

FOCUS ON FAITH

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WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE

I've met a lot of people who can't understand why it is that I believe the Bible.

The conversation usually goes along the lines of:

- How can you believe in something that was supposed to be written so many years ago?
- It's out of date and doesn't match up with what we know scientifically these days so it's irrelevant for today's modern world
- There are so many contradictions and anomalies (usually though people can't actually tell me what they are!)
- The Bible is a load of fairy tales designed to con people who can't think for themselves and it's a crutch for those who need to believe in something because they can't cope
- It's so negative – all those "thou shalt not's" – it's boring.

In some ways I can understand why people are sceptical about the Bible. As Christians we believe it is the divine Word of God but of course it was written by human beings and we all know that as humans we have the ability to twist things, misinterpret or re-interpret what's been said and the old "*Chinese whispers*" syndrome can easily distort the original meaning. We filter information through our own prejudices and preconceptions. And of course there have been many examples where people have deliberately used the Bible for their own, usually selfish, ends.

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But for me those are not the issues that matter because to be honest there are too many supposed "*coincidences*" that come together in the Bible to make it more than a work of mere fiction. I'll admit that even after reading the Bible for many years there are large swathes of it that I don't fully understand but for me the real evidence for the validity of the Bible is that it doesn't shy away from talking about life as it really is.

In its 66 books and 1,189 chapters written by 40 different authors from kings to fishermen over a period of around 1,500 years we see a mixture of writing styles and a wealth of history, prophecy, poetry and narrative. The Bible covers the whole range of life's joys and sadness, people's attitudes and motivations as well as their strengths and weaknesses. That the Bible doesn't pull any punches about moral ineptitude and lessons that need to be learned gives me hope that my life can be changed for the better.

Right from the beginning with the story of Adam and Eve we see how God's perfect creation is spoilt by temptation and

deception. One of their sons murders his brother and the whole cycle of revenge and retaliation commences. Later on we read about Abraham who tries to con a local chieftain king that his wife Sarah is his sister in order to save his own skin – and even when he's put into a similar situation a few years later, he tries it again. His grandson Jacob also had a twisted sense of ethics – lying to his father and cheating his brother out of his inheritance and later on deceitfully acquiring a large portion of his father-in-law's financial assets.

The revered warrior King David becomes an adulterer and then ensures the husband of the wife he seduced doesn't return home from the frontline of the battlefield. One of David's sons engineers a coup to overthrow his father and almost succeeds and there are plenty of other examples where the Bible records the type of political intrigue and machinations worthy of any modern day thriller.

Of course we also read about the really good guys and women but we learn so much from those who had character flaws. The Bible certainly doesn't condone their behaviour – what they did was totally unacceptable and there was a cost to pay for their misdeeds. But the reason the Bible is still relevant in our day and age is that despite our so-called enlightened, civilised culture the issues of morality, ethical fairness, integrity and respect for others haven't changed much over the centuries since the Bible was written.

But what really gives me hope is that in the life of Jesus we see God's overwhelming capacity to forgive our frailties and imperfections. Jesus suffered the worse people could throw at Him – cruelty, humiliation, persecution, torture and ultimately death – yet in doing so He made a way to rescue and redeem mankind and enabled us all to understand the extent of God's love and grace.

What I read in the Bible is not a fantasy or even a parody of life, but an accurate representation of the way we still live today. I know I'm not perfect yet I have a heavenly Father who has demonstrated time and time again through the Bible that I am loved and I am valuable to Him.

The Apostle Paul, originally an accessory to murder himself before becoming a believer, records that the Bible is "***inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right***".

That's a huge claim but for me the evidence is right there. Read it for yourself and find out!

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information on local Churches together with contact details, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.