

## “FAITHFUL TO THE WORD”

**INTRODUCTION:** Back in 1976, a book was published that greatly impacted Evangelicalism...

1. Published the year I was converted: *The Battle for the Bible*
  - a. By **Harold Lindsell**: Editor Emeritus of *Christianity Today*
  - b. He had served as both faculty and administration at *Fuller Theological Seminary, Columbia Bible College* and *Northern Baptist Seminary* (in Chicago).
  - c. **Zondervan Books**: “*The book that rocked the evangelical world.*”
2. **Harold J. Ockenga**, who was then president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, wrote the Foreword (p. 9).
 

*As evangelicalism grows, it becomes more and more threatened with incipient division. The perplexing question of the inspiration of Scripture is endangering the unity of the evangelical movement. Two prominent views are emerging. The adherents of both appeal to the Bible to support their position. The first view considers all of Scripture to be inspired and true, including the historical, geographical, and scientific teaching. The second view holds that only the Bible teaching on salvation-history and doctrine is true. The Bible is authoritative for faith and practice only.*
3. Out of the controversy (and Lindsell’s book) a new word arose in the Christian vocabulary: “*inerrancy.*”
  - a. Prior to the 1970’s, theologians, scholars and pastors spoke of the Bible’s *infallibility*.
  - b. **Westminster Confession of Faith**: “*of the Holy Scriptures*” (1-5)
 

*We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.* (WCF 1-5)
  - c. *Infallible* means that someone/something *cannot* err; it does not have the *potential* to make a mistake.
  - d. *Inerrant* means that someone/something *has not* erred; it *in fact* has not made a mistake.
  - e. Thus something that is *infallible* must of necessity be *inerrant*; but something *inerrant* may not always be *infallible*.
  - f. Both *infallibility* and *inerrancy* are the results of *divine inspiration*. (divine authorship)
 

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.* (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
  - g. To this day, European evangelicals hold to the *infallibility* of Scripture while American evangelicals like to speak about the *inerrancy* of the Bible.
4. **Dr. Harold J. Ockenga** went on to make this observation in the introduction to the book, *The Battle for the Bible* (p. 12).

*Dr. Lindsell mentions that acceptance of inerrancy is the watershed of modern theological controversy. He is right in declaring that the attitude we have toward the trustworthiness of Scripture determines our later position, not only on faith, but also on practice. The evidence that those who surrender the doctrine of inerrancy inevitably move away from orthodoxy is indisputable. It is apparent that those who give up an authoritative, dependable, authentic, trustworthy, and infallible Scripture must ultimately yield the right to the use of the name “evangelical.”*

5. Is this true? Was that comment by Ockenga fair? Can that statement be verified?
  - a. Answers? *Yes...yes...yes!*
  - b. A 1967 poll of delegates to the Liberal *National Council of Churches* assembly verifies these statements.
  - c. **Newsweek** magazine ran a story on June 26, 1967 (nine years before Lindsell’s book; month I graduated from High School): “*The New-Time Religion*” (*Battle for the Bible*; p. 145). *Conservative critics frequently complain that the National Council of Churches is too liberal to represent mainstream American Protestantism. Are they right? Last week the NCC released a survey of 521 clergy and laymen who attended the council’s 1966 General Assembly in Miami Beach. Based on responses from 37 percent of the voting and alternate delegates, plus 298 consultants and “accredited visitors” at the assembly, the survey does indeed reveal a modest liberal stance [my italics]. To be sure nearly two-thirds firmly believe in God [this means that one third do not], and more than half – 58 percent – confidently regard Jesus as divine. Thus on at least two fundamental points – together with the 22 percent who temper their beliefs with only occasional doubts – the survey shows that NCC representatives are as traditional as most American churchgoers. But in other specific areas, NCC assemblymen seem to have jettisoned much of the old-time religion. Only one in four accepts Biblical miracles – such as the virgin birth of Christ – as literally true. In fact, a third of the respondents believe such miracles can be explained by natural causes. The devil “definitely” does not exist for one in three, and only 15 percent believe that children are born into the world already guilty of sin – a doctrine basic to reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin. Finally, with something less than triumphant optimism, barely 62 percent look forward with “complete certainty” to a life after death.*
  - d. “*Neo-orthodoxy*” – reliance upon science, reason and experience rather than the Word of God.
6. Here we are, in 2011, facing the **exact same** issues with a new generation of church-goers: The Millennials.
  - a. Some 44 years after my high school graduation
  - b. A full 35 years after Lindsell’s book was first published
  - c. Three decades (31 years) after I was required to read *The Battle for the Bible* in seminary (1980).
  - d. A generation of Christians saying, “*We don’t believe everything in the Bible or that the Bible is always correct.*”
7. **Listen carefully:** The question now is not defined by words like *infallibility* and *inerrancy*, but words like *authenticity* and *reliability*...subjective words rather than objective realities.
8. Again, we are facing the challenge of a “*New-Time Religion*” (as in 1967); but now it is called “*A New Kind of Christianity.*”
  - a. The title of the book by **Brian McLaren** and his emergent church theology
  - b. Postmodernity mixed with Christianity
  - c. Can the Bible be trusted? Is it reliable?
  - d. According to McLaren, not the way we have traditionally and historically understood it.
9. **Brian McLaren** gives his view of the Bible in these words (*pp. 67-69*).

- a. *I love the Bible. This love goes back to childhood for me, to warm memories when my parents would read me Bible stories, either directly from a big, black, leather-bound, red-letter King James Version or from a children’s illustrated story Bible. But my quest for a new kind of Christianity has required me to ask some hard questions about the Bible I love. There will be no new kind of Christian faith without a new approach to the Bible, because we’ve gotten ourselves into a mess with the Bible. First, we are in a scientific mess. Fundamentalism—whether in its Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Pentecostal, or Orthodox form (for it exists in all streams of Christian faith)—again and again paints itself into a corner by requiring that the Bible be treated as a divinely dictated science textbook providing us true information in all areas of life, including when and how the earth was created, what the shape of the earth is, what revolves around what in space, and so on. Second, we are in trouble in relation to ethics. The Bible, when taken as an ethical rule book, offers us no clear categories for many of our most significant and vexing socioethical quandaries. We find no explicit mention, for example, of abortion, capitalism, communism, socialism, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, autism, systemic racism, affirmative action, human rights, nationalism, sexual orientation, pornography, global climate change, imprisonment, extinction of species, energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, genetic engineering, space travel, and so on—not to mention nuclear weapons, biological warfare, and just-war theory. Third, we are in deep trouble relating to peace. As much as we love the Bible, many of us are afraid that the Bible is becoming a box cutter or suitcase bomb in the hands of too many preachers, pastors, priests, and others. When careless preachers use the Bible as a club or sword to dominate or wound, they discredit the Bible in a way that no skeptic can.*
- a. Yes...these are issues and questions we must face.
- b. No...our struggles do not make the Bible unreliable, irrelevant or outdated (obsolete).
- c. *Because the Bible does not **explicitly** address every issue we want answers for – schizophrenia, global warming, and genetic science – does not mean the Bible...*
- i. *Has no such answers to such questions,*
  - ii. *Is automatically wrong on such issues,*
  - iii. *Must be supplemented by “science”*
- d. **The real problem may well be this:** *We don't like the answer the Bible gives! For example:*
- i. *The sanctity of life and abortion*
  - ii. *The integrity of marriage and same sex unions*
  - iii. *The doctrine of creation and popular evolution*
10. The Bible is God’s inspired, infallible, inerrant, authentic, reliable, relevant, and living Word. And it must be trusted as *the Word of God*.
- a. *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. (Heb. 4:12)*
  - b. *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)*
11. Why should we have a high view of Scripture and an absolute trust in what it says? *Because Jesus said we should and Jesus had such a view of Scripture.*
12. In **John 17**, Jesus prays for His Church – you, me and Christ Covenant – and He asks God, His Father, for 9 specific blessings.

- a. We are preaching through these: “*What Christ Wants for His Church*”
  - b. First: *Glorifying to God* (John 17:1-5; Mike Ross)
  - c. Second: *Saved in Eternity* (John 17:3; Kris Decker)
  - d. Third: *Faithful to the Word* (John 17:6-8)
13. When Jesus prays that we be **Faithful to the Word**, He asks God for *four things* for His Church (us)
- a. *Four verbs* that shape these 3 verses (17:6-8)
  - b. That we *keep* God’s Word (v. 6)
  - c. That we *receive* God’s Word (v. 7-8)
  - d. That we *know* God’s Truth (v. 8)
  - e. That we *believe in* God’s Son (v. 8)

#### I. WE SHOULD KEEP GOD’S WORD (John 17:6)

*I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.* (John 17:6)

1. Jesus turns from praying for Himself in verses 1-5 and now spends the rest of His prayer interceding for His followers: the Apostles, the other disciples, and those believers who will come after them...us!
2. These people for whom Jesus prays are His *elect*.
  - a. The ones the Father gave to Jesus...  
*I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me...* (John 17:6)
  - b. The ones whom Jesus chose for Himself...  
*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* (John 15:16)  
*If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* (John 15:19)
  - c. Jesus is **not** praying for the world; for mankind...  
*I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.* (John 17:9)
  - d. These ones whom Jesus prays for were God the Father’s even before they were Christ’s...  
*I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.* (John 17:6)  
*I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.* (John 17:9)
  - e. **Westminster Shorter Catechism; Q. 20**  
*Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*  
*A. God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.* (WSC #20)

f. **Westminster Confession of Faith; 25-1**

*I. The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. (WCF 25-1)*

3. **D. A. Carson:** *Gospel of John; Pillar NTC; p. 558.*

*These people for whom Jesus now lifts His voice in prayer are those whom the Father has given to the Son. This gift was not rooted in anything intrinsic to the people themselves. They were part of the wicked world, but God gave them to Jesus out of the world – apparently functionally equivalent to the fact that Jesus chose them out of the world. Thus in a profound sense they belonged to God antecedently to Jesus’ ministry (they were yours; you gave them to me).*

4. *Clearly: Jesus is praying for His Church – for you, for me, for our family, friends and our children who belong (or will someday belong) to Jesus Christ as God’s chosen and God’s children.*

5. *Jesus has manifested God’s name to these elect, special, chosen people:*

- a. *Meaning: He has revealed to them plainly and humanly what God is really like!*
- b. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 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. (John 1:1, 14)*
- c. *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:9-11)*
- d. *Jesus has “manifested” (made plain) the works of God, the Word of God, and the nature of God.*
- e. *Jesus is the invisible God with a human face. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)*

6. *This is the essential attribute of the Church: The Church is the assembly of chosen people who believe in the name of God and Christ to be saved:*

- a. *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)*
- b. *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*
- c. *For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:11-13)*

7. **Lesslie Newbigin:** *The Light Has Come (p. 228).*

*The work of Jesus is the communication of the name of God to a community. He does not bequeath to posterity a body of teaching preserved in a book—like the Qur’an. He does not leave behind an ideal or a program. He leaves behind a community—the Church. This community exists not because of decisions which its members have made. It is not constituted by the faith,*

*insight, or moral excellence of its members. It exists because God has called its members out of the world by his own action and given them to Jesus. They are those whom God had chosen “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). Jesus has manifested to this God-given community the “name of God.”*

8. And here is **the** distinguishing mark of God’s elect, a true Christian, an authentic believer in Christ...
  - a. “...and they have kept your word.” (17:6)
  - b. A true believer “keeps” God’s Word
  - c. Meaning: *A Christian accepts and obeys the revelation of God in Jesus as God speaking/manifesting Himself to the believer.*
  - d. To “keep” is to treasure, grab hold of, revere as sacred and special, but also...*to obey.*
9. To “keep God’s Word” is to see the Bible as a personal revelation of God, through Jesus, to us, and to treasure that Word of God in such a way as to make it both your rule for faith and your rule for life. The Word of God becomes the ground (foundation) for your relationship with God.
10. **The gist:** *to keep the Word is to have a Biblical worldview and a Bible-centered faith.*
11. **Illustration:** Covenant Day School’s core values includes a *Biblical worldview*: all academic disciplines for Math, to Science, to History, to Art are aimed at proving and explaining the centrality of Christ and His Lordship over all things.
12. This is **counter intuitive** to mankind. We do not naturally think this way. This must be explicitly taught to people, but even then only the Holy Spirit can grant such a worldview, and only to His chosen, elect, redeemed ones.
13. **Example:** It was in the same year that Zondervan published *The Battle for the Bible* (1976) that I became – by God’s sovereign grace – one who would “keep the Word.”
  - a. I had always believed that the Bible was God’s Word.
  - b. But not until 1976 did the Spirit open the eyes of my soul to see the Bible as God manifesting Himself, to me, in and through Jesus Christ.
  - c. It was then that I stopped believing things *about* the Bible and started believing *in* Jesus Christ.
  - d. **Then the Bible became, for me, the way to know God.**
  - e. And my heart and mind were changed; I stopped doubting, arguing with or testing the Bible, and I embraced it!
  - f. *I had been led to “keep” God’s Word.*
  - g. A new and radical **worldview** for Mike Ross!
14. **When will you stop holding the Bible at arm’s length and demanding that it answer all your questions before you trust in it? When will you embrace the Word of God as Christ made visible for you? When will you “keep” God’s Word?**
15. Jesus desires that you *keep* His Word. And He also prays for you to *receive* God’s Word.

## II. WE SHOULD RECEIVE THE WORD FROM GOD (John 17:7-8a)

*Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them....* (John 17:7-8a)

1. Key statement: “...and they have received them” (i.e., God’s Words)

2. **Gist:** “Father, everything I told and taught to your people came from You. I gave them Your words. My teaching was Your revelation. And these believers have received my words as Your words!”
3. *And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me." (John 12:44-50)*
4. Here is a two-fold challenge that modern man faces day in and day out: *Whose Word is the Bible?*
  - a. The Sermon: *The misconception that Mike Ross is speaking.*
  - b. The Epistles: *The false idea that St. Paul or St. Peter are speaking.*
  - c. A Sunday School lesson in the communities: *The erroneous view that the pastors are offering their opinions.*
  - d. **No...no...no! In all of these, it is God who speaks!**
5. **Martin Luther** believed that “*the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God!*”
  - a. A radical idea – in his day and in ours
  - b. *The preaching of God’s Word creates the church and shapes the true faith.*  
  
*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. (Jude 3-5)*
  - c. **Edwin C. Dargan:** *A History of Preaching; p. 12.*  
*Preaching is an essential part and a distinguishing feature of Christianity, and accordingly the larger history of general religious movements includes that of preaching. The spread of Christianity, both geographically and numerically, has been largely the work of preaching. We must not underestimate the value and effect of personal example and suasion, but history forbids that we should assign an inferior place to preaching in bringing men to know Christ as Saviour and Lord, and in training them in the Christian life, doctrine and service.*
  - d. Dargan derived this true assessment of Christianity from the Old Testament prophets, Jesus the Preacher, the New Testament apostles, Church Fathers and Reformers.
6. **Henry Steward Wilson:** *The Speaking God: Luther’s Theology of Preaching; p. 9-11, 118.*  
*Why must the Word be heard? Is it not enough that one reads the Scripture? Luther would say that by its very nature the Gospel is meant to be heard. Since the origin of the Scripture lies in the act of preaching, the Scripture is conveyed best in oral proclamation. The Word should be returned to its pristine, oral form. Therefore the Word of God must be preached and heard to become fully effective. Further, the Word should be continually heard so that people may not*

*become arrogant and think that they can earn their salvation through their good works.*

*Preaching is a reminder that a Christian is accountable to God who is so graciously merciful to him in spite of continuous human rebellion. Since the task of preaching is to communicate the good news, the preacher is a messenger from God to the people.”*

7. One of the *subtle* ways we choose to ignore or reject God’s Word – and look very “spiritual” in doing so – is to say, “*Well, that’s the preacher’s opinion!*”
8. No! It is not. It is the *Word of God*: “Thus says the Lord...”  
*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* (2 Tim. 4:1-5)
9. Jesus prays that His Church will be like His apostles: *They received the preaching and teaching of Jesus Christ as the very voice of God and the words of God...*
  - a. ...and they are!
  - b. *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* (Hebrews 1:1-2)
  - c. And the Scripture remains the voice of Jesus speaking the Words of God whenever the Scripture is faithfully and fully preached.
10. **Incidentally:** My fear today is not that people will take my preaching too seriously and actually believe that Jesus is speaking God’s Word to them, through me! Rather, my fear is that postmodern Americans will think: “God doesn’t speak to people anymore ...at least not through an infallible book...so that sermon is simply ole’ Mike’s opinions”!
11. *The Bible remains relevant to all men in all times because Jesus continues to speak, in these last days, through His preached Word.*
12. And you need to **receive the Word** in that frame of reference – not for my preacher’s ego, but for God’s glory, Christ’s purpose, and your eternal good.

### III. WE SHOULD KNOW THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD (John 17:8b)

*“...and they have come to know the truth...”*

1. Jesus prays for us to “*come to know the truth*” – the reality we would never know unless God revealed it through Christ and His prophets and apostles.
2. Who would believe such *mysteries* – things not able to be discovered by man unless revealed by God – unless they were given to us in God’s Word?
3. *And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the mysteries of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.* (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

4. There are four ways to know the truth –
  - a. By experience (living life)
  - b. By consensus (culture)
  - c. By objective reality (science)
  - d. By revelation: *God telling us things*
5. All four methods of knowledge are legitimate, but only one is both infallible and spiritual...
  - a. Three can, and do, make mistakes – even **science**.
  - b. Only God’s revelation is error free.
  - c. And only God can reveal the realities of the *invisible world!*
  - d. Science is only the study of that which is *visible*; Science is unable to say anything about spiritual realities.
6. Only God, revealing truth in the Scripture can explain the great *divine mysteries* of life, salvation, and immortality –
  - a. How the world was created and when. (*Only God was there when it happened!*)
  - b. How sin, sorrow and suffering came into being
  - c. Why world events unfold the way they do
  - d. How to save mankind from eternal death
  - e. The realities of Heaven, Hell, conversion, salvation, eternal life
  - f. Virgin births, God incarnate, resurrection, second coming
  - g. And myriads of other mysteries men want and need to know
7. God’s people are *spiritual people*, and so the yearning to know spiritual realities is something important to them.
8. True Christians do not pit science, experience, accumulated human knowledge against Scripture, but they only trust the Bible as the *sole interpreter* of all other branches of knowledge, and the infallible collator of **all Truth**.
9. **Key Illustration:** If evolution is true, then God will lead us to discover undeniable evidence that verifies Genesis 1 and 2. We do not have to bend Scripture to jive with Darwin’s theory. Scientific theory does not trump divine revelation. All truth is from God, and once properly understood, fits together and *augments* the message of the Bible. If I am forced to choose between science and Scripture, then I will choose God’s revealed truth until our observed truth complements revelation.
10. *It is sin to choose the theory of men and the human idea over the revealed Word of God through Jesus Christ.*
11. **What if I can’t make sense out of science, culture, my experience, and God’s Word?**
  - a. You wait on the Lord in faith.
  - b. You trust what’s been revealed to you by God.
  - c. You study harder until knowledge of truth comes.
  - d. And you reckon with the idea that there are going to be many things mankind will never know!  
*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 29:29)*
  - e. But you **do not** jettison God’s revealed Word in favor of man’s *plausibility structures*.

12. **Plausibility Structure:** something so commonly held that it cannot be challenged without ridicule and pressure to conform from society: *evolution, egalitarianism, global warming, feminism, machismo, government intervention, the utopia of wealth, etc...*
13. **Most plausibility structures are not proven by science, verified by experience, informed by accumulated knowledge, or revealed in Scripture. Plausibility Structures exist and are propagated by the peer pressure of society, often in opposition to God's Word. But the Spirit will inevitably bring all plausibility structures either in collapse (e.g., a flat earth) or under conformity to God's revealed Word (e.g., the abolition of slavery).**
14. God's revealed truth will shape all truth – sooner or later!

*Forever, O LORD, your word  
is firmly fixed in the heavens.  
Your faithfulness endures to all generations;  
you have established the earth, and it stands fast.  
By your appointment they stand this day,  
for all things are your servants. (Ps. 119:89-91)*

#### IV. WE SHOULD BELIEVE IN THE CHRIST OF THE WORD OF GOD (John 17:8c)

*"...and they have believed that you sent me."*

1. There was once a **plausibility structure** concerning salvation that propagated the idea that men could reach God by means of religion, good deeds and moral philosophy.
2. All mankind believed this. All mankind was wrong!
3. Only a small group of people – *the Jews* – believed otherwise, and in so believing, they were held in great disdain and derision.
4. **But then** Jesus Christ came into the world, sent from God, to save mankind by means of Gospel and grace – and He *shattered* the most widely-held plausibility structure of all time!  
*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)*
5. How do we know this? At least most of us? *The Word of God.*
6. What the children sing is correct: *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so."*
7. **Now...think with me:** If the Bible was correct about salvation (and the whole world was wrong), could it not be correct about evolution, environment, homosexuality, gender, men and women, other religions, marriage, child rearing, education and a host of other plausibility structures in 2011? And, could it be, that the world is wrong while Jesus is right?
8. Is the Bible outdated? Irrelevant? Unreliable? Full of errors?
  - a. *By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,  
"That you may be justified in your words,  
and prevail when you are judged." (Romans 3:4)*
  - b. The Bible was right about man, sin, salvation and Jesus!

- c. Is it so hard to believe that it is also right about all the things over which we argue today?
9. God spoke. He promised a Messiah. Jesus came to save. God was true, right and faithful. *And that same God still speaks through Jesus, in the Word, and expects us to believe Him.*

**CONCLUSION:** Back in 1976, the year *The Battle for the Bible* was published, **James Montgomery Boice** called a council of evangelical leaders...

1. They formed the *International Council on Bible Inerrancy*: a group of 200 Pastors, Theologians, and Scholars committed to the Bible.
2. They met in Chicago, on October 26-28, 1978, and they produced the *Chicago Statement on Bible Inerrancy*.
3. They continued to meet in conferences or “summits” until 1986 and published books, pamphlets, and papers on the authority of the Bible.
4. In 2013, my dear friend, **J. Ligon Duncan**, president of *The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals* (founded by the late Dr. James M. Boice), will convene the *Council on Biblical Inerrancy II*.
5. To address a new generation of church-goers about the truths of God’s Word, and to call the Evangelical Church to be faithful to the Word...with these words (Chicago statement):  
*The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God’s written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.*
6. **This is what Jesus wants for His church: Faithfulness to God’s Word...the Bible.**