

# ***How can you trust the Bible? Is it reliable?***

*(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)*

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**Pages 1-10: Understanding the Evidence and Strategy for Answering**

**Page 11: Questions for Discussion**

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## **PAGES 1-10: UNDERSTANDING THE EVIDENCE AND STRATEGY FOR ANSWERING**

“What about all that funny stuff in the Bible? What about all the miracles, food laws, genocides, stuff on homosexuality and women’s roles?”

“Isn't the Bible a historically unreliable collection of legends and culturally regressive?”

“Whose Bible anyway? Wasn’t there a power struggle ...?”

### **A. IDENTIFY AND CLARIFY THE ORIGIN OF THE QUESTION**

- a. Existential (Heart)
  - There is stuff in the Bible that’s hard to believe is actually true
  - Some of it seems very hard to live out
- b. Presuppositions (Worldview, Plausibility Structures)
  - The Bible is culturally dated and inaccurate
  - The Bible is just a book, I am in authority over the Bible – I get to decide what it should say
  - The Bible is a tool used by those in power to oppress
  - The stories about Jesus are a collection of legends
- c. Evidence (Mind)
  - Aspects of the Bible do not follow logic (for example, miracles)
  - Wasn’t the canon formed by those in political power?
  - The Bible is hard to read and understand

### **B. EMPATHISE WITH THE QUESTIONER, THE QUESTION, THE OBJECTION**

- a. Find common ground and empathise with their question – “I too wish that ...!”, “I also find this amazing..”
- b. Agree there are parts of the Bible that are hard to believe
- c. There are even people in the Bible that struggle to believe what has happened

From God’s point of view, perhaps this is the point – it’s not meant to be easy to believe. Sometimes the things that are both true and amazing are the things that are hardest to believe (e.g. passing an exam that didn’t go well etc).

We are meant to find it hard to believe that there is a personal God who loves us, who intervenes, who does miracles, and who loves us the way we are.

### **C. DISMANTLE THEIR PRESUPPOSITIONS**

- a. Show that it works against their position as well – i.e., their question is a 2-edged sword.
- b. Show that their position is as much a faith-based position as yours (Tim Keller).
- c. Show that their position is largely a product of their culture (Western) (Tim Keller).

#### **Presupposition 1: “The Bible is dated and culturally wrong – it has no authority over me”**

##### **Response 1**

*But who are we to judge the Bible?*

*This is such an elitist, Western, colonial thing to do to the Bible*

We can't have it both ways ...

- I'm going to be open-minded, not judge another culture,
- And then judge the Bible and its culture.

We all look back on stuff our grandparents used to think/do/say - and are embarrassed.

Surely, in 30 years time, our grandkids will look back at us and be embarrassed.

So who are we to say that we have it right, and the Bible has it wrong?

We need to let the Bible speak to us on its own terms.

*You can't have it both ways ...*

- Say that the Bible is trapped in our culture;
- And not see how trapped in our culture we are as well.

##### **Response 2**

*But who are we to say what we want to be in or out of the Bible?*

Keller's *Stepford Wives* analogy: In this movie husbands decide to have their wives turned into robots who never cross the wills of their husbands. A Stepford wife was wonderfully compliant but no one would describe such a marriage as intimate or personal. If a wife is not allowed to be able to contradict her husband, they won't have an intimate relationship.<sup>1</sup>

If I want a personal relationship with my wife

- I have to love her the way she is;
- I can't pick and choose what bits I like;
- I can't pick and choose what bits I'm going to listen to.

If you eliminate anything from the Bible that offends your sensibility and crosses your will, if you pick and choose what you want to believe and reject the rest, how will you ever have a God who can contradict you? You won't! You will have a Stepford God! A God of your own making, and not a God with whom you can have a relationship and genuine interaction. Only if your God can say things that outrage you and make you struggle (as in a real friendship or marriage) will you know that you have got hold of a real God. So an authoritative Bible is not the enemy of a personal relationship with God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God. Belief in an age of scepticism* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2009) 113-14

<sup>2</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 114

Relationships are built on dialogue - we need to let God speak to us on his terms.

*You can't have it both ways ...*

- want God to be personal and loving;
- and then not let God speak to us on his own terms.

### **Response 3**

*Judging from the 'outside' means you cannot acquaint yourself with what the Bible is really saying.*

For example, before having kids, one doesn't know what it is like to change the nappies.

And as outsiders, there are things that we find hard to understand about God's teachings:

- Women submit to husbands;
- Husbands give up your lives for your wife;
- Whoever loses his life for me will gain it.

But imagine missing out because you let this stop you?

*You can't have it both ways ...*

- Judge what the Bible says;
- Without knowing what it's really saying.

### **Response 4**

*The Bible might not be saying what you think it's saying.*

Some of the Bible heroes aren't heroes. What they did was wrong.

E.g., the way they treated women and their own wives.

Some of the Bible practices aren't the same cultural practices that we do now.

E.g., Slavery as it was in Biblical times.

*You can't have it both ways ...*

- judge what the Bible says
- without knowing what it's really saying

## **Presupposition 2: "The political-religious powers decided what is in the Bible today (especially what is in the New Testament)"**

### **Response 1**

At an *evidence* level, this just simply isn't true:

- a. The Gospel accounts were written too early (that is, very close to the actual events) to be invented
  - Eyewitnesses were still alive; readers of the Gospel accounts could therefore check the facts
  - The events of Jesus' life were public knowledge (crowds that heard and watched Jesus, saw him being crucified and hundreds who claimed to have seen him after his death)<sup>3</sup>
- b. The Gospel accounts are too damaging to those in power
  - the apostles look like fools or cowards
- c. The Gospel accounts are too authentic to be invented

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Reason For God. Conversations on Faith and Life. Discussion Guide* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010) 13

- women as original resurrection eye-witnesses, at a time when women’s testimony was not admissible evidence in court
- Jesus as “weak” asking for the cup to be taken away
- Jesus dying on a cross – humiliated, crying out for his God
- The writers mention details that are irrelevant to the narrative<sup>4</sup>
  - o Jesus sleeping on a *cushion* in the boat (Mark 4)
  - o Peter was *a hundred yards* out in the water when he saw Jesus on the beach (John 21)
  - o He and the other disciples caught *153 fish* (John 21), etc.

The thought behind this claim is that everything is a power game – and the winners get to decide what’s in and what’s out.

But aren’t we doing the same thing when we say what we think should be in and out of the Bible?

- We need to let the Bible speak to us on its own terms.

*You can’t have it both ways ...*

- Argue against those in power picking and choosing what they want to hear;
- And yet subconsciously do this to the Bible ourselves.

## **Response 2**

The words of the bible have been a stimulant for liberation, not just (misused as) a tool of ‘the powerful’.

Look at the way the words of the Bible have worked in this way:

William Wilberforce used them to end slavery;

Dr Barnardo used them to rescue homeless children;

Martin Luther King used them to push for civil rights among blacks.

It is truly a tool to liberate, not oppress (though it can be incorrectly used to oppress).

But in the end one must *read it for oneself* to determine if liberation (or oppression) is the Bible’s true agenda.

Martin Luther said ‘The Bible is a lion. When attacked, you don’t need to defend it. You need to uncage it.’

## **4. DISCUSS THE EVIDENCE**

### **Objection 1: “The Bible is Unreliable”**

The reliability of the text refers to how our current text compares with the originals.

#### ***Old Testament manuscripts:***

The work of a scribe was a highly professional and carefully executed task. It was undertaken by devout Jews with the highest devotion. Since they believed they were dealing with the Word of God, they were acutely aware of the need for extreme care and accuracy. Jewish traditions laid out every aspect of copying texts as if it were law. Nothing was to be written from memory. Any copy with just one mistake in it was destroyed. This guarantees us that there has been no substantial change in the text of the OT.<sup>5</sup> Although there are no complete copies of the Hebrew OT earlier than around A.D. 900, the accuracy of the copies we have is supported by other evidence that shows that the text was preserved very carefully since at least A.D. 100 or 200.<sup>6</sup> Some notes about

<sup>4</sup> Keller, *Discussion Guide*, 14

<sup>5</sup> Norman L. Geisler, Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask. A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2008) 158-159

<sup>6</sup> Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1988) 74

the manuscripts we have are as follows:

- All of the manuscripts, no matter who prepared them or where they were found, agree to a very great extent. Such agreements from texts that come from Palestine, Syria, and Egypt suggests that they have a strong original tradition from way back in history
- In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. They provide a basis of comparison from 1,000 years before the manuscripts we now possess were written. That comparison shows an astonishing reliability in transmission of the text. Scholars observed that the two copies of Isaiah found proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variation of spelling.

### ***New Testament (NT) manuscripts:***

It is often asserted that the New Testament Gospels were written so many years after the events happened that the writers' accounts of Jesus' life can't be trusted – that they are highly embellished if not wholly imagined.<sup>7</sup> However this view is emphatically refuted by Christian and secular historians on the basis of the following facts:

1. The date and number of the earliest new testament manuscripts: There are over 5,300 early NT manuscripts, some of which date from the second or third centuries.
  - To put that in perspective, there are only 643 copies (from a 1,000 years after the original writing) of Homer's Iliad, the most famous book of ancient Greece. And no one doubts the text of Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars, but we only have 10 copies of it and the earliest of those was made 1,000 years after it was written. The proximity to the original text and the multiplicity of the NT manuscripts enable textual scholars to accurately reconstruct the original text with more than 99 percent accuracy. And even if we did not have such good manuscript evidence, we could actually reconstruct almost the entire NT from quotations in the church fathers of the second and third centuries. Only eleven verses are missing.<sup>8</sup>
2. The date of original writing is extremely close to the actual events.
  - The timing between the events occurring and the writing of the events is far too short for the Gospels to be legends. The Gospel accounts were written at the very most forty to sixty years after Jesus' death. Paul's letters, written just fifteen to twenty-five years after the death of Jesus, provide an outline of all the events of Jesus' life found in the Gospels (his miracles, claims, crucifixion, and resurrection).<sup>9</sup> The two earliest biographies of Alexander the Great were written more than four hundred years after Alexanders' death, yet historians consider them to be generally trustworthy. Legendary material began to emerge only in the centuries after the early writings, i.e. five hundred years later. So whether the Gospels were written forty or sixty years after the life of Jesus, the amount of time is negligible by comparison.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore very unlikely that those writings would have fallen victim to legend or faulty memories. A respected Greco-Roman classical historian from Oxford University established that the passage of two generations was not even enough time for legend to develop in the ancient world and wipe out a solid core of historical truth. In the case of Jesus, we have reliable information about his divinity

<sup>7</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 100

<sup>8</sup> Lee Strobel, 'Though Questions About Christ', in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (eds.), *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Thought Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003) 80; Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 159-160, Most of the variants that exist between the different NT documents are matters of spelling and word order. There are less than 40 places in the NT where we are really not certain which reading is original, but not one of these has any effect on a central doctrine of the faith.

<sup>9</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 101; The standard scholarly dating, even in liberal circles is Mark in the 70s, Matthew and Luke in the 80s and John in the 90s, Craig L. Blomberg, 'The Eyewitness Evidence: Can the Biographies of Jesus be Trusted?', in Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christmas: A journalist investigates the identity of the child in the manger* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998) 31. However there is many NT experts believe there are solid reasons for dating the Gospels even earlier (Synoptics 12-29 years after Jesus' death), Strobel, 'Though Questions About Christ', 79.

<sup>10</sup> Blomberg, 'The Eyewitness Evidence', 31

and resurrection that falls safely within that span.<sup>11</sup>

3. Written accounts circulated during time of eyewitnesses (other than NT writers).
  - The dates of the NT documents indicate that they were written within the lifetime of contemporaries of Christ. People were still alive who could remember the things he said and did. This includes *hostile eyewitnesses* who would have served as a corrective if false teachings about Jesus were going around.<sup>12</sup>
4. Written by eyewitnesses.
  - All NT writers were either apostles or associated with the apostles as eyewitnesses and/or contemporaries. Matthew and John were disciples of Jesus. Mark was a contemporary and associate of the apostle Peter (1 Pet 5:13). Luke was a companion of Paul (2 Tim 4:11) who interviewed many eyewitnesses to produce his account (Luke 1:1-4). James and Jude were closely associated with the apostles in Jerusalem and were Jesus' brothers. Paul received his apostleship by a revelation from Jesus. In each case there is a definite link between the writer and the apostles who gave them information.<sup>13</sup>
5. The Gospels in particular are from multiple eyewitnesses with different points of view and different social standing.
  - The frequently asserted allegation that the four Gospels contradict each other has been exhaustively dealt with in a variety of books throughout centuries. In reality, far from being contradictory, the Gospels are clearly complementary. Had all the Gospel writers said the exact same thing in the exact same way, they could have legitimately been questioned on the grounds of collusion. Just because the Gospels take a different perspective in describing events doesn't mean they are irreconcilable. For example, Matthew says there was one angel at Jesus' tomb, while John says there were two, yet Matthew didn't say there was only one. John was providing more detail by saying there were two.<sup>14</sup>
6. Corroborated by non-Christian accounts.
  - There are numerous references to Jesus as a historical figure who died at the hand of Pontius Pilate. Some even noted that He was reported to have risen from the dead. Tacitus, a Roman historian, made at least three references to Christ. Josephus, a Jewish historian working for the Romans in the first century, mentioned Jesus, His death and reports of His appearance after death. The fact that neither Josephus nor any other contemporary of the apostles made any attempt to refute the resurrection is significant. Also, the Talmud, a rabbinical commentary on the Torah, mentions Jesus and the Gospels are cited in other first-century works, including The Epistle of Barnabas, The Didache, Clement's Corinthians, and Ignatius' Seven Epistles.<sup>15</sup>
7. Died for their story.
  - As Pascal put it, "I believe those witnesses that get their throats cut." Virtually all the apostles and early Christian leaders died for their faith, and it is hard to believe that this kind of powerful self-sacrifice would be done to support a hoax.<sup>16</sup>
8. Explosion of the Christian church.

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<sup>11</sup> Strobel, 'Though Questions About Christ', 80

<sup>12</sup> Blomberg, 'The Eyewitness Evidence', 31; Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 78

<sup>13</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 144

<sup>14</sup> Strobel, 'Though Questions About Christ', 77

<sup>15</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 202-204; Norman Geisler, 'Though Questions About The Bible', in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (eds.), *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003) 125

<sup>16</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 210

- After the death of Jesus the entire Christian community suddenly adopted a set of beliefs that were brand-new. Their view of resurrection was absolutely unprecedented in history. They believed that the future resurrection had already begun in Jesus. There was no process or development. His followers said that their beliefs did not come from debating and discussing. They were just telling others what they had seen themselves. Even if you propose the highly unlikely idea that one or two disciples did get the idea that he was raised from the dead on their own, they would never have got a movement of other Jews to believe it unless there were multiple, inexplicable, plausible, repeated encounters with Jesus.

Further, for those who find the reports that Jesus claimed to be God and that Jesus was resurrected from the dead hard to believe as recorded history, consider:

How could a group of first-century Jews have come to worship a human being as divine? It was absolute blasphemy to propose that any human being should be worshipped. Yet hundreds of Jews began worshipping Jesus literally overnight. The hymn to Christ as God that Paul quotes in Philippians 2 is generally recognised to have been written just a few years after the crucifixion. What enormous event broke through all of that Jewish resistance? If they had seen him resurrected, this would certainly account for it.<sup>17</sup>

## **Objection 2: “The canon was chosen for us by those in power”**

The question of the canon: How do we know the books in our Bible, and no other are the ones that should be there?

‘Canon’ comes from the Greek and Hebrew words that mean a measuring rod, and it signifies a standard that all scriptural books must meet. Inadequate views of what that standard is make a common mistake: *they confuse God’s determination of what is Scripture with man’s recognition of those writings*. The bottom line is that whatever God inspired is Scripture and what He did not inspire is not. 2 Tim 3:16 declares that the Bible is God-breathed. Jesus said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). Combine this truth with 2 Peter 1:20-21, which affirms that the Scriptures were given by men who “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,” and we see that inspiration as a whole is the process by which Spirit-moved writers produced God-breathed writings. Thus, God has already decided what should be included; *our problem is knowing how to recognise what writings God has inspired*.<sup>18</sup> There are five questions that have been asked by the church in accepting and rejecting books as canonical:<sup>19</sup>

1. Was it written by a prophet or apostle of God? (see Deuteronomy 18:18; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
2. Was the writer confirmed by an act of God? (see Heb 2:3-4; John 3:2; Acts 2:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12).
3. Does the writing tell the truth about God? (see Galatians 1:8; Deuteronomy 18:22).
4. Does the writing have the power of God? (Any writing that does not incite transformation in the lives of accepting readers is not from God, see Heb 4:12).
5. Was the writing accepted by the people of God? (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Pet 3:16).

## **Old Testament**

The Protestant church accepts identically the same OT books as the Jews had, and as Jesus and the Apostles accepted. At the Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) informal discussions were held about the canon. Those present *recognised* what already was accepted. They did not bring into being what had not previously existed. No branch of Judaism has ever accepted any other books or rejected any of the 39 books of the Protestant Old Testament. The books were received as authoritative because they were recognised as *utterances of people inspired by God*

<sup>17</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 209-210

<sup>18</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 152; Geisler, ‘Though Questions About The Bible’, 114-115

<sup>19</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 153-54

to reveal his Word.<sup>20</sup>

### **Apocryphal books**

These books were never received into the Jewish canon and were not considered as part of the inspired Scriptures by Jews or Christians in the early centuries of the Christian era. This is evident from a study of the writings of Josephus (the Jewish historian) and Augustine (Bishop of Hippo). Jesus and the NT writers do not once quote the Apocrypha. These books also do not claim to be the Word of God or the work of prophets.<sup>21</sup>

### **New Testament**

As for the OT, the NT books possessed canonicity by virtue of their inspiration, *not by virtue of their being voted into canonicity by any group*. Much of the material of the NT claimed apostolic authority. Paul and Peter clearly wrote with this authority in mind. Because of their apostolic authority the NT books were accepted and preserved by the early church. Peter refers to a collection of Paul's letters and calls them Scripture (2 Pet 3:16). Luke refers to other written records (Luke 1:1-4, possibly Matthew and Mark). Paul quotes Luke alongside a passage from the Law (1 Tim 5:18). Jude (vv. 6-7) had access to Peter's second letter (2 Pet 2:4-6). We know that Paul's letters were circulated among the churches (Col 4:16). This may have been the beginning of the collection of books for the NT canon. Lists of apostolic books and collections of apostles' writings were made as early as the second century. Further, early church fathers such as Polycarp, Ignatius and Clement mention a number of the NT books as authoritative. The church fathers of the second century alone cited from every major book of the NT.

Challenged by heretical teachings the church responded by officially defining the extent of the canon. What was authoritative and what was not came to be clearly delineated. The final fixation of the canon as we know it came in the late fourth and early fifth centuries at several councils where the 27 books of the NT were *affirmed*.<sup>22</sup> Three criteria were generally used throughout this period of time to establish that particular written documents were the true record of the voice and message of apostolic witness:

1. Could authorship be attributed to an apostle or close associate of the apostles?
2. Recognition of a book by the majority of churches;
3. Conformity to standards of sound doctrine.

There are no books in the NT that were initially accepted and later thrown out.

### **Gnostic Gospels**

These are "Pseudepigrapha" which means "false writings". They are so called because the author has used the name of some apostle rather than his own name. These were not written by the apostles, but by men in the second century (and later) pretending to use apostolic authority to advance their own teachings. The books' teachings are contradictory to the canonical Gospels and the stories about Jesus are highly unlikely and are not from eyewitnesses. Today we call this fraud and forgery.<sup>23</sup>

The four canonical Gospels were written much earlier than the Gnostic Gospels and were recognised as authoritative eyewitness accounts almost immediately, and so we have Irenaeus of Lyons in 160 A.D. declaring that there were four, and only four, Gospels. The widespread idea, promoted by The Da Vinci Code, that the Emperor Constantine determined the NT canon, casting aside the earlier and supposedly more authentic Gnostic Gospels, simply is not true.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 80-81; Norman Geisler, 'Though Questions About The Bible, False Prophets, And The Holy Books Of Other Religions', in Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler (eds.), *Who Made God? And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003) 140

<sup>21</sup> Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 81-82

<sup>22</sup> Little, *Know Why You Believe*, 82-83; Geisler, 'The Holy Books Of Other Religions', 146; Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 154

<sup>23</sup> Geisler/Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 156-57

<sup>24</sup> Keller, *Reason For God*, 103



In the end, it is always good to encourage objectioners to read the Bible for themselves, that God may speak for Himself through the Bible's words.

## **5. LEAD TO THE GOSPEL AND EXPOSE BIBLICAL TRUTH**

*Aim: Raise any biblical evidence that has not been outlined. Note there is no need to force this because the overarching context of the conversation is the fact that you have already shared aspects of the Gospel anyway. This information can be helpfully given in a follow-up email.*

In John 7:17 Jesus lays down the challenge of the truthfulness of his words to people who doubted what he taught: "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." Jesus is saying that if you want to know in your own experience whether or not the Bible really is true, then put its teachings into practice.<sup>25</sup> These words can move a conversation helpfully from theoretical debate to practical application.

## **6. SOME SUMMARIZING THOUGHTS**

If you are asked, 'Do you 'believe' in the Bible?' (That is, 'Do you believe in the reliability of the Bible?') You may be able to reply, 'Yes, because who am I to say what should be in or out of the Bible?'

If God is a personal God who is loving AND wants a relationship with me, then it must be that he can communicate. If this is the case then He will be communicating with me on His terms, not mine.

I can't have it both ways:

- A personal God who loves me; AND
- Picking and choosing which bits of God I'm going to listen to ...

That's not a relationship! If this is what I want perhaps I should consider buying a dog or a manikin instead.

Further consider: You can't have it both ways:

- To not want to impose your Western cultural presuppositions on other people; AND
- Impose your view of God onto *His* Bible.

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<sup>25</sup> Keller, *Discussion Guide*, 17

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# ***How can you trust the Bible? Is it reliable?***

*(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)*

## **PAGE 11: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Case scenario: You have a close classmate who invites you around on Friday night to relax, listen to some music and enjoy some pizza after a demanding week. You accept the offer with joy as your friend still lives with their Italian parents who make pizza every Friday evening in a wooden fired oven. You decide to watch a little bit of TV before dinner and as your friend is channel surfing the screen alights with an advertisement from the National Geographic channel. The advertisement is about 'understanding truth from the gospel of Judas – truth that the church doesn't want you to know'. Your friend keeps flicking and eventually lands on the Simpsons. A further 10 minutes pass as the Simpsons unfolds and seemingly out of the blue your friend asks, "*I know you are a Christian and I know you are meant to believe the Bible is true. But doesn't it trouble you that it has been manipulated and changed over time?*"

1. Consider as a group the possible origin(s) of the question.
2. Are there any follow-up questions you would want to ask your friend to assist you in determining the origin of the question? [*Note – knowing the origin of your classmate's question will greatly facilitate you answering their question usefully*].
3. In addition to an individual having a stimulus/motivation/origin for a question a person will hold one or more presuppositions, i.e. truths that are subconsciously assumed when they ask the question or hear your answer. When reconsidering your friend's question – identify any presuppositions held by them.
4. The conversation continues and your friend raises the following 2 issues:
  - a. "The Bible is dated and culturally wrong – it has no authority over me";
  - b. "The political-religious powers got to decide what's in the Bible (esp. NT) today".In groups of 2-3 role play a conversation that depicts and 'apology' to these two accusations.