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HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life?
The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F is for FORGIVENESS

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A is for AVAILABLE

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I is for IMPOSSIBLE

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T is for TURN

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H is for HEAVEN

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

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ON THE COVER

Dead Sea Scroll number 28a (1Q28a), from Qumran Cave 1. From Qumran (Khirbet Qumran or Wadi Qumran), West Bank of the Jordan River, near the Dead Sea, modern-day State of Israel. On display at The Jordan Museum in Amman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

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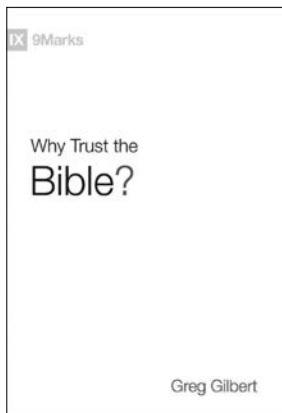
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Books of Study

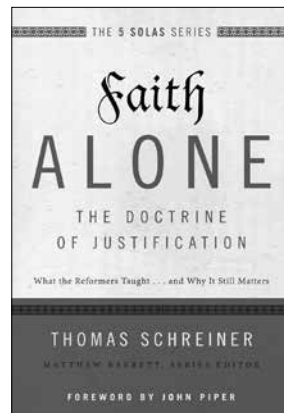
Further in-depth Bible studies by the authors presented this quarter in MasterWork® are available in their full-length books. To purchase your own copies to read and study, visit lifeway.com. Or you can order a copy by calling 1.800.458.2772.



Why Trust the Bible?

Greg Gilbert

Crossway
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Faith Alone

Thomas Schreiner

Zondervan
ISBN: 978-0-310-51578-4

How to Use

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

1. Read Day 1 through Day 5 prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the session. The main point of the session and the goal are printed on the leader guide pages at the end of each session. (See p. 18.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.

The main point of this session is: God's grace through Jesus's sacrifice transforms our spiritual ruin into righteousness through faith.

Focus on this goal: Salvation is not earned by works but is a free gift available to all through faith in Christ.

Key Bible Passage: Romans 3:23-24

Leader Guide

- Read and study the key Bible passages listed at the top of the teaching plan.
- Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book.

- One option is to follow the leader guide at the end of each session.
- A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the session. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.

written by forty authors over 1,600 years. Twenty-six books tell one seamless story about how God redeems us, and has a future for us. Let's explore the beautiful story of Scripture. How does this story fit with Christians who were never successfully fitting in with Christians who were never

DISCUSS

When might a visit to a library be overwhelming? When might it be exciting?

Discussion Questions

- Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at masterwork.lifeway.com to fit your group.
- Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
- Arrive early, praying for the group time.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this session is: God's grace through Jesus's sacrifice enables us to partake in the righteousness through faith.

Focus on this goal: Salvation is not earned by works but is a free gift made available through faith in Christ.

Key Bible Passage: Romans 3:23-24

Before the Session

- You'll continue to use the large group booklet "Grace" throughout the session. **Order or Mail:** all in Step 1. You can do it in Step 2.
- Bring on item:** Item from forms that has been reviewed or re-reviewed. If the item is not ready, take a photo and be ready to share that with your class. You'll do that in Step 1.
- Bring hymns:** To sing again, or have lyrics to "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus" ready by Step 2.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Open class by directing members' attention to the featured item or photo or an item you brought to class.

Share how the work was accomplished, how long it took, and so on.

With encouragement, **point out** that the item **did** not do any of the work; **emphasize** your actions, **emphasize** that on the project that is 100% responsible for the transformation.

Point to the large "Share" poster you wrote earlier with what work and thank you review what you discussed.

Leader Guide

The screenshot shows the MasterWork website interface. At the top, there's a header with the 'MasterWork' logo. Below that, there's a main navigation area with a search bar and several categories of teaching plans. The main content area displays a grid of teaching plan cards, each with a title, a thumbnail image, and a brief description. The cards are organized into sections like 'Spring 2022', 'Summer 2022', and 'Fall 2022'. Each card has a 'View Details' button.

masterwork.lifeway.com

masterwork

Study Series: Scoundrels
Author: Angie Smith

Lesson Title: "The Beginning" (pp. 6-13)
Session 1
September 4, 2022

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to reveal the creation revelation of His plan from the very start of the Bible.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning to their work with Christ.

Key Bible Passage: Genesis 1:1-3

Before the Session

- Prepare TBS (Step 2).
- Prepare TBS (Step 3).

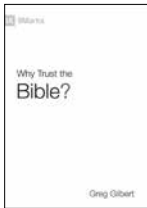
During the Session

Step 1: Title

Scripture allows us to believe that if we've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series, we'll be prepared to read the books, watch the movies, and understand the order and what happens next. What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

Make reading or watching and listening a member game in a better group of the overall story and a deeper understanding of the characters, and to help us see how all the stories fit together. **Share that the story of Scripture as a whole. We can know God best when we know Him.**

Customizable Teaching Plan



WHY TRUST THE BIBLE?



ABOUT THE WRITERS

Greg Gilbert earned his BA from Yale University and his MDiv from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is senior pastor at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of *What Is the Gospel?*; *James: A 12-Week Study*; and *Who Is Jesus?*; and is the coauthor of *What Is the Mission of the Church?* Greg and his wife, Moriah, have three children.

Leslie Hudson contributed learning activities, discussion prompts, and teaching plans for this study. A member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, Tennessee, Hudson helps others find “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” in God’s Word. She practices praying God’s Word for her family, Sunday School class, and community.

Don’t believe everything you read. In our age of the Internet, only a misguided person takes as absolute truth everything he or she reads.

In my own family, my wife and I are trying to teach our children the skill of not accepting everything they read or hear at face value but rather putting it to the test to see if it seems trustworthy. Even with our five-year-old daughter, we’re working on teaching her to recognize the difference between things that are real and things that are “just a story.” She’s gotten pretty good at it too:

- ♦ George Washington was the first president of the United States. “That’s real, Dad.”
- ♦ Elsa built an ice castle with her special power of freezing thin air. “Just a story.”

Now imagine I throw her a curveball. A man named Jesus was born to a virgin, claimed to be God, did miracles, was crucified on a cross, and then rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He now reigns as King of the universe.

How is she supposed to answer that one? “Um, real?”

If you’re a Christian, I’m sure you’d answer it with a firm “That’s real.” But most people in our culture think it strange for normal individuals to take that story seriously.

It’s encouraging to see how firmly Christians do seem to trust the Bible. A good number of Christians, however, can’t really explain why they trust the Bible. They just do. They give lots of legitimate reasons for Christians to trust the Bible, but none of these answers will likely go far in convincing someone who doesn’t yet trust the Bible to start trusting it. The apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15 that Christians should “always [be] prepared to make a defense” for the hope that is in us. In our day, that defense has to go all the way to the question, “Why do you trust the Bible?”

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ

Day 1

Turtles All the Way Down

I am a Christian, a sold-out, convinced, everything-your-mother-told-you-to-watch-out-for Christian. I believe the Bible is true, I believe the Red Sea split in half, I believe the walls of Jericho fell down and that Jesus walked on water and healed some people and threw demons out of others. I believe God flooded the world and saved Noah, I believe Jonah was swallowed by a gigantic fish, and I believe Jesus was born of a virgin. And above all, I believe Jesus died and then got up from the dead—not in some spiritual or metaphorical sense but bodily and historically and for real. I believe all that.

- 1. Before reading ahead in today's text, make a list of three things you believe 100 percent, without a doubt. Write them in the space below.**

There's no use pretending otherwise: The main reason that I believe the Bible is true is precisely because I believe Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Whether or not you agree with me about the resurrection, you can probably see why believing that would quickly and strongly lead me

DISCUSS

What are some things you've believed all your life? What are some things you believe now that you didn't believe when you were younger?

DISCUSS

Can you say you agree with our author in this first paragraph? Did you always?

to trust the Bible. If Jesus really was raised from the dead, then the only possible, intellectually honest conclusion one can reach is that He really is who He claimed to be. If Jesus actually got up from the grave in the way the Bible says He did, then He really is the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Wisdom of God, just like He said. And if *that's* true, then it makes sense that He probably knows what He's talking about, and therefore, we ought to listen to Him.

One thing that is beyond any reasonable doubt is that Jesus believed the Bible. When it comes to the Old Testament, the point is very straightforward; over and over in His teaching, Jesus authenticated and endorsed it as the Word of God. And as for the New Testament, even though it was written years after His days on earth, it too rests ultimately on Jesus's own authority, and the early Christians knew it. In fact, the two main criteria they used to recognize authoritative books were (1) that those documents had to be authorized by one of Jesus's apostles and (2) that they had to agree in every particular with Jesus's own teaching. The point is pretty clear. Once you decide that Jesus really did rise from the dead, the truth and authority of the Bible follow quickly, naturally, and powerfully.

Now that's a quick and impressive case, but here's the question: How do you get to the point of believing that Jesus really did rise from the dead in the first place? You can't just say you believe in the resurrection because the Bible says it happened, and you believe what the Bible says because Jesus rose from the dead, and you believe Jesus rose because you believe the Bible, and you believe the Bible because.

That whole thing would become just hopelessly and ridiculously circular. It reminds me of the little boy whose teacher asked him why the world doesn't just fall into space. "Because it's sitting on a turtle's back," the boy answered.

"And why doesn't the turtle fall?" the teacher asked. "Because it's standing on another turtle's back," the boy insisted.

"And why doesn't that turtle fall?" the teacher pressed. "Well," said the little boy thoughtfully, "obviously, it's turtles all the way down!"

In one way or another, it's turtles all the way down for all of us, no matter what you take as your final authority for knowledge. This issue affects everyone, not just Christians. If you ask a rationalist why he trusts reason, he'll say, "Because it's reasonable." If you ask a logician why she trusts logic, she'll say, "Because it's logical." If you ask a traditionalist why he trusts

tradition, he'll say, "Because everyone has always trusted tradition." In all these cases, we're left crying out for more; why does one trust reason, logic, or tradition in the first place? Some may argue that reason is more reliable than spiritual explanations because you can see and touch the evidence in support of various claims. But even that argument rests on certain presumptions about what kind of evidence is or is not legitimate—that is, reasonable. One way or another, you end up with turtles, all the way down, for everyone. In fact, I think that's probably one way God reminds us that we're finite—written deep in the logic of what it means to be human is an inescapable reminder that we can't figure it all out.

2. Go back through today's content and underline the core truths our author encourages us to believe. Prayerfully consider how those statements do (or do not) impact your everyday life.

Day 2

Presuppositions Examined

We shouldn't give up all hope of knowing anything. Even if it's true in some philosophical, epistemological sense that we all ultimately have to stand on circular thinking, that doesn't mean we can't come to some confident conclusions about the nature of reality. Sure, some overzealous philosophers have at times thrown up their hands and said, "Well, that's it then! I guess we can't know anything!" But that kind of thinking tends to drop you into an epistemological solitary-confinement cell (we can't know anything or anybody) that very few of us will find either inviting or necessary. So most of us simply start with a few presuppositions—for example, reason is reasonable, logic is logical, our senses are trustworthy, the world

NOTE

Presupposition:

basic beliefs we start with and assume are true before we think or reason about anything else.

Epistemology: the study of how we know what we know and why we believe something is true.

and we ourselves really exist and are not just “brains in a vat”—and then we proceed from those presuppositions to draw confident conclusions about ourselves, about history, about the world around us.

DISCUSS

What are some reliable sources for knowledge? How often do we seek to confirm what we've learned and/or heard with a reliable source?

1. Mark your desire for knowledge on the line below:

○ — ○ — ○ — ○ — ○ — ○ — ○ — ○ — ○ — ○

I don't care to learn anything. **If it comes my way I will learn it.** **I'm always seeking new knowledge.**

The fact that we necessarily have to presuppose *some things* doesn't mean we can presuppose anything we want. For example, you can't just presuppose that you're the president of the United States and work from there. Nor can you just presuppose that you're a god and that everything you happen to believe is therefore the case. Nor can you presuppose that the latest issue of the *National Enquirer* is the Word of God and that it therefore gives you an accurate picture of reality. These would be completely unwarranted presuppositions, and people would mock you for believing them. But more than a few people would say that's exactly what Christians have done with the Bible. We have, without any good reason whatsoever, simply presupposed that it is the Word of God, that everything it says is therefore true, and that Jesus therefore rose from the dead.

What if the alleged foul is not quite that flagrant? What if there's a way to come to a good and confident conclusion that Jesus really did rise from the dead *without simply presupposing that the Bible is the Word of God*? If we could do this, then we'd be able to avoid the charge of unwarranted circularity. We'd be able to say that, *even before concluding that the Bible is the Word of God*, we came to a confident conclusion that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, and then, on the basis of that confident conclusion, we followed Him in accepting the Bible as the Word of God. This kind of belief would differ markedly from one that simply relied on a “leap of faith.” Not only could it be defended against skeptics' objections; it could also challenge skeptics in their unbelief. It would be, as Peter wrote, a formidable “reason for the hope that is in [us]” (1 Pet. 3:15).

DISCUSS

Do you know someone who believes all of Christianity is an unfounded presupposition? How have you addressed that belief?

2. Let's set the above passage in context: read 1 Peter 3:13-17 and summarize it in the space below.

Day 3

Christianity as History

Let's approach the documents that make up the New Testament not *first* as the Word of God but simply as historical documents, and then on that basis, let's see if we can arrive at a confident conclusion that Jesus rose from the dead. Even someone who's not a Christian should have no objection to this. After all, to approach the New Testament simply as a collection of historical documents involves no special pleading, no special status, no special truth claims. Let's let them speak for themselves in the "court of historical opinion."

To approach the New Testament as historical shouldn't raise any objections among Christians. It's not as if that would be to treat it as something *other than* what it is. The New Testament documents themselves claim to be historical; their authors intended them to be historical. Take Luke, for example. He began his Gospel by saying that he aimed to give his reader "an orderly account" of the life and teachings of Jesus (Luke 1:3). Whatever else you think Luke was doing, he was most certainly writing history. The method of writing history in the ancient world differed from our own method of doing so, but the basic idea was still the same—the authors were writing accounts of events that they believed really happened. So given that Luke and the other authors were doing that kind of work, surely there's nothing inappropriate about letting his books, and the others, stand and speak as what they were intended to be all along.

DISCUSS

How much interest do you have in learning history? How well can you explain the history of the Bible?

1. Look up each of the following passages below and write what it teaches you about the historical claims of the Bible:

Luke 3:1-2

Acts 17:24-27

Acts 1:1-3

2 Peter 1:16

Even more than the religions of the world, Christianity presents itself *as history*. It's not primarily just a list of ethical teachings or a body of philosophical musings or mystical "truths" or even a compendium of myths and fables. At its very heart, Christianity is a claim that something extraordinary has happened in the course of time—something concrete and real and *historical*.

DISCUSS

How does this last paragraph address the opinion of those who say, "I believe the historical accuracy of Jesus but I don't believe He claimed to be God."

2. Based on the paragraphs above, why is it important to approach Christianity as history?

Day 4

DISCUSS

Why are the four Gospels central in our knowledge that the Bible is historically accurate?

A Chain of Reliability

Another question arises at this point, and we'll spend most of this book trying to answer it: Are the New Testament documents—especially the four Gospels—truly *reliable* as historical witnesses? Can we trust them

to give us good, dependable information about the events of Jesus's life, especially concerning His resurrection, such that we can say, "Yes, I'm pretty confident that actually happened"? I think we can trust the New Testament documents, but getting to that conclusion will take some work, precisely because, as with any historical document, we can raise many questions at many different points about their reliability.

1. As you read the upcoming paragraph, underline the three different people whose hands have impacted each biblical account.

Think of it like this. If you're reading Matthew's Gospel about any particular event in the life of Jesus, you can count at least three different people who have put their hands on the biblical account you are reading and have therefore affected it in some way. First, the account originates with the author who wrote it down. Second, at least one person, and likely more, copied that original writing and thereby transmitted it, so to speak, through the centuries into our hands. Third, someone (or some committee) translated that copy from its original language into your native language so you can read it. At each step in that process, questions arise that bear heavily on whether you can really trust the story you're reading to give a reliable account of what happened. Moving backward in time from yourself to the event itself, you end up with a chain of five big questions:

1. Can we be confident that the *translation* of the Bible from its original language into our language accurately reflects the original, or is it saying things the original never did?
2. Can we be confident that copyists accurately *transmitted* the original writing to us, or did they (deliberately or not) add, subtract, or change things so much that what we have is no longer what was originally written?

3. Can we be confident that we're looking at the right set of books and that we haven't missed or lost a set of books out there that gives a different, but equally reliable and plausible, perspective on Jesus? Can we be confident that we're right to be looking at *these* books as opposed to those?
4. Can we be confident that the original authors were themselves *trustworthy*? That is, were they really intending to give us an accurate account of events, or did they have some other aim—for example, to write fiction or even to deceive?
5. If we can be confident that the authors did, in fact, intend to give an accurate account of what happened, can we be confident that what they described really took place? Can we be confident that what they wrote is actually *true*? Or are there better reasons to think that they were somehow mistaken?

DISCUSS

Is it really that important that we answer all these questions affirmatively? Why?

If we can respond to each of these questions with a firm “Check!” then we'll have a pretty solid chain of reliability from ourselves to the events in question. We'll be able to say, confidently, that:

1. we have good translations of the biblical manuscripts;
2. those manuscripts are accurate copies of what was originally written;
3. the books we're looking at are indeed the right and best books to look at;
4. the authors of those documents really did intend to tell us accurately what happened; and
5. there's no good reason to think they were mistaken in what they saw and recorded.

However you look at it, these affirmations would establish a pretty solid foundation for thinking that we really can accept the Bible as historically reliable. If we can do that, then it follows that we can consider the Bible's account of the resurrection of Jesus and say, “Yes, I really do believe that happened. As much as I believe that any other event in history happened, I believe Jesus rose from the dead.”

2. Go back through the list on pages 13-14 and write only the five italicized words that begin with the letter T. This will help you hone in on the standards for historical confidence in the Bible.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Day 5

Building Historical Confidence

Let me say three more things before we start trying to build that kind of historical case. First, keep in mind that we're not searching for what we might call mathematical certainty. That kind of logical, lock-it-down certainty is possible in mathematics and sometimes in science, but it's never possible when you're dealing with history. With any historical event, someone somewhere will always be able to concoct an alternative to the accepted account that has at least a bare chance of being the case. "Maybe Caesar didn't in fact cross the Rubicon River," someone might say. "Maybe one of his generals dressed as Caesar and managed to fool everyone. Yes, yes, I know there's no good reason to think that, but it's still barely possible, and therefore you can't be confident that Caesar ever crossed the Rubicon." If objections like that were enough to keep us from drawing firm conclusions about history, we'd never be confident in any knowledge about the past.

1. Using the information in this first paragraph, define mathematical certainty in your own words.

Thankfully, we're not looking for mathematical certainty but rather for historical confidence. We want to be able to say not so much, "It is a mathematical, logical certainty that Caesar crossed the Rubicon," but rather, "Some people actually did report that Caesar crossed the Rubicon. We think they were intending to report what actually happened (rather than to deceive or mythologize), and there's no good reason to think they were mistaken in their report. Therefore, we can be historically confident that Caesar really did cross the Rubicon." That's the kind of "certainty" we look for in history, and to demand anything more is to demand something from historical study that it can never deliver.

DISCUSS

What's the difference between mathematical certainty and historical confidence?

Second, keep in mind that historical confidence provides sufficient grounds for action. Occasionally I've run into people who assert that they're not going to act on anything without firsthand experience of it. If they didn't see it or experience it, then there's just too much doubt to act on it in any way. At first glance, that position seems to have a sheen of intellectual respectability; it seems careful and thoughtful. But look at it a moment longer, and you realize that nobody actually lives like that. We all put confidence in—and act on—things of which we ourselves have no direct knowledge or experience all the time.

I wasn't present when the Constitution of the United States was ratified, but as an American, I live with the confidence that it in fact was, and I also act on that confidence. I don't decline to vote because I'm not mathematically certain that we really live under a ratified US Constitution. Here's another example, even closer to home: I have no direct knowledge that my parents really are my parents; I don't personally remember my birth, we've never had a DNA test done, and it's always possible some mistake was made and my birth certificate was forged! But all the evidence I have points to the fact that my parents really are my parents, and so I live and act all the time with confidence that they are.

That’s the kind of confidence history can provide, and it’s the kind of confidence I hope we can reach as we think together throughout the pages of this book—a historical confidence that would allow us, even compel us, to say, “Yes, I think the resurrection of Jesus happened. I have no better explanation for the facts. And now I’m going to act on that confidence.”

Third, this is not and wasn’t intended to be an academic book. It doesn’t consider every possible variation on every argument, and it doesn’t give every possible example or counterexample. It aims simply to present a flyover of the arguments and considerations that have convinced me—and many others over the years—of the Bible’s truth.

2. According to the third point made by our author, what is a “flyover” of the Bible’s truth?

In keeping the argument to that flyover level, you’ll notice that I’ve focused particularly on the New Testament—and within the New Testament, particularly on the four Gospels. I’m not going to treat every nuance of text, transmission, and canon that arises in discussions regarding the Old Testament or even regarding every book of the New Testament. Exploring the evidence for the New Testament, especially the Gospels, with the five tests above will give us a good sense of the issues and historical evidence involved in discussions of all the other books, too. And even more important, remember that what we’re aiming for is historical confidence that Jesus rose from the dead. If we can arrive at that, then we wind up with a very good reason for trusting in the reliability of the Old Testament as well. How do we arrive at historical confidence that Jesus was resurrected? By determining if the Gospels, in particular, are reliable historical witnesses.

DISCUSS

How might the upcoming study guide your own faith? How might it give us tools for sharing our faith?

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this session is: Christianity is a reasonable faith, rooted in real history, grounded in reliable Scripture, and worthy of our confidence.

Focus on this goal: Strengthen your confidence in the truth of Christianity by seeing its historical foundation and the reliability of Scripture.

Key Bible Passages: Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31; 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8; 1 Peter 3:15

Before the Session

1. Before learners arrive, **write:** “What can I believe? What should I not believe?” on a board or large piece of paper. You’ll use this in Step 1.
2. Beneath the question on the board, **draw** a simple chain. You’ll use this in Step 5.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **direct** their attention to the question on the board.

Start the discussion by **asking:** *Can you believe everything on the internet? What about on the news? Can you believe everything you hear from a pulpit? How about a podcast? How about in a Christian book?* Get everyone in the group to this starting point: **Say:** *We must be wary about what we hear or read, and we must learn to discern fact from fiction.*

Explain that your text over the next seven weeks will help your group develop a strong foundation for believing that the Bible is a trustworthy text and worthy of confidence.

STEP 2 - Turtles All the Way Down

Direct your group to the introductory page of this study in the *MasterWork* Guide.

Read aloud the short biography of Greg Gilbert, our author of the book that will be our text over the coming weeks.

Summarize or **read** the introduction of the book on the same page. Then **enlist** a volunteer to read aloud the opening words of Day 1.

Say: *Not all of us can say—with confidence—that we believe the Bible as our author does; but let's commit to studying and reading this text in the hopes that, by the end of our study, we can.*

Use the text from Day 1 to explain circular logic (using the same truth to prove that truth) and the idea of “turtles all the way down.” **Note** that rationalists, logicians, traditionalists, and every system of belief can easily rest their foundation on circular logic.

STEP 3 - Presuppositions Examined

Read aloud the definitions of *presuppositions* and *epistemology* in Day 2 of the *MasterWork* Guide.

Engage your group in considering a few presuppositions that most Christians hold, such as Jesus's identity as both God and man, God is the Creator of the universe, etc.

Stress that some presuppositions are false; even if we've believed something for our entire lives, that does not make it true.

Invite a volunteer to read Hebrews 11:1-3,6 aloud, and help your group see that these were the presuppositions for the writer of Hebrews and, it seems, for his readers.

STEP 4 - Christianity as History

Ask: *When I say the word “history,” does that word create a positive or negative connotation for you?*

Invite your group to answer by responding with either a thumbs up or thumbs down.

Summarize the opening paragraphs of Day 2, **pointing out** that the original authors of the New Testament intended for it to be considered as real, accurate history.

Assign volunteers to look up each of the Scriptures in Activity 1. As the volunteers read them aloud, consider that each passage points to the historical accuracy of the New Testament.

STEP 5 - A Chain of Reliability

Direct your group to the sketch of the chain on the board. **Use** the numbered list in Day 4 to consider the “chain of five big questions” as presented by our author.

Draw attention to the “T” word (italicized in each item) and label the links of your chain with those words.

Then **point** to the second numbered list in Day 4 and **consider** the implications of confirming the five Ts and its necessity for confirming the historical reliability of the New Testament.

STEP 6 - Building Historical Confidence

Ask: *What is 2 plus 2? What's the square root of 9?*

Ask: *What impact did Abraham Lincoln have on American history?*

Explain that there is a difference between mathematical certainty and historical confidence; in finding confidence in the Bible, historical confidence is the goal.

Using the Day 5 text, **help** your group consider that we cannot have firsthand experience or proof of these ancient documents; our historical confidence will need to provide sufficient grounds for action.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the last two paragraphs of Day 5. **Ask:** *Can we all set the standard of historical confidence and a flyover of the arguments as the goal of our study over the next few weeks?*

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Ask: *Why is this study important to us today? Is it really necessary?* After a few volunteers have answered, **invite** your group to turn to Matthew 28 and **read aloud** verses 18-20.

Say: *This is our great commission; if it is true, then it impacts everything we know, seek, believe, say, and do. If it's false, we're wasting our time and energy. Let's be diligent students to find out the truth.*

Close in prayer.