

Why Your Eternal Life Starts Now, Not After You Die

“Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how transient I am. Indeed, You have made my days as a handbreadth, and my age is as nothing before You; indeed every man at his best is as a breath. Surely every man walks in a mere shadow; surely he goes as a breath; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them. Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You” (Ps. 39:4-7).

Here’s a question for you: When does eternal life begin?

Is eternal life a duration of life that only begins once you die? If so, then Christianity is about dying and not much about living. Christianity is, therefore, something for old people to think about at the finish line and nothing for young people to fret about at the starting line. This may explain why churches are filled with grandparents but not their grandchildren.

On the other hand, is eternal life a quality of life that starts at the moment of your salvation, infects and affects all of your life, and culminates at your death? If so, then Christianity is about living a new life from the moment you meet Jesus and receive His Spirit that continues forever and ever. If eternal life is the Spirit-filled life of Jesus empowering your entire life, then any day lived any other way is a wasted day.

I believe in heaven. I look forward to heaven. I hope that in my resurrection body my hair will not be as thin as it is right now, venturing home to be with the Lord before the rest of me. I hope that my current two-inch vertical leap will be replaced by the ability to dunk a basketball and that when I

sing, it will not sound as if I had been captured by al Qaeda, as is currently the case. In heaven, I also look forward to skateboarding on the streets of gold and discovering what a perfect cheeseburger actually tastes like.

Even if there were no heaven, I would want to be a Christian solely for the benefits in this life. If I died and became nothing more than mulch, or if everyone went to hell including me, I would still want to know Jesus and be filled with the Spirit in this life because it is the only way to truly live.

The Spirit-filled life with Jesus is so wonderful that even one day of it makes life worth living. Next, we will learn what this looks like for you and your family. {eoa}

Mark Driscoll is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Spirit-Filled Jesus, which you can order here. He currently pastors The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of pastor Mark Driscoll's Bible teaching, please visit or download the app. You can download a free devotional e-book from Pastor Mark here.

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The Only Solution to What's Keeping You Awake at Night

And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He

who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God (Rom. 8:10-14).

What keeps you awake at night, causes you stress during the day and floods your mind before your feet hit the floor in the morning?

Most of the time you are thinking about you, right? Then you go to church for an hour a few times a month and get frustrated with God because it doesn't seem as if He's doing enough to help you. Meanwhile, the worship leader sings about His goodness, the preacher reminds you of His promises and you go home wondering what you are missing.

You think too much about yourself. You don't think about Jesus enough. The best thing for you to do is first think about Jesus and pick up a book that helps you learn about Spirit-help. Self-help is no help. Spirit-help is serious help. The Holy Spirit helped Jesus and wants to help you.

Have you ever examined your life in light of these questions: How did Jesus Christ live His life and leave His legacy? If Jesus were living my life, what would He be doing and how would He be doing it? That's the key that unlocks the rest of your life.

I want Christ to live His life through you! I invite you to have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit just as Jesus did.

Think deeply about the Spirit-filled life of Jesus so that you can then live by His power. The order is crucial and biblical—

first, think about Jesus and then, think about you. This insight from Luke has changed my life, family and ministry, and I know it will do the same for you if you submit to the Spirit as we walk through the Scriptures in these next few days. {eoa}

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Explained: Why There Are So Many Different Bible Translations

"I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great plunder" (Ps. 119:162).

If I had to make an educated guess, I'd have to say that most of the people reading this post aren't fluent in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic. Neither am I. The problem is, those are the original languages of the Bible, which means in order to understand God's word to us, we need a translation.

Having the best possible translations of Scripture is

important because it helps us to hear God most clearly and therefore know Jesus most intimately. By way of analogy, if Jesus were to call us on our cell phone, we would want to have the best possible coverage so as to hear him most clearly. In some ways, a good Bible translation is like good cell phone coverage—it offers the most effective communication.

The third step in getting the Bible from God to you is translation. Translation occurs in service to people who want to read the books of the Bible but are not familiar with the original language in which they were written (Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic). Teams of language-theory scholars carefully undertake the painstaking process of translating the original languages into the languages of other peoples. Today, the Bible has been carefully translated into nearly 3,000 languages. Though the thought of a translation may concern some people, the fact is that most of Western literature has also been translated—because we don't use their original languages either. The first translation of the English Bible was initiated by John Wycliffe and completed by John Purvey in A.D. 1388.

The quantity of New Testament manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature.

In translating the Bible into English, four general categories of translation are most common: word-for-word, thought-for-thought, paraphrases and corruptions. The same four options are also used in the translation of other ancient books into English.

Word-for-word (also known as literal translations) make a special effort to carefully interpret each word from the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic into English. Word-for-word translations emphasize God, the divine author of Scripture, over the human reader of Scripture. The result is a striving for the precision of what the Bible says, much like one would expect in other important communications, such as legal

documents, marriage vows or contracts. Word-for-word translations are generally at a high-school reading level.

Word-for-word translations tend to be the best for studying because of their accuracy, though they sometimes lose the poetic nuances of the original languages. Among the most popular word-for-word translations are the English Standard Version (ESV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the New King James Version (NKJV). The King James Version (KJV) is also a word-for-word translation, but because of its use of archaic English, it is very difficult for some people to read. The NASB was widely regarded as the most scholarly word-for-word translation until the arrival of the ESV. It did not become widely popular, however, because of its tight copyright and sometimes stiff translation of poetry that lost some of the beauty of the original writings. Thankfully, the ESV has preserved the degree of accuracy present in the NASB while also doing a better job of translating the poetic parts of Scripture in a more fluid manner. More recently, the Modern English Version (MEV) has also been released as a word-for-word translation that is easy to read. The philosophy of word-for-word translation guided virtually every English Bible translation until the middle of the 20th century. At that time, thought-for-thought translation became popular.

Thought-for-thought (also known as dynamic equivalence or functional equivalence) translations attempt to convey the full nuance of each passage by interpreting the Scripture's entire meaning and not just the individual words. Thought-for-thought translations may include words that were not included in the original text in an effort to give the same meaning that the reader of the original languages would have had.

The best and most widely read thought-for-thought English translation is the New International Version (NIV). Other thought-for-thought translations include Today's New International Version (TNIV), New Living Translation (NLT), Contemporary English Version (CEV), and the Good News Bible

(GNB). The benefit of thought-for-thought translations in general, and the NIV, my favorite thought-for-thought translation, in particular, is that they are easy to understand and make the Bible accessible to a wide number of people.

Going one step further than thought-for-thought translations are paraphrases, which combine both Scripture and interpretive commentary into the translation method.

Paraphrases pay even less attention to specific word meanings than thought-for-thought translations in an attempt to capture the poetic or narrative essence of a passage. For this reason, many paraphrased translations do not even have verse divisions in them. Examples of paraphrased translations include The Message (MSG), The Living Bible (TLB) and The Amplified Bible (AMP).

Corruptions are “translations” of Scripture that clearly seek to undermine the teaching of Scripture. These “translations” are very poor and should not be used as credible translations for study. These include the Jehovah’s Witness translation called the New World Translation, which was written in large part to eliminate the deity of Jesus Christ.

Do you have a favorite Bible story, verse, or character? {eoa}

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Hard Proof That the Bible Is Trustworthy

“It is written” (Matt. 4:4b).

The quantity of New Testament manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature. There are about 5,800 Greek manuscripts and about 15,000 manuscripts in other languages.

This chart illustrates both the number of transmitted manuscripts we possess of Scripture and their proximity in date to the autographs are unparalleled when compared to other ancient documents.

As the scholar who did the research for this chart put it:

Although there has been an increase in the number of non-NT [New Testament] ancient manuscripts, nothing has changed regarding the applicability of the bibliographical test. Even Homer’s Iliad, which has seen the greatest manuscript increase, is still dwarfed by the NT, which has more than three times the Greek manuscripts as the Iliad. When one adds the 15,000 manuscripts in other languages, and then considers that almost the entire NT could be reproduced by the quotations of the early church fathers, one must maintain that, despite the increase of non-NT ancient manuscripts, the NT remains in a class by itself: it is by far the most attested ancient work.

Put simply, if someone seeks to eliminate the trustworthiness of the New Testament, then to be consistent, they would also have to dismiss virtually the entire canon of Western literature and pull everything from Homer to Plato to

Aristotle off of bookstore shelves and out of classroom discussions. The transmission process of Scripture is without peer.

Do you trust that the Bible has been accurately copied so that what we read today is in fact accurate? Why? Why not? {eoa}

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Where the Early Church Got the Bible

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of the Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. For no prophecy at any time was produced by the will of man, but holy men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

How did we get the Bible? Can we be sure that our Bible today is the same as what God inspired to be written? Here's the fascinating story of how the Bible got from God to us

As New Testament scholar Daniel B. Wallace has said, “Before the year 1881, you had three choices for an English Bible translation: the KJV, the KJV or the KJV.” In our day, we are

tremendously blessed to have a variety of English Bible translations that we can access easily. With so many to choose from, however, it's helpful to understand why multiple translations exist, what's the difference between them and how we came to have any Scripture in our language at all.

Many volumes have been written to explain the miraculous and fascinating process necessary for the Bible's existence. To summarize, I'll explain the five-step process that has occurred for you to read the Bible:

1. Revelation
2. Transmission
3. Translation
4. Interpretation
5. Application

The story of how the Bible got to us from God is a captivating one, and it begins with revelation.

1. Revelation

Revelation is the miraculous event whereby God revealed himself and his truth to someone and inspired them, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to write down what he had to say—perfectly (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19–21). This original copy is called the autograph.

By comparing the ancient manuscripts, we find that the vast majority of the variations between them are minor elements of spelling, grammar and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of words or phrases. Overall, 97 to 99 percent of the New Testament can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt, and not one Christian doctrine is founded solely or even primarily on disputed passages.

Remarkably, the Scripture quoted in the works of the early Christian writers (mostly A.D. 95–150) are so extensive that virtually the entire New Testament can be reconstructed from

quotations alone, except for 11 verses (mostly from 2 and 3 John).

Not one Christian doctrine is founded solely or even primarily on disputed passages.

Critics of the accuracy of the Bible routinely claim that it is in fact a series of fables and legends that have developed over hundreds of years, because there are not enough copies of ancient manuscripts to alleviate their skepticism. But a simple shepherd boy dealt a serious blow to their criticisms in 1947.

This boy wandered into a cave in the Middle East and discovered large pottery jars filled with leather scrolls that had been wrapped in linen cloth. Amazingly, the ancient copies of the books of the Bible were in good condition because they had been well sealed. What are now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls are made up of some 40,000 inscribed ancient fragments. From these fragments, more than 500 books have been reconstructed, including some Old Testament books, such as a complete copy of Isaiah.

2. Transmission

The next aspect of how we got our Bible is transmission. Transmission occurred when trained scribes carefully copied the manuscript so that other copies could be made available for people to read.

While these handwritten copies have the occasional minor error in punctuation or spelling, called variants, they were accepted as accurate and authoritative by God's people (for example, Deut. 17:18; see also 1 Kings 2:3, Ezra 7:1, Neh. 8:8).

For example, the apostles, who were the senior leaders in the early church, taught from copies of the books of the Bible (Acts 17:2, 18:8), and the early church tested all teachings

against the existing scrolls (Acts 17:11). Furthermore, Jesus himself taught from copies of the books, not the autographs, and treated them as authoritative (e.g., Matt. 12:3–5; 21:16, 42; Luke 4:16–21, 10:26). God's people have always relied on manuscripts, and these writings have proven to be accurate and trustworthy.

Tragically, opponents of Scripture have attacked its trustworthiness by falsely stating that our current English translations are built upon poorly transmitted copies. However, the bibliographical test of Scripture flatly refutes this false argument. This test determines the historicity of an ancient text by analyzing the quantity and quality of copied manuscripts, as well as how far removed they are from the time of the originals. In the next devotional, we will examine this fact in greater detail.

Have you ever read ancient literature such as Aristotle, Plato or Homer? Have you ever considered that you are reading from translations of the copies of the original manuscripts and that we have to trust such work anytime we read ancient literature? {eoa}

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What the Bible Says About the Bible

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)

If you want to really get to know someone, the best thing to do is allow them to speak for themselves. Similarly, it is both reasonable and helpful to let the Bible speak for itself. Here are a few of the deeply meaningful insights that Scripture reveals about itself:

- Given by the inspiration of God – 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21
- The very words of God – 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- All we need to know God – Luke 16:29, 31
- A perfect guide for life – Proverbs 6:23
- Pure – Psalm 12:6; 119:140
- True – Psalm 119:160; John 17:17
- Trustworthy – Proverbs 30:5–6
- Perfect – Psalm 19:7
- Effective – Isaiah 55:11
- Powerful – Hebrews 4:12
- Nothing should be taken from or added to it – Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32
- For everyone – Romans 16:25–27
- To be obeyed – James 1:22

And here are some poetic images from Scripture about Scripture:

- Sweet like honey – Psalm 19:10
- A lamp to guide our life – Psalm 119:105
- Food for our soul – Jeremiah 15:16

- A fire that purifies and a hammer that breaks us – Jeremiah 23:29
- A sword for defeating evil – Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12
- A seed for salvation planted in us – James 1:21
- Milk that nourishes us – 1 Peter 2:2

By its own declaration, the importance and trustworthiness of Scripture can hardly be overstated. From God to you, the Bible remains a wonderful book that is also reliable and relevant. If you want to hear a word from God, the best thing to do is read the Word of God.

Which of the statements above do you find most important? Which of the Scriptures above might be worthwhile for you to look up for yourself? {eoa}

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What We Mean When We Say the Bible Is Inspired by God

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete,

thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

It's no surprise that Christians and non-Christians have radically different views of Scripture. Christians claim the Bible is the Word of God, while non-Christians disagree.

Unless the Holy Spirit illuminates the understanding of a non-Christian, this differing view of Scripture will always be the case. As 1 Corinthians 2:14 puts it, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

At the heart of the Christian view of the Bible is the concept of verbal plenary inspiration. There's a lot packed into those three words, so let me explain what it means and what it doesn't mean.

Verbal plenary inspiration is a way of saying that God the Holy Spirit inspired not only the thoughts of Scripture, such as the ideas, but the very words and details of Scripture.

Jesus Himself said, "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one dot or one mark will pass from the law until all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). The English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible says this about the passage: "Jesus confirms the full authority of the OT [Old Testament] as Scripture for all time ... even down to the smallest components of the written text: the iota is the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet ... and the dot likely refers to a tiny stroke or a part of a letter used to differentiate between Hebrew letters."

God authored the entire Bible, down to every word. But God didn't figuratively sit down at a desk, take out a pen and start writing down the Bible. Instead, he inspired writers throughout history to write down Scripture. These human authors retained their own style, voice, perspective and

cultural distinctions, yet God uniquely inspired them to write down what he wanted recorded with complete accuracy. This is different from, say, the Qur'an or Book of Mormon, which adherents of Islam and Mormonism claim was the result of someone taking dictation.

2 Peter 1:20-21 explains it this way, "...no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. For no prophecy at any time was produced by the will of man, but holy men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

Do you believe that the Bible is the literal Word of God? Why? Why not? {eoa}

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How to Answer the Most Common Question About the Bible

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8)

When it comes to the Bible, I like to say, "It's all about Jesus!".

Holy Bible means the "Holy Book." The Bible is actually a small library. It contains 66 separate books (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament), written in three languages (Hebrew, Greek and a bit in Aramaic), over a period of more than a thousand years, by more than 40 authors of varying ages and backgrounds who wrote on three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe).

The New Testament speaks of the Old Testament as "Scripture," translated from the Greek word *graphe* meaning "writing," while the word bible comes from the Greek word for book.

Authors of the Bible include kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen and scholars. The books of the Bible cover history, sermons, letters, songs and love letters. There are geographical surveys, architectural specifications, travel diaries, population statistics, family trees, inventories and numerous legal documents. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects with amazing unity. It's also the best-selling book of all time and is now available in nearly 3,000 languages.

The Old Testament was written on papyrus—a form of paper made out of reeds; the New Testament was written on parchment (prepared animal skins). Because both forms of documents easily degrade under hot and dry conditions, it is providential that we have so many copies of ancient manuscripts. Incidentally, the various chapter and verse divisions in the Bible were not part of the original books. A lecturer at the University of Paris created the chapter divisions in 1228. Its current chapter and verse divisions were not fully developed until 1551. They were added, like an address on a home, to help people locate things quickly and easily.

The Scriptures exist for many reasons, and chief among them is the revelation of the person and work of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is precisely how Jesus Himself

taught us to rightly understand the Bible as the following examples indicate:

- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” (Matt. 5:17)
- “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:27)
- “He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44-45)
- “You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe the One He has sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think in them you have eternal life. These are they who bear witness of Me.” (John 5:38-39)

How is your Bible reading going? If you do not know where to start, a good place to begin is the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament and continue reading from there. {eoa}

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Think Twice Before Rebuking Someone

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44, NIV).

Sometimes love means letting things go. Love “covers a multitude of sins,” as 1 Peter 4:8 (MEV) says.

Other times love requires us to confront. If someone is doing something that will be their undoing and destruction, the most loving thing in the world is to confront them. But it is doing so with hope for the person being confronted, without bitterness, in an effort to not defeat them but to bring them to repentance. The issue is never our victory as much as God’s glory.

This takes wisdom and discernment. Since our own hearts are so prone to pride and anger, we must be sure that our desire to rebuke is truly a prompting of the Holy Spirit and therefore an act of love, and not one of vengeance that would be better left in the Lord’s hands. So we are not called, as John Calvin writes, to imitate God’s judgment upon sin, because that belongs to him alone. Rather, we are called to “imitate his fatherly goodness and liberality.” Love is our response to injustice; it’s not vengeance. Believers are marked by a life of love and are known as Christ’s disciples by their love (John 13:35).

The point of Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:44 is to challenge conventional wisdom, “to live on a level above that of ordinary decent people,” and to take our cues not from the culture but from our Father in heaven. This does not mean we ignore injustice and avoid confrontation. But it might mean that, in some situations, we keep our mouths shut and leave things in the Lord’s hands. Other times, it doesn’t mean this.

But no matter what, the heart that is led by the Holy Spirit is led not by hatred, but by love, which bears all things, believes all things and hopes all things.

Lastly, this allows us in the end leave people in the hands of God. There is a day when we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for our life. Loving someone today does not negate or diminish the reality of that tomorrow. It gives them an opportunity to know him today so that change can come before it's too late on Judgment Day.

Whom do you need to forgive so you can move on with your life and allow them to do the same?

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Are You Refusing to Obey Matthew 5:44?

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44, NIV).

As a new Christian, I must confess that I struggled with these words of Jesus. My concern was if we just loved everyone and prayed for everyone, the bad guys would just keep hurting

people.

Perhaps you too wonder, *Is Jesus denying the idea of justice here? Are we just supposed to love everybody no matter what they do to us or to others? Is the popular but false picture true that the God of the Old Testament was a God of strict justice and wrath, and Jesus is the opposite, overlooking all that and loving everybody?*

Not exactly.

First, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not prescribing how the world should live together in peace and harmony. It describes life in the kingdom of heaven that has broken into the world as we know it, directly challenging the "normal" human way of living. Part of its purpose is to stir up and challenge a world where hatred is often the norm. So, that must be remembered.

Also, Jesus doesn't give us isolated teachings to do with them whatever we want. As with any text, this one must be viewed in light of the entirety of Scripture. We have to take all of what Jesus said together. For example, in Matthew 23, Jesus rips into the scribes and Pharisees, calling them "children of hell," and in Revelation 19, Jesus comes riding on a white horse to slay his enemies. Passages like these show that there was more to Jesus than "Let's all just love everybody."

The call to love is also not a general call to weakness or passivity. Justice is real, and justice will be done. Love does not mean ignoring evil and pretending it doesn't exist. We need to be stirred by injustice. But what true love does is recognize that vengeance is the Lord's (Rom. 12:19).

This does not mean we sit back and wait for some ethereal form of justice from God. He can and does use humans and institutions to bring justice in this world and this life. We can be thankful for God-ordained means of justice in the world such as governments, courts, police forces and the military

(Rom. 13:4, for example). Sometimes, we as individual believers will make use of these, as Paul does in Acts 22:25–29, and other times we may be mistreated for the very reason that we are serving God. Nonetheless, Jesus' strong words should cause us to check our own life, heart and motives to see if we are seeing the love of God that flows to us also flow through us to others.

Is there anyone in your life who has hurt or angered you for whom you have not been praying? Will you pray for them now?

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