

Why Examine the Bible?

The following is a typical conversation that one of Jehovah's Witnesses might have with a neighbor. Let us imagine that a Witness named Brian has contacted a man named Eric.



THE BIBLE—ACCURATE HISTORY

Eric: I should tell you that I'm not very religious. So I don't think we have much to talk about.

Brian: I appreciate your telling me that. By the way, my name is Brian. And your name?

Eric: Eric.

Brian: It's nice to meet you, Eric.

Eric: You too.

Brian: If I may ask, did you grow up in a religious household?

Eric: Yes. But when I left home for college, I kind of lost touch with religion.

Brian: I see. What did you study in college?

Eric: Social studies and history. I've always liked history—you know, man's journey on earth.

Brian: History can be fascinating. The Bible, as you may know, is a book of history. Did you ever include the Bible in your research?

Eric: Not really. I know it's a good book, but I never really thought of the Bible as a historical book.

Brian: You seem to be an open-minded person. If you have a few minutes, I would like to show you just a few examples of accurate history found in the Bible.

Eric: Sure. But I don't have a Bible.

Brian: That's OK. I can show you from my copy. The first example is here at 1 Chronicles chapter 29, verses 26 and 27. Those verses say:

"Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel, and the length of his reign over Israel was 40 years. In Hebron he reigned for 7 years, and in Jerusalem he reigned for 33 years."

Eric: How is that an example of accurate history?

Brian: Well, critics at one time claimed that King David never existed.

Eric: Really? Why would they question his existence?

Brian: There was little evidence outside the Bible that he was a real person. However, in 1993, a team of archaeologists uncovered a very ancient stone with a word on it that is translated "House of David."

Eric: Interesting.

Brian: Another person from the Bible whose existence was questioned was Pontius Pilate, a governor who ruled in Jesus' day. He is mentioned here at Luke chapter 3, verse 1—among many other government officials of the time.

Eric: Yes, I see. It says that "when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was district ruler of Galilee."

Brian: Right. For years, some scholars doubted





Photograph © Israel Museum, Jerusalem; courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority

whether Pontius Pilate was a real person. Then, about 50 years ago, a stone was found in the Middle East with his name clearly etched on it.

Eric: Hmm. I've never heard those details before.

Brian: I'm glad to share them with you.

Eric: To be honest, I have always respected the Bible as a work of literature, but I've never really felt that it had any relevance to our time. It may contain accurate history, but I don't think it has any practical value.

THE BIBLE—AN OLD BUT MODERN BOOK

Brian: A lot of people would agree with that statement. But I believe differently. Here's why: Our basic human needs have not changed from the beginning of time. For example, we have always needed food, clothing, and shelter. We've always felt the need to communicate with one another and to have a happy family. Isn't it true that we all value those things?

Eric: Sure.

Brian: The Bible can help us in all those areas. It is what we might call an old but modern book.

Eric: What do you mean?

Brian: Let me put it another way: The Bible contains fundamental principles that are as relevant today as they were when they were written centuries ago.

Eric: OK. In what areas?

Brian: When it comes to things such as having a balanced view of money or a happy family life or being a good friend, Bible principles can guide us. This book is like a road map to success. Wouldn't you agree, for instance, that being a successful husband and family head these days can be a challenge?

Eric: Well, yes, I have to agree with you there. My wife and I have been married for about a year, and it's not always easy to see eye to eye.

Brian: Exactly. But the Bible contains simple principles that work. Take Ephesians chapter 5 as a case in point. Let's read verses 22, 23, and 28. If you like, you can read those verses.

Eric: Sure. It says: "Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord, because a husband is head of his wife just as the Christ is head of the congregation, he being a savior of this body." Then, verse 28 says: "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself."

Brian: Good. Thank you. Isn't it true that if both mates tried to apply that simple advice, family life would improve?

Eric: Yes, I guess so. But that's easier said than done.

Brian: True; no one is perfect. In fact, in that same chapter of the Bible there is a verse that encourages us to be reasonable.* With any relationship, there needs to be balance and compromise. My wife and I have found that the Bible can help us find that balance.

Eric: That makes sense.

Brian: Jehovah's Witnesses have a Web site that has some good information on marriage and family life. If you have a couple of minutes, I could show you a sample of what it offers.

Eric: Sure. I can spare a couple of minutes.

Brian: Good. The address for the Web site is www.jw.org. Here is the home page.

Eric: I like the photos.

Brian: Those are scenes of the ministry work that we do all over the world. Ah, here we are. This section is entitled "Help for Couples and Parents." Under that heading, there are several

* See Ephesians 5:17.

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brief articles dealing with different situations. Is there one that interests you?

Eric: Yes. "Solving Problems in Your Marriage." I think I could use that!

Brian: This article outlines four steps to solving problems. Notice this paragraph. Would you like to read it, Eric?

Eric: Sure. It says: "If communication is the lifeblood of a marriage, then love and respect are the heart and lungs of the relationship." Hmm, I like the way they explain that.

Brian: Thank you for reading. There's a Bible verse cited here. You can open it by tapping on it.

Eric: Yes, I see it. Ephesians 5:33. It says: "Each one of you must love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband."

Brian: Did you notice that the emphasis is on *giving* what each one expects to *receive*?

Eric: I'm not sure what you mean.

Brian: Well, isn't it true that the man wants to feel he is respected by his wife and that in turn, the wife wants to be assured that her husband really loves her?

Eric: Yes. I'll agree with that.

Brian: If the husband often looks for ways to show his love for his wife, wouldn't it be easier for the wife to manifest respect for him?

Eric: That sounds as if it would work.

Brian: So this one verse in the Bible, though written almost 2,000 years ago, addresses the needs of both parties in a marriage and provides helpful advice that, if applied, really works. And to repeat the illustration we read earlier, the "heart and lungs" of the marriage will remain healthy.

Eric: I must admit, there is more to the Bible than I thought.

Brian: I am happy to hear that, Eric. I would like to meet you here again and get your opinion on the subheading "Four Steps to Solving Problems" that appears in this same article on our Web site.*

Eric: Sure. My wife and I will take a look at it together. ■

* For more information, see chapter 14 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org.

Is there a particular Bible subject that you have wondered about? Are you curious about any of the beliefs or religious practices of Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, do not hesitate to ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He or she will be pleased to discuss such matters with you.

