

# The Bible - Asking Tough Questions

## Part 1:

### What is the Bible?

Have you heard someone call the bible a love story, between God and you? It's true. I also think it is a war story about greatest rescue mission ever carried out in the history of our universe. God created us in his image with the free will to choose to love him. We blew it and broke the rules! An enemy named Satan, knew how much God loved us and directed all of his energy to separate us from God and kill our hearts and souls. God was with us the entire way. He loved us, guided us, and disciplined us. We were never meant to do life on our own. We always needed him and he always welcomed us back. We had a very hard time getting it right. He loved us so much that from the beginning, he planned to rescue us from the punishment we deserved, which was physical and spiritual death. He did this by becoming the man Jesus Christ, who was crucified (by us), to pay the penalty for our sins and declare us innocent, if we choose to accept this free gift. We now have gained an opportunity to receive the love of God within us through the Holy Spirit and the gift of eternal life. Also, God has promised to come back and set everything right on earth, which is yet to come. He's not done yet!

If you read the bible from this perspective, it will come alive in the way it is intended. Also, it is important to know that Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit are three parts that make up one whole, also known as the trinity. A way to understand this is using our universe, which is made up of time, space, and matter. We experience them all at the same time yet they are unique. If one is not there the universe ceases to exist. If you understand that Jesus was there from the beginning (John 1:1), the entire bible makes a lot more sense.

### Here are a couple tips about studying the bible:

- Your knowledge of the bible doesn't mean a whole lot, but your relationship with God does. Say no to bible thumping!
- Seek small groups and bible studies through church or friends. It will accelerate learning and applying the bible.
- Do what works for you – Books, Bible, Audio, Video, Daily Devotionals, Apps, etc. There are tons of ways to get immersed. Pick one.
- It's not about earning God credits or checking something off your list. It's all about allowing God into your life and changing you from the inside out.
- A little goes a long way. Start in small chunks or study a specific question or aspect of your faith. Be surgical and focused! I'm going to give you some examples of how to do that in this article.



### BY: DAVID HALSEY

How do you actually read the bible? After years of trial and error, I'm not so sure it is possible to just "read" the bible like a book. As a matter of fact, I tried this and it was downright painful. It was like looking at a 500 piece puzzle and trying to solve it in my head, without actually moving any of the pieces. Do you have the ability to memorize scripture? You have my absolute respect, because I really struggle in this area too.

I am not a theologian. I am not a scholar. I'm really not even that smart to be honest. However, I have learned how God intended to use the bible for me, and I really think it can apply to just about everyone. I am going to share it with you in this article.

This is going to be a "to be continued" article so consider this part 1. What I am going to do is show you how to take any questions you might have and use God's inspired word, the "sword of the spirit" (i.e the bible), to find answers, seek truth, grow in spiritual maturity/wisdom, and consistently use the bible as a weapon and a tool for your life.

I hope you decide to press forward with me because this is like finding buried treasure.

Here are a few biblical belief statements. If you disagree with me, that's okay. I am trying to make a point so stay with me on this.

1. There is scientific evidence that supports a young earth of 6,000+ years but I also agree there is scientific evidence supporting an old earth.
2. God created everything from nothing, including man and woman, per the biblical account in Genesis (i.e. Creation), not from one creature becoming millions of other kinds of creatures over a long period of time (i.e. Darwinian Evolution).
3. Moses was led by God to free the Hebrew slaves from Egypt and delivered them to the Promised Land.
4. There was a worldwide flood and that God used Noah to continue life on earth. Again, I think there is evidence on both sides of the debate.
5. It is possible that the story of Jonah and the whale could have happened. Why not?

I tend to believe the stories of the bible are true because they were written as true. The bottom line is "we weren't there", so nobody knows for sure. We use faith to choose what we believe in, regardless of what side we take.

Besides making my own decision based on what I believed was solid logical, scientific, and historical evidence, the tipping point for me is what Jesus actually had to say. He did not contradict the Old Testament and believed every word of scripture, including the creation account in Genesis (Matthew 19:4, John 5:46, Mark 10:6), Noah and the flood, (Matthew 24:37-39), and the story of Jonah (Matthew 12:39-41).

Here is the best part. You can disagree with me on all five of the examples I noted, and a lot more, and we can both be brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. Our common ground is our belief in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ, and our mission together to love God, love others, and to grow God's Kingdom here on earth.

God is much more concerned with us choosing to love him and changing the condition of our hearts, which is why his word, the bible, is so important to us.

## What does the Bible say about the Bible?

Let's start here. It is important to understand and internalize why this great book is like no other.

*"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Hebrews 4:12*

*"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life". John 6:63*

*"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work". 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

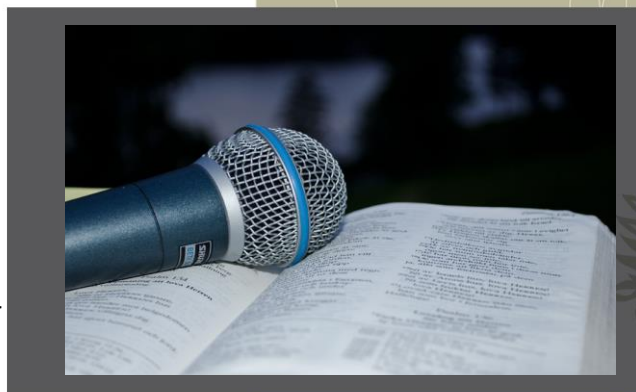
*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile". Romans 1:16*

*"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". Ephesians 6:17*

*"...you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;" Proverbs 2:5-6*

**"Living", "Active", "Sharper than...Sword", "Gives Life", "Profitable", "Competent", "Power of God", "Brings Salvation", "Wisdom", "Knowledge", "Understanding".**

The list goes on and on. We need this book! God's Word is the ultimate life and death coach.





## Asking Tough Questions – Setting the Stage

Have you ever asked yourself questions like this?

- *What is God's purpose for me?*
- *Why would God allow so much suffering?*
- *As a spouse or a parent, am I doing it the right way?*
- *How is Christianity different from other religions?*
- *How can I get more wisdom?*
- *What did Jesus have to say about issues of today like abortion, homosexuality, human trafficking/slavery, capital punishment, war, etc.?*
- *Why should I forgive someone who hurt me badly?*
- *How am I possibly going to get through this situation?*
- *Why am I often frustrated, angry, impatient, or irritable, and what can I do about it?*
- *Why do I lack self-control and sometimes do what I know is not right?*
- *How can I get closer to God and actually have a relationship with him?*
- *Are these bible stories really true? How do I know the bible is accurate and reliable?*

There are limitless questions. It is amazing how many of them are addressed in the bible. My challenge to you is to not let a doubt or a question go by without seeking for the answer.

This is what leads to spiritual growth, maturity, and wisdom. You might not always get the answer you are looking for. God may lead you down a different path, or answer your question with another question. He will, however, give you what you need.

### What are the tools you need?

- 1) A Bible – What is the best version? Whichever one you will read. Seriously! All major versions of the bible are consistent. I prefer the NIV Study Bible because it speaks plainly and provides cross references and study notes to help me understand the context of the message. Find what works for you.
- 2) An Internet Search Engine – Google? Yahoo? Bing? Whatever. A great place to start is to just type in your question or topic and see who has already written about it. Just be careful not to rely too much on open forums because you will find all kinds of opinions and mis-information. Use credible sources.
- 3) Trusted Advisors – Find people that have wisdom and biblical knowledge and learn from them.
- 4) Books – I can't say enough about reading good books. Books take scripture and biblical concepts and bring them to life from a practical application perspective. The authors have already done the homework for us.



Here is a “tough” question so let's use this as an example. This and many other questions came from my trusted inner-circle, my “Band of Brothers”. This first question is really the cornerstone of our relationship with God.

### HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE SAVED?

To make sure I was scripturally accurate with my answer, I did a quick Internet search and the following verses jumped out:

**John 6:47** ...*“the one who believes has eternal life.”*

**Ephesians 2:8** ...*it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...it is the gift of God*

**John 14:6** *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

**Luke 23:40-43** *But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

