The Bible

The bible is the biggest best seller of all times, translated into more languages and read by more people than any other single book. Despite its popularity, many people today are completely unfamiliar with it. Where did the bible come from? How do we know if the events recorded in the bible really happened? How is the bible relevant to my life today? This has some basic questions and hopefully help you better understand and benefit from the bible.

What does the Vineyard say about the Bible.

Facts about the bible

1. The bible is a collection of 66 books. The word bible comes from the Greek word for ‘books’. Scripture, another word used for the bible, means ‘the writings’.
2. The bible was written by more than 40 different authors over a period of about 1600 years. Some well-known bible authors include Moses, David, Solomon, and the apostles Peter, Paul and John.
3. The bible is divided into the Old and New Testaments. Testament is another word for ‘covenant’ which is like a contract. The Old Testament is about God’s special covenant with the Jewish people and the New Testament is about God’s new covenant based on the person and work of Jesus Christ.
4. The Old Testament books were written between 1400BC and 430BC. These books were compiled into a collection called the ‘canon’ about 300 years before the birth of Christ.
5. The New Testament was written between 40 AD and 90 AD. The early church recognized these writings as ‘scripture’ but they were not collected into an official canon until the 4th century.
6. The bible is not arranged in chronological order, which can make reading through it confusing. The various books are grouped instead by the type of writing they are-law or history or poetry for example.

Vineyard believes that the bible was written by men but inspired by God.

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16 that ‘all scripture is inspired by God.’ By saying ‘inspired,’ he didn’t mean that the bible is inspiring to read, or that the authors were ‘inspired’ in the same way a composer is inspirited to write a piece of music. The word in the Greek literally means ‘out-breathed’ and conveys the idea that the writing of the bible was intimately directed by the Holy Spirit. Peter referred to this when he wrote, ‘…no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.’ (2 Peter 1:20-21) This is why Christians often call the bible the Word of God.

At the same time, real historical figures at specific times in history wrote the carious books of the bible. The bible did not just fall out of the sky, but it is both natural and supernatural – the product of both human and divine activity. Somehow God guided the human authors to write what He wanted us to know concerning our Christian beliefs and practices.

Vineyard believes that the bible is REVELATION

God has made Himself known to men and women through revelation such as the wonder and beauty of creation, the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and the pages of the bible. What this means is that the truth contained in the bible was not arrived at merely through human effort-study, research or contemplation. God had to reveal it – show it or disclose it to the bible authors. Without revelation, it would be impossible to truly know God.

Vineyard believes that the bible is TRUSTWORTHY

Everything Christians are required to believe is based on the bible. It is, therefore, of tremendous importance to determine whether or not the bible is reliable. It would be impossible, however, to thoroughly deal with all the issues surrounding this subject in a brief pamphlet. Suffice it to say that there is overwhelming evidence supporting the bible’s reliability and trustworthiness, particularly when it’s compared with other ancient documents. We can as Christians have confidence that what was originally written down was preserved and accurately passed on over the centuries. Advances in archeology have repeatedly corroborated the bible’s record of history, further pointing to its reliability.

Most criticisms against the bible’s reliability have little to do with actual discrepancies, inaccuracies or blatant errors and more to do with anti-supernatural biases. Some critics dismiss any references in the biblical accounts to the supernatural as myth, legend or folklore.

Vineyard believes that the bible is AUTHORITATIVE

The bible is more than just a book of good ideas and helpful hints. It is the Word of God, and since God is both Creator and King, what He says has authority. The bible has authority over us as Christians in the same way a highway patrolman has authority over us as drivers. In the Vineyard, we look to the bible as the final authority for what we should believe (doctrine) and how we should live (practice). In contrast to some Christian denominations, here in Vineyard there is no person or tradition of equal or greater authority than the bible.

How to get started reading the bible

It is essential that as a Christian, you regularly read the bible. This is how you will grow and mature spiritually as well as how God will speak to you. Here are a few practical suggestions to get you started:

1. Get yourself an easy to read translation of the bible. We recommend the New International Version (NIV) with is both easy to read and accurately translated.
2. Begin by reading the gospels, which tell the story of the life of Jesus
3. Start out reading just a chapter or two every day – whatever is manageable for you.
4. Eventually get a bible reading plan to follow that will systematically take you through the bible in a year.
5. Consider investing in a ‘study’ bible which includes helpful background information that will increase your understanding of what you read.

Hopefully this has answered some of your questions about the bible and given you some practical suggestions for getting started reading the bible on your own. If you are interested in learning more please consider joining one of our small groups or attending one of our many bible studies or training classes.