

- I. Introduction: How do we know what we know? Good morning, and welcome back for week three of our six-week series on the Bible and its role in helping us identify and embrace truth.
- A. Which is another way of saying – welcome to this discussion in which we are exploring the ways God provides direction for our life and answers to the questions we should be asking.
- B. I have been making a big deal about the idea that:
1. There are seven life questions - What ultimately matters? Who am I? Where did I come from? What went wrong? What is expected of me? What happens when I die? And how do I know what I know.
 2. That we all have answers to them and these answers are shaping us, although they might not be any good.
 3. And that our answers to questions 1 – 6 are based on question seven: which is the foundation of this series: How do I know what I know?
- C. In week one we were in John 18 and the topic of truth.
1. I noted that we are living in a knowledge crisis and suggested that the problems and polarization we are experiencing lies deeper than the news - it is being caused by different worldviews, which are being caused by different answers to the first six questions, which are being caused by different answers to Question Seven, which are different because we opt for different sources of authority – reason, revelation, tradition and intuition.
 2. We then looked at some of Jesus’s claim to capital T truth.
 3. And I argued we need to give some careful thought to how we know what we know.
- D. Last week we were in Psalm 19 exploring Natural (also called General) Revelation. This grew out of the first part of Psalm 19 – the heavens declare the glory of the Lord. I noted that:
1. Our amazing universe points to an amazing God.
 2. And it was the belief in natural revelation that gave birth to science.
 3. I then noted the limitations of Natural revelation, first, the fact that it is general – it is enough to realize that there is a god, but not to realize what he is like; and second, that we can suppress this knowledge. (We were in Romans 1)
- E. Today we return to Psalm 19, which shifts to some comments about Special Revelation – also called Supernatural Revelation.
- F. If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn with me to Psalm 19. And while you are doing that, let me also say:
1. I hope you are taking advantage of the additional resources we’re making available right now: the small group discussion guides; daily video devotions, podcasts and the book – which I wrote – and which is unfolding a chapter a week.
 2. I know we are asking a lot. Most of us are very happy not thinking too hard. Thinking hard is, well, hard. And thinking hard about our own thinking – the topic of epistemology – is particularly hard. But from time to time we need to do it.
- G. Today we return to Psalm 19 where we will focus on the claims the Bible makes about itself.

II. I am beginning with verse 1:

A. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech; they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

B. The law of the Lord is perfect - the law is referring to the Bible.

1. In this case, the Old Testament – in particular, the first five books (called the Torah or Pentateuch, which were written by Moses). One of the things you will eventually realize is that when the Bible is talking about the Bible, it is talking about the Old Testament. In next week's LakeLight lecture we will explore why we should trust the New Testament as well.

2. And - as opposed to being told that it is soundless – which is what we just heard about natural revelation, we are hearing that it is perfect.

C. The Law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.

1. The idea that it revives our soul speaks to the way the Bible knows us at our deepest level. And it has the power to show us who we are – to help us better access our true identity. To help us see ourselves more accurately.

2. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Prince Rillian would have a vision of who he was every night at midnight, but he was kept tied up so he couldn't act on it. He was told that he was a monster and had to be restrained. In reality, he was a prince and was under a spell.

3. David says, the Bible is that sword that he uses to help you see who you are. The truth was trying to get out.

D. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy

1. What we have here is Hebrew poetry – and as I have noted before, in Hebrew poetry they do not rhyme words, they rhyme meanings. We get a handful of synonyms for the Bible - law, statutes, precepts and commands. These are not parts of Scripture, but synonyms.

2. And each one adds a bit more color.

E. The Law = perfect; the statutes are trustworthy – which is the crisis, right. We do not lack information. We just do not know if we can trust it. We need to develop a new set of filters. David says, **Your statutes are trustworthy. They make wise the simple.**

1. This leads to the 15-year rule. I'm sure you know that we tend to look back at ourselves – the 15-year younger version of ourself – and think that we were a bit off. We can't believe we thought X or did Y. What I hope you have come to realize is, in 15 years we will look at ourselves and think we are off now. What can we do? We can read the Bible. It gives us timeless insight. It makes wise the simple.

F. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

1. The idea that the precepts are “right” is alluding to a straight edge that we use to measure other things. Which is a key point. One of the things that is developed in the Bible is the idea that *we* do not judge the Bible on the basis of other things. We judge other things on the basis of the Bible.

2. We see a similar thing in John 17:17 – thy word is Truth (not true)
3. By the way, don't miss the shocking promise – the law = joy. We think just the opposite. We think freedom = joy, and then we misunderstand what is meant by freedom.

G. And The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

1. The fourth one –the precepts of the Lord bring joy – is another profound insight. It is worth noting what a staggering – and counter cultural claim this is. We think we are only free when we have no restrictions. This Psalm notes that the Bible says we have joy when we embrace its limits. And they rewire us.
2. There is a lot here. I commend this passage to you.

H. Reading on: V. 9: The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm and all of them are righteous.

1. One of the key points here is that God's laws are stable – timeless, they endure forever. We think they are old and out of date. No. We are the ones being misled. It is so obvious at one level that we are racing down the wrong path – we are going in unsustainable ways, but they seem right. And when they hit critical mass it is really hard to see that they are wrong.
2. Reality will win. It will bounce back. It is hard to know how and when, but unsustainable things are unsustainable.

I. God's law – his Word, the Bible, this whole list (Law, statues, precepts, decrees) - are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

J. V12: **But who can discern their own errors?** This is rhetorical – no one can. We all have blind spots. Pride and self-justification keep us from getting better. We can't see our own errors, not because they are so small, but because they are so characteristic.

K. Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. V. 14: May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

III. There is so much here. I love Psalm 19. And it is a great foundation from which to make a few theological / doctrinal observations about the Bible and its authority. I want to make four:

IV. Number One: The Bible has a lot to say about the Bible.

A. In a way similar to how Jesus says a lot about Jesus – which shocks people. They are alert to the fact that Jesus has a lot to say about: serving others, loving your enemies, living in light of eternity. They are less aware that he has all of these things about himself – being God, judge of everyone, eternal, the creator.

B. We looked at Psalm 19, because it allowed us to focus on both Natural and Supernatural Revelation. If I was just focused only on supernatural revelation, I could have picked a half dozen other passages:

1. Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2. Or 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the servant of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

C. The Bible has a lot to say about how we are to view the Bible.

D. Now, some of you are thinking: who cares? Hello, this is circular reasoning. Woodruff, you two-bit fool. You can't tell us to trust the Bible and then support the claim by citing the Bible. You cannot assume what needs to be proved in order to prove it. Can you say freshman philosophy? Can you say common sense?

1. Well, for starters, that is not exactly what I am doing. I am not trying to prove that the Bible has authority. I am simply noting that the Bible claims to have authority. There is a big difference. And it is important to note that the Bible claims to have authority, because if it would undermine the idea that we should trust it if it never mentioned it.

2. Second, claims to ultimate authority are necessarily circular. Most arguments prove their truthfulness by appealing to some higher source of truth. If I try to prove that I am the highest source of truth by citing something higher than myself, I undermine the argument.

a) Charges of circular reasoning are not just a problem for the Bible, but for every ultimate claim to truth. People who believe that reason should be our primary source of authority do so because it seems like the reasonable thing to do. And people who ultimately trust their gut do so because that is what their gut tells them to do. You cannot cite Reason to prove the Bible.

3. Third, every ultimate claim rests on faith. You can only back up so far before you get to an axiom that you simply have to accept. You cannot use science to prove the scientific method, or to prove that the material world is all that exists. You have to accept that.

4. You will hear scientists claiming they are just following the facts, but then they make some statement of faith.

a) Carl Sagan used to say: The cosmos is all there is and all there was and all there ever will be. OK, that is your belief. Just don't claim it's science. You cannot use science to prove science. You have to start with that assumption.

b) By the way, the hardest people to deal with are those who make dogmatic announcements against being dogmatic – and cannot see it. I have no problem with you making a statement of faith. I do. Just own it.

c) When I was a college pastor, I had this ongoing run in with Student Affairs that kept demanding neutrality. And I could never convince them that their claim to neutrality was not neutral.

E. So, back to point one: The Bible has a lot to say about the Bible. I already cited Hebrews 4 and 2 Timothy 3. In addition to them, there are also a bunch of passages which show how highly Jesus valued the Word of God. I find these especially important.

1. When Satan, Pharisees, attacked him – he answered scripture

2. When Peter takes out sword, he says “put it away or Scripture will not be fulfilled.”

3. In his high priestly prayer – in John 17 – which he prays just before the events. He keeps talking about “the word.”
4. Jesus so delighted in the Bible that when you stabbed him he bleed scripture
5. Jesus is the only one completely saturated with the Bible.

V. **Point Two: The claims the Bible makes about itself are big.** Indeed, the Bible does not just claim to reveal God, it goes beyond that. It claims:

- A. To record the words of God, which is a point driven home with quotation marks:
 1. In Gen 12:1: The Lord SAID to Abraham, “Leave your country, your people & your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”
 2. Exodus 3:4: The Lord SAID to Moses, “Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”
 3. Mat 3:16: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, & he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven SAID, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
 4. In all of these cases, the Bible suggests that God spoke audibly and that the biblical writers captured his very words.
 5. In a like manner the Bible suggests that God speaks through the prophets.
 - a) There were 3 offices in the Old Testament: Prophet, priest and king. The prophets – men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Jonah – were understood to be God’s spokesmen. The claim is that what they said when they spoke for God was from God.
 - b) Over 3000 times we find the statement, “Thus says the Lord,” preceding statements they make.
 - c) The claim is that these are God’s words.
 - d) In the New Testament Jesus fills this role. He is God so the words he says are the Words of God.
 - e) And the claim extends to what the Apostles say after Pentecost
 - f) The Bible claims that after they were filled by the Holy Spirit the words of the apostles – the things they said and wrote – were inspired by God.
 - (1) Paul makes this claim in I Cor 14:37, where he writes, “If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.” In other words: If you disobey my words you disobey God himself.
 - (2) We also see it in I Thessalonians 2:13, where he writes, “And we also thank God continually b/c, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God.”
 - g) The Bible claims to reveal God and the Bible claims to contain the words of God.
- B. The Bible Claims to be the Word of God.

1. Listen carefully, I know it sounds like I am repeating myself. But, beyond the claim to be a record of the ways God has revealed himself and the words he has spoken, is an even bolder claim: the claim that all of the words found in the Bible are divinely inspired.

2. In other words, it is not just the words in quotation marks that matter. Scripture claims that God speaks to us through every word in all 66 books. Or, to frame it a bit differently, Scripture says that what Scripture says God says.

a) Paul makes this point in his 2nd letter to Timothy, where he writes, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

b) Peter says essentially the same thing in the 2nd letter he wrote, Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

3. In other words, all of the words delivered by the prophets had their ultimate origin with God, not with man. He worked in such a way that they did not corrupt the text in the process of delivering the message.

C. What this means is, the Bible is claiming authority over our lives.

1. There are a number of other points I could make here. The Bible makes a number of claims about itself beyond recording the words of God and being the Word of God.

a) It claims to be the necessary and complete guide to our spiritual life, which is a point the Westminster Confession summarizes for us. It says: The whole counsel of G, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.

b) It claims to be truth. We already noted this – John 17:17. The point being, the Bible does not claim to be one person's opinion, true most of the time, or true for some of the people. The Bible claims to be Truth. This is why the first article in our church's statement of faith asserts that: In the end, when all truth is known, we will find that the Bible – all 66 books – in their original autographs and properly interpreted are always true in all they teach.

D. There is more here to develop. Let me simply underline: the Bible claims authority over our lives. It claims the authority of God.

VI. The third thing I want to say is, **I believe the Bible is what it claims to be.**

A. I believe That God has revealed himself to us.

B. I believe he has done so in both natural and supernatural ways.

C. I believe that the highest and best way to know what the father is like is the Son.

1. This is what the writer of Hebrews tells us: In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

D. But it also argues that the Bible - this book. This collection of 66 books – 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. Books that were written over 1,600 years by forty different authors in three languages and on three continents – is from God.

E. I believe that this book – this revelation to us from God - is more valuable than we can imagine and that we need to preference it

F. I believe that the Bible is the Word of God and something we can and should trust to direct our path.

1. I believe that it is true in ways and at levels that we do not appreciate.

2. My goal is to get you into the book every day.

G. To be clear:

1. I do not believe that the Bible is a magic book. We have to rightly interpret it. And that requires more time and effort than many of you give it.

2. Saying it has authority takes some of the work away, but not all. We have to study it so we can rightly handle it. But I believe that in the end we will find that the Bible, all 66 books, in the original autographs and properly interpreted, are always true never false in what they claim.

H. I wrestled with this twenty years ago – chased my tail. Read a lot and eventually made peace. And Billy Graham's experience was helpful.

VII. Four: You need to decide what you are going to trust.

A. You need to decide where you are going to put your weight down.

B. Life will become different once we decide on the rules – easier in some ways.

1. Clayton Christenson speaks about this in *How Will I Measure My Life*.

C. But harder in some others.

1. You don't read the Bible literally do you?

VIII. OK, so: The Bible talks a lot about itself; it makes big claims; I have decided they are true; you have to decide for yourself.

IX. Let me encourage you – this isn't just a head game. It's not just an intellectual challenge.

A. If you look at the Bible one of the things you see is the heart of God – you see the great and wondrous lengths He has gone to – sending his only Son - to show you how much He cares for you.

B. And you see that he is speaking to you today - and every day - from his word and also from his general revelation.

C. He holds certainty and expansive wisdom in his hand. He has guided the lives of his creation for millennia and is right now, reaching out to you to trust him with your heart to take one step further along the continuum we have so often spoken of.

D. No matter what concerns you have, how difficult your situation is, how great things are going for you, the wisdom he has given us in his word and in our experience of him guided by his word will never give us the wrong yardage, it will always put us on the green; if not in the hole....”