

Understanding
THE BIBLE
*(Its Message, Manuscripts, Composition,
and Greatest Translations)*

Charles Redmond
&
Jon Redmond

All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For the sake of clarity, all Scripture quotations, parenthesized Scripture references, and stand-alone Scripture references have been placed in italics.

Special Thanks

A special thanks to Cyndy Johnson for not only typing this booklet, but also for her extensive research on this project, her tedious documentation of such a large number of significant sources, and her incredibly helpful insights and practical assistance in the editing process. Cyndy has been a faithful ministry assistant at First Baptist Church for over 20 years, and she has been an indescribable blessing on every task that she has undertaken.

Thanks, Cyndy, for always doing extra, for always doing everything so amazingly well, and for always having such a sweet and cooperative spirit. May God give us many more years together at First Baptist. There is much work yet to do!

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to the people of God in previous generations who devoted their lives (and in some cases *sacrificed* their lives) to honoring the Word of God and doing their part to pass it on to the next generation. May we follow their example and devote our lives to that same noble task.

Introduction

The information contained in this booklet was compiled and prepared by Charles Redmond and Jon Redmond in conjunction with a five-week Wednesday night study on the Bible's message, manuscripts, composition, and greatest translations. The study took place at First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas, in the fall of 2021.

You will notice that the information in this booklet has been carefully prepared and is formatted very similarly to what thoroughly written lecture or sermon notes would look like. We have not attempted to turn this information into a traditionally formatted booklet. Instead, it is formatted in a way that will help you absorb large amounts of information in bite-sized, digestible sections and sentences.

While this booklet is *informative*, *historical*, and even somewhat *technical*, it is also *devotional* in nature in that it has a tremendous amount of practical application sprinkled in to keep it from becoming too academic and heavy. The information concerning the reliability of the Bible, the message of the Bible, different Bible translations, and the value of reading the Bible is especially practical. To be clear, though, this booklet is written to introduce (or reintroduce) you to material that is not often discussed in a local church setting. The material is not only interesting, but it is also extremely important and will give you a much deeper appreciation for the Bible.

If you are a skeptic of the Bible, we pray that what is written here will make you stop and think. We also pray that it will lead you to faith in *God's Word* as well as to faith in *God's Son*, Jesus Christ. If you are already a believer, we pray that the information contained here will confirm and even strengthen your confidence in the Word of God. The psalmist said: "*Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven*" (*Psalms 119:89*). Our prayer is that as you learn more about the Bible that the trustworthiness of God's Word will be forever settled in your heart as well.

What Makes the Bible So Special?

•The Bible is the best-selling book of all time.¹ For centuries, people have turned to the Bible for wisdom, counsel, guidance, comfort, strength, peace, direction, and hope. The Bible is *battle-tested* and has been proven trustworthy by millions of people over multiple generations for many different reasons. Let's consider some of the reasons the Bible is so reliable:

•**First of all, the Bible is reliable because of its clear, consistent, and unified message.** It was written by approximately 40 different writers who lived on 3 different continents over a period of about 1600 years.² Those writers came from different backgrounds. Some were farmers; some were fishermen; some were kings; some were historians; and one was a doctor.³

•The amazing thing, considering the diversity of the writers' backgrounds and the many centuries that separated many of their writings, is that the Bible has one clear message: *God loves people and wants to have a relationship with them.* Sin, though, stands between a holy God and the people whom He so loves. In order for there to be a relationship between God and people, that sin problem must be solved. That's why God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth. Jesus lived a perfect life and then died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The Bible says, "*The wages of sin is death,*" and Jesus paid that penalty for us (*Romans 6:23*). He then rose from the dead thus conquering death and making eternal life possible for all who will repent of their sins and trust Him to save them.

•In the Old Testament, we see glimpses of Jesus and hints about Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus is clearly revealed. The message of God's love and salvation, though, is the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Though the Old Testament and the New Testament are separated by hundreds of years, the central message of the Bible is unchanged. The message is clear, consistent, and unified from cover to cover. No book in human history is as uniquely written and compiled as is the Bible.

•**A second reason we can trust the Bible is because of all the fulfilled prophecies it contains.**⁴ In this sense, the Bible is the only book in the history of the world that literally proves itself.

•In the Old Testament, many prophecies were made about the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would one day come to earth. In the New Testament, those prophecies were fulfilled. For example, the Old Testament prophet Micah predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (*see Micah 5:2*). Isaiah, another Old Testament prophet, declared that the Messiah would be born of a virgin (*see Isaiah 7:14*). In *Psalms 22*, David prophetically described how the Messiah would be crucified. In another passage, David explained how the Messiah would be raised from the dead (*see Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:25-36*).⁵

•These prophecies were made hundreds of years before they were actually fulfilled. But they, along with hundreds of other Old Testament prophecies, were all fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.⁶ No other book in the world contains *prophecies and the fulfillment of those prophecies hundreds of years later...all within the pages of the same book.*

•**A third reason we can trust the Bible is because it is scientifically accurate.** The Bible declared that the earth is suspended in space (*see Job 26:7*), that it is round instead of flat (*see Isaiah 40:22*), and that the stars are too numerous to count (*see Jeremiah 33:22*) long before the scientific community acknowledged these truths.⁷ It should be noted, in reference to the stars, that God, the Maker of the stars, is able to count them all and even calls each star by name (*see Psalm 147:4*). No human being, though, can do that. There are just too many stars. Amazingly, the Bible spells all of this out for us.

•Science evolves and changes. Science, by nature, is always updating itself.⁸ That's not a criticism of science; it's just an honest acknowledgment of the way science works.

•The Bible, on the other hand, never changes. It is always the same. It never needs updating. It has been accurate ever since it was first written.⁹

•A fourth reason we can trust the Bible is because of the millions of lives that have been radically and dramatically changed by its compelling message.¹⁰ Hard hearts have been softened. Sinners have received forgiveness. Restless souls have found peace. Broken lives have been put back together. People have been changed from the inside out.

•The Bible is a book about God's unconditional and never-ending love. It is a book about forgiveness, second chances, and new beginnings. It is a book about Jesus Christ and His transforming power.

•Interestingly, the word “Bible” literally means “book.”¹¹ The Bible, though, is not just “a book,” it is “The Book.” It is the greatest “Book” of all time. No other book compares to it.

Where Did the Bible Come From?

•The Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God (*see II Timothy 3:16*).

•While the Bible was written by human beings, it was written by human beings who were inspired by God (*see II Peter 1:21*). The Bible is God's Word to us. While the Bible had many writers, God was its Author. God spoke through the different personalities of the biblical writers, but it is His perfect Word that has come to us.

•The Bible is the most valuable material possession we have. It is “a mirror” that reveals the sins and imperfections in our lives (*James 1:23-24*). It is “a fire” that purifies us (*Jeremiah 23:29*). It is “a hammer” that breaks up the hard places in our hearts (*Jeremiah 23:29*). It is the only book in the world that is alive. The Bible truly is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (*Hebrews 4:12*).

•We don't have the original manuscripts that Moses, David, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and the other biblical writers wrote. Those

manuscripts have long since been lost, burned, or in some other way destroyed. What we have today are Bibles that came to us through manuscripts that were copied from other manuscripts, that were copied from other manuscripts, that were copied from other manuscripts, etc., etc., that can thus be identified as having come from the original manuscripts that the biblical writers actually wrote themselves. We know that the oldest existing manuscripts came from the original manuscripts because of the authenticity, consistency, and sheer number of copied manuscripts.¹²

- There are no original manuscripts from any literature in the ancient world. This is true of all ancient literature, not just biblical literature.¹³

- The original manuscripts of all ancient literature are validated and verified by the copied manuscripts that have been discovered through the years. If significant numbers of manuscripts are discovered, and if the content in the manuscripts is consistent, it is assumed that the manuscripts can be traced back, either directly or indirectly, to the original source.¹⁴

- The classic example of this is Homer's *Iliad*, a poem written by Homer in the 8th century B.C. While the original manuscript no longer exists, approximately 2,000 copied manuscripts do exist. This far exceeds any manuscript evidence that exists for any other non-biblical literature from the ancient world.¹⁵

- Let's consider the number of biblical manuscripts that have been discovered:

- The Hebrew Old Testament** – Approximately 10,000 of these manuscripts, or fragments of these manuscripts, have been discovered in a synagogue in Cairo, Egypt.¹⁶

- The Septuagint** – This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament). The Septuagint was translated and compiled in the 3rd century B.C. so that those who spoke Greek could read the Hebrew Bible. Over 2,000 manuscripts of the Septuagint have been discovered.¹⁷

•**The Dead Sea Scrolls** – Approximately 1,000 Old Testament scrolls have been discovered in caves near the Dead Sea. The first discovery was made in 1947 when a young shepherd boy threw a rock into a cave and heard some pottery breaking. He went into the cave to discover that inside the broken pottery were Old Testament manuscripts. This became the greatest archaeological discovery of the 20th century. Eventually, approximately 1,000 Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered representing every book in the Old Testament except the Book of Esther.¹⁸ These manuscripts matched up to the accepted Hebrew Old Testament approximately 95% of the time. The other 5% of differences were very minor and had to do with things like the spelling of names which is not unusual at all because in the ancient world many names had different spellings.¹⁹

•**New Testament Greek manuscripts** – Over 5,800 of these manuscripts, or fragments of these manuscripts, have been discovered.²⁰

•**Latin New Testament manuscripts** – Approximately 10,000 of these manuscripts have been discovered.²¹

•**New Testament manuscripts in other languages** – Approximately 9,300 of these manuscripts have been discovered.²²

•Obviously, the number of existing biblical manuscripts far exceeds the number of manuscripts that have been found for Homer's *Iliad*. That is an understatement. For this reason, the Old Testament and the New Testament have been more than archaeologically and historically validated and verified.

•As the years and centuries passed, these manuscripts were passed on to subsequent generations.

•In the 1500s, a Catholic priest by the name of Erasmus became, for all practical purposes, the first editor of the Greek New Testament. As he studied and compared the New Testament manuscripts available to him at the time, he put together what is known as the Textus Receptus. The Latin words "Textus Receptus" literally mean "Received Text." It was his conviction that as he compiled his edition

of the Greek New Testament that he actually had the manuscripts that could be traced back to the apostles themselves. In other words, he had “received the text” that they had originally written even though he didn’t have the original manuscripts. He based his conviction on the large number of manuscripts that he consulted as well as the consistency of the content in those manuscripts. The Textus Receptus, to be clear, only refers to the Greek New Testament, not the Hebrew Old Testament.²³

- The manuscripts that Erasmus was working with are dated as 12th century A.D. manuscripts. Obviously, those manuscripts came from other older manuscripts, but the ones he was actually working with are dated as 12th century A.D. manuscripts.²⁴

- The Textus Receptus became the basis for the Greek New Testament that would appear in subsequent Bibles for the next four centuries.²⁵

- The King James Version, published in 1611, used the Textus Receptus for the New Testament portion of the Bible as its translators translated the Greek into English.²⁶ Several centuries later, the New King James Version, which was published in 1982, also used the Textus Receptus for the New Testament portion of the Bible.²⁷

- In the late 1800s, additional Greek New Testament manuscripts were discovered in Egypt. These manuscripts became known as the Alexandrian Text because of the location of their discovery. Others have called them the Critical Text. For our purposes today, they are largely known as the NU Text. The NU derives its name from the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament United Bible Societies. The “N” obviously comes from “Nestle,” and the “U” comes from “United.” The manuscripts that led to the NU Text date to the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D., so they are obviously much older manuscripts than the manuscripts that led to the Textus Receptus. In fact, they are somewhere between 900 and 1,000 years older.²⁸

- For this reason, the majority of those in the academic world today consider the NU Text to be a more reliable text than the Textus Receptus. Their logic is obvious: *The older the manuscripts, the closer they were to the original manuscripts.*²⁹

- It should be noted, though, that the manuscripts that led to the Textus Receptus came from other older manuscripts that have since been lost.
- The historical significance of the Textus Receptus should also be noted. For hundreds of years, it was the Greek New Testament that the people of God used. Those who criticize the Textus Receptus often fail to remember that were it not for the Textus Receptus, and more specifically the manuscripts from which it came into being, there would most likely have been no Greek New Testament for hundreds of years.³⁰ Keep in mind that the Greek New Testament manuscripts now known as the NU Text weren't discovered until the late 1800s.³¹ It is hard to believe that God would have allowed there to be no Greek New Testament for that long. He has obviously used the Textus Receptus mightily through the centuries. The Protestant Reformation and the ministries of John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham were built upon the Textus Receptus and upon the manuscripts from which it was derived.
- The Textus Receptus contains some verses that are not found in the NU Text. This is clearly indicated in the translation notes of most Bibles. The differences between these two Greek texts, though, are minimal and of no theological significance thus causing us to feel very comfortable with both Greek texts.³²
- The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew. The Old Testament that we have today has come to us from the Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts that were universally accepted by the Jewish community of faith. The Hebrew Old Testament has been authenticated by the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- The New Testament was written in Greek. The New Testament that we have today has come to us largely from the Textus Receptus and the NU Text.
- We owe a great debt to the scribes, compilers, and editors of these manuscripts. Our Bibles today have come to us through their hands. We are the beneficiaries of their love for God's Word and their commitment to preserving His Word and passing it on to us.

The Development of the Bible

•Perhaps a broad and simplified overview of how the Bible has developed through the centuries would be helpful:

•**The Septuagint** – 3rd Century B.C. – This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament).³³

•**The Vulgate** – 4th Century A.D. – This is the Latin translation of the Bible. The work was largely done by a man named Jerome. The word Vulgate means “common speech.” The idea here is that by translating the Bible into Latin it was being translated into a language that the people of that day could understand.³⁴

•**The Wycliffe Bible** – 1382 – John Wycliffe lived many years before the Protestant Reformation took place. He was, though, in many ways, a forerunner of that great movement. He strongly believed that the common people should have a Bible in their own language. For that reason, he spearheaded the translation of the Bible from Latin into Middle English, the type of English spoken in his day. It is generally accepted that Wycliffe had the help of others in his translation project.³⁵ The earliest version of this Bible was completed in 1382 with subsequent and more comprehensive versions coming years later resulting from the work of other translators.³⁶ The Wycliffe Bible was the first Bible to use chapter divisions.³⁷

•**The Gutenberg Bible** – 1455 – This Bible was the earliest mass-produced major book ever printed in Europe. The Gutenberg Bible is a printed edition of the Latin Vulgate. It was named for Johannes Gutenberg who is credited with being the inventor of the printing press. The printing press changed the world of books as we know it today.³⁸

•**The Luther Bible** – 1534 – Martin Luther translated the Bible into the German language so that the people in the German-speaking world could have the Bible in their own language.³⁹

•**The Tyndale Bible** – 1535 – William Tyndale’s Bible, the Tyndale Bible, is recognized as being the first English translation to be translated directly from the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. A contemporary of Tyndale’s, Myles Coverdale, aided in the completion of Tyndale’s translation thus leading to the first complete Bible to be printed in English. Tyndale’s Bible was a major source for many of the English Bibles which would follow. His Bible greatly contributed to the Great Bible as well as to the King James Version of the Bible.⁴⁰ William Tyndale was killed for his faith in Jesus Christ and for his faithful service of Him.⁴¹

•**The Great Bible** – 1539 – The Great Bible was the first *authorized* Bible to be printed in English. It was authorized by King Henry VIII of England, and it became the official Bible of the Church of England. It is named the “Great Bible” because the Bible itself is very large. It is a huge Bible. These Bibles were chained to specific locations in the churches of that day so that the people could read the Bible for themselves. If people were wealthy enough, they could have purchased their own copy of the Great Bible. Because of the size of the Bible, though, it would have been cost prohibitive to many others.⁴²

•**The Geneva Bible** – 1560 – The Geneva Bible was made accessible to the general public. It was the first Bible to use both chapter *and* verse divisions. Additionally, the Geneva Bible had an extensive cross-reference system along with book introductions and study notes. The Geneva Bible was one of the Bibles that came to America on the Mayflower.⁴³ Interestingly, it was called the “Geneva Bible” because it was translated by a group of Protestant scholars who had fled England and were living in exile in Geneva, Switzerland, because Queen Mary I of England (a Roman Catholic) had stopped the publication of Bibles in England.⁴⁴ She was a ruthless leader who killed so many Protestants that she earned the nickname “Bloody Mary.”⁴⁵ Because of her persecution of Protestants in England, many of them found refuge in Geneva, Switzerland, and while there, they produced the Geneva Bible.⁴⁶ In the years following, countless numbers of people were blessed by reading the Geneva Bible including William Shakespeare and John Bunyan who regularly read

from it.⁴⁷ This is a wonderful example of how God brings much good out of the most evil of circumstances.

- The King James Version** – 1611 – The King James Version was published in 1611 because King James I of England did not like some of the study notes in the Geneva Bible. He thought they lessened his authority as a king. For that reason, he commissioned a Bible to be translated into English that did not have study notes.⁴⁸

- As we think about the different Bibles available to us today, we obviously owe a great debt to those who have gone before us. The above-mentioned Bibles owe their existence to the manuscripts that were available to them at the time they were translated. Today, we are blessed to have more ancient manuscripts at our disposal than they had at their disposal because of the significant manuscript discoveries that have been made in recent years. These manuscript discoveries have largely contributed to the significance of many of the Bible translations we have today.

- We will discuss those translations in some detail later. First, though, let's continue our discussion of the development of the Bible, and more specifically, how the 66 books that make up the Bible were selected.

Why Are There 66 Books in the Bible?

- There are many writings about spiritual matters that can be traced back to the ancient world. The question is this: *How did we end up with the 66 books that we have in our Bible?*

- To answer that question, we must understand that a “standard” was put in place to help scholars and leaders make that decision. The Greek word “canon” means “standard, rule, or measuring stick.” It came to refer to the list of the individual books in the Bible which met the standard of “canonization.” These books then became the “rule” or the “standard” of our beliefs and practices. So, the word “canon”

came to have a double meaning. First, it refers to the “standard” used for determining which books were divinely inspired. Second, it refers to the biblical “standard” by which we should live our lives.⁴⁹

What About the Old Testament Books?

- The books that make up the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) were assembled over a long period of time within the Jewish community. This was presumably done under the leadership of the Jewish rabbis. Books were selected that had, for many years, been recognized by the people of God as “Holy Scripture” based on their obvious *divine authority, historical reliability, consistent theology, and the universal acceptance of the Jewish community of faith*. Using these criteria, the 39 books of our Old Testament were selected. These criteria made the selection process a dependable one. Keep in mind that the books were already inspired by God before they were placed in the Hebrew Bible. God simply used the process of canonization to guide the Jewish religious leaders as they were assembling the books.⁵⁰

- Interestingly, the Catholic Bible contains seven books that the Protestant Bible does not contain. These books are: Tobit, Judith, I and II Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and Baruch.⁵¹

- These seven books were written during the 400-year intertestamental period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They were included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Additional chapters of Esther and Daniel were also included in the Septuagint.⁵²

- Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria in the 4th century A.D., identified three categories of books:

- “Canonical” books refer to the inspired biblical books.

- “Edifying” books, which were later called “ecclesiastical” books, were the books that were thought to be helpful and

edifying for the church, but they were never on the same level as the “canonical” books.

- “Apocryphal” books formed another category of books. The word “apocrypha” means “things that are hidden.” There is a certain mystery as to the origin and reliability of these books.⁵³

- Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, combined Athanasius’ second and third categories of books by calling the “ecclesiastical” books “apocryphal” books. So, in time, there were only two categories of books: “canonical” books and “apocryphal” books.⁵⁴

- Jerome included certain apocryphal books in the Vulgate, but he never considered the apocryphal books to be inspired by God. He thought that some of the material in the apocryphal books could be beneficial to the church, but he was adamant that they never be placed on the same level as Scripture itself.⁵⁵

- During the Protestant Reformation, Protestant leaders such as Martin Luther insisted that these books, for the sake of clarity, be separated from the canonized books in the new Bibles that were printed. Luther’s own German Bible had the apocryphal books in their own section. Luther placed these books between the Old Testament books and the New Testament books in a section simply called, “Apocrypha.” He did this because he recognized that these books were never considered to be canonical.⁵⁶ The Protestant leaders as a whole felt the same way for the following reasons:

- The Jews had never considered the apocryphal books to be inspired. These books were never in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁷

- Jewish scholars had met at the Council of Jamnia in 90 A.D. and rejected these books.⁵⁸

- Josephus, the great Jewish historian, had rejected them.⁵⁹

- Many great church leaders such as Origen, Athanasius, and Jerome had rejected these books.⁶⁰

•The apocryphal books, in some passages, teach a different theology than the canonical books teach. For example, the apocryphal books contain a small number of passages that address topics such as praying for the dead, salvation by works, and purgatory.⁶¹

•The word “purgatory” comes from the word “purge.” The idea was that upon death people would go to some temporary place of punishment where they would be purged (or cleansed) of whatever sins that they thought the blood of Jesus, for whatever reason, had not fully cleansed. After their sins were fully purged, they were taught, they could then go to heaven.⁶² The idea of purgatory is not found in any of the canonical books. The clear teaching of Scripture is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from every sin including pre-conversion sins, post-conversion sins, and even heinous sins (*see I John 1:7*). For that reason, the whole concept of purgatory is insulting to the blood of Jesus and His sacrificial death on the cross. Those who believe in purgatory believe that there is some other way for their sins to be cleansed other than by the blood of Jesus. Such a belief is heretical, blasphemous, and completely unbiblical. Any teaching that espouses purgatory must be wholeheartedly rejected.

•At the Council of Trent in 1546 A.D., which was a “counter-Reformation” council, the Catholic Church recognized the previously-mentioned seven apocryphal books as Scripture. Instead of referring to them as “apocryphal” books, though, the Catholic Church refers to them as “deutero-canonical” books (“deutero” means “second”). The Catholic Church was saying that these seven books were canonical even though they came along later than the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible.⁶³ Again, Protestants have always disagreed for the above-mentioned reasons.

•The original King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611, contained several apocryphal books in a section called, “The Books Called Apocrypha.” While the “The Books Called Apocrypha” section was separate from the Old Testament and the New Testament, thus implying that these books did not have the same status as the Old Testament and New Testament books, it nonetheless created quite a controversy among the Protestants of that day thus leading to the “The

Books Called Apocrypha” section of the King James Version being removed from subsequent editions.⁶⁴

- We can be very confident that the 39 books that we have in our Old Testament, which have been the accepted books of the Hebrew Bible for well over 2,000 years, are the exact books that God intends for us to have.⁶⁵

What About the New Testament Books?

- The early church seemed to use three criteria for selecting a New Testament book as the authoritative Word of God. First, the book had to be *orthodox*. In other words, it had to agree with the theology taught in the Old Testament, and it had to be consistent with what the apostles were known to have taught. Second, the book had to have some *apostolic connection*. In other words, each book had to either have been written by an apostle or by someone closely connected to an apostle. For example, Mark and Luke weren’t technically apostles of Jesus, but Mark was closely connected to Peter, and Luke was closely connected to Paul. Third, the book had to have *the universal acceptance of the established churches of that day*. These three criteria made the selection process a dependable one.⁶⁶

- Both Protestant and Catholic Bibles have the same 27 New Testament books. There is no controversy here.⁶⁷

- Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria in the 4th century A.D., wrote his annual “Easter Letter” in 367 A.D. to the people for whom he was spiritually responsible. It was a significant letter because it contained the list of the 27 books of the New Testament that we have today.⁶⁸

- He compiled this list because certain heretical books were circulating at that time. Some of these books were falsely named after some of the apostles and early church leaders and were, for that reason, confusing to some of the people. It was not 100% clear, at least in the

minds of some, whether or not these books should be included in the New Testament.⁶⁹

- Bruce Metzger, a New Testament scholar, wrote: “The year 367 marks, thus, the first time that the scope of the New Testament canon is declared to be exactly the twenty-seven books accepted today as canonical.”⁷⁰

- Certainly, Athanasius was basing his list of New Testament books on what had been passed down to him from the most reliable sources of his day which were the church fathers and historians who had received their information from the previous generation of church fathers and historians, who had simply passed on what they had received. The original sources of authority were the apostles themselves and the universal acceptance of the earliest churches.⁷¹

- We can be very confident that the 27 books that we have in our New Testament are the exact books that God intends for us to have. We know this because of the affirmation of the apostles themselves which was revealed and confirmed by the unquestioned agreement of the church fathers, the early church historians, and the early churches themselves.⁷²

What Is the Difference Between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

- The Bible makes it very clear that God never changes. He Himself has said: “*For I am the LORD, I do not change*” (*Malachi 3:6*). What, then, is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

- The word “testament” literally means “covenant.”⁷³ In Old Testament times, God gave people laws to obey. These laws were given to show people how to live their lives, but they were also given to reveal human sinfulness. God gave His laws to reveal our need for a Savior. The Bible says: “*What purpose then does the law serve? It*

was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Galatians 3:19). The word “Seed” refers to Jesus. The law was given to reveal our sinfulness. Jesus, hundreds of years later, came to take away our sins.

•The law was never intended as a means of salvation. Even in Old Testament times, no one was ever saved by keeping the law. Abraham is the classic example of this. Abraham was saved by trusting in God, not by keeping the law (*see Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4*). In fact, Abraham was saved hundreds of years before the law was even given. Abraham was saved by trusting in the promises of God and looking forward to the coming of Christ. We are saved today by placing our faith in Christ and in what He did many years ago on the cross. Abraham looked *forward*. We look *backward*. But in order to be saved, we all have to look *upward* to God, now clearly revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ. His blood still cleanses today (*see I John 1:7*). The Bible says: “*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*” (Galatians 2:16).

•The Old Testament describes God’s dealings with His people before the time of Christ. The New Testament describes God’s dealings with His people from the time of Christ through much of the first century. The entire sacrificial system in the Old Testament reveals how seriously God takes sin. He demanded a payment. All of the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament were merely a picture of the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would make for us on the cross.

•The Old Testament (the old “covenant”) was based largely on the animal-sacrifice system. Those animal sacrifices reminded the people of their sins, and they were a preview of the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would make on the cross.⁷⁴

•The New Testament (the new “covenant”) is based on Christ Himself. The blood of the sacrificial animals in the Old Testament was a picture of the much superior blood of Christ that would be shed in the New Testament. The Bible makes clear that “*it is not possible*

that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). The Bible also makes clear that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

•To be clear, the sacrifices in the Old Testament never provided forgiveness. The Bible says: *“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Hebrews 10:11).* Those Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the sacrifice that Jesus would make on the cross. Without His sacrifice, there could be no forgiveness.

•Old Testament believers were forgiven on the basis of Christ’s death, even though He hadn’t died yet. The Bible says that Jesus is *“the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).* In the mind of God, Jesus died on the cross long before He ever actually died. Christ’s death on the cross was actually part of God’s plan all along (*see Isaiah 53:10 and Acts 2:23*). God sees the end from the beginning (*see Isaiah 46:10*). And God forgave Old Testament believers based on Jesus’ death. The Old Testament sacrifices, repeated regularly, simply showed the need for the permanent, once-for-all sacrifice that Jesus would make.

•The sacrifice Jesus made was, in every way, superior to the Old Testament animal sacrifices. The Bible says: *“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God...For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified...Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:12, 14, 18).* Jesus’ sacrifice was the one-time sacrifice that makes forgiveness available to all who receive Him.

•Jesus was sinless. His death, therefore, was substitutionary in nature. He literally died in our place. He took our punishment. The Bible says: *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).* Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that makes forgiveness possible because God’s plan from the beginning was that all of our sins and imperfections should be placed on His sinless and perfect Son.

•There is a sense in which the Old Testament sacrifices temporarily appeased God's wrath against sin. His wrath was not completely appeased, though, nor was He ever fully satisfied until Jesus died on the cross. It was Christ's death that satisfied the righteous requirements of God (*see I John 2:2*).

•On the cross, God "*made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (*II Corinthians 5:21*). Jesus took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty that we owed. In exchange, He gives us His righteousness if we will repent of our sins and trust Him to save us. No animal sacrifice could do that.

•In Old Testament times, the people couldn't see Jesus as clearly as we can today. They saw Him, as it were, in the shadows. They weren't saved because they perfectly understood everything that would happen. They were saved based on their faith in the promises of God and because of the sacrifice that Jesus would eventually make.

•Today, we can clearly see Jesus in the pages of the New Testament. We read about His perfect life and sacrificial death. We don't perfectly understand everything about Christ's death either. But we aren't saved by the depth of our understanding. We are saved by placing our faith in Jesus Christ and in the blood which He shed for us on the cross. In the Old Testament, God revealed our need for a Savior. In the New Testament, God sent Jesus to be our Savior.

•So don't think of the Bible as *The Old Testament vs. The New Testament*. That's not accurate. Think of the Old Testament as paving the way for the New Testament. Think of the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. People in Old Testament times were saved by faith just as we are today. Their faith looked *forward* to the fulfillment of God's promises, culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ. Our faith looks *backward* to the fulfillment of those promises in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In both Old Testament times and New Testament times, though, people *were* and *are* saved by looking *up* to the only One who can save us...God, now clearly revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ, who became for us *God in human flesh*. When we look to Him today in repentance and faith, His blood washes our sins away.

•God hasn't changed. In both Old Testament times and New Testament times He has treated His people with grace and mercy, and He has forgiven our sins based on Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

•It might appear that God's judgments on sinful people were harsher in Old Testament times than in New Testament times. Keep in mind, though, that in the New Testament God's judgment of sin was poured out on Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus took the punishment that we deserved. So God's love and His holy hatred of sin are seen in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The only difference is that in the New Testament God's judgment of sin was placed on Jesus so that we could be forgiven and free.

•For those of us who have been saved, we will never be punished for our sins because we have placed our faith in Jesus who took that punishment for us. Unsaved people, on the other hand, will spend eternity in hell being punished for their sins because they rejected Christ's payment for those sins (*see Revelation 20:11-15*).

Does the Old Testament Law Still Apply Today?

•The question is often asked as to whether or not Christians today are bound to obey the laws found in the Old Testament. In order to answer that question, we must understand that there were three categories of Old Testament laws. There were *ceremonial laws*, *civil laws*, and *moral laws*. The *ceremonial laws* no longer apply today because they have all been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The *civil laws* were for the nation of Israel at that time and do not apply today because we live under the laws of our own societies. The *moral laws*, though, still apply today.⁷⁵ Remember, God never changes. What was moral back then is still moral today. What was immoral back then is still immoral today. Idolatry, dishonoring your parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, coveting, cheating...these things are still wrong. God's *moral laws* have not changed. And they never will. As a result, we are still expected to obey the *moral laws* of God. The Holy Spirit, who indwells each believer, helps us to obey these laws. And thankfully, forgiveness is available when we fail.

The Arrangement of Biblical Books

•An overview of how the individual biblical books are grouped together in our English Bibles is very helpful:

•**The Old Testament**

•**The Law**

-Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

•**History**

-Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

•**Wisdom literature**

-Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

•**The Prophets**

-Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

•**The New Testament**

•**The Gospels**

-Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

•**Church History**

-Acts

•Paul's Epistles (Letters)

-These letters were named based on who they were written to.

-Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon

•General Epistles (Letters)

-With the exception of Hebrews, these letters were named based on who wrote them.

-Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, Jude

•Prophecy

-Revelation⁷⁶

What About Chapter and Verse Divisions?

•The original biblical manuscripts did not have chapter and verse divisions. We know this because the oldest biblical manuscripts available to us today do not have them.⁷⁷

•In approximately 1227 A.D., Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, developed the chapter divisions that are in our Bibles today.⁷⁸

•In 1448 A.D., a Jewish rabbi who went by the name of Nathan developed the verse divisions for the Old Testament that are in our Bibles today.⁷⁹

•In 1555 A.D., a man named Robert Estienne, who was also known by the name of Stephanus, developed the verse divisions for the New Testament that are in our Bibles today.⁸⁰

•While the chapter and verse divisions were not used by the biblical writers and while they are not found in the oldest existing manuscripts, they nonetheless make locating specific passages and memorizing Scripture much easier. For these reasons, we are extremely blessed to have chapter and verse divisions.⁸¹

Some of the Greatest Bible Translations Available to Us Today

•Below is a brief, concise, yet fairly thorough overview of the most well-known Bible translations available today. We want to make clear that we believe all of the translations mentioned here are excellent. Hopefully, this will be helpful to you as you seek to discover which Bible translation is best for you:

•**King James Version (KJV)** – The KJV was published in 1611. It was the most scholarly and accessible of all translations at the time it was published. The KJV is still very popular today even though some of the old English words are difficult to understand. The New Testament portion of the KJV was translated from the Textus Receptus.⁸²

•**New King James Version (NKJV)** – 130 Bible scholars, pastors, and theologians put this Bible together to update the vocabulary of the KJV while at the same time preserving the beautiful literary style in which the KJV was written. The complete NKJV was published in 1982. The New Testament portion of the NKJV was translated from the Textus Receptus.⁸³

•**New American Standard Bible (NASB)** – This Bible was an update of the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901. The complete NASB was first published in 1971. It was revised in 1977, 1995, and 2020. The NASB translators translated the Hebrew and Greek very literally. While this has many advantages, it can often make for bumpy reading. The NASB uses a different New Testament manuscript than the KJV and the NKJV use. It uses the NU Text for the New Testament as opposed to the Textus Receptus.⁸⁴

•**New International Version (NIV)** – The complete NIV was first published in 1978. It was revised in 1984 and 2011. The NIV is the most popular translation today. It tries to strike a balance between a “word for word” translation and a “thought for thought” translation. The NIV uses the NU Text for the New Testament.⁸⁵

•**New Living Translation (NLT)** – The NLT was first published in 1996. It was revised in 2004, 2007, 2013, and 2015. It is a very “easy to read” Bible.⁸⁶ The process of putting this Bible together began as an attempt to update the Living Bible, which was published in 1971, which is a paraphrase of the Bible that was prepared by Kenneth Taylor in an attempt to make the Bible more understandable for his young children during their nightly family devotional time.⁸⁷ But, as the process went along of putting what would become the NLT together, the 90 scholars involved in this project decided to make this an actual translation instead of just an update of Taylor’s paraphrase.⁸⁸ It has become an extremely popular translation. The NLT uses the NU Text for the New Testament.⁸⁹

•**English Standard Version (ESV)** – Over 100 scholars and pastors were involved in the translation of the ESV which was first published in 2001. It was revised in 2007, 2011, and 2016. The purpose for this Bible was to get back to a more “word for word” approach to translation. The ESV says of itself that it is “essentially literal” meaning that, as a general rule, it translates from Hebrew and Greek into English in a very literal sense, but if something is unclear, it seeks to give clarity to the passage. The ESV is more literal than the NIV, but not as literal as the NASB. It is a very popular translation in academic circles today. The ESV is a much improved version of the Revised Standard Version (RSV). The ESV uses the NU Text for the New Testament.⁹⁰

•**Christian Standard Bible (CSB)** – This Bible owes its beginnings to the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) and for all practical purposes has taken the place of the HCSB. The CSB was first published in 2017 with a subsequent edition in 2020. It describes its translation approach as “optimal equivalence” meaning that it translates “word for word” when deemed best, and it translates

“thought for thought” when deemed best. The CSB uses the NU Text for the New Testament.⁹¹

Which Bible Translation Should You Use?

•Determining which Bible translation is right for you is not necessarily an easy thing to do. We will attempt here to make a recommendation for you that has more to do with *you* than it does with the actual *translations* themselves. Again, we believe that all of the major translations are excellent. People, though, are different, and that is, in part, what has motivated so many of the Bible translations through the years...trying to get a Bible into peoples’ hands that they can easily understand and apply to their lives. With that in mind, our recommendations are as follows:

•**If you want to read the Bible in the most literal translation, the one closest to the original Hebrew and Greek languages, we recommend the NASB.** The NASB is an excellent translation. Many pastors, preachers, and teachers use the NASB because of its literalness and precision.

•**If you want to read the Bible in the translation that is the easiest to understand, we recommend the NLT.** The NLT is an excellent translation. It is simple and very easy to read. It is also very reliable and true to the original languages. It is very accurate. In fact, it has in no way sacrificed accuracy for readability. It is a wonderful Bible to read for your daily devotions. It is, without a doubt, the easiest of all the translations to read and understand. Interestingly, Chuck Swindoll now uses this Bible in his preaching ministry for the reasons mentioned here.⁹²

•**If you want to read the Bible in the most poetic, memorable, and beautifully written translation, we recommend either the NKJV or the ESV.** The NKJV and the ESV are both excellent translations of the Bible. We find these translations to be easy to meditate on after you have read them because of the beauty of their literary style which, by the way, is very similar in both translations. We also believe that these translations are the best and the easiest translations from which

to memorize Bible verses. The poetic and majestic way in which these translations are written makes memorization easy. Of these two translations, we actually prefer the NKJV. We have several reasons for this. First, we both began reading the NKJV when it first came out in 1982, and we have been reading it ever since. For this reason, the overwhelming majority of the verses we have memorized have come from the NKJV. Second, we slightly prefer the wording of the NKJV over the ESV in certain classic verses such as: *Psalms* 47:4; *Psalms* 107:1; *Psalms* 138:2; *Isaiah* 53:5; *Nahum* 1:7; *John* 3:16; *John* 14:1-3; *Romans* 8:28; and *Colossians* 2:10. Third, while many regard the Textus Receptus as an inferior Greek text to the NU Text, we are not convinced that it actually is. We respect and highly esteem both Greek texts, but in some passages, such as *Matthew* 17:20, we believe that the Textus Receptus is actually more accurate than the NU Text. There are certainly other passages, and perhaps even the passage just mentioned, that could be argued the other way, but that is nonetheless our opinion. Fourth, we highly regard the historical significance of the Textus Receptus. That said, the primary reason we slightly prefer the NKJV over the ESV is because of our long personal histories with it. Had we begun with the ESV and memorized large numbers of verses from that translation, we would most likely prefer it over the NKJV. This demonstrates that our main reason for preferring the NKJV is our familiarity with this particular translation. We cannot stress strongly enough that both of these translations are excellent.

•If you want a Bible translation that attempts to make the most out of both the “word for word” approach and the “thought for thought” approach, we recommend either the NIV or the CSB. Both the NIV and the CSB are excellent translations of the Bible. They are accurate and dependable. For decades, Rick Warren has used the NIV in his preaching ministry.⁹³ Tony Evans’ new study Bible, on the other hand, is in the CSB.⁹⁴

Choosing the Translation That Is Best for You

•We encourage you to pray this matter over thoroughly and to make the decision that is best for you. As John Piper, a respected pastor, stresses, it is best to have one main Bible translation that you read

from each day. You can then use the other translations as commentaries. Let the other translations shed insight onto your main translation if there is a passage that is unclear to you. By settling on one primary translation, though, you will find it much easier to memorize Bible verses. If you are reading from a different translation every day, it will be virtually impossible for you to memorize Scripture.⁹⁵

- Additionally, if you have one main Bible that you read from daily, you will get to know where things are in that particular Bible. It is said that the old Puritans used to have one Bible for their entire lives. Think about that. Not only did they use the same translation for their entire lives, but they also used the same actual Bible. As the years and decades passed, they developed a wonderful history and familiarity with their Bible that they never would have had if they had changed Bibles every few years.⁹⁶

- That said, we should indeed view other Bibles and other translations as our friends, too. We should let them work with our main Bible to help us more fully understand the words that God has spoken to us.

- A good example of using different translations for different reasons can be found in the life and ministry of Billy Graham. He typically preached from the KJV. When quoting Scripture in one of his books, he typically used the NIV. When having his own daily quiet time, he typically read from the Living Bible. He found that each translation (or paraphrase) had its own strengths, and he used them accordingly.⁹⁷

- As you examine the different translations, one of them will *grip* you. It will be as though that particular translation was prepared just for you. That is how you will know which translation to use.

- As you reflect upon the information that has been shared here, our prayer is that it would give you a deeper appreciation for the Bible. Additionally, we pray that you would have greater confidence than ever before in the reliability of God's Word. Manuscript evidence, along with the evidence of millions of changed lives through the centuries, says to us that God's Word is indeed reliable and can be trusted in every season of life.

What About Study Bibles?

•One of the benefits of a good study Bible is the clear, concise introductions they give to each book in the Bible. In addition, they are loaded with background information, theological truths, interpretations of difficult passages, and instructions for victorious Christian living. We recommend the following study Bibles:

•**The Life Application Study Bible** is considered one of the best study Bibles of all time. This is a very basic, well-rounded, and thorough study Bible, and it would be a nice addition to anyone's personal library.

•**The Life Application Bible for Students** would be a wonderful gift for an older child or teenager.

•**The Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible** is also an excellent study Bible. It is devotional in nature and is a wonderful Bible to use when having your daily quiet time. It is loaded with practical application as well as scholarly information. Charles Stanley is a respected pastor who has inspired countless numbers of people because of his deep love for God, his personal intimacy with God, and his anointed and practical preaching. Many of his insights are included in this Bible. For that reason, this is our favorite *devotional* study Bible.

•**The MacArthur Study Bible** is also an excellent study Bible. It is academic in nature reflecting the scholarly background of John MacArthur, a respected pastor. It is a tremendous resource when preparing sermons, Sunday School lessons, or when you are just wanting to learn more of the historical background and theological ramifications of a biblical passage. It is also filled with much material that will be easily applicable to your life. This is our favorite *academic* study Bible.

•**The Adrian Rogers Legacy Bible** is another wonderful study Bible. Adrian Rogers was one of the most beloved pastors and preachers who ever lived. Much of his wisdom is included in this Bible. Those

who put this Bible together actually describe it as more of an “encouragement” Bible than a study Bible. While it does have excellent book introductions, helpful articles related to certain passages, and many practical insights, it is not as extensive of a study Bible as the other study Bibles mentioned here. For that reason, this might be the perfect study Bible for the person who doesn’t want to be overwhelmed by study notes.⁹⁸

- Additionally, David Jeremiah, Chuck Swindoll, and Tony Evans have recently released their own study Bibles. They are all excellent. They are filled with tremendous background information, theological explanations, and practical suggestions for daily Christian living.

- The translation choices for study Bibles will be limited as study Bibles are published in a smaller number of translations than standard Bibles.

- We must always remember that the study notes in a study Bible are not inspired. Only the actual biblical text is inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative. We should focus more on the biblical text than on the study notes. Let the study notes help you, but never place them on the same level as the Bible itself.

A Wonderful Soul-Winner’s New Testament

- The Covenant of God’s Love** is an excellent soul-winner’s New Testament. This Bible was published in 1998 by The Lockman Foundation. It contains very helpful outlines and explanations by Richard Jackson about how to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is very easy to use. Richard Jackson is a respected pastor and one of the most passionate and effective soul-winners we have ever known. Additionally, he and his wife, Wanda, have been treasured friends of our family for more than four decades. Their love for the Lord and their desire to see lost people get saved has been and continues to be a true inspiration to us. Only eternity will reveal how many people have been saved by personalizing the clear gospel presentation contained in this Bible.⁹⁹

What About Capitalized Pronouns for God?

•The only major Bible translations that use capitalized pronouns when referring to God are the NKJV and the NASB. None of the other translations capitalize pronouns for God. While this may seem disrespectful, it actually isn't.

•The first reason that most translations do not capitalize pronouns for God is because the oldest existing biblical manuscripts themselves do not capitalize these pronouns.¹⁰⁰ The second reason that most translations do not capitalize pronouns for God is because it is not always clear when a pronoun refers to God or when it might refer to someone else. An example is *Matthew 3:16*. In this verse, the second "He" is capitalized in the NKJV but not capitalized in the NASB because the NKJV translators felt like that pronoun referred to Jesus while the NASB translators felt like that pronoun referred to John the Baptist. Another example is *Psalms 22:1*. The NKJV translators chose to capitalize the first-person pronouns in this verse because they took them to be a reference to something Jesus said on the cross, so the first-person pronouns, in their minds, referred to Jesus. The NASB translators, on the other hand, chose not to capitalize the first-person pronouns in this verse because, while recognizing the future messianic significance of the text, they also realized that in their original context the first-person pronouns applied to David long before they applied to Jesus.¹⁰¹

•Since it is not always easy to tell when a pronoun refers to God or when it might refer to someone else and since the oldest biblical manuscripts do not capitalize pronouns for God, it is clear why most translations have chosen not to capitalize these pronouns.

•That said, one of the reasons we like the NKJV is because it capitalizes pronouns for God. While it is true that there are isolated incidences where it is not clear to whom a particular pronoun refers, in most cases it is clear, and we find that capitalized pronouns for God make it easier for us to understand the biblical text. We fully understand why most translations don't capitalize these pronouns, but we prefer the ones that do.

What About Red Letter Editions?

•Some Bibles have the words of Jesus in red letter print. Other Bibles don't. Why is this?

•The Bibles that have put the words of Christ in red have done so to highlight the words of Jesus. There is something tender and sweet about seeing His words in red. It sets them apart as special.

•The Bibles that haven't put the words of Christ in red haven't done so because they don't want, in any way, to imply that the words of Jesus are more inspired than any other words in the Bible. They are correct on this. In other words, the words of Jesus are no more inspired than the words of Moses, Matthew, Peter, or Paul. Every word in the Bible is equally inspired, and there are some who fear that putting the words of Jesus in red letters gives the impression that His words have more authority than all the other words in the Bible.¹⁰²

•While we understand both points of view, we actually prefer the words of Jesus to be in red letter print for sentimental and practical reasons, but we also fully recognize that all of the words in the Bible are equally inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative.

The Blessing of Having a Bible

•The Bible has providentially come to us through the work of rabbis, scribes, scholars, pastors, and theologians. Supervising the entire process, though, has been the Holy Spirit Himself. The Bible, as we have seen, is the most validated and verified written work in human history.

•The Bible is God's unchanging Word. It is settled for all eternity (*see Psalm 119:89*). Additionally, it is the light on the path of our lives that shows us the next step to take (*see Psalm 119:105*).

•We believe that the God who *inspired* His Word has also *preserved* His Word through the centuries. We also believe that He still uses

His Word to *convict* the lost, *convert* those who repent of their sins and trust Christ, and *conform* believers into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

- We encourage you to read God’s Word daily, to think about it deeply, to meditate on it thoroughly, and to apply it to your life personally. Let the Bible be God’s voice to you. As John Calvin said, “When the Bible speaks, God speaks.”¹⁰³

- Billy Graham once made this interesting observation: “I am never lonely when I am reading the Bible. Nothing dissolves loneliness like a session with God’s Word.”¹⁰⁴ We couldn’t agree more. When we read the Bible, we sense God’s presence in a very personal and powerful way. We encourage you, therefore, to make the Bible your closest tangible friend.

- Adrian Rogers used to say: “These hath God married and no man shall part: Dust on the Bible and drougt in the heart.”¹⁰⁵ In other words, when we neglect spending time in God’s Word, our spiritual lives become empty and dry. Conversely, when we faithfully spend time reading the Word of God and meditating on what we have read, our spiritual lives become vivacious, healthy, and strong.

Do You Know God Personally?

- As we have tried to stress in this booklet, it is very important that we get to know the Word of God. It should be in our hearts and on our minds as we go through every moment of every day. There is something even more important, though, than knowing *the Word of God* and that is knowing *the God of the Word*.

- The purpose of reading the Bible isn’t primarily to get to know the Bible. The purpose of reading the Bible is to get to know God Himself. Jesus said to the Pharisees: “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life*” (John 5:39-40). As wonderful as the Bible is, we aren’t

saved by reading the Bible. We are saved by trusting in Jesus. The Bible, though, points us to Him.

•The Bible is a book about Jesus from beginning to end. In the Old Testament, we see glimpses of Jesus. In the New Testament, He is clearly revealed. He lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose from the dead three days later. He is alive today and wants more than anything else to come into your heart, forgive your sins, save your soul, and live His life through you.

•If you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, or if you're just not sure that you do, pray this prayer now:

Dear Jesus,

I need You in my life. I'm sorry for my sins. Please forgive me and cleanse me and help me to change.

I invite You to come into my heart to be my Lord and Savior. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it. Welcome to my heart, Jesus. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.*

•If you prayed that prayer, God just answered it. The Bible says, “For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). You have called on the name of the Lord, and He has answered your prayer. Congratulations and welcome to the family of God! We encourage you to share your decision with a friend and to make it public in a good Bible-believing church as soon as possible.

A Closing Word

•Whether you just got saved or whether you have known the Lord for many years, we encourage you to make developing your relationship with Him the top priority of your life. The best way to do that is to

spend significant time with God each day in Bible reading and prayer. As God's children, we should have a desire to hear from our heavenly Father on a daily basis, and we should be confident that He will speak to us directly from His Word. When we hear from God and then obey His instructions, we grow spiritually. The Bible says, "*As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). Through reading the Bible and meditating upon what you have read, you will begin to grow in your relationship with God. By trusting what God has said, you will grow even more. And, as you obey the teachings of Scripture, you will literally grow by leaps and bounds!

- Other than trusting Jesus with everything, the most important thing you could do would be to make the Bible your most treasured earthly possession.

- Prayerfully select the Bible that is best for you and then read from it every day. Let its words comfort you. Let its writers inspire you. And let its Author change your life!

¹ Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia*, "List of Best-Selling Books," October 17, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books (accessed November 2, 2021).

² Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, 2005, p. 16.

³ Ibid., p. 16-17.

⁴ Ibid., p. 18-20.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 8-11.

⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 22-23.

¹¹ Joshua J. Mark, *World History Encyclopedia*, "Bible," September 2, 2009, <https://worldhistory.org/bible/> (accessed November 2, 2021).

-
- ¹² Dr. Josh D. McDowell & Dr. Clay Jones, “The Bibliographical Test,” August 13, 2014, <https://www.josh.org/wp-content/uploads/Bibliographical-Test-Update-08.13.14.pdf> (accessed November 4, 2021), p. 1.
- ¹³ Don Stewart, “Why Don’t We Possess Any of the Original Manuscripts of the Books of the Bible?” *Blue Letter Bible*, July 18, 2018, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/words-bible/question4-original-manuscripts-of-the-bible.cfm (accessed November 3, 2021).
- ¹⁴ Dr. Josh D. McDowell & Dr. Clay Jones.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Jack Wellman, “Do Ancient Biblical Manuscripts Prove That the Bible Is True?” *What Christians Want to Know*, May 23, 2018, <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/do-ancient-biblical-manuscripts-prove-that-the-bible-is-true/> (accessed November 5, 2021).
- ¹⁷ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “Septuagint Manuscripts,” October 3, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint_manuscripts (accessed November 5, 2021).
- ¹⁸ Jennie Cohen, “6 Things You May Not Know About the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *History Stories*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/6-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-dead-sea-scrolls> (accessed November 9, 2021).
- ¹⁹ Dr. Patrick Zukeran, “The Dead Sea Scrolls Shed Light on the Accuracy of Our Bible,” *Probe for Answers*, <https://probe.org/the-dead-sea-scrolls/> (accessed November 9, 2021).
- ²⁰ *Kiddle Encyclopedia*, “Biblical Manuscript Facts for Kids,” September 20, 2021, https://kids.kiddle.co/Biblical_manuscript (accessed November 9, 2021).
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “Textus Receptus,” November 2, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textus_Receptus (accessed November 10, 2021).
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ronald J. Gordon, “Understanding Greek Texts,” *Comparing Translations*, September 2020, https://www.cob-net.org/compare_greektext.php (accessed November 19, 2021).
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ CEO, S. Michael Houdmann, “The Textus Receptus – What Is It?” *Canon of the Bible*, <https://www.compellingtruth.org/Textus-Receptus.html> (accessed November 19, 2021).

-
- ³¹ Ronald J. Gordon.
- ³² Abigail Rose Lindner, "Bible Translations: Textus Receptus and Nestle-Aland," *A Patchwork of Receptions*, September 10, 2018, <https://apatchworkofperceptions.wordpress.com/2018/09/10/bible-translations-textus-receptus-and-nestle-aland/> (accessed December 1, 2021).
- ³³ N.S. Gill, "The Story of the Septuagint and the Name Behind It," *ThoughtCo. - History and Culture*, January 20, 2020, <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-story-of-the-septuagint-bible-119834> (accessed November 15, 2021).
- ³⁴ "Vulgate," *Your Dictionary*, Dictionary, <https://www.yourdictionary.com/vulgate> (accessed November 15, 2021).
- ³⁵ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Wycliffe's Bible," October 9, 2021, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wycliffe%27s_Bible (accessed November 8, 2021).
- ³⁶ Terry Noble, "How Did We Get Our First English Bible?" *Christianity Today*, October 16, 2012, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/theology/our-first-english-bible.html?start=1> (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ³⁷ CEO, S. Michael Houdmann, "When Were the Books of the Bible Divided Into Chapters and Verses? Who Did the Dividing?" *Canon of the Bible*, <https://www.compellingtruth.org/divided-Bible-chapters-verses.html> (accessed November 29, 2021).
- ³⁸ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Gutenberg Bible," November 6, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutenberg_Bible (accessed November 15, 2021).
- ³⁹ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Luther Bible," August 29, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luther_Bible (accessed November 15, 2021).
- ⁴⁰ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Tyndale Bible," October 9, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyndale_Bible (accessed November 15, 2021).
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Great Bible," August 5, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Bible (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁴³ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Geneva Bible," October 28, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva_Bible (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁴⁴ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Geneva Bible," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 21, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Geneva-Bible> (accessed November 23, 2021).
- ⁴⁵ "Why is Queen Mary I of England Known as Bloody Mary?" Got Questions Ministries, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bloody-Mary.html> (accessed November 23, 2021).
- ⁴⁶ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, "Geneva Bible."

-
- ⁴⁷ Lawrence M. Stone, "The Bible Shakespeare, John Bunyan, and the Pilgrims Read," *The Story of the Bible*, <http://www.storyofbible.com/the-bible-shakespeare-john-bunyan-and-the-pilgrims-read.html> (accessed November 29, 2021).
- ⁴⁸ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "King James Version," November 8, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁴⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1988, p. 17-21.
- ⁵⁰ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Development of the Old Testament Canon," November 15, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_Old_Testament_canon (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁵¹ Elesha Coffman, "Why Are Protestant and Catholic Bibles Different?" *Christianity Today*, August 8, 2008, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/why-are-protestant-and-catholic-bibles-different.html> (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁵² *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Deuterocanonical Books," November 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuterocanonical_books (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁵³ F.F. Bruce, p. 90-91.
- ⁵⁴ F.F. Bruce, p. 91-93.
- ⁵⁵ "What Is the Apocrypha? Are Apocryphal Books Really Scripture?" *Christianity.com*, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-is-the-apocrypha-are-apocryphal-books-really-scripture.html?amp=1> (accessed December 9, 2021).
- ⁵⁶ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, "Apocrypha," October 28, 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocrypha> (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁵⁷ Don Stewart, "Why Were the Books of the Old Testament Apocrypha Rejected as Holy Scripture by the Protestants?" *Blue Letter Bible*, April 24, 2007, https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_395.cfm (accessed December 10, 2021).
- ⁵⁸ Jeremy M. Norman, "The Council of Jamnia May Have Been Influential in the Process of Canonizing the Old Testament," <https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=1611> (accessed December 10, 2021).
- ⁵⁹ Don Stewart, "Why Were the Books of the Old Testament Apocrypha Rejected as Holy Scripture by the Protestants?"
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Myron J. Houghton Ph.D., Th.D., "Why We Reject the Apocrypha," *Faith Pulpit*, January-February 2007, <https://faith.edu/faith-news/why-we-reject-the-apocrypha/> (accessed October 27, 2021).

-
- ⁶² Carol Zaleski, “Purgatory,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 21, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/purgatory-Roman-Catholicism> (accessed November 29, 2021).
- ⁶³ F.F. Bruce, p. 104-105.
- ⁶⁴ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “Biblical Apocrypha,” November 20, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_apocrypha#King_James_Version (accessed December 10, 2021).
- ⁶⁵ “Summary and History of the Bible,” *Christian Bible Reference Site*, <https://www.christianbiblereference.org/summary.htm> (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁶⁶ Brent Cunningham, “What Were the Criteria for New Testament Books?” November 20, 2007, <http://www.brentcunningham.org/?p=527> (accessed October 28, 2021).
- ⁶⁷ Myron J. Houghton Ph.D., Th.D.
- ⁶⁸ F.F. Bruce, p. 77-79, 208-209.
- ⁶⁹ F.F. Bruce, p. 77-79, 208-209.
- ⁷⁰ Paul Kroll, “Church History: Athanasius Lists the New Testament Writings,” *Grace Communion International*, <https://www.gci.org/articles/athanasius-lists-the-new-testament-writings/> (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁷¹ F.F. Bruce, p. 208-209.
- ⁷² “The Canon of Scripture-Study Resources,” *Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/canon.cfm> (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁷³ CEO, S. Michael Houdmann, “What Does the Word Testament Mean?” *Canon of the Bible*, <https://www.compellingtruth.org/what-does-testament-mean.html> (accessed November 2, 2021).
- ⁷⁴ “A Covering for Sins,” <https://www.thehopeproject.com/en/study-guide/7-called-to-walk-in-the-ways-of-god/a-covering-for-sin> (accessed November 5, 2021).
- ⁷⁵ Samuel Mills, “The Old Testament Law-Ceremonial, Civil, Moral” <https://www.trusting-in-jesus.com/Old-Testament-Law.html> (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ⁷⁶ Dr. Gustavo Karakey, “Literary Divisions of the Bible,” <https://biblestudyblueprint.com/overview-of-the-bible-step-5/> (accessed November 16, 2021).
- ⁷⁷ “Who Divided the Bible Into Chapters and Verses?” Got Questions Ministries, <https://www.gotquestions.org/divided-Bible-chapters-verses.html> (accessed October 26, 2021).
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid.
- ⁸¹ Ibid.

-
- ⁸² *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “King James Version,” November 8, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ⁸³ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “New King James Version,” August 23, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_King_James_Version (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ⁸⁴ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “New American Standard Bible,” November 3, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_American_Standard_Bible (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ⁸⁵ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “New International Version,” September 9, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_International_Version (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ⁸⁶ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “New Living Translation,” August 9, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Living_Translation (accessed November 12, 2021).
- ⁸⁷ “Our Founder: Kenneth N. Taylor,” *About Tyndale*, <https://www.tyndale.com/kenneth-n-taylor> (accessed December 9, 2021).
- ⁸⁸ Tyler Martin, “Is the NLT a Paraphrase or a Translation?” *Inspiring Tips*, August 12, 2021, <https://inspiringtips.com/is-the-nlt-a-paraphrase-or-a-translation/> (accessed December 9, 2021).
- ⁸⁹ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “New Living Translation.”
- ⁹⁰ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “English Standard Bible,” November 9, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Standard_Version (accessed November 12, 2021).
- ⁹¹ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, “Christian Standard Bible,” August 27, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Standard_Bible (accessed November 11, 2021).
- ⁹² “Chuck Swindoll - Why the NLT?” *YouTube*, Uploaded by Tyndale House Publishers, November 10, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S297J6GBBPU>.
- ⁹³ “Rick Warren on the New International Version,” *YouTube*, Uploaded by Zondervan, September 17, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrAB8PhV_Ws.
- ⁹⁴ “Introducing The Tony Evans Study Bible,” *YouTube*, Uploaded by Christian Standard Bible, October 3, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0wK90pWp2E>.
- ⁹⁵ John Piper, “What Translation for Bible Memory?” *Desiring God, Ask Pastor John-Interview With John Piper-Episode 259*, January 20, 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-translation-for-bible-memory> (accessed November 17, 2021).

-
- ⁹⁶ John Piper, “How Many Bible Versions Should You Read?” *Desiring God, Ask Pastor John-Interview With John Piper-Episode 1003*, February 15, 2017, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-many-bible-versions-should-i-read> (accessed November 22, 2021).
- ⁹⁷ Tyler Martin, “Which Bible Did Billy Graham Use?” *Inspiring Tips*, August 14, 2021, <https://inspiringtips.com/which-bible-did-billy-graham-use/> (accessed November 17, 2021).
- ⁹⁸ “The Adrian Rogers Study Bible,” *Love Worth Finding With Adrian Rogers*, <https://www.lwf.org/adrian-rogers-legacy-bible> (accessed December 1, 2021).
- ⁹⁹ Richard Jackson, *The Covenant of God’s Love*, Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA, 1998.
- ¹⁰⁰ “The Question of Biblical Capitalization?” April 18, 2018, <https://www.stcatherinerccc.org/single-post/2018/04/18/The-Question-of-Biblical-Capitalization> (accessed November 17, 2021).
- ¹⁰¹ Mark Ward, “Why We Should Not Capitalize Deity Pronouns When Referring to God,” *Logos-Faith Life*, June 8, 2017, <https://blog.logos.com/why-we-should-not-capitalize-deity-pronouns-when-referring-to-god/> (accessed December 10, 2021).
- ¹⁰² Barry Cooper, “The Inspiration of Scripture,” *Simply Put*, February 2, 2021, <https://simplyputpodcast.com/the-inspiration-of-scripture/> (accessed 11/18/2021).
- ¹⁰³ “John Calvin Quotations,” *QuoteTab-John Calvin Quotes*, <https://www.quote-tab.com/quote/by-john-calvin/when-the-bible-speaks-god-speaks> (accessed November 12, 2019).
- ¹⁰⁴ Franklin Graham With Donna Lee Toney, *Billy Graham in Quotes*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2001, p. 225.
- ¹⁰⁵ Adrian Rogers, p. 7.

Charles Redmond

Charles Redmond is the senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. He has served in that capacity since January of 1990.

A graduate of Georgia State University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Luther Rice Seminary (D.Min.), Dr. Redmond's desire is to lead people to place their faith in Jesus Christ, to help them grow daily in their love for Him, and to encourage them to enjoy all that God has given them.

Jon Redmond

Jon Redmond is the associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. He has served on the church staff at First Baptist since June of 1995.

A graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.), Jon's desire is to lead people to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and to help them grow in their relationship with Him.