



WHAT ABOUT...? • COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY • WEEK 8

Is the Bible Really Reliable?

A guided conversation from the May 31, 2026 sermon by Pastor Kent Keller • 2 Peter 1:16-18

SUMMARY

How do you know the Bible is anything more than ancient religious stories? How do you know somebody didn't invent it, or edit it, or change it along the way? It's the question every honest reader eventually asks. It's the question Peter himself answered in his second letter — and it's the question Pastor Kent Keller took up this Sunday at Christchurch Miami from 2 Peter 1:16-18.

Peter wrote those words around 64 A.D., looking back at what he had seen. He had been on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured. He had heard the Father's voice from heaven. And he was about to be put to death for refusing to recant. That is not the voice of someone inventing a religion. That is the voice of someone reporting one. 'We did not follow cleverly devised myths,' Peter wrote. 'We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.'

Kent walked us through three movements. First, the Bible has built the modern world — Wilberforce ending the British slave trade, Florence Nightingale founding modern nursing, Martin Luther King quoting Amos, Desmond Tutu against apartheid. This is the book that shaped your hospital, your school, and the moral instincts you take for granted. Second, the textual evidence for the New Testament is staggering — 5,800 surviving Greek manuscripts compared with about 10 for Caesar's Gallic Wars, and a copy gap of 20-60 years versus 900-1,000 for Caesar. The eyewitness testimony of Peter, John, and hundreds of resurrection witnesses goes unchallenged in the ancient record. No one ever stepped forward to disprove it.

Third, the Bible is not a museum piece. It is alive. Hebrews 4:12 calls it 'living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.' But here is the hard turn: sixty-eight percent of Americans read the Bible less than once a year. The most consequential book in human history is sitting closed on our shelves. The book is reliable. The book is alive. The only question left is whether you'll open it.

PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

Father, You have not stayed silent. You have spoken — through prophets, through apostles, through Your Son, and through the book You preserved across centuries so it could land in our hands tonight. Make this conversation honest. Give us courage to ask hard questions and faith to receive what You answer. Cut through what's hiding in us with Your living word. In Jesus' name, amen.

START ICE BREAKER

When was the last time you actually opened the Bible on your own — not in a sermon, not in a study, not in a devotional app, just you and the text? What was getting in the way of doing it more often?

SCRIPTURE KEY SCRIPTURES

2 PETER 1:16-18 • ESV

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

1 JOHN 1:1-3 • ESV

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

HEBREWS 4:12 • ESV

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

DISCUSS DISCUSSION

01 THE HONEST QUESTION.

Peter knew his readers were going to wonder whether the apostles had made it all up. Have you ever asked that question — quietly or out loud? Where did the doubt come from, and how did you handle it?

02 EYEWITNESSES, NOT MYTHS.

Peter's defense isn't an argument; it's a testimony. He says, 'I was there. I heard the voice from heaven on the mountain!' Why is firsthand testimony from someone willing to die for it different from secondhand religious folklore? What kind of evidence would convince a fair-minded skeptic?

03 MANUSCRIPT REALITY CHECK.

We have 5,800 Greek New Testament manuscripts and a 20-60 year copy gap. We have about 10 manuscripts of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and a 900-1,000 year gap — and no historian disputes Caesar. Why do you think the New Testament is held to a different standard, and what should that tell us?

04 WHAT JOHN TOUCHED.

John writes that he heard, saw, looked upon, and touched the word of life. Four physical verbs in one sentence — aimed straight at the Gnostic claim that Jesus wasn't really physical. Why does it matter that Jesus had a body — and not just a body, but a body John could touch?

05 THE SILENCE NO ONE BROKE.

The Jewish leaders, the Roman soldiers, the doubting families — any one of them could have produced a body, a witness, a confession to shut Christianity down before it spread. No one ever did. What do you make of that silence?

06 LIVING AND ACTIVE.

Hebrews 4:12 says Scripture doesn't just describe you — it reads you, cuts you, discerns the thoughts of your heart. When was the last time the Bible did that to you? What did it expose, and how did you respond?

07 SIXTY-EIGHT PERCENT.

Most American Christians read the Bible less than once a year. Without pretending you're better than that statistic, what is honestly keeping you from opening Scripture more often? Time? Confusion? Boredom? Fear of what it might say?

08 A FAITH FAMILY OF READERS.

What would it look like for this group to actually become a Bible-reading community — not as a guilt trip, but as a rhythm we sustain together? What's one practical step we could take starting this week?

APPLY LIFE APPLICATION

Kent's closing challenge was simple and unflinching: if you don't read it, it does you no good. Three honest moves to make this week:

- 1 Start the gospel of John.** Twenty-one chapters. One a day. Three weeks. No commentary required. Just read the eyewitness account of the apostle who knew Jesus most intimately, and let his words land. Come back next week and share what one verse or moment hit you hardest.
- 2 Find your reading window.** Pick the same time and place every day this week — first coffee, lunch break, before bed. Same time. Same place. Same Bible. Habits beat motivation. Tell one person in this group what window you picked so they can ask you about it.
- 3 Bring a question back.** Don't read defensively. Read honestly. When something doesn't make sense or pushes back on you, write it down. Bring at least one real question to next week's group. The Bible is alive — it can take your questions.

Don't make this complicated. Pick a chapter. Open it. Read it. Let it cut. The book has survived 2,000 years, hundreds of skeptics, and every cultural shift since the Roman Empire. It can survive your honest questions this week — and it will repay your honest attention.

REMEMBER KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ The Bible defends itself first as eyewitness testimony — Peter, John, and hundreds more who saw the risen Christ.
- ▶ The New Testament is the best-attested ancient document by an enormous margin — 5,800 Greek manuscripts, 20-60 year copy gap.
- ▶ No one in history ever stepped forward to disprove the gospel claims. The silence of the opposition is its own evidence.

- ▶ The Bible has built the moral conscience of the modern world – abolition, civil rights, hospitals, schools, and more.
- ▶ Jesus himself appealed to the written word of God in his hour of greatest temptation. He took Scripture that seriously.
- ▶ Hebrews 4:12 says God's word is alive and active – it reads you while you read it.
- ▶ If you don't open the book, it does you no good. The Christian life cannot bypass the Christian Scripture.

Open it. Read it. Let it cut.

PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, You have spoken, and Your word is alive. Forgive us for the dust on our Bibles and the silence in our reading habits. This week, give us hunger we have not had – for Your word, for Your voice, for the truth that cuts and the grace that heals. Make us a faith family that reads, that listens, that responds. We are not alone in this – we open the book together. In Jesus' name, amen.

CHRISTCHURCH MIAMI

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