

BELIEVE

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DEDICATION

On this Father's Day 2025, I dedicate this book to my father who had a very strong belief in God. He spent his whole life trying to encourage and instill that same type of faith in me. He did not place limits on what God could do and the spiritual world that surrounds us. He always helped me think outside the box. One of his favorite expressions was, *"Son, you can accomplish anything you set your mind to."* He told me that a thousand times if he told me once. That expression itself was based on belief. Why? Because there is no way you can set your mind to something without first believing it can happen. That's just the way he thought and lived his life. Nothing was impossible if you truly believed and had faith it could happen. Whether it was a new business idea or instilling confidence in his son who didn't even know what the word meant.

When he entered a room, everyone knew he was there because he oozed confidence and belief. This confidence came from a deep core belief that God was with him, for him and rewarded those who had faith. He used to tell me, *"Son, it's not how many times you fall but how many times you get back up."* Trust me, I witnessed him fall and suffer many hardships that would have done in an ordinary man, but he was not ordinary. Sometimes, when I saw him lying flat on his back, I wondered if he would get back up. He did, and I respected him immensely. He showed me the pattern of success in life. It's not the size of your bank account but the size of your belief.

I could fill this book with endless stories of my father and what he meant to me. How he supported anything and everything I did. When I played a sport, he not only came to my games, but came to every practice as well. He was deeply committed. That being said, I want to share one story I'll never forget. I had traveled to California when I was in my early thirties to visit my sister, brother-in-law and of course, my father. We spent some time alone camping in the desert in search of gold. One night we left camp and went to a local Chinese restaurant, his favorite cuisine. On the way back, we saw an overlook to the side. We pulled over, parked the truck

and walked forward to the edge. It was around 10 pm at night, the air was cool, the desert calm and peaceful, with a full moon overhead which illuminated the desert floor below. We spent the next few hours looking up to Heaven and pouring our hearts out to God. Look familiar? Take another look at the cover. This image is the closest depiction I can show which expresses what that night was like. The only difference is, I was much older. Still, this picture stirred my heart. Not knowing why, I pondered it more and more.

Then suddenly I realized, my heart was moved because of that night, that night standing next to my daddy, I truly was a child.

His child and a child of God.

I loved my dad very deeply and was crushed when he passed. I still remember that night like it was yesterday. I was awakened early on November 1, 2014, with a phone call from the hospital. The words

I had feared all my life were being spoken to me over the phone.

"Mr. Dever's", they said, "Your father has passed away. If you would like to come see him, we will hold off on his final preparations."

It was 1:30am when my wife and I left for that long hour drive.

Thoughts of him ran through my mind as I drove. Upon arrival, I walked into the room where he was laid out very peacefully. For

the next hour, I just held his hand and stroked his face as the

tears flowed like rain. That hour went by so fast. It was quickly interrupted by the nurse who let me know my time was up. My two sisters, brother-in-law and nephew were on the way but would not arrive for several hours. It was around 3:30am, there were not many places to go except this lonely cafe just at the entrance to the hospital. I remember going there with my wife. Crushed in spirit, we entered through the front door. As we entered, there was a group of musicians at a table drinking coffee and playing very soothing classical music on guitars. I remember thinking how peaceful it was. The waitress approached for the order. *"What can I get you, hon?"* *"A cup of coffee would be nice,"* I said. As she returned with the coffee, I noticed my cup was different. The coffee was inside a cup that had the word *"Believe"* imprinted on the side. The unusual thing about that was all the other cups in the entire restaurant were solid white. This was the only different cup, and it was brought to me, a grieving son. I took note and felt my dad's presence. It was as if he was comforting me and telling me to not worry, he was in a better place. He was telling me once again to BELIEVE, just like he had been telling me all my life. There are many other comforting things which happened that night, but this one stood out the most. He was saying, *"Believe son, Believe for I am*

in a better place. Believe we will celebrate our reunion again one day.

Believe in the God I taught you about all my life." Believe was the simple, compelling and overwhelming message. Oh, that was just coincidence some of you might say. I say differently. There were over a hundred plain white cups in that restaurant and the only one that was different was the one brought to me. Different with the words my father had striven to teach me all my life. A word which came at the exact moment when I needed it most. "*BELIEVE*" is all it said. Thank you, my precious daddy, for teaching me that very powerful but simple word,

BELIEVE!

INTRODUCTION

Believe. A very simple word with so much meaning behind it. *As a verb form, it can be defined as: 1: to consider to be true or honest; to accept the word or evidence of 2: to hold as an opinion; as in to think. As a noun form, the word Believe becomes Belief which is defined as: 1: a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing 2: something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion: something believed (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).* Using a Thesaurus, some words of similar meaning are confidence, accept, consider, trust, faith, certainty, conviction. The Scriptures define faith as, *"Now faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see" (Hebrews 11: 1 NIV Copyright 1984 Version).* Get the picture? That simple word can derive so much significance.

Did you know everyone believes, has belief or faith in something? Right about now, you might be thinking, *"Come on Ray, you know that is not true. You must have fallen off the turnip truck. Not everyone believes in God!"* Yes, I can see why many people think that but try and consider it from a different point of view, one where everyone believes. Yes, even an Atheist believes! Maybe that belief is not in God, but they do believe in something, something they put trust in, something they have conviction about. Without belief or faith, nothing in our world happens. It takes faith to get out of bed in the morning (*my kids are shouting, "You know that's right!"*), to go to work, to apply yourself, educate yourself, to seek friendship or a companion, to seek a higher meaning or purpose, to seek a reason to live another day, or to simply choose to do nothing at all because you consider it all meaningless; all of these require belief or faith. Why? Because without belief, nothing in life matters and motivation no longer exists. Even a person who wakes up every day and says, *"I want to be a good person today because I believe in humanity"* can come to a place where they eventually say, *"I give up, what difference does it make? The world is on fire, and my hose is not big enough. Everyone just wants to think about themselves and look out for number one."* Yes, even the most hard-core selfish

person can become perplexed. There is only so much self-thought and self-purpose acceptable. As the old song, "One" by Three Dog Night goes, *"One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do."* I mean come on, even the band knew it took three dogs and not just one. On a larger scale, all societies exist or existed due to a belief or belief in something. For Rome, they believed they were the light of the world, a nation to bring civilization and meaning. The former Soviet Union, an atheistic government, believed that communism was the answer to all of life's problems. A society where no one was perceived as better than their neighbor and the government would equally distribute the wealth. In the United States, our society believes in a constitution with a bedrock foundation that all people are created equal with unalienable rights. I could go on and on about belief and argue the point that everyone believes in something. Then again, I believe some of you will never believe everyone believes so arguing the point only brings me to a place of disbelief, a giving up, a throwing in of the towel, a reason for not getting out of bed in the morning. Well, we definitely can't have that! After all, I still have two kids at home.

Having a strong belief or faith can bring with it very strong emotions. Don't think so? Have you watched the news lately? People

rioting in the streets, burning cars and buildings because of some belief that is different or an emotion that was stirred due to a strong belief. Politics can bring out those strong emotions. Have you seen the people crying in the streets after a national election? Have you seen politics divide friends and family? What about the Civil War? Brothers fighting and killing brothers because of a strong belief. The Civil Rights Movement brought positive change but at the terrible cost of a powerful leader's life, Dr. Martin Luther King. History is full of these examples. Many years ago in England, a woman stepped out onto the racetrack and was trampled by horses. Why? Because she held the belief that women should be allowed to vote. Ferdinand Magellan sailed the ocean to prove his belief that the world was round and not flat. The spark that eventually formed the United States via the American Revolution was ignited from a very strong belief there should not be *"taxation without representation."* And finally, I want to close out this paragraph with someone else who had more belief and passion than anyone else in history, Jesus Christ. Right now, some of you may be balking and thinking, *"Yep, here we go again, another Jesus freak trying to convince me to believe."* I get it, I used to think that way myself until I started looking at some facts. There is no denying that Jesus Christ

walked this earth. There is no denying that he was put to death on a cross by the Roman Empire. There is no denying that he had a band of followers who also experienced cruel deaths based on a strong passionate belief. History proves it; therefore, it cannot be denied because it is factual. Whether you choose to believe or not does not change those facts. Jesus Christ willingly gave up His life because of a very passionate belief in God's plan. A plan that still exists today, if you choose to believe.

So why write this book and for what purpose? I write for a legacy for my children and their children and their children. My desire is to help them and others who read this book be able to face the world with confidence and not cower from what they believe. I hope to express my beliefs and why I believe. The Scriptures say, *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15 NIV)*. For the person who does not believe, I hope to plant a seed which God can water. A seed which will eventually grow into a giant oak. For people who already believe but are weak, not sure of what they really believe in, tossed back and forth depending on the circumstances, I pray this book takes away those shifting doubts

which can be so discouraging, especially when we see others who appear to have no doubt. Take heart, I have been there myself and so have many biblical heroes. Always remember, appearances are not always what they seem and someone else may be struggling just as much as you but are able to mask it better. Just keep plugging away and searching for the truth. I pray you are strengthened in your faith towards a solid foundation. For those of you who believe in a deep way, I pray this book encourages your faith even more so you can share that faith with the world. Remember, everyone needs encouragement. As the Scriptures say, *"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today', so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness"* (Hebrews 3:13 NIV).

I want to present this book from three different perspectives. First, why do I believe? What are my personal motivations for believing. Second, I want to share stories of biblical heroes whose faith is truly inspiring, stories that give me chills and make the hair on my neck stand up. Third, I want to share examples where God's hand has been at work in my life and in the lives of others, how He revealed Himself at just the right time. That I am not some preachy spiritual Bible thumping lunatic who cannot relate to your struggles; just the opposite. There have been many setbacks

in my life, but my belief in God is what picked me up. I am very much *Less Than Perfect* as the title of my first book says. Through it all, I hope you come away knowing you are not alone, there is a God, and He cares for you. I pray you are encouraged, your faith is strengthened, and His blessings of peace and joy rest upon you. Let's begin that path of "*Belief*" together!

PART 1 - REASONS TO BELIEVE

MY PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS

GOD IS REAL

IT MAKES SENSE, DON'T OVER THINK IT

So, God is real? Ok Devers, prove it. As much as I would like to prove to you God is real, I cannot. The truth is no one can. Maybe that's not the answer you wanted to hear and definitely not the answer I wanted to give, but the facts are the facts. Nothing can prove with absolute certainty God is real and He exists. I can, however, present you with overwhelming and persuasive evidence which testifies to His existence. It is up to you to make a decision based upon that evidence. After all, the Scriptures define faith as, *"Now faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see"* (Hebrews 11: 1 NIV Copyright 1984 Version).

So where do we start? To be totally honest, it starts with you. Do you really want to embark on the journey to determine if God is real? Are you willing to put aside your beliefs up to this point and look at it with a fresh set of eyes, an open heart with no predetermined outcome? If so, you will be able to come away knowing you applied everything, you were sincere and gave it your all. Whether you believe in God is not the point. The point is to apply yourself with absolute self-honesty and be willing to change. My pledge to you is this, if you read this entire book and still come away not believing, I will not judge you or condemn you. That is not my place. I am just a messenger with a message. Therefore, to get started, let's begin with a very short simple prayer. Be honest with yourself and say it with all sincerity, *"God, are you real? If so, please help me to believe."* That's it, nothing more has to be said. Sometimes the shortest prayers can be the most powerful.

As I write this next section, I am watching and listening to a YouTube video of birds singing in the forest with a clear brook quietly flowing through the middle. It's very relaxing, helping remind me of who made it. For the Scriptures say, *"Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities-God's eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, because they are under-*

stood through the things God has made. So humans are without excuse "(Romans 1:20 CEB). Nature itself screams there is a God!

I am very fortunate to live on acreage in a small rural area of Texas. I get to experience nature every day. I wake up to a beautiful sunrise with birds singing in the background, watch beautiful sunsets with doves cooing the day is over and time to settle in for a quite rest. Venture into the night seeing the vast beautiful sky full of the moon and stars while in the background an owl hoots and coyotes' howl. There is nothing like a constant reminder that something very powerful made it all. Something powerful that is not explained away by scientific theory or a philosopher's ideas. I am very blessed to live in that place; however, it was not always so. I used to live in the vast city of Houston, Texas where steel and concrete abound. Overpowering noises of combustion engines, busy people, less than fresh smells with hazy skies. In that type of environment, seeing God's creation is sometimes difficult. Then again, if you have seen a man or woman, you have seen God's greatest creation and the one he is most proud of. For the Scriptures say, *"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27 NIV).* You did not just crawl up from the sea onto dry

land and evolve from a parasite. No, you were created by a supreme being. Therefore, our first examination of his creation will start with mankind.

There is an old saying I have heard many times, especially since I was in the Army. "There is no atheist in a foxhole." Simply put, when you face the chilling hand of death, day in and day out, God becomes real. In a foxhole, many claiming to be an atheist have prayed to God for protection from death. I would like to add to that saying with one of my own, *"Very few medical professionals do not believe in God."* Why? Because, after years of studying the human body and being amazed at its wonderfulness and complexity; there is no other conclusion that makes sense except we were made by something very powerful, loving and intelligent. After all of man's great achievements, he has never attained the ability to create life from nothing. Not even a single blade of grass! Yes, he has discovered how to make those blades of grass withstand the Texas heat better via altering its DNA structure; but the ability to create life from nothing has not been achieved. Consider the following facts about the human body which can be readily found via an internet search. I will not include everything as this book could not encompass it all. Furthermore, I want you to search for some of the

same facts yourself. Things learned from your own research will stay with you the longest. It's also that part of sincerely searching with an open heart and mind. The Scriptures say, *"You will search for me, and when you search for me with all your heart, you will find me" (Jeremiah 29:13 ERV).*

Brain Power – *"Your brain has 86 billion neurons, give or take-on the same order as the number of stars in the Milky Way. If you look at the synapses, the connections between neurons, the numbers start to get beyond comprehension pretty quickly. The number of synapses in the human brain is estimated to be nearly a quadrillion, or 1,000,000,000,000,000" (by Rachel Tompa, Ph.D. Allen Institute 4-21-2022).* Did you know the spinal nerve pathways can travel up to 268 miles per hour and the human brain can process around 228 trillion operations per second? All of this is happening at the same time? It is estimated to operate at 1 exaflop, or 1 quintillion operations per second, using about 20 watts of power with full adaptability, creativity, and self-learning. No supercomputer or AI comes close to the human mind in output and efficiency. *(Discover Magazine 5-14-2021; Human Brain Project 9-4-2023; NIST.gov 3-15-2023; Brownridge Research 6-18-2024; IFLSCIENCE.com 12-19-2023)* In addition to the computing capability and efficien-

cy of the mind, that grey matter in our heads offers things a supercomputer cannot. The ability to provide great healing powers as it communicates with the body via hormones, neurotransmitters, and the nervous system. Thoughts, beliefs, and emotions can trigger positive or negative biological responses. Chronic stress weakens the immune system and slows healing while things like prayer, meditation and positive thinking can lower stress, thus boosting the immune system. Therefore, we can infer that people who join support groups, have a positive outlook, meditate, pray and believe in God will recover quicker and live longer than those with chronic depression and stress. Don't think so? Then why do our doctors encourage us to have a strong positive support system? Why not just skip that step and pump us full of pills? There must be some value to state of mind which helps. You mean we can improve our own healing process with some thought out meditation and mind control? That simple fact alone is amazing and something a supercomputer or AI cannot do! (*Mayo Clinic Proceedings Vol 76 Issue 12 December 2001; "The Power of Positive Thinking" John Hopkins Medicine; National Cancer Institute at cancer.gov; Cleveland Clinic.org; PubMed Central*)

Heart and Blood – the human heart beats around 100,000 times a day pumping nearly 2,000 gallons of blood. That equates to more than 3 billion heart beats in an average lifetime. The heart creates its own electrical impulses and knows exactly how many beats per minute is needed. Our red blood cells which carry oxygen to our body make the full circuit of the body in about 60 seconds. Our bone marrow creates around 2 million blood cells every second. Our blood travels about 12,000 miles a day and if all the blood vessels in our body were stretched end to end, they would circle the earth twice. Wow, that is a lot of distance wrapped up in one human body! (*UnityPoint Health; The Texas Heart Institute; PBS; Cleveland Clinic; Medical News Today; John Hopkins Medicine; Wikipedia; PeaceHealth*)

Muscle & Bones – the human body has about 600 muscles making up approximately 40% of the body's weight. The jawbone muscle is the strongest muscle and has about 200 pounds of force. Some muscles like the heart and diaphragm never sleep but continually work even when we sleep. We are born with 270 bones that fuse as they grow and become 206 bones when we are an adult. Those bones are sometimes described in science media sources as ounce for ounce stronger than steel. (*Cleveland Clinic; NIH*)

National Cancer Institute SEER Training; Library of Congress; Healthline.com; MedlinePlus.gov; Wikipedia; Discover Magazine.com)

Other Interesting Body Facts – The eyes can distinguish over 10 million colors. Our bodies can detect at least 1 trillion scents. Our skin is the largest organ with millions of touch receptors able to feel pressures as light as a feather. We have about 9,000 taste buds which last about 10 days before they regenerate. Our brains can store over 2.5 petabytes of memory which equals about 3 million hours of TV watching. That memory is also not just data but emotions, purpose and imagination. Our human bodies start from a single fertilized cell and grow into a fully functioning body in just 9 months. The Scriptures say, *"You formed the way I think and feel. You put me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because you made me in such a wonderful way. I know how amazing that was! You could see my bones grow as my body took shape, hidden in my mother's womb. You could see my body grow each passing day. You listed all my parts, and not one of them was missing"* (Psalm 139:13-16 ERV). Therefore, never let anyone tell you that you are nothing. God says otherwise because you are his most beautiful

and amazing creation! (*Optometrists.org; Nature.com; NIH National Library of Medicine; scientificamerican.com*)

The human body is not the only living thing that points to an amazing, loving Creator. Did you know there are over 5.5 million species of insects; 10-11 thousand species of birds; around 34 thousand species of fish; about 11 thousand species of reptiles; nearly 8 thousand species of amphibians; roughly 6.5 thousand species of mammals; about 390 thousand known plants of which around 369 thousand are flowering; an estimated 2.2 to 3.8 million fungi species; and finally an untold amount of microorganisms such as bacteria, archaea, and viruses which are mostly invisible to the human eye? Mind blowing, isn't it? (*PubMed National Center for Biotechnology Information; Livescience.com; Wikipedia; Britannica*)

There is an old expression many of you have heard before and it goes something like this, *"In life, take time to stop and smell the roses."* Let me take that expression a little further, *"In life, don't just take time to stop and smell the roses but also take time to be inspired by the beauty and awesomeness of all creation."* Take time and get out into that creation. Walk in a meadow with wildflowers, trees, insects and birds. Hang out in a park or forest, hike a mountain, or

camp in a desert. Snorkel in the ocean, swim in a stream, or float on a lake. Do something that puts yourself in that creation and when you are there, take the time to reflect on its marvel and beauty. Notice the extreme attention to detail in everything created. Close your eyes and listen to the beautiful music of the birds, streams and ocean waves. Feel the breeze and breathe the fresh forest or rain cleaned air. Did all this just magically come into existence without a divine hand? Some say yes, I say no.

Up to this point we have focused on the human body and other life forms on Earth. Have you ever considered facts about the Earth itself? Facts such as rotation, orbit and tilt? Consider these facts: the Earth rotates about 1 thousand miles per hour and completes one revolution every 24 hours; the Earth orbits the Sun at an average speed of about 67 thousand miles per hour and completes one full orbit in 365.25 days. The orbit is not a circle but an ellipse or slightly oval-shaped so our distance from the sun changes throughout the year; Earth's axis is tilted at 23.5 degrees, and the northern or southern hemispheres alter back and forth creating the various seasons of the year. Now for the really scary part! Moderate changes to the Earth's tilt, orbit, shape, speed or distance from the Sun could cause a severe unstable environment with extreme

climates of intense heat or devastating cold. Bottom line is this, the Earth's orbit, tilt, speed and distance from the Sun are finely tuned and balanced to the exact degree needed to sustain life. (*Discover Magazine.com; Space.com; Nasa Space Place; Wikipedia; Earth Observatory; National Geographic*) All this leads to a bigger question. Who is monitoring everything? Who is making sure these changes never happen and destroy our life and existence? Did all of this just happen with a Big Bang and then stay in a perfect state without any monitoring at all? Maybe God created the Universe with a Big Bang but did the Big Bang also finely tune what came about from the bang? Once in a perfect state, did lightning just strike the water creating an organism which crawled upon dry land creating all the different types of species and organisms in existence today? Maybe so, but highly unlikely. One more important question before we move on. Are those neurons in your wonderfully created mind starting to beg the question? I hope so, because it takes a questioning mind to develop a deeper faith in God's existence. The more you question and dig, the more you will be convinced a "*Being*" with unequal power and love created everything in our universe and still monitors it so we can live and flourish. Why? Because that "*Being*" created something beautiful,

wonderful and amazing and wants it to continue. I call that "*Being*" God and He is my friend.

So back to the question, is God real? I have laid out many things for you to contemplate but not everything. These are just some of the facts I personally considered. There is much, much more to question and understand as I didn't even scratch the surface. What about the stars, planets, comets and galaxies? What about Earth's ecosystem, climate and weather? What about various body organs and how they function to provide exactly what is needed. Again, I leave you to explore with a sincere heart. Just remember in your search to not overanalyze or overthink it. Sometimes we can have paralysis by analysis. Why? Because sometimes the answer is just not known and requires a decision to either believe or not believe. Even Spock on Star Trek often reached decisions that required him to rely on faith based upon his best logical judgement. Personally, given all the known and unknown realities of this world, I find it much harder to believe there is not a God than to simply believe there is.

A HOLY BIBLE

NO OTHER BOOK LIKE IT

In the previous chapter we laid out my personal argument for why I believe in God. In this chapter, I will follow suit with my personal arguments for why I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. To address that, I first want to ask this question. If there is a God that created so much of the marvelous beauty we see, touch, and feel with so much precision and detail; is it beyond His capability to also leave an instruction manual on how to live and get closer to Him? I mean, wouldn't that be super easy to do after creation? That's like saying an architect or engineer who built the

tallest building in the world could not have the capability to paint the front door red. It just doesn't make sense.

Hands down, the Holy Bible is by far the most controversial book that has ever been written. No other book in history has created so much awe and equal hate. Wow Devers, right out the gate you hit us with this heavy and bold statement! Well, that is because it is absolutely, without a doubt, one hundred percent true. There has never been a book which inspired more people to dedicate their entire life, living by its standards. Equally so, there has never been a book which has prompted more hatred to discredit and destroy. Why? Let me answer that with some Scriptures which say, *"God's word is alive and powerful! It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts"* (Hebrews 4:12 CEV). Another Scripture says this, *"All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live"* (2 Timothy 3:16 ERV). In other words, the book is not just a book, it lives and breathes. Not literally lives and breathes like you and me but it does live and breathe like no other writing. It's not your

typical book because it penetrates deep inside and stirs something inside our soul. It makes us question who we are, what we are and how we should live. Some people embrace it, and others hate it. Why? Because our human nature is to live how we want, do what we want and be what we want, anytime we want. Don't believe me? Have you ever watched a child growing up. Life is all about what they want and when they want it. It takes loving parents to correct and foster them to think of others. Without guidance we can become our own worst enemy. The Scripture says, *"They are judged by this fact: The light has come into the world. But they did not want light. They wanted darkness, because they were doing evil things. Everyone who does evil hates the light. They will not come to the light, because the light will show all the bad things they have done"* (John 3:19-20 ERV). Are things starting to get a little clearer now? Are you feeling a little uncomfortable? I know I am and I'm the one who knows what is coming next. What thoughts will be shared and questioned? That is why it is living and active.

The first mistake most people make when reading the Bible is they want to make it a book of science or history giving all the answers to endless questions. Truth is, it's a book about relationships. Relationships with God, families, neighbors, friends and enemies.

You get a little science, history, proverbs, poetry and songs but the primary content of the Bible deals with relationships. For example, in Genesis chapter one we get some history about how our world came into being, but in chapter two it jumps to Adam and Eve and their relationship with God. Why not just start with chapter two you might be saying? Well, I think God knew we needed something to hang our hat on about how our world came into existence. He didn't describe every detail of exactly how He made the stars, the moon, the earth, the oceans, the birds, animals, plants, trees, etc. but God does give enough information, so we are not constantly asking the question like a little child. God, how did the moon get here, God, how did the dog get here, God, how did the trees and flowers get here? So, a little history at first telling us how, followed by relationships. Here are a couple examples. The Scriptures say, *"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground"*(Genesis 1:27-28 NIV). Later on, in chapter 4 the Scriptures say, *"Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your*

presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." But the Lord said to him, "Not so; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him (Genesis 4-14-15 NIV). These Scriptures provide information that others were created but it does not provide the specifics. Once again, why not? Simply put, I believe it was not God's purpose. I believe He wanted to jump right into the relationship with Adam and Eve followed by His relationship with other biblical characters. Why? Because God's relationship with us is more important to Him than the how or where. For example, being together is more important to newlyweds in love than how will they provide for each other or where will they live. They would be perfectly happy living in a tent at some campground if it meant just being together. It's kind of like that; I believe God cares more about having a relationship with us than all the particulars. If we can look at the Bible from this point of view, it makes a lot more sense.

When I take a deeper look at the contents of the Bible and how it came into existence, my belief is strengthened. Did you know the Bible is comprised of 66 books; written by 40 authors over 1,500 years; covering the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe?

How did the authors from different lifetimes, from hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles away, make it all fit together so magically and harmoniously like a glove? As mentioned above, the words just come to life. Prophecies are told and then fulfilled hundreds of years later. One prophecy I find amazing is Psalm 22 written by King David around 1,000 BC; it describes in detail the crucifixion of Christ more than 1,000 years later. I encourage you to read the entire Psalm but will share portions of it here: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Psalm 22:1 NIV)*? Ties to Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. *"All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads, "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "Let him deliver him, since he delights in him" (Psalm 22:7-8 NIV).* Ties to Matthew 27:39-43. *"they pierce my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16 NIV).* Ties to John 20:25-27. *"They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment" (Psalm 22:18 NIV).* Ties to Matthew 27:35 and John 19:23-24. In case you were wondering if David just got lucky, there are many more prophecies about Jesus from Moses, Balaam, Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Hosea, Joel, Zechariah and Malachi which all came true. Conservatively, there are over 300 prophecies about Jesus with some saying there are up to 574 prophecies. In all, the Bible

has over 1,800 prophecies that were fulfilled (*J. Barton Payne's Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*). I find that hard to argue with.

Many people have attacked the Bible saying it does not agree with history or science and outright has passages which contradict each other. I can see some of those arguments and how they might possibly sway someone in a negative way. However, when you look at the Bible as a whole from a different perspective, you will come away with a more solid picture. For example, let's say you, me and ten other people were standing on Main Street in downtown Houston, Texas. It was a pretty spring day with no clouds in the sky. Suddenly, a car came racing through the intersection running the red light. It hit a city bus and two other cars. As a result, several people were hurt and had to be taken to the hospital. Police officers arrive on the scene to take statements on what happened. My statement may be more focused on the type of car which created the accident and how fast it was going; your statement more on the type of driver and how distracted they were; others may focus on the people who were hurt, how long it took for help to arrive, how many other vehicles were involved. One thing is for sure. After all the statements are taken, there will be a clear picture of what actually happened. That is especially true

with the four Gospels about Jesus Christ. Remember, there were twelve different apostles around Him, so there is room for different perspectives. Matthew was written to a large Jewish audience with focus on the fulfilled prophecies of Jesus. Mark emphasizes more miracles and action. Luke displays more compassion for the poor and outsiders with historical context. John is more focused on Jesus divine nature. In all, they paint a very clear picture of who Jesus is and how we should perceive and follow Him. There are other areas of the Bible that are similar. For example, the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st Kings, 1st Chronicles and Psalms describe the life of King David. Each was written by a different author. Some passages in 2nd Samuel and 1st Chronicles are almost exactly the same. Through it all, we get a solid picture of who King David was. I can go on and on with examples but want you to research more on your own. The bottom line is this, Scriptures have been taken out of context, twisted and used in many harmful ways throughout history to try and discredit or prove a point of right or wrong. That is why it is very important to be knowledgeable of what they say and not just take someone's word for it. To prove that point, I leave you with this: Jesus himself was tempted by

the devil with scripture taken out of context (Matt. 4:6 and Luke 4:10-11).

In closing this chapter, I hope there are things written which cause you to rethink your position on the Bible being the inspired word of God. There are many more arguments to be made but I feel I've touched on the ones that help me the most. Prayerfully, I hope they will also help you. I was raised to have a skeptical mind and to think critically. I do not take my belief lightly nor should you. The belief from reasoned thinking is the best. Why? Because that type of thinking is grounded in deep conviction. Conviction that will sustain you through life's trials. I leave you with a final Scripture which is commonly referred to as the Scripture in the center of the Bible, *"It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in Humans"* (Psalm 118:8 NIV). Now why would God put that peculiar scripture at the center of the Bible? There can be many answers, but my personal belief is this, God wants you to put your faith, hope, love and trust in Him and no one else.