God-centered in His purpose of redemption while growing all along to a culmination of redemptive history<sup>210</sup> in Christ, which this research project endeavors to proclaim as well. Likewise, the results of biblical theology and this research project maintain a practicality in that the primary goal of the Bible is mankind's redemption unto the ultimate glory of God.<sup>211</sup> Though the Bible does provide mankind with answers to his skeptical questions, the centrality of redemption and God's glory must be maintained as the primary focus.

One other significant complement by *Biblical Theology in the Church* that coincides with and undergirds the end results of this research study is Michael Lawrence's assertions on the character of the Bible. He purports that the Bible is historical and "intensely human." He also maintains that the Bible is not only human but divine because the Holy Spirit is the single, divine author and that the Spirit inspired it as the story of God for God's creation to know Him, be saved by Him, and to live for His glory. He concluded that the Bible is best understood as a

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<sup>210</sup> For a detailed viewpoint of salvation or redemptive history, see Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 56-75.

<sup>211</sup> Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 27-28.

redemptive narrative. In addition, Lawrence instructs his readers that the Bible defines itself through the lens of covenants that define allegiance to the one, true King and His expectations for citizenship in His kingdom. Finally, Lawrence expressed that the Bible purposes to bring God decisive glory through salvation and the final judgment of sin and evil.<sup>212</sup> These attestations perfectly coincide with the attestations of the seven lessons to equip Covenant Baptist Church in defending the Bible.

#### Comparison to the Outside Work of Kevin DeYoung

As a matter of an additional work discovered in the time post literature review, *Taking God At His Word: Why The Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, And Enough, And What That Means For You And Me* by Kevin DeYoung adds depth and support to the results of this research project. Kevin DeYoung concludes his book on the centrality of the Bible with a title, *Stick With the Scriptures*. Here, he reminds the reader of the supremacy of the text from 2 Timothy 3:14-17. DeYoung intends that teaching that Scripture is God-breathed in verse sixteen is enough as it acts as the verse “about the Bible in the whole Bible.” He further declares that “There is no more important verse for developing a proper understanding of Scripture” than verse sixteen because if it is not true then the Bible has no clarity, authority, or necessity.<sup>213</sup> Thus, the focus of this research project has dealt with pertinent and some ancillary issues pertaining to the Bible’s reliability, but the primary concern is to let the Bible speak for itself. When one lets the Bible speak for itself, it defends itself, answers mankind’s skepticism, maintains the glory of God, and achieves the divine purpose of the eschatological redemption through the restored kingdom of

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<sup>212</sup> Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 28-33.

<sup>213</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word: Why The Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, And Enough, And What That Means For You And Me*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, reprinted 2016), 112.

God. The stakeholders have seen and are more comfortable in their understanding of biblical reliability because the study has primarily let the Bible speak for and defend itself.

In addition, Kevin DeYoung reminds the reader, as they “stick with the Scripture,” that they must consider four things in defending the Bible to our skeptical culture: your history, the Scripture’s ability, the Scripture’s originality, and the Scripture’s practicality as fleshed out in the 2 Timothy 3 passage.<sup>214</sup> As this research study has taught stakeholders, one must recall, like Paul’s ministry protégé Timothy, that the Scripture’s reliability is proclaimed in our personal discipleship. Its ability is affirmed in our personal transformation in its regenerating truth. The skeptical mind can also see and then validate the Bible’s trustworthiness through our own testimonies and spiritual journey with God. Third, the Bible boldly testifies that the originality of the Bible is God. He wrote it in His perfection. Thus, the Bible demonstrates perfection and trustworthiness. The human authors are not inspired in and of themselves. They find their inspiration in the instrumentation of the Holy Spirit, Who is the single, divine author of Scripture.

Because the Bible is inspired by God, it carries an authority and sufficiency that cannot be attained by a human author on their own. Like Kevin DeYoung writes, the Bible is practical for the spiritual formation and discipleship of the believer. In essence, the conclusions of Kevin DeYoung affirm the focus of this research study that the greatest defense of the Bible is not found in historicity, epistemology, in human argumentation and debate, church tradition, or in personal experience. It is found in the Bible itself. God’s Word can and does stand alone. It defends itself if a person is open-hearted and willing to read its divine pages for themselves.

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<sup>214</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word: Why The Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, And Enough, And What That Means For You And Me*, 113-122.



Stakeholders were taught to affix themselves primarily to the Scripture because it is a powerful, two-edged sword which achieves the purposes for which God sends it to do (Hebrews 4:12 and Isaiah 55:11 respectively).

As to lessons learned from this study, several have been concluded from this research project for Covenant Baptist Church. First, researching and teaching a seven-week study on the reliability and inerrancy of the Bible was a goliath task as a multiplicity of subjects needed to be covered in a short window of time. In hindsight, trying to cover all the instruction discovered in the review of literature was difficult. It might have been more fitting to focus entirely on letting the Bible speak for itself as a defense and then allow for future discipleship instruction in the church for the other issues such as history, archaeology, epistemology, other sacred literature, and ancillary concerns. Covering a broad teaching area of biblical reliability left the researcher a little overwhelmed and likely did the stakeholders, as some indicated through the exit questionnaire a desire for additional study or a more simplified and digestible approach. In hindsight, a narrower approach to the lessons would be more desirable.

A second conclusion from this research experience is that this was truly a gap in the discipleship ministry of the church. From stakeholder feedback to recent Barna research, the question of biblical reliability is a problem. From the standpoint of the stakeholders, they want more discipleship in the area of biblical reliability and how best to defend it to a skeptical world. In terms of the George Barna research, many people in America subscribe to a Moralistic Therapeutic Deism in which they consider themselves as Christians, but do not maintain the biblical worldview of Christians. Eighty-eight percent of these individuals find their primary moral guidance from places other than the Bible, with seventy-five percent not believing in God as the basis of all truth. In addition, these testifying Christians do not believe that the Bible is the

true reliable communication from God.<sup>215</sup> Because of the feedback of stakeholders and the Barna study, the skepticism about the Bible's reliability has crept into the church due to inadequate discipleship in the church.

This researcher founded and then pastored Covenant Baptist Church for over seventeen years. Yet, even with instruction of Bible doctrine throughout the seventeen years, gaps crept in during those years revealing that a long-held Baptist doctrine of inerrancy, infallibility, and inspiration has now drifted off modern church member's radar screen. Conclusions drawn from this research is that Covenant needs more discipleship in order to become more biblically literate. By the same token, Barna's 2021-22 inventory demonstrated that most churches are biblically illiterate to why the Bible is unconditionally trustworthy. As learned in this study, the doctrine of the Bible's discipleship is the foundation for all apologetic discourse regarding the Scripture. Thus, it is imperative for this pastor and other pastors to re-educate the laity in biblical apologetics and periodically re-evaluate their understanding of the foundational points of the doctrine and their progress in actively engaging the culture.

Truly, increased familiarity with the infallibility, inerrancy, and inspiration will increase the usage of the same in the believer's everyday vernacular. As always when a project of this magnitude is at hand, prayer, time management, disciplined research, and inclusion of periods of rest had to be learned and applied to make the project come together. Another lesson is that personal study and further research needs to have a place in the life of this pastor. Being bi-vocational for several years as Covenant was fledged has left this pastor unformed regarding some aspects of the changing culture as well as the contributions scholarship of today regarding the Scripture's reliability. Thus, this researcher is now spurred to further research on behalf of

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<sup>215</sup> George Barna, *American Worldview Inventory 2021-22*, 24.

the stakeholders and for personal enrichment. In a similar manner, this research project has reminded this facilitator of the need of being aware of the changing worldview in America, finding ways to engage the culture with a biblical worldview, digging deeper personally and corporately for future disciples, and employing an intentional ministry of evangelism and apologetics in his personal marketplace.

All projects are potential learning experiences. This research project that benefitted Covenant Baptist Church is no different. The researcher learned first and foremost to trust God and ask for His guidance and favor in the project. God has abundantly supplied throughout the entire process. Times of struggle have demanded times of intense prayer for the thesis to come together. The prayer life of the researcher has improved as well as his faith in God to provide. This research project has brought about a renewed commitment to balance academics, ministry, and family all at the same time. Again, this was a matter of prayer. Trusting God and living by faith in Him as been a lesson re-etched upon the researcher's heart.

In terms of academics, the researcher did not realize how much out of the loop he was being in bi-vocational ministry as a pastor and a chaplain at the same time. The challenges to being a witnessing Christian are increasing and the demand to be versed in apologetics has mushroomed in this information age. There have been so many new conversations added to the debate regarding biblical inerrancy, belief in God, and the reliability of the Bible among evangelical theologians and skeptics alike in the last two decades. The battle for the Bible is ongoing and was not settled with the theological conservatism that arose from the 1970s through the 1990s. America is more secular and the anti-American systems of socialism, communism, adherence to world religions and a syncretism have added to the misunderstanding of the Bible. People are not students of the Bible anymore as much as they are critics of the Bible in the

modern context of many younger Americans who embrace Marxist policies. Apologetics is an alien idea to many people in the church. Many Christians familiar to the researcher would not even know where to begin to defend their faith or even know the mindset of a skeptic.

In terms of applying this research to similar settings, the need for discipleship regarding the Bible is imperative as we are quickly losing ground in our secular, post-modern culture. The Bible clearly instructs believers to be continual students of its contents and rightly utilize its truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Likewise, the church can apply this study by ensuring that the doctrines of the church, especially regarding the Bible's trustworthiness, are taught in creative ways to a body of contemporary disciples. A local church pastor must measure the climate of the congregation and its local marketplace. These lessons and questionnaires can be taught or expanded in similar local church settings. First, one must explore the understanding of a pastor's own flock as to biblical sufficiency through these or similar questionnaires. If questioned, individual churches will likely validate the Barna research that biblical worldview is a fading concept both inside and outside the church. This research might be applied by a local church through intentional evangelism in the marketplace and engagement of skeptics by caring stakeholders that are willing to share their faith. A church might also include witness training in dealing with skeptics in its small group discipleship. Furthermore, a larger amount of time for role-play and discussion could be implemented in the small groups to enrich stakeholders in their engagement of skeptics. A church must realize that genuine worship means that we honor God through informed disciples who prayerfully engage the culture with the gospel in our generation and fulfill Ephesians 4:11-16.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### IRB Approval

February 15, 2022

Harlan McLain  
Jacob Dunlow

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-717 IRB Application for Equipping Covenant Baptist Church to Defend the Bible

Dear Harlan McLain and Jacob Dunlow,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

- (1) Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not “designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application’s status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix B

## Flyer to Solicit Participation

# Project Participants Needed

## Equipping Disciples to Defend the Bible

- Are you 18 years of age or older?
- Do you want to better understand how to defend the reliability of the Bible to a skeptical world?

If you answered **yes** to either of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an action research study.

The purpose of this project is to equip believers in Covenant Baptist Church to defend the Bible to a skeptic. Participants will be asked to participate in discipleship sessions with open forum discussions and questionnaires. Benefits include a comprehensive understanding of biblical reliability and how to defend the Bible.

The study is being conducted at  
Covenant Baptist Church  
11090 Old Hwy 63S  
Lucedale, MS 39452

Grant McLain, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Please contact Grant McLain at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] for more information.**

Liberty University IRB – 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515

## Appendix C

## Invitation to Participate

January 23, 2022

Mr. John Doe  
Church Member  
Covenant Baptist Church  
PO Box 33333  
Leakesville, Mississippi 39451

Dear John Doe:

As a doctoral student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting a project as a part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Biblical Studies. The purpose of my project is to better understand where Covenant Baptist Church members feel inadequate in defending the trustworthiness of the Bible to skeptics and formulating a six-week study to address any gaps in understanding or discipleship regarding the Bible and its defense, and I am writing to invite eligible, adult participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, must desire to be more knowledgeable about defending the Bible to a skeptical person or in a witnessing encounter, and implement discipleship material in their daily walk with God in the world. Participants, if willing, will be asked to answer survey question regarding the doctrine of the Bible, attend six discipleship training sessions regarding Biblical trustworthiness, participate in role play scenarios using the witness/skeptic scenario, and participate in a post-session survey. It should take approximately six weeks of one to one and a half hour sessions on Sunday nights to complete the above required sessions and pre and post evaluations (15 minutes each). Participation will be completely anonymous and no personal identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please complete the enclosed pre-session survey and hand return it to Pastor Grant McLain. You may direct any questions regarding this research study to Pastor Grant McLain at [REDACTED], or by mail at [REDACTED].

A consent document is provided and contains additional information about my project. Because this participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you prefer to do so at the first discipleship session.

Sincerely,

Rev. Grant McLain  
Pastor

[REDACTED]

## Appendix D

## Consent to Participate

**Title of the Project:** Equipping Covenant Baptist Church to Defend the Bible in a Skeptical World

**Principal Investigator:** Harlan Grant McLain, Pastor of Covenant Baptist Church, Doctor of Ministry Candidate of Liberty University

**Invitation to be Part of a Church Project**

You are invited to participate in an academic and church project. To participate, you must be an adult member (18+ years of age) of Covenant Baptist Church who desires to be equipped regarding the reliability of the Bible in a skeptical world. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

**What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study project is to equip Covenant Baptist church to defend the Bible. As one would face a skeptic or encounter someone who has questions regarding biblical reliability, you will understand how God communicated and wrote His word to corrupt humanity and then carefully preserved His Word through redeemed, human instruments.

**What will happen if you take part in this project?**

If you agree to be in this study project, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. To be involved in six consecutive weeks of interactive discipleship for 1 to 1 ½ hours which will be video recorded.
2. Provide open and honest feedback through questionnaires, interviews, role play, and open discussion times.
3. Be willing, as the Holy Spirit leads, to defend the Bible to a skeptic or in an evangelistic setting in one's personal, spiritual journey.

**How could you or others benefit from this project?**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this project are being equipped to defend the Bible to a skeptic or in an evangelistic encounter, growing in your appreciation of God and His Word, being able to be comfortable in various scenarios of defending the Bible. Benefits to society include becoming informed of the Bible's reliability and hopefully develop a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ of those individuals.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this project?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal as in normal day to day life.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of [pseudonyms/codes]. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. No identifiable data will be collected.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with people outside of the group.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this project is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Covenant Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the project?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the project leader at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from open discussion data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the project?**

The researcher conducting this project is Pastor Grant McLain. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Jacob Dunlow, at [REDACTED].



**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a project participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the project is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher/project leader will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature

## Appendix E

## Entrance Survey Questions

Use extra paper or the back if needed.

Please briefly describe your personal faith in Jesus Christ and how long have you been a Christian?

What Scripture passage indicates that the Bible is inspired by God and is profitable for life instruction and completely equips believers for good works? (Circle One)

- A. John 3:16
- B. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- C. Luke 4:18
- D. Luke 4:4

The Word of God is incorruptible and eternal according to 1 Peter 1:23-25. (Circle One)

- A. True
- B. False

The authority of the Bible rests in:

- A. The authority of a perfect God
- B. Its recorded miracles
- C. The church
- D. The credibility of its human authors

What is your understanding of the reliability of the Bible? Is it important to one's faith?

Describe the importance of the reliability of the Bible to a person's faith.

Describe your current comfort level regarding defending the on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the lowest level of comfort and 10 describing the strongest level of comfort in defending the Bible?

(Circle One)

Lowest 1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    Highest

Please briefly describe why you feel that you are at this level of comfort in defending the Bible.

What are your beliefs about the authority of God's Word? Is it reliable? Is it totally reliable or is it reliable only in matters of faith and practice?

How could discipleship in the local church better equip you to defend the Bible to a skeptic or to person to whom you are witnessing?

Please briefly describe how you might defend the Bible to a skeptic or in a witnessing setting.

What is biblical inerrancy?

What specific expectations regarding doctrine or discipleship do you have regarding this research project?

## Appendix F

## Exit Survey Questions

(Use extra paper or the back if needed)

Which Scripture passage best indicates the inspiration and profitability for life instruction that comes from the Bible? (Circle One)

- A. 2 Timothy 3:16-17      B. Luke 4:18      C. John 3:16      D. Luke 4:4

The Bible is authoritative because of: (Circle One)

- A. The authority of a perfect God      B. The church  
C. Its recorded miracles      D. The credibility of the human authors

The Bible is incorruptible and eternal according to 1 Peter 1:23-25 (Circle One)

- A. True  
B. False

Describe your understanding of the reliability of the Bible since completion of this study.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being the lowest level of comfort and 10 being the highest level of comfort, how would you now rate your comfortability in defending the Bible. (Circle One)

Lowest 1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      Highest

How has your personal faith been affected as a result of this study?

Describe the reliability of the Bible in your own words.

Describe the importance of the reliability of the Bible to a person's faith.

Describe if this research study has made a positive impact in your confidence to defend the Bible.

How would you relate the reliability of the Bible on a scale of 1 to 10 with one being lowest and 10 being highest? (Circle One)

Lowest      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10      Highest

How has your confidence changed, if any, regarding the Bible's reliability?

Describe whether your doctrinal or discipleship expectations were met regarding this research project.

What are some key verses that declare the trustworthiness of the Bible?

What is biblical inerrancy?

Describe how you might present the reliability of the Bible to a person who feels it has errors.

Would you recommend these discipleship sessions be employed in the ongoing discipleship ministry of the church? (Yes or No) Do you feel that you are a stronger Christian from participating in this study? (Yes or No) (Circle one answer to each question)

As you conclude this study are you convinced the Bible, in regard to scientific, theological, and historical truth has:

- A. Minor errors
- B. Major errors
- C. Historical errors
- D. Scientific errors
- E. Theological errors
- F. All of the above
- G. None of the above

How has your opinion changed about the Bible as a result of the study?

Would you now intentionally seek an opportunity to defend the Bible to a skeptic?  
Circle One (Yes or No)

According to your own confidence level, would you now attempt to engage a skeptic in some way regarding trustworthiness of the Bible? Circle One (Yes or No)

## Appendix G

### Defense of the Bible Lesson Outlines

#### Lesson 1 Defending the Bible in A Skeptical Culture

Pastor Grant McLain

The Bible is a unique work among all sacred books. It is special revelation from God to mankind. The Bible is the believer's guide and sourcebook for eternal salvation. Most Christians are familiar with its content and believe its message. However, many believers are unable to defend the text in a hostile or skeptical setting. The goal of this study is not simply to encourage the reading, study, and adherence of the Bible but to understand why the Bible is true and authoritative as well as how one might approach the Bible's defense (apologetic) in a situation where a person does not accept it as authoritative or declares it a book of myths rather than accepting it as God's absolute truth to a world in need of redemption.

Many statements have been drawn up to declare the reliability and the authority of the Bible. One such declaration is the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message adopted by Southern Baptist churches across the world. The author of this material had the distinct privilege of being able to attend the convention that revised and embraced this seminal document of Baptist doctrine. This statement of faith, regarding the Bible, supplies a good starting point for such a study as this. It states:

“The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.”

Scripture references are listed to undergird this statement of faith as well: “Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 34:16; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46 John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.”

*(The Baptist Faith and Message: A Statement Adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention June 14, 2000, Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 2000, reprinted 2015, 7.)*

Such a statement and Scripture references provide an excellent framework for a biblical foundation for the defense of the Bible.

## Biblical Foundation for a Trustworthy Bible

A good starting point for biblical foundation of the Scripture is Genesis 1. It is here that God speaks, and things and people are created out of nothing. With the speech of God, creative activity follows in Genesis. Later in the Scriptures, God begins to communicate to His creation as He pursues relationship with Adam and Eve and their descendants. Early on, the Bible declares God as the Creator, Divine-Originator, and Prime Mover. God, not only authoritatively brings life into existence but also interacts with life on an intimate level which is loving, caring, authoritative, personal, and ultimately; salvific. The Bible purposes to secure a relationship with God for human beings by remedying the problem of sin through Jesus Christ.

Let's note a verse that brings light on the origin and purposes of God in Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

### The Inspiration of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:15-17 says:

<sup>15</sup> And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (*King James Version (WORDsearch Edition)* (WORDsearch, n.d.), 2 Tim. 3:15–17.)

Let's draw some conclusions from these important verses for our study. From these verses, we see:

1. **The Bible is reliable.** V. 15 As the Apostle Paul writes to his young son in the ministry, Timothy, he understands that the Scripture was handed down to Timothy for instruction at an early age. It is the same Old Testament Scripture that Timothy was trained in by his mother and grandmother. At the same time, it is understood that this biblical foundation was provided to Timothy in his childhood as accepted, embraced, and important to the formation of entire person. Furthermore, the Bible was the source of truth to make a person "wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." So, Timothy's family embraced Scripture as foundational truth and vital to bringing one to an understanding of their need to turn from sin in repentant faith and unto Jesus Christ.
2. **The Bible is God-breathed.** V. 16 The origin of the Bible is eternal God. He spoke and the Word of God existed and was recorded. It is His voice, His very breath. The Father in heaven is perfect and demands the same of His children. (Matthew 5:48) Thus, God is a perfect being. It stands to reason that a Perfect Being speaks perfect truth. Therefore, it can be reasonably deduced that the Bible is reliable because God is perfectly reliable. There are no changing variables in God. (Psalm 102:5-27; Malachi 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:13; James 1:17) God, the Son, who is the essence of the Father, is always the same. (Hebrews 13:8) God does not lie. (Numbers 23:19) God is all-wise. (Isaiah 40:28) As the Eternal God. His words are eternal and fixed. (Psalm 119:89; 33:11) God is the eternal and immortal King of the Ages both now and in time to come. (1 Timothy 1:17)

3. **The Bible perfectly achieves its divine purpose.** Vv. 15-17 The Bible is such a trustworthy document that it is reliable to mature a believer into God's intended purpose for their lives. It is reliable to give Timothy a firm foundation for life. V. 15 It is reliable enough to bring about saving grace for Timothy from sin by repentant faith in Jesus, God's Son. V. 15 It is reliable for "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction." V. 16 It is reliable to furnish the believer completely for all that God wants them to do and be.

**God's Life-Giving, Powerful Word**  
**1 Peter 1:23-25**

Romans 10:17 "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." KJV  
Upon reception of the eternal Word, we have assurance of an eternal salvation. The two go hand in hand!

**1. The Demonstration of God's Powerful Word! V. 23**

- A. It brings new birth! V. 23a; John 1:13-14
- B. It is an incorruptible seed! V. 23b; James 1:18
- C. It is God's Word! V. 23c; 2 Timothy 3:16
- D. It lives and abides forever! V. 23d

**2. The Description of God's Powerful Word! V. 24-25a**

- A. God's Word is not a temporary power. V. 24
  - 1) Like the flesh v. 24a
  - 2) Like the glory of man v. 24b
  - 3) Like the grass v. 24c
- B. God's Word is an eternally enduring power. V 25a

**3. The Declaration of God's powerful Word! V. 25b**

Psalm 102:12; Isaiah 40:8

The Word of God is the Gospel proclaimed to you.

John 1:1 Jesus is the Living Word!

Application – Romans 10:17 is just as true today as it ever was!

**Applying the Lesson/role play scenarios**

What verse in today's study sticks out to you as a verse that relates the reliability of the Bible?

How would you explain that verse to a skeptic?

What have Baptists; for instance, traditionally said about the Bible?

What is the nature of the Bible?

Is the Bible trustworthy?

What is the primary purpose of the Bible?



## **Lesson 2 Equipping Covenant Baptist Church to Defend the Bible**

Pastor Grant McLain

In 1 Peter 3:16, the Bible calls us to give a ready defense to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is within you.

### **How We Got the Bible!**

2 Peter 1:16-21

#### **1. The Bible provides proper integrity to its readers! V. 16a**

The Bible is not commonly devised fables/myths. The amazing narratives in the Word of God are truth!

“The Jews who copied the manuscripts cared a great deal about what they were preserving. This was a precious book to them, the Word of God.” p. 66 (Clark, Mark. *The Problem of God: Answering A Skeptic’s Challenges to Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.)

P. 24 “NT writers did not conform their writings to modern notions of historical precision. Rather they followed the accepted conventions of their day telling the truth about their subject matter in ways that would be on target in their original contexts and for their original audiences.”  
 P. 27 “The Bible itself is a great thing. The canons of the OT and the NT are wonderful witnesses. But before they ever existed there was a truthful God who spoke a truthful word to his prophets, priest, kings, apostles, and to his own Son and His family.” p. 27 “The NT is truthful and trustworthy in all that intends to assert and teach us- and its subjects include history, theology, and ethics.” Witherington, III, Ben. “The Truth Will Out: An Historian’s Perspective on the Inerrancy Controversy.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 56, no.1 (March 2014):19-27.

P. 303 “The process by which a literary composition saw the light of the day was a long, drawn-out procedure of correction, editing, polishing, and rewriting. At times it was a community effort that involved some of the author’s closest associated who gave constructive criticism and suggested changes.” (Mitchell, Timothy N. “What Are the NT Autographs? An Examination of the Doctrine of Inspiration and Inerrancy in Light of Greco-Roman Publication.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 59. no. 2, (June 2016), 287-308)

#### **2. The Bible provides proper instruction to its readers! Vv. 16b-18**

A. It attests to heaven’s power and glory. V. 16bc

B. It attests to heaven’s promised Messiah. Vv. 17-18

#### **3. The Bible provides proper illumination to its readers! V. 19**

A. The Bible is God’s prophetic word that is strongly confirmed. V. 19a

B. The Bible is God’s providing word that is to be strongly heeded. vv. 19bc

- 1) It is a lamp in a dismal place providing saving hope. V. 19b
- 2) It is the morning star dawning unto saving grace. V. 19c

#### 4. The Bible provides proper inspiration to its readers! Vv. 20-21

##### A. The Bible is not for private but rather public interpretation. V. 20

- 1) Bible passages must be interpreted according to their immediate context (the section of Scripture where it is located).
- 2) Bible passages must be interpreted according to the context of the Bible book in which they are written.
- 3) Bible passages must be interpreted according to the context of the entire Bible. (John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: The John Phillips Commentary Series, The Expository Commentary*, 253)  
 “We must respect the historical givenness of the text, whether we are happy about it or not. We must do our detailed contextual study and exegesis of the text before jumping to applications and implications for today. Or even second order theological deductions based on the biblical text. The starting point must be the historical character and givenness of the text.” p. 25 (Witherington, III, Ben. “The Truth Will Out: An Historian’s Perspective on the Inerrancy Controversy.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 56, no.1 (March 2014):19-27)

##### B. The Bible is not by the will of human beings but by the Holy Spirit. V. 21

- 1) Holy men spoke from God. V. 21a (prophets and holy men)
- 2) Holy men were moved by God. V. 21b The Spirit of God gave direction and enlightenment to human instruments in such a unified and progressive way that we have a unified message of redemption through the Messiah, Jesus for all mankind. Thus, the Bible is God’s message with one redemptive theme and one central, salvific figure, Jesus who brings about one divine purpose, the glory of God by restoration of God’s kingdom from sin.

“Not only is the Bible a human book, it is also divine book. As 2 Peter 1:19-21 points out, behind the various human authors and prophets stood God, who through the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to say exactly what he wanted them to say.” (Lawrence, Michael. *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. P. 29)

“By inspiration in this sense is meant that the operation of the Holy Spirit by which the prophets of Israel were enabled to utter the word of God. The vocabulary was theirs; the message was his. Only to certain individuals, and only occasionally to them, was this enablement granted. But in the New Testament age the situation was different.” (Bruce, F.F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1988. 264)

## The Bible: God's Holy Word

### Selected Scripture

The Bible is composed of 66 books in 2 testaments; the Old Testament= 39 books of the Law, the Prophets, the Writings which declare the story of Israel and the Promised Messiah, the New Testament= 27 books including the Gospels, epistles which include the story of the Messiah and the church that He commissioned.

Bible comes from the term, *biblion*, Latin for "books." Later the term would incorporate any kind of written document. Ancient documents were written in stone by chisel, soft clay by a stylus, parchment- animal skins, vellum calf skins, and papyrus- paper made from the pulp of water reeds. In Greek, *graphe*, came to refer to the writings or Scriptures.

**Revelation-** the content that is disclosed in the Bible through God's communication to creation, synonymous to God's Word or the Word of God. (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 15-16)

**General revelation** is the revelation that is available to all people at all times through the physical creation, history, and the composition of the human nature.

**Progressive revelation** is the teaching that later revelation is built upon earlier revelation, containing truth which was not known beforehand.

**Special revelation** is God's revelation at particular times and places and through particular events and people. (Millard Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 143-144)

**Verbal Plenary** inspiration means that the Bible is completely inspired as the speech of God as He moved the human writers by His Spirit to communicate His very words with divine intent for mankind.

1. What is the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16-17  
Answer: God's inspired Word
2. Who inspired the Bible? 2 Peter 1:20-21  
Answer: The Holy Spirit
3. Who are the human instruments? 2 Peter 1:20-21  
Answer: Prophets, holy men
4. What is the Bible's revelation? John 5:39  
Answer: Reveals Jesus as Savior of mankind
5. What does the Bible do? Hebrews 4:12  
Answer: Discerns thoughts/intents of heart
6. What does the Bible impart? 1 Peter 1:23-salvation, 1 Peter 1:10-12-divine truth with promise of the Messiah  
Answer: Life

In Josh McDowell's *A Ready Defense: Over 60 Vital Lines of Defense for Christianity Topically Arranged for Easy Reference*, McDowell quotes Norman Geisler and William Nix in *A General Introduction to the Bible*, sharing 5 questions that were considered by early church fathers in deciding what books belonged into the Bible and help assure us of the Bible's careful preservation.

1. Is it authoritative- did it come from the hand of God?
2. Is it prophetic- was it written by a man of God?
3. Is it authentic- if they were in doubt, they threw it out?
4. Is it dynamic- did it come from the life-transforming power of God?
5. Was it received, collected, read, and used- was it used by the people of God?

Interestingly, the Apostle Peter places the work of Paul on a level playing field of other Scriptures in 2 Peter 3:16. In essence, Peter parallels the Old and New Testaments as Scripture.

#### Review and Role Play

1. What assurances do we have to say that the Bible is reliably God's Word?
2. What does the Bible say about itself?
3. What is revelation and its various parts?
4. Who were the human writers and who led them as the story of the Bible unfolds?
5. What standards were used to accept books of the Bible?
6. What is progressive revelation and how can it be used with Scripture to defend your faith?

**Lesson 3 Defense of the Bible and its Sufficiency: God's Reliable Word**  
**"God Speaks: Two Testimonies of Revelation"**

**Psalm 19**

Pastor Grant McLain

When referring to the sufficiency of the Bible, one is communicating that the Bible is adequate, genuine, and trustworthy in all of its revelations, intents, and purposes,

**1. General revelation reveals the speech and intent of God. Vv. 1-6**

General revelation – the information about God and His will as given to all people through the created order

- A. The conscience makes us accountable to God v. 1; Romans 2:14-16
- B. The Creation testifies to God's existence and His glory. Romans 1:19-21
- C. The Celestial light testifies to the Person of God.
  - 1) It shares the continual speech and knowledge of God. v. 2
  - 2) It shares the nature of God universally. Vv. 3-4
    - a. As the sun is supreme, God is supreme v. 4
    - b. As the sun dominates the sky, God dominates His Creation v. 4-5
    - c. As the sun knows all, so does God v. 6 Nothing is hidden from Him.

**2. Special revelation reveals the speech and intent of God. Vv. 7-14**

Special revelation is the unique and specific written Word of God and Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. Through special revelation, we know and believe the gospel of Jesus.

***A. 7 Statements for the Sufficiency of the Bible***

1. The instruction of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul v. 7 Perfect = whole or complete; God's law gives you everything you need in order to be saved, serve, and know God through abundant and eternal life. *God's Word can change your life.*
2. The testimony of the Lord is sure (trustworthy) enlightening the eyes (The Bible has the power to make one wise) v. 7b
  - a. The Bible's reliability is clearly taught here.
  - b. It enables us to make wise choices.
3. The statutes (precepts) of the Lord are right; rejoicing the heart. V. 8a
  - a. God's Word leads you down right paths.
  - b. God's Word brings joy when we have taken the right path
4. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. V. 8b
  - a. God's Word is a pure light to show the way.
  - b. God's Word scatters the darkness and reveals the safest path to tread.
5. The fear of the Lord is clear, enduring forever. V. 9a
  - a. God reveals Himself and His will in a perfect way.
  - b. God's Word is unchanging and always relevant as it endures forever.
6. The judgments (ordinances) of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
  - a. God is the righteous and supreme Judge.
  - b. God's judgments are always true and right.
7. God's Word is more desirable than the finest gold or the sweetest honey. V. 10
  - a. The Bible is more valuable than anything you own.

b. The Bible affords us the opportunity to enjoy the sweetness of the Lord.  
Ps. 34:8

***B. One Set of Guidelines for Life Vv. 11-14***

- 1) The Bible warns us of the danger of sin.
  - a. It discerns our secret faults v. 12
  - b. It protects us from willful sins v. 13
- 2) The Bible is sufficient to direct v. 14
  - a. Our external words
  - b. Our internal thoughts

Conclusion – The Bible is sufficient to save your soul and direct your life.  
The Bible is totally sufficient!  
Read it! Heed it! Believe it!

**God's Reliable Word: What the Bible says about Itself**

1. The Israelites accepted Scripture as being from God as Moses shared it in both spoken and written forms. Exodus 24:3-4
2. The Israelites followed Scripture for life as a nation and did not add to it or diminish it in any way. Deuteronomy 4:1-2
3. Joshua trusted and obeyed God's Word as the leader of Israel. He followed the Bible as a guide for success and courage to lead Israel. Joshua 1:8-9
4. The Israelites accepted the entirety of the law. Joshua 8:34-35a
5. Psalm 19, through general and special revelation, records that the speech of God is perfect V. 7, converts the soul V. 7, sure- making wise the simple V. 7, right and rejoices the heart V. 8, pure- enlightening the eyes V. 8, true & righteous altogether V. 9, desired over fine treasure or fine food V. 10, warning and a reward V. 11.
6. The nature of the Bible is delineated in Psalm 119:
  - A. It inhibits sin. V. 11
  - B. It is forever settled in heaven. V. 89
  - C. It is a lamp and a light. V. 105
  - D. Is right and truthful. Vv. 127-128
  - E. Is wonderful and gives light and understanding. Vv. 129-130
  - F. Is pure and the love of God's servant. Vv. 137-140
  - G. Brings peace. V. 165
7. The Scripture is the faithful Book of the Lord. Isaiah 34:16
8. Jeremiah the Prophet internalized and rejoiced in the Scripture. Jeremiah 15:16
9. Jeremiah delivered the judgments and commands of the Lord as God's truth. Jeremiah 36
10. Jesus both fulfills and promises fulfillment of God's Word Matthew 5:17-18
11. Humans err in not knowing and embracing God's Word and power. Matthew 22:29
12. God's Word will not pass away. Luke 21:33
13. The Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament through Jesus Christ. Luke 24:44-48
14. Bible study reveals Jesus as the Source of Salvation. John 5:39

15. The Holy Spirit illuminates the truth from God's Word unto His glory. John 16:13-15
16. The Bible sanctifies the saint. John 17:17
17. The New Testament verifies the Old Testament through notable quotes. Acts 2:16-20
18. The Scripture was cherished and studied by early believers. Acts 17:11
19. The Scripture was written to provide learning and hope for the future. Romans 15:4
20. The mysteries of the Old Testament are revealed through the gospel in the New Testament. Romans 16:25-26
21. God inspired the Bible for our benefit 2 Timothy 3:16-17
22. God speaks specially through His servants and His Son. Hebrews 1:1-2
23. God's Word is unique in its power and discernment. Hebrews 4:12
24. God's eternal Word brings new creations and thorough cleansing. 1 Peter 1:22-25
25. God's sure Word came by His holy servants. 2 Peter 1:19-21

#### Considerations for this Lesson

1. Is the Bible reliable?
2. How does the Bible convey its own reliability? What does it say about itself?
3. What verses would you use to convey the reliability of the Bible? From the Old Testament? From the New Testament?
4. Were the Israelites careful to accept and preserve God's Word? If so, how?
5. What verses specifically testify to the sufficiency of the Scripture?

## Lesson 4 God's Purposes in Giving Scripture

### Pastor Grant McLain

#### God speaks to us in His Word because:

1. **We cannot understand Him on our own!** Psalm 145:3; Job 26:14; Romans 11:33-34
2. **He wants us to know Him personally!** Jeremiah 9:23-24; John 14:8-11; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:12; I John 2:13
3. **He wants us to have the truth!** I Corinthians 2:6-16
4. **He wants us to glimpse His glory and power!** Job 26
5. **He wants to instruct us with hope!** Romans 15:4
6. **He provides protection and reproof!** Proverbs 30:4-6
7. **He is the only being who is totally trustworthy!** Numbers 23:19
8. **His word will be accomplished!** Matthew 5:17-18
9. **He wants to lead us on right paths versus wrong paths that lead to destruction!**  
James 1:16-18

### God's Word: A Call to Return to God's Worldview

#### 2 Kings 17:1-18

**Introduction:** When a court case is decided in civil or criminal case, the case must be argued as to the facts in order to convince a jury of one's peers in order to convey a just outcome. Essentially, the case must be presented for and against in order to get to a verdict. In Genesis 2-3, God created man and woman, set them in the Garden of Eden to tend it, and watched painfully as mankind brought sin and corruption through the temptation of the Serpent and Satan ultimately usurped the throne from God Who is the true King. We have had much discussion these past two years on election fraud and the possible usurpation of the presidency. The Bible is God's case for returning the Kingdom to Himself and restoring the order of a God-centered world. Ultimately, the Bible argues for the return of the world to the one true, King!

1. **In Scripture, God calls sinful people from idolatrous ways! Vv. 1-12 Why?**
  - A. Judgment was prepared and ready to be executed. Vv. 1-6
  - B. Sin had totally permeated God's people and world. Vv. 7-12

App- Don't stay in your sin! God loves you too much to leave you in sin! One of God's purposes in the Bible is to lay out the case for sin so that people see the depth of their condition and remember God's commands and return from the heights from which they had fallen. He wants us to stop sinning and live for Him! Will you do that today? Abandon your sin and yield yourself to God! Comparing better times to worse times as in the gas prices of today.

2. **In Scripture, God calls sinful people to repentance through His prophets and seers!**  
**V. 13**

In order to restore the Kingdom to God,

- A. Prophets and seers spoke against the sins of Israel and Judah. V. 13a
- B. Prophets and seers spoke a message of repentance- a change of mind that leads to a change of behavior. V. 13b
- C. Prophets and seers spoke a message of returning to God. V. 13c

App- God used His prophets to record His truth in order to return His people to Himself. The essence of repentance is changing direction in your life like you would your car in order to get on the right path. Return to God's worldview, His path for you today! Beloved, return to God!



**3. In Scripture, God calls sinful people to see the sinfulness of their heart! Vv. 14-18**

In Scripture, we see that sin had caused the people to:

- A. Be unwilling to hear God's voice. V. 14a
- B. Harden their necks. V. 14b
- C. Be unbelieving. V. 14c
- D. Reject God's Word. V. 15a
- E. Embrace a futile existence- wasted living through vain choices. V. 15b
- F. Choose worldly ways over God's ways V. 15c
- G. Embrace idolatry. V. 16
- H. Sacrifice their children- deny and destroy the image of God. Vv. 17-18

App- Turning the light on reveals the dirt on the lampstand. God's word is the light that reveals our sin. The Bible gives us an honest look at the dark stain of sin in our hearts so that we confess it and forsake it for the King of our hearts!

**Closing:** The reason for anchors is to keep the boat from drifting. God's word reveals our sin and how far we have drifted from Him. It is the anchor that keeps us from drifting as it keeps us grounded in His Truth. Will you get grounded today by returning to God and His Word? Be saved and follow God today! After all, He wrote 66 books to get you to return to Him! Return to God's Worldview by coming back to the King today!

**For Reflection and Review**

1. Why is God's purpose in writing the Bible important to its defense?
2. How might you defend the Bible by appealing to the God's purpose in writing Scriptures?
3. What verses stand out to you for Bible defense?
4. What is God's worldview? Is it the same as a biblical worldview?

**Lesson 5 Doctoral Study on the Reliability of the Bible**  
Pastor Grant McLain

**Additional Witnesses in the New Testament of the Old Testament Scripture**

Matthew 21:42; 26:54-56; John 10:35; Acts 17:2; 18:28; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:8; 22; 4:30; 1 Timothy 5:18; John 7:38

**What about the Apocrypha?**

**Apocrypha**= books written between 200 BC and AD 400 that were not included as inspired in the 66 books of the accepted and authoritative canon of the Bible

**Sample Old Testament apocryphal books** (primarily written in the time of the 2nd Temple in the Intertestamental time period)

Bel and the Dragon, I & 2, 3 & 4 Esdras, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Prayer of Manasseh, Tobit, Judith, Rest of Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremy, Song of the 3 Children, Story of Susanna

**Sample New Testament apocryphal books** (primarily written post-New Testament after the death of the original apostles)

Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas AD 70-79, Epistle to the Corinthians AD 96, Ancient Homily also called the 2nd Epistle of Clement AD 120-140, Shepherd of Hermas AD 115-140, Didache, The Teaching of the 12 AD 110-120, Apocalypse of Peter about AD 150, The Acts of Paul & Thecla AD 170, Epistle to the Laodiceans about the 4th Century AD, The Gospel According to the Hebrews AD 65-100, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians AD 108, the 7 Epistles of Ignatius AD 100

**Reasons why the Apocrypha is rejected as Scripture**

1. None of these books enjoyed any more than a temporary or local recognition. (They were not accepted by the churches abroad)
2. Most of them never had any more than a semi-canonical status and were appended to various manuscripts or mentioned in tables of contents.
3. No major canon or council included them as inspired books.
4. The limited acceptance enjoyed by apocryphal books is that they were attached to references in canonical books because of their alleged apostolic authority.

There are other pseudepigraphal books (false) not listed here but are declined for the same reasoning.

Resource: Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 25. Primary Resource: Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), p. 317.

## Dealing with Skeptics

Primary Source: Alex McFarland, *10 Answers for Skeptics*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2015)

Alex McFarland offers the following advice in dealing with skeptics:

### The Three Cs

1. **Confirm:** Listen carefully to what the skeptic is saying and see if you can *mentally* classify their argument in the following categories: *materialist*- the existing world is all there is, *scientific*- these objections fall back on testable proof for the existence of God, *antinomian*- “anti-law” where the person does not follow a certain moral code and are a law unto themselves, *religious*- uses religious principles to question religion, usually general terms to reject the Bible’s claims on a religious basis because religion has divided and killed people over the millennia, *Christian*- these individuals deny or reject the basic fundamentals of Christianity, *emotional*- people who have been hurt or let down by Christianity or religion, *circumstantial*- these individuals are critical of the Bible because of circumstances like evil and suffering in the world.
2. **Clarify:** ask exploratory questions but be conversational and definitely not indicting. Try to determine their main objections in order to religion or Christianity.
3. **Connect:** strive to build a relationship with the person, after all, they are a person and not a project. Make your time together more than talking about religion or faith. Connect on a personal level with their life and interests. Find some common ground and go from there. Absolutely, do not be fake or overly authoritative in any given subject.

(*10 Answers for Skeptics*, pp. 41-42.)

McFarland quotes James Spiegel on p. 42 from *The Making of An Atheist: How Immorality Leads to Unbelief* when he writes “Belief in God is not merely a matter of evidence. There are also personal dynamics, both moral and psychological, that influence belief formation.” (p. 132 in Spiegel) McFarland concurs with Spiegel that the atheists view is based on self and not God, therefore; their beliefs and values convey the same self-centeredness. McFarland says: “His point (with which I agree) is that unbelief is more about *will* than about evidence and logical argumentation.” (McFarland, p. 42)

So, as we begin to deal with answer skeptics questions, we have to keep the individual in mind and remember that there will is not given to God’s will. They are selfish and their thinking is tainted by it; even if they are skeptical. However, our interest is not for argumentation but the witness that we and the Spirit bear unto them is for the sake of their ultimate salvation. Remember, we are not arguing a point but loving them with Scripture into the Kingdom of God!

## Lesson 6 Defending the Bible

### Pastor Grant McLain

#### The testimony of prophecy argues the reliability of the Bible

The example of the Prophecies about the Coming Messiah in the Old Testament and Fulfilled in the New Testament is great example of prophecy proving the reliability of the Bible as these promises came true through Jesus Christ.

The New Testament writers believed Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy: Acts 3:18; 10:43; 13:29, 17:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Romans 1:2; 1 Peter 2:5-6; Matt. 2:4-6

**The Feast in Leviticus 23 are laid out. The New Testament asserts that these feasts find their fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus.** Passover- Death of Jesus Christ 1 Cor. 5:7, Unleavened Bread- Holy life of Christ in 1 Cor. 5:8; First Fruits- Resurrection- 1 Cor. 15:23; Pentecost- Outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 1:5; 2:4; Trumpets- Israel's regathering in Matt. 24:31; Atonement- Cleansing by Jesus Christ in Rom. 11:26-27; Tabernacles- Zech. 14:16-18.

#### Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Christ Jesus

##### Promise given

##### Fulfillment

Born as seed of a woman Genesis 3:15	Galatians 4:4; Mt. 1:20
Born of a virgin Isaiah 7:14	Mt. 1:18; 24-25; Luke 1:26-35
Son of Abraham Gen. 12:2-3; 22:18	Mt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16
(Interestingly in Genesis 22:18; we find the only time that God swears by Himself.)	
Son of Isaac Ge. 21:12	Lk. 3:23-24, Mt. 1:2
Son of God Ps. 2:7; 1 Chron. 17:11-14, 2 Sam. 7:12-16	Lk. 3:23, 34; 1:33; Matt. 1:2
Born of Tribe of Judah Gen. 49:10; Mic. 5:2	Lk. 3:23, 33; Mt. 1:2; Heb. 7:14
Born of Jesse Is. 11:1, 10	Lk. 3:23, 32
House of David Jer. 23:5	Lk. 3:23, 31; Mt. 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15, 22:41-46; Mk. 9:10 10:47-48; Lk. 18:38-39; Acts 13:22-23; Rev 22:16
Born at Bethlehem Mic. 5:2	Mt. 2:1, 4; Lk. 2:4-7; Jn. 7:42
Presented with Gifts Ps. 72:10	Mt. 2:1, 11
Herod slaughters children Jer. 31:15	Mt. 2:16
His Pre- Existence Mic. 5:2	Col. 1:17; Jn. 17:5, 24; Rev. 1:1-
2,17,	
He is called Lord Ps 110:1; Jer. 23:6	2:8; 8:58; 22:13
Immanuel Is. 7:14	Lk. 2:11; Mt. 22:43-45
Prophet Deut. 18:18	Mt. 1:23; Lk. 7:16
Priest Ps. 110 :4	Mt. 21:11; Lk. 7 :16; Jn. 4:19, 6:14; 7 :40
Judge Is. 33 :22	Heb. 3 :1; 5 :5-6 Jn. 5:30; 2 Tim. 4 :1

King Ps. 2 :6; Jer. 23 :5; Zech. 9 :9	Mt. 27:37; 21:5; Jn. 18:33-38
Zeal for God Ps. 69:9; 119:139	Jn. 2:15-16
Preceded by a messenger Is. 40:3; Mal. 3:1	Mt. 3:3; 1:10; Jn. 1:23; 1:17
Begin Ministry in Galilee Is. 9:1	Mt. 4:12-13, 17
Ministry of Miracles Is. 35:5-6; Is. 32:3-4	Mt. 9:35; 32-33; 11:4-6; Mk. 7:33-35; Jn. 5:5-9; 9:6-11; 11:43-44, 47
Teacher of Parables Ps. 78:2	Mt. 13:34
Enter the Temple Suddenly Mal. 3:1	Mt. 21:12; Jn. 1:14; 2:19-21
Ride to Jerusalem on a donkey Zech. 9:9	Lk. 19:35-37; Mt. 21:6-11
Stone of Stumbling to Jews Ps. 118:22; Is. 8:14; 28:1	1 Pet. 2:7; Rom. 9:32-33
Light to Gentiles Is. 60:3; 49:6	Acts 13:47-48; 26:23; 28:28
Resurrection Ps. 16:10	Acts 2:31, Mt. 28:6; Mk. 16:6
Ascension Ps. 68:18	Acts 1:9
Seated at God's Right Hand Ps. 110:1	Heb. 1:3; Mk. 16:19; Acts 2:34-35
The next prophecies of Christ were fulfilled in 1 day	
Betrayed by friend Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14	Mt. 10:4; 26:49-50; Jn. 13:21
Sold for 30 pieces of silver/money brought back Zech. 11:12-13	Mt. 26:15; 27:3-5
Price for Potter's Field Zech. 11:13	Mt. 27:7
Forsaken by Disciples Zech. 13:7	Mk. 14:27, 50; Mt. 26:31
Falsely Accused Ps. 35:11	Mt. 26:59-60
Silence before Accusers Is. 53:7	Mt. 27:12
Wounded and Bruised Is. 53:5; Zech. 13:6	Mt. 27:26
Smitten and spit upon Is. 50:6; Mic. 5:1	Mt. 26:67; Lk. 22:63
Mocked Ps. 22:7-8	Mt. 27:29; 41-43
Fell under Cross Ps. 109:24-25	Jn. 19:17; Lk. 23:26; Mt. 27:31-32
Hands and feet pierced Ps. 22:16, Zech. 12:10	Lk. 23:33; Jn. 20:25
Crucified with Thieves Is. 53:12	Mt. 27:38; Mk. 15:27-28
Intercession for Persecutors Is. 53:12	Lk. 23:34
Rejected by Own People Is. 53:3; Ps. 69:8; 118:22	Jn. 7:5, 48; 1:11; Mt. 21:42-43;
Hated w/o cause Ps. 69:4; Is. 49:7	Jn. 15:25
Friends stand far off Ps. 38:11	Lk. 23:49; Mt. 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40
People shook their heads Ps. 109:25; 22:7-8	Mt. 27:39
Stared upon Ps. 22:17	Lk. 23:35
Garments parted and lots cast Ps. 22:18	Jn. 19:23-24
Suffered thirst/gall and vinegar given Ps. 69:21	Jn. 19:28-29; Mt. 27:34
Forsaken cry Ps. 22:1	Mt. 27:46
Committed Himself to God Ps. 31:5	Lk. 23:46
Bones not broken Ps. 34:20	Jn. 19:34
Side pierced Zech. 12:10	Jn. 19:34
Darkness over all the land Amos 8:9	Mt. 27:45
Buried in a rich man's tomb Is. 53:9	Mt. 27:57-60

Resource for this section: Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, pp. 168-192

## **Some Defenses of the Bible**

Resource for this section: Alex McFarland, *10 Answers for Skeptics*

**Skepticism exists over the OT on moral or philosophical grounds and some individuals are unable to accept that God would require Israel to the Canaanite upon their conquest of the Promise Land.**

Answer: God gave over 400 years of opportunity for Canaan to repent according to Genesis 15. The Canaanites were an ungodly people and were guilty of idolatry in Deuteronomy 7:1-6, and child sacrifice and bestiality according to Leviticus 18. Also, they would have constantly tried to annihilate Israel and the future Messiah to come from them.

-Alex McFarland, *10 Answers for Skeptics*, p. 35

**Has archaeology proven the Bible?**

Answer: Yes, the names of ancient kings, cities, settlements, battlegrounds have been verified by archaeology. King David was considered a legend before archaeologists discovered tablet from one of Israel's neighbors that verified him as the king of Judah.

-Alex McFarland, *10 Answers for Skeptics*, p. 157

**Is there any evidence that verifies the miracle stories of Jesus?**

Answer: Yes, there are writers who are contemporary to the New Testament that can verify Jesus' miracles. One such person is the Jewish historian, Josephus. Even the Sadducees, enemies of Jesus, acknowledged his miracles but attributed them to Satan.

-Alex McFarland, *10 Answers for Skeptics*, p. 159

**How do we know the Bible is God's Word?**

Answer: The Bible claims to be God's Word- Psalm 93:5; 119:89; Prov, 30:5; Mt. 24:35; John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled and are continuing to be fulfilled this day. The unity of the redemptive message and work of God is evident in all 66 books over the thousands of years in which it was written by multiple authors from multiple cultural and physical settings. p. 164

**Who decided the books to be included in the Bible?**

Simple Answer: It came about gradually though some disagreement occurred early on about a few of the books. The early church and its leaders were using the books we have today. In AD 367, Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria listed the books which correspond to the Protestant Bible of today. Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox include some other books not in the Protestant text. p. 164

**Is what we have now really the original?**

Answer: Yes, with pretty good authority We have thousands of complete and partial manuscripts of the Bible dated very close to the actual events with some minor textual differences that do not affect major doctrine. Ancient and modern texts are very similar. p. 165

**How can one use finite language be used to portray and infinite God?**

Answer: Scripture is full of metaphors, similes, poetry, and other literary devices that try to convey God's truth to us. Just because literary devices are utilized does not mean one should reject the Bible as truth from an infinite God. Language is always limited in being totally descriptive but is dependable to communicate plain truth. p. 166

**What about the similarities between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity in their teachings?**

Answer: Though they come from similar origins, they do not teach the same things, overall. Differences between major faiths are well-researched and documented. *God Is Not One* by Boston University professor Stephen Prothero, is one such book that points out the differences in major world religions. For instance, Jews still await the Messiah while Christians accept Jesus as the Messiah. Islam denies the Trinity and rejects the death and resurrection of Jesus. In addition, Judaism and Islam are works based while Christianity is based in grace through faith. p. 166

## Lesson 7 Defending the Bible

Pastor Grant McLain

### *Defenses of the Bible*

Source: Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway) 2004.

#### 1. The argument of historical figures, mentioned in the Bible and verified in history.

Table 10.1, p. 270 (Geisler & Turek)

Person	NT Citation	Non-Christian Source(s)
Jesus	many citations	Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Phlegon, Thallus, Suetonius, Lucian, Celsus, Mara Bar-Serapion, Jewish Talmud
Agrippa I	Acts 12:1-24	Philo, Josephus
Agrippa II	Acts 25:13-26:32	coins, Josephus
Ananias	Acts 23:2; 24:1	Josephus
Annas	Lk 3:2, John 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6	Josephus
Aretas	2 Corinthians 11:32	Josephus
Bernice (wife of Agrippa II)	Acts 23:13	Josephus
Caesar Augustus	Lk 2:1	Josephus and many others
Claudius Caesar	Acts 11:28; 18:2	Josephus
Drusilla (wife of Felix)	Acts 24:24	Josephus
Egyptian false prophet	Acts 21:38	Josephus
Erastus	Acts 19:22	inscription (archaeology)
Felix	Acts 23:24-25:14	Tacitus, Josephus
Gallio	Acts 18:12-17	inscription
Gamaliel	Acts 5:34; 22:3	Josephus
Herod Antipas	Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:14-29; Lk 3:1; 23:7-12	Josephus
Herod Archelaus	Mt 2:22	Josephus
Herod the Great	Mt 2:1-19; Lk 1:5	Tacitus, Josephus
Herod Phillip I	Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17	Josephus
Herod Phillip II	Lk 3:1	Josephus
Herodias	Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17	Josephus
Herodias' dau., Salome	Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:14-29	Josephus
James	several citations	Josephus
John the Baptist	several citations	Josephus
Judas the Galilean	Acts 5:37	Josephus
Lysanias	Lk 3:1	inscription, Josephus
Pilate	several citations	inscription, coins, Josephus, Philo, Tacitus
Quirinius	Lk 2 :2	Josephus
Porcius Festus	Acts 24 :27-26 :32	Josephus
Sergius Paulus	Acts 13 :-12	inscription
Tiberius Caesar	Lk 3 :1	Tacitus, Suetonius, Paterculus, Dio Cassius, Josephus,



2. **The argument of Divine Design-** “Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from faith. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God.” -James Tour, Nano-scientist. The Bible sets forth a design and a designer. The heavens and the earth declare the glory of God and speak His truth to us. Ex. Psalm 19

**The teleological argument**, derived from the Greek word, telos, meaning design says: “1. Every design has a designer. 2. The universe has a highly complex design. 3. Therefore, the universe had a Designer.” Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) confirmed that creation proceeded from “an intelligent and powerful Being.” William Paley (1743-185) made famous the teleological argument with the common-sense illustration of a watch only existing at the hands of a watchmaker. Creation reveals this designer through the pages of the trustworthy Bible. p. 95

3. **The Top 10 Reasons We Know the New Testament Writers Told the Truth**

- 1) The New Testament writers included embarrassing details about themselves  
Ex. Mk 9:32; Lk 18:34; Jn 12:16; Mk 14:32-41; Mk 8:33; Gal 2:11; Mt 26:33-35; Jn 2:18-22; 3:14-18; Mt 12:39-41; 17:9; 22-23; 28:17
- 2) The New Testament writers included embarrassing (accusations) details and difficult sayings of Jesus. Ex. Mk 3:21, 31; Jn 7:5, 12; 6:53, 66; 8:30-31, 59; Mt 11:19; Mk 3:22; Jn 7:20; 8:48; 10:20; Lk 7:36-39; Deut. 21:23; Gal 3:13; Jn 14:28; Mt 24:36; Lk 18:19; Mt. 21:18ff; Mk 6:5
- 3) The New Testament writers left in the demanding sayings of Jesus. Ex. Mt 5:28, 32, 39-42, 44-45; 48; 6:19-21; 7:1-2
- 4) The New Testament writers carefully distinguished Jesus’ words from their own. Ex. Paul distinguishes himself from Jesus in 1 Cor 7:10-12. They did not take credit from God.
- 5) The New Testament writers include events related to the resurrection that they would not have invented. Ex. The burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the ruling council, the 1<sup>st</sup> witness as women over the disciples in all 4 Gospels, the conversion of priests afterwards Acts 6:7, the Jewish explanation of the empty tomb in Mt 28:11-15
- 6) The New Testament writers include more than 30 historically confirmed people in their writings. (See previous table)
- 7) The New Testament writers include divergent details. Ex. Matthew includes 1 angel at Jesus tomb while John includes 2. Many critics cite occasions like this in the New Testament to disprove the Bible. However, divergent truths strengthen the Bible because they are not necessarily contradictory but rather a perfect blend. Differences in texts can be easily described as more than one eyewitness testimony. (Personal note: This solution can also be applied to the Old Testament)
- 8) The New Testament writers challenge their readers to check out verifiable facts, even facts about miracles. Ex. Lk 1:1-4; 2 Pet 1:16; Acts 26; 1 Cor 15-500 eyewitnesses, 2 Cor 12:12

- 9) The New Testament writers describe miracles like other historical events: with simple, unembellished accounts. They simply listed the circumstances of the miracle and the miracle itself as accepted and provable facts.
- 10) The New Testament writers abandoned their long-held sacred beliefs and practices, adopted new ones, and did not deny their testimony under persecution or threat of death. Ex. OT animal sacrifice for the sacrifice of Jesus, law of Moses for the sinless Christ, strict monotheism for a trinitarian view, sabbath worship for Sunday, an OT conquering Messiah for a Lamb Who takes away the sin of the world. The NT writers were not the only ones to do this, many Jews and Gentiles converted to Christ.  
(Summarized from pp. 275-292)
4. **Messianic Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus.** Seed of the Woman Gen 3:15, Seed of Abraham Gen 12:3-17, Tribe of Judah Gen 49:10, Son of David Jer 23:5-6, He is God Isa 9:6; Born in Bethlehem Micah 5:2; Visits Temple Mal 3:1, Dies in 33A.D Dan 9:26, Rises from dead Isa 53:11 (p. 337)
  5. **Parallel passages** such as Gen 1 with Jn 1 & Col 1, Adam & Eve Gen 1 & 2 and 1 Tim 2:13-14, the marriage before Flood in Gen 6 & Lk 17:27; call of Abraham in Gen 12-13 & Heb 11:8; the Exodus in Ex 14:22 & 1 Cor 10:1-2; Brazen serpent Num 21:9 & Jn 3:14, Jonah and the great fish Jonah 2 & Mt 12:40, Daniel and the lions Daniel 6/ Hebrew youth in Daniel 3 mentioned in Hebrew 11:33-34, slaying of Zechariah 2 Chron 24:20-22 & Mt 23:35 just to name a few. (p. 360)
  6. **Individuals who cited the New Testament canon or claimed it was authentic after it was mostly written from the 1<sup>st</sup> 4 centuries-** Pseudo-Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Hermas, the Didache, Papias, Irenaus, Diognetus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine. **Canons** of Marcion 140A.D., Muratorian 170 A.D., Apostolic 300 A.D., Cheltenham 360 A.D., Athanasius 367 A.D. Translations Tatian Diatessaron c.170, Old Latin c.200, Old Syriac c.400. Confirmed by **Councils-** most books (only 5 questioned) in Nicea in 325-340, all NT books accepted Hippo in 393, Carthage in 397, Carthage in 419. (p. 369) These are also affirmed by Alex McFarland in *The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity*, p. 85
  7. **Jesus taught the Bible was the Word of God in 7 ways** as it is: 1) Divinely authoritative- Mt 4:1-10 2) Imperishable- Mt 5:17 3) Infallible- Jn 10:35, 17:17 4) 4) Inerrant- Mt 22:29 5) Historically reliable – Mt 24:37-38; 12:40; 24:15; quotes of OT in Mt 7:6-7; 13:14-15; Lk 4:17-19 6) Scientifically reliable- regarding male & female & marriage Mt 19:4-6, Jn 3:12 7) Has ultimate supremacy- Mt 15:3-9; 5:17; Lk 24:26-27; Jn 5:39-40 (pp. 356-359)

The following defenses for the Bible excerpted from:

Alex McFarland, *The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House), 2007

8. **Measurements-** It would be hard to imagine our world without some standard of measurement. We need them in order to function. Established rules and standards are universal to all cultures. Thus, we can all admit that standards are necessary. The Old and New Testaments are both God's standard bearers. We cannot reject the Bible and its standards in favor of another set of standards. The Bible can be accepted just as other standards are accepted as true. (pp. 75-76)

9. **Reasons to accept that the Bible is accurate, understandable, and intelligible-** “The Reason of Truth- The specific, verifiable claims of the Bible have all been found to be true. The Testimony of the Church- The Church throughout history-even during the first century, when there were eyewitnesses still alive to many of the incidents recorded in Scripture-took Scripture to be true. The Results of Orthodoxy- the teachings of Scripture have had a tremendous impact on individuals and culture. Its impact and power are not just slightly greater than other books but are of a different species altogether.” Therefore, sacred writings of world religions pale in comparison as they do not contain the power of God! p. 112
10. **Reasons for confirming the Bible’s trustworthiness:** “Internally consistent, Externally validated, Miraculously preserved, Comprehensively accurate, Christologically affirmed.” p. 96

The next defenses are excerpted from Alex McFarland’s *10 Answers for Skeptics*, (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House), 2011.

11. **Confirmation of the Bible-** Manuscripts- “no other ancient document comes anywhere close to the Bible in terms of accuracy of surviving copies. History- Archaeology has repeatedly verified the biblical record. While there are a small number of people & places that so far have no extra-biblical reference, there are no known inaccuracies in the Bible. Authorship- the men who wrote the Bible were men of integrity... Jesus Christ also testified that the Bible comes from God. Mt. 24:35; Jn 10:35. Prophecy- there are numerous prophecies in the Bible. A single false prophecy would be enough to refute the Bible’s claim to divine origin; instead, many prophecies have been fulfilled and none have been proven false. Power- For 2000 years, the Bible has exhibited amazing power to change people’s lives, even to the point of impacting history. No other book has shaped individuals-and even world events-like the Holy Bible.” pp. 182-183 People “automatically assume since the Bible is old, it has to contain errors.” “God’s Word- in every case throughout thousands of years-has been perfectly preserved.” p. 234
12. **Archaeology-** does archaeology prove the Bible? Yes and no. There is an amazing amount of archaeological evidence that has undergirded the Bible’s claims. However, archaeology is unable to prove “faith” as faith is clearly subjective. It does provide a supportive role in proving the history of the Bible in the finds that have been discovered for centuries. Archaeology does not seek to prove the Bible but assists to authenticate the message of the Bible. p. 189
13. **Manuscripts-** “1000’s of manuscripts copies, compared to the mere dozens for other unquestioned texts, a minimal amount of time between the events and the writings. And yet, the Bible is still scrutinized as a historical document.” p. 232 The data to prove the Bible is overwhelming if one researches it.
14. **McFarland quotes English scholar, F.F. Bruce-** “The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning... If the New Testament had been a collection of secular writings, their authority would generally be regarded as beyond doubt.” p. 84, F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 15

## Glossary and Related Commentary

**Autographs (Original)** – the original text of the Bible, sometimes refers to the oldest version of a particular, biblical book. Craig Blomberg argues that the original copies were copied repeatedly and countlessly over centuries and lend credence to the careful preservation of their contents. (Craig Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible?* 33-34) The Bible can be trusted because of its careful preservation in human history.

**Authority**- the right to command belief or action. (Millard Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 17) Authority is the self-declared and evidential power and influence over the life of human subjects as God’s truth. (Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible*, 205) The Bible is authoritative because God is and speaks truth. In addition, the Bible is trustworthy because God is the legitimate, ultimate, and final authority.

**Bible**- the divine-human book composing 66 books of the accepted canon; the written, Word of God. The Holy Spirit acts behind the human authors and inspired them to write exactly what God wanted them to say. (Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 29) The message of the Bible is salvation’s story through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. As grand, redemptive narrative, the Bible shares the story of Creation, the Fall of mankind, Redemption, and Restoration of fallen mankind. (Matthew Emerson, *The Story of Scripture: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*, 11)

**Biblical Reliability/Trustworthiness/Infallibility**- these are synonymous terms that communicate the faithfulness of the Bible from a very, reliable God. The Bible exclusively claims to be God’s exact communication to the human race. The early church went to great lengths, almost to the point of paranoia, to reject books that they deemed unreliable and accept only books that they redeemed as authoritative and reliable as God’s Word. (Andrew Kostenberger, Darrel Bock, and Josh Chatraw, *Truth Matters: Confident Faith in a Confusing World*, 62) Because of careful selection, preservation, and transmission through the centuries, the Bible is to be understood to be without mixture of error and can be embraced by all as God’s true word for all times. The reliability of Scripture is grounded in the reliability of God.

**Contradictions**- according to the historical-critical view, contradictions are problems or discrepancies, some being unreconcilable as one compares one Scripture passage to another. (Bart Ehrman, *Jesus Interpreted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don’t Know About Them)*, 19-20)

**Error**- something that is faulty, inaccurate, or including mistakes. (Mark Clark, *The Problem of God: Answering a Skeptics Challenges to Christianity*, 63)

**Historical Criticism**- or higher criticism is the school of thought that one can only make probable judgments regarding the past and the past can only be interpreted through the realities of the present. Higher critic says that since the Bible is a supernatural book, the Bible must be in error because anything supernatural is not reality. (Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview: Answering Modern Challenges to the Bible*, 45-47) The goal of higher criticism is being concerned with the original, historical context, who the authors were, and who they really

claimed to be, their personal persuasions, and their sources of information. (Bart Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 4)

**Illumination-** the work of the Holy Spirit in shedding light on the meaning of Scripture and conveys the eliciting of commitment from the hearer of Scripture and as outlined in John 14:16-17. (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 153)

**Inerrancy-** the inerrancy of the Bible refers to it not being tainted with any mixture of error and that it is wholly true and makes no claims that are not true. (Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 13) Inerrancy proclaims the Bible's trustworthy nature despite sinful, finite human authors because they were inspired by a single, divine author, the Holy Spirit. (Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 30) Scripture is "fully truthful" its statements as they are "correctly" interpreted in terms of their meaning in their cultural setting and the purpose for which they are written. (Millard, Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 259-263)

**Limited inerrancy** is the understanding that Scripture is only inerrant in matters of salvation. (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 167)

**Infallible-** a near synonym or alternative to the term inerrancy which communicates a certainty that something or someone is unable to err or fail while also denying the possibility of error. (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 168)

**Inspiration-** The Bible itself defines inspiration as being God-breathed in 2 Timothy 3:16 as He is the divine, truth giver who supervised and guided the human authors to convey His original intent. (Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs*, 29) See also 2 Peter 1:21.

**Revelation-** the content that is disclosed in the Bible through God's communication to creation, synonymous to God's Word or the Word of God. (John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 15-16) **General revelation** is the revelation that is available to all people at all times through the physical creation, history, and the composition of the human nature. **Progressive revelation** is the teaching that later revelation is built upon earlier revelation, containing truth which was not known beforehand. **Special revelation** is God's revelation at particular times and places and through particular events and people. (Millard Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 143-144)

**Skepticism-** when referring to the Bible, the belief that doubts the Bible and Christian faith as a whole and driven by gullibility and psychological weakness. Skeptics consider the Bible as "bogus." (Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 21)

**Word-** the Bible as God's revelation or communication to creation, that is real in the mind and reward to the human heart with no comparison to anything more true or more precious. (John Piper, "The Glory of God as Ground of the Mind's Certainty and the Goal of the Soul's Satisfaction" in *Scripture and the People of God*, 306)

**Worldview-** how one views the world from their own life circumstances, history, and environment. ((Vern Poythress, *Inerrancy and Worldview*, 20-21)