

“How Can You Believe the Bible?”

By: Doug Warren

How can you believe the Bible?

Often people think I am crazy. They may not say it in so many words, but that is what they are thinking. One of the reasons folks frequently question my grasp of reality is that as we talk about parenting, football, or even the weather I will occasionally refer to something from the Bible like it is real and trustworthy. Since it is not usually considered polite to openly declare someone off his or her rocker, this incredulity is sometimes expressed in the question, “How can you believe the Bible?”

This question is asked perfunctorily many times with no desire for an answer, but simply as a socially acceptable way of saying, “You’re really weird.” Indeed you may be reading this thinking to yourself, “The question is supposed to shut you up, not get you explaining your delusions.” Fair enough. There is only this one small thing. I also find in talking with folks that many have concluded that the Bible is not believable without ever really asking this question in any way other than simply rhetorically.

Every once in a while it seems to me, I get asked this question by someone who really wants to know. If you happen to be one of those folks, read on and I hope this helps. If not, it is okay. I have been called much worse than weird or crazy and I hope you read on anyway.

The first reason that I trust the Bible is that it is so raw. Its stories, poems, and letters resonate with the reality of life. The Scriptures are full of flawed people shown warts and all who yell, scream, laugh, and cry, who try hard, give up, attempt great things for God, despise Him, curse Him, love Him, and crumple in a heap because they can’t understand Him.

The heroes are shown to be both valiant and vulnerable. The villains are evil yet understandable. There are spies, prostitutes, kings, and peasants. Both the leaders and the followers continually fail at the most basic levels with disastrous results. It is not the kind of record anyone would make up. But it is precisely the kind of true to life account that shows God is faithful despite all our deficiencies.

The second reason that I believe the Bible is true is that it is so compelling. Not only does it have the ring of truth to its narratives and didactics, but the story moves with gripping intensity to a breath-taking triumph. We all know the old warning, “If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” Yet the grandeur of God actually revealing Himself and inviting us into relationship with Him provokes wonder. The more you enter into this awe-inspiring drama, the more you want it to be true, but wanting it to be true doesn’t make it so.

The real reason that I turn to the Bible again and again is the culmination of its story in the person and work of Jesus. If Jesus really is who He claims to be in the pages of Scripture, than there is nothing truer in all the universe than this book that tells me about Him. His story of sacrificial love that overcomes even my own brokenness provides answers to the deepest questions of my heart. Not just my experience, but the collective search of humanity. His life, death, and resurrection is the only thing that explains the human condition.

Whether you consider the foundational questions of philosophy, the complexity of science, or the conflict and conquest of history, there is nothing that answers the why with the same authenticity and fullness as Jesus. In His victory the jagged fallenness of the world is restored. In His self-sacrifice my selfishness is transformed to real love for neighbor. In His conquest over death the horror of so much dying and suffering in this world is finally answered.

In an interview in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Albert Einstein put it like this, “I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene. Jesus is too colossal for the pen of the phrase-mongers, however artful . . . No one can read the gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.”

The Bible shows *the* life that explains all life. Its candid authenticity and compelling plot not only explain my deepest longings, fears, and dreams, but give them meaning and purpose. Jesus is more than believable, He makes my faith possible.

It has been my experience that most people who dismiss the Bible do so not because of what it says, but because of how others have misused the text and often them too. This is something that the Bible itself addresses. There have always been people who have misappropriated the Bible for their own purposes. Jesus not only explains these charlatans, He provides the only lasting answer to all of our deceptions. He said, “I am the Truth . . .and the truth will set you free.”

The Bible is worthy of our trust and it is life-transforming if we will believe it. I pray that we will look to its author and grow in our understanding.