

IDENTITY – BRETT KUNKLE FIRST SERVICE

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 8 | 10.17.2021

[Teaching today: Guest Speaker Brett Kunkle]

Good morning, church. I know I'm not who you normally see up here, this is probably going to be a once off thing so it's my audition, so we'll see how that goes, but it's just a really great privilege for me to be here today to welcome our guest speaker. You know, it's one of those things where you never think you'll be able to meet one of those voices, those "superhero" voices that you've been maybe listening to on podcasts or reading articles of, and then your pastor says, "Oh, you won't believe, we've managed to get a guest speaker, Brett Kunkle." And I'm like, "Sorry – what?" I think I literally went giddy and I'm like, "Are you serious? Are you serious?" And so for a couple weeks now whenever Pastor Lee sees me he's been like, "Are you getting excited?" I'm like, "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

And the reason I'm excited is because [RETRIEVES HER CELLPHONE FROM BACK POCKET] I need to read something off Brett Kunkle's website. Well, firstly, let me do the intro, the fact that he is from a movement called MAVEN and I just love this because this movement is all about



<https://maventruth.com>

equipping the next generation to know truth, pursue goodness, and create beauty. Raise your hand if you want to be part of a movement that is all about that. And what I absolutely love is... first of all you have to go to their

website, guys, you have to, maventruth.com. Such rich stuff there, it's – you'll get lost and it's a good website to get lost on, but what I absolutely love is under the banner of "WHY MAVEN" – listen to this:

Gender identity. Sexual orientation. Pornography. Casual sex. Consumerism. Affluence. Substance abuse. Violence. Technology. Social media. Entertainment. Racial tension. Pluralism. Secularism. Atheism.

Are they ready for these conversations? Are we? The typical evangelical kid in our typical evangelical church is not. Neither are their parents or leaders. Rather than bemoan the situation and give in to despair, the church needs to redouble her efforts in discipling the next generation. And we need to do it in culturally-savvy and relevant ways, while never compromising the truth of Christ.

<https://maventruth.com/about/>

Amen. [APPLAUSE] When there are so many voices out there speaking to our kids, speaking to the next generation, speaking to us, the noise, it's voices like Brett Kunkle and voices like MAVEN that we should be channeling our friends, our youth, our kids, those who we have influence over, into, in terms of direction. So it gives me great pleasure to welcome Brett Kunkle to the stage. [APPLAUSE] I'm just going to pray quickly for Brett.

Lord Jesus,



We just say thank You so much for allowing Brett to be here at such a time as this. We pray, Lord Jesus, that we have minds that are open, hearts that are open to hear the message that he has, and that the message today, Lord Jesus, causes impact and causes change. And just in the next generation, Lord Jesus, please just equip us with what Brett is going to be teaching us today. Thank You, Jesus, for this time. Amen.



Brett Kunkle
maventruth.com

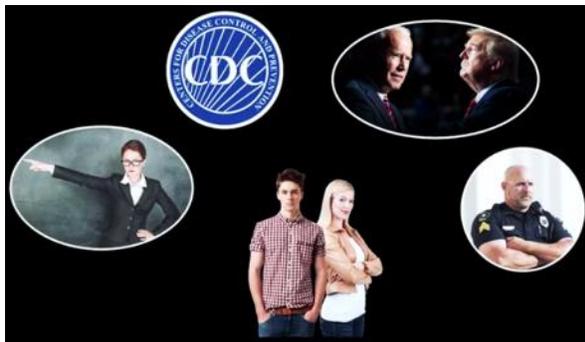
Well, um, that may have been the best introduction I've ever heard [CHEERS/APPLAUSE] so I feel like we should just close in prayer. I mean, that's probably what we should do here. No, we want to address, uh, I think something that is really a crisis not only for our young people but for us as well. You know, it used to be that in the church—there's probably a generation that's in the church who you can say something like, "The Bible is the authoritative Word of God," and that generation would look back at you and say, "Amen." Right? But pretty much, I don't know, if you're 40-ish and under you grew up in a different culture. And certainly our young people, when you make claims that the Bible is the authoritative

Word of God or the Bible is the Word of God, it's often met with skepticism. Right?

Now let's think about this word *authority* here. What does it mean to be an authority or to have authority? It's the power to influence others. So when we talk about the authority of the Bible, our vision is that the Bible—if it is God's Word—would have the power to influence our lives. Right? But when we think about authority in our culture and think about the culture that our young people have inherited that they're growing up with, do they have any questions about authority? Yeah, absolutely. Right?



So we can look in the realm of our political leaders. We can look in this kind of moment at even our doctors and health leaders. We can look at education teachers. There have been questions



that are raised about law enforcement. And wherever you stand on any of the particular cultural and political issues, I think here's the point, young people are growing up in a world where authority is being questioned at every turn and often for good reason. Right? And so if we want the Bible to be an authority in their lives, we're going to have to do more than just simply assert that, just simply claim the Bible is God's Word for a generation that is going growing up

with a default setting that authorities – we should be suspicious of those things. Okay?

So, here's what I want to do, I want to spend some time thinking about the nature of authority first because I think if we do that it's going to help us figure out how and what we need to do in order to establish the authority of God's Word for the next generation, and not just the next generation but maybe even for many of us. So let's think through the nature of authority. How many of you have ever really spent a lot of time thinking through the nature of authority? I want to give you an illustration here that I think will help us maybe start thinking about authority and its source. Okay?

So, let's say you go out to dinner with your family, you go to your favorite Chinese food restaurant. At the end of the meal the server brings you that thing that all your kids are always looking forward to at the end of a Chinese food meal – right? – the fortune cookie. Okay. So you open up the fortune cookie and one of your kids pulls out the fortune and it says this, it says, "Get up and leave now." Think about it, what do you do at that point? Do you gather up your family and say, "Okay, hey, guys, the fortune cookie said it, we've got to obey it, let's go, let's get out of here." No. I mean, you're gonna laugh. Right? You're going to say, "Uh, well, you

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know, whoever made that fortune cookie was wanting to have some fun or something, but I don't think anybody in here feels like they have to obey this command, do they?" Now, is this a command? Well, it is a command but we don't think that there's any obligation to obey this command.

Okay. Let's change the scenario.

You just finished your Chinese food meal and there's a lady who's sitting at a table next to you, this lady looks over at you and says, "Hey, excuse me, will you please get up and leave now." Are you going to get up and leave? No. You're going to ask a question, aren't you? You're going to say, "Well, excuse me, ma'am, who are you? Like, why should I leave?" Now imagine the lady says to you, "Well, I'm another customer here and I just want you to get up and leave." Are you going to get up and leave? No. No. You sinful people are going, "For *sure* I'm not going to leave now." Right? [LAUGHTER] No. But we're, again, this lady is giving us a command but is there an obligation to obey it? No, she's just another customer.



Okay. Third scenario, same command, okay? Let's say you finish that Chinese food meal, this lady at the table next to you says, "Get up and leave now." And you say, "Well, well, who are you?" And let's say she flashes you this badge and she says, "I'm with the DEA. We are about to bust the owner of this restaurant for dealing drugs. You better get up and leave now." Does that change anything? Yeah, absolutely. Are you going to get up and leave now? Yes, you're going to get up and leave now.



Now notice, is the command the same in each one of these scenarios? Yep. Exact same command, but in the first two scenarios we realize, we understand, we recognize that there's no obligation to obey that command; but in the third situation there seems to be an obligation that we have to obey the command. What is the difference between those three scenarios? It's the issue of authority. Right? It's the issue of authority. In the first two instances, a fortune cookie or another customer, we don't have the proper authority to issue that command, but in the third scenario the agent that works for the DEA, who works for a government agency, has the authority. And so here's the implication: Authority seems to be derived from the appropriate person *with* the appropriate credentials. And when you have that kind of authority what happens? Well, in those circumstances we have an obligation to obey. That person can give commands that we ought to listen to. All right?

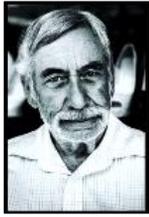
Now, so what is what is one of the key things when it comes to authority? One of the key issues is who is behind the command? Who is the authority that we're pointing to? Right? Do you see the connection between who it is and the nature of authority? So that's one of the key insights here. Now, now think about this though, do we simply trust someone who merely has a position of authority? Just because someone has a position authority, do we automatically trust them? No. Especially not in this day and age. Right? So I think we're going to have to think even a little bit more deeply about the nature of authority.



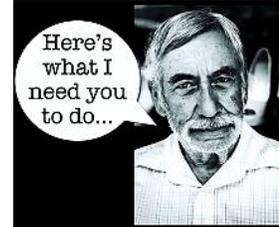
Okay. So let me show you a picture here, how many of you know who this guy is? Raise your hand if you know who this guy is. Nobody knows who this guy is, good, because it would have

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been really weird if someone would have raised their hand because I just Googled "stranger" and this guy's face came up. [LAUGHTER] So if someone said, "Oh, yeah, I know! That's my uncle" – uh, sorry. No. So if you don't know who this person is that makes him a stranger. Right? Now imagine, um, imagine number one that I didn't give this illustration, but imagine this guy comes up to you after the service and he walks up to you and he says, "Hey, here's what I need you to do," and he lists off a couple of things that he needs you to do. What's your response? Do you say, "Okay, hey, whatever you say I'm going to do it." No, of course not. Your question is, "Yeah, why? Who are you again? I don't think I know you." Right? And so this gives us some insight into, again, the nature of commands and the authority behind a command.



Now, let me change the scenario. This is my wife Erin, we've been married for 24 years, imagine my wife Erin comes up to me and says, "Here's what I need you to do, Brett." What do I do? [ANSWERS YELLED OUT FROM AUDIENCE] Yeah, but not for the reason why you're thinking, like, if you don't you're in trouble. But think about the... if my wife Erin comes up to me and asks me to do something after 24



Erin & Brett



years of marriage, after 24 years of relationship, after knowing her, I pretty much am going to just immediately trust what she says. And so what this helps us to understand is that not only does there need to be an appropriate authority but that authority is strengthened when there is relationship. Right? Relationship is a key part of authority.

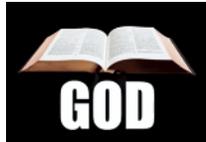
Now, it's not... but we have to be careful, relationship isn't the only thing because imagine my wife Erin comes up to me and she's got dental tools in her hands [LAUGHTER] and she says "Okay, Brett, open your mouth, here's what I need to do. I need to pull out a couple of teeth." And I'll just let you know my wife is not a dentist. Am I going to just give in if my wife shows up with dental tools and wants to stick them in my mouth? Of course not. Does it matter how close or how long our relationship has been? No. At that point it's not merely a matter of, "Hey, I know my wife well and I trust her, so therefore I'm going to trust her with pulling teeth out of my mouth." No, of course not. So it's relationship but something else that establishes authority, it's knowledge. The only person I'm going to allow to put those dental tools in my mouth is the person with the relevant knowledge. Right?



And so what do we have here? As we think through the nature of authority we have two things that are necessary to establish authority—knowledge and relationship. Knowledge and relationship are key components to establishing authority. Now, you can see how we can relate this back to Scripture now. Right?

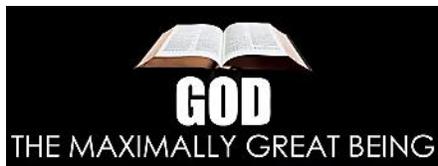
All right. We have this claim. We make the claim that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore it should be authoritative in our lives, and so we preach from it, we teach from it, and we ask people in our congregations to submit their lives to it. How can we strengthen the authority of God's Word? How can we do more than just simply say,

"Well, it's God's Word. Period"? Well, one thing that we can do is we can help our people understand, all right, who is this authority? Who stands behind it? Well, God, we say it's God's Word. Right? So who's the authority? God. Okay. Is God the proper authority? Well, yeah, but we need to do more than just say yeah, He's the proper authority, we need to explain why He's the proper authority. Who is God? And this is why it's absolutely vital that not only that we teach the next generation but that *we ourselves* know the character of God.



In fact, I think we're actually at a crisis point in the American church in terms of our lack of biblical knowledge. Today, here's a test, pull aside your own kid or maybe pull aside one of the students who attends the church here and just ask them, say, "Hey, could you list for me, if you could just list all of the, just from the top of your head from memory, list for me all of the characteristics or attributes of God?" What you would discover is that the vast majority of people, and not just students but even adults, we are very inarticulate about our theology. And you get—the typical young person who you ask this—you might get four or five characteristics. Of course, they tell you, well, God is loving, you know, God is forgiving, but beyond that a lot of young people can't give you much more.

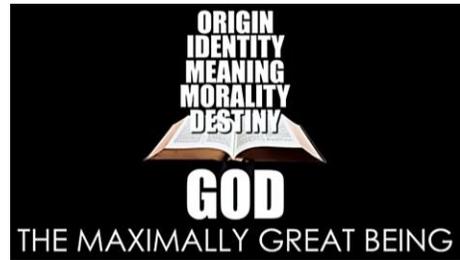
Now, if you take any systematic theology book and you pull it out and you open it up you'll have anywhere from 20 to 25 different attributes of God listed in there. And what are God's attributes? It describes who He is. I mean, imagine if I said to you, um, or if you asked me, "Hey, Brett, tell me about your wife," and I could only list maybe a couple of things about her. Right? You would question, *Well, gosh, don't... shouldn't you have more knowledge if you're in this kind of close relationship with her?* And so what we need to do is we need to pass on to the next generation a deep and significant knowledge of God's nature and character, so when we talk about God we are talking about what philosophers refer to as the "maximally great being" or some philosophers refer to Him as the "greatest conceivable being."



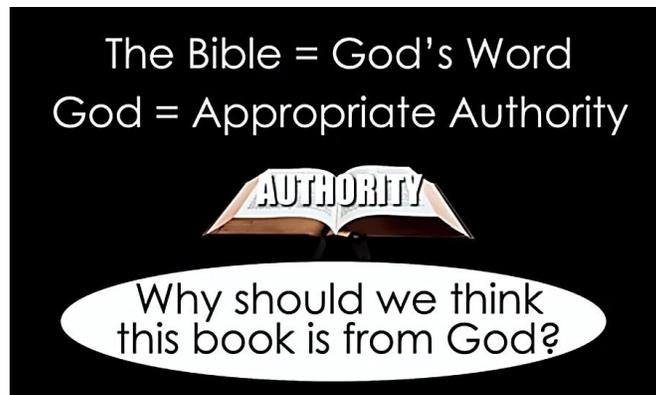
What does that mean? That means there is no being that you can even conceive of that's greater than God. He's the greatest being we can possibly imagine, the maximally great being. In fact, one of the medieval Christians, Anselm, used this as an argument for God's existence. And so God—who is the personal and powerful Creator of the universe, the greatest being imaginable, the One who is not only perfectly loving and merciful but who is also just, the One who is morally perfect or holy, the One who can speak the universe into existence out of nothing, who's all-powerful, who's all-knowing, who's all present—this is the greatest being that we can ever imagine. *That being is the proper authority on life – wouldn't He be?* The One who has brought us into existence would be the One that could give us insight into the biggest questions of human existence.

What are those questions? Well, where do we come from? The question of origin. Who are we or what are we? What does it mean to be human? What is the meaning of life? How should we live our lives, morality? And then, what happens when I die? Right? These five questions are

the most significant questions human beings have asked in the history of humanity. And, of course, the most significant questions of life: Who's the appropriate authority to weigh in on those issues? It would be the One who has designed life Himself, who has brought the universe into existence—God, the greatest being we can even imagine. He would be the appropriate authority.



So when we say the Bible is God's Word what we mean is that God has given this Book to us, and who is God, when we look carefully at His character, He is the appropriate authority. And so when we talk about God and who He is, this is the being who we want to be in relationship with. Right? Do you see why it's so vital to have knowledge of who God is and also to be in relationship with that being, to be in relationship with God, and in doing so that will help establish the authority of the Bible. When our young people have a clear view of who God is, that He's not some fairy tale but that there's good reason to think that this being exists, then that begins to establish authority in God's Word.



Now, here will be the second question that young people will ask: Well, why should we think the Bible is the Word of God? Right? Why should we think the Bible is the Word of God? It's not enough to simply *say* the Bible's the Word of God, we need to give *reasons* why we think this Book is from God. And so if we want to establish that authority, we need to make an apologetic or a defense for why we think this Book is no ordinary book because we're not the only ones that claim that we have a book from God. Right? Mormons claim that they have a book from God. Muslims claim that they have a book from God. Other religions claim divine inspiration for their religious books. Why is the Bible different?

Well, these [IMAGE ON NEXT PAGE] are some of the reasons why we might think the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, let me just highlight some of these and we'll go through these. I'll go through a couple of them, we don't have time to go through all of them, but what we're going to make is a case, we're going to give reasons why we think this Book is no ordinary book but it's from God.

Number 1: We have good reason to think that God exists. Look, think about it, if atheism is true and there is no God, then guess what – there's no such thing as God's Word. So if atheism is true then it's game over, there's there is no authority in this Book, it's just written by other men because there is no God. But if we have good and powerful reasons to think that God exists, that



can then begin to strengthen our confidence that this Book is from God. But then we also have to look at the Book itself, and some thinkers and theologians will look at its self-authenticating nature where they'll say actually it's self-evident. When you encounter this Book the nature of the Book itself being from God it just authenticates itself and that you don't actually have to give any additional reasons, some will take that line of argument.

But I think we have powerful reasons that we can add to that. You might even be able to argue, hey, it is self-evident but then there are a number of other reasons why we think this Book is no ordinary book. And so we look at its preservation, just take the New Testament for instance, New Testament written approximately 2,000 years ago, how do we know that what was written 2,000 years ago is what we have today? And we can point to the divine preservation of this Book.

You can look at the internal and external historical corroboration. What does that mean? That just means there's evidence within the Book and evidence outside of the Bible that testify to its divine origins. You can look at its societal impact, just look at the history of western civilization and how it's changed, this Book has changed societies. You can look at individual transformation. In fact, there are probably stories right here in this auditorium of people who have encountered this Book and who have been radically changed by it. We can see it's real-world correspondence, that means this Book corresponds to the way that the world really is. And, of course, if it's from the Creator of all reality that would be something that we would expect.

There's the unity of this Book we'll talk about. There's the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, so we can actually experience the Holy Spirit bearing witness, as Paul writes in Romans¹ bearing witness to our spirit. There's prophetic fulfillment, we can look at the prophecies in the Old Testament and see how they come true hundreds of years after they are predicted. And then there's the testimony of Jesus. If you have any high view or view where you respect Jesus, Jesus holds to the divine origins of Scripture. And so these are some of the reasons why we can believe with confidence that this Book is no ordinary book.

¹ Romans 8:15 (ESV): **The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**

Okay, let's just take a look at a couple of these. For an example, let's take preservation first. Okay, let me give you some Textual Criticism 101 now before your eyes glaze over. Okay. Let me just encourage you, these kinds of discussions may challenge us a little bit – right? – but they're absolutely vital because we need to grow in our knowledge of God. In fact, when you look at the New Testament, the New Testament talks so much about *knowing* God, not just having faith in Him, but having knowledge of Him. Knowledge is absolutely essential. We see in John 17:3, this is eternal life, that we may know You, the only true God.

³This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

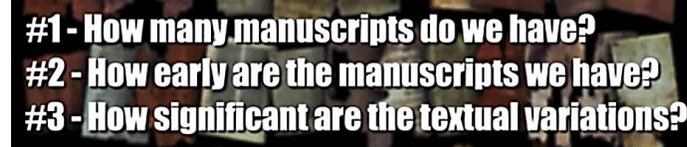
– JOHN 17:3 (NASBI995)



And so knowledge is absolutely vital. And if you gain knowledge about the Scripture what that knowledge will do is it will give you a greater confidence in God's Word.

Okay, so Textual Criticism 101, what is this? Okay, textual criticism is an academic discipline where historians will look to see whether or not an ancient document has been preserved over time. And so, of

course, this is something that applies not just to Scripture but to any ancient document from the ancient world. And what historians are going to look for are certain things to determine the historical



kind of reliability of the preservation of a document, so they're going to look at three criteria in particular.

Number one: How many manuscript copies do we have of any particular document? Right? Because if you go back a couple of thousand years we don't have the original writings of *Homer*. We don't have the original writings of Aristotle. We don't have the original writings of Paul or Luke or Peter. What do we have? We have copies of those originals, and so what historians look for are how many copies do we have? The more copies we have, the more comparisons we can draw to reconstruct the original.

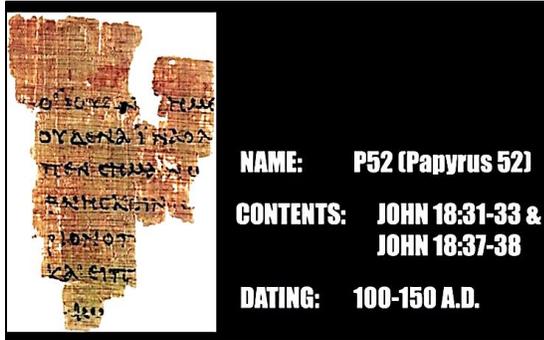
Here's the second criteria: How early are the manuscripts? So let's say the Apostle Paul is writing in 40 or 50 A.D., what's our earliest manuscript copy of his writings? The earlier the better – right? – because that prevents myth or error to creep in. The earlier you have the copy that's closest to the original.

And then thirdly: How significant are the variations? Because these things are hand copied. This is in a day before computers and before printers and, you know, so these things are hand copied and often by candlelight or often in very poor conditions, and so there's going to be errors that creep in. How significant are those variations? And when... here's the thing, when we take something like the Old or New Testament and we compare it to other ancient documents out there, there really is no comparison. In fact, this is the kind of knowledge that the younger generation needs to gain confidence in the Scriptures.

So this is maybe the most famous biblical manuscript that's out there, it's called "P52" which just refers to Papyrus 52. It is a papyrus in the John Rylands Library in England and it's likely our earliest New Testament document that we know of to this date. The contents on it, it's just a small little fragment, the contents are John Chapter 18, some verses from John 18 on the front

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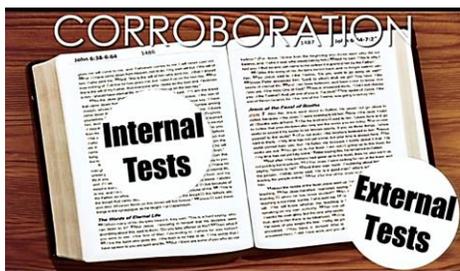
and then some other verses on the back, and the dating of this is anywhere between 100 and 150 A.D. according to most scholars. Now think about it, when does John write the book of John? Somewhere in the 90s, so 90 A.D. So this manuscript, let's just put it on the further end, let's say it's around 150 A.D., you're at 50-60 years after the time of the writing of the book of John.

Now, when you look at just the first 300 years of Christianity you have over 120 manuscripts that contain the New Testament again and again in the early part of Christianity. Now, in order for us to understand how significant this is we have to compare this to something else. So, all of what we know about Roman history comes to us from three major figures – Livy, Tacitus, and Suetonius. Okay? Now, the earliest writings that we have from Livy date about 400 years after he originally wrote, and we have about 150 manuscripts or 150 copies of what he wrote. Tacitus, the earliest manuscript we have dates anywhere between 750 and 950 years *after* he originally wrote, we have about 33 copies of what he wrote. Suetonius, 800 years is the earliest dating on our earliest manuscript and we have about 200 copies of what he wrote.

Livy	Tacitus	Suetonius	N.T.
			
400 years	750-950 yrs	800 years	25-50 years
150 copies	33 copies	200 copies	20,000 + copies

Okay, now think about it, almost all of Roman history, the knowledge that we base our knowledge on is from these three guys. And so if you look you've got what, 383 manuscript copies, the earliest at 400 years, but look, the vast majority of those come 700-800 years after the original writing. Is there some huge controversy about Roman history and about how, gosh, we don't have enough manuscript evidence? No. This is what we base our knowledge of Roman history on. Now compare the New Testament.

When you look at the New Testament our earliest manuscripts date anywhere between 25-50 years and we have more than 20,000 copies. You have more than 5,800 copies in Greek alone, and then you add Latin and Coptic and Syriac and these other languages, what do we have? We have good reason to think that what was written in the 1st Century is what we are reading today. You see how that knowledge strengthens confidence? We can read with confidence the gospels and the letters of Paul and think, *This is what he wrote 2,000 years ago.* That's just one test.



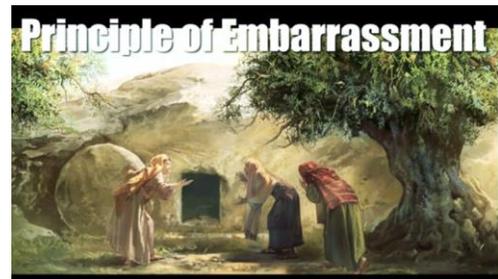
Think about the, uh, I mentioned the corroboration. Right? There's internal tests and external tests and understanding how these tests establish the authority of the Bible can really give us confidence, so let's take something like an internal test. Historians will look at a document and say there are markers or evidences within a document that help us to have confidence that what it's saying is actually true. Now what would be that kind of test? Well, one principle that historians look at is something like the principle of embarrassment. What's the principle

Principle of Embarrassment

embarrassment? Well, if you or someone in your community is writing and they reveal details that are embarrassing about

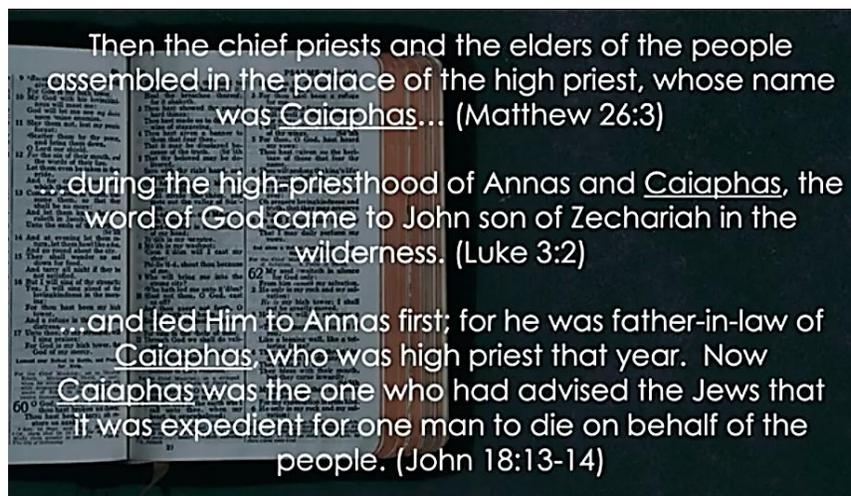
themselves or about the community that you're in that is generally considered reliable. Right? Now why is that? Because we as human beings don't naturally want to embarrass ourselves. We don't want to reveal information that's embarrassing to us and so we will often hide that, but if we reveal it that seems to be an indicator that it's actually true.

And so when we look in the New Testament do we have any embarrassing details about individual Christians or the Christian community? Absolutely. Right? Isn't the New Testament filled with all kinds of embarrassing details? One of those embarrassing details is the fact that women are the first eyewitnesses to the empty tomb of Jesus. Now why is this embarrassing? Well, because of the view of women, the status of women in 1st Century Palestine there was a low view. Right? Women were looked at as second- or third-class citizens. Often their testimony was not even considered reliable enough to be included in a court of law.



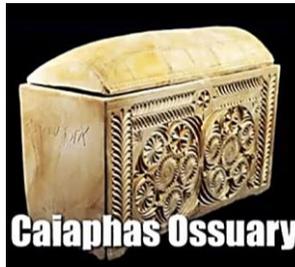
There's a Greek philosopher named Celsus who lived in the 2nd Century who actually used this as an argument against Christianity. He was highly antagonistic of Christianity and he wrote things arguing against it and one of his arguments was that Christianity can't be true because the written accounts of the resurrection are based on the testimony of women, and we all know that women are hysterical. [LAUGHTER] Okay, those aren't my words, those aren't mine, that's Celsus. Okay? Just so you know. That was this Greek philosopher's argument against Christianity. And so if the disciples wanted to make up a story, if they wanted to give credibility to the story of an empty tomb and a resurrected Jesus, guess what, you would not put women as the first eyewitnesses. And that's just one example. Think about Peter, any embarrassing scenes in Peter's life or any of the disciples? There's all kinds of embarrassing detail within the New Testament which actually lends to its credibility.

But not only are there internal tests there are external tests. So the writings of other ancient historians or archaeology, these things point to the reliability of the New Testament. And so you have this individual, for instance, Caiaphas, who's mentioned throughout the gospels. Caiaphas who is the high priest – Right? –the Jewish high priest during the time of Jesus' ministry. He



was also a member of the ruling Jewish sect, the Sadducees. He held this seat of honor, he's this, you know, the guy who oversees the trial of Jesus.

And do we have any extra-biblical evidence, is there anything outside of the Bible that confirms what the Bible says? Absolutely. In 1990 archaeologists uncovered the Caiaphas Ossuary and when they discovered this there are a number of reasons why they think that this is the bone box, an ossuary is a bone box, why this is the Caiaphas of the New Testament. And that is just one of literally thousands and thousands and thousands of examples that confirm that Scripture has divine origins.



- Discovered in December of 1990
- Location: Peace Forest section of Jerusalem
- It is a first century Ossuary or "bone box"
- Inscribed on the ossuary were the words "Yehosef bar Kayafa," translated as "Joseph, son of Caiaphas"
- Excavator Zvi Greenhut of the Israeli Antiquities Authority recovered the artifact
- On display at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.



Here's a couple more. Think about... we talked about the supernatural unity of the Bible. The Bible is written by 40 different authors over a period of 1,500 years in 13 different countries and on three different continents. How in the world can this Book speak with one coherent voice and one coherent message – unless there's one supernatural author who's working through the human authors?

We can look at prophetic fulfillment. We look at the Old Testament and what do we see? Just take some of the major prophecies about the life of Jesus, that He would be a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah and the house of David, born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, have His hands and feet pierced, be crucified with sinners, have none of His bones broken, cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", rise from the dead, and ascend into Heaven. All of those things predicted prior to his life and death and resurrection. What would explain prophetic fulfillment except a God who knows the future. Right?

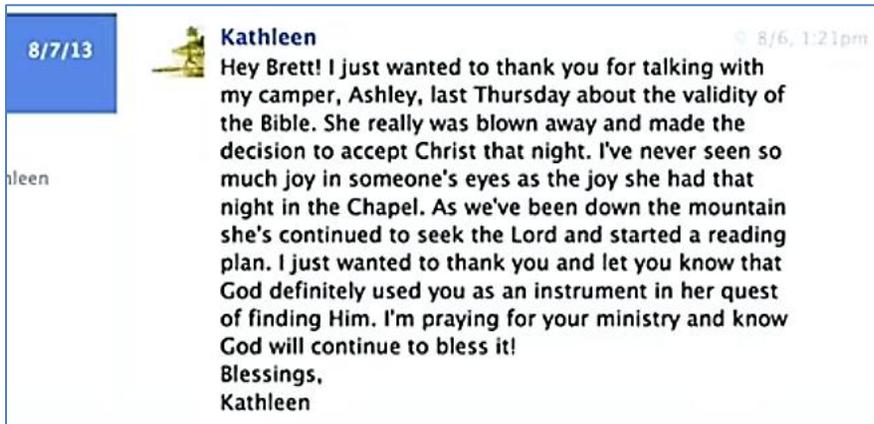


- be a descendant of Abraham (Gen.12:1-3)
- be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) & the house of David (Ps. 110:1)
- be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2)
- be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:1 4)
- be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12f.)
- have His hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16)
- be crucified with transgressors (Isa. 53:9, 12)
- have none of His bones broken (Ex. 12:46; Ps. 34:20)
- cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1)
- rise from the dead (Ps. 16:8-11)
- ascend into heaven (Ps. 68:1-8)

And so what do we have? We have a number of evidences that give us knowledge that this Book is no ordinary book but that it is indeed the authoritative Word of God. Isn't that pretty exciting that we can *know*—we don't have to have some kind of blind faith—we can *know* that this Book is no ordinary book. And of course that knowledge needs to then be connected to relationship, doesn't it? And I want us not to pull those things apart. I think oftentimes we in the church we pull those things apart too much and we separate those things.



I was at a camp a couple of years ago speaking to young people and doing a number of talks on the truthfulness of Christianity. Afterwards I had a leader come up to me and say she had a student who had questions about the Bible, was interested in Christianity but had questions about the Bible, and could I sit down and talk with her and answer some of her questions. So we did, a little bit later that afternoon I sat down with her and the leader and just went through some of the objections she had to Scripture and some of them had to do with its historical reliability and how can we trust it. And so I went through some of those reasons and those evidences why we can trust Scripture.



Two days later I got a message on Facebook from this leader and here's what she said; she said: "Hey Brett! I just wanted to thank you for talking with my camper Ashley last Thursday about the validity of the Bible. She really was blown away and made the decision to accept

Christ that night. I've never seen so much joy in someone's eyes as the joy she had that night in the chapel." And see, that knowledge that she gained as we talked ended up strengthening and giving her the ability now to put her trust in God and in His Word.

And so, what have we done here? Well, a little review... we've talked about the nature of authority. Right? And of course there needs to be an appropriate authority behind any kind of command, like the commands that we find in Scripture. But in order for us to really give that authority the necessary place in our life, what do we need to do? We need to, number one, we need to have knowledge of that authority; and then number two we need to be in relationship, a relationship where we can trust that authority. All right? And then I think that second part is key in then what our response is.

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When we have knowledge that this Book is no ordinary book but it's the Word of God, then we should ask, *Okay, if it is the Word of God—whether I think it is or not—we have good reason whether I believe it or not.* Right? So we're making a claim that's objectively true here. Well, if

What is the proper response to God's authority exercised in the Scriptures?



it is an authoritative Book, if it is indeed the Word of God, what would be the appropriate response then from us? If we are literally holding the Word of God in our hands, what is the appropriate response? Well, one response would be reading it regularly, wouldn't it? Wouldn't this be the kind of thing that we ought to be *in* day in and day out; that the Creator of the universe has revealed His will and His thoughts and His ideas and His commands to

us? He's answered the big significant questions of life in this Book, and so we ought to be searching this Book, regularly reading it if it is indeed the Word of God.

And so we need to figure out how – in a technological age – how do we get in this Book more often? And so let me just give you some practical, really practical ideas that me and my family we've, you know, struggled to figure out, okay, how do we get more and more of the Word of God into our lives? And so one thing that we will do is maybe take a Psalm and when we sit down to dinner rather than do, uh, you know, just ask someone to pray, we will read a Psalm as a prayer and let the Psalm be a prayer. Just one small way that we're trying to make the Word of God come alive in our homes. Right? And I think what Jesus says in Matthew 4 when He's tempted by Satan. Right? He says man does not live by bread alone:

⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

– MATTHEW 4:4 (NASB 1995)



And so we read the Scriptures before we partake in that meal. Or maybe you're driving, maybe you drive a lot. Listening to an audio version, particularly when you're driving with your kids. I know the temptation in our modern vehicles is to have screens on or to hand them the iPad or hand them the iPhone, but what if instead we had them listen to Scripture and redeem some of

Read a Psalm before meals

Listen to an audio version while driving with your kids

Memorize large sections

Read through a book of the Bible as a family

Reach for your Bible before you reach for your phone

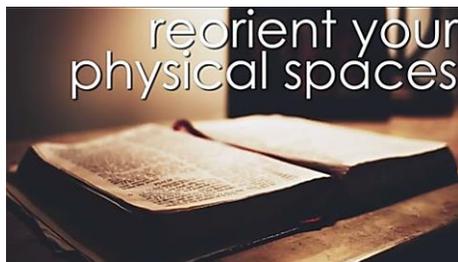
that time that we're driving. How about memorizing Scripture? This seems to be a discipline that has fallen on hard times, we don't memorize Scripture very often anymore and if we don't memorize Scripture it's going to be kind of hard to meditate on it.

How about reading through an entire book of the Bible as a family? There's one thing that our family has been trying to do is read through the New Testament together and we just take it one chapter and one book at a time and just read through it together. No fancy Bible study,

we don't have any fancy curriculum, we just pull out the Bible and we read a chapter and then we just discuss it, *Hey, what did you observe?* Right? Or maybe it's as simple as hey, in the morning reach for the Bible before you reach for your phone. Right? These are little practical things that we can do to begin to read it regularly, and reading it regularly is the appropriate response if it is indeed the Word of God.



Of course if we're going to communicate to our young people that this Book is the authoritative Word of God and that we ought to obey it and live by its commands, then they have got to see that in us don't they? And so we have to humbly submit to its authority. It won't matter how much knowledge you have or what kind of apologetics you can lay out for the authority of Scripture if our young people look into our lives and see that we're not living by it and that we're not submitting to it. And so we have to live according to its authority if we want our young people to live according to its authority.



Here is another thing that we've done in our home – reorient your physical spaces. What do I mean by that? Well, in our home the way we design and decorate our home is not neutral. It's not neutral meaning the way you design your home or the way you lay out your home can nudge you in certain directions. And so think about how the typical American family designs a living room or a bedroom. Often what's at the center of a living room or a

family room, a screen – right? – a TV, and we have multiple screens and devices within our homes. And what do those things do? They nudge us to get on those all the time.

And so in the same way are there ways that we can nudge ourselves to get into God's Word? And so my wife and I have thought carefully about how can we decorate our home or what things can we place in our homes in ways that nudge us towards the Scriptures? So one thing that we've done that's very practical is saying, okay, let's not keep our Bibles like back in the office or back in a bedroom, let's keep them out front and center somewhere in our living room where we spend a lot of time as a family. So the Bibles are visible, so they're easy to get to. And then on our mantle a friend bought me a page from a 400-year-old King James Version of the Bible and that page has one of my favorite verses on it – Romans 12:2 –

² And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

– ROMANS 12:2 (KJV)

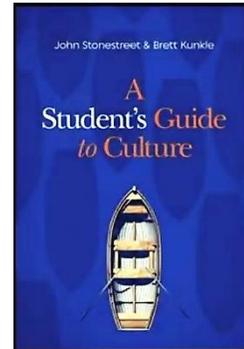
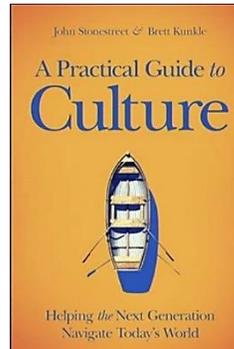
and he gave that to me as a gift. And so we frame that and we put that in the center of our mantle. Things like that that help us to picture and see the Word of God all around the house because we want to build our home on God's Word; we want to make it central to all what we do. Those are some practical things that we can do.

Okay, let me wrap up by giving you a couple allies here because this is, I mean, we just covered some very basic stuff, there's a lot more we could say. All right. But there are some allies that will help us particularly with the next generation. Number one is Summit Ministries. Summit Ministries, they put on these two-week conferences every summer for young people to give them the knowledge that Christianity is true and why



we think it's true. In fact, I just sent my third kid to Summit camp this summer, and this last September my 18-year-old daughter is taking a gap year and she's spending the first three months in Colorado with Summit Ministries and they're pouring into her because she's got to get ready for what's coming in college and beyond. Okay?

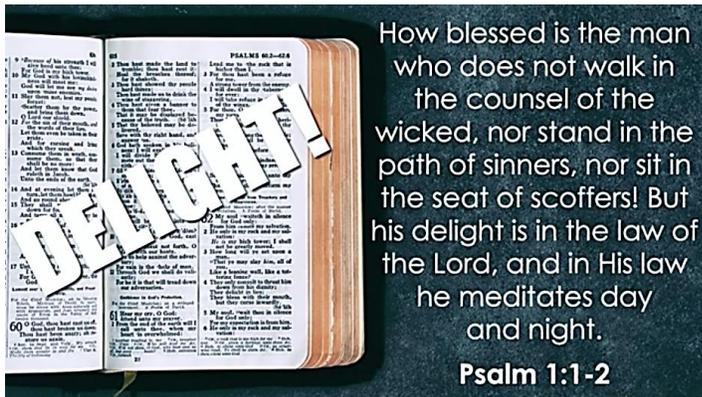
And then our organization, MAVEN. We started MAVEN four years ago really to help the church equip the next generation, and so we have a lot of different resources. You can go out to the table in the lobby and see some of those resources. A couple of books we wrote, one for adults, one for students, and we've got two chapters in this book on how to think carefully about the nature of Scripture and how do we read it.



Okay, let me close with this, Psalm Chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, says:

- 1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!**
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.**

– PSALM 1:1-2 (NASB 1995)



What is the appropriate response to God's Word? Notice this key word *delight* – "**but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night.**" When we grow in our knowledge of Scripture, when we grow in our relationship to Scripture, when we're reading it, when we're studying it, when we have confidence that it's true, you know what the byproduct is? The byproduct is delight, delight, and *that* is what we need to pass on to the next generation.

Let's pray.

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Heavenly Father,



Thank You, thank You for the authoritative Word that You have given to us. And Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would illuminate our hearts and our minds and give us a greater knowledge of your Word. Lord, I pray that your Holy Spirit would give us a passion to grow in our knowledge so that we can grow in our confidence. And heavenly Father, as we grow in our knowledge of your Word we also pray that your Holy Spirit would humble us and give us a willingness to submit to its authority. And Lord, as we do that, as we live in obedience to You, I also pray that we'll see the fruit of that; we'll see how we flourish when we live according to your commands. And so Lord, help us to pass on a knowledge and a love and a passion and a delight for your Word to the next generation. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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