



“Your Future in the Bible”

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I want to thank my wife for something else pretty cool she allowed me to borrow this neat device it is a IPod touch, for our journey, I was able to take that on the plane and it does lots of really cool amazing things. I don't know if you have a chance to play around with something like this, but the technology is amazing. You can listen to music, you can watch videos, you can have all sorts of different things, you can play around within it. But I think it is ironic that a high-tech device like an IPod is also something that has really increased something that is pretty low-tech.

Five years ago if I said the word kindle to you, you would think of fire. Now you think about the most gifted item in the history of amazon.com. Here's the thing, reading is making a comeback. Woot! Some of you are more excited than others. But I think that it is really cool, people are reading in more places and more places than ever before, because of devices like the IPod Touch, and the Kindle and the Nook. All of these e-reader devices have really increased the number of book sales out there. E-book sales have climbed to about 10% of the entire market, and the sale of these devices have been up 193% since just last year alone. It is really moving forward, it is growing. And I

don't know exactly why this is happening. My gut says it's just because people finally think that it is cool to read when you are holding this, rather than a copy of, *Lord of the Rings*. I think that it just looks cooler in public that way.

But regardless of the reason, regardless of the reason I think it's great that more of us, and therefore, more of you are reading, in increased numbers. But it brings up an interesting question when we think about reading, I want us to consider: What are you getting from your books? What are you getting from your books? Different books contribute differently to our lives. I just grabbed a few random examples of books out there. We have everything from, *Green Eggs and Ham*, *Jurassic Park*, Stephen Hawking's, *A Brief History of Time*, *The Bible*. We start looking at these books and think, "What do we get from them?" Does it create enjoyment? And we can look through and have a chart here, yes, for some people, *Green Eggs and Ham*, is a lot of fun. My kids have enjoyed that. Other people with a sick twisted mind enjoy, *A Brief History of Time*, and that's okay. Does it teach information? And certainly all of them teach information to some degree, even fiction you can learn from. Does it showcase talent? Yes. Does it elicit emotion? Yes. But the big question is: What about truth? Are we getting truth from this material, because I don't know. I read *Green Eggs and Ham*, and I think, "Well, you know I'm not a fan of eating green eggs, and ham, so maybe there is some truth there." I look at *Jurassic Park*, there are some truthful things in there. There are some truthful things maybe in Stephen Hawking's books. In the Bible you start asking people, "Is it true?" And they are not sure. We don't want to take a real firm stand on truth. And that is not a criticism of anyone or any book. It is simply an acknowledgment that we have difficulties with the concept of truth.

Books fill us with ideas, and we think about these ideas, but are they true? It is hard to say with certainty; we just have to start to wonder. Now that question about truth, it has been around for a long time. Hundreds, and hundreds of years ago it started off. Remember a guy named Pontius Pilate during the crucifixion trial of Jesus, he asked that question famously. What is truth? And taken seriously, that is a heavy question and it leads us into some big philosophical arguments. There is a huge realm of scientific study, no scientific but philosophical study out there where people discuss the nature of truth. The entire field of epistemology is out there where people discuss what is the nature of truth? And they can spend hours and hours with these philosophical discussions, and we could do that too this morning if we really wanted to figure out what is truth? We could delve into that subject and we could talk about it for hours and probably leave here without a lot of satisfaction. Because philosophy can be interesting, but we don't live in a philosophical world. We live in a practical world; we live in a real world that is filled with jobs and families, mortgages and medicines. And we **don't have time** for the philosophical debates. But, this is important because we still need truth. We still need truth; we have a need to deal with truth, because practically, every one of you came in this morning dealing with truth in way or another. Just to be here in this room this morning, you engaged in truth. You choose your clothing based on the

assumption that the weatherman's forecast for the day was in the ballpark of true. You ate cereal this morning based on the assumption that the list of ingredients in your Cocoa Puffs was true, it doesn't contain poisonous substances unless all of a sudden puff corn is a poisonous substance. You drove here, assuming that the directions you got from Google Maps or Tom Tom were true. You stopped for gas and coffee, and you double checked sports center just to make sure that what you saw last night about the Rangers was true. Okay. You do all these different things, and you buy something at the Gas Station assuming that when you pull out your debit card that the balance you have listed is true, although maybe we'd like that not to be quite so true. You know. Can I get an amen? Hey, and you just said amen a word meaning truly to some guy that you've never met at a conference you've that you never been at before, but you assume that it is going to tell you truth because the brochure says it's true, right!? We assume all these things about truth. Practically, we make judgments about truth every single day. We think about it every single day in those judgments guide us and they inform us.

Now when we are faced with reading material, then, we would do well to do the same thing. We should do well to find firm conclusions about the truth of what we read. It's time to avoid being wishy-washy. We need to stand up and say firmly, "This is truth. This is a lie." We do it daily with the rest of life; we need to do it with what we read. So this morning I feel very comfortable coming before you today and saying with absolute certainty Green Eggs and Ham is a lie! I would not like them here or there. I would not like them anywhere.

I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them Sam I Am. Rubbish! Okay, that's really not my main point. This is really the more important issue the Bible, because I feel equally comfortable coming in front of you this morning and saying, "The Bible is true." This is truth. And maybe you've come to that conclusion already. Maybe you believe that and maybe you haven't. But either way it is time to decide. It is time to figure this out because if this is true, this has some really big, practical application for your life and especially for your future.

We don't have time this morning to debate it from every single angle, all the epistemology, philosophical discussions out there; we do not have time to get into everything about truth. But we do have time to run through some very practical, everyday, common sense, tests of truth. These are some things that you use every day in your life, things that you do all the time, and they serve you well. So I would just ask that this morning work with me, let's go through some of these tests of truth and see where you stand when we look at the Bible. Let's discover the truth. You ready?

Well let's talk about first things: How do we know something is true? First of all to start we need to consider whether it was true in regard to past events, because past truth matters. If you doubt me I just want you to ask anybody who ever took this product cocaine toothache drops! Cocaine toothache drops. Great for the kid. You know this is back from 1885 and you look through advertising from this era and you find out that actually cocaine was used in a lot of different products until about 1914 when they

started to pull it. According to one manufacturer cocaine could make the coward brave, the silent eloquent and render the sufferer insensitive to pain. That's great. But we now know just a little bit more about cocaine; we know that it might not be the best substance for us. It has a lot of dangers to it. It is highly addictive, and it is something that we should not be giving in place of Tylenol.

This past truth is in fact a lie. And as such, we can ignore its claims for the present and for the future. Past truth matters because it carries over. We need to know the truth about past events. If it was true then, it remains true now. And if it was false then, it remains false now even if they thought it was true before.

With the Bible, this issue is huge, because the Bible is filled with information about past events. It talks about a lot of different things that happened in the past and so it raises the question: Can we trust the bible's claims about the past? Can we trust the Bible's claims about the past? If so, we will have to take those teachings seriously if they true. If not we can safely dismiss the book as just another great piece of literature that really has no bearing on our lives today. There are a number of different ways to look at the Bible and evaluate those past truth claims, but I want to look at three everyday tests of truth we would use, because if it is good enough for the rest of life, it should be good enough for this.

And the first truth has to do with the source, I start thinking about the source, and here is the question, here is the test. Do I trust the source? Do I trust the source? Now I have spent very little time in Texas. This is my first time really, really spending any time in the area beyond a layover at DFW and a stopping at a Whataburger on a quick pass through west Texas. By the way Whataburger ketchup is amazing we had it last night, I love it. That's great. But most of what I know about Texas and its people comes not from first hand knowledge but I hear these things and I say, "They are probably true." I believe that Texans love their football, okay. I believe that Dallas is sometimes called the "Big D". I believe that I should be able to get some good barbeque or Tex-Mex somewhere within a 1 mile radius of wherever I'm stand. I have heard those things. I believe those things and I believe them because somebody told me. People told me these things. Whether these are from friends or whether it is from magazine authors or people who are on TV who have showed it. I believe these things because people told me.

Now I don't believe everything that I have ever been told that means you Shamwow guy, but I recognize that if the source is trustworthy then I am going to accept what they say as truth.

So what happens when I apply this test to the Bible? What happens when I apply this to the Bible? Does it show me that my sources related to the Bible are trustworthy when it comes to the past truth that is out there? And in a word, yeah, yeah. I find out a lot of different things. I start looking at it and I say, "You know what the source has remained

intact. If the Bible were a lie, I'd expect it to have been modified somewhere along the way. Instead, when I look at the Bible I find that the Bible I have here this morning is the same as what they had all they way when it was written.

Now of course, there are various English translations along the way and your King James Version and the NIV version and whatever I have here the Holman Christian Standard Version, they might read a little bit differently, but the Greek and the Hebrew text the originals that they are based off of are the same from when they were written. They have remained unaltered.

Now the process for figuring this out is pretty simple. You know that something was written way back in ancient history. They didn't have Xerox machines so they to make copies of it to be passed down. And to figure out if something that I am holding is an accurate representation of what it said way back then all I have to do is figure out when this was written. Figure out when my earliest copy is and figure out how many copies I have and then cross check it.

For example Plato the philosopher there wrote a lot of stuff between 427 and 347 BC, he wrote some stuff back there, the earliest known copy that we have of his writings come from around 900 AD. That means there is about 1200 years of a gap between when he first wrote it and when we can find our earliest copy. Okay fair enough, things get destroyed along the way, people lose them, they misfile them, they burn them up, whatever. But we find those then we find out that there are 7 copies of that manuscript and we cross-check and we look at those and we say, "You know what, those seem pretty consistent so we are pretty confident that we have now is the same thing that he wrote back then. Okay, we do that with all the other text from the ancient world too, the writings of Caesar, the writings of Aristotle and others, most of these things have gaps of 500 or more years from the original writing to the copy, and we have a handful of copies that we look at and we can compare and we say, "Yeah, that is trustworthy." Okay.

When we look at the New Testament, when we look at the Bible the New Testament was written between 50-100 AD, you know different dates in there. Our earliest copies date back to 130 AD. The gap is less than 100 years, and we look at the number of copies that we have to cross check it there are over 24,000 copies or fragments of copies that we have for cross-checking. That is pretty cool. That is pretty good. And with evidence like that, it leaves me no doubt that what we have is intact. The source itself has remained in intact over these years so that gives me hope that helps me understand that I trust the source.

I also find out that the sources are consistent, the sources are consistent. If the Bible were a lie, I'd expect less congruency. After all, the source is a group of 40 different authors who wrote 66 books, over a span of 1500 years, in three continents, in three different languages and in multiple genres. Such a book, such a collection should have

multiple discrepancies should have a lot of inconsistencies, contradictions along the way. And yet when I look at the Bible and I read through it there is no such problem.

Consider this you look back at the Old Testament you see the Old Testament books of Kings and the Old Testament books Chronicles and you read through them and you see them talking about the same time period. You see them talking about the same people and the stories that I see in Kings match up with what I see in Chronicles, both tell the story of the nation of Judah and its rulers. They match – same kings, same events!

I go to the New Testament and I see four separate accounts of the life, death and ministry, of Christ and the resurrection of Jesus. I see four copies here that we call the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and I read through them and yeah some of them provide some different perspectives but just like any group of eyewitness they have different perspectives, they might share different details but they all come together, they all harmonize. They all harmonize.

We even find consistency between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The principles that we find in the Old Testament line up with what we see in the New Testament. The description of God that we find back there, this holy and just and loving, and merciful God from the Old Testament is still the holy, and just and loving and merciful God that we find in the New Testament. The sources are consistent and the more that I read the Bible, the more amazed I am at how consistent those teachings are. The sources seem trustworthy.

I also look at this and say, the sources don't benefit. If I am trying to decide if I trust a source I want to look and say are these sources benefiting from it? Do they have anything personal to gain from it? If it were a lie I would expect the Bible to a whole lot more self-serving to its authors. But instead I find it to be very unflattering to its authors. Paul as he is writing some letters says that he is the chief of sinners. Woo, that is great when you are trying to write to a church crowd, right? The chief of sinners. Matthew one of the disciples records how when he is talking about his experiences with Jesus how he and the other disciples were clueless. Jesus is teaching and they are just sitting there, "Um, could you explain that?" That's not very flattering, I would like to at least you know make myself sound a little better but they are not trying to do that at all.

I find that the authors for the most part are anonymous, they write these books and they are not trying to get any credit for themselves. Tradition tells us that a lot of the authors that we find, but some of them we still don't even know who wrote the book of Hebrews for sure. They are not trying to gain anything from writing these things. They are not trying to gain credit from this.

I find also that the authors suffered as they are writing this material. It is one thing to be skewered by critics, it is another to experience what it says in Hebrews 11, "mocking, and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword." Paul himself describes his experiences in 2

Corinthians says how he was beaten, lashed, stoned, and shipwrecked because of this message that he has written down, that he has preached. You don't face that kind of persecution unless you are really convinced of your message. The sources are not benefiting from this, and based on that it seems trustworthy.

Do I trust the source? Yeah. The source seems trustworthy. That is an everyday test of truth that we see here, that says the Bible and its past truth is correct. There is another test, okay, let's keep going. The story, let's talk about the story. Is the story believable? This is another everyday test of truth that we face.

You know it got me thinking about my son Jacob. Jacob is 7 years old and he is full of energy, got a lot of stuff going on there, but he is losing teeth, you know, typical kid thing to do here. He is missing his two front teeth there. And he excited when he lost his first tooth last year because he was going to put it under his pillow for the Tooth Fairy. Okay, he is excited about this. And he puts it under there, and I'm not a bad parent, I'm really not. But every now and then I am forgetful. And I went to bed that night and I woke up the next morning and as I sat there it just hit me like a bolt of lightning, oh my goodness the tooth is still under the pillow and I didn't put any money there. I am sorry if I am spoiling the message, Tooth Fairy not real. Sorry. But I realized I hadn't put any money under his pillow, so I am like he is still asleep I can do this. I go grab some quarters, I sneak into his room all ninja like, I get there I get it under his pillow, I slide it in underneath, everything is good, I just got to get that tooth. I am feeling around I can't find the tooth, okay, I am probing and probing, and I am probing and all of a sudden Jacob wakes up and he turns around and he is like, "Dad what are you doing?" And I thought quickly and I said, "Buddy I was so excited to see what the Tooth Fairy would bring I just couldn't wait." So I pulled the pillow back and we marveled that the Tooth Fairy left him some money, and she even left the tooth so he could save it as a keepsake, what an awesome Tooth Fairy it was. Kids are so gullible, you've got to love it. And my point is they can hear the silliest stories and believe them. Now we are not going to get into the morality of me telling such an obvious lie. That is for another conference.

But the issue here is believability, believability. And for that we have to focus on the everyday test of truth. I believe some things I believe some things because they sound realistic. There is just that ring of truth to it when I hear the story. The story seems to match the things that I have seen in real life, the details are convincing enough and in everyday life I decide if a story is believable so I wonder what happens when I apply this test to the Bible? What happens when I apply this test to the Bible? Does it show me that the Bible is faithful for the past? And here I am going to have to say, "Yeah, it does." Consider the following things, the details of the Bible stories fit known history. If it were a lie I would expect the Bible to be filled with made up facts along the way. But historical and archaeology evidence verifies much of what we see in the Bible. It contains real people, the existence of these people groups that it describes are out there. People from the Hittites to the Romans were real people. The leaders it

discusses, Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, Caesar Augustus, Pontius Pilot, they are all real people we can document that, so they are real.

It has real places. You go to Israel today you can find Jericho, and Jerusalem, and the Jordan River, and these places that are in actual existence. It's not talking about Narnia, or Hogwarts or Oz. This is real stuff, these are real places. And they are real events that happened, well not everything in life gets recorded for posterity. I mean we won't know what you got for your birthday in 500 years, okay, but a lot of the major things do get recorded and we look through and we see details in the Bible corresponding. We see the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC, it happened, it matches up. The expulsion of Christians and Jews from the city of Rome in 49 AD with the Edict of Claudius, it talks about it in the Bible history back it up, it happened, those things match up. The details make the story believable. We do a little more digging we find out the characters are all too human. When we start looking through the Bible if this were false I would expect the people it described to be too good to be true at least when it is talking about the heroes along the way. But much like the authors who weren't too interested in self promotion we find out that the Bible is not too interested in putting an inflated view of its subject matter out there, the characters are believable guys. King David, hero, you know one guy that we look to and says, "This was a man of God. He was a great guy." And yet it also talks about him being an adulterer and he arranged a murder. These are not usually qualities you want out of a hero, but there they are for us to see.

Abraham the father of our faith, and yet it talks about how he is out there lying to protect his own skin. We see other stories out there, Paul one of the most influential Christians to live starts off the story as a strict persecutor of Christians. He approves the death and imprisonment of those that believe in a resurrected Christ. This is not exactly the picture of a guy that we would want out there. But the Bible shares it. The characters are way too human, the people are believable along the way.

We also find out that the story authentic detail, believable stories have believable details, stuff that you would have no reason to make up. And there is just plenty of stuff in the Bible that they would have no reason to make up the way they do it. In John 21:11 it talks about a fishing incident involving Jesus and it just throws in the details that the boys caught a 153 fish in the net, okay, 153 fish. Why would you make that up? It is just there. 1 Chronicles 27:30 talks about the fact that Obil the Ishmaelite was in charge of King David's camels and Jedeiah the Meronothite was in charge of the donkeys. And we care why? Who would make that up, it just seems like an insignificant detail but there it is. In the final chapter of Colossians Paul passes on greetings from random people, like Aristarchus, Archippus, Demas, and Justus people we don't know anything about. We don't know much about these guys. Why would they, if they are making this stuff up, wouldn't we want to include, you know, influential people; Peter says hi, Jesus says hi. You know who is Justus? Who is Demas? Who is this guy taking care of the camels and the donkeys? Nobody cares about them, why include it unless it's true? This stuff helps me realize that the story itself is believable.

And I will throw this disclaimer, asking is the story believable can be hard for a book that talks about the miraculous. That talks about virgin births, and arks and floods and resurrections. If the whole thing were just a bunch of superstitious stuff along the way, like Greek mythology with fictitious characters and places, and events, then okay, it would be fine to dismiss it. But the fact that the authors are so credible on their details, matching history, giving us realistic humans, and sharing details that no one makes up that makes it easier for us to say, "You know what? I think they are telling the truth. I don't think they are making this up along the way." And if the story line is about a God who interjects Himself into history then this could actually be plausible. So based on the story the Bible seems to be trustworthy. Do I trust it? Yeah, I do.

Well the final everyday test of past of truth has to do with facts. We start looking at facts here and say, "Do the facts line up?" "Do the facts line up?" No here is a fact, here is a fact for you, Donald Trump is a success. Donald Trump is a successful businessman. I believe that even though there are still some things that puzzle me. I struggle with the fact that his enterprises have been involved in multiple bankruptcies, but most of all I wonder how someone so powerful could have such bad hair. It just doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I mean really, look at that. That is just scary. It's not right. But it comes down to one argument if I say, "I believe this, I believe that he is a successful businessman." I have to reconcile it with the fact of that hair, okay. And I believe some things because I use logic. Okay. Now on the bankruptcy issue logic says that Trump has been able to separate his personal and cooperate finances and so even though his company is had issues, personal he has been able to maintain a vast income, so he can be a successful businessman in terms of those results. Okay, logic says, I can figure that out. On the hair issue, logic says that bad hair is a luxury you can afford if you are good at your job. Justin Bieber, Tom Brady, I mean I am just saying, bad hair is a luxury you can afford, logic tells me that. And my point is that in everyday life we face conflicting information that we have to make sense of. And by using logic we can reconcile these problems, and say, "Okay, I think I figured out the truth." We can see that logic says riding on a airplane is pretty safe, even though I know some people have died doing it. I can say that texting while driving is not a safe thing to do, even though yet I have avoided a crash. Okay. Logic helps us see, if the facts line up enough for us to believe then that tells us it is true.

So what happens when we apply this to the Bible? When I start thinking about using logic here and figuring out the facts, I find out some different things. First of all, I say that the inaccuracies that we find in the Bible really aren't so inaccurate. Skeptics love to look at the Bible and point out that it simply has the facts wrong. And they say if they can't get the simply stuff straight, if they can't get these things right they why worry about the bigger things? Why worry about the theology? But if we view it properly these inaccuracies can be easily explained. Let me give you an example, out of 1 Kings 7:23, skeptics like to point out that the dimensions that they list in 1 Kings 7 of this basin, okay there is a round basin, they like to point out that the dimensions just don't match up. It's

got a diameter of 10 and a circumference of 30, and if you calculate this out then the value of pi has to equal 3, except we know that pi does not equal 3, it equals 3.14 and all sorts of decimal points. See it is inaccurate, the Bible is wrong, they can't do that. And we could look at that and say, "Okay, that is true, it doesn't match up exactly. But that is expecting a level of scientific precision that most of us don't use." And if somebody asked you how much money you made last year and you rounded off to the nearest \$10,000 are you lying? Are you inaccurate? No you are just rounding off. If we remember that cubits, the measurement that they were using, aren't quite as precise as meters, and we think about rounding, we realize, you know what that makes sense. 30 is close to 31.4 if they are just using round numbers that is fine. The inaccuracy that we find isn't so inaccurate after all. It is just not that inaccurate.

We also find out that points of view ultimately align. Skeptics like to point to the Bible and say there are conflicts between biblical ideas. In one place it says X and in another place it says Y and those things don't match up and so we can disregard the Bible because it is just full of contradictions. But viewed properly the contradictions they actually match up. For example faith versus works, some people bring this up and Paul says in Ephesians 2:8, "That we are saved by grace through faith." In James 2:14, James says, "If somebody has faith but not works can his faith save him?" And the answer seems to be no, so we say, "Well those don't seem to match up, one says faith, one says works, conflict, so just regard it." But if you just understand the perspective it makes sense. Paul is pointing out that none of our works is sufficient to save us. We don't earn our salvation, it is a free gift. James is pointing out that the faith that we have needs to be living and active and not just lip service. And taken together those two just paint a good picture of what the truth is. We are saved by faith alone and truth faith will end up demonstrating itself by the things that we do. There is no conflict it is just presenting two sides of the same coin. So those points of views that seem in conflict really they ultimately align.

We also find out that moral problems really aren't a problem. Critics of the Bible sometimes like to take the moral high ground. And they say the God presented in the Bible does not act like God should act. If He is a good God why does He allow such terrible things to happen to good people? For example Joshua and the Israelites in Joshua 6 are commanded to completely destroy the people who live in Jericho, they are supposed to go in there and wipe them all out. And that is tough, that is a tough teaching, but if we stop and think about it, we can figure this out, we can rationalize some of this, because God Himself explains the reason. He says, "The people who live in this land are wicked and they are going to turn the Israelites away from worshipping the true God and start worshipping false gods." And God's intent was to set up this model nation in a strategic crossroads and the best chance of success is to start off with a clean slate where he doesn't have these pagan influences turning His people away from Him. And so we can think about that and we also have to stop and say, "Am I God?" You know maybe I don't know everything. Maybe I don't have all of the

knowledge of the situation. Do I know the whole situation? Do I have God's knowledge? Does God use my standards of morality, or am I supposed to be using His? When I start to look at this, it is tough! But really we can start to come to grips with some of the challenges there. If we decide we believe the rest of the Bible to be trustworthy, the parts that say God is perfectly just, He is good, He is holy, He is loving, then we have to have to assume that somehow these actions fit in with that.

If we can do that with our own country we believe that we live in a good country and when we fought against Hitler in World War II that was a good thing, despite the fact that some innocent civilians died in the crossfire. We can still say we are a good nation because of that. If we can do that with our own nation, shouldn't we at least be willing to do that same thing with God? Based on reconciliation of facts the Bible seems trustworthy. Do I trust it? Yeah. So when I look at past truth, when I look at past truth I say, you know what the Bible faces these everyday tests and it passes each one. The source seems trustworthy the story seems believable, the facts line up enough for me to say that it is true. And in everyday life I would believe something like this, and so when I look at the Bible and the past truth that is presented in there, I can conclude so far that the Bible is true. Alright, good deal.

That's not all. We have to look farther, because if it is true in the past, that's great. But is it still relevant for today? Truth carries forward from the past into the present. And why does present truth matter? Why does present truth matter? Well let me tell you. In just a couple of weeks we face some big elections in the nation. People all across the nation are going to be voting for congressional appointments and to win their votes politicians are out there telling their people a number of things, they are telling them all sorts of things, a number of things. This one over here is going to help create jobs. This one over here is going to be a fiscal conservative. This one over here is going to reject Washington politics. And this one over here is going to do the same thing too. And for us to make the choice correctly of a politician who reflects our values, we have to consider the present truth of their claims. Are they telling the truth for now? Or are they just saying what they think we want to hear? By the way the answer is B; they are just saying what we want to hear. Just in case you were wondering. But the bottom line is we need to have truth about present events. We need to have that truth about present events, because how true something was in the past, if it doesn't carry forward into the present it won't work. It is like a broken light bulb, if it worked in the past, great! But if it doesn't work now it is useless. This is important when we look at the Bible, because if the Bible has past truth but has no relevance for modern life then we can relegate it to history. We can put it in the library, we can forget about it. But if it is true for today the implications for our life are huge. So can we trust the Bible's claims about the present? That is our big question. Again there are some everyday tests of truth that we can use that can help us out, okay.

The first one has to do with the unexpected, has to do with the unexpected. Is the information fairy tale? If you watch TV for any length of time you are bound to see some

products that are just amazing, they are going to make you thin, and strong and smart, and funny, and that stain that is in your pants that's been there for the last 10 years, it will take that out too. It's great. I have a well meaning friend of mine that actually bought one of these products for us after the birth of my daughter. My daughter is going to be 2 in January, you might have seen this product it is called, "Your Baby Can Read." Have you seen the commercials for that? It's great, the commercial shows success stories, babies reading flashcards at extremely young ages. There showing it, "What's this one?" "Turtle." "That's right!" "Elephant, chimpanzee." "Great!" These babies are reading it's amazing. And it's all because of these wonderfully scientifically designed videos. So our friend sends it to us, we get the package in the mail. I see the product, I am immediately skeptical but I say, "Okay, fine, it sounds like a fairy tale, but we will give it a try." And so we pop in the video and Chaynee sits down she starts watching this thing, she watches the videos and you know what, um, our baby can't read. We tried, but on a good note, she is addicted to videos now. But that's what I expect along the way. I expect for most things, I expect fairy tales. I expect claims that are too good to be true. The truth itself that would be really unexpected, I am still waiting for an ad to say that this product will clean a lot, but grease stains, not so much. I am waiting for them to some people lost 50 pounds on this diet but you have no will power so it's probably going to get you about 3 or 4. That's what I want to hear. I believe some things, I believe some things because no one would make that up, no one would make that up. And what happens when I apply that to the Bible, it gives me the unexpected, it gives me the unexpected.

Fun stuff is excluded, fun stuff is excluded. If the Bible were a sham I'd expect it to be at least more exciting, right? There are lots of pagan religions out there that made life fun. You get to worship God by having sex. You get to take vengeance on your enemies. You get to do all sorts of things that we'd like to do, but the Bible is filled with commands that I don't get. It's stuff that we like that's getting regulated, sex, speech, desires, pride, were told not to engage in certain activities except within the boundaries that God puts there. And we say, "Wow, I mean that's hard. He's excluding a lot of fun stuff from life." Why would we make that up? I also see that difficult stuff, difficult stuff, is included, if the Bible were made up I think we'd make it easier. But instead it has some really difficult teachings in it; love your neighbor, fine if your neighbor is a nice guy. But love your enemies, what? You know that jerk from accounting? That's tough. Give to the needy, okay I yeah I can chip in a quarter when I am passing by the homeless guy, sure. 10% seriously, that's tough, this is hard stuff, difficult stuff is in there.

I also find out that the Bible is not about us. The focus is not on me. I would think that something made up would be about how it would benefits us. A lie would put us at the center, but the Bible puts us on the periphery. The focus of the Bible is on God, not on us. We are told to put aside the things that we want most, in order to do the things that He wants most. We are told to take up our cross, to put to death our own agendas and follow Him, we are to keep on focus on Him through everything. Even Heaven, even

Heaven, the thing that we think should be the culmination of human experience, human pleasure and joy, it's not even about us. It doesn't even tell us much about what we are going to be doing except worshipping God. He's the focus of the whole thing. That doesn't make a lot of sense. Overall I would expect a fairy tale for the present when I read the Bible if it's a lie. But instead I find the unexpected. I find challenge I find a focus where I not expect. And consequently I say, "You know what? This doesn't seem made up. This seems trustworthy. This seem true for the present."

Another test for the present that we see is functionality. Is the information functional? Is the information functional? Now I am not a doctor. I don't even play one of TV, but I am reasonably confident about treating some illnesses that I have along the way. I believe that when I have a headache I should take some ibuprofen, okay, that's fine. I believe that when I have allergies I can take a Claritin and that is going to help me. I believe that when I have a toothache I just need some cocaine. Officially I don't have a diagnosis for these problems along the way. Officially I can't state what chemical reaction takes place when I take an ibuprofen and it goes to my head and helps dull the pain. I don't know how that is happening. But I believe in these treatments because they work. I believe some things because they are simply helpful, in everyday life I look for things that work.

So what happens when I apply this to the Bible? What happens when I take this test and apply that to the Bible? Why I found out some things. I see that the Bible shares how to make relationships better. (It's coming, here we go. I believe remotes should work if I am pushing the button.) The Bible shares how to make relationships better. If this book is from our Creator it should explain how we function better with others, and it really does, it is filled with ethical teachings, like do not steal. It is filled with relationship principles that husbands and wives should submit to one another and love each other. Societal ideas take care of those who are in need. It talks about taking care of the alien, the fatherless, and the widow. I hear from people all the time who have tried to put these principles into practice who say, "It works. It was hard, but the biblical teaching improved my marriage." Okay it works.

The Bible also shares how to make finances better, okay. If this is from our provider it should explain how we function better with our resources, and it does. It is filled with teachings about stewardship, how to properly manage the things that I have. It is filled with teachings about generosity, how we are supposed to give things away to help others. And I hear from people all the time who have tried it, who have put these principles into practice who say, "It works, it was hard, but biblical teaching helped me get my money under control." Great!

The Bible shares how to make me better, it shares how to make me better. If this is from our God it should explain how we function better with Him, and it does. It is filled instructions and encouragement for our spiritual lives. It spells out how we can have a relationship with Him despite our sins. It tells me how I can prepare for a life with God. And I hear from people all the time who have tried to put these principles into practice

who say, “It works, it was hard but you know what? This really improved my relationship with God.”

From a functional standpoint this stuff seems true. The Bible seems trustworthy in practice, so I have to consider that to be evidence of its truth for the present. There is one more present test of truth that I would like to consider this morning. (You can go to the next slide.) And that is, does it match real life? Does it match real life? Now this might not seem much different from the previous test, but there is a key difference here, and I want to explain. (Go to the next slide) If you listen to country music at all you may have heard a fairly recent song by the artist Kenny Chesney, it is entitled, “The Boys of Fall,” and that song presents a really great picture of small town football teams, vivid descriptions the experience of being on the field, the camaraderie of being part of a team. From a functional standpoint I say that it works. It describes a lot of towns, like where I grew up in northwest Kansas, small towns that had football teams, it describes it, it works, okay. But the song went a little deeper for me, one of the verses says the following, it says, “In little towns like mine, that’s all they’ve got. Newspaper clippings fill the coffee shops, the old men will always think they know it all, young girls dream of the boys of fall.” And as I listen to that verse it was like a time warp, I was back there in high school, you know, and I am thinking about the experience and I am smelling the smells of the field and hearing the sounds, and hearing the cheers. And I am thinking of all this time about my Dad, sitting at our local, we had a drugstore with an old fashioned fountain there, okay. And he used to go there and he used to sit there at the old shop there with his buddies from town drinking his black coffee, talking about what was going on. Complaining about the coach and the decisions he’s making, and saying how they could have done it better if we just run a single wing formation, that would have worked out better. And he is talking about this, and I go back and it is such a vivid glimpse into my own past that I broke down in tears in the parking lot, because my Dad passed away 5 years ago. My Dad passed away in ’05 and that song, just sitting there all of a sudden brought this flood of memories back. And I got to think about my Dad and I got to hear him in my minds ear along the way. It wasn’t just a functional description of life in a small town with small town football, it was my life, it was mine. And I believed some things as it says in the next slide, I believe some things because I have lived them. Forget about anything else, this is part of real life, it is my life.

So what happens when I apply this test to the Bible? What happens when I apply this test to the Bible? You get my story, that’s what happens. I don’t have a super dramatic conversion experience. I grew up in a church going family, I was baptized at age 10, I went to church camp, I walked the straight and narrow, I go to Bible College, I worked at churches and I end up here at this conference, okay. But the words of this book, the words of this book here, have become part of who I am. I can testify to the things that it says. I have lived the results of obedience. I have felt the consequences of sin. I have been able to worship God in the way that it says. I have been on my knees in worship. I have spent time in awe of God, I have felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. This is my

story. It's me. And I know what it has done for me, it is personal. And there are some things in life that is just the way it is. You only know it is true by experiencing it. As a parent if you have never been a parent, you will never fully understand what it is like to love your kid, until you have them yourself. You won't. You can try to tell people, you can explain all you want, but you will never know it until you live it. And it is the same thing here, you will never know the full truth of the Bible until you live it. Your story, I don't know, I don't know your experience, only you can speak about your experience. But think about what you know from trying to live the Bible, if you've done it. Think about, are the failures or faults in life your own, or they the Bibles? You know what helped you to succeed. I can't share anything about what you have gone through, only you can do that. But your experience can help confirm that the Bible matches real life. You will just have to take my word for it, or take your own. But the Bible passes this test, it matches real life. So in matters of present truth then, the Bible works, the Bible works, it matches real life.

It's functional, it's unexpected, it's true for the present. There is one last thing though that is pretty important, okay. It is true for the past, it is true for the present, but we also see the Bible is true for the future. And that's no less important because future truth matters, future truth matters. If you don't believe me ask any small business owner about the tax year for 2011, we don't know what the tax rate is going to be for your business, you don't know how to function, you don't know what to do as far as planning, as far as hiring, as far as what to do with your profits, you don't know what to do there, but future truth matters, we need to know the truth about future events. And that is true for the Bible too. The Bible talks about the future a lot, it talks about it a whole lot. Depending on how you classify prophecy at least a ¼ of the Bible's content talks about things that were, and some that are still in the future. It is stuff that is way bigger than tax policy too. The question is can we trust the Bible's claims about the future?

There are some more everyday tests of truth, and we will run through them real quick. Do they have expertise? That is one everyday test of truth, do they have expertise? Now I think about cooking chiefs, you know people that cook things. I am terrible in the kitchen, I have no idea what happens when you take this ingredient and mix it with this. I know usually the results aren't good but a chief can tell if you do this and this and this you get this result in the future. They know it, they already have the expertise to tell you that. All I know that if you add bacon it's going to be good, that is the only thing I can tell you. But I believe some things just because I am not that smart, I'm not that smart, I'm not the expert. And when I look to the Bible I say, "Does it have anyone with expertise about the future that I can listen to?" And the answer is yeah, GOD. Listen to God here, God has power, throughout the entire Bible God has showed that He has power over things, since He is sovereign over His creation. He controls the fate of men, He controls the fate of nations, if God can influence the future for those things, I would call that expertise. He is there, He's an expert. God has knowledge, throughout the Bible God shows that He knows all these things that are to come, even places where it doesn't say

explicitly that God was going to cause an event, it says He knew it was coming up. He knows the heart of men, and knows how they will react. He knows the plans of men along the way, if God can foretell the future that is expertise. He has a purpose throughout the Bible I see that He knows what He is planning, not only is he sovereign and in charge, but He knows where He is going, the entire Bible has a whole story that focused on the theme of Jesus and where He was going. Jesus is coming, Jesus has come, He is coming again, that is the theme of the entire book, and God is able to plan this all out and orchestrate it, and I call that expertise. He knows what is going. It seems silly not to trust the expert, and the Bible got a pretty good expert about the future. It passed that test.

Another test has to do with accuracy, accuracy. Has it been accurate in the past? I think about a television show called “Storm Chasers,” if you have ever watched it, it is fun. These guys go around chasing tornados and with their weather vehicles to try to get data. And it shows these two different crews; one has a guy who is successful all the time, and another guy who blows it, who can’t seem to get the information right. If I am going to go out there and I am going to hit a storm with somebody I want the successful guy with me, because he has been accurate in the past. I believe some things because they are usually right. And anytime you want to talk about the future you want someone who is going to be right. So what happens when I apply this to the Bible? Well guess what? It’s been right, it’s been accurate. Prophecies have been right in the past, if it were made up by men I would expect it to be full of stuff that fails. And the Bible says so itself in Deuteronomy 18, it says, “You may say to yourself, how can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord? If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously do not be afraid of him.” Guess what? The prophets in the Bible, they were right, they were right. Prophets predicted all sort of future things, they predicted that Assyria and Babylon would swing in and conquer Israel and Judah, decades before it happened. Prophets predicted that the Israelites would return from an exile after 70 years of captivity, and they did. Prophets predicted the appearance of the Messiah, it shared details that would apply to His life, like the virgin birth, and being born in Bethlehem, and that He would come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. And we see all these things happening, and we see the manner of His death being prophesized and it fulfills exactly the way it is supposed to. Those prophecies success stories aren’t just chance. The odds are too big, you can’t just say, well it just randomly happened that way. There is no way it could happen unless it was a truthful accurate prediction. Not just a guess. The Bible shows in past predictions it has been accurate, and it is accurate in the present too, it continues on today. All I have to say is Israel, it exists, you know, what else do you have to say. What other group comes back after centuries, a millennium away from its homeland and restores its nation? The Ottoman Empire? No. The Huns? No. Israel, yeah, because the prophecies are there. The accuracy of the Bible in regard to prophecies is amazing and its accuracy makes me believe that it is true, and it leaves me to the final test.

The final test of truth here, does it provide hope? Does it provide hope? It's been said that all natural desires exist because there is a natural fulfillment for that desire. I desire food because somewhere sustenance exists in this universe. I desire water, because somewhere in this universe it exists for me to drink. I desire intimacy because companionship can be found in the universe. The desire proves the existence of the source, in other words I believe some things because I want them, I believe some things because I want them so they must exist. So what happens when I apply that to the Bible? It tells me that my hopes, my hopes, that seem to have no obvious remedy here on earth, my hopes will have fulfillment someday, that's what it says. Hope will end because our hopes will be fulfilled. Dead people will live, dead people will live, my hope to see people like my dad will cease to be hope and it will become reality. Problems will be finished, injustice will be eliminated, poverty will be wiped out, healthcare will be unnecessary, the environment will be perfected, crime and suffering will be gone, our bodies will be glorified, all these problems will be taken care of. The hope is fulfilled. Relationships will be perfected. My desire to see God finally that God shaped hole in us that people talk about that is going to be fulfilled. He is going become tangible. And the Bible seems trustworthy because it shares hope that I can not find anywhere else. More specifically it explains why my hope exists in the first place, God designed me that way, it's there.

In matter of future truth, the Bible passes these everyday tests. We see all these test, we see that it has expertise, accuracy, and hope, and so in addition to knowing that the Bible is true for the past, and it is true for the present, I can say, you know what? It seems pretty true for the future too. I must agree that the Bible is faithful and true. Everyday, everyday we make life altering decisions about truth, you step in your car and you say, my brakes will work, without testing them. That's true that my brakes will work. The true that the signs out there on the interstate say that this exit gets me off at McKinney, that's true, I make a decision that it's not going to just steer me off a cliff. I decided that it was true that when I turn on the radio it is not going to electrocute me, I believe these things. I use common sense about everyday truth. And you know if I use common sense everyday test of truth with the Bible it is pretty clear, that this book right here is true. It has been shown to be reliable and trustworthy in the past, it has been shown to reliable and trustworthy in the present, it has been shown to be reliable and trustworthy in the future, this is true, it's true. And since it's true I would be an idiot not to listen to what it says. If it is true, I need to base my actions off of that, and the Bible tells me how to live right now, it tells me how to treat others right now. It shows how I should relate to God, it shows me everything about the right here, right now, I should do that. And you know what? It talks about my future. It talks about your future. And if it's true then it is true about what's to come. And it tells me what is coming, it tells me what to expect, it tells me about the return of Jesus Christ. It tells me about the accumulation of history, it is coming, and there is future and hope and it's there.

And the rest of the speakers today are going to be telling you about that truth. This stuff is true, and if it's true, we need to listen to it, we need to see that, and we see our future hope that is in there. Since it is true, listen. Figure out how your future fits in with the truth right here. Just listen to the truth. And I want to close with one passage because this is the truth, Jesus says, "Look, I am going quickly, and my reward is with me to repay each person according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those that wash their robes so they may have the right to the Tree of Life, and may enter the city the gates. I Jesus have sent my angel to attest these things to you for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the Bright Morning Star. He who testifies about these things say, 'Yes I am coming quickly,'" Amen, Come Lord Jesus.