

How Will You Respond?

Your response to the Bible determines the course of your life and your eternal destiny. First Corinthians 2:9 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (NIV). Man could never conceive of all that God has to offer on his own!

Every time we pick up the Bible, we pick up the truth. Jesus said, "If you continue in My word . . . you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). What did He mean by that? Think of the person who is working diligently on a math problem. As soon as he finds the answer--he's free. Or consider the scientist in the lab pouring different solutions into test tubes. He stays with it until he says, "Eureka, I found it!"--then he's free. Man will search and struggle and grapple and grope for the truth until he finds it. Only then is he free. The Bible is our source of truth--about God, man, life, death, men, women, children, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, friends, and enemies. It shows us how to live. The Bible is the source of everything you need to know about life on earth and the life to come. You can trust the Bible. It is God's living Word.

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You Can Trust the Bible

John MacArthur

We live in a world that, for the most part, has no absolute standard for life and behavior. We are under a system of morality by majority vote--in other words, whatever feels right sets the standard for behavior.

That philosophy, however, runs contrary to everything we know about our world. For example, in science there are absolutes. Our entire universe is built on fixed laws. We can send satellites and other spacecraft into space and accurately predict their behavior. Science--whether biology, botany, physiology, astronomy, mathematics, or engineering--is controlled by unalterable and inviolable laws.

Yet in the moral world many people want to live without laws or absolutes. They try to determine their points of reference from their own minds. However, that is impossible. When we move from the physical to the spiritual realm, fixed laws still exist. We cannot exist without laws in the moral and spiritual dimensions of life any more than we can do so in the physical dimension. Our Creator built morality into life. Just as there are physical laws, so there are spiritual laws. Let me give you an example.

First, "the law of the Lord" is a Hebrew term used to define Scripture. Psalm 19 specifies that it is "perfect"--a comprehensive treatment of truth that is able to transform the soul. The Hebrew word translated "soul" (nephesh) refers to the total per-

The Bible Is "Perfect"

Let's look at each aspect separately. Together (vv. 7-9) The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;

There's a section in Psalm 19 that is Scripture's own testimony to itself. This is what it says:

The Bible claims to be alive and powerful. That's a tremendous statement. I have never read any other living book. There are some books that change your thinking, but this is the only book that can change your nature. This is the only book that can totally transform you from the inside out.

The Bible is an amazing book. It's amazing in that it stands up to many tests of authenticity. But beyond that, it's particularly amazing when looked at from a spiritual and moral perspective.

The Power of the Bible

by Josh McDowell (Here's Life Publishers).

Demands a Verdict.

If you would like to read more about the life of Christ and other evidences for the Bible's reliability, try Evidence That

Law, until all is accomplished." Matthew 5:18 He says, "Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the detailed prophecies and did many miracles. It is important to Christ Himself. As we have already seen, He fulfilled many Additional evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is

The Life of Christ

and destroy it, just as the prophet predicted. permitted besieging Medes and Babylonians to enter the city the river, carrying away a vital part of the city walls. That ers. In the case of Nineveh, a great storm came and flooded could flow through the bars of the gates and keep out intrudended to build gates down into the rivers nearby. The water In those days when people walled in their cities, they destroyed (Nahum 1:8; 2:6).

People have asked me whether I believe that AIDS is the judgment of God. My response is that AIDS is the judgment of God in the same sense that cirrhosis of the liver is the judgment of God or that emphysema is the judgment of God. If you drink alcohol, you're liable to get cirrhosis of the liver. If you smoke, you're liable to get emphysema or heart disease. And if you choose to violate God's standards for morality, you're likely to contract venereal disease—even AIDS. It is a law that the Bible describes in terms of sowing and reaping.

We can explain this principle in another illustration. Gravity is a fixed law. You may choose not to believe in gravity, but regardless of what you choose to believe, if you jump off a building you'll fall to the ground. You don't have an option. It's not a question of what you believe; it's a question of law. The law will go into effect when you put it to the test. That is true in any other area of physical law.

The same thing is true in the moral and spiritual dimension. To segment life into a physical dimension in which fixed laws cannot be violated and a moral or spiritual dimension in which laws can be violated is an impossible dichotomization. The same God who controls the physical world by fixed laws controls the moral and spiritual world.

Where, then, do you find the laws of morality? How do you determine what is right and what is wrong? Has our Creator revealed such standards to mankind in a way we can understand?

Salvation . Jesus said, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Salvation is the greatest reality in the universe—and the Bible reveals the source of that salvation. Acts 4:12 says regarding Jesus, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Instruction . Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." The Bible can take those who don't know God and introduce them to Him. Then it will teach them, reprove them when they do wrong, point them to what is right, and show them how to walk in that right path.

Hope . Romans 15:4 says "Whatever was written in earlier times [a reference to the Old Testament] was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The Bible is a source of encouragement, giving us hope now and forever.

Happiness . James 1:25 reveals the key to happiness: "One who looks intently at [Scripture], and abides by it . . . this man will be [happy] in what he does." Psalm 119, the longest psalm in the Bible, devotes all 176 verses to describing the Word of God. It begins, "How [happy] are those who walk in the law of the Lord."

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon laid siege to Tyre three years after the prophecy was given. When he broke down the gates, he found the city almost empty. The Phoenicians were navigators and colonizers of the ancient world; they had taken their boats and sailed to an island a half mile offshore. They had reestablished their city on the island during the years of siege. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city on the mainland, but since he didn't have a navy, he was unable to do anything about the island city of Tyre. This left the prophecy partially unfulfilled. About 250 years later Alexander the Great came into the area of Tyre needing supplies for his eastern campaign. He sent word to the residents of the island city, but they refused his request. They believed they were safe from attack on the island. Alexander was so infuriated at their response that he and his army picked up the rubble that was left from Nebuchadnezzar's devastation of the mainland city and threw it into the sea. They used it to build a causeway, which allowed them to march to the island and destroy the city. That exactly fulfilled what Ezekiel had predicted hundreds of years previously. If you travel to the site of Tyre today, you'll see fishermen there drying their nets. The city was never rebuilt. Peter Stoner said that the probability of all the details of that prophecy happening by chance is one in 75 million. The Assyrian city of Nineveh is another example. It was one of the most formidable ancient cities, which reached its apex during the seventh century b.c. Yet the prophet Nahum predicted that it would soon be wiped out. He said an overflow-

son. It means the real you—not your body but what is inside. So the truths in Scripture can totally transform a person. You may say, "I'm not interested in being transformed." Then you probably aren't interested in the Bible. The Bible is for people who have some sense of desperation about where they are. It is for people who don't have the purpose in their lives they wish they had. They're not sure where they are, where they came from, or where they're going. There are things in their lives they wish they could change. They wish they weren't driven by passions they can't control; that they weren't victims of circumstance; that they didn't have so much pain in life; that their relationships were all they ought to be; that they could think more clearly about things that matter in their lives. That's who this book is for: people who don't have all the answers and who want something better. The Bible says that the key to this transformation is the Lord Jesus Christ. God came into the world in the form of Christ. He died on a cross to pay the penalty for your sins and mine, and rose again to conquer death. He now lives and comes into the lives of those who acknowledge Him as their Lord and Savior, transforming them into the people God means for them to be. If you're content with the way you are, you're not going to look to the Word of God for a way to change. But if you're aware of your guilt, if you want to get rid of your anxiety and the patterns of life that desperately need to be changed, if you have some emptiness in your heart, if there's some longing that has never been satisfied, and if

him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (22: 18-19).

The Bible Is Authoritative

Since the Bible is perfect and complete, it is the last Word--the final authority. Isaiah 1:2 says, "Listen, Oh heavens, and hear, Oh earth; for the Lord speaks." When God speaks, we should listen, because He is the final authority. The Bible demands obedience.

John 8:30-31 reports that many of the people Jesus preached to came to believe in Him. Jesus said to them, "If you continue in My word, then are you are truly disciples of Mine." In other words, He demanded a response to His word. It is authoritative. Galatians 3:10 says, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." That's a tremendous claim to absolute authority. In James 2:10 we read, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all." To violate the Bible at one point is to break God's entire law. That's because the Bible is authoritative in every part.

The Bible Is Sufficient

The Bible is sufficient for a number of essentials:

there are some answers you just can't seem to find, then you're just the person who needs to look into the Word of God to determine if it can do what it says it can. It can transform you completely through the power of Christ, the One who died and rose again for you.

The Bible Is "Sure"

Second, Psalm 19 says that the Scripture is "sure"--absolute, trustworthy, reliable--"making wise the simple." The Hebrew word translated "simple" comes from a root that speaks of an open door. Ancient Jewish people described a person with a simple mind as someone with a head like an open door: everything comes in; everything goes out. He doesn't know what to keep out and what to keep in. He's indiscriminate, totally naive, and unable to evaluate truth. He doesn't have any standards by which to make a judgment.

The Bible says it is able to make such a person wise. Wisdom to the Jew was the skill of daily living. To the Greek it was sheer sophistry--an abstraction. So when the Hebrew text says it can make a simple person wise, it means it can take the uninitiated, naive, uninstruted, undiscerning person and make him skilled in every aspect of daily living.

The Bible touches every area of life, including relationships, marriage, the work ethic, and factors of the human mind and motivation. It tells you about attitudes, reactions, responses, how to treat people, how you're to be treated by people, how to

The Bible claims to be the revelation of God to man. Although I have spent many years of my life studying the Bible, I wasn't always committed to it. That commitment developed after my freshman year in college, when I came to grips with my life and future and wanted to know the source of truth. I discovered several compelling reasons for believing that the Bible is God's Word. Five basic areas, which go from the lesser to the greater, help prove its authenticity.

The Authenticity of the Bible

Experience

First, the Bible is true because it gives us the experience it claims it will. For example, the Bible says God will forgive our sin (1 John 1:9). I believe that, and I can truly say that I have a sense of freedom from guilt. The Bible also says that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That's what happened to me when I came to Jesus Christ. The Bible changes lives. Someone has said that a Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't. That's true because the Bible can put lives together. Millions of people all over the world are living proof that that is true. Maybe you know one or two of them. They've experienced the Bible's power.

That's an acceptable argument in one sense, but it's weak in another. If you base everything you believe on ex-

that the probability of their coming to pass is one in 10¹⁷. He illustrates that staggering amount this way:

We take 10¹⁷ silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly. . . . Blindfold a man and tell him he must pick up one silver dollar. . . . What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them come true in any one man. (Chicago : Moody, 1963], 100-107)

And Jesus fulfilled hundreds more than just eight prophecies! The Bible includes many other prophecies as well. For example, the Bible predicted that a man named Cyrus would be born, would rise to power in the Middle East, and would release the Jewish people from captivity (Isaiah 44:28--45:7). Approximately 150 years later, Cyrus the Great became king of Persia and released the Jews. No man could have known that would happen; only God could.

In Ezekiel 26 God says through the prophet that the Phoenician city of Tyre would be destroyed, specifying that a conqueror would come in and wipe out the city. He said that the city would be scraped clean and that the rubble left on the city's surface would be thrown into the ocean. The prophecy ended by saying that men would dry their fishnets there and that the city would never be rebuilt.

perience, you're going to run into trouble. Followers of Muhammad, Buddha, and Hare Krishna can point to various experiences as the basis for their beliefs, but that doesn't necessarily mean that their beliefs are correct. So although experience can help validate the power and authority of the Bible, we will need more evidence.

Science

The Bible also presents a most plausible, objective understanding of the universe and the existence of life. It presents a God who creates. That makes more sense than believing that everything came out of nothing, which is essentially what the theory of evolution says. I have an easier time assuming that someone produced everything. And the Bible tells me who that someone is: God.

The study of creation helps explain how the earth's geology became the way it is. The Bible tells of a supernatural creation that took place in six days and of a catastrophic worldwide flood. These two events help explain many geological and other scientific questions, some of which we will soon explore.

You will find that the Bible is accurate when it intersects with modern scientific concepts. For example, Isaiah 40:26 says it is God who creates the universe. He holds the stars together by His power and not one of them is ever missing. In this way the Bible suggests the first law of thermodynamics--that ultimately nothing is ever destroyed.

Peter Stoner, a scientist in the area of mathematical probabilities, said in his book *Science Speaks* that if we take just eight of the Old Testament prophecies Christ fulfilled, we find

(Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah). Testament contains more than three hundred references to the future unless we see God as its Author. For example, the Old Testament contains more than three hundred references to the Messiah of Israel that were precisely fulfilled by Jesus Christ

Prophecy

There is no way to explain the Bible's ability to predict the future unless we see God as its Author. For example, the Old Testament contains more than three hundred references to the Messiah of Israel that were precisely fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah). Peter Stoner, a scientist in the area of mathematical probabilities, said in his book *Science Speaks* that if we take just eight of the Old Testament prophecies Christ fulfilled, we find

The Bible includes supportive information to establish the credibility of the miracles it records. For example, Scripture says that after Jesus had risen from the dead more than five hundred people saw Him alive (1 Corinthians 15:6). That would be enough witnesses to convince any jury. The miraculous nature of the Bible demonstrates the involvement of God. But to believe the miracles, we must take the Bible at its word. So to further validate its authenticity we must take another step and consider its incredible ability to predict the future.

Miracles

A third evidence for the authenticity of the Bible is its miraculous

seating feeling of meaninglessness, never really finding genuine answers.

Where do you find truth that eluded Roquentin? I believe it is in the Word of God, the Bible. Consider its attributes.

The Attributes of the Bible

The Bible Is Infallible and Inerrant

The Bible, in its entirety, has no mistakes. It is flawless because God wrote it--and He is flawless. It is not only infallible in total, but also inerrant in its parts. Proverbs 30:5-6 says, "Every word of God is tested. . . . Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar." Every word of God is pure and true. The Bible is the only book that never makes a mistake--everything it says is the truth.

The Bible Is Complete

Nothing needs to be added to the Bible. It is complete. Some today say the Bible is incomplete and simply a product of its time--a comment on man's spiritual experience in history--and that we now need something else. Some believe that preachers who say, "The Lord told me this or that," are equally inspired, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, or any of the other prophets. That is essentially to say that the Bible is not complete. However, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, warns, "If anyone adds to [the words of this book], God shall add to

I look back at times in my own life when I didn't know what direction to go, what my future was, or what my career ought to be. Then I began to study God's Word and submit myself to His Spirit. Then God laid out the path for me. As I've walked in that path, I've experienced joy, happiness, and blessing. In fact, I find so much satisfaction in life that people sometimes believe something's wrong with me. Even difficultly brings satisfaction, because it creates a way in which God can show Himself faithful. Even unhappiness is a source of happiness. In John 16, Jesus compares the disciples' sorrow at His leaving to the pain of a woman having a baby. There's joy through any circumstance. I know you want a happy life. I know you want peace, joy, meaning, and purpose. I know you want the fullness of life that everybody seeks. The Bible says, "[Happy] are those who hear the word of God and observe it" (Luke 11:28). Why? Because God

out a right track. And the result is joy to the heart.

The Bible Is "Right"

Third, the Word of God--called "the precepts of the Lord"--is right. In Hebrew, that means it sets out a right path or lays out a right track. And the result is joy to the heart. How does the Bible transform one's life? It does so when you read it and Commit your life to Jesus Christ, the Teacher and the Author of Scripture. He comes to live in you and applies the truth of the Word to your life.

cultivate virtue in your life--every aspect of living is covered

swers?" "No," he said, "but at least I've gotten myself into a situation where I don't ask the questions." That's the despair of not knowing the truth.

Scripture describes some people as "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). That's not referring to intellectual truth; it's referring to the truth of life, death, God, man, sin, right, wrong, heaven, hell, hope, joy, and peace. People can't find it on their own.

What Is Truth?

To look at things philosophically, we live in a time-space box we can't get out of. We cannot go into a phone booth and come out Superman--we cannot transcend the natural world. We are locked into a time-space continuum.

And we bounce around in our little box trying to figure out God. We invent religions, but they're self-contained. The only way we'll ever know what is beyond us is if what is on the outside comes in. And that's exactly what the Bible claims. It's a supernatural revelation from God, who has invaded our box. And He invaded it not only through the written word, but also in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Jean-Paul Sartre's novel Nausea lays out an existential view of life. Its main character, Antoine Roquentin, is horrified by his own existence. He tries to find meaning in life through sex, humanitarianism, and other avenues but is left with a nau-

We read in Ecclesiastes 1:10: "Is there anything of which one might say, 'See this, it is new'?" The answer immediately follows: "Already it has existed for ages which were before us." Ancient writers of the Bible, thousands of years before the laws of thermodynamics had been categorically stated, were affirming the conservation of mass and energy.

The second law of thermodynamics states that although mass and energy are always conserved, they nevertheless are breaking down and going from order to disorder, from cosmos to chaos, from system to non-system. The Bible, contrary to the theory of evolution, affirms that. As matter breaks down and energy dissipates, ultimately the world and universe as we know it will become dead. It will be unable to reproduce itself. Romans 8 says that all creation groans because of its curse, which is described at the beginning of the Bible (Genesis 3). That curse--and God's plan to reverse the curse--is reflected throughout biblical teaching.

The science of hydrology studies the cycle of water, which consists of three major phases: evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. Clouds move over the land and drop water through precipitation. The rain runs into creeks, the creeks run into streams, the streams run into the sea, and the evaporation process takes place all the way along the path. That same process is described in Scripture. Ecclesiastes 1 and Isaiah 55 present the entire water cycle: "All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the

I can go to a Christian who is facing death and see joy in his heart. My grandmother died when she was ninety-three years old. She was lying in bed, and the nurse told her it was time to get up. My grandmother said, "No, I'm not getting up today." When the nurse asked why, my grandmother said, "I

The autobiography of English philosopher Bertrand Russell, written near the end of his life, implies that philosophy was something of a washout to him. That's shocking. He spent his life musing on reality, but was not able to define it. I don't believe I'm Russell's equal intellectually, but I do know the Word of God. Scripture enlightens the eyes, particularly concerning the dark things of life, such as death, disease, tragic events, and the devastation of the world. Scripture deals with the tough issues of life.

Fourth, the palmist says the Word of God is pure, enlightening the eyes. The simplest Christian knows a lot of things that many scholarly people don't know. Because I know the Bible, some things are clear to me that aren't clear to others.

The Bible Is "Pure"

within. blesses their faithfulness and obedience. You can have a happy life without sin, without sex outside of marriage, without drugs, and without alcohol. God is not a cosmic killjoy. He made you. He knows how you operate best. And He knows what makes you happy. The happiness He gives doesn't stop when the party's over. It lasts because it comes from deep

The Bible truly is the revelation of God to mankind. He wants us to know about Him and the world He created. Although the Bible does not contain scientific terminology, it is amazingly accurate whenever it happens to refer to scientific truth. But someone might say, "Wait a minute. The Old Testament says that the sun once stood still, and if that happened, the sun didn't really stand still; the earth stopped revolving." Yes, but that statement is based on the perception of someone on earth. When you got up this morning, you didn't look east and say, "What a lovely earth rotation!" From your perspective, you saw a sunrise. And because you permit yourself to do that, you must permit Scripture to do that as well.

English philosopher Herbert Spencer, who died in 1903, was famous for applying scientific discoveries to philosophy. He listed five knowable categories in the natural sciences: time, force, motion, space, and matter. However, Genesis 1:1, the first verse in the Bible, says, "In the beginning [time] God [force] created [motion] the heavens [space] and the earth [matter]." God laid it all out in the very first verse of Scripture.

by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance, and the hills in a pair of scales."

place where the rivers flow, there they flow again" (Ecclesiastes 1:7). "For . . . the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth" (Isaiah 55:10). Also, Job 36:27-28 speaks of evaporation and condensation--centuries prior to any scientific discovery of the process: "He [God] draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the mist, which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly."

In the 1500s, when Copernicus first presented the idea that the earth was in motion, people were astounded. They previously believed that the earth was a flat disc and that if you went through the Pillars of Hercules at the Rock of Gibraltar you'd fall off the edge. In the seventeenth century, men like Kepler and Galileo gave birth to modern astronomy. Prior to that, the universe was generally thought to contain only about one thousand stars, which was the number that had been counted.

However, in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, the number of the stars of heaven is equated with the number of grains of sand on the seashore. God told Abraham, "I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore" (22:17). Jeremiah 33:22 says that the stars can't be counted. Again God is speaking: "As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David." Today several million stars have been cataloged, though hundreds of millions remain unlisted.

It's also interesting to note that the earth maintains a perfect balance. If you've ever seen a basketball that's out of balance, you know that it rotates unevenly. You can imagine what would happen if the earth were like that. The earth is a perfect sphere, and it is perfectly balanced. The depths of the sea have to be balanced with the height of the mountains. The branch of science that studies that balance is called isostasy. In Isaiah 40:12, centuries before science even conceived of this phenomenon, Isaiah said that God "has measured the wa-

Job also says that the earth is "turned like the clay to the wheel" (38:14, KJV*). In those days, soft clay was used for writing and a seal was used for applying one's signature. One kind of seal was a hollow cylinder of hardened clay with a signature raised on it. A stick went through it so that it could be rolled like a rolling pin. The writer could, therefore, roll his signature across the soft clay and in that way sign his name. In saying the earth is turned like the clay to the seal, Job may have implied that it rotates on its axis. The Hebrew word translated "earth" (hu) refers to a sphere.

The oldest book in the Bible, the Book of Job, pre-dates Christ by about two thousand years. Yet Job 26:7 says, "He hangs the earth on nothing." In the sacred books of other religions you may read that the earth is on the backs of elephants that produce earthquakes when they shake. The cosmogony of Greek mythology is at about the same level of sophistication. But the Bible is in a completely different class. It says, "He . . . hangs the earth on nothing"

The word of God is clean. It describes and uncovers sin, but it is untouched by evil. And even though it is an ancient document, every person in every situation in every society can find timeless truth in this book. Here's a book that never needs another edition because it's never out of date or obsolete. It speaks to us as pointedly and directly as it ever has to anyone in history. It's so pure that it lasts forever.

When I was in college I studied philosophy. Almost every philosophy I studied was long dead. I also studied psychology. Almost every form of psychotherapy I read about is now obsolete or has been replaced by more progressive thinking.

But there's one thing that never changes, and that is the eternal Word of God. It is always relevant.

The Bible Is "True"

Finally, and most pointedly, Psalm 19:9 says that the Word of God is true. Today it seems there's no longer a premium on truth. But that was true even in Jesus' day. Pilate, when he sent Jesus to the cross, said, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). The context makes clear that he was being cynical.

I remember meeting a young man on drugs who was living in an overturned refrigerator box by a stream in the mountains of northern California . I was hiking through the area and asked if I could introduce myself. We talked a little while. It turned out he was a graduate of Boston University . He said, "I've escaped." I asked, "Have you found the an-

Further, Psalm 19:1 says that the Word of God is "clean, enduring forever." The only things that last forever are things untouched by the devastation of evil--another word for sin.

The Bible Is "Clean"

The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer, (Like the cover of an old book, its contents worn out And strip of its lettering and gilding) Lies here, food for worms! Yet the work itself shall not be lost, For it will, as he believed, appear once more In a new And more beautiful edition, Corrected and amended by its Author! Can you look death in the eye and say, "This is not the end; it is but the beginning for me"? What can you say to someone who loses a child? What can you say to someone who loses a spouse to cancer or heart disease? Are you roaming around in the confusion in which many people find themselves? Where do you go for the dark things to be made clear? I go to the Word of God, and I find clarity there.

Do you have that kind of hope? When I was a boy I used to go to Christ Church in Philadelphia and read epitaphs written about Americans who have had a great impact on our country. Benjamin Franklin wrote his own epitaph:

love Jesus, and I'm going to heaven today, so don't bother me." Then she smiled and went to heaven.