

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Amazing God, Jesus, This I Believe (The Creed)

WELCOME

What is the Bible to you? Think of an object, e.g. *light, food, sword*, that describes the significance of the Bible in your life. Explain why.

WORD

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

All Scripture is *inspired by God* and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;¹⁷ so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.

1 PETER 3:15

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, *always being ready to make a defense* to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, *but with gentleness and respect*;

A.W. Tozer said, “**what you think and believe about God is the most important thing about you.**” But if somebody asks you *why you believe what you believe*, what would you say?

The Apostle Peter’s instruction reminds us to be **ready to stand in defense (apologia)** of the Scripture at this time when truth is scarce and subjective. How can we defend the reliability of the Bible and its promises given to us? **Matthew 4:4, Psalm 19:10-11, and Psalm 119:105** reminds us of the importance of the Bible!

The following are the evidences we can hold on to in defending the Scripture which is inspired by God and is useful for our lives (2 Timothy 3:16-17), in gentleness and reverence (1 Peter 3:15):

1. SCIENCE. Scientific discoveries support writings in the Bible related to the natural world. The misconception that “science and Bible do not mix” is negated by the fact that, **(1)** The Bible affirms scientific claims even years before these were discovered (**planetary positions** [Job 26:7], **numbers of stars** [Jeremiah 33:22], **importance of quarantine** [Leviticus 13:46], etc.). **(2)** Most (65%) of the Nobel Prize Winners identify themselves as Christians like Dr. William Daniel Phillips and Joseph Hooton Taylor who said “**There is no conflict between science and religion. Our knowledge of God is made larger with every discovery we make about the world**”. They believe in God and agree to the fact that the ultimate end of scientific explanations is that there is a Creator and they themselves have chosen to believe in Him.

2. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEXT. The common test for the authenticity of every literary discovery is knowing how and when the original text was copied and how many of those copies still exists today. It also looks at the closeness of the time of recording/writing to the time of the event. For example, works like Pliny’s **History** and Plato’s **Republic** only have 7 surviving manuscripts and the time interval between its writing and the first copy is 750 years (History) and 1200 years (Republic). In contrast,

the New Testament was written with a time interval of only **80 years** from the original writing to the first copy produced with **24,600+ manuscripts which all say the same thing that still exist today!**

3. INTERNAL TEST. In a bibliographical test for ancient manuscripts, this determines the credibility of a document by analyzing the ability of the writer or the witness to tell the truth and if they were truthful to the end. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament writers claim guidance and empowerment from the Holy Spirit of God (**David in 2 Samuel 23:2, Jeremiah in Jeremiah 2:1-2, Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2, John in Revelation 1:1**). We also see this in the Synoptic Gospels (**Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**) as well as in the epistles. Peter calls themselves EYEWITNESSES (**2 Peter 1:16**). Written by different people, they all agree by way of personal testimonies the proof of what was **seen, heard, or even felt (1 John 1:1)**. These witnesses all died for the sake of the truth which they themselves have experienced and witnessed!

4. EXTERNAL TEST. This looks into other writings that confirm events, places, and characters mentioned in that book/manuscript. These external sources are by people who can be considered **believers** (letters of the church fathers like *Polycarp, Eusebius*, etc.), and **even hostile and secular sources** (writers and account makers who do not identify with God like *Josephus, Tacitus*, etc.). The Bible has these supporting evidences from archaeology, historical records, personal letters, and various writings!

5. ARCHAEOLOGY. Archaeological discoveries prove the Bible’s events, characters, places, and situations to be true. Some of these are the **Ebla Tablet, inscriptions** bearing the names of Bible characters like Balaam (**Numbers 22**) and Pontius Pilate (**Gospels**), and even places mentioned in Scripture like the Pool of Bethesda! Even the **DEAD SEA SCROLLS** discovered in the Qumran cave confirm the reliability of Old Testament writings!

WORD (cont'd)

6. PROPHECY. Prophecy fills $\frac{1}{4}$ of the entire Bible. Most of the prophecies were fulfilled as also recorded Scripture or in historical accounts. The fall of many powerful nations like **Egypt** (*Ezekiel 29:9*), **Tyre** (*Ezekiel 26:4*), **Edom** (*Obadiah 4*) and others were all fulfilled!

7. ISRAEL. Israel is a nation that has been conquered and exiled many times, yet God promised restoration. The prophets of old prophesied about the restoration of this nation (***Ezekiel 36:10-11, Isaiah 66:8, etc.***). The world stood witness when Israel was recognized a nation again in **1948**, with the Philippines being part of the “*swing vote*” that restored Israel to the nation that it is today!

8. JESUS CHRIST. Jesus was prophesied in the Bible. The life He will live was written hundreds of years before He came such as how He will be born in **Bethlehem** (***Micah 5:8***) even though His earthly parents were from Nazareth. The sacrificial love of Christ as painted in **Isaiah 53** is the pinnacle of the Gospel records. The **Person of Christ** is the **most dependable** evidence of the truth and power of Scripture! **John 14:9** is a clear claim from Jesus that He and the Father are One! His birth, death, and resurrection are great proofs of our faith!

9. TRANSFORMED LIVES. These are evidences of the power of God’s Word. The apostles changed—from being fearful and unfaithful to being bold and willing to push the Truth forward

even if it cost them their lives. Society (Europe, for example) has changed a lot because of the values Jesus Christ and his followers have presented. Entire nations were transformed by the eternal Word of God!

10. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. As we study the Bible and live in accordance to it, our personal lives and experiences will mirror the benefits, trials, challenges, and hope found in God’s Word. If we have encountered His truth in the Bible, we are to live it out so that many more will commit their lives to God and the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Our lives can have a new beginning (**2 Corinthians 5:17**)—our redemption story!

Psalms 1 reminds us to meditate on His Word day and night and to avoid counsel from wicked influences. Destructive consequences of wicked living were written in the Bible to serve as warning for us and to encourage us to continue walking by faith. Abiding in His Word brings blessings of wellness and success in our lives. Our moral lives can sometimes be a hindrance for others to believe the Bible. So, get rid of sin in your life today!

When we read and study God’s Word, we discover **TRUTH** and it sets us free (**John 8:31-32**). All of these things have been written so that we will **believe in Jesus Christ**, and by believing **secure eternal life with Him**—the greatest blessing of all (**John 20:30-31**)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. **Self-Check.** What do you really believe about the Bible? Does your life reflect what you believe? In what way?
2. **Setting It Right.** Many of us do not give ample time and effort to reflect and meditate on God’s Word. What steps can you do to grow more in your knowledge of the Bible?
3. **Living It Out.** For some people, the only “Bible” they will ever read is our lives. What is the evidence in your life (transformation) that will help you share God’s Word to others and prove its benefits to those who commit to live by its every word?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray that God will speak personally to those people who encounter His Word. Be gentle and reverent in words and actions when sharing or defending your faith. Share this Sunday message to someone you have been praying for.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends