

Is the Bible Accurate?

Part 3 of 4 in "Can I Trust the Bible?" · Why a God who cannot lie gave us a Word we can trust

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

JOHN 17:17

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Because God cannot lie, His Word is completely true, not just in matters of salvation but in everything it affirms. And the careful way it was copied shows God preserving it for us.
SCRIPTURE	Psalms 19:7-9 · Psalm 119:142, 160 · John 17:17 · Titus 1:2 · Hebrews 6:18 · Matthew 5:18
LENGTH	About 20 to 25 minutes
BEST FOR	High school and older middle schoolers; third talk in a four-part series
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles. Optional: a long sentence for a "telephone" copying game.

Start here: "Sure, it's a good book, but it has mistakes"

You've probably heard it from a friend, a teacher, or online: "The Bible is a good book, but it's full of mistakes." Even some religious teachers say the Bible is reliable about salvation but has small errors in history or science. Does that matter? And can we trust that what we read today is what was originally written?

1 What the Bible says about itself

The Bible never uses the word "inerrant" (without error), but the idea runs all through it:

- "The law of the LORD is perfect... the testimony of the LORD is sure... the commandment of the LORD is pure... the judgments of the LORD are true" (Psalm 19:7-9).
- "Your law is truth" (Psalm 119:142).
- "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160).
- Jesus prayed, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).
- Jesus said not even "one jot or one tittle," the smallest letter or stroke, would pass away from the Law until all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:18).

2 Why it has to be true: God cannot lie

“...God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.” **TITUS 1:2**

Hebrews says "it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18). If God is the Author of Scripture and God cannot lie, then His Word cannot contain errors. An inaccurate Bible would contradict God's own character.

Think about it this way: if God couldn't get the facts right on things like dates, places, and history, where we can check Him, why would we trust Him on sin, salvation, and eternity, where we can't?

WHAT INERRANCY DOES AND DOESN'T MEAN

Believing the Bible is without error doesn't mean every statement is technical or literal. The Bible uses **figures of speech** ("the trees of the field shall clap their hands," Isaiah 55:12), **everyday descriptions** ("the sun rises"), and some passages are **hard to understand** (Peter admits this about Paul in 2 Peter 3:16). None of these are errors. Inerrancy applies to the original writings, and it means that everything the Bible actually teaches is true.

3 Why it matters

If the Bible contains errors, even small ones, it can no longer be our standard of truth. Someone has to decide which parts are right and which are wrong, and that someone becomes *me*. I become the judge of God's Word instead of the other way around.

That opens a dangerous door. When people decide they have the authority to label one verse a mistake, it's usually not long before they find others they don't like, especially verses that challenge their opinions or behavior. Each step away makes the next one easier.

4 Copied with incredible care

Even if the originals were perfect, were they copied accurately? For the Old Testament, Jewish scribes followed strict rules. Over the centuries, scribal traditions included rules like these:

- Copies were made from an approved, accurate manuscript.
- Each letter was copied one at a time, never from memory.
- Columns and lines had set lengths, with careful spacing between letters and words.
- Later scribes (the Masoretes) counted the letters and words of each book and noted the middle letter, then checked new copies against those counts.
- A copy with mistakes could not be used in worship; flawed copies were set aside or destroyed.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Before 1947, the oldest complete Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts dated to around A.D. 1000. Then a shepherd in the Judean desert found jars of ancient scrolls in caves near Qumran. Among them was a complete copy of Isaiah from about 125 B.C., more than 1,000 years older! When scholars compared it with the later copies, they found it remarkably close. Most differences were spelling, word order, and small copying slips, and none changed any teaching of the faith. God had preserved His Word.

TRY THIS: THE TELEPHONE GAME

Whisper a long sentence down a line of students and see how it changes. Then ask: "What if each person could see the original, copy it letter by letter, and check their copy against a count of every letter?" That's the difference between gossip and careful scribal copying.

We'll look at the New Testament manuscripts in Part 4. For now, here's the point: the God who cannot lie has given us a Word we can trust, and He has kept it for us.

TALK IT OVER

1. Why do you think some people say the Bible is true about salvation but has errors in other areas?
2. How does God's character ("God, who cannot lie") connect to the accuracy of His Word?
3. What is the difference between a figure of speech and an error? Can you think of an example?
4. What happens when we become the judge of which parts of the Bible are true?
5. What do the Dead Sea Scrolls teach us about how God preserved His Word?

TAKE IT HOME

Memorize John 17:17. This week, when you read something in the Bible that challenges you, write it down and ask, "Am I willing to let God's Word judge me, instead of me judging it?"

God cannot lie, and His Word is truth.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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