

B L I N D F A I T H

WEEK 3 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

If you could choose two people who are alive today to have over for a dinner party, who would you pick and why?

SHARE

Welcome to our series, "Blind Faith."

We all have faith in something. Whether it is faith in ourselves, faith in God or faith in something or someone else, we all have faith. Faith is developed by the belief in what we perceive to be evidence. Take a chair for example: when we sit down in it, we are trusting that the chair will support us. Because of our past experience, we have faith that the chair will hold us. Our belief system isn't really all that blind.

There are reasons behind why we believe what we believe. For some, our belief system is based on truth, for others it might be based on something completely false, but is still a belief. We can feel emotionally strong about something and it still is untrue. We can also feel that something is completely false, when in reality it is completely true.

So what about faith in God? Is there enough evidence to point to a loving God who exists and knows your name? Are there logical reasons to believe in God? Does our notion of right and wrong in the universe point to a higher law given by God? What is the actual evidence that the Bible is trustworthy and without error? And ultimately, we know Jesus of Nazareth historically lived on this earth and made outrageous claims of being God in the flesh, but did he really prove it by resurrecting from the dead? Is Jesus really the only way to Heaven?

These are real questions that deserve real, intelligent answers. For far too long people have thought of Christianity as a blind faith. Throughout this series, we hope God will open your eyes and hearts to what we believe is the irrefutable evidence established by logic, reason, historical facts, and experience.

This entire series is based on questions we have received from people attending Red Rocks Church. We are grateful that so many of you sent in these great questions and we will do our best to help answer them. When it really comes down to it, regardless of how airtight the apologetics and arguments for God's existence are, we trust God will speak to you and reveal himself to you throughout this series.

This week Shawn tackled the question that many people ask, “Can I trust the Bible?” Within that basic question, we find a host of others such as “How do we know it wasn’t fabricated over the years?” “Is it accurate and trustworthy historically?” “Has it been changed over the years?” And “Is it really from God?”

2 Timothy 3:16,17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

According to the Bible, every part of it is inspired by God and completely true. The Bible is inerrant, that is: without error in every way. This means the entire New Testament is completely true and every part of the Old Testament. The entire Bible is a collection of 66 different books written by different authors with different writing styles and character traits to specific audiences. It contains some historical accounts, poetic books, songs, personal firsthand accounts and some prophetic, but all completely without error; inspired by God, directed by God for his purposes.

Considering the verse we just read, would you agree that reading God’s word is useful in teaching how to live life rightly? Can you give an example of how God’s word helps you live life?

As a Christ follower, have you had periods of time where you stopped reading The Bible? How would you say that affected you during that time?

G R O W

In the message, Shawn talked specifically about how important firsthand accounts were in validating the complete accuracy of the Bible. In the early days of the church, firsthand accounts were written approximately 40 years after Jesus died. These accounts were by living eyewitnesses with specific names, times, and geographies listed in the testimonies. Why is this so important to verify the accuracy of the accounts? Well, simply because those who were actually there were around to testify that those events were true. No one can make up historical events and complete lies and get thousands of people to believe them while those very people are still living.

Mark 15:20,21

And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Richard Bauckham in his book *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* points out that Mark didn’t need to name or list these men, however he listed specific names like a footnote for a term paper. Basically saying, *test this for it is completely accurate*. If one was making these accounts up, you would want to generalize or use fictitious characters no one could account for, long after everyone died. These accounts were being taught and verified by those who were there.

Paul writes about the resurrection of Jesus and lists fifteen eyewitnesses by name and mentions another five hundred. Paul is saying, *go ask them, they were there*. If the gospels were lies, they would have been vehemently refuted immediately. Even if one were an atheist or a skeptic, the accounts would be considered highly reliable as firsthand accounts and reliable documents to verify the historical events that took place.

Had you ever thought about all the immense amount of specific detail in the firsthand accounts? Do you think someone could make up these accounts and convince people who were living to believe them? Why or why not?

Consider this: if a group of people in Denver started a movement around a fake event and used your name as someone who was there when it happened, don't you think you would do everything you could to refute the lie?

With so many specific names and details in the biblical accounts about Jesus and his followers, would it be more likely or less likely to be true and why?

MOVE

We can be sure that these biblical events were historically accurate and those who were there verified the firsthand accounts of the gospels. The big question arises that if we could verify the events 2000 years ago, how can we know they are still accurate today? Shawn talked about how ancient writings are authenticated by the literal number of copies of any document that are accurate and secondly, by how closely the copies can be dated to the original writing.

For comparison's sake, let's take a look at some ancient writings:

Plato: wrote between 427-347 BC, verified 7 copies with the earliest copy dated 1200 years from the original. We don't doubt "The Republic" or any of Plato's other writings since we have copies that were written that matched the earliest copies.

Homer: wrote "The Iliad" and has the most evidence of any other writing besides the Bible, 643 copies of the exact original. This is substantial, overwhelming evidence that it has not been changed over the years.

The New Testament: written 50-95 AD, the first and earliest copy is less than 100 years old. Not 1200 years later; less than 100 years. Not 7 copies, not 600 copies that verify the accuracy, but the New Testament has over 24,000 copies and partial copies that completely match and verify that the New Testament we have today has not been changed in content and is accurate.

The Bible has more evidence of its authenticity than any other ancient writing in the world. We know for certain it was accurate then and now. Christianity is based on faith, but not blind faith. William Albright, speaking regarding the archeological proof that substantiates the claims in the bible, ***...there can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the old testament tradition; there have been over 25,000 archeological discoveries that substantiate the validity of scripture.***

Shawn ended this week's message looking at just a couple prophecies that were fulfilled in the Bible. In fact there were seven predictions made in Isaiah alone, that experts say that the probability of the events happening by coincidence is 1 in 400 Million. Norman Giesler, one of the world's most renowned theologians states, ***If an omniscient God exists who knows the future, then predictive prophecy is possible, and if the Bible contains such predictions then they are a sign of its divine origin.***

This week's LG Study was specifically designed to help encourage the believer, while giving skeptics substantial evidence that would point to the validity of The Bible.

After this week's message and study, would you say there has been something talked about that has helped build your faith? If you are a skeptic, is there anything that you would say has given you more to think about that you hadn't considered before?

Consider taking some time this week to look into all the prophecies found in the Bible that have been fulfilled and verified by history. Be encouraged and inspired this week that your faith doesn't have to be a blind faith.

PRAY

Let's take some time and pray for one another. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13

ADDITIONAL BOOKS AND MEDIA

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Remarkable book by one of the world's most respected theologians.

Jesus among other Gods by Ravi Zacharias

Why is Jesus different than every other religion and why that matters.

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel

A journalist for the Chicago Tribune with a law degree from Yale goes about to disprove the claims of Christ and the overwhelming evidence changes everything.

Youtube.com

Consider going online and look up "Ravi Zacharias" or "Timothy Keller" clips, many of them are loaded with great philosophical, historical and biblical evidences that will help answer difficult questions.