

**Authority Issues**  
**Hang Up The Telephone**  
**Pastor Eric Nelson**

**Community Group Questions:**

1. Let's play a quick round of "Telephone" as a group. What changed between the original message and the final one—and what do you think this game illustrates about how people view the Bible today?
  2. If someone told you the Bible was just a collection of bad translations of copies of copies, how would you naturally respond? *(Be honest—have you ever wondered that yourself?)*
  3. Digging Deeper: How does learning about the sheer number of manuscripts and the short time gap between the original writings and the earliest copies change your perception of the Bible's reliability? *(Does that evidence surprise you? Encourage you? Leave you with more questions?)*
  4. The Variant Challenge: What do you make of the idea that more manuscript variations actually *strengthen* our confidence in the New Testament's accuracy rather than weaken it? *(Why would a scribe's accidental mistakes—or attempts to "help"—not be a deal-breaker?)*
  5. If the Bible has been transmitted accurately, how should that affect the way we approach it as an authority in our lives? *(Does that change how you read it, apply it, or even defend it in conversation?)*
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**REALITY:** No original documents of the Bible **EXIST**.

**REALITY CHECK:** Even though we don't have any originals, we can **CONFIDENTLY** know what the originals said.

**TRANSMISSION:** Can we be confident that the original text of the Bible was transmitted accurately to us through the centuries?

Help me if you can I'm feeling down  
 And I ~~do~~ appreciate you being round.  
 Help me get my feet back on this ground.  
 Won't you please help me.  
~~When I was younger so much younger than I am today.~~  
 When I was younger so much younger than I am today.  
 I never needed anybody's help in anyway!  
 Now those days are gone and I'm not so self-assured  
 Now I find I'm changing and  
 And opened up the doors.  
 Help I need some love  
 " I don't just want any love  
 Help. You know I need some

For the New Testament the evidence is overwhelming. There are 5,366 manuscripts to compare and draw information from and some of these date from the 2nd and 3rd centuries. To put that into perspective, there are only 643 copies of Homer's Iliad and that is the most famous book of Ancient Greece. No one doubts the existence of Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars, but we only have 10 copies of it and the earliest was made 1,000 years after it was written. To have such an abundance of copies of the New Testament from dates within 70 years after their writings is amazing. Norman Geisler

Not only do we not have the originals, we don't have the first copies of the originals. We don't even have copies of the originals, or copies of the copies of the copies of the originals. What we have are copies made later—much later. In most instances, they are copies made many centuries later. And these copies all differ from one another, in many thousands of places....these copies differ from one another in so many places that we don't even know how many differences there are. Possibly it is easiest to put it in comparative terms: there are more differences among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament. Barth Ehrman

**Matthew 27:24 24** So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood;[a] see to it yourself. (ESV)

Some manuscripts: this righteous blood, or this righteous man's blood. ESV Footnote

*Did some unknown creative genius take an ordinary man, Jesus and invent his deeds of power and His words of love and authority and authenticity, then present this invented Jesus to a church with such deceptive power that many people were willing from the outset to die for this fictional Christ? Further, must we believe that all the Gospel writers swallowed the invention-and in the space of several decades while many who knew the real Jesus were still living? Is that a more reasonable or well-founded guess than the plain assertion that a real man, Jesus Christ, did in fact say and do the sorts of things the Biblical witnesses said he did? You must decide for yourself. John Piper*

**Psalm 19:7-11** *The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. 11 By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

**God's Word:**

Refreshes the soul.

Produces wisdom.

Gives joy to the heart.

Insight for flourishing.

Lasts forever.

Warns.

Leads to a rewarding life.

**INERRANCY**: The Bible is 100% trustworthy.

**INFALLIBILITY**: The Bible will not fail in helping us flourish with God.

**INSPIRATION**: It's from God