

# KNOW WHY YOU BELIEVE

K. SCOTT OLIPHINT

**JUSTIN S. HOLCOMB**, SERIES EDITOR

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*Know Why You Believe*

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*To Kyle, Lizzie, Katie, Caroline, and Kelly*

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# INTRODUCTION

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

—C. S. Lewis

Toward the end of World War II, C. S. Lewis delivered a lecture to the Oxford Socratic Club titled “Is Theology Poetry?” The epigraph to this introduction is taken from that lecture.<sup>1</sup> Only Christianity can shed light on everything we think, ask, live, or do. This is Lewis’s succinct response to the question, “Why Christianity?” In one short statement, he says volumes.

Any parent knows the *why* question can become exhausting. Children have an innate ability to ask it—over and over again. They’re not taught to ask it. Parents spend no time instructing them about the meaning and importance of asking it. Children just by nature ask it and ask it and ask it again.

Why do children instinctively ask why? Answering this question could never end. If we answer by saying, “Children instinctively ask why because it is in their nature to do so,” it raises another question: “But why is it in their nature?” And on and on it could go.

The reason the *why* question begins at an early age is because we are interested in the reasons for the things in our world. We ask the *why* question for mental and practical relaxation. What we are after in asking why is a place of rest. We want to be able to live our lives, do our work, watch the news, and relate to others,



all the while recognizing the meaning of what we're doing and why we're doing it. We want more than simply to do things. We want to understand things.

This is why Lewis's quote is so striking. It is a sweeping conclusion to the *why* question. Christianity, for Lewis, is not simply one thing among many things he believes. Instead, he is saying that he believes in Christianity *because* it enables him to see everything in a proper light.

Christianity is a way of seeing. It provides a foundation for everything we think, do, and believe. It gives a proper perspective on us and on the rest of the world.

Think of reciting the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

The question is, “*Why* do we believe those things?”

The following chapters discuss why Christians believe what we do. The chapters also include objections from those who challenge our reasons for believing what we do. At the end of each chapter are questions to expand understanding of the reasons we gave, followed by suggestions for further reading.

The source of the topics we will discuss is the Bible. Everything we discuss in this book depends on how we view the Bible. The first chapter in this book is foundational.

We can trust the Bible to give us truth. The Bible not only is the source of what Christians believe, but it also points us to everything else in the world—and beyond! It points us to the way the world is, to who we are, and, most important, to who God is.

We could think of the Bible as the eyeglasses through which we see everything. If our eyesight is poor, no matter how wide we open our eyes, we do not have a clear view of the things we see. But through the 20/20 vision of the Bible, we can see clearly.<sup>3</sup>

Christianity is not a religion that has its primary source in nature, or in experience, or even in an individual's salvation. The source for Christianity is the Revealer, Jesus himself, who has much to say about nature, experience, and salvation. Our salvation is not something we can earn through works or that we deserve. Christianity comes to us as a gift from God.

The Christian religion stretches all the way back to the beginning of time, where Scripture began. Christianity encompasses the entire history of redemption before the time of Christ, and it tells us a good deal about what we can expect now and in the future.

This is why the quote from C. S. Lewis is so helpful: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” Christians today don't believe Christianity because they've seen Christ, or his miracles, or his resurrection, or God. Christians believe because of the testimony given to us in the Bible. And through Christianity we are able to properly see everything.

We begin the book with a discussion of the various things the Bible teaches—about God, about Jesus, about miracles, about life

after death. We also show how we should think about the Bible's teachings in light of what science is telling us about our world. Each of these topics deserves an entire book. We establish some of the main things that need to be considered in light of the Christian faith.

We make one concession: There is no amount of evidence, or discussion, or argument that will, by itself, change anyone's mind to a belief in Christianity. Christianity is a religion of faith, knowledgable faith. Christianity is properly understood only by knowing and trusting in Jesus Christ.

We also offer one challenge: While reading this book, there may be things you simply cannot believe. If so, ask yourself this question: "What am I trusting in that will not allow me to believe this?" We all trust in something—or in some things.

The most important question throughout this book will be, "Do *I* believe this, and, if not, why don't I believe *this*?"

# WHY BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE?

It was the wee hours of the morning. I couldn't sleep, so decided to see if the television might lull me to sleep. I happened on an infomercial touting the “amazing success” of a vibrating device that fit around your waist and was supposed to shrink your waist by inches! The results this device was supposed to deliver were unbelievable, literally. The success of sales commercials like this one has surely diminished now that we can go online and read reviews from users.

The infomercial prompted a few questions. Why is such an amazing device sold only through a television commercial? At 3:00 a.m.? Why wouldn't the inventor sell it in prime time? Why not put them in every store in the country? Why don't I know anyone who uses this device? There was no hint that the device was new. Yet I had never heard of it. There was something amazing about this device—the amazing inconsistency between its supposed success and the way it was being sold.

People are tempted to treat the Bible like this infomercial. Skeptical questions arise quickly. How credible are the Bible's claims? Are there people who believe it? Is it too obscure to be

read by most people? Is it the equivalent of a product promoted on TV at 3:00 a.m.?

A quick look at reviews of the English Standard Version of the Bible on Amazon.com reveals two examples: “Better for Arabian nights than actual spirituality. Contradicts itself in the first two sections and it’s racist, encourages slavery, bigoted and generally makes no sense.” Another reviewer says the Bible is “neither accurate nor truthful.”

These reviews make the Bible sound like an infomercial. What it says is incoherent, not to mention offensive; it’s neither accurate nor truthful.

Despite these bad reviews, the Bible’s track record is strong. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the Bible remains the bestselling book of all time. Estimates are that more than seven billion copies have been sold. No other book even comes close. The Bible has been translated into more than 350 languages, making it accessible to billions of people around the world. It is difficult to think that a book that is “neither accurate nor truthful” would amass the popularity the Bible has over so many years.

Why is the Bible so popular?

## Reasons

The reasons for believing the Bible are formidable. For the sake of clarity, we will divide these reasons into external and internal. The external reasons are those that come from outside of the Bible itself, such as the historical evidence that attests to the Bible’s history. The internal reasons, which are more definitive, are those that the Bible itself contains.

### *External Reasons*

When we ask the question, “Why believe the Bible?” we are asking a specific kind of question, a question that has many sides to it. It might be useful to ask the question this way: “What would it take for me to believe that what the Bible says is true?” When the question is put like this, it becomes more personal.

Believing in what the Bible says is not like believing that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. We can set up the right conditions to demonstrate the truth that water freezes at 32 degrees. We can repeat the demonstration anytime, any place. People can see the water freeze and believe the truth of the statement.

Believing that the Bible is true is not simple. Would you believe the Bible is true if you were certain it is historically accurate? Christianity, unlike other world religions and many cults, is not the product of one person or of one secret meeting or of a private revelation, as is the case, for example, with Islam, Mormonism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Christianity is not a private religion. It is a public religion embedded in the history of the world.

Christianity is a religion with historical documentation that extends back through Judaism to the beginning of time. Much of Christianity’s history took place in a relatively small part of the world—the Middle East. The Bible names cities and countries and regions, many of which still exist today. Archeology continues to unearth the remains of extinct cities, places, and cultures mentioned in the Bible. For example, the Bible states in three different books that King Hezekiah reigned over Judah (2 Kings 17–20; Isa. 36–39; 2 Chron. 29–32). Recently, an archeological dig in Jerusalem discovered a seal that belonged to him with the inscription, “Belonging to Hezekiah, [son of] Ahaz king of Judah.”<sup>1</sup>

That inscribed seal provides proof of the historical nature of the Old Testament.

Archeology keeps adding more and more support to the Old Testament narratives. In the 1990s, an inscription was found that confirmed the existence of “the house of King David,” which is discussed in the books of the Old Testament.

Regarding the history of the New Testament, there are at least three records describing the existence of Jesus Christ and his followers done by men outside of Christianity. One is from Jewish historian Josephus (c. AD 37), who wrote that Jesus was a man who did wondrous works and whose followers said he was the Messiah. Josephus also recorded the fact that Jesus was put to death by Pilate. Tacitus (c. AD 56–120), also not a Christian, described the first-century persecution of Christians. He attributed the Christian movement to Jesus Christ, a Jew who was killed under Pontius Pilate. A man named Pliny (c. AD 61–112) recorded the continuation of Christianity into the second century. He wrote that Christians were meeting weekly to worship Christ as if he were God.<sup>2</sup>

These are remarkable factual records from men who were not part of the Christian movement. In their writing, Josephus, Tacitus, and Pliny recorded some central and crucial Christian teachings and beliefs, including the fact that his followers believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, and long after his death on the cross, worshiped him as if he was God. A multitude of historical and cultural evidence shows the historical consistency of the Old and New Testaments.

For those looking for reasons to believe the Bible, however, this evidence can seem to be too weak, unconvincing.

The question, “What would it take for me to believe the Bible

is true?” needs more than just historical records and objects. “Granted there are historical testimonies to the Bible’s history,” you might say, “but what about the books that are included in the Bible? Is it possible to confirm their accuracy?”

With respect to the Old Testament, much of its confirmation can be found in the New Testament. From Jesus to his apostles, the attribution of authority and divinity to the Old Testament is beyond doubt. As for external testimonies to its authority, the discovery from about 1946 to 1956, of various caves in the West Bank that contained what we call the Dead Sea Scrolls, added significant and substantial support for the reliability of the Old Testament. Of the eleven or so caves containing ancient manuscripts, Cave 5 housed what is thought to be the oldest Hebrew manuscript, a fragment of the book of Samuel from the third century BC. The cave also contained a hundred copies of various books of the Bible, adding up to the entire Old Testament except Esther.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the manuscripts found in the caves near the Dead Sea, there are thousands of other manuscripts that confirm the accuracy of the words given in the Old Testament.

What about the New Testament?

The sheer number of manuscripts available to confirm the New Testament is overwhelming, when compared with similar documents. Counting only texts written in Greek, there are at present 5,686 manuscripts that copy part or all of the New Testament, some dating perhaps to the first century!<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the second most documented work from this time period is Homer’s *Iliad*, which has 646 supporting manuscripts. Other works have far fewer manuscripts. There are only ten copies of Julius Caesar’s *Gallic War*, eight copies of Thucydides’s *History*, and only two copies of the *Annals* by Tacitus.



The thousands of manuscripts of the books of the Bible lend credence to the material in the Bible. Unlike so many other books that we count as real history, there are copies and more copies, extending through centuries, that all confirm the contents of the Bible.

But maybe you need more evidence. Maybe you need to know how it was determined that the books in the Bible are the right ones. Perhaps you need an answer to the question, “Who decided which books would be in and which would be out?”

Questions like this tend to center on the books of the New Testament. When we begin to address the question of the included books, or canon, of the New Testament, we are moving much closer to the central focus of our “why believe” question.

In a dialogue between two characters, Leigh Teabing and Sophie Saint-Clair, Dan Brown, in his popular book (and later movie) *The Da Vinci Code*, writes this about the origin of the Gospels and of Christianity:

[Teabing:] “The Bible is a product of *man*, my dear. Not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book.”

[Sophie:] “Okay.”

[Teabing:] “. . . More than *eighty* gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relatively few were chosen . . .”

[Sophie:] “Who chose which gospels to include?”

[Teabing: (with enthusiasm)] “Aha! The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great.”<sup>5</sup>

As anyone who was around during the release of this book and movie can testify, *The Da Vinci Code* garnered an enormous audience and created a new generation of Bible skeptics.

The problem with the Teabing and Sophie discussion is serious. It has no basis in fact. The notion that Emperor Constantine collated the books of the New Testament could not be further from the truth. Any cursory glance at the writings of the second-century church fathers, before Constantine was even on the scene, shows that the books of the New Testament were already in use and affirmed by the Christian churches in the East and in the West. Constantine, who was responsible for calling the Council at Nicea in 325 AD, was as dependent on the completed canon of the New Testament as anyone else in the fourth century.<sup>6</sup> There is not one shred of historical evidence for anything that Brown asserts. Nevertheless, for those who would rather remain skeptics than look at history, Brown’s book provided new fuel.

There never was a council called to decide which books to include in the New Testament. This might seem strange since it is clear that many councils were called periodically to decide substantial doctrinal issues in the church.<sup>7</sup> Why would there be no council to decide something as fundamental as what books to include in the New Testament?

One answer to this question has to do with the conditions that prompted councils and assemblies to be called in the first place. These historic assemblies were not called because various

church leaders were simply interested in developing their theology. Rather, these councils needed to meet to avert and respond to serious doctrinal error in the church.

The Council of Nicea (325 AD), for example, was called by Emperor Constantine to affirm the identity and full deity of Jesus Christ against the position of Arius and his followers, who argued, with some success, that Christ, while in some ways unique, was not fully God. A little more than a hundred years later, a council had to be called at Chalcedon to discuss and affirm the two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ. Nicea opposed Arianism; Chalcedon opposed Eutychianism (that Christ had one nature) and Nestorianism (that Christ was two personalities). Oftentimes sound doctrine developed in the church in the face of controversy and error.

No council was needed to decide which books to include in the New Testament. The church understood and recognized from its earliest days which books contained the authority of Christ and which did not. Though there were those who opposed the acceptance of the books, such as Marcion,<sup>8</sup> those detractors were seen as renegades who were at odds with what the church had already recognized about the books of the New Testament.

The early church received these new books, which eventually were called the New Testament. The great Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield wrote,

They received new book after new book from the apostolical circle, as equally “Scripture” with the old books, and added them one by one to the collection of old books as additional Scriptures, until at length the new books thus added were numerous enough to be looked upon as another *section* of the Scriptures.<sup>9</sup>

### *Internal Reasons*

Christians can remain skeptical despite the historical and manuscript evidence that supports the Bible's historical integrity. That is a natural reaction. As one author put it, "From a strictly evidential perspective, we cannot be absolutely certain of what books are in the canon and whether the canon is closed. *Historical evidence as such provides only probability, not certainty.*"<sup>10</sup> External evidence will always remain inconclusive. This means that the best we can do with external evidence is "maybe, but maybe not."

The reason goes back to our illustration of the freezing point of water. The external evidence that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit is conclusive. For anyone who doesn't believe it, you can set up a demonstration and prove its truth, and you can demonstrate it over and over again.

Christianity is not like that. Christianity's proof runs much deeper and is much more sweeping than what any scientific or historical evidence can show. Christianity is not simply about a historical book. It has its focus in a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. A discussion of how we can believe the Bible is true cannot be left simply with history. It has to involve, first and foremost, a relationship with Jesus.

Believing that the Bible is true is more like being in a marriage relationship than like a scientific experiment. Typically, when a man is interested in getting married to a woman, he will go through a period of engagement with her. This period is akin to gathering external evidence of what living with that person would be like. However, no matter how long the engagement, there can be no marriage relationship until the commitment is

made and living together as a married couple begins. Only then will one know what marriage is like. A commitment is required before the reality of marriage can be understood in its fullness. No book can do that; no amount of evidence can produce that reality. Only the marriage commitment can do it.

So it is with Christianity. It makes perfect sense to try to get to know Christianity from the outside. But all we have available are probabilities and speculations. Only a personal commitment to Christ brings to light what Christianity actually is.

The persuasive reasons for believing the Bible is true have to do with the character of the book itself. Unlike any other literary work, the 66 books of the Bible were written by many different people over a period of approximately 1,500 years. With such a diversity, it's natural to think that the Bible would contain a diversity of religious ideas and truths. This is why so many cults focus their religion in one person and one short period of time. It's much easier that way. But Christianity has never seen such diversity as a weakness. The diversity of the Bible is further testimony of its truth.

Historically, the internal evidence of the Bible's truth is focused on the unity of its diversity. For example, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* gives a partial list of arguments as evidence that the Bible is God's Word. Those arguments include

the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof.<sup>11</sup>

All of this internal evidence requires familiarity with the content of Scripture, not just its history. One must sit down and read what the Bible says. It doesn't matter where you begin to read. If there is in Scripture a "consent of all the parts," then wherever one begins will be consistent with other books and passages one reads along the way.

But let's say you open the Bible and begin at the beginning. The first thing you will read is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Immediately you will be aware of what the Confession calls "the heavenliness of the matter." The Bible is not a history book. It is a book given and written in history, but its subject matter is more heavenly than historical. It begins with creation.

But creation is not the beginning of all that exists. Even in the beginning, God already existed. In the first words of the Bible, we read of him who transcends, even as he establishes, all of creation. From beginning to end, the Bible points us beyond ourselves and beyond our existence to heaven itself, where God, who is not earthly, has always been.

By the "efficacy of the doctrine," the Confession is pointing us to the application of what Scripture teaches to the lives of people given to us in the Bible. Throughout the Bible, we see God in relation with human beings, calling them to various tasks, enlisting their services to accomplish his purposes. Through all of Scripture, God graciously offers life. When, as with Adam, the decision is made to forego that life and to choose death instead, God steps in and provides a way for life to overcome the death that is now the natural condition of all people (see Gen. 3:15). What God does in Scripture and promises throughout Scripture since the time when Adam brought God's good creation

under a curse, all point to one event—the coming of God the Son in the person of Jesus Christ. The “efficacy of the doctrine” means that what God teaches and proclaims throughout Scripture comes to pass. It all has its focus in God’s condescension, his “coming down” to save and redeem. That focus reaches its climactic goal in the coming of the Son of God in the flesh.

By the “majesty of the style,” the Confession highlights the transcendent character of the truth of Scripture. Unlike the truth of the freezing point of water, the truth of Scripture points us outward and upward, beyond creation, to the very dwelling place of God. (See, for example, Ps. 90:1.) Once we grasp and own the truths of Scripture, the very style of those sixty-six books moves us to a life beyond ourselves, to the life that is found only in God through his Son.

These and other arguments are given in the Bible to move those who read it and believe it to a certainty about the truth of the Bible and about the one whose truth it is. We cannot grasp and own these truths simply by our intellectual efforts. Even if all of the arguments in the Confession were given, more is needed. The Confession concludes with this: “Yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”

Whenever we contemplate why we believe the Bible, or whenever we attempt to give reasons for our belief in Scripture, this last and deeply personal affirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit in us must be recognized. The only way that one can be fully persuaded and assured of the “infallible truth and divine authority”

of Holy Scripture is when the Holy Spirit himself testifies of the truth of Scripture in our hearts. That work always includes his “bearing witness” of the truth and efficacy of what the Bible says. (We will look more at this in chapter 6.)

We should not miss this most important point. The Holy Spirit does not do his internal work by himself. Instead, he works “by and with the Word in our hearts.” His work is accomplished only when we expose ourselves to the words of Scripture. The Spirit has seen fit to work with those words because it was he himself who, through human agency, produced them (see 2 Tim. 3:16). We must expose ourselves to what Scripture says. Only then can we hope to see the heavenliness, the majesty, the efficacy, the glory of God, and the entire perfection of Scripture. Without that exposure, the best answer to the *why* question is little more than a historical probability, and the power of what Scripture says can never be known.

## Responses

“But,” someone will object, “aren’t you simply reasoning in a circle here? Aren’t you telling me that the only reason to believe the Bible is because of what the Bible says about itself? Couldn’t any book say the same thing about itself?”

This common objection stems from a misperception of the Christian understanding of the Bible. Suppose, for example, I asked you to prove to me, without in any way using your senses of sight or touch or hearing, that your senses were trustworthy guides for experiencing the world. How might you go about that? You can prove your senses to be reliable only by way of your senses.



There are no external sources that establish the reliability of the use of your senses.

The Christian understanding of the Bible is similar. One of the reasons that we spent some time looking at some external evidence concerning the Bible was to show that even though there is historical evidence for the Bible's reliability, such evidence says next to nothing about what the Bible is and how it can be affirmed as authoritative. For the Christian, the Bible, like our senses, is the only authoritative means we have for showing what it is. And because the Bible is the ultimate authority for Christians, there can be no other authority that can establish its authority. If another authority were to establish the Bible's authority, then the Bible would get its authority from something else and, by definition, would not be the final authority.

As for books of other religions (assuming this is a real objection and not just a red herring), it might be worthwhile to read those books, to look into the religions they support. Not only will those books pale in comparison with the rich and varied history of Scripture, but there will be no majesty, no efficacy, and, most important, no "full discovery of the only way of man's salvation,"<sup>12</sup> since salvation can only be accomplished by God himself! What other religion has been saying for millennia that only God can save us? All other religions place the burden of salvation on us, and it is a hopeless burden to carry.<sup>13</sup>

Another objection goes like this: "But what about all the contradictions in the Bible? How can you confess 'the consent of all the parts' and 'the entire perfection thereof' when the Bible is riddled with so many contradictions?"

Some have said that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a

contradiction; some say the same about the doctrine of the incarnation. Or some will read the first three gospels and see, for example, that Jesus cleanses the temple toward the end of his ministry, but then read in the gospel of John that the temple cleansing was at the beginning. Are these not plain and obvious contradictions? Don't they present problems that inhibit any thinking person's belief in the Bible?

Reams have been written about this objection, and we can't deal with it in detail here. But maybe it will help to think of an analogy. You go to the doctor for a physical examination. At the conclusion of the exam, the doctor says, "I detected a problem with one of your organs, but this is what the human body is. It is nothing but a bunch of parts full of problems. It's no surprise that I found a problem in one part. See you next year." Obviously, you would find another doctor.

Any doctor committed to the profession begins with the proper notion that the human body is a coherent whole. All of the parts are meant to function in concert so that each part can function to its fullest. To diagnose problems in the body, you have to assume the harmony and consent of all the parts of the body working together.

So it is with Scripture. No one has exhausted the meaning of those sixty-six books; no one has the capacity to do so. The only way to diagnose perceived problems in Scripture is to study Scripture. When Scripture is studied with the commitment that the parts will be coherent because God is the primary author from beginning to end, contradictions disappear. But when Scripture is studied apart from that commitment, one encounters contradictions and problems because one begins with the premise that the Bible is full of contradictions.

## Conclusion

When we consider a proper approach to the Bible, the marriage analogy can help us. The only way someone can acquire a “full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority” of Scripture is, as in marriage, by first making a commitment. That commitment is to Jesus Christ who is, through all of Scripture, “the only way of man's salvation.”

This is one of the reasons the question was asked in this way: “What would it take for me to believe the Bible?” As a matter of fact, the Bible itself answers that question. It would take a “marriage” to Christ himself, and that marriage can only take place when one hears and *believes, trusts*, and owns what Scripture says. What it would take, in other words, is a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, as we read and as we trust Christ. Then we believe that what we read is the Word of God.

Once we believe and begin to read the Bible, we will affirm that we believe in Christ, not simply because we see him revealed in all of Scripture, but also because by believing him we are able properly to see everything else.

Here is the point we have to recognize as we progress through the rest of this book. *Unless we recognize these truths about the Bible, we will not be able to understand why we believe anything else about Christianity.* This point can hardly be overstated. These truths about Scripture will have to be our guide through the rest of this book. It could not be otherwise. It is the Holy Spirit who “fully persuades” us, through his own words in the Bible. The Bible presents to us “divine authority” about God, Jesus Christ, miracles, the resurrection, and everything else. So we can only

discuss our “why” questions in the context of the answers that God himself gives to us, in his Word.

In trusting Christ and believing his Word, we begin to see the world and everything else in its proper light.

## Questions for Reflection

1. Is the fact that the Bible was written over a period of sixteen centuries a strength or a weakness? Explain.
2. Some people have said that Christians worship a book. Is this what Christianity means when it says that the Bible is God’s Word?
3. Since there never was a church council that agreed to put the right books in the New Testament, how can we be sure the books there are the right ones?
4. Like Scripture, what other authorities in our lives do we have to first trust before we can learn from them?

## Recommended Reading

Garner, David B. *Did God Really Say? Affirming the Truthfulness and Trustworthiness of Scripture*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012.

Grudem, Wayne, C. John Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner. *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible’s Origin, Reliability, and Meaning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

MacArthur, John. *The Scripture Cannot Be Broken: Twentieth Century Writings on the Doctrine of Inerrancy*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.

Packer, J. I. *God Has Spoken: Revelation and the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.

Piper, John. *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

Ridderbos, Herman N. *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*. Biblical and Theological Studies. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1988.

Warfield, B. B. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1948.

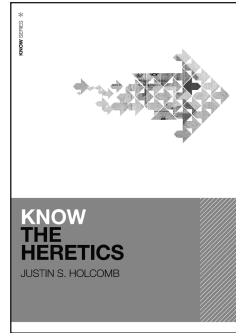
# Know the Heretics

*Justin S. Holcomb*

There is a lot of talk about heresy these days. The frequency and volume of accusations suggest that some Christians have lost a sense of the gravity of the word. On the other hand, many believers have little to no familiarity with orthodox doctrine or the historic distortions of it.

What's needed is a strong dose of humility and restraint, and also a clear and informed definition of orthodoxy and heresy. *Know the Heretics* provides an accessible "travel guide" to the most significant heresies throughout Christian history. As a part of the KNOW series, it is designed for personal study or classroom use, but also for small groups and Sunday schools wanting to more deeply understand the foundations of the faith.

Each chapter covers a key statement of faith and includes a discussion of its historical context; a simple explanation of the unorthodox teaching, the orthodox response, and a key defender; reflections of contemporary relevance; and discussion questions.



*Available in stores and online!*



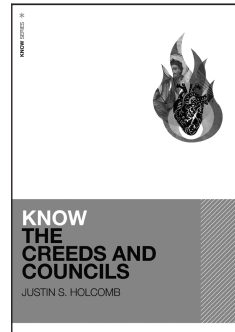
# Know the Creeds and Councils

*Justin S. Holcomb*

In every generation, the Christian church must interpret and restate its bedrock beliefs, answering the challenges and concerns of the day. This accessible overview walks readers through centuries of creeds, councils, catechisms, and confessions— not with a dry focus on dates and places, but with an emphasis on the living tradition of Christian belief and why it matters for our lives today.

As a part of the KNOW series, *Know the Creeds and Councils* is designed for personal study or classroom use, but also for small groups and Sunday schools wanting to more deeply understand the foundations of the faith.

Each chapter covers a key statement of faith and includes a discussion of its historical context, a simple explanation of the statement's content and key points, reflections on contemporary and ongoing relevance, and discussion questions.



*Available in stores and online!*

