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Alright. It is good to see everybody today. And here at the Northwest campus, would you please join me in greeting all of our other campuses right now? They are joining us. We love you guys: North, Downtown, and our brand new West campus.

Last weekend our West campus had their grand opening. They are meeting at Avon Middle School North. They had a little over 1,000 people at the grand opening last weekend. It was just amazing. We give God the glory and the honor for what only He can do.

And if you are at West right now, whether you are a part of that team or whether you are visiting and checking it out, I just want to welcome you. We are so glad to have you. You are in great hands with your campus pastor, Mr. David Cupp, and that entire team. I cannot wait to hear how week number two goes.

Well, at all of our campuses we want to acknowledge that we have a heavy heart as we've been watching some of the things develop in Charlottesville over the last couple of days. Every human being has been created in the image of God. And racism, and bigotry, and hatred are just more evidence that we live in a broken and fallen world.

Honestly, we need to begin with ourselves. And that's what I've been doing over the weekend. Just examining my own heart and saying, "God, is there anything in me that You need to deal with?" And then asking God to intervene in the situation.

I just want to pray a pastoral prayer over all of us at all of our campuses today. I want to let you know, those of you who are our African American brothers and sisters, that we love you and we stand in support with you, we want to be there. Those who are serving in law enforcement and first responders, we just pray for you and your safety. We thank you for your integrity and courage. So let's just go before the Lord right now, as a church, asking Him to do what only He can do.

Lord God, we come to You today and we are heavy hearted, we're exhausted hearing just one more news story like this. And, Father, we aren't totally sure what to say, but we know that the appropriate response isn't to just be silent, we need to say something. So we cry out to You—that seems to be the most appropriate thing to say—like a child who holds its hands up to its father or its mother when in need, we hold our hands up to you and we say, "God we live in a broken world that has people who are hurting and we hurt one another."

And the answer isn't to perpetuate that, it isn't to become bitter or angry or defensive, but to become humble and to ask You to do what only You can do in each one of our hearts.

And so, God, we pray—begin with us. We know that the church has the only answer because of Jesus Christ. And You are a loving God and the only thing that You hate is what we do to each other. So You sent Jesus to a cross to reconcile us to You, but also to one another. So, as a church, may we remember that and may we live it out. And we ask this in Jesus' name. And the church says together: Amen.

Thank you.

Well at all of our campuses if you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it, would you find Acts, chapter 8? And actually, if you want to download our church app and you go to today's message you can click on the Live Notes tab and all of the passages that I'm going to be walking us through and all of the main points that I'm going to be making that I'll be putting up on the screen here are on the Live Notes. I don't know if you knew that or not. You can just follow along on your device and there is a section for you to jot down some notes. I'm going to be talking somewhat fast because I've got a ton of material today and that Live Notes section may actually help you kind of keep up and to know where I am headed.

We are in this series called Base Camp where we're walking through the seven values that we have as a church. And we're using the analogy of base camp because if you have ever watched a documentary on climbing a mountain you know that base camp is not a recommendation, but it's a requirement. If you're going to get up to the top you have to stop in base camp, because base camp is where we acclimate to the altitude, we repack our gear, we make sure that we are rested up and that we have the proper nutrition. That way everybody that we are in the group with—we can get to the peak safely. So base camp is not a recommendation, it is a requirement.

But base camp is not the summit. We don't want to get these two things confused. We don't want to get to base camp and say that we actually went to the summit, when we were just in base camp. Got it? We want to get up to this summit. So we would say that we've not arrived, this isn't the destination.

For a long time I really thought that church was the summit. That as long as I believed in God and as long as I would be in church on the weekends, then I got credit for it. It didn't really matter if I paid attention to anything that was being said or applied anything to my life or if I was changing at all as a human being. As long as I believed in God and was in church occasionally then that's all that God really wanted for me. In other words, I thought that church attendance was the summit.

Then there was another season in my life, during my college days, when I thought that church just wasn't really all that necessary. Maybe some of you can relate to that. Some of you—that might describe how you feel even now. And I would say, "You know I can be

a good Christian. I can pray and read my Bible. I can attempt to sing, it's actually better when I sing to myself because that way I don't hurt other people's ears and all of that. I can just do this by myself, because God sees my sincere heart."

And I even used some passages of Scripture, inappropriately, to say some things that it doesn't really mean, alright? So I thought that either church attendance was the summit or that it was totally not necessary. Both of those perspectives are inaccurate and just simply not helpful.

So what is the summit that we are talking about? The summit that we're referencing in this series is personal transformation.

The word that we use for it is discipleship, meaning that we want to follow Jesus in every area of our lives. I want to be transformed. It's not a transaction. It's transformation. And so I want less of me and more of Jesus. And I want to look more like Jesus in every area of my life rather than just settling for being a churchgoer. This is what we want for everybody who calls Traders Point home. And our church values help to get us there. So last week we looked at Relational Evangelism.

This is the value that we are looking at this week. It's Biblical Authority. And this is what we mean by it: we will hold the Bible above us as our authority while striving to help everyone understand and apply it.

So this is phrased intentionally, meaning that we will hold the Bible above us—we're looking up at it, we have a high view of the Bible, it is over us we are not over it. However, that does not mean that we are going to adopt a condescending attitude about that and say, "Well, the Bible says it and that settles it and you just need to get over it." That's not ever what we're going to communicate. No, we want to actually help you understand it and apply it to your life, because we really do believe that the Bible is God's word to us and we can trust it and it has transformational power.

I realize that maybe not everybody is convinced of that. And there may be some of you today who are saying, "Well, Aaron, I just don't know. There is some good stuff in the Bible for sure, but there are also some things in the Bible that I just don't get. It seems boring or outdated, irrelevant, far-fetched, and confusing."

And so you might assume that what I'm going to say as we talk about Biblical Authority is that I'm just going to say, "You know what? You just need to believe that the Bible is God's word because I say so." But that's not what I'm going to do. I would never do that. Here's what I want to do. I want to frame out our expectations:

I'd like to help you have more confidence in the Bible than what you currently have.

So just do a quick assessment and just say, “Okay, how much confidence do I have in the Bible?” And some of you may say, “Well, I’m already there.” Or, “I have a high view of the Bible. I believe that it is God’s word. I trust it.” That’s fantastic! I want to help you have more confidence in that conviction so that you can be a little more sure-footed when your friends and family ask you why you feel that way.

If you are at any one of our campuses today and you’re not sure about that or you’re skeptical of it or you just flat out reject it—man, can I just say that I’m so glad that you are here. You are always welcome here. All I want to do—I’m not arrogant enough to think that I’m going to completely change your mind in the next 25 minutes. What I want to do though is that I want to help you take a step, just a step, that you might have more confidence that God’s word can be trusted than what you had when you walked in here today.

So, what’s going on in Acts, chapter 8, verses 26 through 28 is that one of the leaders in the early church, this guy named Philip, has been sent by God to the city of Samaria. And in Samaria all kinds of action is going on. Everybody was there. Philip was teaching. People were responding and Philip is loving life. He loves his job because he’s good at it. He’s effective at it.

And then God reassigns him. He sends him to the desert, which is a big bummer. That would be like you and me living and working in sunny San Diego and then we end up getting reassigned by our employer to central Kansas, or let’s just go a little closer to home—central Indiana, alright? And I know for some of you it’s like, “That’s my story and I’m bitter about it.”

We would maybe object and try to argue our way out of that. But Philip doesn’t do that. Philip is obedient to God. He says: okay, God. I’ll go. And God sends him into the desert, which is northern Africa, and he’s going to cross with this Ethiopian man, he’s a eunuch and he is searching for God. He’s looking for some answers, maybe like many of you. And somebody had given him the Old Testament Scriptures—the Bible. And he’s reading it, but he doesn’t understand what he is reading.

So pick this up with me in verse 28. It says, “Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and walk along beside the carriage.’ Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked,” this is a great question.

He said, “‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ The man replied, ‘How can I, unless someone instructs me?’ And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him. The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: ‘He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.’” Verse 34, “The eunuch asked Philip, ‘Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?’”

Now this is a great question, because Isaiah is talking about Jesus but he never mentions His name. So as the eunuch is reading this passage he has a very apparent question: Who is this guy talking about? Is he talking about himself or is there somebody else I need to know about?

In verse 35 I love how Philip responds here. It says, “So beginning with this same scripture, Philip told him the good news about Jesus.” And why this is so significant is that Philip knew that the Bible is thematically consistent. In other words, the Bible is only about one thing—the good news that comes to us through Jesus Christ. It’s found in every book of the Bible. It’s all about Jesus. And Philip knows this.

And it says: beginning with this Scripture, and the reason I want to point that out is because it’s not like God said to Philip: Hey, Philip. Go to the desert because there’s an Ethiopian eunuch who has some questions about the Bible. Would you prepare a lesson in advance so that you really know your stuff and then present it to him.

No, no, no—he just goes and he’s like: Hey, what are you reading? And he reads whatever it is that is in front of him. And Philip has such a handle on God’s word that he could begin with the very passage the eunuch was reading and explain the good news of Jesus Christ. That’s what the Bible is communicating to us.

You know, one of the things that I think that we would all agree on is that communication is really, really important. Don’t you agree with that? Yeah, I just need you to communicate with me, alright? I feel a little alone up here. No, we all realize that.

You know when communication gets cut off... Or have you ever been misunderstood by somebody or maybe you’re just no longer talking to somebody and really it’s like cutting at the root of the relationship. You cut those nutrients of communication off and the relationship begins to die.

It’s not only that, it’s making sure that we are clear as we communicate. There are some humorous examples of this. In the 1990s there were some major miscommunication blunders when marketing companies were trying to advertise certain products cross-culturally.

Here are a few examples of this. There was a Swedish vacuum cleaner company called Electrolux that use the following in an American ad: Nothing sucks like an Electrolux. Don’t really think that’s the message they were trying to communicate, alright?

In China, Coca Cola was first rendered as Ke-kou-ke-la but unfortunately the Coke company did not learn until after thousands of ads were printed that that phrase actually means: Bite the wax tadpole. So then Coke scrambled to fix it so they researched 40,000 Chinese characters and they found a close thematic equivalent of: Ko-kou-ko-le, which is loosely translated as: Happiness is in the mouth, which I’m not sure is any better.

In Chinese the Kentucky Fried slogan, Finger Licken Good came out as: Eat your fingers off.

In Taiwan the translation of the Pepsi slogan Come Alive! It's the Pepsi Generation got translated as: Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead.

You know when communication gets twisted or misunderstood, misrepresented or cut off it causes all kinds of hurt feelings and havoc and relationships begin to die.

Listen. I want you to know that there is a God who wants a relationship with you, therefore He communicates. He is not a mute God. He is not a passive God. He is a God who has leaned in and is actively communicating with you and me.

In fact in John's gospel it introduces Jesus this way. It says, "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God." In other words he's saying that God is a God of words, and God is communicating, and God has given us a book. He didn't want us guessing about where we came from and why we're here and if there is a God and what's He going to do about all of the hurt and brokenness in the world? God wanted us to know definitely the answer to all of those questions.

Listen. The Bible doesn't contain all truth that can possibly be known about every single subject in the world. It doesn't need to. The Bible communicates the most important truth that we need to know about, your very identity and the value that you have to the Creator of the universe.

Yet, I am fully aware that that may not change anything about your trust in it. You may still struggle to have confidence in the Bible. And maybe the painful thing about it is that you can remember a time in your life when you did trust the Bible. You grew up going to church. Maybe you remember going to vacation Bible School in the summer and singing the songs and memorizing the Bible passages. But somewhere, as you were growing older, you began to ask questions about the Bible or you began to read some things that may have initially disturbed you and you may not have understood so you began to ask some questions.

Maybe it was a pastor or parents or somebody you respected—a teacher—and maybe they just had no good answers to the questions that you were asking. Worse yet, maybe they got defensive or even angry and they turned it back on you. And you said, "You know what? If that's your response then I'm out."

Maybe you were flipping channels one day and you came across a PBS special—you know the one, it's The Bible revealed and it just punctured holes in this confidence that you thought that you had in God's word.

Maybe you graduated from high school and you went off to college somewhere, hundreds of miles away from home, you're hundreds of miles away from your home church, you're the only Christian in your dorm, you go to that freshman Philosophy class or religion class and the professor is so smart, and so good with words, and just mocked the Bible relentlessly and anybody who would ever even get to put their trust in it or to take it seriously.

Maybe you've attempted to read the Bible but every time you ever open it you don't know where to begin and it's just so confusing and it's overwhelming and all of the strange names and the places and the thees and the thous and the big gaps and it's like, "I don't know. I don't know what I'm reading." So if you were to be honest you just don't interact with it all that much anymore.

Wouldn't you agree that when you misunderstand something you don't have very much affection for it? But when your understanding for something begins to increase, then you begin to have more love and affection for it.

It's like that guy who was walking along the beach in southern California and he stumbled across a genie in a bottle and the genie comes out and he says, "I'll give you a wish." And the guy was like, "Well, I'd love to go to Hawaii but you'll never get me on an airplane so I'd love to have a bridge from California to Hawaii."

And the genie is like, "That's unreasonable: The expense, the engineering, the time—you need to ask something else." So the man is like, "Okay, well I'd love to be married one day. Can you help me understand women?" And the genie said, "You want two lanes or four?"

Send your email to [jbarker@tpcc.org](mailto:jbarker@tpcc.org).

Hey, wouldn't you agree that when you understand something, your affection for it grows. Just be honest. There's a lot of misunderstanding around the Bible. Maybe you can relate to one of these.

A lot of people think the Bible is a rule book: just filled with laws, morals, and thou-shalt-nots.

Some of us see the Bible as just kind of a story book: you know fairy tales and children's stories that we read to our kids before bedtime—not to be taken literally.

Some see the Bible as outdated and out of touch: so we assume that it's pro-slavery, anti-women, and homophobic. It's not any of those things.

Some of us see the Bible as: a secret code book, like if you hold the Bible up to the light just right or there's a watermark in the margins it would give you next week's lotto numbers or tell you who shot JFK. There's just some crazy stuff out there concerning what the Bible is and what it isn't.



Maybe some of you see the Bible as well-meaning but you think that the authors had an agenda or that it is just simply not relevant anymore—it was written such a long time ago and times have changed. So we kind of see the Bible like we would look at a book on parenting that was written in the 1950s, or a car repair manual that was written in the 1920s and you go, “Well, it was probably relevant at the time, but it’s just not anymore.”

Here’s the thing. If you are not fully convinced that the Bible can be trusted or that it is God’s word, here’s what I would just simply ask for you to do—even for just a moment. I’d like to ask you to consider why you have that conviction, why do you feel that way? Is it because you leaned in and did the research for yourself or have you simply adopted something that you’ve heard or read elsewhere?

See, all I really want to do is that I just want to help you understand the Bible a little bit better so that you begin to trust it more. So let me just give you a couple of things that you may or may not know about the Bible.

Actually, the word Bible comes from the Greek word *biblios*, which simply means book. And it’s not like any other book that’s ever been written because it’s actually a collection of 66 books written over a period of 1500 years in over a dozen countries, on three different continents, by over 40 different people.

Those people include: poets, prophets, princes, kings, sailors, soldiers, attorneys, doctors, farmers, scholars, shepherds, priests, historians, fishermen, tax collectors, and businessmen.

They wrote it in: caves, ships, homes, palaces, prisons, and deserts—if they had coffee houses then, probably there too, alright?

The contents include: history, law, poetry, songs, prophecy, sermons, and letters.

So here is the question that I have. How do you get that many people over that amount of time, from that many places saying the same thing without contradiction?

Remember, once again, the Bible is thematically consistent. It is all about the good news of Jesus and how we can be reconciled to Him. If there was only one or two, I’d even give you like three people who were writing the Bible, then I’d get the whole: Well it was a sham. They were just writing it to control people.

But there are over 40 authors, many of whom never met one another. Some of them didn’t speak the same language. They came from different professions and geographic regions. They didn’t even live during the same time period. It’s not like they could send each other an email and say: Hey, here’s my chapter. What’s your chapter look like? Let’s make sure that it matches. They didn’t have any of that.



So how do you get all of the authors of Scripture saying the same thing? If you think that the Bible is written to control people, then you just simply don't understand the message of the Bible.

Now, I will give you this. There have been corrupt religious leaders throughout church history who have used the Bible to control people. But the authors of the Scriptures never used it to control people. What did they stand to gain? And if you feel that way then you've misunderstood the message of the Bible, which is the message of freedom. We just did a whole series on it.

So here's my response to that question that I just asked. Here's my answer: There were about 40 writers, but only one Author. Men may have been holding the pen, but God was the one communicating.

Listen to what it says in 2 Timothy, chapter 3. It says, "All scripture is inspired by God," all of it, "and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right." Get this,

"God uses it to prepare and equip," not control and coerce but to prepare and equip, what? "His people to do every good work."

Now, this doesn't mean that we are like robots just going around doing God's duties. This is that God wants us to have fruit in our lives. He says: I'm going to prepare and equip you so that you will live fuller lives and so actually the relationships around you will flourish as you get connected to Me.

That still may not be enough for you. You go, "Well how do I know that the Bible can be trusted? I'm not just going to trust it because the Bible says it can be trusted." Well, we could look at the historical reliability of the Bible.

You know, in academic circles there are three primary tests to determine if an ancient document is trustworthy. And these are not Christian tests. These are academic tests. They are basically this: Were there eye witnesses? What is the manuscript evidence? And does our theology confirm it?

And the Bible has all three of those things going for it. There were eye witnesses, people who actually saw what Jesus said and did and they wrote it down within a reasonable period of time. There is overwhelming manuscript evidence.

Did you know that the Jewish scribes were some of the most meticulous people on the face of the planet? When they were copying the ancient texts—for example when they were copying the first five books of the Bible, which is called the Pentateuch, they not only translated it or copied it word for word, they would copy it letter for letter. And they were so meticulous that they counted how many letters there were in the first five books of the Bible and when somebody would finish transcribing it, somebody else would

check their work and one of the tests was: count the letters of the first five books of the Bible and if it didn't add up they would throw the whole thing out.

There are over 25,000 early manuscripts of the Scriptures, which is way more than any other document that we have. Homer's Iliad comes a distant second with, I believe, about 643 manuscripts. Nobody questions its authenticity.

When you look at some of the archeology... The critics of the Bible used to say that Moses could not have possibly written the first five books of the Bible because people could not write in 1400 B. C. And then they discovered some tablets dating back 1,000 years before the time of Moses that had over 20,000 written records. So I suppose people were jotting things down.

People used to laugh at the Old Testament reference to the Hittites—they are mentioned about 50 times in the Old Testament—and professors and critics of the Bible would laugh at that, "That's ridiculous. That's a fabrication in the Bible. One more evidence that we can't take it seriously." Then several years ago archeology confirmed the existence of a Hittite people. They lived over a 1,200 year period in the Middle East.

In the past, liberal scholars argued that there was no such place as Jericho, until it was found. They argued that King David never lived until they found his name on multiple artifacts. They argued that the exodus from Egypt never occurred and then archeological proof was discovered. Archeology continues to confirm what the Bible says.

We could talk about the scientific reliability of the Bible. That might be enough to make some of you smirk, or even laugh. Here's what I want you to consider though. I think we all agree that science changes as technology advances. So as we learn new things about our bodies, and biology, and the universe then science changes what it knows.

Here's what I want you to understand—what I want you to see. Did you know that the Bible affirms some things that we now know about our universe that mankind couldn't have possibly known at the time that it was being written?

Here's what I mean. The scientific knowledge that was widely accepted by human beings during the timeframe that the Bible was written was false, because they just did not have the technology to know otherwise, yet have you ever stopped to consider that none of what was considered to be reliable scientific knowledge at the time ever is found in the pages of the Bible. And if the Bible was just merely written by men, who had made it up—don't you think that some of it would have found its way into the pages of Scripture?

Let me just give you two examples. I've got a bunch of them. Let me just give you two. Here's the first one: One widely held scientific belief during the days when the Bible was being written was that the earth was flat. And then about five or six hundred years ago,

these two guys, Copernicus and Galileo, they came along and said, “No. You’re wrong. It’s actually round. It’s a globe.”

Here’s when the Bible told us—2,600 years ago in Isaiah 40, “God sits above the circle of the earth.” Do you know that the word circle in Hebrew is translated as sphere or globe? The Bible told us this 2,100 years before Copernicus and Galileo.

Here’s another widely held scientific belief. It’s just simply this one: The earth had to be held up. There’s got to be something holding it up. And so the Greeks believed that it was being held up by Atlas—so if you’ve ever been to the Rockefeller Center in New York you’ve probably seen at statue of it.

A lot of the Eastern mystics—they actually believed that the earth sat on the back of an elephant, which stood on the back of a sea turtle, which sat on the back of a serpent that swam throughout the sea. And why not? Totally reasonable.

The Egyptians, who were brilliant at engineering thought that the earth stood on five pillars. Now here’s what I want you to consider. Moses—maybe some of you remember this story—Moses was put in a basket, put in the Nile river, he was found by Pharaoh’s daughter, she adopted him. So Moses would have grown up in Egyptian schools.

So you know that in his science classes they would have taught that the earth sits on five pillars. Well Moses writes the first five books of the Bible, which explains the origins of the earth and never once does he include that anywhere. In fact, the oldest book of the Bible says this: “God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.”

Here’s what I want you to consider. How in the world did the authors of Scripture know these things? Maybe the answer is because they didn’t write it. God wrote it. And He put some stuff in a book that He wanted us to know.

We could talk about the prophetic reliability of the Scriptures. Did you know that there are over 300 prophecies made about Jesus 400 years before His birth and all of them were fulfilled? If only one of them wasn’t fulfilled, that would be enough for us to discredit the whole thing. But all of them were fulfilled.

There is this guy by the name of Doctor Peter Stoner, which is an awesome name—that’s beside the point. He came up with this thing called Science Speak. He actually employed 600 reliability researchers and they researched this. And they said the chances of all of the prophecies about Jesus 400 years before His birth all being fulfilled would be the equivalent of filling the entire state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep. You ever driven across the state of Texas? Takes forever.

So you fill the entire state of Texas with silver dollars, two feet deep, put a red dot on one silver dollar, burry it, blindfold a guy and put him in a helicopter, fly him out, drop him down on a rope and tell him that wherever he drops, reach down and pick up a silver

dollar with a dot on it—that's the odds of all of the prophecies coming true. And they did concerning Jesus.

Well the Bible tells us why in 2 Peter, chapter 1. It says, "Above all you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophets own understanding." In other words, they weren't making it up. They weren't like: Whoa, we got it right. That's not what they were doing, "...or was it from human initiative. No those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit and they spoke from God."

Have you ever considered the durability of the Bible? Here's something to consider. Do you know why the Bible is attacked so venomously? The Bible is the most despised, derided, denied, disputed, dissected, debated, outlawed and destroyed book ever. No other book has been burned, banned, or beaten down from Roman Emperors to Communist leaders, to college professors. And if it's just a bunch of children's stories or if it's outdated information, why try so adamantly to destroy it?

My favorite story is of the French guy, Voltaire. Maybe some of you have heard this story where he boldly declared that Christianity would be extinct within 100 years of his lifetime and that the only place that you would be able to find a Bible was in a museum. Fifty years after his death, in 1778, the Geneva Bible Society purchased his home and used his own printing press to start printing Bibles. Now, even if you're a skeptic of the Bible you have to tip your hat to that and say, "Yeah, that's actually true. That's a pretty good story," alright?

Well the Bible tells us why it's so durable in Isaiah 40, verse 8 it says, "The grass withers, and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

Now, I personally believe that the reason why the Bible is attacked so adamantly is because we have an enemy who knows that it's God's word that can be trusted and he knows the transformational power that it contains. So he's doing everything that he can right now to convince you that it is not worth your time. That's why some of you have been arguing with me as I've been talking, "I'm going to go check that out because I'm not so sure about that." And I would invite you to.

Here's the thing. He'll keep you distracted and confused and skeptical so that you won't pick it up. Don't let him.

Here's the camp that most of us are in. Most of us are probably not adamant about saying the Bible is not God's word. We're just too busy. We're too distracted and so we just don't pick it up that much anymore. Don't let it happen.

See, we could talk about the historical reliability and the prophecies and the science and archeology and all of that kind of stuff—you want to know the most effective reason why I believe that the Bible can be trusted? It's this right here. Jesus trusted it. Did you know that? Jesus was constantly quoting it all of the time. Jesus affirmed all of the Scriptures. He didn't show up and go: Hey, I'm sorry about Leviticus. That author was

having a bad day. That's not what He did. He was constantly affirming the Bible. He was coming to fulfill it.

When Jesus was tempted in the desert, He didn't just try to argue His way out of it. He would say: It is written. It is written. When He was arrested He would say that Scripture must be fulfilled. When He was in pain on the cross He quoted it. The core operating principle of Jesus' life was God's word.

Now get this. He was the sinless, perfect Son of God and if He needed it, if He relied upon it that much, how much more do I? And how much more do you? I've got to tell you, man, I need God's word like I need oxygen. And I begin to feel the effects of it when I'm not in it. I start to get more skeptical. I start to get more bitter and angry. I'm shorter with my kids. I'm not as gracious with my wife. I can begin to feel the effects of it.

Now you may be here and you are like, "Well, Aaron, this is all really compelling information. I'm not sure that I buy all of it but I congratulate you and all of your research. But you know what? Honestly, I just don't want to believe it." And that's probably where a lot of us are.

I could try to present all kinds of evidence and it wouldn't matter because you're like, "I don't want to believe it. Here's why. I don't agree with it. I don't fully understand it. And I don't like it." And I hear you. And I agree. It's tough. There are some things in the Bible that I don't like, sometimes I don't fully agree with, I don't understand. Let me just ask you this. When is it ever a good idea, in any area of your life, to dismiss something purely because you don't like it, agree with it, or fully understand it?

Several months ago I took an emotional intelligence 360 test as part of my development as a human being and as a leader and a pastor. I don't know if any of you have ever had to do that for school or for your job but, basically, I had to fill out a section on my own and then I sent out an electronic survey to my leadership team here at the church, a few of our elders, a few of our staff and then a few people outside of our church who live in other states who have had a chance to be around me and who know me pretty well.

It's basically a test where there are a bunch of questions that they are answering about the way I come off to other people. And I don't know if any of you have ever had to take one of these or not, but I got the results back and I sat down with the facilitator. It was here at the church in one of the rooms.

I walked in and within 10 minutes of him walking me through my results the room started spinning. It was just disorienting, because most of the time people aren't really, fully being honest with you. Did you know that? Yeah, even if they are 90 percent on, they're holding off about 10 percent—you know, hurt feelings, whatever.

And this is one hundred and ten percent, alright? And it's disorienting. I had no idea that I came across that way. And, "You really think that? Why didn't you say that before?"

And all of these questions. It was disorienting. And I was in a fetal position for, I think, three or four days after that. It was just like, oh man—rough, brutal.

And I've got that emotional intelligence 360 test on my desk. It is nicely bound, multiple pages, and divided into chapters. I hate it. And every time I glance over at it during the day, I scowl and I offer up a pathetic whimper. Why? Well, because it hurts. It said some things that I don't like and I don't want to agree with and I certainly don't fully understand. But that doesn't make it any less true. And I would actually just be hurting myself and I'd be hurting those I love if I just close my ears off to it and said, "I'm going to dismiss that. I think the test is flawed. I think that they had an agenda. I think they were having a bad day.

You know, the Bible actually addresses this in Proverbs 14. It says, "There is a path before each person that seems right," it seems right the way I see it, it seems to be right, "but it ends in death." Now that's not a threat. That's a warning. And there are a whole bunch of things in life that seem right to us. My feelings seem right. My logic seems right, And the traditions that I've adopted seem right. And pop-culture seems right. But I've got blind spots just like in my emotional intelligence 360. And it ends in destruction. And it ends in pain. And it ends in habit.

And God says: Listen. I love you so much that I didn't want you to guess who you are. I didn't want you to guess if I really exist or who I am. I didn't want you to guess as to how things can be reconciled between us or what I intend to do in this world. I want you to know it definitively so I gave a book. Would you trust it?

Some of you would say, "Well, Aaron, times they are a changing." And I would agree times are changing and things must change. But here's the thing. Don't change the Bible to fit you. Change you to fit the Bible, because God says: Listen, man. I love you and I want the absolute best for you.

In Psalm, chapter 19—I want to end with this. It says, "The instructions of the Lord," in other words, the Bible, "are perfect, reviving the soul." That's what it's intended to do. "The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living."

So where do you start? Can I just offer you this counsel? Start with 10 minutes a day. Download the youversion Bible app on your phone or on your iPad. Its got all kinds of reading plans, electronic reading plans that will take you through the Bible in as many different ways as you want to go through it. They'll even send you little stars and rewards and text messages and say, "Good job," which I need. I'm like, "Thank you. I appreciate that." Just 10 minutes a day. You spend more time eating and watching Netflix than that. Just 10 minutes a day—just read it.

Every single weekend—here's my promise to you as your pastor at all of our campuses—every single weekend we will read a passage of Scripture, we will explain that passage



of Scripture, we will be honest about why that Scripture is hard to believe. Then we will apply that passage of Scripture to our lives.

That's what we will do every single week—it's called expository preaching—whether we are plowing through a book of the Bible or whether we are in more of a thematic series like the one that we're in right now, all that is is expository preaching. It's read it, explain it, apply it. We're going to do that every single week. So even if you don't trust anything that I just said, come be here and start applying the wisdom of the Bible and just see what happens—just see what happens.

The last thing I would ask you is just simply this. Go to [tpcc.org/start](http://tpcc.org/start)—this is our discipleship curriculum that we've written for our church that will help you get to the summit. And there's a section in there on understanding and applying the Bible to your life.

Here's what I want to leave you with. Man, hold on to it. In a culture that says let go of it, hold on to it long enough to let the Bible get a hold of you.

Let's pray

Father, we come to You right now thanking You for Your work, thanking You for being a God who communicates. God, now give us ears to listen. Give us softer hearts to receive it. Lord, I pray that when we are confused about something or have questions about something that we would know that You are a God who welcomes our objections and our questions. And that the word of God says itself that it is living and active and that it can penetrate. So we want it to penetrate us. We want it to get inside of us and change us as a people.

Father, may we live lives where the rest of the world would see us and notice the difference and that it would cause them to be intrigued about where that difference is coming from. And very humbly but boldly and lovingly we could say, "The truth is found in God's word."

God if there are some at all of our campuses who do not have a relationship with You and they do not trust that the Bible is Your word, God we are so glad that they are here and I pray that You would specifically speak to them just in these few moments as we take communion together, that just in the silence that they could feel Your presence and know that they are loved. And I pray that before the year is out, they would put their trust in You. We ask this right now in Jesus' name, Amen.

Right now at all of our campuses we are going to take communion together. It's just a little piece of bread and a cup of juice that represent the body and the blood of Jesus. If you're visiting with us, if you're not a follower of Jesus, if you don't feel comfortable taking it, just let it pass. Nobody is going to think a thing of it. Just spend a few moments in silence just thinking about what has been said.



Maybe the entire message didn't apply to you but what was one thing that did? We're just going to spend a few minutes reflecting, doing some business with God and then our team is going to come out and lead us in another song of worship as we conclude. So ushers, you can come.

[tpcc.org/start](http://tpcc.org/start)