



IS THE BIBLE relevant?

Video Introduction

In this opening video, Steve Ham explains the *Answers for Life* program. We will spend the next six weeks answering six questions the world has about Christianity. Steve explains the purpose and the process of the program.

Purpose: To help participants answer questions about the relevance of the Bible and Jesus Christ, with the goal of leading them toward a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Process: To search the Bible for answers to six crucial life questions relevant to the purpose of the program.

1. Is the Bible relevant?
2. Who does God say He is?
3. What does the Bible say about origins and science?
4. Why is there death and suffering in the world?
5. What is so important about Jesus?
6. Do I have to go to church to be a Christian?

As a result of this course, the participant will do one of three things:

1. Receive Jesus Christ as Savior by faith.
2. Reject the news of the gospel having truly heard it.
3. Develop a true desire to investigate the truths of the gospel more seriously.

Discussion

These initial discussion questions are designed to facilitate your understanding of the status of each participant's belief (or disbelief) in God.

- **Do you agree that everyone has a faith-based belief about God, whether they believe in God or not?**

Explain that believing in God requires exercising faith that He exists. The existence of God is not able to be proved or disproved (to do so would require God-like omniscience).

Christians accept that God exists based on the claims given in the Bible, and there is scientific evidence that is consistent with the existence of the biblical God.

Because it is impossible to prove a universal negative ("there is no God"), an atheist (someone who doesn't believe God exists) is also exercising faith that his belief about God is the correct one.

Follow-up questions: Why does it require faith to reject a belief in God? Do atheists generally agree that they live by faith? Why?

- **What does the term "blind faith" mean?**

Discuss what the participants really think about faith. Discuss what it means to have a blind faith: believing in something against all evidence to the contrary.

To demonstrate what faith is, use the example involving a chair. Seeing four sturdy legs on a chair is usually enough evidence for people to exercise their faith that the chair will hold them up when they sit on it.

Follow-up questions: What are other examples of exercising faith in everyday life? What are examples of having a blind faith? (For example, believing in Santa Claus, believing in fairies, believing you passed a multiple choice test when you only guessed every answer.)

- **Do you think Christianity requires blind faith? Why or why not?**

Discuss the responses. Find out if participants believe that faith in Jesus Christ is without evidence.

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? “Having faith in God is intellectual suicide.” “Christianity is only for people who need a crutch.”

Discuss the responses.

After having asked these questions, you should have a general understanding of the participants’ basis for their (dis)belief about God. This series of questions should also help to lay the foundation that faith also requires a logical basis.

Read Romans 12:2 together. This verse reminds us that God builds faith in our hearts through the renewal of our minds. The God of the Bible does not require us to check our intellect at the door but to rationally see the truth presented.

Read 2 Timothy 1:12 together.

The writer of the second letter to Timothy, Paul, says in 2 Timothy 1:12 that he *knows* what he believes in.

Definition of faith: *The assurance of the heart in the adequacy of the evidence.*

Consider your faith in the chair you are sitting in. Was there adequate evidence for your personal assurance or belief that it would hold you up when you sat in it?

Christianity is all about having *faith* in Jesus Christ. Over the next six weeks we will discuss some of the evidence that has provided millions of Christians with a strong basis for their faith in Jesus. Remember, we’re not out to *prove* that Christianity is true; rather, we want to understand the Bible’s claims, and how these claims explain the world around us.

- Is this statement true? “Everybody lives by a faith-based belief about God.”

Any belief about God (in the affirmative “God exists,” or in the negative “God does not exist”) requires faith, since neither can be proven. We are not out to prove God exists but to show how His Word is reliable and authentic. We have a good and logical basis for faith.

These are the questions we will be discussing:

1. Is the Bible relevant?
2. Who does God say He is?
3. Is there credibility in what the Bible says, especially about origins?
4. How can there be a God of love when there is death and suffering in the world?
5. Who is Jesus and why is He so important to Christians?
6. Does a person have to go to church to be a Christian?

Is the Bible Relevant?

- **If there is a God, would you expect Him to reveal Himself to us?**

Discuss what participants would expect from a God who created. One major expectation would normally be that the Creator would give us some sort of understanding of who He is.

Follow-up question: Does it make sense for the Creator to have no connection or relationship to His creation?

The Bible claims to be one way that God has revealed himself to us. So, we need to find out if the Bible's claim to be a revelation from God is defensible.

If the Bible is God's revelation to us, what would you expect from it in relation to the following?

- **The degree of truth**

Follow up question: If the truth is coming from God, should all of it be truth or just some of it?

- **The degree of authority**

Follow-up question: If the ultimate being (God) gave us a written word, would you expect it to simply contain authority or actually *be* the authority?

- **The degree of reliability**

Follow-up question: How should a fully reliable Bible affect our life? To put it another way, If we knew the Bible to be 100% reliable, would we live our lives differently?

This question allows participants to logically think about the expectations that should be placed on Scripture. It should be reliable, authoritative truth. If Scripture is only partly correct or partly authoritative, what does this say about God?

We should therefore consider the Bible's claims of truth, authority, and reliability. We should also consider what the Bible says about how God has revealed Himself to us.

Biblical Claims about Revelation

From the Bible, we know that there are two ways in which God has revealed Himself to humanity: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation refers to the way that God has revealed Himself through creation, morality, and religious sense. Special revelation refers to how God has revealed himself through the written word of the Bible and through Jesus Christ. To include every biblical reference for general or specific revelation would seriously lengthen this study; however, we have provided a few examples.

General Revelation: Creation

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each of us.

In these two passages the Bible claims that God has revealed Himself through His creation. The verse in Romans clearly points to the whole of creation compelling us to ask, “Where did it come from?” The verse in Acts shows that all nations are compelled to ask specifically about the origin of humanity. The Bible states that if we can view the created world around us, we are without excuse in not making an effort to know the Creator.

At this stage we may be tempted to speak more of creation, origins, and science; however, these will be discussed in the third session. For now, it is simply important to understand that it is a biblical claim that God has revealed Himself in a general way through the material creation. If this claim alone is found to have merit, the Bible is certainly relevant in guiding us through living in God’s created world.

General Revelation: Morality

Romans 2:13–15 For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves, their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.

In these verses, the biblical claim is that there has been a law of morality written on the hearts of all mankind from the beginning.

Is the Bible Relevant?

- Have you ever wondered where a sense of good and evil or morality came from?

Follow-up question: If this world all came into being by chance, then we are only a collection of atoms, and our thoughts are nothing more than a random assortment of atoms bouncing around inside our heads. Who's to say that what my collection of atoms tells me to do is any better than what your collection of atoms tells you to do? There is no basis upon which to say one action is "right" while another is "wrong." Without a biblical standard of morality given by the Creator, we have no logical reason to label any action as "evil."

If we are to live according to the survival of the fittest, why do we have any sense of care, fairness, or justice even in regard to things that happen to us?

General Revelation: The Religiousness of Man

Psalm 139:7–10 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

This is a small section of a psalm where the writer is showing he has a built-in sense of God. This happens all over the world where generations of all nations have been seeking God (or gods) with great religious fervor.

Have you ever wondered why people all over the world are so fascinated with a "god" or religiosity?

The Bible claims that even without the Bible or any spoken word from God, people can see from the physical material surroundings, from a basic understanding of good and evil, and from a sense of the religious that there is a very strong case for believing there is a God who has revealed Himself.

The Bible also claims that God has revealed Himself in two special ways.

Special Revelation: Jesus Christ

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The gospel of John begins with talking about Jesus. Jesus is called "the Word." We know that this passage is talking about Jesus because verse 14 clarifies it in this way:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

During the next session, we will discuss who God says He is in the Bible (His Word). It may be a difficult topic to consider, but for now we need to understand that the biblical claim is that God has come physically among us in a special way through Jesus Christ. This is another claim of God's revelation of Himself to us. Notice how the first verse of John says clearly that the "word" was God and in verse 14 how the "Word" became flesh (i.e., a human being).

Philippians 2:5–7 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

- If the biblical claim is that Jesus is in fact God in human form, and every part of the Bible directly or indirectly points toward Jesus Christ, would you consider that the Bible is a relevant document? Why?

Possible answers:

If God has lived among us, then that is a very important event to know about.

If the Bible is ultimately about Jesus, Jesus must be important and we should know about Him.

If Jesus is God, we should find out about Him.

Special Revelation: The Bible

THE BIBLE CLAIMS ONLY GOD'S AUTHORITY

2 Peter 1:19–21 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

- These verses make pointed comments about the Scriptures (the Bible) in relation to interpretation, will, and inspiration. What does this passage say about the prophecies found in the Bible?

They are all from God and not man.

Since the Bible is to be considered truthful, authoritative, and reliable, you would expect that it came from the God who is the source of truth and authority—not from man. The words of Scripture are actually from God totally, with man as His writing instruments. This is a logical conclusion if this book claims to be God's Word and revelation to humanity.

Not only this, but if God's Word is to reveal Himself to man, you would expect it to have great purpose.

Is the Bible Relevant?

2 Timothy
3:15–17

and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Explain the meaning of *inspiration*: it literally means *God breathed*. The Greek word is *theopneustos*, and it is made up from two Greek words: *theos* (God), and *pneuma* (spirit, breath, or wind). So in these passages this inspiration of God means that He breathed out His Word through men. In their writings in the Bible we see evidence of their human personalities and even historical research that they did (e.g., Luke 1:1–3). But God so worked through them that what they wrote is exactly what He wanted, and it was without error. So the Bible gives us God’s truth. For more information on this topic, see chapter 6 of *Nothing But the Truth* by Brian H. Edwards.

- **According to these verses, why was the Bible written?**

To provide us with wisdom of salvation, teaching, rebuking, guiding in the right paths, equipping for good works.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ∞ Only God can be a fit witness concerning Himself.
- ∞ General revelation can turn us toward God.
- ∞ Only special revelation through Jesus Christ and the Bible can give us the message of salvation.
- ∞ If God is the perfection of truth, He can be trusted.
- ∞ If mankind is limited or corrupted, we will struggle with truth.

THREE DESCRIPTIVE WORDS ABOUT THE BIBLE

God’s Word is:

- ∞ **Infallible**: it is totally trustworthy and will not mislead.
- ∞ **Inerrant**: it is free from error (as originally written).
- ∞ **Authoritative**: in every matter it deals with, it is the sole (or ultimate) authority.

If there is an all powerful Creator, wouldn’t you expect these things to be true about His written revelation to us? Would you also expect these things to be testable?

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE REVEALS GOD’S CHARACTER

1. Written over the course of 1,500 years (God is timeless)
2. Written by more than forty authors from every walk of life: kings, military leaders, poets, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, musicians, tax collectors, shepherds (God rules over all)

3. Written in different places: jail cells, palaces, dungeons, in exile, hillsides, while traveling (God is everywhere)
4. Written in different moods: joy, despair, conviction, certainty, confusion, tribulation (God is an emotional being)
5. Written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic (God communicates and reveals)
6. Presents hundreds of controversial subjects with complete harmony (God is truthful and noncontradictory)
7. Presents one universal unfolding story of God's redemption of humanity (God saves)
8. Contains predictive prophecy that has been accurately fulfilled (God is in control)
9. Written in different styles: historical narrative, letters, poetry, song, biography, law, prophecy (God is creative)

Understanding that God has revealed Himself to us is the first step toward establishing a firm foundation for our faith. A Christian should have an axiom (or presupposition or basis) that God's revealed Word is the sole and total authority. We can choose to see the world through God's perspective or our own.

Accepting and understanding the whole teaching of Scripture is akin to putting on a pair of glasses to help us to see the world better. When we embrace biblical teaching and understand how it applies to the world around us, we have a biblical worldview. Over the next five weeks, we will see how a biblical worldview improves the way we view our lives. Since the Bible is God's Word, everything we learn will be taught from this book and tested for trustworthiness. Since this book is the trustworthy, revealed Word of God, it is totally relevant for every human being of every age.

Further Reading

The New Answers Book, chapters 1 and 25

Nothing But the Truth by Brian Edwards

www.answersingenesis.org/go/bible

Conclusion

In 1632 the Italian scientist Galileo published a book in which he supported the view of Copernicus a century earlier that the earth is round and that the sun is the center of our solar system. The church authorities disagreed and his book was banned. Galileo was forced to renounce his views under threat of death by the infamous Inquisition. In fact Galileo was right and he knew he was right; merely declaring him to be in error and forcing him to change his views altered nothing of the truth. Today any school children who learn about Galileo know what the great mathematician and astronomer really believed.

Is the Bible Relevant?

In the same way we cannot read the Bible honestly without coming to the conclusion that what it claims for itself is an authority that allows nothing higher. No other writings, no other documents, and the views of no other teachers or philosophers are ever referred to in the Bible as carrying the same authority. Some of our great philosophers and religious leaders were alive in Bible times, including Plato, who was born 400 years before Christ, and Gautama the founder of Buddhism, who was born a century before Plato, but they are never mentioned and certainly never quoted in Scripture. To the human writers of the Bible, both in the old and new testaments, there is only one authoritative Scripture.

Like the authorities in Italy who punished Galileo for telling the truth, critics may not like what the Bible says about itself, they may even consider it to be wrong. But what they must never do is to pretend that it does not claim such a clear authority for itself. We may twist its words and change its meaning but, like the views of Galileo, the whole world will know what the Bible really teaches about itself. Willful unbelief, ignorance, or fear of accepting the claims of the Bible can never change the truth of them. (Brian Edwards, *Nothing But the Truth* (Evangelical Press, 2006), pp. 114–115)

Video Close

In this first session you have considered the following.

- ∞ Having faith in what we cannot prove still requires a logical basis. For the Christian, having faith in Jesus Christ does not require that we leave our intellect at the door.
- ∞ Faith is *the assurance of the heart in the adequacy of the evidence*.
- ∞ Since God exists and is the reason and source for all that exists, it is reasonable to expect that He would in some way reveal Himself to us.
- ∞ The Bible claims to be God's written revelation to man and indicates that God has revealed Himself to us through such things as creation, morality, religious sense, the written word (the Bible), and Jesus Christ.
- ∞ The Bible claims to be authoritative, reliable truth from God.
- ∞ The Bible claims to be breathed out by God through the writers.
- ∞ The Bible claims to be inerrant.
- ∞ The Bible claims to have no higher authority: From God.

Bottom Line: The Bible claims to be an authentic and accurate message from the Creator, and it actually reads like one. The onus, therefore, is on its critics to prove otherwise.