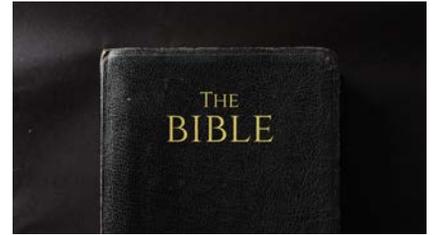




The Bible

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Open with prayer.

Let's Connect

Every week we want to begin by asking two questions. It's helpful if everyone answers these questions.

1. What gave you life this week?
2. What drained you this week?

INTRODUCTION

The Bible did not create Christianity. Christianity is the result of an event (the resurrection) that created a movement (the church) that produced sacred and reliable texts that were collected and bound into a book (the Bible). But how do we approach not being at peace with everything we read in the Bible? Paul—the apostle, Pharisee, author, preacher, and church planter—offers us clarity and confidence to move forward.

READ

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NIV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the following descriptions of Paul. What about him do you identify with? What's hard to relate to?

Scholar: Paul studied under the most esteemed Jewish teachers. He was an expert in the law.

Skeptic: Paul initially spent all of his energy attempting to discredit, undermine, and hurt the followers of Jesus.

Convert: Paul went from being a law-abiding Pharisee to a Jesus follower in a single day.

Leader: Paul taught, wrote to, prayed for, chastised, and financially and emotionally invested in the people he led.

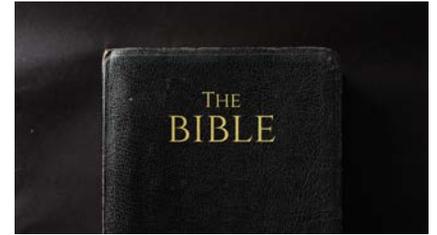
Writer: The letters to the churches Paul planted help explain in practical terms what it looks like to follow Jesus. His writing has shaped the thought of Western civilization.

Thinker: Paul thought deeply about life and its most difficult questions. He cared deeply about leading people to think the new way Jesus came to introduce.

Sufferer: Paul experienced extraordinary loss and pain. At times he struggled financially, physically, and emotionally.

2. Paul wrote much of what we call the New Testament in his 13 letters. What about Paul's life gives him the credibility to discuss faith in Jesus?





3. In his writing, Paul explains the relationship we should see between the parts of the Bible. And if he could have been there the day we got our first Bibles (as children or adults), he would have given us two pieces of advice:

- Read the Old Testament for inspiration and motivation but not application.
- **Take your application cues from Jesus' new covenant command.**

So . . .

- What Old Testament applications are you stuck on? What old expectations and standards can you let go of because of Jesus' new covenant?
- **Read Ephesians 5:21 and 4:32.** Because of Jesus' new covenant command, what should be your primary focus as you live your life? How are you doing on this currently?

4. Paul authenticates the most important event recorded in the Bible—the resurrection.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1, 3–7.

- What important details are recorded here about the events immediately following the resurrection?
- What is the most comforting or encouraging image in this passage for you?

5. The story of the Bible reminds us that the question of utmost importance is not, *Are you at peace with everything in the Bible?* The most important question is, *Have you found peace with God whose Son died for your sin and was seen?*

6. What would change for you if you began your faith with the event of the resurrection like the early followers did? They didn't have a Bible. They had:

Christ died for our sin and was buried: He rose from the dead and was seen.

Can you revisit or begin your faith here too?

THINK ABOUT IT

The story of the Bible is extraordinary. It's a story with personal implications for all of us because of what Jesus did for all of us. We can have clarity regarding our relationship with the Hebrew Bible and we can have confidence regarding the event of the resurrection.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, think about what old ways of thinking you can let go of in order to make room for a better way—the way that was established before the Bible existed; the way that relies on Jesus rising from the dead and being seen by men and women who believed and followed.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. — **Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)**

