The Trustworthiness of the Bible

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Dr. Everett Piper teaches on the trustworthiness of the Bible.

I've had some people ask me, why is a Wesleyan going to a Baptist church? And my response has always been because I enjoy going to a church where they preach the Bible. Seriously, that's why we chose this church.
We're very serious about wanting to be unified around the inerrancy of Scripture. It being the true north, the measuring rod outside of those things being measured, to quote C.S. Lewis, or you can do no measuring.
And that's why we are part of this church and members of Highland Park Baptist, because this church and your pastor, Pastor Scrivani, believes in the inerrancy of the Word and preaches it.
So, I'm going to start out reading a prayer, an old Puritan prayer, with regard to Scripture. And here's what we're going to do. You should always know your speaker, I suppose.
[1:02] I've never pretended to be a preacher, because I'm not one. I'm not a theologian. I could argue that I might be a bit of a teacher because of my academic background, but I'm not even a good teacher. I'm one of those dastardly administrators that it made everybody's life miserable by trying to balance the budget.

Okay? So, I'm not a preacher, maybe a teacher, and if I am one, I'm average at best. So, what we're going to do tonight is set the context for this class. And this class is going to focus on a couple stories with regard to the Bible, and whether or not it's true.
These stories will be relevant to our culture. I'm going to personalize them because they're things that I've had to deal with in my career, and in my engagement with culture as a guy from the local ivory tower, if you will.
So, my goal is not to get into the weeds too much tonight, because we don't have time. We'll touch some of the issues relevant to the questions that we're facing today with regard to the authority and the inerrancy of the word.
Not only from a secular culture, but from within the church itself. And I'm going to argue that it's not just Wesleyans and Nazarenes and Methodists and Free Methodists and Assembly of God.
[2:11] I'm going to argue that this is pervasive across the evangelical community. That there is a lack of understanding on how to defend the word and how to answer some of the key questions that are out there.

From folks like Bart Ehrman, who used to be at Moody Bible, but now is a professor at the University of North Carolina, and he makes it his primary goal in life to tear down the authority of the word by arguing on secular shows like Bill Maher, etc., that the Bible is loaded with errors and you cannot trust it.
So, class, here's what I want you to be thinking of. When I say that, how are you going to answer the question when your neighbor asks you it? Can you answer that question? Is the Bible loaded with errors? I've heard that it is.
And if it's loaded with errors, why do you believe it? If you can't answer that question when your neighbor asks you, in three minutes or less, I'm arguing you're not ready to engage your culture. You can't spend 20 minutes answering that question. Your neighbor's going to walk away. Or your kids bring a friend home and they ask similar questions. Well, what about the violent verses in the Old Testament?
[3:17] Stoning your son when he disobeys you. Do you guys believe you're supposed to do that? And if you don't, why? Yeah, amen? Amen. You will be asked these questions.

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The LGBTQ nonsense that we face on a daily basis. Can you answer the question as to how a Christian should respond to that issue? A biblical Christian and what the Bible teaches on that today.
These are critical issues. These are critical issues. Is the Bible the authority in the Christian's life or isn't it? And does the Bible change with culture or should culture change with the Bible?
Which way does that go? So my goal tonight is to prime the pump and at least get you to think on how you're going to answer those questions when somebody inevitably asks you.
And if they're not asking you, then you're not doing your job of engaging your culture as a Christian. Because people want to know the answers to this stuff. If I learned one thing while I was at Oklahoma Wesleyan University is that if you open your big mouth once or twice, you're going to have a lot of people asking you questions on this stuff.
[4:25] People that don't know the Lord. I've told the story in the men's group here about how I was invited to go on the Dave Rubin show back in the old days of Oklahoma Wesleyan because I spoke up on a couple issues with regard to what was going on in the college community at the time.

Dave Rubin is a married homosexual. Married in quotation marks. He's a married homosexual. He used to be radical left, part of the Young Turks. And now he's a conservative who has a huge following.
Millions and millions of people follow him on his podcast. He's a conservative in everything but sex. I'm on his show talking about this stuff. And he didn't turn me off. He was fascinated by it.
He wanted to know more. An hour later when I'm leaving and getting ready to fly back to Oklahoma Wesleyan, back to Oklahoma from LAX airport, he tweets, if more guys said what this guy just said, we'd be a freer, braver, and wiser nation.
He got it. When I told him that you have to have a true north, that there has to be a measuring rod outside of those things being measured, or you can do no measuring, Mr. Rubin, you will have no freedom if you don't live within the four pillars, the four corner posts, if you will, of the fence of God, of the primacy of Christ, the priority of Scripture, the pursuit of truth, and the practice of wisdom.
[5:40] If you don't live within the freedom that that fence provides you, you're going to be controlled by government to the extreme because those simple laws that God gave us, God gave us ten, Jesus summarized them in two, if you will.

We refuse to live by those, so the government gives us reams and reams of little laws to fill the vacuum. Mr. Rubin, my married homosexual friend, got it.
Adam Carolla, he's a debauched atheist, a comedian of Howard Stern types. He got it and said what the world needs today is more of this wisdom, the authority of the Bible, the inerrancy of Scripture, the Bible being the true north that guides us as a culture toward greater freedom rather than less.
They got it. So that's the context. I'm going to open with a prayer. I'm going to tell you a couple stories. I've got one video. It's very quick.
It's about 30 seconds long to prime the pump. And all the while we're talking, I want you to be thinking, what would you say in the face of some of these questions? Why do you believe the Bible is true?
[6:55] That's the simple question our culture is asking you as a born-again believer today. Why do you believe that that book is true? Okay, here's the prayer.

Let's open up with this. This is a collection of Puritan prayers. This one in particular references Scripture, so I'll read portions of it, not the whole thing. It says, My Father, in a world of created, changeable things, Christ and His Word alone remain unshaken.
May I always lay hold upon this mediator. Let me know that He is dear to me by His Word. I am one with Him by the Word.
If I oppose the Word, I oppose my Lord. If I receive the Word, I receive my Lord. O Thou who hath the hearts of all men in Thy hand, form my heart according to Thy Word, according to the image of the Son.
So shall Christ the Word and His Word be my strength and comfort. Amen. Before I get into a video, these are some resources I'm going to use tonight.
[8:03] I've got them up here. If you want to thumb through them afterwards. If I accomplish nothing other than whetting your appetite to go pick up these books and read some of them, it's worth our time being here tonight.

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The first one is on the right here. It's Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell's Evidence That Demands a Verdict. This is in, I don't know what edition it is, but it's been reprinted multiple times. As you can see, it's a thick book.
It is a book of apologetics that answers about any question you have. I really respect these guys. In fact, we had the Josh McDowell Institute for Christian Apologetics at Oklahoma Wesleyan while we were there.
They do an excellent job. There's a section in the beginning on Scripture, the authority of the Word, how we got it, why we can trust it. Okay? Excellent book. The other book there in the middle is a short one.
This is by Jonathan Morrow. Sean actually endorses this, so it's endorsed by McDowell. Questioning the Bible, 11 Major Challenges to the Bible's Authority. Excellent book.
[9:01] Short chapters. Gives you a great summary. I'm going to cover some of the stuff. Obviously, you don't have the time to hardly scratch the surface. Another great resource. And then this one is a rebuttal, a refutation of Bart Ehrman.

I just told you who Bart Ehrman is. He's the guy that graduated from Moody Bible, Conservative Bible College up in Chicago. And then he fell away. And now he's an apostate, biblical scholar teaching in theology at the University of North Carolina.
He's the guy out there who's arguing that the New Testament is filled with errors. It has so many errors, you can't trust it. Okay? We're going to tackle some of that tonight. This guy, Timothy Paul Jones, goes basically point by point in refuting Bart Ehrman.
He does a super job at that. I have a couple others up here. I didn't take the time to put it on the screen. Keith Small, he was actually a professor, a teacher of mine, when Marcy and I were privileged to have a sabbatical at Oxford a few years ago where we studied at the Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics.
Keith Small was one of our professors. He actually has done an analysis of comparing the Koran and the Bible in terms of critical analysis and whether or not the Bible is more trustworthy than the Koran.
[10:17] It's fascinating. It's a fascinating read if you have to engage with any Muslim friends that are telling you that their Koran is more accurate than your Bible, which they will tell you. And then, this is an excellent book, is just the importance of inerrancy.

And I'll use this as a springboard. I don't have this up there. This is by Vic Reisner. He's a pastor. He's confronting his own church because his own church is getting weak need on inerrancy.
And maybe that's a good place for me to play the video, and then I'll jump back to Reiser's point. Okay. You denied the historicity of this story of Exodus.
I don't take these stories literally. That doesn't invalidate the divine spark one bit. You were one of the first rabbis to officiate same-sex marriages. Do you mean that the Torah said that someone's deepest impulses are just evil?
I don't believe that that's true. As society changes, so does the way that God instructs us change. So you had just said that sometimes the theology has to evolve to meet the standards of society.
[11:26] No, that's not how I put it. Actually, I do want to stop you there because I put it differently. And you may or may not like the formulation, but it's impossible to really fool any kind of biblical life.

But religious traditions are flourishing. So the message is falling on deaf ears. Okay. Obviously, this is not a Christian dialogue. These two Jews. If you don't follow these guys, Rabbi Wolpe is the guy who said he doesn't believe the story of Genesis' literal history, but the divine spark is still powerful. So he denies the historicity of the Genesis narrative. The Jews didn't really experience the Exodus. He denies that. So you have a Jew, a rabbi, saying that the Jews did not benefit from the Exodus. It's just a metaphor. It's an analogy. It's not true. But it's still a beautiful story. The divine spark is inspiring. Have you ever heard anything like this in your Christian circles?
The same guy is saying, well, I don't believe that our most important impulses that define us can be evil. Therefore, he's one of the first rabbis that actually officiated a gay marriage, a same-sex marriage.
[12:44] And then he goes on to talk about how culture changes, and therefore the Bible, in his case, the Torah has to change with culture, evolve with culture.

It's a living document. It's not a stagnant. It's not a stagnant revelation from God. So culture changes the Bible more than the Bible will change culture, is essentially his argument.

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Now, this is a dialogue between two Jews. It's a conservative platform. This is Prager University platform. The young guy is Shabbos Kastenbaum. And he's an Orthodox Jew.
And he's interviewing Rabbi Wolpe, who is a conservative Jew. And if you don't know this, in Jewish circles, the conservatives are really the liberals. It's kind of like Lutherans, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.
It's a very liberal church. It's not evangelical. So the labels can throw you off. Well, the same would be true in Jewish circles. Wolpe is actually very liberal.
[13:44] within the Jewish faith, as you see, because he doesn't even believe that the Torah is true. The story of Exodus is just a beautiful story.

He doesn't really believe it happened. Now, this reminds me of something that happened to me, oh, years ago, when I was doing my doctoral work at Michigan State University. I was in my 30s at the time, and I was an administrator at my alma mater, Spring Arbor University, an evangelical Christian college like Oklahoma Baptist or Oklahoma Wesleyan would be in the same mix.
In fact, it would be part of the same organization that both of those institutions are, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, all of these Christ-affirming institutions that say they believe in the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith.
And that's why parents from around the world choose these institutions to spend a boatload of money to send their kids to these colleges to get an education that's grounded in a biblical worldview.
Well, at Spring Arbor University, Marcy's alma mater, my alma mater, I decided to do my doctoral research on the definition of evangelical. I wanted to know what evangelical means within the evangelical community because I was hearing all these various different opinions as to what evangelical means.
[14:58] Now, we would assume that evangelical means you believe in the evangel. You believe in the fundamentals of the faith. You believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. You believe in the Bible as the word of God, Jesus as the son of God, truth as revealed by God.

In many cases, most churches would say, and you're obligated to be obedient too, sanctification, holiness, obedience unto the Lord as demanded by God. It isn't optional. At least we would agree on those things, right?
Those fundamentals of the faith. So my dissertation at Michigan State University, not a Christian school in case you didn't know, was on this very question.
By the way, I think when Mike was working on his dissertation, one thing I said to him was, choose a topic that your committee knows nothing about. So you're the expert and they can't challenge you. Well, I pulled that off in spades at Michigan State University because they did not know anything about this evangelical language.
But I want to tell you a story on this because this will drive the point home. I'm spending time on this because this is a critical question. What Wolpe just said, the Bible is just allegory, metaphor, a beautiful story, emotional, existential moment where we can be inspired by the story of the Exodus, even though it didn't really happen.
[16:17] And our passions and our proclivities, our instincts are pure and good. Surely, surely we're not going to call those things evil, are we? Questions that I ask in my dissertation and my doctoral research at Michigan State University, I use my alma mater as a case study.

So I decided to ask the faculty, staff, the students, the alumni, the pastors, the board members. I ask all these various different constituent groups, what do the words evangelical Christian mean to you when we apply those two words, evangelical Christian, to this college?
I went to one of the senior faculty members. He had been there forever. He had a room named after him on the campus. He was the guy. So think of that guy on your alma mater at Oklahoma Baptist or wherever.
Think of that guy. That's who I'm talking to right now, the Christian guy. And I ask him, what do the words evangelical Christian mean to you with regard to the virgin birth, the death, the resurrection, and the miracles of Jesus?
I ask this question of everybody, not just him. The faculty, staff, the students, the parents, the pastors, the board. But this guy, the lead faculty, Mr. Spring Harbor University, Mr. Evangelical Christian College himself.
[17:40] If you look at evangelical Christian college, this is back in the days of an encyclopedia, rather than Googling it, you're going to see his face. He answered the question, what do the words

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evangelical Christian mean to you with regard to the death, resurrection, the virgin birth, and the miracles of Jesus?

He answered, and I quote, these can be message statements. They do not have to be reality statements. Are you surprised? You shouldn't be. You should not be surprised.
I can guarantee you that we could go to 20, 30, 40, 50 other Christian colleges and hear the exact same thing that Wolpe just said on behalf of the Jews.
Our evangelicals are saying on behalf of the New Testament and all of Scripture. They are. I've run into it time and time again. What we're talking about tonight matters.
Because if our Christian leaders are teaching the next generation that the death, resurrection, virgin birth, and miracles of Jesus are metaphor, not reality, we're in trouble.
[18:51] Your faith means nothing other than what you want it to mean. And you're not a good measurement of faith. Nor am I. You can do no measuring without a measuring rod outside of those things you're measuring.

C.S. Lewis once said, if you want to get from England to America, get a map. You can stand on the beach in England and desire the beauty of America.
You want to go visit it. You want to experience it. But you're not going to get there unless you get a map and follow it because the map was created by people that preceded you and they know what they're doing. That's the point that I want to make with regard to this particular issue tonight.
So, we could talk about Wolpe. I mean, I wrote an article for the Washington Times two weeks ago on this very thing and I asked this question. I said, what Bible is he reading? I mean, my land.
He's saying that the Exodus is not real. And then even more so, I don't know, I would say worse, maybe equal to. But worse, he's saying that our, what did he say?
[20:04] Do you really mean that the Torah says that someone's deepest impulses are just evil? I just don't believe that's true. What Bible is he reading? Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart are only evil continually.

Genesis 6.5, that's the Torah, Rabbi Wolpe. The heart is deceitful above all else. It's desperately wicked. Who can understand it? Jeremiah. That's in the Torah.
Well, it's not the Torah. That's in the Tanakh. That's in the Old Testament. Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right or never sins. That is Ecclesiastes.
And then we have another verse out of Ecclesiastes. This one is 9.3. It says, the same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people are full of evil and there is madness in the hearts while they live.
And we can jump to Romans. If the rabbi wanted to consider the New Testament, we know that the New Testament says, there is none righteous, no, not one, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And then, for out of the heart of man comes evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.
[21:12] It sounds to me like the teachings of the Bible condemn our innermost passions rather than elevate them to some level of goodness. And that's exactly the opposite of what you heard.

But my professor at Spring Arbor College is saying the same thing. He's saying the same thing. I ask a board member at that institution, what do the words evangelical Christian mean to you with regard to sexual behavior, sexual morality?
Her quote, I've searched the scriptures over and over again and I can find nothing in them that says premarital or extramarital sexual affairs are unhealthy. Okay, you search the scriptures over and over again.
Search the newspaper and you can figure out that premarital and extramarital sex is unhealthy. I mean, this is ridiculous, people. This is ridiculous. And so what we're hearing is we'll be saying the exact same thing that I'm arguing many people are saying in the evangelical church, whether it's Baptist or Wesleyan or Nazarene.
One of the battles that I fought in my last few years at Oklahoma Wesleyan were within the holiness side, obviously, because that was the church influence out at Wesleyan.
[22:26] Two battles. When I kept talking about the inerrancy of scripture because I decided, well, here's a good Baptist story for you. In the first couple days of our experience at Oklahoma Wesleyan, the institution was in financial crisis.

I needed to hire somebody that could raise money because we were about 12 months away from bankruptcy when Marcy and I were hired in 2002. So I narrowed down the candidates for the vice

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president for development, for fundraising, to two candidates.
They were both good on paper, but the one that was best by far was a good old Baptist boy. He wasn't Wesleyan, he was Baptist. And candidly, I did not care. If he's born again, if he loves Jesus, if he believes in the Bible, and if he can raise money, come on board.
I wanted him. So I went to his reference page, and the first guy at the top of his reference page was the president of the Missouri Southern Baptist Foundation, if I remember the title correctly.
So I called up this guy, and I said, Mr. President, I'm Everett Piper. I just assumed the presidency at Oklahoma Wesleyan University. We're having some difficulty. We're in financial crisis. Your buddy Joe has applied to be the chief fundraiser.
[23:33] He interrupts me, and he says, why would Joe want to work for you? And I knew what he was saying, and some of you know, too. He thought, why would my Bible-believing Baptist brother Joe want to work at a liberal Methodist school?

And I knew that's what he was thinking. So I interrupted him. And I said, sir, we're not Methodist. I just want to tell you that. I know you think we're the same as Ohio Wesleyan, Kentucky Wesleyan, Texas Wesleyan, Kansas Wesleyan, Dakota Wesleyan.
We're not, because we're not Methodist. Those schools abandoned the Bible and abandoned the Lord decades ago. Oklahoma Wesleyan is a Wesleyan school. And we still believe in the primacy of Christ, the priority of Scripture, the pursuit of truth, and the practice of wisdom.
And we've made up our minds here right now, because we're in financial crisis, that we're going to wave the banner of the truth of Christ and the truth of Scripture. And, sir, if we win waving that banner, great.
God's grace. If we lose, I don't care. We'll go down fighting. And he started chuckling on the phone. And then he said this. And this is relevant to what we're talking about.
[24:45] He said, you really mean that, don't you? And I said, yes. Why would I give my career to anything less? And he said, I really need to get to know you, because I don't hear this kind of stuff in our circles much anymore.

Stop and think about that. But this good old Baptist boy, the president of the Missouri Southern Baptist Foundation, is telling me a suspicious Wesleyan that just won him over.
I just won him over by saying nothing other than we're going to wave the banner of the truth of Christ and the truth of Scripture. And he's telling me, I don't hear this kind of stuff much in our circles anymore. So if you think it's just a Wesleyan problem or a Nazarene problem or a Jewish problem or a free Methodist problem, it's not.
It's everywhere. It's everywhere. So in the next few minutes, here's what we're going to do. I've got so much here. I'm going to start out by trying to give you some confidence in what your forefathers have said.
And we're going to work our way backward to the first century. So is the inerrancy of Scripture something that we just made up in the fundamentalist and evangelical debate of the early 1900s?
[25:57] No. But people will tell you that. I had an Indiana Wesleyan faculty member disparage me. He didn't do it to my face. He did it behind my back. But his president sent me the note.

So I saw the note that he sent to the president where he disparaged me as being a closet Calvinist. I was a closet Calvinist as the new president at Oklahoma Wesleyan because I wouldn't stop talking about inerrancy.
Well, guess what? The Wesleyan discipline says we are inerrantists. All 66 original documents, they have no error. They are without error. We are strictly inerrantists at Oklahoma Wesleyan.
The Wesleyan Church believes in inerrancy. But yet I've got a guy who's challenging me for waving that flag, a flag that's even part of our own denomination's doctrine.
All right. So let's start working our way backward. Charles Wesley. Search the Scriptures, for in them you think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.
[27:03] John 5, 39. So he's quoting that particular scripture. Charles Wesley. Search the Scriptures, for in them you think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

Charles Wesley citing that verse. John Wesley. Oh, give me that book at any price. Give me that book, O God. I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand.
If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth. Charles Spurgeon. I do not believe that from one cover to the other there is any mistake in it of any sort whatsoever, either

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upon natural or physical science or upon history or anything, whatever.
I am prepared to believe whatever it says and to take it believing to be the word of God. For if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. Charles Spurgeon.
George Whitefield. All heirs that have overspread the church of Christ first arose from ignorance of the word of God. The words which are now before us are to this day as true as they were 1,700 years ago.
[28:16] George Whitefield. D.L. Moody. Now we have to take the word of God just as it is. And if we are going to take it, we have no authority to take out just what we like and what we think is appropriate.

And let dark reason be our guide. That's a direct rebuttal to Rabbi Wolpe and to my professor at Spring Arbor College. Martin Luther. The scriptures, although they also were written by men, are not of men nor from men, but from God.
I beg and faithfully warn every pious Christian not to stumble at the simplicity of the language and stories that will often meet him there. These are the very words, works, judgments, and deeds of the high majesty, power, and wisdom of God.
That's Martin Luther. Augustine comes along before that. I have learned to hold the scriptures alone as what? Inerrant. No, this is not a fundamentalist invention, folks.
It didn't just pop on the scene in the early 1900s. Augustine used the word inerrant. Christostom. Approximately 350, maybe 400 A.D.
[29:25] The Bible presents us true history, and unless the principle be honestly recognized, it is useless to teach doctrinal and spiritual lessons as contained in the words.

For that it is to build a superstructure on a pernicious and crazy foundation. So back to a little bit more awkward wording here, because we're getting into ancient writing, but the Bible presents us true history.
And unless this principle be honestly recognized, we're going to be in a boatload of trouble. Piper paraphrase. Jerome, around 340, maybe 380 A.D.
In the Holy Scripture, even the order of the words has a sacred meaning. They are written and edited by the Holy Spirit. Do you think that our forefathers thought the Bible was true?
Or did conservatives in recent days make all this stuff up? Gregory of Nazianzus, 325 to 389.
[30:26] Nothing is without design in Scripture. Every stroke and every letter has its special significance. We trace the accuracy of the Spirit in detail to each separate stroke and letter.

For it is blasphemous to suppose that exact pains were bestowed by the compilers of the book, or even the smallest letters without design.
No single syllable of the sacred writings is to be neglected. Every word or action must be accepted on the testimony of inspired Scripture.
So we're back into the early 300s now, folks. Now let's go to Athanasius, late 200s. The Holy Scripture is mightier than all the synods. The Bible is a book wholly inspired by God from beginning to end.
So was it one of the councils that came up with Scripture being the Word of God? Did this all get invented at the Council of Nicaea? By the way, the Council of Nicaea had nothing to do with the canonization of Scripture.
[31:26] It was about the Arian heresy, where Arius was claiming that Jesus was not eternal. He was not eternal with God. Pastor Mike and others have covered that with you. So when they say, well, the Council of Nicaea is where you guys came up with this Bible, garbage, nonsense.

It's just not true. The Council of Nicaea had nothing to do with the canonization of Scripture. We'll get into where the canonization really started and how it was formed much earlier than that. Cyprian said this in 200 to 258 AD.
The names given for Scripture testify to them. Divine Scriptures, precepts of the Gospels, divine commands, sacred Scriptures, Scriptures from heaven, precepts of divine law, wells of divine fullness, voices of the Lord.
That's what Cyprian said in the early 200s. Clement of Alexandria, 150 to 250 AD. He says this, from my infancy, I had been taught to reverence every letter of the Greek Bible.
Arrhenius says this in 142 to 200 AD. We're getting really close to when the apostles were alive now, guys. He said this, we should be most properly assured that the Scriptures are indeed perfect since they were spoken by the word of God and his spirit.

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[32:39] Justin Martyr, he's even earlier than that. 100 AD to 165. The writers received from God the knowledge which they taught. This knowledge was too great to have been acquired otherwise than by the divine gift which descended on men whose sole function was to present themselves pure to the energy of the divine spirit.

And then we have Polycarp. Polycarp was a disciple of John. This was a student of John, the apostle John. You can't get any closer than the apostles themselves.
Polycarp said this, 69 to 156 is when he lived. The Scriptures are the oracles of the Lord and whoever perverts them are the firstborn of Satan.
I don't think he's beating around the bush. So did the canonization of Scripture happen in 325 in Nicaea? No. No. You're going all the way back to Polycarp.
Who's at the elbow of the apostle John? And he's saying we believe this Bible. It is inspired by God. And if you disagree with that, you're the spawn of Satan.
[33:48] Again, Piper paraphrase, a Polycarp. Now, what do the apostles say about Scripture? Because somebody's going to come along and say, well, yeah, you keep quoting Paul when he writes to Timothy that all Scripture is God-breathed and it's good for instruction, etc., etc.

But it's obvious that Paul was talking about the Old Testament when he said that. He wasn't talking about the New Testament, right? Can you answer that? Can you answer that in three minutes or less?
No. It's not true. And why do we know that's not true? Because Paul equated his own writings with the prophets and with the law and with the writings.
Paul equated his own writings. And he wasn't just being arrogant, folks, because Peter comes along and says he agrees and that Paul's writings are Scripture. So Peter attests to Paul's authority to write Scripture equal to the law, the prophets, the Psalms, and the writings.
Okay? That's what Peter is saying of Paul. So Peter just got done telling us that the 13 books that Paul wrote are just as authoritative as the Old Testament.
[35:05] Peter just said it, of Paul. And if you want to throw Hebrews in there, which I know the pastor is going to argue you shouldn't, you've got 14. Okay? Now, who else do you have?

Well, the apostles attest to each other, okay, that their writing is authoritative. So John is attesting to Matthew, and Matthew is attesting to John. And Paul lists James and John and Jude on his reference page when he comes back to Jerusalem.
He talks about going and meeting with them to make sure that they understood what he was teaching, and he gave them an opportunity to disagree. So Paul is saying that if you want to check my references, go to John and James and Jude.
Well, it seems that Paul is also attesting to the authority of those guys then. So now we're covering 1st and 2nd and 3rd John. We're covering the Gospel of John. We're covering Luke because Paul and Luke were partners.
We're covering Mark because Peter and Mark were partners. We're basically covering the New Testament in the first century while Paul is still alive. And John is still alive.
[36:11] They're attesting to one another. The canonization of Scripture happened then, not 300 years later. It happened then because they said, Our writings are of the same stature as the Old Testament.

Jesus attests to the Old Testament. Jesus says, These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, And as I understand it, when Jesus said Psalms, he was covering a generic, it was an umbrella term for the Psalms and all the writings.
So this covered the entire whole Old Testament. So Jesus is saying that the Old Testament is Scripture. And we know that Jesus quoted the Old Testament constantly as it was Scripture.
He even used it to defend himself against Satan's temptations. Jesus consistently pointed out that Moses' words carried the authority of God.
In John 5, he says, If you believe Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Seems that there's a pretty strong indication from our Lord and Savior that he's saying the Old Testament is authoritative.
[37:32] And then he gives authority to his apostles to carry on and do what? Preach the gospel and spread the word. So he has given his stamp of approval to his apostles to do the same thing that the Old Testament did for him.

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Fast forward. You'll be disappointed if we don't get into some of the controversial stuff. So I'm going to skip some of the... I've got tons and tons of stuff.
When people come to you and say, Well, Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code says that that Bible was made up by Constantine. Or whoever.
If it wasn't that council, it was another one. I've got tons of stuff here. And you could just take five of these examples and make them your own and say, Well, that's just not true. The one I like best is Polycarp.
He's there. There's no distance. There's zero distance between the Apostle John and Polycarp. And you can't get any closer to the real source than that.
[38:37] And the fact that the church fathers have been consistent on these things for 2,000 years should mean something to us. C.S. Lewis talked about chronological snobbery, that we think our new ideas are always better than the old.

Well, they're not. They're not. And evangelicals are often tempted to this. We come up with a new idea that's five minutes old and we'll chuck 2,000 years of church history because we think that we've got it all together right now.
Stop doing that. Go back and pay attention to what the church fathers say. If it's consistent with Scripture, use it. If it's not consistent with Scripture, then discard it.
But more often than not, you're going to find stuff of great value. All right. Mistakes. Bart Ehrman says there are tens of thousands of mistakes in the New Testament alone.
He actually says there are hundreds of thousands of mistakes in the New Testament alone. Textual errors. He can prove it to you. He can show you the mistakes. How do you respond to that?
[39:42] Well, that's not true? Actually, there's some truth to it. Now, before you panic and start throwing stones at me, let me explain this. When you go back to the manuscripts, the oldest manuscripts that we can find, if you go back to P66 and all the other manuscripts that you can go look at at Oxford Library, in other words, around the world, there are thousands upon thousands of manuscripts that we've discovered.

And when you go back and you start looking at them, there are some inconsistencies. For example, some of the big ones are the story of the woman caught in adultery, where Jesus says, you know, let him who is without sin cast the first stone.
That's not in the oldest manuscripts. The longest, in fact, in your ESV, it's going to say that. Get your ESV out, and it's going to give you a line right there at that verse, and it's going to say the following verses are not in the oldest manuscripts.
It'll say that. It says it in the NIV, the ESV. I know it says it in those two. It probably says it in many other versions. The long version, the long ending of Mark, it'll say the same thing.
These verses are not in the oldest manuscripts. The Lord's Prayer. The long ending of the Lord's Prayer.
[41:00] Same thing. It'll say this particular ending is not in the oldest manuscripts. We'll get to that in a second.

Do you know what almost all of the other mistakes and variations are? Jobs and tills. Absolutely. It's the forgetting the dot and I or cross a T.
It's misspelling a word. It's the reversal of a word or the repeated word, saying and twice or to twice in a row. If you take out, and these two books tell you this, this one and this one as well as evidence, all three of these books tell you this.
If you take out all of those variants, 99% of the issue is addressed. 99% of the variants are things like forgetting to, or failing to dot an I or cross a T, or misspelling a word.
Or something like this. A different way. Pastor Mike is, Pastor Mike is, Mike Scrivani is the pastor of Highland Park.
[42:11] Mike is the pastor of Highland Park. Mike is pastor of Highland Park. Michael is pastor of the Baptist Church in Bartlesville.

Mike misspelled, M-Y-K-E, is pastor of First Church in Bartlesville. Well, is it First Church or is it Highland Park Church? Which is it? These types of mistakes or errors or inconsistencies would be an example of something that you might stumble across in the original manuscripts.
Did anything I just said compromise the basic doctrines of the church? The death, resurrection, virgin birth of Jesus, his miracles, his atonement, your belief that the Bible is telling you the truth about these things.

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No. None of that is compromised by any of these inconsistencies of jots and tittles, of commas, of misspellings, or phrasing something differently that says the same thing.
Executive pastor, preaching pastor, head pastor. I bet I just came up with probably two or three dozen variants on describing his title and what his function is.
[43:22] And only one of them was technically wrong and that was when I said First Baptist rather than Highland Park. And even then, okay, we'll go back and figure out, did 20 documents say Highland Park and just one of them said First Baptist?

Well, now you know that he was the head pastor or the preaching pastor or the executive pastor. Whatever his title is, he's the dude who's preaching the gospel at that church in Bartlesville. Nothing was changed in terms of what it told you about the gospel. So, when somebody says to you, well, the Bible is loaded with errors, don't get all defensive and panic.
You can literally go count the errors and 99% of them go away if you get rid of the jots and tittles and the misspelled words and the description of the same thing in just a different way.
Does that make sense? Another one that I've run across is people will say, well, do you believe all that Old Testament violent stuff?
[44:27] Violent stuff. I was on a radio show a few years ago. The guy was an atheist and I responded to him and I said, well, do you believe in poetry, prose, prophecy, parables?

Do you believe in prescriptive literature and descriptive literature? Do you believe in proscriptive literature? I do. I believe that all those literary forms are used in the Bible and I believe that all those literary forms are used to tell the truth.
So when the Bible describes something, it's not necessarily prescribing it. When it proscribes, it tells you not to do, that isn't necessarily prescribing it and telling you to do it.
Poetry is used to tell the truth. Metaphor, analogy, simile are used in Scripture. We know that over and over again. Pastor Mike preached this morning about God's wings covering us.
Do you think God really has wings? Or was that something to give us an image of God's protection of us? When Jesus says that Jerusalem, oh Jerusalem, how I yearn to gather you as a hen, as a mother hen gathers its chicks.
[45:27] Is God a chicken? Is Jesus a chicken? Well, of course he's not. This is a form of language. It's poetry. It's a simile. It's giving us an image of how powerful it is that God loves us and protects us.

So we know that the Bible contains poetry and prose and prophecy and parables. We know that it contains descriptive literature and prescriptive literature and when it describes that David is having adultery, that doesn't mean it's prescribing that we should go out and do the same.
This is obvious, people. And I took 30 seconds or so to answer this atheist on the radio and there was silence. We didn't go anywhere after that because there's no answer to that. He knows what I'm saying is right and he knows that the book is still true even though those genres of literature are contained therein.
Does that make sense? So the Old Testament stuff, which is difficult to wrestle with at times. I've got to admit, I have difficulty with some of the old war stories of the Old Testament.
But you can get rid of a lot of the concerns just by asking the question, do you believe in descriptive literature and prescriptive literature, parable prophecy, poetry, prose?
[46:36] Do you believe that the truth is being told through all of those genres of literature and therefore, we can read a lot, I've got to admit, not all, you can read a lot of the Old Testament description of what's going on and it puts your mind to rest a great deal.

A great deal. And if you're answering somebody that's just trying to be a jerk and poke at the Bible, it puts that concern to rest very quickly. And if they're really serious about wanting to dig in the Word, then you can come back and you can start reviewing some of the difficult passages and get them in with Pastor Mike and have him answer the question.
All right. Sir Frederick Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, once commented concerning the Gospels.
The interval between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence is so small as to be negligible. And the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.
This is a guy who had all the manuscripts. He had access to all of the extant manuscripts and all of the things that people were debating. Well, why does it say Pastor Scravani and then it says Mike

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Scravani and then it says Pastor Mike Scravani and then it says Pastor Michael Scravani and then it says Reverend Scravani and then it's...
[48:08] So why do all these extant manuscripts! say something different about this guy? Clearly, the scholars have concluded it doesn't say anything different.

It was a variant, if you will, that Bart Ehrman makes a big deal about and I don't think we should. Okay, I'm going to conclude with this and then you can have a question or two.
Again, I told you, we're not going to get into the weeds. You can get into the weeds further by doing a little bit of research. The point is, this stuff is going on in your church. Do you guys remember Rob Bell a few years ago?
The NUMA series? A lot of churches in Bartlesville were using the NUMA series in your youth groups. At the time, I'm going to cut the youth pastors a little bit of slack because I'm not too sure they really knew what it was.
Maybe this church had it. I don't know. We weren't here then. But a lot of Baptists and Wesleyan and Nazarene and good evangelical Bible-believing churches were using the Rob Bell NUMA series. Rob Bell is now deconstructed.
[49:14] He's more in the Church of Oprah than he is in the Church of Christ. And he's in the same camp as Tony Jones and Doug Padgett. Unfortunately, I would argue even Andy Stanley is coming dangerously close recently in some of his preaching because he is now advocating that Christians need to unhitch themselves from the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is irrelevant to your faith. And he's also boiling down the New Testament to nothing but a bunch of good stories, heartwarming stories, about the love of Jesus. So he's cherry-picking his truths and he's discarding the things that make him feel uncomfortable.
And that's coming from Andy Stanley. Many of these guys are deconstructing the word. They're doing exactly what Rabbi Wolpe did at the beginning of this with the Old Testament.
They're doing it with the New Testament. They're doing it with the Gospel. John Piper has a book out and I didn't write it down.
Forgive me for this. It's a few years old now. But John Piper argues that the best way to know that the Bible is true is because it testifies to the grace of God in your heart.
[50:29] He doesn't go through all this. He says the best way to know that the Bible is true because it testifies to the grace of God in your heart. I'm not sure I agree with that being the only thing we should do to evaluate the authority of the Word.

But it rings true for me and I'm going to close with this story. One of my favorite books is a book that's been out of print for a hundred years probably. It's called The Curate's Awakening. It's by George MacDonald.
If you know anything about C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald was partially responsible for, at least God used George MacDonald to bring C.S. Lewis to faith.
George MacDonald was a late 1800s, early 1900s writer and he wrote a bunch of novels. One of the novels is this book I'm telling you about right now.
It's The Curate's Awakening as I said. It's a story about a young pastor who just graduated from seminary and he gets his first job at a small little church out in the hills of Scotland. Scotland. And he goes out and he takes over this little parish and he's 20 years old and he's doing this job and he's reading out of the Anglican Book of Prayers and he's administering communion and he's preaching sermons that have been left to him in a file by his predecessor.
[51:46] He's doing the job of a pastor. And one day as he's preaching there's a guest out in this small little country church a young man that he didn't recognize.

The guy's only in the church today because he's courting a young lady and he's trying to impress her by going to church. So after the service the curate's done curate by the way is another word for pastor, preacher, a curate.
So the curate is done delivering his sermon. He's administered communion. He's standing outside the church letting everybody walk past him and say good sermon pastor really appreciated this today.
He did a good job. And this young man who's the guest who happens to not only just be there to visit this young lady but he's also an atheist. He's not a believer. He has no use for this Christianity, this Bible, this Bible that's full of errors and preaches violence and intolerance.

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He has no use for any of this so he walks up to the pastor as they stand at the entry of the church or the exit as it may be and he leans over and he kind of whispers in the pastor's ear. He says, you know what you said today is garbage.
[52:52] You don't believe it and I know it and you know it. And he moves on. Well, the curate is caught off guard and the rest of the book, this is in the first couple chapters, the rest of the book is about the curate basically being stunned into admitting that this atheist is right.

He doesn't know if what he's really doing is something that he really believes. He's just going through the motions to get a paycheck from the church of England or the church of Scotland in this case.
So he goes to an old man in the church, this old, crippled up, palsied man. His name is Polworth. He's all hunched over and he goes up to Mr. Polworth and he says, Mr. Polworth, how do I know if the story of Jesus is true?
How do I know if this Bible stuff is real? The preacher's asking the old man rather if he can figure out rather or not what the stuff he's preaching and the sacraments he's administering if any of this is real?
And Mr. Polworth looks at the curate and he says, if you want to know if the story of Jesus is real, go read the words of Christ. Go read the Bible and do them.
[54:09] Polworth reverses the equation. He doesn't say go believe them. He says go do them. Essentially, Polworth is saying, I don't care whether you believe it or not. At this point, you obviously don't or you wouldn't be asking me this question.

You don't believe the Bible. You don't believe in Jesus or you wouldn't be coming to me asking these questions. That's implicit in the conversation. So Polworth just skips past the belief and he says, go do it. Now don't get nervous.
Polworth isn't preaching a salvation by works here. What he's preaching is a salvation by experiencing Jesus. By going to the Word of God and experiencing the Word of God.
Like John Piper is telling you in his book that the Bible is real because through it you experience the glory of God. Well, the rest of the chapters that go on for the rest of the book, the curate is actually reading the Bible on a daily basis for the first time in his life and he's actually taking it seriously and he's doing what Polworth says.
He's doing the words of Christ even though he's not sure he believes the story of Christ. He's doing it. He does this week after week and he decides that he's going to make his sermon series on this journey.
[55:17] So he starts telling his congregation the truth. So every sermon from then on out for the rest of the book the pastor is telling the truth. He's being very vulnerable and he's sharing with his congregation his journey through the Gospels, his journey through the New Testament, his journey through Christianity and trying to apply these teachings, this grace, this glory of God to his own heart, mind, and soul.

And here's the end of the book. The curate's been preaching these sermons week in and week out. You can imagine how nervous this congregation is. But those who are still there listening to him, probably he's gained a few followers because of the words out.
This guy's a little, you know, he's a little crazy but he's telling the truth. He's not just trying to cover up all of our doubts and our apprehensions. He's actually sharing this journey with us.
It's kind of the way the congregation is reacting. His last sermon before the book closes. He says, I've got part of it memorized but this part I don't. So this is a paraphrase. He stands before his congregation.
He says, you know what we've been doing for the last several weeks. Mr. Polworth told me that if I want to know if the words of Jesus are true, that I just need to go read them in the Bible and do them.
[56:32] And that's what we've been doing and that's what I've been preaching. And I stand before you today, and this is the quote, I stand before you today and declare to you, in my attempt to obey the words recorded as his, I have found grandeur beyond the realm of any human invention and therefore I cast my lot with those of the crucified.

Stop and think about that. In my attempt to obey the words recorded as his, in my attempt to obey the Bible, the word recorded as his, I have seen grandeur beyond the realm of any human invention.

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You can't make this stuff up. It's too glorious. It's too beautiful. It's too good. This has to be the word of God.
It can't be made up by you or me or any other man. It's beyond the realm of any human invention and therefore I cast my lot today before you with those of the crucified.
Now, I don't know about you but I think that preaches. That preaches not because I'm advocating some sort of existential heartwarming experience. Don't get nervous. I'm not that much of a Wesleyan anymore.
[57:47] But I do believe that if John Piper can say it, so can Everett Piper. That he believes the Bible is true not because of all this other stuff that you can dig into which is important.

And if you're as logical and rational as I am, you can't avoid doing it anyway. But that logic and that rationality will just carry you so far. There comes a point in time where you just have to jump in and you have to say, I've given this a good shot.
I've read this stuff. I've done this stuff. And you know what? I don't care what Bart Ehrman or anybody else says. This isn't made up by man.
This is given by God because it's beyond the realm of any human invention. And that, I believe, has to be a take home for all of us who are truly born again if we want to explain to our neighbor why we believe in the authority of Scripture.
I'm done. If you have a question or two, I'll take it. And if I don't know it, like I said, you can go talk to Pastor Michael, Pastor Scavani, Reverend Scavani, Pastor Mike, whatever we're going to call him.
[59:01] All of it's inerrant. All of it's true. That's who he is. But any questions? The four pillars of truth, the four fence posts. The context for that is that was our mission statement at the university.

We crafted that as a defining, the defining boundaries of who we were going to be. And I'm passionate about those four things.
It wasn't... What are they? I'm going to tell you. I'm telling you I'm passionate. You're digging into my soul right now. Just don't... No, no, serious. Okay, it's the primacy of Jesus Christ.
Jesus is the Son of God. The priority of Scripture. The Bible is the Word of God. The pursuit of truth. Truth is given by God. It isn't made up by you or me.
And then the practice of wisdom. Holiness, sanctification, obedience unto the Lord. It's demanded by God. It is not optional. So the primacy of Christ, the priority of Scripture, the pursuit of truth, and the practice of wisdom.
[60:02] Those are the four things I shared with Adam Carolla and Dave Rubin and anybody else that would stick a microphone in my face. I always talked about those four things being the boundaries of good education because you're going to get a much more liberating, liberal, if you will, education within those four boundaries.

You're going to have an education that gives you more human freedom in those boundaries than you'll ever get if you break down the fences and try to live outside of them. Christ, Scripture, truth, wisdom. Christ, Scripture, truth, wisdom.
Another word for wisdom would be obedience or holiness. That make sense? Yeah. Pastor Mike, Michael?
So in Christian circles, evangelical circles, if somebody will say, I believe in the inspiration of Scripture but not the inerrancy of Scripture. I'll tell you how I answered that as a layman and not a theologian or scholar.
I would admit, I would say, as the president of the university, I am not a theologian. I'm not teaching in the religion division. But this one thing I do know, as the president of the institution, we're going to take the highest view of Scripture.
[61:08] We're not going to take a weaker view. So the inerrancy of Scripture is a stronger word than infallibility or authority. Is the Bible infallible? Yes.

Is the Bible authoritative? Yes. But you could claim that it's infallible and authoritative and deny the inerrancy. In fact, the proof of that is the free Methodist church out of which we come, a conservative holiness church not unlike a Nazarene church or a Wesleyan church.
They have abandoned the word inerrancy because they were uncomfortable with it because it was too fundamentalist in their nature. So now they are a church that is grounded in infallibility and authority rather than inerrancy.
The Nazarene church, which the Skoranis have some experience with as well as we do because of that church circle, the Nazarene church still claims, if you're Nazarene in here, I'm sorry, but this is

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just true.
The Nazarene church says they are inerrantists and technically they are, but they qualify it. They say we believe in inerrancy in matters of salvation.
[62:15] You get what the problem here is? You just opened up Pandora's box to a lot of debate and that's why I ended up confronting a Nazarene ministry officially sanctioned by the Nazarene church that was titled LGBTQ Love Wins in Rainbow Colors because if you only believe in inerrancy in matters of salvation, you can start qualifying things outside that box and they're culturally constructed or deconstructed.

They're not absolutely true. You're going to get into a place where, well, you could say that the Exodus narrative is just metaphor and analogy. it's not real and that's not going to affect your salvation, right?
You could get yourself into a place where you're going to start having those weakening discussions about the Bible and I just don't feel comfortable with that. So pragmatically, Mike, I just, I'm not going there.
So, I'm not going there. We're going to claim the strongest word possible to define the Bible. That's not very academic, but pragmatically, it was my way of fending off liberals who wanted to challenge me because my response would be, well, why do you want to weaken it?
Why do you want to weaken the definition of Scripture? What's your point? What's your, I don't understand why you'd want to do that and more often than not, they would drop their stones and walk away.
[63:43] So, that's probably not the angle you were going for. That's, so, anyway, anything else? All right. Let's close in prayer and make sure that you got the, those books down and I would strongly encourage you to pick those up.

The big book, Josh McDowell, you can pick away at it as you wish. I mean, it's, the way it's written is you could read one section a week or one section a day if you wanted on the issues that are important to you and that you find interesting.
The other ones are quick reads and they overlap a lot. So, Heavenly Father, thanks for the time to get together. Thanks for your word. Thanks for the revelation you've given us so that we have a true north and we don't have to make stuff up as we go and that we can trust that the word that you've given us is without error and 100% true in everything that it teaches us.
In Jesus' name, Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net You

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