

BURNING QUESTIONS: SCRIPTURE

Psalm 119:105-112

May 3, 2020

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Good morning everyone and welcome back! It is great to be with you once again. We are in our third week of a series of messages called, “Burning Questions”. A few months ago we invited people to submit questions they had that they wanted us to address in a message. So Pastor Dennis, Pastor Greg and I met to review the questions, separate them into groups and we selected the questions that we believed could best be addressed in our message series.

In the first week, Pastor Dennis offered an introduction and then answered the question, ‘Why don’t pastors know everything?’ and “Is Jesus the only way to achieve salvation?”

Last Sunday, Pastor Greg talked about heaven. “How do we know there is a heaven?”; “What’s it like?” and “How do we get there?” “Does it really exist?” If you have missed any of our messages, you can find them on our website, ingomarchurch.org, which is how you got here today!

Today my topic is scripture, the Bible. “How do we know the Bible is true”? “How do we know it isn’t myth or legend?” “Who wrote the Bible?” and “What does the Bible say about a Christian marrying a non-Christian”?

You know that the Bible is important to us at Ingomar Church. It is the basis for all of our messages. It is read each week in worship. It’s importance is emphasized in our first core value.

We believe the Bible is the Word of God and the source of our knowledge of God’s love for us. It is the full and final authority on all matters of faith and practice. Core Value #1, Ingomar Church

You also know that we offer various opportunities to study the Bible, to learn more about its content, to understand it better. That happens in small groups and Bible studies. One of the best ways to understand the Bible is to take the Disciple Bible Study. Disciple is an excellent way to understand scripture and learn about the Bible. The class usually begins in the fall and meets for 32 weeks. Each year we invite people who might have interest to take the class. It's a personal invitation to some but an open invitation to everyone.

Would you like to guess what is the number one reason people use an excuse to not enroll in the Disciple Bible Study? It's not "I don't have enough time!", although some say that. It's not, "I don't like the teacher", or "I don't like groups." No one says that. It's not "That night doesn't work for me", although some do say that.

The number one reason offered by people for not taking Disciple is, are you ready for this? It's, "I don't know anything about the Bible". Hello? Are you kidding me? Isn't that the perfect reason to take Disciple? . . . So you will learn about the Bible? You will have your questions answered. You will learn what you don't know!

Listen carefully! There are literally hundreds of people at Ingomar Church who have taken Disciple. Their faith has deepened. Their lives have been blessed, even transformed. Some say it's one of the best decisions they ever made. Others say it greatly enhances their understanding of scripture. You should take it! I did!

Now to our questions:

Question #1 – Who wrote or collected the stories of the Bible?

The Bible was written and compiled by all sorts of people. Some were prophets or people who worked for prophets writing down what they said

and did. Some were active participants in the events taking place like Moses. Most of the Psalms were written by David, some while he as a shepherd, some while he was king. Three of the four gospels were written by Jesus' disciples, recording what they observed. Luke was a physician who traveled with Jesus and the disciples. He wrote Luke and Acts, observing their actions, hearing their expressions. The Epistles were letters written to specific churches or groups of believers, written by Paul, Peter, James, John and others. Revelation was written by the disciple John while he was in exile. Many of the accounts about the various Old Testament kings were written by prophets who advised they or scribes charged with the responsibility to create an historical record.

The collection of books that make up the Bible was compiled by groups of people, councils of church leaders and others. Long conversations, great care and lots of prayer led them to determine what would be included and what would be excluded. The gospel of John was in. The gospel of Thomas was not. Determining authority was a major factor in decision making.

So we know the names of many of the Biblical authors. If you own a study Bible, each book is preceded by introductory material that includes notes about context, authorship, date and intended audience. A good study Bible is a worthwhile investment for all believers. There is one additional participant that we must mention when we consider authorship and compilation of the Bible. That is the Holy Spirit, or God.

The Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is that part of the Trinity that dwells in us, in any believer. The Spirit confronts us. The Spirit encourages us. The Holy Spirit is that part of God and Jesus that leads us to realize that we need Jesus in our lives. The Spirit helps us to understand and

nudges us to respond to Jesus, to believe and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

The Holy Spirit also guides us in the choices that we make, in the decisions we make, even in the things we say and do. You can resist the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit will seek to guide you as well.

Paul addresses the value and the origin of scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Peter also speaks to this tie between scripture and the Holy Spirit.

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy of scripture never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, through humans, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 1Peter 1:19-21

So Paul says that "all scripture is God-breathed" . . . and Peter says that the prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Therefore, I believe and we as a church believe that those who wrote down the words that comprise our Bible were led, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down the things that they wrote.

So, I believe and we as a church believe that scripture is the inspired Word of God. Some people use such terms as 'inerrancy' or 'infallibility' to describe scripture. I believe in Biblical truth and the accuracy of scripture. I do not believe the Bible, in its present form is perfect or without error at all. I do believe that when the original authors wrote down what they wrote that it was without error. The Bible, as we have it today, is a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy and on and on, copied by hand; a translation from Hebrew and Greek to later French, English and German. So the Bible may contain some inaccuracies and discrepancies but they are minor. They do not have a negative impact on my faith or the value of scripture to me.

To sum up, the Bible was written by people, participants, leaders, prophets, and observers who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record what they recorded.

Question #2 - Because much of the Bible was orally transmitted for generations; mostly written after-the-fact by authors who cannot truly be verified; translated and embellished innumerable times and allowed by humans whose choice of canonical writings continues to be debated, how is it possible to insist on its truth, and especially its infallibility?

Oral transmission does not mean that something is untrue or inaccurate. Much of scripture was recorded by eye witnesses. Some of scripture is made up of letters written by a disciple to a church and shared with other churches.

The various parts of the Bible are essential parts of the faith of the people of God. They were very important to them. They would have revered them, honored them, protected them and preserved them. I believe that the Holy Spirit was also active in guiding the preservation and integrity of God's Word.

In 1946 – 1954 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in clay pots in caves in the Qumran community along the Dead Sea. Qumran was a settlement of Essene Jews. Inside these clay pots were copies of the Old Testament books, all except for Esther, written on parchment. The scrolls were hidden in pots in caves to protect them from attack and capture.

These scrolls dated back to 3 BCE through 1 Common Era. They are the oldest copies of the Old Testament we have available to us. The original King James Version, published in 1611 did not have access to these documents. The newer translations, Revised Standard Version, New International Version, and others were able to use the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Some say that the original King James Version isn't as accurate as the newer translations. There is some truth to that. Many of us came to believe in Jesus through the King James Version, as I did. The newer versions didn't come on the scene 'till 1958.

Here's my point. Even with the inclusion of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the newer versions were not much different from the existing King James Version. People did not throw their King James' away!

I do not believe the Bible is infallible, completely perfect and without any discrepancies in its current form. But I do believe it is the inspired Word of God and the most reliable, most dependable guide to our faith and the practice of our faith. I also believe that the same Holy Spirit who inspired its writing and compilation has also provided for the preservation of its message.

Question #3 - How do we know the Bible and the story of Jesus isn't myth or legend?

First of all, ancient historians dedicated to preserving history have verified the life of Jesus. They were neither Christian, nor Jew. One in

particular was Josephus. Second, those who witnessed his ministry were eye witnesses to his life, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection have testified to his existence. Third, some of what we believe we simply believe by faith. There's too much evidence to support Jesus' existence, rather than deny His life and ministry.

Question #4:- What does the Bible say about marrying a non-Christian?

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:14 - Do not be yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

So Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit says don't do it! Why? Because Paul didn't want them to compromise or corrupt their faith in Jesus Christ.

Early Christians had to contend with pagans and Jews who did not believe in Jesus Christ. They lived in their communities, shopped in their markets, etc. The opportunity for interaction existed. Certainly in some cases, young men and young women fell in love with each other without spending a lot of time discussing what they believed or if they believed in God or Jesus. Remember the pay, "Fiddler on the Roof?"

The same thing happens in our culture today. When a young man and young woman meet and fall in love most of them don't spend much time talking about their faith. They're crazy about each other. So what happens if they are so in love that they decide to get married without resolving the issue that one believes in Jesus and the other doesn't believe in God or Jesus? Or that one is a strong, active believer and the other not

so much. Now faith will become a major issue in their marriage or, what's even worse, it becomes no issue at all! Here me out. The first of the Ten Commandments says, "You shall have no other gods before me." In other words, God is the most important thing in your life.

When asked what the most important commandment is, Jesus said,

"The first and greatest commandment is this: You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and soul and mind and strength".

Matthew 2:37-38

Believing, actively-practicing service Christians knows that God is to be the first and foremost object of their love. Their love for God guides their lives, leads them to practice His behaviors and obey His teaching and instruction. That love also leads them to worship God regularly.

So for that person to be united in marriage with someone who does not believe in God or Jesus; does not seek to follow or imitate the teachings of God and Jesus can put them in a difficult situation.

Now perhaps you say, "Yea but they can learn to respect each other's religion or lack thereof!" Maybe, maybe not. So once worships every week and one never worships. As life progresses, children arrive. How are they raised? Do they go to church or not? Mother goes, father doesn't. Or father goes and mother doesn't. Do the children go? Proverbs says, **"Train up a child in the way they should go and when they are old they will not depart from it."** Proverbs 22:6

Mother goes, takes the kids while the father stays home. Eventually questions arise: “Why doesn’t daddy go to church?” Then they say, “Why do I have to go if my dad gets to stay home?”

Maybe one wants to make plans for Sunday morning all the time and the other insists on attending worship. Worship, church and faith in God become an issue in their marriage. The couple argues and shouts and one may even mock the other for their faith.

Then something odd happens; something tragic, not in all cases but in some. In the interest of creating peace and harmony, they never discuss their faith anymore, and they stop practicing their faith. Everyone gives up on their faith, and they drift from God.

Paul warns us that if your faith in Jesus is important to you, then you’d better not marry someone who has no faith, or whose faith isn’t important to them and they don’t believe as you believe. Because if you do, your faith will become a major issue in your marriage, a reason for discouragement or what’s even worse, it will become unimportant to you both and will cease to be an issue at all. That, my friends, breaks my heart and breaks the heart of God.

Friends, I believe that scripture is God’s Word to and for us. I fully embrace the content of our first core value at Ingomar Church.

We believe the Bible is the Word of God and is the source of our knowledge of God’s love for us. It is full and final authority on all matters of faith and practice.

You see friends, scripture is the primary way we hear from God. Scripture is our guide as we pursue a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It reminds us of who God is and all that God has done for us. It reveals how much God loves us and leads us to experience the best that God has in store for us.

Next Steps:

- Memorize Psalm 119:105 – “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”.
- Get yourself a study Bible if you wish to know more about the background of the Bible.
- Join a small group that studies the Bible.
- Take the Disciple Bible Study.
- Read your Bible every day.
- Try to imagine your life, your relationship to Jesus if you did not have access to God’s Word.