

Which Book Should We Trust?

A Reflection Worksheet for Seekers and Believers

Focus Truth

A claim of divine authority is not enough. A trustworthy message should be stable, open to examination, honest about humanity, and worthy of the Creator.

Before You Begin

Many religious books claim spiritual authority, but they do not all make the same claims about the Creator, humanity, suffering, morality, or salvation.

This worksheet is designed to help you establish fair standards before deciding which book deserves your trust. Move slowly, think carefully, and be willing to examine both unfamiliar beliefs and your own assumptions.

1 Begin With Fair Standards

Before choosing a religious book, it is helpful to ask what we should reasonably expect from a genuine message from the Creator. These standards cannot prove by themselves that a book is divine. They can, however, help us recognize which claims deserve closer examination and which ones give us reason for concern.

What qualities would you expect from a message that truly came from the Creator?

Which would matter more to you: the age of a book, its popularity, or the trustworthiness of its message? Why?

What assumptions do you already bring to the question of religious authority?

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② A Claim Is Not Enough

A book does not become divine simply because it claims divine authority. Age, popularity, emotional impact, and the sincerity of its followers are not proof. A text may contain wisdom, inspire devotion, or express genuine spiritual longing without giving a complete or trustworthy picture of the Creator. A serious claim should be able to withstand serious examination.

Why is a claim of divine authority not enough by itself?

Can a book contain meaningful wisdom without being the Creator's authoritative message? Explain.

What would make a religious claim worthy of closer examination?

Why should we avoid accepting or rejecting a book only because of what someone else told us?

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③ Look for Stability Without Ignoring History

If the Creator gave humanity a written message, we should expect its central teaching to remain recognizable across time.

Stability does not mean that every copy, translation, or printed edition must look identical. Different kinds of changes should not all be treated as though they were the same.

Consider These Differences

A. Translation

The language changes so new readers can understand the message.

B. Copying Differences

A misspelling, repeated word, missing line, or other difference appears while a handwritten copy is being made.

C. Editorial Arrangement

Headings, chapter numbers, or other tools are added to help readers follow the material.

D. Substantial Alteration

The actual teaching is removed, rewritten, or changed to serve a new purpose.

Why is it important not to treat all four of these as the same thing?

Which kind of change would concern you most, and why?

What evidence would help you decide whether a message had been preserved or reinvented?

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4 Ask Whether the Message Can Be Examined

A message intended for humanity should give people something public to consider. Readers should be able to study its words, investigate its history, ask how it was preserved, and compare its claims with the world it describes. A religious message should not demand trust while refusing honest questions. This does not mean every spiritual truth can be proven like a mathematical equation. It means truth from the Creator should not need to hide from careful examination.

What parts of a religious claim should be open to examination?

Why is a public message easier to evaluate than one person's private claim?

If a book makes historical claims, what would you want to investigate?

What is the difference between examining a claim honestly and deciding the answer before considering the evidence?

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5 Does the Message Tell the Truth About Us?

Human beings are capable of love, courage, creativity, sacrifice, forgiveness, and compassion. We are also capable of greed, cruelty, pride, deception, injustice, and abuse. A trustworthy message should explain both. It should not merely flatter humanity, but it should not reduce people to nothing more than their failures. It should account for both our dignity and our brokenness.

What does human goodness suggest about us?

What does human selfishness and cruelty suggest about us?

Why should a trustworthy message explain both human dignity and human failure?

What would you expect a trustworthy message to reveal about the source of human dignity and the cause of human brokenness?

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A Closer Question: Who Benefits From the Message?

Religion can be misused for money, control, influence, or reputation. The deeper question is whether the message itself supports that selfishness or exposes it.

Does the message mainly protect its leaders, or can it correct them?

Why might a message that exposes the failures of its own leaders be more trustworthy?

⑥ Does It Reveal the Creator?

A book claiming to come from the Creator should do more than provide religious rules. It should help us understand the Creator's character, purposes, values, and relationship with humanity. It should explain what has gone wrong and whether the Creator has acted in response to our brokenness. The deepest message would not simply give humanity a ladder to climb. It would tell us whether the Creator has come near.

What would you expect a genuine message to reveal about the Creator's character?

Why are rules alone not enough to help us know the Creator?

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Should the message only tell us how to reach the Creator, or should it also show how the Creator has reached toward us? Explain.

What Should We Expect From the Creator's Message?

Number these qualities from 1 to 5, with 1 being the quality that seems most important to you.

- _____ Stable enough to preserve its central message
- _____ Open enough to examine honestly
- _____ Truthful about human dignity and brokenness
- _____ Strong enough to correct religious and political power
- _____ Clear enough to reveal the Creator and His response to us

Which quality stands out most to you and why?

7 Keep Seeking With Fair Standards

These standards do not prove that a particular book came from the Creator. They help us know where to begin. They also protect us from trusting a religious text simply because it is familiar, inherited, popular, or agreeable to us. They are filters for the search, not final proof.

The standard I believe is most important is:

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One assumption I may need to examine is:

One question I still have is:

My next step in seeking truth is:

The Next Question

In the next Theological Thursday post, we will begin applying these standards to the Bible. We will consider whether the Bible presents a stable and examinable message, enters public history, tells the truth about human dignity and failure, corrects its own leaders, reveals the Creator's character, and tells the story of the Creator moving toward humanity.

The goal will not be to pretend that every question about the Bible is easy. The goal will be to understand why the Bible deserves serious consideration.

One-Sentence Takeaway

A book claiming to reveal the Creator should not be trusted merely because it is old, popular, or familiar.
Its message should be stable, open to examination, truthful about humanity, and worthy of the Creator.

Closing Prayer

Creator, give me wisdom as I search for truth. Keep me from accepting claims carelessly, but also keep me from dismissing them without examination. Help me recognize a message that is stable, truthful, and worthy of You. Give me humility to question my assumptions and courage to follow the truth wherever it leads. Amen.

Continue the Journey

Keep seeking, keep growing, and keep walking with God

You do not have to stop here.

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