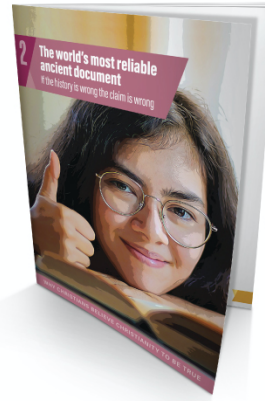


# 2

## The world's most reliable ancient document

If the history is wrong the claim is wrong



### Discussion Guide #2

#### OPENING DISCUSSION

**Purpose:** For participants to connect and share their prior knowledge of the wider topic.

1. Name the best book you've ever read and why?
2. Have you ever believed something you were told was true that later turned out not to be?
3. Have you ever believed something to be false that it later turned to be true?
4. To set the scene for today's discussion, (a) What objections have you encountered to the reliability of the Bible? (b) Why might this topic be important?



**PRAYER**



**WATCH VIDEO #2**

#### DISCUSSION PART 1 – WHY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

**Purpose:** For participants to recognise the Bible as a reliable and true record of history.

1. Why is the reliability of the Bible important? (Consider, what would you think God's character to be like if the world is a reflection of him?)  
*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 3-4)*
2. How does the Bible differ from other books? What are some of its world records?  
*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 6)*

## 2

# The world's most reliable ancient document

If the history is wrong the claim is wrong

3. Why might the Bible become the world's most attacked book?

*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 6-7)*

4. How many ancient copies of the New Testament exist today? What is the significance of this?

*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 8-9)*

5. Understanding that no original documents exist for any really old document ('work of antiquity'), how close to the time of writing are the copies we have of the New Testament, and what is the significance of this?

*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 12-13)*

6. When, and by whom, does evidence suggest the books of the New Testament were written? What is the significance of this?

*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 9-11)*

7. How does archaeological evidence point to the accounts of the Bible being accurate accounts of history? How many dig sites now exist in relation to history recorded in the Bible?

*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 24-25)*

8. What is the main reason many have attacked the Bible so vocally – with seemingly no regard for the evidence of history, archaeology or the study of the ancient texts?

*(Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 6-7 and then an answer in Pg 27-28).*

9. If their basis for attack is a belief that miracles cannot happen, what is the real basis for their objection, and topic to discuss?

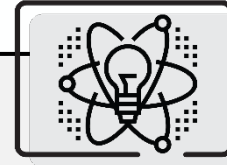
*(Does a God exist? Because, if a God exists – or even just a spiritual realm, miracles are possible).*

10. What is one of the strongest evidence that Jesus' miracles really did happen?

*(Consider non-Christian historians of Jesus' time who still documented the miracles - Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 17-18. Consider sceptics in more recent times who have investigated and changed their views on Jesus as a result of the evidence - Optional: See Booklet #2, Pg 22-23)\**

## DISCUSSION PART 2 – ENGAGING THE CONVERSATION

**Purpose:** For group members to recognise and use stories and questions as effective tools of communication.



### Learning Point:

**We win people, not arguments** (2 minutes to read)

Our goal isn't to win arguments as much as it is to win people. In fact, it is possible to win an argument – and lose people! Achieving a positive impact must therefore be significantly about our manner. As 1 Peter 3:15-16 puts it – use gentleness and respect while remaining truly authentic ('keeping a clear conscience...').

For this reason, the last part of each of these discussions centres around 'translating' what has been discussed into stories and questions we could use in our conversations – like Jesus did.

### To revise our six types of stories for our conversations

1. Stories from our own life experience
2. Stories from other people's life experience
3. Stories from history
4. Stories from the natural world
5. Stories from reason, logic and science (which we could sometimes choose to tell as personal stories – explaining how we personally came to believe a certain thing)
6. Stories from the Bible.

We can do this with the awareness that different types of stories will speak to different people. For example, sometimes a personal story is more powerful than a factual one.

And if you're looking for possible illustrations or stories – the (free downloadable) booklet series available with this series is full of them.\*\*

Finally, as a habit, at the end of any short story you use to communicate something, always remember to ask a question – because the key to great conversations is great questions!

Regarding today's topic, while people might sometimes have objections related to the reliability of the Bible, remember that the motivation behind our culture-wide attack on the Bible has had little to nothing to do with the Bible itself. It was instead based on a scepticism of miracles – which is, to get to the real issue, to question whether God and/or a spiritual realm exists. We can therefore use questions to turn a conversation from being about the Bible to being about the possibility of miracles, the existence of which rests entirely upon the existence of a God or supernatural realm. In short – if God exists then miracles can happen. The evidence for the Bible's reliability – which is very strong – can then be left to stand on its own feet.



### An Exercise\*

List some objections to the trustworthiness of the Bible then consider the three questions below.

1. What **possible points** could you make in response to this objection?
2. What **stories or illustrations** could you briefly insert into your conversation (ideally with humour) to communicate in an interesting yet gentle way?
3. What **questions** could you ask that might help to make these points, or to open discussion around them?

### Optional extension

In pairs, raise possible objections relating to today's topic. Then take turns to engage each other in a conversation using cheerfully stated short stories and questions.



### TO TAKE HOME

What is the main thing you take away from this discussion today?

### For next week

- Group facilitator – please promote next week's discussion topic as being meaningful and interesting.
- As an option to go deeper, encourage members to read the next downloadable booklet prior to next week's video and discussion.
- Encourage members to note down any further questions they have on this topic during the week – as these will potentially be discussed next week.



### CLOSE WITH PRAYER

### Notes for the discussion facilitator

\* **Re Jesus' miracles** – More will be discussed in later episodes, and in particular in the text of Booklet #7. Of particular note, many non-believing academics in our own times, on the basis of the evidence, even agree that there were post-resurrection appearances of Jesus after his death (See Booklet #5). In our own times, unique miracles that happen when a person prays specifically in Jesus' name are also evidence that points to Jesus (See Booklet #7).

\*\* **Regarding stories that could be told** – Please encourage your group to notice the many amazing stories included in this particular booklet, like as the time gap to the 1 Corinthians 15 creed (Pg 10), the comparison to William Shakespeare (Pg 14), the 'Incomparable claim – What if we lost all 25,000 ancient copies?' (Pg 15), or the investigations into this matter which have served to validate the reliability of the New Testament authors' writings like those of Law Professor Simon Greenleaf (Pg 22), Former Chief Magistrate Clarrie Briese (Pg 23), Journalist Lee Strobel (Pg 23) and Josh McDowell (Pg 26). It's not hard to find a great story to tell regarding this topic – while then wisely turning conversations toward the real questions: Do miracles happen? And, then is there a God/spiritual realm?