

ACTNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Cell Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Cell Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

Wondering If We Can Trust the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Mr Daniel Lee

SERMON SYNOPSIS

- The Bible text is derived from about 5,000 New Testament manuscripts, earliest dating back to the 3rd century AD, and the Leningrad Codex manuscript, dating back to 11th century AD, which was the most complete record of the Old Testament.
- It is a known fact that there existed some errors in the manuscripts as these were passed from generation to generation through verbal transmission until there was the opportunity to record these accounts by scribes using Hebrew for the OT and Greek for the NT on writing material which were rare in ancient times. However, the errors were not significant to alter the consistent message of the Bible as the scribes had faithfully and carefully transcribed verbal accounts onto scrolls and these were painstakingly preserved through the generations.
- Sceptics hold the view that since scribes had altered the text and inserted accounts or verses in later editions of the manuscript, hence the Bible cannot be trusted as God's written word. However, Christians should appreciate the fact that despite a large number of writers producing the large number of manuscripts, the Bible has a very low error rate and the central message of God's salvation for mankind is well-preserved over the years. The comparison of the OT manuscripts with ancient text unearthed from later archaeological finds, like the Dead Sea Scrolls that contained the 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah, shows the accuracy and consistency of the transcripts.
- The errors committed in transcribing the manuscripts or later editions by scribes do not significantly affect the meaning of the text. For example, Hebrews 2:9 has an error in 7 NT manuscripts while Acts 8:37 was inserted in later manuscripts. For transparency, these deviations are flagged out by Bible scholars for the reader's noting and reflection.
- "All scripture is inspired by God" in 2 Timothy 3:16 means "God-breathed"; carrying the life of God. Inspiration is different from and need not be perfection. Only God is perfect. Yet He used imperfect man to reveal Himself with life-giving messages that is well-preserved and useful in every way for our equipping.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Upon discovery that there are a few errors in the Bible transcripts, not affecting the overall central message of the Bible, does that create doubts in you or reduce your trust in the Bible? Share with each other views and concerns as well as actions we can take to build confidence in the Bible.

[Children's Activity: For young children, you can teach them this song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BFGWuXUdhY>. Prepare balloons, paper plates and coloured markers. Write 2 Timothy 3:16 on a board and ask the children to copy the words on to the centre of the paper plates. Ask them to decorate their paper plate with the coloured markers. Write various verses or key words/scripture on a balloon. Then throw the balloon in the air and ask the

Writing Team:

Agnes Goh, Foo Ming Tay, Hannah Ng,
Lye Kuan Loy, Ravi Cuttilan, Sharon Ward

ACTNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Cell Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Cell Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

children to use their paper plates to fan the balloon to prevent it from falling to the ground. Add more balloons with verses to the game as the children use their plates to fan more balloons from touching the ground. Explain 2 Timothy 3:16, that the Bible- God's word – is God's breathe. It brings life to us and keeps us from falling to the ground, i.e. making mistakes, sinning. God's word also moves us toward the direction He wants us to go which is best for us. Get older children to memorise the verse.]

2. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible is written by the inspiration of God or God-breathed. How does this help us have faith in the authority of the Bible?
[Verses to help us go deeper: Genesis 2:7; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:13]

3. Having settled the question of the authority of the Bible, how then do we apply the Bible in our daily Christian walk?
[Verses to help us go deeper: 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 10:17; John 20:31]

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God for bringing together faithful people and resources who meticulously wrote manuscripts for the passing down of Scripture through the ages and for those who are involved in Bible translation and literacy work to reach those in remote areas of the world.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand His Word as we read it daily for our spiritual growth, and experience the God-breathed life that it brings.
- Ask the Lord to lead us to people who have yet to believe in Jesus so that we can pass them a Bible to read and discover about God's plan for their salvation.

MEMORY VERSE

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105 NASB)

PRACTICAL HANDLE

As the Bible is a book that contains God's message for salvation which we can trust, look for opportunities to give away a Bible to someone who may be interested to read it. Give yourself a faith target (eg, give a Bible every two months or quarterly). This could open up opportunities to strike a conversation with pre-believers on the Bible's usefulness in our lives.