

# Session 1 • How can I know the Bible is reliable?

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Hello and welcome to the series, Knowing What You Believe. We're going to get started with Session 1. This is where we really have to start because the first session is entitled: How can I know the Bible is reliable?

What we're going to be doing in this first session is we're going to be listening to 6 witnesses. These witnesses are going to systematically appear before us and talk about why the Bible is reliable.

## **Six Witnesses of the Bible's Reliability**

- The witness of Unity
- The witness of Prophecy
- The witness of Archaeology
- The witness of Science
- The witness of History
- The witness of a Changed Life

We're going to be looking at The witness of Unity, The witness of Prophecy, The witness of Archeology, The witness of Science, the witness of History, and The witness of a Changed Life.

This first witness is The witness of Unity.

## **The Witness of Unity**

Now, some of you might be wondering what I mean by the witness of Unity. This is the individual, the witness that steps forward, and begins to talk about the consistency of the biblical message.

This witness tells us over and over again that even though the Bible was written by some 40 different authors, of very different backgrounds, and over a period of 1,600 years, all of the topics they talked about, they agreed with one another. There is a unified theme, a unified message.

## **Topics covered in the BIBLE**

Topics such as God. They wrote about mankind. They wrote about sin. They wrote about salvation, how a person is saved. They wrote about death.

Now, those are really incredibly important topics, but more than that, they're very controversial topics. And what I mean by that is if you went out on the street and interviewed, I don't know, say 50 people, and you asked them to write few paragraphs on these various topics. You'd probably have about 50 different ways that people described all of those things.

Now imagine that you interviewed 40 people to write on those topics and many more, and then spread them out over a period of 1,600 years. I think you know what you would end up with. You would end up with contradiction upon contradiction. Some people would say there is a God. Others would say there's no such Being. Some would say He can be known. Some would say there's no way you can know God.

Here's the cool part. In the Bible, when we read through the Scriptures, we see that all of these things have a consistent theme and a consistent thread of truth. All the way through the Bible, the consistency and unity of the Bible proves that even though there were 40 different human authors, there was one author who oversaw the entire writing process, and that is God Himself.

Let's move on to the next witness, The Witness of Prophecy.

## **The Witness of Prophecy**

Prophecy is a powerful way of proving that the Bible is reliable. One of the strongest arguments for its reliability is the fact that the Bible is filled with accurate prophecies about the future.

In fact, there are approximately 2,500 prophecies in the pages of Scripture. And you might be surprised to learn that the vast majority of them, almost 2,000, have been fulfilled.

So that means we can look at the prophecy and we can look at the fulfillment already. That leaves us around 500 prophecies or so that are still yet to be fulfilled. Well with an overwhelming number that we have of those that have already been fulfilled and to the letter, we have great confidence in the Bible's ability to predict the future and tell us about the events that are to come. In fact, the Bible stands alone in its ability to predict the future with accuracy.

Let me give you some examples. In Isaiah chapter 44, it says,

**Isaiah 44:24, 28 (ESV)**

*Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD...who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"*

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Alright, interesting prophecy. And you can see in this prophecy, the Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah about a man who is one day going to give a decree that Jerusalem and the temple itself, are to be rebuilt. In fact, you'll notice that the Lord even called that man by name. He referred to him as Cyrus. Alright.

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So what's so crazy about that? Well, here's the interesting point. When the prophecy was given to Isaiah, which was about 700 years, give or take, before the birth of Christ, the temple that He talked about one day needing to be rebuilt was still standing. The temple was completely fine at that time when Isaiah gave a prophecy about a man who had given a decree to have it rebuilt.

In fact, at the time of Isaiah, the temple would not be destroyed for another 100 years. History tells us that king Cyrus of the Persian Empire gave an order for the Jewish captives living in Babylon to return to Israel so that they might rebuild the Jewish temple, which had been destroyed some 70 years prior. This proclamation is given for us in the Book of Ezra. You can read both the prophecy and the fulfillment.

The other incredible thing about prophecy has to do with the birth, the ministry, the death and resurrection, of Jesus Christ. In fact, there are a couple of incredible chapters in the Bible that speak specifically about the suffering of

Jesus on the cross. One of them is Psalm 22. Let me share just a few verses from this chapter. It begins by saying,

**Psalm 22 (ESV)**

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ...they have pierced my hands and feet...they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (and then later in the chapter it says) *...they have pierced my hands and feet...they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

This prophecy was given in the Psalms, written by David, who was a prophet, and was written 1,000 years before the events finally unfolded, which we can read about in the Gospel accounts showing their fulfillment.

Another incredible passage and chapter of the Bible is in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 53 that talks about the suffering servant. Here are some excerpts from that chapter.

**Isaiah 53**

*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one - to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.*

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These short excerpts from these chapters in the Old Testament speak so powerfully, so poignantly about the death of Jesus Christ. And all you have to

do is read through the Gospel accounts: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and you can see how these were fulfilled in vivid detail by the events that are recorded there.

The next witness that we're going to talk about here is the Witness of Archeology.

### **The Witness of Archaeology**

When you're talking to a skeptic about the Bible, the discoveries of archeology can be very helpful to underscore the reliability of the biblical text.

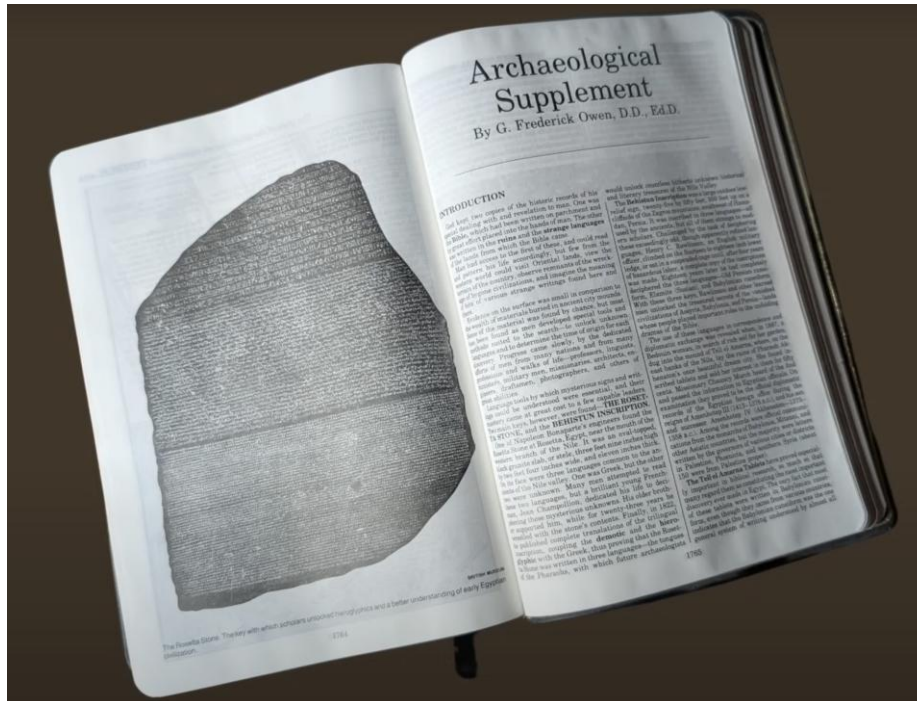


The vast amount of archeological evidence can be used to demonstrate that the people, places, and events of the Bible really did happen. We have an overabundance of evidence speaking to us about the reliability of the Bible.





The archeological digs that have been going on in the Middle East for many years are continuing, even today. And they continue to find more evidence of the things of which the Bible speaks: the places, the nations, the wars that took place, the events that happened in that area.



For decades now, Bibles have been printed with little archeological supplements in the back to help people to understand what has been found archeologically that corroborates the biblical text, so this information is widely available to all people.

**SESSION ONE: HOW CAN I KNOW  
THE BIBLE IS RELIABLE?**

**expeditionbible.com**



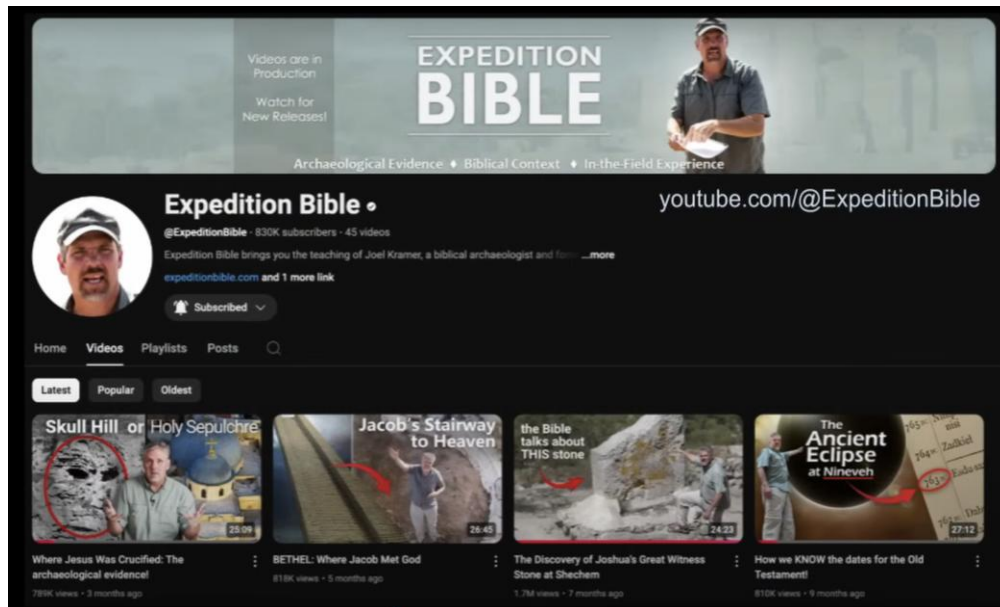
**Joel Kramer**

**KNOWING  
what you  
Believe**



I would also encourage you to check out a particular website called: [expeditionbible.com](http://expeditionbible.com). This is a website operated by Joel Kramer, who is a

biblical archeologist, and a believer, who lives in Israel, and produces videos about the incredible discoveries that have been made in that land that corroborate the Bible. It's really a tremendous website, and there's a corresponding YouTube channel as well.



Also, I will include [a link to an article](#) in the Study Notes for this session that highlights 10 crucial archeological discoveries that are related to the Bible. It's really good for you as a Christian to be familiar with the archeological discoveries that have been made that corroborate the Bible, so that you can speak to other people about the reliability of the Scriptures.

Okay, let's check out the next witness. This is the witness of science.

## The Witness of Science

When we look into the pages of Scripture, we find that the Bible does make scientific statements. It makes statements about the created universe. Let me give you some examples.

First of all, the Bible correctly describes the shape of the earth.



It's in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 22. It says,

**Isaiah 40:22 (ESV)**

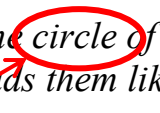
*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;*

*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth...(and then it makes another scientific statement) who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,...*

Let's take the first one. Did you know that the word that is translated, circle here, is a Hebrew word that means sphere or even circuit, which means something that goes around. It depends on the context, of course, but in this case, it indicates something spherical.

**Isaiah 40:22 (ESV)**

*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;*

**Hebrew**  *circle (sphere); make a circle (circuit)*

And then notice that Isaiah writes that God stretches out the heavens like a curtain.



**Isaiah 40:22 (ESV)**

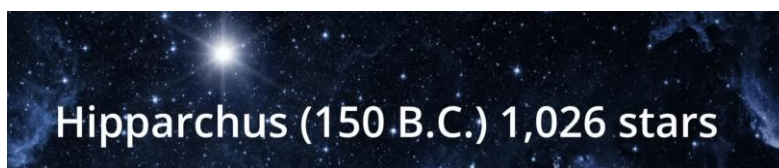
*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth...who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;*

In other words, it speaks of a universe that is constantly expanding. This is pretty fascinating in light of the fact that the Book of Isaiah was written 700 years before the birth of Christ. Long before science had clarified or proven the shape of the earth, and long before science had understood that the universe is constantly expanding.

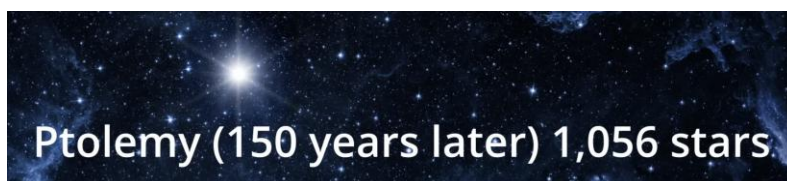
Here's another example from the Bible. Long before the telescope was invented, men used to believe that they could count the stars.



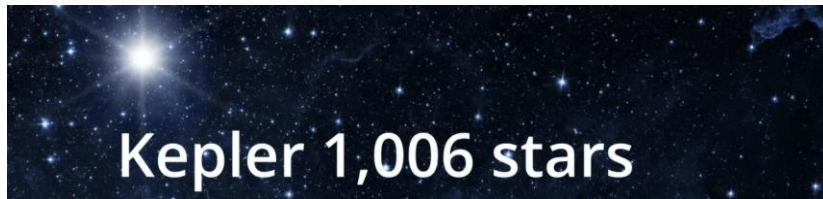
In fact, a scientist named Hipparchus, back in 150 B.C. boldly claimed that there were exactly 1,026 stars in the sky.



150 years later, a Roman named Tomi said it's 1056,



And then a man named Kepler counted even fewer stars, saying there were 1,006.



Well, those sound funny today because with our modern technology and high powered telescopes, we estimate that in just the Milky Way galaxy, our galaxy, there are 100 billion stars.



And yet 600 years before the birth of Christ, God moved upon the prophet Jeremiah to say this,

**Jeremiah 33:22 (ESV)**

*As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant..."*

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Finally, I want to bring up one other scientific law that's referred to today as, The Law of Entropy. It's also referred to as the second Law of Thermodynamics. Those are big, fancy names, but basically it simply means

that science has discovered that all matter is in a constant state of deterioration. It is breaking down. All matter is breaking down. It is literally wearing out. Well, the second Law of Thermodynamics was primarily established somewhere around 1850 by a German physicist.

Now, if the Bible truly makes accurate statements about the universe, we would expect it to say things that are in keeping with this proven law of science, and it does. In fact, more than two millennia before science got around to giving this law a fancy name. Check this out from Psalm chapter 102.

**Psalm 102:25-26 (NIV1984)**

*In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.*

*In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. (listen to this) They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.*

Isn't that incredible? Basically what you have there in that Psalm, is a poetic description of the Law of Entropy. Here's how Jesus said the same thing,

**Matthew 24:35 (ESV)**

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."*

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."*

And these are just a couple examples of the Bible making correct scientific statements about our world and our universe.

Next we come to the Witness of History.

**Witness of History**

And basically what we're asking here is, did the biblical writers record what really happened? In other words, is the Bible historically accurate? And by the way, the historicity of the Bible is closely related to archeology, because through archeology, much of the historical accuracy of the Bible is shown to be true.

Let me read for you a list of historical events and then I'll tell you when I'm done what they all have in common. They are:

### **HISTORICAL EVENTS**

- The military campaign into Israel by Pharaoh Shishak around 926 BC
- Revolt of Moab against Israel around 853 BC
- Fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria around 721 BC
- Defeat of Ashdod by Sargon II in 713 BC
- Campaign of the Assyrian king Sennacherib against Judah in 701 BC
- Siege of Lachish by Sennacherib ALSO in 701 BC
- Fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians in 539 BC

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Now, I could go on and on citing events that are listed in the Bible, but what do all these things have in common? Well, they're all mentioned in the Bible and corroborated by historical documents and discoveries outside the Bible.

Another powerful proof of the historical accuracy of the Bible is given to us from the master historian himself, Luke, the doctor. In the third chapter of Luke's Gospel, he incites no fewer than 6 historical time markers when he's telling about events of that time. Let me show you this from Luke chapter 3. He writes,

### **Luke 3:1-2 (ESV)**

*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.*

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*Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.*

This is incredible. Six different time markers. Let's look at these in a bulleted list. They are:

### **LUKE'S HISTORICAL TIME MARKERS**

- The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar
- Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea
- Herod was tetrarch of Galilee
- Philip was tetrarch of the regions of Ituraea and Trachonitis
- Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene
- During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas

The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea. Herod was tetrarch of Galilee. Philip was tetrarch of the regions of Ituraea and Trachonitis. Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene. And it was during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.

Now, first of all, Luke didn't have to go into all this detail and give us all of these time markers, but he did anyway. The problem is that for many years, historians believed that Luke had made a mistake.

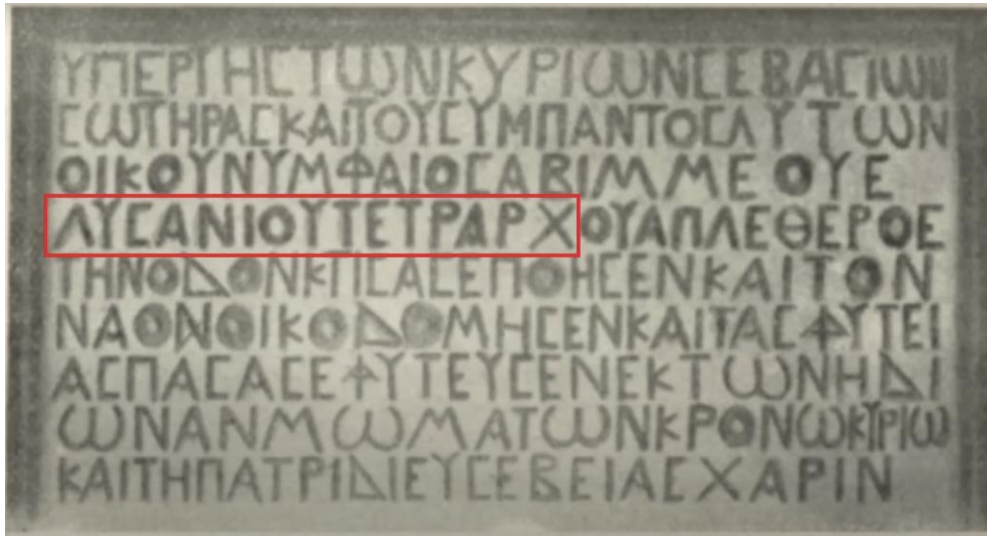
And the reason they thought so is because another historian, a man by the name of Josephus said that Lysanias served as tetrarch of Abilene before the time of Christ. Luke is giving us dates during the time of Christ.



So who's correct, Luke or the historian Josephus? Well, for a long time, Luke was considered to be the one who had made a mistake in his timing. Up until about 15 years ago, that is, because around 15 years ago, literally less than 2



decades ago, a discovery was made that showed an inscription that read like this:



Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene has paid for these roads, et cetera. And this inscription places Lysanias under the authority of Tiberius Caesar and Pontius Pilate.

Well, clearly there was another man that Josephus wrote about by the same name, possibly even a relative who had ruled that same area many years earlier. The bottom line is that the Bible proves again and again that it accurately presents history as it happened.

The final witness that we're going to hear from that will speak to the reliability of the Bible is the Witness of a Changed Life.

### **The Witness of a Changed Life**

One of the claims of the Bible is that through the Word of God, there can come a transformation of a human heart. This is something that the apostle Paul wrote about in the Book of Romans when he said,

#### **Romans 6:4 (ESV)**

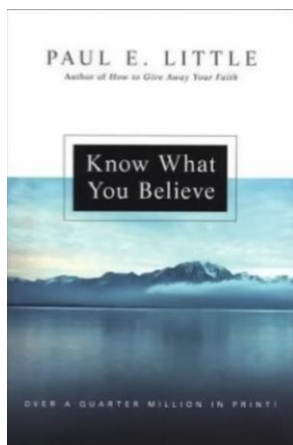
*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

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This whole idea of walking in newness of life is the witness of a changed life. Can God's Word really do that? Well, I think there are many people, probably many who are even watching this right now, who could stand up and tell how the Lord has truly changed their lives through the Word of God.

Several years ago, pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa wrote a book called, Harvest. Perhaps some of you are aware of this book or have even read it. It chronicles the lives of several young men who literally had been ruined through drug abuse and other sorts of things, but whom God saved and transformed through His Word, making many of these men com into completely different individuals, many of them becoming pastors of large churches.

I want to read something for you. It's an excerpt from another book, a book that I discovered many years ago when I was really just first walking with the Lord. It's a book that inspired, in fact, this video series. It was written by Paul Little and it powerfully illustrates the power of God's Word to transform a human life. It goes like this,



Ernest Gordon, a prisoner of war during World War II and later a chaplain at Princeton University tells in his book through the Valley of the Kwai, how he and the other prisoners of the Japanese on the Malay Peninsula had been reduced to acting like animals stealing food from others who were also starving. In their desperation, the group decided it would be good to read the New Testament. Because Gordon was a university graduate, they decided he should lead, but by his own admission, earnest was a skeptic. And those who asked him to lead were unbelievers too. Gordon and the others eventually came to trust Christ through the New Testament. How this group of scrounging, clawing

humans, was transformed into a community of love is a touching and powerful story that demonstrates the power of God to change lives.

You see, one of the things that we have really proven through this first session is that even though the Bible is a grouping of books written by various individuals, it was inspired by one author; God Himself, and that's why we call it, the Word of God, because God moved upon those who authored the Bible to write what they did.

And that means that even though there were these different authors contributing to the writing of the Bible, there was really only one author, that's God. And because it is God's Word, there is an inherent power in that Word. As the Bible even testifies about itself, saying the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. (Hebrews 4:12)

So the Word of God can make such a powerful difference in the lives of people just like that story of those men from World War II. We all come to God in desperate need of transformation, and as we repeatedly expose ourselves to the Word of God, the Lord renews our minds, and we begin to think differently about life, about ourselves, and about other people.

And as we keep reading and keep studying the Word of God, the Holy Spirit takes that word and He begins to impact our hearts in ways that we can barely understand. This happens through instruction and conviction. And as we apply the Word of God into our lives, we begin to discover a new stability that begins to take hold. A stability that enables us to stand even when life throws its worst our way.

Jesus described this process of stabilizing our lives through the Word in Matthew chapter 7. Let me show you this as we close. He said

**Matthew 7:24-25 (ESV)**

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”*

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All the things He describes in that. The rains falling, the floods rising, the winds blowing and beating upon that man's house. Those all speak of the difficulties that we all go through in life, but as Jesus said, this man's house remained, and of course, that speaks of the man himself. Why? Because he has built his life on the foundation of God's Word. It truly is a powerful transforming thing.

Well, this wraps up Session 1 of Knowing what you Believe. We'll see you in Session 2.