

A few common questions need to be addressed before diving into an intense Bible reading program like this one. This information is not meant to be exhaustive but to provide encouragement and confidence regarding God's Word.

## What Is the Bible and Where Did It Come From?

The Bible is comprised of 66 books written by over 40 people in three languages — Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek — spanning more than 1500 years. However, the amazing thing about the Bible is the harmony of its message. While there are numerous books and writers, there is one focus, one thrust, one overarching theme, which is evidence that God had a hand in its compilation. How could that many individuals, over that span of time, work together to create a unified story? How could they avoid contradicting each other at some point? That is an impossible task from a human standpoint. The only solution is that God ordained the operation.

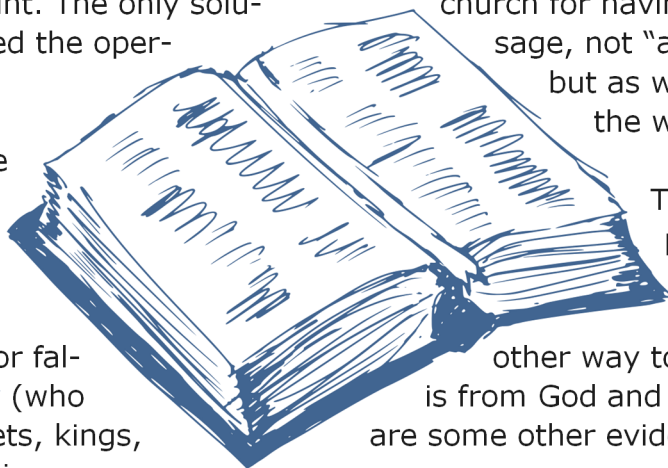
The 66 books that were included in the Bible were believed to be inspired by God based on their **authenticity** (they were not forged or falsified), their **authority** (who penned them — prophets, kings, apostles, etc.), and their **accuracy** (measured against history and other verified books). Those books that were not included in the Bible (like the *Apocrypha*, meaning "books outside the canon") were either found to be falsified, lacking authoritative authorship, and/or having no theological value. Neither Jesus nor the apos-

cles mentioned or verified their reliability. Therefore, we do not treat those books as Scripture. They have no authority for us.

## How Do We Know the Bible Is From God and Not From Man?

It is a common misconception that the Bible is a work of man and not of God. However, upon a closer look, it is easy to verify the true Author.

First, the Bible claims to be the words of God. Paul wrote in *2 Timothy 3:16*, "All Scripture is inspired by God." He repeated this truth in *Galatians 1:11, 12*, when he wrote, "The Gospel, which was preached by me, is not according to man, for I neither received it from man nor was I taught it, but I received it from Christ." Peter wrote, "No Scripture was written by an act of human will but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (*2 Peter 1:20, 21*). In *1 Thessalonians 2:13*, Paul praised the church for having received his message, not "as the words of men, but as what they really are, the words of God."



To use the Bible to support itself seems to be a sort of circular reasoning. Is there any other way to verify that Scripture is from God and not man? Yes, here are some other evidences to consider.

First, remember the supernatural way the Bible was compiled. The 66 books written by 40 different authors over a span of 1500 years without contradiction and with one overarching message is proof that the Scriptures are of God, not man.

Second, the Bible is verified by history and archaeology. If the Scriptures mention a city, a mountain, a river, a person, or a nation, we should be able to find them in history and archaeology, and we have. In fact, some things have been found that only the Bible mentions.

Third, if the Bible is of God, then it should include things that only He would know or that only He could do, and it does. The Bible tells us about our beginning. It also tells us what will happen in the future. It is full of miraculous works, and it is brimming with prophecies, most of which have come true (and the others will in time). The Bible is exceptional.

Fourth, the Bible is obviously not of man because of its anti-humanistic counter-cultural teaching. If man wrote the Bible, he would never describe himself as innately sinful. Even if he did, he would prescribe a way to save himself with his works, not by sending a Savior to die for him. Furthermore, men would never write things like "love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you, treat others as you wish to be treated, or it is more blessed to give than to receive." These concepts are not from human minds.

Finally, if the Bible were a normal book, written by men, it would have been eliminated and long forgotten. Generations of evildoers have attempted to destroy the Scriptures or prevent us from having them. No other book has been so vilified and scrutinized like the Bible. Why is this? Perhaps because it is of God.

## Is the Bible Complete? Is It Reliable?

If we believe in a powerful and purposeful God, who superintends over all things, then it must follow that He has given us everything we need for life and godliness in His Word. The author of *Hebrews* tells us that God's Word was completed in His Son Jesus (1:1, 2). He is the final revelation, the final message to us. Thus, the Bible is complete. We need nothing else.

Since God is the Author of Scripture, then its reliability rests on His character. The Bible says that He is truth and that He cannot lie. It is against His nature (*Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18; John 14:6*). Therefore, His Word is reliable.

## How Do We Account for the Difficulties in the Bible?

The Bible is complete, and it is sufficient to meet our needs. It is God's Word to us. Therefore, it is authoritative and true. Yet, as "His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts" so our finite minds cannot fathom His infinite wisdom (*Isaiah 55:9*).

When we run into difficulties in the Bible, we must be careful not to discredit the Bible simply because we confront a difficulty. Rather we must admit our inadequacy, our lack of understanding, and our inability to grasp such lofty things. It is not yet for us to know all the mysteries of our heavenly Father (*1 Corinthians 13:12*).