Open Letter to a College Student

To Encourage Confidence in Scripture

It may be helpful to you to realize that ***a Bible course or textbook may be biased against the Bible as God's Word***. The book or course may treat Scripture as only human thought that developed over time. This is not how the Bible views itself, because it claims to be from God. Its authors often say "thus says the LORD" and Jesus quotes Deuteronomy that the Scriptures are from God's mouth (Matt. 4:4, 2 Tim 3:16). However, if the textbook takes a skeptic's view, you may find it:

1. Does not consider the Bible as being from God
2. Implies the Bible is historically inaccurate without giving a basis
3. Drives the idea of genre in an unreasonable way
4. Presses readers to feel we need to apologize for the Bible
5. Makes many statements without providing a basis
6. Denies fulfilled prophecy (like Isaiah 53 being about Jesus)
7. Charges writers as frauds without giving a real basis
8. Charges New Testament writers with reading new meanings into Old Testament Scriptures to have them point to Jesus
9. Claims to know why books were written while giving little basis

Please, stay on the high ground

Do not feel backed into a corner. You can have great confidence in the Scriptures as "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16) written by holy men who were "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). There is a living God who is capable of speaking what He wants through frail men, and preserving it in the Scriptures. Don't go along with ignoring God when talking about God's Word. ***If we are talking about a book that explicitly claims to be God speaking, we cannot ignore God as we consider it***.

Realize there are **very good reasons for confidence** in God's Word. The Scriptures are amazingly consistent with themselves though written by 40 very different human authors who wrote the Scriptures over a 1500 year period. This ***consistency*** is nothing less than amazing, and it demonstrates that there truly is one Author, the LORD! Further, the Scriptures show they come from the living God by the abundance of ***fulfilled prophecy*** such as the destruction of Tyre (Ezekiel 26), four major kingdoms of men (Daniel 2 and 7), and the Messiah coming to the day (Daniel 9:24-26). Further, the Scriptures have demonstrated ***historical accuracy***. Many accusations have been made against some specific detail in the Scriptures such as the Hittites, Belshazzar, and Pilate (see for example Bible and Theology Matters "Pontius Pilate Inscription" on YouTube), but eventually an archaeological dig shows the Word was accurate all along. Thus, the Scriptures have shown themselves reliable, and so should be approached this way. Approach the Scriptures as "innocent until proven guilty." Not only that, but Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The ***resurrection*** is a massive testimony to the truth of the Scriptures which He fulfilled in His coming and which He proclaimed as being true! Further, the Scriptures which testify of Jesus Christ as Savior of sinners have ***transformed*** millions of lives. They are divine!

Second, note how a relationship with a real God may be missed

The LORD is a personal God who desires a real relationship with us. This is woven into the fabric of the Scriptures. Yet you may find this completely missed. Don't miss the heart of the God of the Bible calling us to know Him!

Third, realize the Scriptures are overwhelmingly reliable

The manuscripts of the Scriptures are impressively reliable! We have ***over 5000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament*** compared with other ancient works like Julius Caesar for which we have 10. Some manuscripts are ***within 50 years*** of the original writings, as compared with other ancient manuscripts whose earliest copies are a thousand years later. No classical scholar would have any doubt of the authenticity of the NT documents!

We are ***not guessing at what the original writings said***. By an orderly comparison of manuscripts, we are able to discern what was written with the exception of a very few areas. Westcott and Hort spent their lives doing this, and in the end they identified that less than 2% of the Scriptures had

any remaining questions, and of these many related to things like two different Greek words for "and". No significant doctrine is affected. The Dead Sea Scrolls had a scroll of Isaiah from 200 BC which was the same as the 900 AD Masoretic manuscript except for three words. Other historical records concur with Scriptural people and events such as Sodom, Ahab, Balaam, Belshazzar, Hezekiah. Luke's records are impressively detailed in their historical connection and have proved wonderfully trustworthy.

Realize that the Scripture was **progressively recognized as Scripture**. The canon was not assembled by a council as is often asserted. The Levites put the book of the law by the ark as being God's Word (Deut. 31:24-26), so it is dishonest to suggest that the Israelites did not have written Scriptures until Josiah found them. Daniel already had Jeremiah's writings as Scripture within 75 years (Daniel 9). The canon was already known in Jesus' day. He shows the Old Testament canon began with Genesis and ended with 2 Chronicles in his statement in Luke 11:51 (2 Chr is the last book in how the Hebrew Scriptures are arranged). He refers to the three-part canon in Luke 24:44, as does Josephus. Councils just codified what was already accepted.

Write down anything that causes you to question the reliability of the Scriptures. Beware of vague statements and exaggerations. ***Read the Scriptures yourself*** and talk to believers who desire to please God.

Some further encouragements and warnings:

1. **Ask what the Lord Jesus thought**
   a. Did He see Abraham and Moses as historical? Yes. John 7-8, Mark 12:26
   b. ***Genesis 1 and 2 contradict?*** No. Quotes back-to-back in Matt 19:4-5
   c. Did He think the flood was real? Yes. Luke 17:27
   d. Did He see ***Jonah*** as a real person? He called him a prophet, and parallels him with Solomon who was a real person! Mt 12:38-41
   e. Scriptures fit together? Yes! Luke 24:27, 24:44
   f. ***OT prophets look for personal Messiah***? Yes! Luke 24:27, 24:44
2. **Compare Scripture with Scripture**
   a. The Scriptures are consistent. Paul saw it as essential to defend the gospel as consistent with Genesis (Rom. 4).
   b. The Scriptures interpret themselves. We are not left guessing.
      i. Am I left confused trying to decide ***how to apply law today***? Romans 1 to 8, Galatians and 1 Timothy 1 give clear teaching related to the law.

ii. Did different people write ***Isaiah*** at different times in history? This was contrived in the late 1700s with no basis. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found they gave no sense that Isaiah was divided. John 12:38-41 quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10 and 53:1 as written by the same Isaiah.

3. **Keep alert for Undermining Ways**
   a. **Unstated premises**: Some assert that ***Daniel*** was written around 165 BC (not the 500s BC). The false premise is that the detailed prophecies of Daniel 8 and 11 could not have been written ahead of time because they obviously match what occurred up through Antiochus IV. Unbelief assumes they must have been written after they happened. But Daniel 9 prophesies extend into AD with Messiah coming, Messiah being killed, and the temple being destroyed. Evidently God is able to prophesy!
   b. **False perspectives**: Pictures are sometimes painted to set a false stage, such as suggesting the Pentateuch is a "legend" genre, thus not historical. But Christ refers to it as historical (Mt 19:3-8).
   c. **Unfounded presuppositions**: A man made up the idea that the Pentateuch was from four different sources. Do not assume the supposed sources are real, even if the textbook lists dates for them.
   d. **Exaggerations**: One copyist error may be emphasized giving the sense that they abound.
   e. **Natural thinking**: Attempts will be made to parallel the Scriptures with natural men's writings. When researched, they are quite thin. Contrasts are more evident than similarities.
   f. **Beauty robbed**: How can we talk about the Psalms but not mention Psalm 23? Why no mention of Messianic Psalms?
   g. **Peripheral talk**: Much talk about nothing, and little talk about the rich can lull you to sleep. All Scripture is written for our learning (Rom 15:4, 1 Cor 10:12). Christ showed Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).
   h. **Missing Christ!** He's there!

Seek the Lord. A personal relationship with God is essential! God sent His Son to die as a substitute for you, satisfying the judgment you deserved for your sins. Through faith in Christ, you can receive the free gift of eternal life! The Holy Spirit can open your understanding to see Christ in the Word and to grasp God's thoughts as you handle God's inspired Word honestly.

Written with much love in the Lord Jesus, Bruce Hulshizer

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