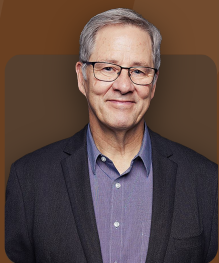


FOUNDATIONS

Why I Trust My Bible



AS TAUGHT BY

Bill Mounce

NT119

Why I Trust My Bible

as taught by
Dr. Bill Mounce



BiblicalTraining.org
Rooted in scripture. Growing in Faith.

Why I Trust My Bible

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BiblicalTraining.org

BiblicalTraining.org not-for-profit ministry that gives all people access to a world-class Christian education at no cost. Our classes range from new believers to biblical literacy (“Foundations”), deeper Bible study (“Academy”), and seminary-level training (“Institute”).

We are a 501(c)3 not-for-profit and rely solely on the donations of our users. All donations are tax deductible according to the current US tax codes.

DISTINCTIVES

World class. All Bible classes are taught by world-class professors from major seminaries.

Holistic. We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application.

Configurable. Ministries can use lectures as well as the own to design the educational program.

Accessible. BiblicalTraining a web-based ministry whose content provided at no cost.

Community-based. We encourage people to learn together, mentor/apprentice relationships.

Broadly evangelical. Our materials are broadly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith, and are not tied to any one church, denomination or tradition.

Partners. We provide the content and delivery mechanisms, and our partner organizations provide the community and mentoring.

Overview

Title: Why I Trust My Bible

Speaker: Dr. Bill Mounce

GOALS

1. Identify the challenges people make to the trustworthiness of the Bible and know how to answer them in a way that gives you confidence in its reliability.
2. Understand how the Bible was written and how copies were made so that you can have confidence in the original content and the documents we have now.
3. Understand how the messages of Jesus and Paul are the same even though sometimes they sound different.
4. Understand how the writings of the New Testament were chosen and why others are not included.
5. Understand the basics of translation philosophy and the purpose of each type.

REQUIREMENTS

1. 11 sessions
2. 2 hours per week (lesson and discussion)

PREREQUISITES

None

FORMAT

Audio and video

Your Speaker

Bill Mounce has had a distinguished career as an author, translator, and teacher. As the founder of BiblicalTraining.org and also serving on The Committee for Bible Translation to create the NIV translation of scripture, Bill is well-known for his best-selling biblical Greek textbook 'Basics of Biblical Greek' amongst other acclaimed works. He blogs regularly on Greek and issues of spiritual growth here at BiblicalTraining.org.

Bill was also a preaching pastor, a professor of New Testament and director of the Greek Language Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and a professor at Azusa Pacific University.

Robin and he have been married since 1983 and have three adult children.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Aberdeen

M.A., Fuller Theological Seminary

B.A., Bethel College

MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

Basics of Biblical Greek

Why I Trust My Bible

Greek for the Rest of Us

Weekly Schedule

Listen or watch the lesson. The lesson for each chapter designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts for an hour. The crucial step, the meeting time with your fellow students going to be productive and encouraging, everyone the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

Take notes. This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

Questions. Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Other questions are more reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

MEETING TOGETHER

While some people may have to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group provides encouragement to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

Facilitator's Guide

If you are leading the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

Your role is to facilitate. This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

Preparation. Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and think carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going. A great question is, "What is the Lord teaching you this week?"

Creativity. What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

Correct error. This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. So look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

Focus. Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

Lead the discussion. People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

Silence. Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started, and then step out of the way.

Discipleship. Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share some life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

Different perspectives. People process information and express themselves in different ways based on their background, previous experience, culture, religion and other factors. Encourage an atmosphere that allows people to share honestly and respectfully.

Privacy. All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

Goal. The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

Relationships. Share everyone's name, email and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack or WhatsApp.

Finish well. Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

Prayer. Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

1

Significance of the Question

I. THE WORLD IS ASKING (AND ATTACKING)

Reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible

II. YOUR FRIENDS ARE ASKING (OR THEY WILL)

Know what questions they will ask and how to answer them

III. YOU SHOULD BE ASKING

Trust the Bible when you experience challenges in your life

IV. YOU MUST BE ASKING (TITUS 1:9)

Hold firmly, encourage others by sound doctrine and refute error

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is different about the process of proving something scientifically and determining if something is historically accurate? What does Bill mean when he says that he can't prove the Bible is trustworthy but that there is good evidence that it is? Is there a belief system that can be proven to be true? If so, why, and if not, why not?

2

Did Jesus Live?

I. CHALLENGE

Jesus was not a real person that lived in history?

II. TWO CLEAREST STATEMENTS

Quotes from Josephus

III. OTHER SOURCES

Jewish Talmud and Roman historians

IV. SUMMARY OF WHAT WE READ ABOUT JESUS

Facts about the life of Jesus from various sources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What do the references to Jesus in Josephus tell us about who Jesus was? How is this important in determining whether Jesus was a person that lived in the first century a.d.?

2. What other sources refer to Jesus? What do they tell us about Jesus? What difference does this make to you in determining who Jesus was and why his ministry was important? Why does the historical evidence from these sources make it reasonable to think that Jesus lived in the first century a.d.?

3

Oral Tradition: Was Memory of the Writer Accurate?

I. CHALLENGE

The historical Jesus is not the same as the “Jesus of faith?”

II. DEFINITION OF ORAL TRADITION

Stories of what Jesus did and said were passed on by word of mouth

III. DURING JESUS' LIFE, PROBABLY NOT A LOT OF RECORD KEEPING

Oral culture and the rabbinical teaching method

IV. THREE APPROACHES TO ORALITY

Informal uncontrolled, formal controlled, informal controlled

V. OTHER FACTORS CONCERNING MEMORY

Core facts and details, corporate memory, important subject, critics' assumptions

VI. HOLY SPIRIT CONTROL (JOHN 14:26; CF. 15:26, 27)

Reminding the apostles of what Jesus said and did

VII. WHY WAS THE WRITING OF THE GOSPELS LATER?

Nature of orality, preference of eyewitnesses, expectation of Jesus returning soon

9. Memory tends to be more accurate when something is at stake. What is an example from your life that indicates this? Why is this an important consideration when considering the accuracy of the Gospel?
10. Why are your assumptions important when you are determining whether the gospel accounts are trustworthy? What is an assumption that some people have that causes them to distrust the accuracy of the gospels? What is an assumption you have that encourages you to view the gospel accounts as trustworthy?

11. What did Jesus say would be the role of the Holy Spirit in the writing of the gospels (John 14:26)? What presupposition would be necessary in order for this to be a factor for you in considering the gospels to be an accurate account of the events of the life of Jesus?

12. Why is it reasonable that there was a gap in time between the ascension of Jesus and the writing of the gospels?

4

Do We Know Who Wrote the Gospels?

I. CHALLENGE

The Bible is not trustworthy since the gospel writers may have changed the message or didn't know it to begin with

II. TRADITIONAL ANSWERS

Copies of the gospels can be dated back to the first century ad, within 60 years of the events they describe

III. ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT THIS ISSUE

If the church had such a low regard for the issue of authorship, would they have attributed the gospels to these four?

IV. CONCLUSION

These people all had direct or very close indirect access to the stories of Jesus and the Church wanted to honor the traditions

3. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he says that church tradition is strong in identifying the authors of the synoptic gospels? Who are they generally accepted to be? Why would they be considered good sources?

[chart of dates of writing doesn't show at 3 minutes into the video]

4. About how long after the life of Jesus were the gospels written? How does that compare with the time gap for Alexander the Great's biography being written?

5. Why would the reputation of Matthew, Mark and Luke make them unlikely for the church to pick if they were trying to choose authors that were liked and respected? Why does this make it more likely that these people were the actual authors of these gospels?

5

Were the Authors Historically Accurate?

I. CHALLENGE

Was historical accuracy a priority for the authors

II. MULTIPLE ATTESTATION

Mark, Q, L(uke), M(atthew), John

III. EMBARRASSING SAYINGS

Judas and "Get behind me, Satan"

IV. HARD SAYINGS OF JESUS

Luke 14:26, Mark 13:32

V. MISSING SAYINGS

Circumcision, speaking in tongues

VI. WOULD THE GOSPEL WRITERS HAVE EVEN WANTED TO PRESERVE ACCURATE HISTORY

The gospel is grounded in historical events. The accounts of the gospel writers are historically accurate.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

There are indications that the gospel writers wanted to be accurate and that they were accurate, even though you can't prove it.

5. In what ways do critics challenge the idea that the gospel writers recorded an historical account of the life of Jesus? Why are the historical facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection foundational to the Christian faith? How does it encourage your faith to know that there is strong evidence that the gospel accounts are historically reliable?

6

Are there Contradictions in the Gospels?

I. CHALLENGE

Are there actual contradictions in the Bible or only apparent contradictions?

II. "SYNOPTIC PROBLEM" AND HARMONIZATION

A. Description

Similarities and differences in wording and order

B. What do the Synoptics say about themselves?

Selection of the material and purpose of the gospel

III. HARMONIZATION

A. Definition

All accounts can be true

B. Example of Jesus' early years

Birth and early childhood

C. Other examples

Cleansing of the temple and order wilderness temptations

D. Modern biographies' obsession with insignificant details

Jesus' death, one or two donkeys

IV. HERMENEUTICS

Romans 4 and James 2:23, and passages about slavery

V. CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN BIBLE & HISTORY OR SCIENCE

Science may be wrong or incomplete, our understanding of the Bible could be wrong

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Ask the person to describe a contradiction, there is almost always a conservative answer

7

Did Paul Change the Gospel?

I. CHALLENGE

The theology of Jesus and Paul are different and you don't have to listen to Paul because he's not God

II. “JESUS I BELIEVE. I DON’T HAVE TO BELIEVE PAUL”

The Gospel writers recorded their experiences with Jesus as eyewitnesses. Paul also had an eyewitness encounter with Jesus and had visions of being taught by him. If you believe Scripture is God’s Word, all of it is trustworthy.

III. ARE JESUS AND PAUL INCOMPATIBLE?

A. Challenge: Jesus is a kind, gentle, loving person, but Paul is harsh, judgmental, and demanding

The teachings of Jesus and Paul are mutually exclusive

B. Misunderstands Jesus. Jesus could be:

Harsh, judgemental, demanding

C. Hard to find any characteristic in Jesus that you can't find in Paul, and vice versa

Sometimes they each love and encourage people, and sometimes they challenge and condemn people

IV. ARE THEY THEOLOGICALLY INCOMPATIBLE?

Justification, clean and unclean

V. CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Jesus claimed to be God and Paul confirmed it in his teaching. Paul taught with the authority of an apostle so he had no need to use quotes from Jesus.

VI. CONCLUSION

Paul did not create Christianity

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do critical scholars describe the relationship between Jesus and what Paul teaches about Jesus? How do they use this to question the credibility of the life of Jesus and his message?

11. Critics claim that Paul doesn't quote Jesus because he doesn't know him. What events in Paul's life and passages in Paul's writings indicate that he had personal experiences with Jesus and is familiar with his teachings? Why does the purpose of the epistles indicate that it's reasonable that Paul and the other apostles did not quote Jesus?

8

Canonicity: Why We Have the Books We Do

I. CHALLENGE

Bart Ehrman's comments about other apocryphal writings and Dan Brown's fictional story of the DaVinci Code

II. DEFINITIONS

The collection of the books that are received as divinely inspired and therefore are authoritative for faith and life

III. TWO ISSUES

Old Testament Apocrypha and New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

IV. OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

A. "Apocrypha"

Suitable for reading in the church but not establishing doctrine

B. Characteristics

Written between 300 bc and 100 ad but not accepted by Judaism or Jesus

C. History

Part of the Septuagint and Vulgate but viewed as secondary significance

D. Reformation (1400's)

Not accepted by Luther

E. Jews

Believed Malachi was the last prophet

V. NEW TESTAMENT CANON

A. Challenge

Political decision made by leaders at a church council

B. Problem developed

Death of eyewitnesses and apostles and the rise of heresies and false writings

C. Process of Canonization

A new covenant needs new authoritative documents. Citations from early church fathers showed early acceptance.

D. Two basic definitions of “canon”

The church began using them and recognizing them as authoritative, which is where the early lists originated.

E. Description of the omitted books

Other writings were written later, not accepted by the church as a whole and often disagreed with teachings in canonical writings

F. Three criteria of authenticity

1. Apostolic authorship (“Apostolicity”)

Written by an apostle or close associate of an apostle

2. Harmony of doctrine and tone (“Orthodoxy”)

Most writings outside the canon, like the Gospel of Thomas, do not agree with the canon

3. Continual usage in the church as a whole (“Catholicity”)

Believers in churches throughout the world used these writings

G. Did any canonical books struggle to be recognized as canonical?

1. No

Paul's letters and the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke/Acts were accepted right away

2. Hesitancy

John, Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, Philemon, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation were accepted over time

3. Lists

Early lists came from the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and church councils

6. Who was Jerome and when did he live? Into what language did he translate the Bible? What was the name of his Bible translation? What was his opinion of the books in the Apocrypha?

7. What was Luther's opinion of the writings in the Apocrypha? How did the Renaissance emphasis on the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible affect the perception of the legitimacy of the Apocryphal writings?

8. Where were the Apocryphal writings placed in the Coverdale Bible? Why was this significant?

15. What do the terms “extrinsic” and “intrinsic” mean regarding how the books of the New Testament canon were determined? Was the canon determined by extrinsic or intrinsic criteria? Why? What difference does it make?

16. What were the three primary criteria for determining the authenticity of a writing to be included in the New Testament canon? How would you describe each one? Why is each one important?

17. Which canonical books were not accepted at first? Why were they doubted initially? Why were they eventually accepted?

18. What were some of the lists we have of the books that were included in the New Testament canon? When was each of them written? What books did each of them include?
19. What are the three concluding thoughts that Dr. Mounce emphasizes when considering the question of the canonicity of the books of the New Testament? How does each of these give you confidence that the writings we have in the New Testament are authoritative and trustworthy?

9

Textual Criticism: Are the Greek Texts Hopelessly Corrupt?

I. CHALLENGE

The manuscripts aren't reliable

II. HISTORICAL PROCESS

Autographs, manuscripts and variants

III. TYPES OF VARIANTS

Omissions/additions, spelling and other differences

IV. "TEXTUAL CRITICISM": WHICH "READING" IS MOST LIKELY ORIGINAL?

External criteria, internal criteria

V. WHAT DID THEY FIND?

A. Only two passages of any length

John 8, Mark 16:9-20

B. A couple dozen variants involve one or two verses

Matt 6:13, Luke 22:43-44, 1 John 5:7-8, John 5:4

C. Remaining passages are a word or two at best

Insignificant types of differences account for the vast majority of "errors"

VI. HOW MANY VARIANTS ARE THERE?

A. How do you count variants?

Different kinds of variants

B. How many variants are there?

How you count the number of variants

C. What is the significance of these numbers?

How do the variants affect the possible meanings of the text?

VII. STATISTICS DON'T LIE, BUT INTERPRETATION CAN BE SUSPECT

How many places are there questions, and how many of these make a difference in the meaning? Multiplicity of manuscripts helps to determine the original text.

VIII. CONCLUSION: DO NOT DOUBT YOUR BIBLES

5,800 copied manuscripts. No originals, but 99 percent is sure. The one percent affects no significant biblical teaching

IX. HAVE SCHOLARS/TRANSLATORS TRIED TO HIDE THESE ISSUES?

Translations often list the most significant textual variants in the footnotes

X. EHRMAN ON THE “BLACK HOLE”

A. Challenge

Time gap of 350 years between the autographs and first copies

B. Truth

Fragments exist from the first century and enough copies from the second, third and fourth centuries to reconstruct the entire New Testament several times over.

10

Can We Trust Our Translations?

I. CHALLENGE

How can you trust translations since they are so different?

II. THREE PROBLEMS

A. Bible written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic

Ancient languages written in a different cultural context

B. Languages are not codes

Words have ranges of meaning and the meaning can change depending on the phrase

C. "Literal"

"In accordance with, involving, or being the primary or strict meaning of the word" (Webster)

III. SOLUTION: TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY

A. Focus on words or meaning?

Individual words or meaning of phrases

B. Example of hilastērion

Range of meaning that relies on context

IV. "FORMAL EQUIVALENCE" (ESV)

Focusing on translating word for word is not always possible and can also result in awkward English and obscuring the original meaning. All translators include some level of interpretation.

V. FUNCTIONAL (DYNAMIC) EQUIVALENCE (NIV)

Focusing on translating meaning often reads better and illustrates the original meaning. It sometimes involves more interpretation.

VI. PARAPHRASE (NLT; PHILLIPS)

Paraphrase is often easy to read but meaning can be inaccurate

VII. RUNNING COMMENTARY (LIVING; MESSAGE)

Sometimes helpful for inspiration but not accurate enough to study effectively

VIII. TEST CASE – ROMANS 16:16

Greet one another with....

IX. AGNOSTICISM

It is possible to understand the core meaning of something that is written or spoken even if it is from a different cultural context

X. CONCLUSION

Trust your Bible but recognize the limitations of a translation. Read more than one translation

11

Conclusion

I. "WHY I TRUST MY BIBLE"

A. Personally

Education and experience

B. "Why We Trust Our Bible"

Classes with more detail

II. WHY I TRUST IT

A. Can I prove the Bible is trustworthy?

Can't scientifically prove any philosophy, religion or historical event

B. Rational

Reasonable answers to explain reality

C. Informed faith

Rational and reasonable answers to important questions

D. Inner confirmation of the Holy Spirit

Self-validating

III. THANKFUL FOR PEOPLE LIKE DARRELL, CRAIG, DAN, AND MICHAEL

Scholars and translation committee members

