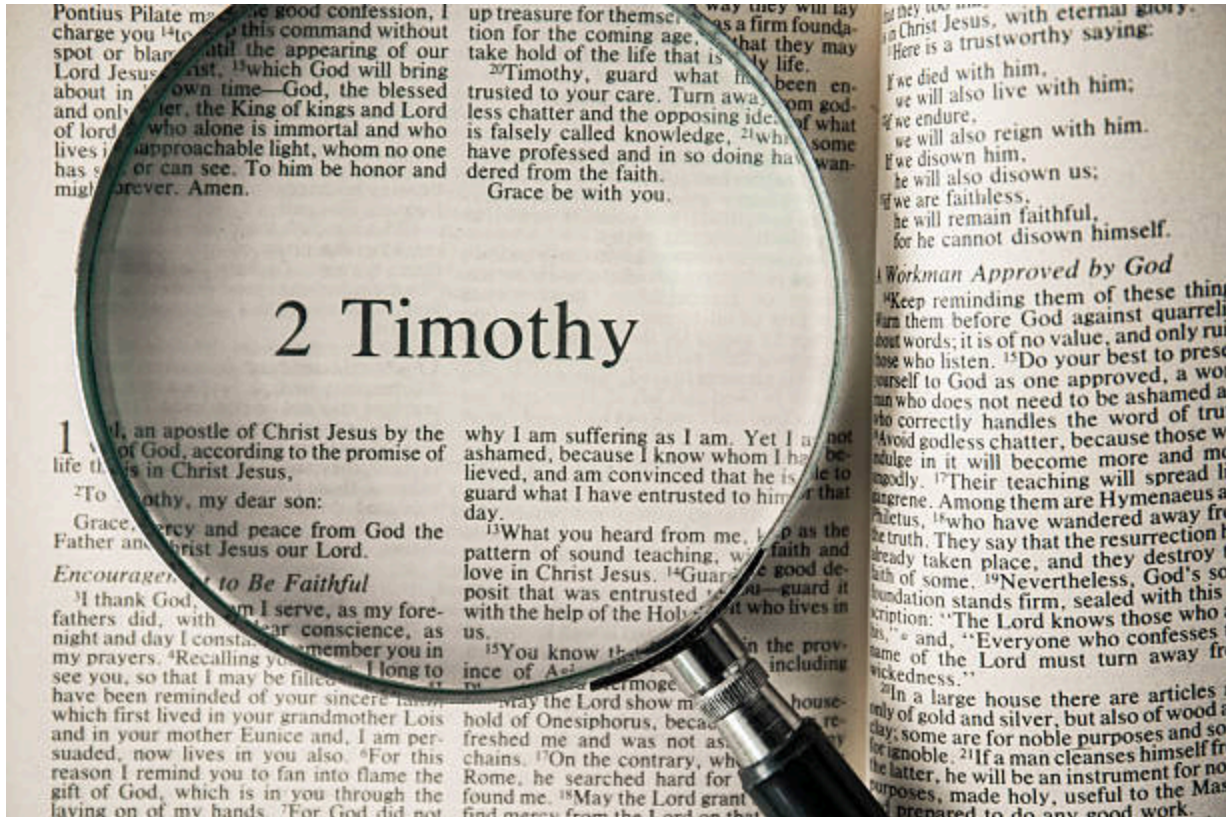


Why the Bible is Trustworthy



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Introduction

The Bible, revered as the sacred scripture of Christianity, has been a cornerstone of faith for billions of people throughout history. It is not just a religious text but a compilation of writings that spans centuries, cultures, and languages, offering guidance, wisdom, and insight into the human experience. Given its profound influence, the question of the Bible's trustworthiness is of paramount importance. Is this ancient text reliable? Can its teachings be trusted in a world that constantly evolves? These are critical questions for both believers and skeptics alike.

Trustworthiness, in this context, refers to the Bible's ability to convey truth accurately and consistently. It is about whether the Bible can be relied upon as a true and authoritative source of knowledge about God, human nature, morality, and the universe. This involves examining its historical reliability, textual integrity, prophetic accuracy, and the consistency of its teachings over time. Trust in the Bible also extends to its relevance in modern life, influencing personal behavior, societal norms, and cultural values.

Understanding why the Bible is trustworthy requires a comprehensive approach. This includes evaluating the external evidence that supports its claims, such as archaeological discoveries

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and historical documentation, as well as internal evidence like the coherence of its message and the fulfillment of prophecies. Additionally, the Bible's influence on morality, ethics, and personal transformation provides further testimony to its reliability.

This document will explore these aspects in depth, aiming to provide a robust argument for the Bible's trustworthiness. We will begin by looking at the historical reliability of the Bible, followed by an examination of its textual integrity, prophetic accuracy, and thematic unity. The discussion will then turn to how the Bible aligns with scientific understanding, its moral and ethical impact, and the testimonies of individuals whose lives have been transformed by its teachings. Finally, we will address common critiques and counterarguments, providing a balanced perspective on the issue.

The purpose of this exploration is not merely to affirm the Bible's reliability for those who already believe in its divine inspiration but also to offer thoughtful answers to those who question its authenticity. In an era where information is abundant and skepticism is common, it is essential to revisit and reaffirm the reasons why the Bible remains a trustworthy and enduring source of truth.

Let me know your thoughts on the introduction. If it aligns with your expectations, I'll proceed with the next section on Historical Reliability. If you have any changes or additional points you'd like to include, feel free to share!

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Chapter 1: Historical Reliability

The question of the Bible's trustworthiness has been a focal point of debate for centuries. Critics often challenge its authenticity, while believers cite its divine inspiration. However, beyond faith, there are compelling reasons grounded in history, archaeology, and textual evidence that support the Bible's reliability. This essay explores the historical reliability of the Bible through three key lenses: archaeological evidence, consistency with historical records, and manuscript evidence.

Archaeological Evidence Supporting Biblical Accounts

Archaeology has played a significant role in validating the historical reliability of the Bible. Numerous discoveries have corroborated details found within biblical texts, lending credence to their authenticity. For example, the discovery of the ancient city of Jericho aligns with the biblical account of its destruction in the Book of Joshua. Excavations revealed that the city's walls had indeed collapsed in a manner consistent with the narrative of Joshua 6:20, where the walls fell after the Israelites encircled the city and shouted.

Another remarkable find is the Tel Dan Stele, an inscription dating back to the 9th century BCE that references the "House of David." This artifact is significant because it provides the earliest extra-biblical evidence of King David's dynasty, confirming the existence of this pivotal biblical figure. Similarly, the discovery of the Siloam Inscription in Jerusalem confirms the construction of Hezekiah's Tunnel as described in 2 Kings 20:20, illustrating the Bible's accuracy in recording historical infrastructure projects.

These examples underscore that the Bible is not merely a collection of religious teachings but also a document rooted in actual historical events. While archaeology does not prove every detail of the Bible, it certainly provides substantial evidence that supports its historical claims.

Consistency with Historical Records and Events

The Bible's consistency with known historical records and events further enhances its credibility. The accounts of ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians, as described in the Bible, align with what is known from other historical sources. For instance, the Assyrian King Sennacherib's campaign against Judah is mentioned in both the Bible (2 Kings 18-19 (ESV) and Assyrian annals, including the Sennacherib Prism. This artifact corroborates the biblical narrative, detailing Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem during King Hezekiah's reign.

Furthermore, the New Testament is also consistent with historical events. The census mentioned in Luke 2:1-3, which brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, aligns with historical practices of Roman governance, where censuses were conducted for taxation purposes. Additionally, the execution of Jesus Christ under the governance of Pontius Pilate is

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well-attested in both the Bible and external sources, such as the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus and the Jewish historian Josephus.

This consistency with historical records suggests that the biblical authors were not fabricating their accounts but were documenting real events that occurred in history. The Bible's alignment with known historical facts reinforces its reliability as a trustworthy document.

Manuscript Evidence: Dead Sea Scrolls, Codex Sinaiticus, and More

Manuscript evidence is perhaps one of the most compelling arguments for the Bible's reliability. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 provided scholars with manuscripts that date back over 2,000 years. These ancient texts include portions of almost every book of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament (ESV)), and remarkably, they show a high degree of consistency with later manuscripts. For example, the Isaiah Scroll, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is nearly identical to the Masoretic Text of Isaiah, which was copied over a millennium later. This remarkable preservation of the text over centuries highlights the care with which the biblical texts were transmitted.

The Codex Sinaiticus, dating to the 4th century CE, is one of the oldest and most complete copies of the Christian Bible in Greek. Along with the Codex Vaticanus, it provides critical evidence of the New Testament's textual integrity. Despite the centuries that separate these manuscripts from the original writings, the differences found in the texts are minimal and do not alter the core doctrines of Christianity. This high degree of textual stability suggests that the Bible we read today is a faithful representation of the original writings.

Moreover, the sheer number of biblical manuscripts is staggering. There are over 5,800 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, with the earliest fragments dating to within a few decades of the original texts. This wealth of manuscript evidence allows for rigorous textual criticism, ensuring that any variations can be identified and corrected, further bolstering confidence in the Bible's reliability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the historical reliability of the Bible is supported by a wealth of evidence from archaeology, consistency with historical records, and the vast manuscript tradition. While faith plays a crucial role in accepting the Bible as the Word of God, the evidence presented here demonstrates that belief in the Bible's trustworthiness is not unfounded. It is a document that has withstood the scrutiny of time and history, affirming its place as a credible and reliable source of ancient history and spiritual truth.

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Chapter 2: Textual Integrity

The Bible is not just a collection of religious texts; it is a compilation of writings that have been carefully preserved and transmitted over thousands of years. The process of canonization, the comparison of various biblical manuscripts, and the analysis of textual variants all contribute to the Bible's textual integrity. This chapter explores how these elements underscore the trustworthiness of the Bible.

The Process of Canonization

The canonization of the Bible refers to the process by which certain books were recognized as divinely inspired and authoritative, forming the official canon of Scripture. This process was not arbitrary but involved careful deliberation by religious leaders over centuries.

For the Old Testament, the canon was largely settled by the Jewish community by the time of the 1st century CE. The books that made it into the Hebrew Bible were those that had been widely recognized as authoritative, consistent with the teachings of the Torah, and used in worship. The criteria for inclusion included the book's historical reliability, theological consistency, and widespread acceptance among the Jewish people. By the time of Jesus, the Old Testament canon was largely recognized, as evidenced by Jesus' own references to the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

The New Testament canonization process was more complex, taking several centuries to finalize. Early Christian communities circulated various writings, but it was only after careful consideration of apostolic authorship, doctrinal consistency, and universal acceptance that the 27 books of the New Testament were recognized as canonical. The Council of Carthage in 397 CE played a significant role in formalizing the New Testament canon, but the process had begun long before, with church leaders such as Irenaeus and Athanasius advocating for certain texts based on their widespread use and theological soundness.

The process of canonization ensured that the books included in the Bible were those that had been rigorously tested for authenticity and doctrinal accuracy. This careful selection process is a key factor in the Bible's textual integrity, as it means that only those writings deemed truly inspired were included.

Comparison of Biblical Manuscripts Over Time

The textual integrity of the Bible is further demonstrated by comparing the various manuscripts that have been preserved over time. Two of the most important textual traditions are the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint.

The Masoretic Text is the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible, preserved by Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE. Their meticulous

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work involved adding vowel points and accents to the consonantal Hebrew text to ensure accurate pronunciation and interpretation. The Masoretes also employed a system of checks and balances, including counting the number of words and letters in each book, to ensure that the text was transmitted with the utmost precision. This resulted in a highly stable and consistent text, which forms the basis of most modern translations of the Old Testament.

The Septuagint, on the other hand, is an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, dating back to the 3rd century BCE. It was widely used in the early Christian church and is frequently quoted in the New Testament. While the Septuagint occasionally differs from the Masoretic Text, these variations are usually minor and do not significantly alter the meaning of the text. In some cases, the Septuagint preserves readings that may reflect an older Hebrew tradition, providing valuable insights into the development of the biblical text.

Comparing these textual traditions shows that, despite the centuries and different languages involved, the Bible has been remarkably well-preserved. The variations that do exist are generally minor and do not impact the core message of the Scriptures. This consistency over time underscores the reliability of the biblical text.

Analysis of Textual Variants and Their Impact on the Message of the Bible

Textual variants inevitably arise in any ancient document that has been copied by hand over centuries, and the Bible is no exception. However, the vast number of biblical manuscripts, particularly for the New Testament, allows scholars to identify and analyze these variants with great precision.

Most textual variants in the Bible are minor, such as differences in spelling, word order, or the inclusion or omission of small words like "and" or "the." These variants typically have little to no impact on the overall meaning of the text. For example, in some manuscripts of the New Testament, the phrase "Jesus Christ" may appear as "Christ Jesus," but the meaning remains the same.

More significant variants, known as "meaningful and viable" variants, are rare and are usually well-documented and analyzed. One well-known example is the ending of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16:9-20 (ESV)), which is absent in some early manuscripts. However, even in cases like this, the variant does not introduce new doctrine or alter the core message of the Gospel. Instead, it provides additional details that complement the overall narrative.

The practice of textual criticism—the scholarly examination of these variants—has led to a deeper understanding of the Bible's transmission history and has confirmed that the vast majority of the text is stable and reliable. Importantly, no central doctrine of the Christian faith is called into question by any known textual variant. This high degree of textual integrity, despite the existence of variants, is a testament to the careful transmission of the Bible throughout history.

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Conclusion

The textual integrity of the Bible is one of the strongest arguments for its trustworthiness. The careful process of canonization, the consistency of biblical manuscripts over time, and the scholarly analysis of textual variants all demonstrate that the Bible has been faithfully preserved and transmitted. These factors assure us that the Bible we have today is a reliable witness to the original writings and the message they convey. As a result, believers and scholars alike can have confidence in the Bible as a trustworthy source of spiritual and historical truth.

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Chapter 3: Prophetic Accuracy

Prophecy is one of the most compelling features of the Bible, setting it apart from other religious texts. The Bible contains numerous prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled with remarkable accuracy. This chapter examines examples of fulfilled prophecies, considers the statistical probability of these events occurring by chance, and discusses how prophecy contributes to the Bible's credibility.

Examples of Fulfilled Prophecies in the Bible

The Bible is replete with prophecies that have been fulfilled in detail, lending strong support to its trustworthiness. One of the most famous examples is the prophecy concerning the birth of Jesus Christ. The prophet Micah, writing around 700 BCE, foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2 (ESV)). Centuries later, Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Another significant prophecy is found in the Book of Isaiah, which predicts the suffering and death of the Messiah. Isaiah 53 (ESV) vividly describes a "suffering servant" who would be "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities." This passage, written approximately 700 years before Christ, aligns closely with the accounts of Jesus' crucifixion in the New Testament, where He is described as being pierced by nails and a spear, and suffering on behalf of humanity's sins.

The fall of ancient cities, such as Tyre and Babylon, also demonstrates the Bible's prophetic accuracy. The prophet Ezekiel foretold the destruction of Tyre (Ezekiel 26 (ESV)), predicting that the city would be laid bare and its stones and timber thrown into the sea. This was fulfilled when Alexander the Great conquered Tyre in 332 BCE, scraping the city's ruins into the sea to build a causeway. Similarly, Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Babylon (Isaiah 13:19-22 (ESV); Jeremiah 51:24-26 (ESV)), predicting its complete desolation. Babylon, once a great empire, fell to the Persians in 539 BCE and eventually became uninhabited, fulfilling these prophecies.

These examples illustrate how the Bible's prophecies have been fulfilled with remarkable precision, supporting the idea that the Bible is not merely a human document but one that reflects divine foreknowledge.

Statistical Probability of Prophecy Fulfillment

The fulfillment of biblical prophecies is not just a matter of chance. When examined statistically, the likelihood of these prophecies being fulfilled by random coincidence is astronomically low. Consider the prophecy of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, which was a small and relatively

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obscure village. The probability of a person being born in Bethlehem is exceedingly small, yet Micah's prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Mathematician Peter Stoner, in his book **Science Speaks**, calculated the odds of one person fulfilling just eight specific prophecies about the Messiah. He concluded that the probability of this occurring by chance is 1 in 10. To visualize this, imagine filling the state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep, marking one coin, and then having a blindfolded person randomly pick the marked coin on the first try. The odds of this happening are the same as one person fulfilling eight Messianic prophecies by chance.

When considering the fulfillment of dozens of prophecies about Jesus—such as His virgin birth, lineage from David, betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, and resurrection—the statistical probability becomes even more staggering. The fulfillment of these prophecies is statistically improbable to the point that it strongly suggests a supernatural element guiding their occurrence.

The Role of Prophecy in Establishing Credibility

Prophecy serves a crucial role in establishing the Bible's credibility as a divinely inspired document. Unlike predictions found in other religious or secular texts, biblical prophecies are specific, detailed, and often involve unlikely events that would be impossible to foresee through human means alone. The accurate fulfillment of these prophecies provides powerful evidence that the Bible is more than just a collection of writings by ancient authors—it is a revelation from God.

The role of prophecy in the Bible is not merely to predict the future but to validate the message and authority of the Scriptures. For example, in Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (ESV), the Bible provides a test for true prophecy: if a prophet's predictions come to pass, they have spoken from God. This principle is seen throughout the Bible, where fulfilled prophecy confirms the authenticity of God's word. The prophets of Israel often challenged their listeners to believe in God based on the fulfillment of His promises. For instance, when Isaiah foretold the coming of a virgin-born child (Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)) and a suffering servant (Isaiah 53 (ESV)), these prophecies were later fulfilled in Christ, validating Isaiah's message and the divine inspiration of his writings.

Moreover, prophecy distinguishes the Bible from other religious texts that lack such detailed and accurate predictions. The Bible's consistent track record of fulfilled prophecies provides a rational basis for faith, offering evidence that can be evaluated objectively. This evidence supports the belief that the Bible is not just a human product but is inspired by an omniscient God who knows the future.

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Conclusion

The accuracy of biblical prophecy is a compelling reason to trust the Bible. The fulfillment of specific, detailed prophecies—such as those concerning the Messiah and the fates of ancient cities—demonstrates that the Bible is not merely a collection of human writings but is divinely inspired. The statistical probability of these prophecies being fulfilled by chance is so low that it points to a supernatural origin. Prophecy plays a vital role in establishing the credibility of the Bible, providing both believers and skeptics with strong evidence for its trustworthiness. As a result, the Bible stands out as a unique and reliable source of truth in a world full of uncertainty.

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Chapter 4: Coherence and Unity

One of the most remarkable features of the Bible is its coherence and unity despite being written by multiple authors over many centuries. The Bible comprises 66 books written by around 40 different authors, ranging from kings and prophets to fishermen and scholars. These authors lived in different historical contexts, spoke different languages, and wrote in various genres. Despite this diversity, the Bible presents a unified and coherent message. This chapter explores the Bible's consistency, thematic unity, and theological and moral coherence as evidence of its trustworthiness.

The Bible's Consistency Despite Being Written by Multiple Authors Over Centuries

The Bible was written over a span of approximately 1,500 years, from the time of Moses in the 15th century BCE to the writings of the Apostle John in the 1st century CE. This vast time span and the diversity of its authors make the Bible's consistency even more remarkable.

One example of this consistency is the Bible's portrayal of God's character. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God is consistently depicted as holy, just, loving, and merciful. In Exodus 34:6-7 (ESV), God reveals Himself to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." This depiction is echoed in the New Testament, where Jesus teaches about God's love and mercy, as seen in John 3:16 (ESV), "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Additionally, the Bible's consistent moral teachings reflect its coherence. From the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 (ESV) to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 (ESV), the Bible consistently upholds values such as honesty, integrity, love for others, and justice. This consistency, despite the different authors and cultural contexts, suggests a guiding influence that transcends the individual writers.

Thematic Unity Across Different Books and Authors

The Bible also displays a remarkable thematic unity across its diverse books and authors. Central to this unity is the theme of God's redemptive plan for humanity, which runs throughout the entire Bible.

From the opening chapters of Genesis, where God promises to send a Savior to crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15 (ESV)), to the prophetic writings that foretell the coming of the Messiah, the Old Testament lays the groundwork for the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. This theme culminates in the New Testament with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Luke 24:44 (ESV), Jesus Himself affirms this unity: "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

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Furthermore, the theme of covenant is another unifying thread in the Bible. God's covenant relationship with humanity begins with Noah, continues through Abraham, Moses, and David, and finds its ultimate fulfillment in the New Covenant established by Jesus. Despite being written by different authors in different times, the Bible consistently presents this covenant theme, demonstrating a unified purpose.

The Bible's thematic unity is also evident in the way the New Testament authors draw on the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul, for example, frequently references the Old Testament to explain the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. In Romans 4 (ESV), Paul points to Abraham's faith as a precursor to the justification by faith that Christians experience through Christ. This intertextuality shows that the Bible's authors were aware of and built upon the writings that came before them, contributing to the Bible's overall coherence.

The Theological and Moral Coherence of the Bible's Message

The Bible's theological and moral coherence further strengthens its claim to be a trustworthy document. Despite the diverse backgrounds of its authors, the Bible presents a consistent worldview that addresses the fundamental questions of human existence: Who is God? What is the nature of humanity? What is the purpose of life?

Theologically, the Bible consistently teaches monotheism—the belief in one God—throughout its pages. From the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV), "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one," to Paul's affirmation in 1 Corinthians 8:6 (ESV), "yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist," the Bible consistently proclaims the existence of one sovereign God who created and sustains the universe.

The Bible also presents a coherent moral framework. It teaches that humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27 (ESV)) and are therefore endowed with inherent dignity and worth. This belief underpins the Bible's moral teachings on justice, compassion, and love for others. Jesus summarizes the moral law in Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV): "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Moreover, the Bible's message of salvation through faith is consistent across both Testaments. In the Old Testament, salvation is seen in the context of faith in God's promises, as exemplified by Abraham, whose faith was "counted to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6 (ESV)). This theme continues in the New Testament, where Paul declares in Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV), "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." This continuity reinforces the Bible's theological coherence, suggesting a divine author behind its message.

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Conclusion

The coherence and unity of the Bible, despite being written by numerous authors over many centuries, is a powerful testament to its trustworthiness. The Bible's consistency in its portrayal of God, its thematic unity across different books, and its theological and moral coherence all point to a single, overarching purpose behind its writings. This unity suggests that the Bible is not merely a collection of disparate texts but a divinely inspired document with a consistent and reliable message. As such, the Bible remains a trustworthy guide for faith and life, offering a coherent and unified vision of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

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Chapter 5: Scientific Consistency

The relationship between the Bible and science has long been a subject of debate. While some view the two as incompatible, a closer examination reveals that the Bible often aligns with scientific discoveries. Furthermore, many apparent contradictions between Scripture and science are resolved through careful interpretation. This chapter explores instances where the Bible aligns with scientific knowledge, addresses seemingly contradictory passages, and examines the relationship between faith and science in biblical interpretation.

Instances Where the Bible Aligns with Scientific Discoveries

The Bible contains numerous passages that align with scientific principles, often predating their discovery by centuries or even millennia. One notable example is the description of the Earth's shape. In Isaiah 40:22 (ESV), the Bible states, "It is he who sits above the circle of the earth," a phrase that suggests the Earth is round. While this description is not as precise as modern scientific language, it is noteworthy that the Bible refers to the Earth in a way that is consistent with its spherical shape, long before this was widely recognized by ancient civilizations.

Another example is the Bible's references to the hydrological cycle, which describes the movement of water on Earth. In Ecclesiastes 1:7 (ESV), we read, "All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again." Similarly, Job 36:27-28 (ESV) states, "For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly." These verses accurately describe the evaporation and precipitation processes that are central to the water cycle, a concept that was only fully understood in modern times.

The Bible also hints at the principles of health and hygiene long before they were scientifically established. For example, the Mosaic Law in Leviticus includes detailed instructions on quarantine for those with infectious diseases (Leviticus 13:45-46 (ESV)) and the washing of hands and garments after contact with potentially contagious individuals or materials (Leviticus 15:11 (ESV)). These practices reflect an understanding of disease transmission that aligns with modern medical knowledge, even though they were written in a time when the germ theory of disease was unknown.

These examples illustrate that the Bible often aligns with scientific understanding, suggesting that its authors had insights that were ahead of their time. This alignment contributes to the Bible's credibility as a trustworthy document.

Interpretation of Seemingly Contradictory Passages

While there are many instances where the Bible aligns with scientific discoveries, there are also passages that seem to contradict scientific knowledge. However, these apparent contradictions often arise from misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the biblical text.

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One common example is the biblical account of creation in Genesis 1 (ESV), which describes the creation of the world in six days. Some interpret this as a literal 24-hour day period, which appears to conflict with scientific evidence that suggests the Earth is billions of years old. However, many theologians and scholars interpret the "days" of Genesis as symbolic or representative of longer periods of time. The Hebrew word "yom," translated as "day," can also mean an indefinite period, similar to how we might refer to "the day of the dinosaurs" or "the age of exploration." This interpretation allows for the reconciliation of the Genesis account with the scientific understanding of the Earth's age.

Another example is the Bible's description of the sun "standing still" in the sky during Joshua's battle at Gibeon (Joshua 10:12-13 (ESV)). At first glance, this seems to contradict our understanding of the Earth's rotation. However, some scholars suggest that this passage could be using phenomenological language—describing events as they appear to the observer rather than explaining the scientific mechanism behind them. This is similar to how we still refer to a "sunrise" and "sunset" even though we understand that the sun is not literally rising or setting, but rather the Earth is rotating.

In other cases, biblical language may be metaphorical rather than literal. For example, when the Bible describes the "pillars of the Earth" (Job 9:6 (ESV)) or the "foundations of the world" (Psalm 104:5 (ESV)), it is using poetic imagery rather than making a scientific statement about the Earth's physical structure. Recognizing the literary genres and styles used in different parts of the Bible is crucial for interpreting these passages correctly.

These examples show that when interpreted correctly, the Bible does not necessarily conflict with scientific understanding. Instead, many supposed contradictions can be resolved through careful study of the text and an appreciation for its historical and literary context.

The Relationship Between Faith and Science in Biblical Interpretation

The relationship between faith and science has been a topic of much discussion, but it is important to recognize that the two are not inherently at odds. In fact, many of the greatest scientists in history, such as Isaac Newton and Johannes Kepler, were devout Christians who saw their scientific work as a way to understand God's creation.

The Bible and science address different aspects of reality. Science focuses on understanding the natural world through observation, experimentation, and reasoning, while the Bible addresses spiritual and moral truths, offering guidance on the meaning and purpose of life. When these domains are properly understood, they complement rather than contradict each other.

Faith and science can work together in biblical interpretation. Science can help us understand the mechanisms of the natural world, while the Bible provides a framework for understanding the significance of those mechanisms in light of God's purposes. For example, while science

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can explain the process of evolution, the Bible can help us understand the meaning and purpose of human life as created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27 (ESV)).

Moreover, the Bible encourages the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, which includes scientific inquiry. Proverbs 25:2 (ESV) states, "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out." This verse suggests that God has embedded mysteries in creation for humanity to discover, and that exploring the natural world is a way of honoring God's creative work.

Conclusion

The Bible and science can and should be seen as complementary, rather than conflicting, sources of truth. The Bible provides the foundational truths about God, humanity, and morality, while science helps us understand the intricacies of the natural world. When interpreted correctly, the Bible aligns with scientific discoveries and offers a coherent and trustworthy account of reality. The relationship between faith and science is not one of opposition but of mutual enrichment, each offering valuable insights into the nature of the universe and our place within it.

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Chapter 6: Moral and Ethical Impact

The Bible has had a profound influence on the moral and ethical foundations of Western civilization. Its teachings have shaped legal systems, inspired social reform, and guided personal conduct for centuries. This chapter explores the Bible's influence on Western moral and legal systems, the relevance of its moral teachings today, and the transformative impact the Bible has had on individual lives, demonstrating its enduring trustworthiness.

Influence of the Bible on Western Moral and Legal Systems

The Bible has been a cornerstone of Western moral and legal systems, influencing the development of laws and ethical standards that continue to shape society today. One of the most significant contributions of the Bible is the concept of the rule of law, which is rooted in the idea that moral laws are universal and apply equally to all people, regardless of status or power.

The Ten Commandments, given to Moses on Mount Sinai and recorded in Exodus 20 (ESV), are one of the earliest and most influential examples of moral law. These commandments form the basis for many legal principles that have been incorporated into Western law, such as prohibitions against murder, theft, and perjury. The command to honor one's parents (Exodus 20:12 (ESV)) and the prohibition against coveting (Exodus 20:17 (ESV)) also reflect the Bible's concern for social harmony and respect for others.

The influence of the Bible on Western legal thought is also evident in the development of concepts like human dignity and the inherent worth of individuals. These ideas are rooted in the biblical teaching that humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27 (ESV)) and therefore possess intrinsic value. This belief has informed the development of human rights, including the idea that all people are entitled to equal protection under the law, regardless of race, gender, or social status.

Furthermore, the Bible's emphasis on justice and mercy has shaped the Western legal tradition. The prophet Micah summarized the ethical requirements of God's people in Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" This verse encapsulates the balance of justice and compassion that has influenced legal systems in the West, where the law seeks to protect the innocent, punish wrongdoers, and show mercy where appropriate.

The Bible's Moral Teachings and Their Relevance Today

The moral teachings of the Bible remain relevant today, offering timeless guidance on how to live a life of integrity, compassion, and purpose. Central to these teachings is the concept of love, which Jesus identified as the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39 (ESV)). This commandment underpins the Bible's moral

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framework and continues to inspire ethical behavior in various contexts, from personal relationships to social justice.

The Bible also teaches the importance of honesty, humility, and self-control. Proverbs 12:22 (ESV) states, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight." This emphasis on truthfulness is essential in a world where dishonesty can lead to broken trust and societal harm. Similarly, the Bible encourages humility, warning against pride and arrogance. In James 4:6, we read, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble," reminding us of the value of humility in fostering harmonious relationships.

In addition to these virtues, the Bible addresses issues of social justice and care for the marginalized. The prophets repeatedly call for justice for the poor and oppressed, as seen in Isaiah 1:17 (ESV): "Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause." This concern for social justice resonates with contemporary movements that advocate for the rights of the vulnerable and disadvantaged, showing the enduring relevance of the Bible's moral teachings.

The Bible's teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation are also crucial in today's world. Jesus' command to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Matthew 6:14-15 (ESV)) promotes healing and restoration in relationships, offering a path to peace in both personal and communal conflicts. In an age marked by division and hostility, the Bible's call to forgiveness provides a powerful antidote to bitterness and revenge.

Transformation Stories and the Bible's Impact on Individual Lives

The transformative impact of the Bible on individual lives is one of the most compelling testimonies to its trustworthiness. Throughout history, countless individuals have experienced profound change after encountering the Bible's teachings, leading to personal renewal and positive contributions to society.

One famous example is the story of John Newton, the former slave trader who became a Christian and later wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace." Newton's encounter with the Bible led to his repentance and eventual advocacy for the abolition of the slave trade. His life transformation is a powerful example of how the Bible can inspire individuals to turn away from harmful behavior and embrace a life of service and justice.

Another example is the story of Saint Augustine, one of the most influential theologians in Christian history. Augustine led a life of indulgence and moral confusion until he encountered the Bible. His reading of Romans 13:13-14 (ESV)—"Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires"—led to his conversion. Augustine's subsequent writings, including *Confessions* and *The City of God*, have had a lasting impact on Christian thought and Western philosophy.

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The Bible's impact on individual lives is not limited to historical figures. Today, many people around the world continue to experience transformation through the Bible's teachings. Stories of individuals overcoming addiction, finding purpose in life, and dedicating themselves to acts of kindness and justice are common among those who engage with the Bible. These transformation stories highlight the Bible's power to inspire change and promote moral and ethical living.

Conclusion

The moral and ethical impact of the Bible is a testament to its trustworthiness and enduring relevance. The Bible's influence on Western moral and legal systems has shaped the principles of justice, human dignity, and the rule of law that underpin modern society. Its moral teachings continue to offer guidance on how to live with integrity, compassion, and purpose in a complex world. Moreover, the Bible's transformative power in the lives of individuals throughout history and today provides compelling evidence of its ability to inspire positive change. As a source of moral and ethical wisdom, the Bible remains a trustworthy and valuable guide for navigating the challenges of life.

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Chapter 7: Testimonies and Transformations

The Bible's influence throughout history is profound, not only in shaping societies but also in transforming individual lives. From the faith of historical figures like Augustine, Martin Luther, and C.S. Lewis to modern examples of personal transformation, the Bible has consistently been a source of guidance, inspiration, and change. This chapter explores the testimonies of influential figures, contemporary stories of transformation, and the Bible's role in driving social and cultural change as evidence of its enduring trustworthiness.

Historical Figures and Their Faith in the Bible

Throughout history, many influential figures have been profoundly shaped by their faith in the Bible. Their lives and works serve as powerful testimonies to the Bible's ability to inspire and transform.

One of the most notable examples is **Saint Augustine** (354–430 AD (ESV)), one of the early Church Fathers whose writings have had a lasting impact on Christian theology. Augustine's journey to faith was marked by a deep inner struggle with sin and existential questions. His conversion came when he heard a childlike voice urging him to "take up and read." Augustine picked up a Bible and opened to Romans 13:13-14 (ESV), which speaks against indulgence and calls for a life lived in Christ. This moment led to his dramatic conversion, and he went on to write **Confessions** and **The City of God**, works that have profoundly influenced Christian thought and Western philosophy.

Martin Luther (1483–1546), the German monk and theologian who sparked the Protestant Reformation, is another key figure whose faith in the Bible had a monumental impact on history. Luther's deep conviction that salvation comes through faith alone, as revealed in Scripture, led him to challenge the practices of the Catholic Church. His translation of the Bible into German made the Scriptures accessible to the common people, empowering individuals to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Luther's unwavering belief in the authority of the Bible not only transformed his own life but also brought about a seismic shift in the religious landscape of Europe.

C.S. Lewis (1898–1963), a renowned writer and apologist, experienced a dramatic conversion from atheism to Christianity, largely influenced by his engagement with the Bible. His intellectual journey led him to recognize the profound truth of Christianity, and his writings, such as **Mere Christianity** and **The Chronicles of Narnia**, have since inspired millions. Lewis's testimony illustrates the power of the Bible to reach both the mind and the heart, leading to a faith that is both intellectually robust and personally transformative.

These historical figures demonstrate that the Bible has been a source of profound personal change, shaping not only individual lives but also the course of history.

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Modern Examples of Life Transformation Due to the Bible

The transformative power of the Bible is not confined to the past; it continues to change lives today. Modern testimonies of life transformation due to the Bible offer compelling evidence of its enduring relevance and trustworthiness.

One contemporary example is the story of **Nicky Cruz**, a former gang leader in New York City. Cruz's life was marked by violence, anger, and despair until he encountered the message of the Bible through the ministry of preacher David Wilkerson. The message of God's love, as revealed in Scripture, led Cruz to a radical transformation. He left his life of crime and became a Christian evangelist, sharing his story of redemption around the world. Cruz's life is a powerful testament to the Bible's ability to bring hope and change even in the most desperate situations.

Another modern example is **Rosaria Butterfield**, a former professor of English and women's studies who identified as a lesbian and was a staunch advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Butterfield's life took an unexpected turn when she began studying the Bible as part of her research for a book. Through her study of Scripture and the kindness of a local pastor and his wife, Butterfield experienced a profound conversion to Christianity. She has since become a speaker and writer, sharing her story of transformation and the Bible's role in her journey. Her testimony highlights the Bible's power to challenge and change deeply held beliefs, leading to a new life in Christ.

These modern stories of transformation echo the experiences of historical figures, showing that the Bible's influence transcends time and continues to be a powerful agent of change in the lives of individuals today.

The Bible's Role in Social and Cultural Change

The Bible's impact extends beyond individual lives to broader social and cultural change. Throughout history, the Bible has inspired movements that have reshaped societies, advocating for justice, equality, and human dignity.

One of the most significant examples is the role of the Bible in the abolition of slavery. Many abolitionists, including **William Wilberforce** in England and **Harriet Beecher Stowe** in the United States, were motivated by their Christian faith and the teachings of the Bible. Wilberforce's tireless efforts to end the transatlantic slave trade were driven by his belief in the biblical principle that all people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27 (ESV)) and therefore possess inherent worth and dignity. Similarly, Stowe's novel **Uncle Tom's Cabin**, which exposed the horrors of slavery, was deeply influenced by her Christian faith and biblical values. The Bible's teachings on justice, compassion, and the equality of all people played a crucial role in the abolition movement, leading to significant social change.

The Bible has also been a driving force behind the civil rights movement in the United States. **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, a Baptist minister and leader of the movement, drew heavily on biblical themes in his advocacy for racial equality and justice. His famous "I Have a Dream"

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speech echoes the prophetic vision of a world where "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24 (ESV)). The Bible provided King and other civil rights leaders with a moral framework for their struggle against racial segregation and discrimination, inspiring nonviolent resistance and a vision of a just society.

Moreover, the Bible has influenced numerous other social movements, including efforts to advance women's rights, promote peace, and care for the poor and marginalized. The Bible's teachings on love, justice, and the inherent value of every person have inspired countless individuals and communities to work for social change, contributing to the advancement of human rights and the betterment of society.

Conclusion

The testimonies of historical figures, modern stories of transformation, and the Bible's role in driving social and cultural change provide compelling evidence of its trustworthiness. The Bible has the power to change lives, inspire movements, and reshape societies, demonstrating its enduring relevance and impact. Whether through the personal conversions of figures like Augustine, Luther, and Lewis, the modern stories of individuals like Nicky Cruz and Rosaria Butterfield, or its influence on social justice movements, the Bible continues to be a source of profound transformation. As such, the Bible remains a trustworthy guide for both individuals and communities seeking to live lives of purpose, justice, and integrity.

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Chapter 8: Critiques and Counterarguments

The Bible's trustworthiness has been a subject of debate for centuries, with critics raising various concerns about its reliability. Common criticisms include allegations of contradictions within the text, doubts about the accuracy of biblical accounts, and questions regarding the Bible's relevance in the modern world. This chapter addresses these critiques by examining responses from scholars and theologians, and emphasizes the importance of critical examination in understanding the Bible's trustworthiness.

Common Criticisms Against the Bible's Trustworthiness

Critics often point to perceived **contradictions** within the Bible as evidence against its reliability. For instance, differences in the accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the four Gospels have led some to question the consistency of the narrative. Additionally, **historical inaccuracies** and **scientific discrepancies** are cited, with skeptics arguing that certain biblical events, such as the creation story in Genesis or the global flood described in Noah's narrative, are incompatible with scientific findings.

Another critique focuses on the **process of transmission** and **textual variations** over centuries, suggesting that the Bible may have been altered or corrupted as it was copied and translated multiple times. Some also question the **moral teachings** of the Bible, arguing that certain passages reflect outdated or culturally specific norms that do not align with contemporary ethical standards.

Responses to These Critiques from Scholars and Theologians

Scholars and theologians have responded to these critiques with rigorous analysis and thoughtful argumentation. In addressing **apparent contradictions**, many theologians emphasize the importance of understanding the context, literary genre, and purpose of the biblical texts. The differences in the resurrection accounts, for example, can be seen as complementary rather than contradictory, offering a fuller picture when considered together.

Regarding **historical and scientific challenges**, scholars often argue that the Bible should not always be read as a literal historical or scientific document. Instead, many passages are understood to convey theological truths through the use of symbolic or poetic language. For instance, the creation account in Genesis is often interpreted as a theological narrative that reveals God as the Creator, rather than a scientific explanation of how the world came into existence.

Textual criticism has provided a robust defense against claims of corruption in the Bible's transmission. Scholars point out that the vast number of biblical manuscripts, especially when compared to other ancient texts, allows for a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the modern Bible. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which include manuscripts that predate

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the previously known oldest copies of the Hebrew Bible by a thousand years, has confirmed the remarkable consistency of the biblical text over time.

On **moral critiques**, theologians often highlight the need to interpret the Bible within its historical and cultural context while also recognizing the timeless principles that underlie its teachings. They argue that the core moral messages of love, justice, and compassion remain relevant and applicable today.

The Importance of Critical Examination

Engaging with critiques of the Bible is essential for a deeper understanding of its trustworthiness. Critical examination allows believers to confront challenges honestly and thoughtfully, leading to a more nuanced and resilient faith. By addressing and responding to criticisms, scholars and theologians help to strengthen the case for the Bible's reliability and relevance in the modern world.

Conclusion

While critiques of the Bible's trustworthiness are not uncommon, they can be met with well-reasoned responses that affirm the integrity and enduring value of the biblical text. Through careful study and open dialogue, the Bible continues to stand as a trustworthy source of spiritual and moral guidance.

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Chapter 9: Conclusion

In our exploration of the Bible's trustworthiness, we have examined several dimensions that collectively affirm its reliability and significance. This final chapter recaps the key points discussed, reflects on the significance of the Bible's trustworthiness for both believers and non-believers, and offers final thoughts on its relevance today.

Recap of Key Points

We began by addressing the **historical reliability** of the Bible, demonstrating how archaeological evidence, consistency with historical records, and manuscript evidence support its credibility. We then explored the **textual integrity** of the Bible, examining the canonization process, comparisons of biblical manuscripts, and the impact of textual variants. In subsequent chapters, we delved into the Bible's **prophetic accuracy**, showcasing examples of fulfilled prophecies and analyzing the statistical probability of their realization.

We also highlighted the Bible's **coherence and unity**, emphasizing its consistency despite being written by multiple authors over centuries, its thematic unity, and the theological and moral coherence of its message. The Bible's **scientific consistency** was addressed, demonstrating instances where biblical accounts align with scientific discoveries and how apparent contradictions can be reconciled through proper interpretation. We examined the Bible's moral and ethical impact, noting its influence on Western legal systems, the relevance of its moral teachings today, and the transformative effect it has had on individuals.

Further, we reviewed **testimonies and transformations**, illustrating how historical figures and modern individuals have experienced profound changes through their engagement with the Bible. Finally, we considered common critiques and counterarguments, providing responses from scholars and theologians and underscoring the importance of critical examination.

The Significance of the Bible's Trustworthiness

The Bible's trustworthiness holds significant implications for both believers and non-believers. For believers, it provides a reliable foundation for faith and practice, offering a consistent and authoritative guide for spiritual and moral life. Its historical and textual credibility reinforces the belief that it is divinely inspired and relevant for guiding personal and communal living.

For non-believers, the Bible's trustworthiness presents an opportunity for meaningful dialogue and exploration. Understanding the Bible's historical reliability, coherence, and transformative impact can foster greater respect and curiosity about its role in shaping human history and culture. It invites an open-minded investigation into its teachings and their influence on ethical and social values.

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Chapter 10: Final Thoughts on the Relevance of the Bible Today

As we conclude our exploration of the Bible's trustworthiness, it is essential to reflect on its continued relevance in today's world. Despite being an ancient text, the Bible endures as a source of profound wisdom, guidance, and inspiration for countless individuals and societies. Its relevance today is evident in several key areas.

Timeless Moral and Ethical Guidance

One of the Bible's most enduring contributions is its moral and ethical teachings. The principles found in the Bible—such as love, justice, compassion, and forgiveness—continue to resonate in contemporary discussions about human rights, social justice, and personal conduct. For instance, the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39 (ESV)) underpins many modern ethical frameworks and social justice movements. The Bible's call for justice and care for the marginalized remains a powerful influence on efforts to address inequality and promote social reform.

Influence on Cultural and Social Norms

The Bible's impact extends beyond personal morality to shaping cultural and social norms. Its narratives and teachings have inspired countless works of art, literature, and music, contributing to the rich tapestry of human culture. For example, the themes of redemption and forgiveness in biblical stories have been explored in numerous cultural and artistic expressions, reflecting their universal appeal and relevance.

Moreover, the Bible has played a significant role in major social movements throughout history. Its teachings motivated leaders in the abolitionist and civil rights movements, shaping their visions of justice and equality. The continued reference to biblical values in discussions about ethical issues demonstrates the Bible's ongoing influence on societal values and norms.

A Source of Personal Transformation

The Bible continues to be a source of personal transformation for many individuals. Its teachings have the power to inspire profound changes in behavior, outlook, and purpose. Stories of personal redemption, such as those shared by contemporary converts or individuals overcoming significant life challenges, highlight the Bible's capacity to offer hope, guidance, and renewal.

For believers, the Bible remains a central text for spiritual growth and moral guidance. Its stories and teachings provide a framework for understanding one's place in the world and navigating life's complexities. The Bible's role in personal transformation is not limited to religious contexts; it also offers valuable insights into human nature, ethics, and relationships that can benefit individuals of diverse backgrounds.

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Encouraging Dialogue and Understanding

In a diverse and often polarized world, the Bible serves as a point of common reference that can foster dialogue and understanding. Its influence on history, culture, and ethical thought provides a foundation for meaningful conversations about values, purpose, and human connection. Engaging with the Bible's teachings can promote mutual respect and a deeper appreciation of different perspectives.

The Bible's relevance today is a testament to its enduring trustworthiness and impact. Its moral and ethical teachings continue to guide individuals and shape societal values, while its influence on culture and personal transformation underscores its profound significance. As a source of wisdom and inspiration, the Bible remains a vital text for navigating the complexities of contemporary life and fostering a deeper understanding of our shared humanity. Its ability to address fundamental questions about purpose, morality, and justice ensures that it will continue to be a relevant and influential guide for generations to come.

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