

## Small Group Questions | October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018

### *Explore God – Is the Bible Reliable?*

**John 6:22–51**

*Other Passages Referenced: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21; Luke 24:44–46; 2 Corinthians 1:20; John 6:68–69; Psalm 19:9b-11; Romans 15:4; John 17:17*

#### **Introductory Comments to Group Leaders:**

“Is the Bible reliable?” That question leads to some interesting responses, even among churchgoers. According to Barna research, 43% of professing Christians in the USA do not believe they can trust all that the Bible says. Sunday’s sermon gives us several reasons to believe we can trust the Bible to reveal truth about God, about the spirit world, about ourselves, and about whatever it speaks. Even for Christians who declare that the Bible is trustworthy, many of them are not able to explain how or why they arrived at that answer. Others are left with questions about the reliability of Bible translations that are a step removed from the original language manuscripts. Under the practical application section below, you will find a link to a six-minute video and a .pdf file that gives a chart comparing and explaining various English translations (Make sure to keep scrolling down after the answer section to find the chart). If you think this would be helpful to your group, you’ll need to factor in about 10 minutes. Also, I’ve been convicted in my own life that I have neglected the discipline of Scripture memory that played a huge role in my spiritual growth in earlier years. In the **Verse** section each week, I plan to suggest a related verse to memorize. If you are not currently doing any scripture memorization, I encourage you to join me in giving it a try.

Here are the video links for this week’s videos that correspond to our big question:

**Pulse of the World** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EK4bGkpC7iY>

**The Curiosity Collective** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68-cYoM5Ybw>

Again this week, I put some answers to the questions and commentary in bold text at the bottom of this document. The numbers correspond to the numbers of the questions. Please refer to those answers after you have delved into the text on your own.

**Sermon Recap:** The Bible is different than any other ancient text, religious book, self-help book, or literary masterpiece. It’s own claim to divine inspiration is not unique, however the quantity of manuscripts, the historical support of their accuracy, the internal consistency of its message, and the impact the Bible has had on humanity put it in a class of its own. The Bible is *externally* reliable, *internally* reliable, *eternally* reliable, and *personally* reliable. **The Big Idea to take away: History and experience give us compelling reasons to believe the Bible is God’s true word as it claims to be.**

#### **Hook: A Question to Help Ignite Conversation**

Please show one or both of the videos above, depending on what you think will be most helpful to your group. Allow a few minutes for comments.

**Look: (Please read this to your group.)** As we try to answer the question, “**Is the Bible reliable?**”, we have to admit that just because the Bible claims to be true does not settle the matter unless its claims can be validated in some way. Sunday’s sermon referenced textual, historical, archeological, and experiential reasons to believe the Bible can be trusted as a reliable source. For those who are not yet convinced, the evidence is available to scrutinize and come to their own conclusions. For those who are convinced of the Bible’s reliability, there is perhaps a more important follow-up question: “Is my belief that the Bible is reliable having an impact on the way I think, speak, act, and feel?”

## Background Helps –

- **Manna and the Bread from Heaven** – It’s difficult to understand the importance of this passage without knowing what Jesus is referring to when he speaks about “manna” and “bread from heaven.” The manna refers to the events of Exodus 16:4–36 and Yahweh’s miraculous provision of bread for His people in the wilderness. Jewish tradition looked for the Messiah to provide manna as Moses had (as depicted by the Jewish work Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1.9)<sup>1</sup>
- **Believe** – Remember, when we read the word “**believe**” in the New Testament, it almost never refers to cognitive belief or opinion alone. Greek has a verb form of “**faith**” that English does not have. Just about every time we see the word “**believe**” in the New Testament it is being used to translate that verb for “**faith**.” When you see “**believe**” it is a good exercise to substitute “**put faith in ... trust ... depend on**” to get a truer sense of the force. (This example, along with the “I am” statements from last week, point to the challenges that our English translations can present.)
- **The Jews** – Some today mistakenly consider John’s use of “**the Jews**” to be anti Semitic (6:41, 52). However, “**the Jews**” was a technical term used through John’s gospel to refer to Jewish leaders and their followers who opposed Jesus—in other words a subset of Jewish people. John’s gospel is known as a very Jewish gospel. John himself was a Jew and wrote, “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22) and “So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews” (John 19:40).

## Read John 6:22–51

1. Find and list the three “Truly, truly ...” statements found in verses 22–51. How do these highlighted statements about bread outline the essence of Jesus’ interaction with his Jewish audience?
2. How does Jesus address the topic of works and faith in **John 6:27–29**?
3. Read **Exodus 16:4–6** to establish the context of the talk about manna and bread from heaven. In Exodus the people would not have survived without the manna from heaven to feed them every morning. The only work required of them was to receive it. Likewise, Jesus claims that he is the bread from heaven that gives life and eternal life to those who receive him. In thinking about the Bible’s reliability, what do you think about the internal consistency of God’s word between the **Exodus 16** and **John 6** passages?
4. Find all of the times in this passage that Jesus refers to “**coming down from heaven**.” What do you think about the internal connection between Jesus coming down from heaven here and “**the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us**” that we saw earlier in **John 1**? ... Is it any wonder his Jewish hearers had a hard time accepting what Jesus was saying?

## Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of [www.wcchapel.org](http://www.wcchapel.org)

**Took:** *Applying the message to our lives.*

## Practical Applications:

1. Can anyone relate a time when you realized you were seeking what God might give you rather than seeking God for who he is? ...How can we get better at treating God as the One we love and worship rather than as our personal genie?

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Barry et al., [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Jn 6:31.

2. Even if we believe the Bible in the original manuscripts is true and reliable, we can have some questions about the reliability of our English or other language translations. This link to a 6-minute video offers a helpful teaching on English translation differences – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swbCX1EgpZ0>  
Likewise, at the bottom of this page you will find a chart that gives a description and continuum of most popular English translations of the Bible
3. Will you take the 5x5 Challenge this week: read the Bible for 5 minutes a day/5 days this week?
4. Will you pray for God to lead you to someone who needs to hear what God’s word has been teaching you through this sermon/study?

**Verse (You might consider memorizing this one):** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” – John 6:35

**Prayer:** “Lord Jesus, our bread of life, forgive us for coming to you for food and things that perish without coming to you for who you are. Thank you for coming down from heaven to give yourself to us. Thank you for being our living word, living water, and bread of life. Teach us to trust you and your reliable word even more.”

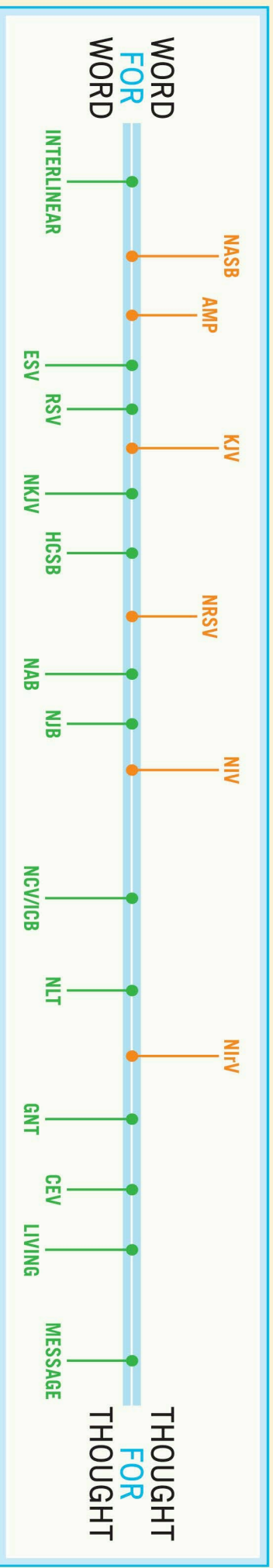
### **What we hope members glean from the passage.**

1. **V. 28 “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves” ... V. “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.” ... V. “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.”** Their motives for seeking him were temporal ... Jesus perceived them to credit Moses for giving them manna/bread from heaven rather than God as the giver ... It is necessary to put faith in/trust/depend on Jesus as bread from heaven that gives eternal life.
2. **Trusting in/depending on Jesus as the One sent from God is the work God requires.**
3. **Both passages have the same message of God sending from heaven what His people need to survive an otherwise unsurvivable reality. It’s worth noting that in 6:49 Jesus said, “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.” In contrast, those who receive Jesus as the bread from heaven are given eternal life.**
4. **John 6:31, 32, 33, 38, 41, 42, 50, & 51 ... The verses from John 1 and 6 claim Jesus preexistence with the Father and his incarnation as God in human flesh.**
  - a. **John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God**
  - b. **John 1:9–10 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.**
  - c. **John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**
  - d. **John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

# BIBLE TRANSLATION CHART

Translation	Reading Level	Translation Philosophy	Target Audience	2 Corinthians 10:13	Distinctives
<b>AMP</b> Amplified Bible	11	Word-for-word plus additional amplification of word meanings	Those looking for more detailed shades of meaning in Scripture	"We, on the other hand, will not boast beyond our legitimate province and proper limit, but will keep within the limits [of our commission which] God has allotted us as our measuring line and which reaches and includes even you."	A popular translation used to understand the hidden meaning of Greek and Hebrew words. Published in 1964 (updated in 1987). Break through the language barrier.
<b>CEV</b> Contemporary English Version	5.4	Thought-for-thought	Unchurched	"We won't brag about something we don't have a right to brag about. We will only brag about the work that God has sent us to do, and you are part of that work."	Written at an elementary-school reading level, the CEV is readable and understandable for the modern reader. Published in 1995.
<b>ESV</b> English Standard Version	7.4	Word-for-word	Bible readers of all ages	"But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you."	A literal update of the Revised Standard Version, seeks to produce word-for-word correspondence. Published in 2001.
<b>God's Word</b> Translation	4.3	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Christians and non-Christians; adults and children	"How can we brag about things that no one can evaluate? Instead, we will only brag about what God has given us to do—coming to [the city of Corinth] where you live."	Published in 1995, a meaning-based, contemporary translation utilizing the thought-for-thought translation philosophy.
<b>HCSB</b> Holman Christian Standard Bible	7.5	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Bible readers of all ages	"We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but according to the measure of the area [of ministry] that God has assigned to us, [which] reaches even to you."	A translation that attempts to combine both formal and dynamic equivalence. Published in 2004.
<b>KJV</b> King James Version	12	Word-for-word	Conservative Protestant	"But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you."	Traditionally loved and accepted by all Christians. Purpose in translation was "to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they can understand." Published in 1611. Timeless Treasure.
<b>The Message</b> A Paraphrase	5.5–10 depending on the passage	Thought-for-thought. Converts the original languages into the tone and rhythms of modern-day American speech while retaining the idioms and meaning of the original languages	Christians who want a fresh Bible-reading experience and seekers	"We aren't making outrageous claims here. We're sticking to the limits of what God has set for us. But there can be no question that those limits reach to and include you."	This paraphrase was translated using the rhythms and tone of contemporary English to communicate to the modern reader. Complete Bible published in 2002.
<b>NAB</b> New American Bible	6.6	Word-for-word	Catholic	"But we will not boast beyond measure but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, namely, to reach even to you."	Published under the direction of Pope Pius XII, this Catholic version of the Bible represents more than 25 years of effort by the Catholic Biblical Association of America. All editions include the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books. Published in 1970.
<b>NASB</b> New American Standard Bible	11	Word-for-word	Conservative, evangelical Protestant	"But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you."	A highly respected, formal translation of the Bible. Purpose of the work was to update the American Standard Version into more current English. Published in 1971. Updated in 1995. The most literal is now more readable.
<b>NCV</b> New Century Version	5.6	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Those who want a highly readable translation of the Bible in today's language	"But we will not brag about things outside the work that was given us to do. We will limit our bragging to the work that God gave us, and this includes our work with you."	Based on the ICB (International Children's Bible), it's a readable and simple translation using the thought-for-thought translation methodology. Published in 1991.
<b>NIV</b> NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION	7.8	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Evangelical Christians of all ages	"We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you."	The bestselling translation, widely accepted by evangelical Christians. Purpose in translation was to "produce an accurate translation, suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing, and liturgical use." Published in 1978. Most read. Most trusted.
<b>NiRV</b> New International Reader's Version	2.9	Balance between word-for-word translation and thought-for-thought, with an emphasis on meaning when necessary for simplification	Children ages 10 and under	"But I won't brag more than I should. Instead, I will brag only about what I have done in the area God has given me. It is an area that reaches all the way to you."	A thorough, scholarly simplification of the NIV, the NiRV was specifically designed to help young children and new readers understand the Bible for themselves and create an easy stepping-stone from a children's Bible to an adult Bible. Published in 1994. Updated in 1998. The NIV for kids!
<b>NKJV</b> New King James Version	8	Authors used the original KJV as a benchmark, while working to produce an accurate and modern word-for-word translation	Those who want a readable translation of the Bible that is great for study but maintains the poetry of the KJV	"We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us—a sphere which especially includes you."	A modern language update of the original KJV. Purpose was to update and modernize the original KJV but preserve the KJV as much as possible. Published in 1982.
<b>NLT</b> New Living Translation	6.3	Balance between word-for-word translation and thought-for-thought	Adults and children	"But we will not boast of authority we do not have. Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God's plan for us, and this plan includes our working there with you."	Based on the work of 90 Bible scholars and a smaller team of English stylists. These scholars and stylists went back to the original languages and sought to produce the closest natural equivalent of the message in natural, contemporary English. Published in 1996.
<b>NRSV</b> New Revised Standard Version	8.1–10.4	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	Mainline and interconfessional	"We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you."	A widely accepted translation in the tradition of the King James Version. Purpose was to make a good one better." Published in 1990. A Bible for all Christians.

# TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies.