

Is the Bible a Reliable Pathway to God?

Article 1 of 8 – Introduction

By Robert A. Mimiaga

Whether you were raised in a home that read the Bible daily or a home that never owned a Bible, this article series is for you. And no matter what spiritual environment we were raised in, from time to time we have all wondered whether the stories and miracles spoken about in the scriptures can be relied upon as a trusted source of information, and equally important, whether this book can help us to really connect with God.

Throughout human history, people have attempted to find a true pathway to God, not merely to seek information about him, but to gain a deeper experience, relationship, and transformation in their lives. Many people have attempted to achieve this journey through prayers, chants, spiritual dances, sacrifices, mystical writings, and other ceremonies traditional to their culture. Augustine of Hippo, a theologian and philosopher in the fourth century, wrote in the first book of his *Confessions*, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."¹ In today's language, his idea might be framed as, "*Every person is born with a God-shaped void in their heart, a longing that can only be satisfied with God.*" So, if there is a God, what is a reliable pathway to him?

This reminds me of an encounter I had with a total stranger many years ago that I will always remember.

I was returning home from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with two other pastors after providing

theological training to young Ethiopian pastors. On our flight back home, we stopped in Bangkok, Thailand, overnight and then continued our flight the next morning. On this last leg of our flight, we were scattered throughout the aircraft, and as luck would have it, I was assigned to the last row on the plane with two seats and next to the restroom. The second seat was already occupied. But there was a bright side! I had brought a new book with me that I was dying to read, and I had envisioned no interruptions and no people around me that I knew—just me, my headphones, and my new book.

After sitting down, the gentleman next to me said hello, and we exchanged some simple pleasantries, and I quickly learned he was a native of Thailand and spoke English. After about an hour of flight time, the stewardess came by with our lunch and served both of us. I took a moment to pray quietly over my lunch and proceeded to eat and continue reading my book. Just then, this gentleman asked what I had done before eating. I painfully put down my book and mentioned that I had prayed to God, thanking him for my meal. He then asked me if I was a Christian, which evolved into a lengthy conversation about my beliefs. He then asked me what it took to be a Christian. I spent the next twenty minutes sharing scriptures from the Bible and explaining the importance of having a relationship with God the Father and his Son.

He asked me how he could pray for that relationship, and somewhere over the Pacific

Ocean at 34,000 feet, I prayed with this young man as he accepted the Lord and became a Christian! After this experience, I couldn't stop wondering what had motivated this man to turn to God in an attempt to fill the spiritual emptiness in his heart. I knew it wasn't my persuasive speaking skills! To what extent did the Bible passages I read provide him with a pathway toward God?

How about you? Have you sought to fill the void in your heart with God? And what about the Bible—do you see it as a reliable pathway to God?

Bible Reliability: The trustworthiness of Scripture in faithfully preserving its message, accurately recording history, and truthfully revealing God's commands and His plan to redeem humanity.

You may be wondering why the reliability of the Bible should matter to you personally. Let me explain by first mentioning that everyone falls into one of three groups:

1. Christians that believe the Bible is totally true.
2. Christians that question the reliability of some of the Bible.
3. Non-Christians that do not believe in the reliability of the Bible at all.

Why the reliability of the Bible is important to Christians (groups 1 and 2)

If you call yourself a Christian, the entire foundation of your faith should be based on the Bible being accurate and reliable. If it is not, then you are wasting your time learning about Bible stories and miracles that are just fairy tales. If the Bible is not accurate and reliable, then the commands of God can be taken as just 'suggestions for good living,' and the statements about who Jesus Christ is are only fables in a world that is full of fables and fantasies.

If the Bible is not dependable, then as a Christian, the scriptures become worthless as a resource for God's truth.

Why the reliability of the Bible may be important to non-Christians (group 3)

If you are a non-Christian, it is understandable that you may not believe any of the stories or commands in the Bible to be true and might even question how and where the Scriptures originated. You may have never given any thought to reading the Bible and only heard about its stories secondhand. But stay with me for a minute... What if the content in the Bible was really reliable enough to be a bridge to God?

Isn't this the sort of truth that deserves your attention, with the power to potentially redirect your life for the better? I am not asking you to believe blindly. I'm simply inviting you to walk with me through this series, to objectively weigh the evidence, so you can thoughtfully determine if the Bible is a reliable pathway to God.

So, what evidence exists that may validate the Bible's reliability and dependability?



Where's the evidence?

In this eight-article series, we will uncover the *evidence* by investigating modern methods of research and hearing comments from academic experts in the field to learn about their opinions on the topic. We will start by exploring the Bible's self-claims in the next article, that is, how Scripture portrays and identifies itself. Next, we

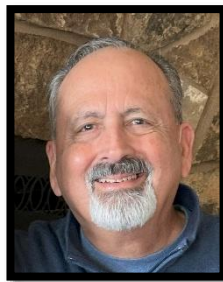
will examine the textual preservation of the Old and New Testaments by comparing them with other secular historical manuscripts. Then we will study the Scripture's archaeological reliability by investigating discovered artifacts to see how they agree or disagree with the information in the Bible.

We will then examine the prophetic dependability of the Bible to acquire a better understanding of what biblical prophecies exist, the number of prophecies in the Old and New Testaments that have been fulfilled, and why that is significant. Finally, we will spend time examining misconceptions of both the Bible and science throughout history and explore evidence of convergence and controversy.

I hope you will join me through this series of eight articles to discover for yourself whether the Bible is a reliable and credible pathway to God. These articles will be released one per week over the next eight weeks on my Facebook account and by email.

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this series of articles are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011, by International Bible Society. The statements from Jesus as quoted in the Gospels will appear in bold italics in all articles, while all other Scripture verses will be italicized only.

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¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Book I, chap. 1 (circa 397–400 AD)