

Discipleship #2

Accountability

Since we last met...

1. Have you involved yourself in any activity which is disobedient to God?
2. Have you faithfully maintained your personal walk with God?
- 3.
- 4.

Solo Time With God

From your personal time with God...

1. What is one new idea that you have learned?
2. What is one area of your life where God has been growing you?

Topical Study: Scripture

1. In what ways has God revealed Himself to mankind? John 1:1-18; Romans 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:16
2. Why has God revealed Himself to us? John 3:16; 1 John 5:20
3. How has God guided His revelation in Scripture? 2 Timothy 3:15,16; 2 Peter 1:19-21

The inspiration of Scripture concerns the authorship of Scripture. God so directed the human authors so that their individuality and literary style were preserved. Yet, at the same time, the full message and intent of God was recorded.

4. What do the following verses tell us about Scripture? Numbers 23:19; Psalm 119:160; Matthew 5:18; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16
5. What authority should we give Scripture over our lives? 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 10:23; James 1:22-25

The revelation of God, written in the original languages of Scripture, is infallible and inerrant. God's word is without error and is totally reliable and the authority in all matters pertaining to our faith and how we are to live our lives. We must live in obedience to God's word.

6. What role does the Holy Spirit have in revealing God's word to us? John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:11-16

Today many people question the existence of absolute truth. They believe that there is no purpose in life and the ultimate questions of life cannot be answered. What difference does it make that God has revealed Himself to us in Scripture?

Some background information to consider...

The History Of The Bible

Have you ever wondered how we ended up with the Bible? Someone had to decide what to include in the Bible and what not to include. Who were these people and how did they make that decision? How would you decide?

The 39 books of the Old Testament had already been gathered together before Jesus' time by a process of accumulation. Although in the Hebrew collection these books were arranged in a different order, they are the same Old Testament books we have in our Bibles today. These were the Scriptures that Jesus and His apostles used and quoted in their teachings and writings. The Christian Church simply adopted them as the "Old Testament" Scripture.

The story of the New Testament collection of books is much more complicated. A rough oversimplification goes as follows:

First century A.D. The books of the New Testament are written to meet a variety of needs in the early churches.

Second century. The books travel from church to church in an improvised exchange program and are used to define Christian beliefs.

Third century. The books are gathered into groupings (called "lists:") of Gospels and Epistles - not necessarily the same from place to place. These mini-Bibles were needed to provide authoritative guidance for faith and practice.

Fourth century. Worldwide representatives of churches come together (in "Councils") and recognize the 27 books of the New Testament as divine revelation, thus confirming and bringing to a close the Biblical canon.

The church leaders of the fourth century did not select the books of the New Testament so much as recognize them under God's guidance as God's inspired writings for the following reasons: 1) They were written by apostles of Jesus or by their immediate associates. As a result, the authors of those writings were covered by the authority that Jesus had given them to teach in His name. 2) The content of each book was in agreement with the teachings of all the other books taken together; thus there was consistency of teaching around them. 3) They had been used by the churches since the time of their writing and had proven their value as God's word in the life and worship of the church.

When the Bible was first written there were no printing presses, computers, or copiers. Preserving the Bible and copying it were very special and important tasks. To see how hard this is, try taking a book you own and copying just 1 or 2 pages. Then make a copy from your copy. Then make another copy from the copy of your copy. Then compare your last copy to the original in your book. How did you do? Are there mistakes? How could you help yourself not make mistakes as you were making copies?

Being written on material that deteriorates, and having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the invention of the printing press, the copiers of the Bible were still able to maintain the style, correctness, and even the existence of the Bible. The Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. They kept track of every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with perfect faithfulness to the original.

A comparison of the book of Isaiah (916 A.D.) and the recently discovered Dead Sea scroll (125 B.C.), 1,000 years earlier, shows the accuracy of the copiers. Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, after 1,000 years of coping, there are only seventeen letters in question. And, none of these letters effect the message of Isaiah.

Concerning the New Testament. There is no other collection of ancient literature which enjoys such tremendous support as the New Testament (see the chart below). For example, there are more existing ancient copies of the Iliad than any other book. Both it and the Bible were considered sacred and so their accurate preservation was important. But, out of 15,600 lines in the Iliad, scholars believe that 764 of these (5%) have some type of mistake in them that was made as they were copied and passed down through the years. The New Testament has about 20,000 lines out of which only 40 lines (.05%) are questioned. None of what is questioned effects the message of the New Testament. Which means that today we have a very accurate copy of the original New Testament.

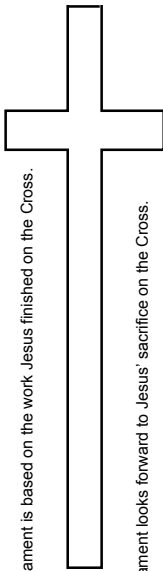
| AUTHOR | WHEN WRITTEN | EARLIEST COPY | TIME SPAN | NUMBER OF COPIES |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Caesar | 100-44 B.C. | 900 A.D. | 1,000 years | 10 |
| Plato (<i>Tetralogies</i>) | 427-347 B.C. | 900 A.D. | 1,200 years | 7 |
| Herodotus (<i>History</i>) | 480-425 B.C. | 900 A.D. | 1,300 years | 8 |
| Sophocles | 496-406 B.C. | 1000 A.D. | 1,400 years | 193 |
| Aristotle | 384-322 B.C. | 1100 A.D. | 1,400 years | 49 |
| Homer (Iliad) | 900 B.C. | 400 B.C. | 500 years | 643 |
| New Testament | 40-100 A.D. | 125 A.D. | 25 years | over 24,000 |

The Organization Of The Bible

The Bible is the most remarkable book ever written. The writing was done by about 40 men in several countries and with many occupations. They wrote over a period of about 1,500 years and in 3 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). Yet, the Bible is a well-organized collection of 66 individual books untied with one great theme and one great central figure: Jesus Christ. All of this would be impossible unless the Bible had one supreme author. And, it did: God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is divided into 2 major sections: The Old Testament and The New Testament. The word “testament” means “covenant” - God’s agreement with man. The 39 books of the Old Testament or Old Covenant is an account of God’s dealings with mankind from Creation until about 400 years before the coming of Jesus. The 27 books of the New Testament or New Covenant reveals Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. In it we find the life of Jesus, the beginning of Christianity, the way of salvation, instruction for Christian living, and God’s plan for the future.

THE BIBLE AT A GLANCE (66 Books)

| OLD TESTAMENT (39 Books) | | | “The New is in the Old concealed. The Old is in the New revealed.” | | NEW TESTAMENT (27 Books) | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--------------------|
| HISTORY 17 books | POETRY 5 books | PROPHECY 17 books | | | HISTORY 5 books | TEACHING 21 books | PROPHECY 1 book |
| <p>Law</p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p> <p>History & Government</p> <p>Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther</p> | <p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon</p> | <p>Major Prophets</p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel</p> <p>Minor Prophets</p> <p>Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p> |  <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">The New Testament is based on the work Jesus finished on the Cross. The Old Testament looks forward to Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">About 400 years between Testaments</p> | | <p>Gospels</p> <p>Matthew Mark Luke John</p> <p>Acts</p> | <p>Paul's Letters</p> <p>Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon</p> <p>General Letters</p> <p>Hebrews James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude</p> | <p>Revelation</p> |