



A Healthy Dose Of Skepticism

Christopher Cummings

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Blurb for the website/podcast:

There are many opinions about the Bible. Some see it as a rule book. Others as good advice. Still others view it as a bunch of nice stories meant to inspire us. But what is it really? Where did the Bible come from? Why should we trust it? Is Christianity a matter of blind faith or is it something more? Join us this week as we look at the Bible with "A Healthy Dose Of Skepticism".

Sermon:

Good morning again, Transformation Road!

Let's stand and read Proverbs 3:5 through 8, together, out loud:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord, and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Nice! You can be seated.

I've been meditating on these verses for several weeks now, and thinking a lot about trust.

Trust is tricky. Trust helps keep our city running, our workplaces functioning, our families strong. By trusting others, we can have meaningful friendships and rewarding professional relationships. We can have child care, like our own Noah's Ark. We can have online services like eBay and Etsy and Amazon.com. Without trust, none of those things would work. Things would fall apart.

But if we put our trust in the wrong hands, we leave ourselves and we potentially leave others open to some very bad things happening.

The verses we just read tell us to trust in the Lord, to trust God.

Which begs the question:

Can we -- can I -- really trust God as he's presented in the Bible?

Or maybe more to the point: Can I trust the Bible?

How do we know it's reliable? And even if we can agree that we can trust that the Bible is the real deal, is it the only truth?

Aren't there other paths to God? What is it that makes Christianity so special?

Is Christianity a matter of blind faith or is it something else?

We could do an entire series on any one of these topics -- but we only have about 35 minutes today, so we're going to look at just three things:

1. What is the Bible?
2. Why should I trust it?
3. How do I respond to all this?

So, we'll look at those three things -- and then we'll end with a little bit of a **challenge**.

All right? Let's go!

First up: What is the Bible?

When I was a kid in the late 1980s I used to love the TV show, "War of the Worlds" -- it was a science fiction program that continued the story from the 1950's movie with the same name.

We have three-fingered alien invaders, their giant war machines that shoot lasers everywhere, and then the main human characters, the Blackwood Project, who are fighting to stop the aliens from taking over the world.

It's funny to me, sometimes, to think about the TV shows, the movies, the books, the people that have shaped my points of view. This particular TV show was not about religion but it often commented on God and the Bible, and it definitely impacted me.

In one episode, I remember one of the aliens ("Mana") describing the Bible as a "blueprint for human control."

In another episode, one of the other aliens describes the Bible and Christianity as a "mad confusion of myth and contradiction," and then they have a good laugh at the fact that the human God is invisible, unlike their own god who shows up on their viewing monitors.

Now I wasn't watching this TV show for its theological content... I was 10 years old and I liked sci-fi... and these aliens were clearly not the good guys... but if I'm honest, their little barbs definitely shaped my worldview, and the ideas behind their words do a great job of defining what many people today think about the Bible.

That it's a rule book.

That it's used to control people.

That it's based on myths.

That, basically, it's not trustworthy.

So, what is it?

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a book -- actually, it's a collection, or a library, of 66 different books. It was written over a long period of time, about 1500 years, by about 40 different people.

The Bible has several different types of writing. There are books of law (like Leviticus and Deuteronomy); historical books (like Ezra and Acts); books of poetry (like the Psalms and Song of Solomon); books of prophecies (like Isaiah and Revelation); biographies (like those by Luke and Matthew); and letters (such as Romans and Galatians).

Some of the authors were kings. Some of them were priests. Some of them were farmers or fishermen or doctors. So it's a very diverse group of people writing, over a very long period of time, but there's an incredible unity to it all.

The Bible says the reason for this unity is because all the words in it are actually God's words.

That's why 2 Timothy says:

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. - 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17

All together, the human authors wrote exactly what God wanted them to write, and the result is the Bible.

Growing up, I knew the Bible was divided into two main parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. I always thought of the Old Testament as the one with the angry God and the New Testament as the one with the nice God.

Again, we could do a whole sermon just on that idea -- but for now, let's look at it this way: The Old Testament is about Jesus, and the New Testament is about Jesus.

More specifically: The Old Testament is about God promising to bless the world through a specific nation that he would create, and the New Testament is about Jesus coming to fulfill that promise as he lived the perfect life no one else could, died, and then rose from the dead to bring salvation to a broken and sinful world.

In 10 words or less:

The Bible is not primarily about rules. It's about Jesus.

When we view the Bible primarily as a book of rules or good advice, we're going to lose interest in it because we can get advice from anywhere -- from Oprah, from Reddit, from wherever -- and it takes no effort at all. Just turn on your TV or your computer or your phone and you've got access to all kinds of advice, good and bad, more than you could ever want.

But the Bible isn't about rules; it's about Jesus. The point of reading the Bible isn't to just do it, to just get through it, like it's a chore or a homework assignment.

The point is to meet Jesus. To get to know and understand and love Jesus.

So you might be thinking now, "Okay, Chris, that's cool. The Bible's about Jesus more than it's about rules. But what makes it real? Why should we trust it?"

Or to put it more sharply like a friend once did: "How do we know the Bible even contains the things that Jesus really said or did? Didn't people just make all this up to control other people?"

A little cynical, but given the world we live in, where nothing can be taken at face value, kind of a valid question.

Which brings us to point #2: Why should I trust the Bible?

The Bible itself says it's from God and it's for us. We just saw that in 2 Timothy.

But I remember one time in school when I tried to define a word by using that word, and the teacher was like, “You can’t do that..” That’s circular logic.

So we’re going to go outside the Bible for a bit to look at what the evidence says about the Bible.

There are a lot of opinions about the Bible’s trustworthiness. More than we can get into today. So we’re going to look at three of the big challenges:

1. Is Jesus just a copy of the pagan gods from other ancient religions? There are a lot of myths, a lot of gods dying and coming back to life; is Jesus based on them?
2. What about the other gospels that have been discovered, like the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary, which paint a different picture of Jesus? This is new information; what do we do with it?
3. If the good news of Jesus’ resurrection was so amazing, why did it take so long to get written down? Doesn’t this indicate that the church tampered with the biblical texts to make the Bible say what they wanted it to say?

I’m going to be leaning on Josh McDowell’s “Evidence That Demands A Verdict” and Lee Strobel’s “The Case for the Real Jesus” here, so I’d encourage you to pick up those books to dig more into these topics. On our website at transformationroad.org, I’ll also link out to some of the online articles that helped inform what we’re going to chew through right now.

Question #1: Is Jesus just a myth based on the pagan gods of other ancient religions?

That’s a good one to start with, right?

Some people argue that Jesus never existed, that he’s just a myth.

Some people will point to the Egyptian god Horus, or the cult of Mithras, or Krishna in Hinduism and say, “Look -- there are a lot of gods who were born of a virgin, on December 25th, they were attended by shepherds, had 12 disciples, they were crucified, died, and were resurrected three days later.” In other words, there is nothing new under the sun and Jesus is just a fictional re-creation of older ‘dying-and-rising’ god mythologies!

On the surface, this sounds pretty bad.

But when you look at the actual details, the argument falls apart. And we’re just going to look at Horus, Mithras, and Krishna here but you can do this with any god before Jesus and the result is going to be the same.

According to Egyptian mythology, Horus was created by Isis, who was not a virgin, and she created Horus through magic, using her dead husband’s body parts. According to historians,

Mithras was born from a rock... clearly not a virgin birth -- unless you count a rock as a virgin. And Hindu mythology says that Krishna's mother had seven children before he was born, so she was clearly not a virgin. So there goes the "everyone came from a virgin" argument.

How about the December birthdate? Again, according to Egyptian mythology, Horus' birthday is celebrated in the season of Khoiak, which runs from October to November. Not December. In Mithraism there is no date for Mithras' birth. And even if there was -- December 25th is never mentioned in the Bible as the date of Jesus' birth anyway, so it's not even relevant.

We could go on, point for point, and we'll find the same thing over and over.

But we'll just do one more, a big one: The crucifixion, death, and resurrection.

Hear me on this: There is no historical record in any credible Egyptian mythology of Horus being crucified. In Mithraism, Mithras never dies; he finishes his earthly mission and returns to the skies. Krishna wasn't crucified either; he gets killed by a hunter who confuses him for a deer.

Now, you don't have to be a detective to research these kinds of things and get to the truth. But, too often, things like these just get accepted and become part of the background noise around us. They don't get challenged because they sound convincing.

And that's actually my definition of blind faith.

Blind faith is the kind of faith that believes in something without discrimination. Without investigation. Without thinking it through.

Blind faith is the kind of faith that believes something is real just because you saw it on YouTube or on Reddit or on the Discovery channel or because a friend said so. Or even just because I said so.

As Christians, we are not called to have blind faith. In fact, the Bible says the opposite: Proverbs 14:15 says, "The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps." Paul tells us to "test everything" in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, and he praises the church at Berea in Acts 17:11 because they poured over the Scriptures every day to see if he was telling them the truth.

Jesus himself tells the people in Luke 14 (28-32) to count the cost of discipleship -- to seriously consider and thoroughly evaluate and think through what he's saying because the stakes are so important and the cost so high.

We are not called to a blind faith, but to an **informed faith** that trusts in God's promises, based on what we know about God's character.

So, with everything that we're talking about today, please, investigate. Check out the books and documents I'm referencing. If you haven't read the Bible for yourself, or haven't read it in a while, read it. If you don't have one, we can get you one; ask me, ask Sarah, ask anyone you see up here.

Investigate what we're talking about. I will not be offended, I promise. *That is a healthy dose of skepticism.* Ok?

Question #2: What about the other gospels that have been discovered that paint a different picture of Jesus? What do we do with those?

Before we look at what's not in the Bible, let's talk a little bit about what is in the Bible and how it got there. When we talk about the Bible an important word you'll hear is "canon" -- that's a Greek word that means "rule" or "measuring stick". So, what measured up and why?

With the Old Testament, it was relatively easy. Hebrew believers recognized God's messengers and accepted their writings as inspired by God and by 250 AD there was nearly universal agreement on the canon of Hebrew Scripture (39 books altogether) with some debate about the "Apocrypha" which many considered good historical and religious writings, but not on the same level as scripture.

For the New Testament, the process began in the first centuries of the Christian church. Very early on, several New Testament books were being recognized as having the same authority as the Old Testament because they were either written by an apostle or by someone with a direct relationship to one.

And these books were being circulated among the different churches along with some other writings that were causing confusion because these other writings were preaching a different gospel. The canon helped clear up what was considered to be from God, and what wasn't.

The first New Testament "canon" was the ("Myoor-a-torian") Muratorian Canon compiled in 170 AD. It included all of the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and Third John.

In the documents in the Muratorian Canon, Jesus is repeatedly referred to as "Lord" and is equated with God. All of these documents agree that Jesus died in the place of sinners, and was raised bodily from the dead. They agree that a person can only find forgiveness for their sins and acceptance by God through faith in the risen Jesus.

This is important for two reasons: First: We can see, very early on, the early church was using discernment when they were considering what was true and what wasn't; they weren't just automatically accepting anything that claimed to be from an apostle. And Second: we can see a unified message about who Jesus is and what he did on the cross. These foundational elements of Christianity were not introduced at a later time; they've been there from the beginning.

So, what happened next?

In 363, the Council of (“Lay-O-Duh-Ceya”) Laodicea stated that only canonical books were to be read in church, and then outlined what those books were. The Council of Hippo 30 years later and then the Council of Carthage (a few years after Hippo) also affirmed those same 27 New Testament books as Scripture.

And that’s the short version of how we got our Bible.

Which brings us to documents like The Gospel of Thomas, which depicts Jesus as a mystic with secret teachings about reincarnation... and the Gospel of Mary, in which Mary (probably Mary Magdalene) is depicted as a disciple, singled out by Jesus for super secret special teachings that nobody else received... and the Secret Gospel of Mark which, again, contains “secret knowledge” and describes Jesus performing secret initiation rites under cover of night.

There are more, but these are three that you might of heard of because they’ve been talked about in movies or books or TV.

When the early church was compiling the canon of the New Testament, their criteria revolved around the book’s message, its agreement with other books of Scripture, its historical accuracy, its inner witness, and its initial acceptance by the people to whom the work was addressed.

These alternative gospels didn’t make the cut because they failed those tests. At their hearts, these alternative gospels present Jesus as a revealer of secret truths rather than as the one who saves through his life, death, and resurrection.

If we set aside the theological arguments and just look at these documents from an historical point of view, there are even more problems.

When historians look at ancient documents like these, they ask questions like:

1. When was the document written? This gets to reliability -- the closer a document is written to the actual events it covers, the more historically reliable it tends to be.
2. Where was the document written? When we’re talking about Scripture, something written near Jerusalem is going to carry a lot more weight than one written in Plaistow, New Hampshire (no offense to Plaistow).
3. Cultural accuracy is another point: Does the document adhere to what we know about the cultural trends of that time and place, or does it not?
4. What’s the author’s motivation? Did he have an axe to grind or a score to settle?

When historians apply these criteria to The Gospel of Thomas or the Gospel of Mary or the Secret Gospel of Mark or the Gospel of Judas or any of the other writings that fall into this category -- the result is always the same: They just don't stand up.

Thomas has too many parallels to the canonical gospels, suggesting it was written after they were. The grammar and composition suggests a Syrian origin instead of Hebrew or Greek. And, again, it preaches a doctrine of salvation by secret knowledge as opposed to a doctrine of salvation through belief in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Mary is similar: It dates from 150 to 200 AD, so it's written after the canonical gospels, and it also plays with the idea of secret knowledge being the saving grace -- in this case, Mary is held up to be superior to the apostles because of a vision and private revelation from Jesus.

And then we've got the Secret Gospel of Mark, which historians have concluded was most likely part of a hoax perpetuated by Morton Smith, a professor of ancient history at Columbia University, who was seeking to advance a personal agenda, sell some books, and make a name for himself.

So, what are we to do with these alternative "gospels"? They fail the historicity tests and they reject the Scriptures that the earliest Christians -- and Jesus -- all affirmed.

Bottom line: These things might be interesting to read, but they aren't legit and they won't help us understand Jesus any better.

So you might be thinking, "Okay, the early church didn't hide any texts from us. But did they alter the original texts to make the Bible say what they wanted it to say?"

It's not a bad question. After all, if the good news of Jesus' resurrection was so amazing, why wasn't it written about the next day and published in newspapers all over town?

And we have these biblical documents being translated from one language to another, by hand -- even if someone didn't intentionally try to change something, isn't it possible some mistakes were made and those mistakes altered the meaning of the message?

Let's look at some dates first.

Most historians agree that **Mark is the first gospel to be written**, around 60 AD -- that's about 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. Matthew and Luke follow, and are said to be written between 60 and 70 AD. John is the final gospel, written between 90 and 100 AD.

Again, looking outside the Bible, we have many ancient historians confirming what the Bible says about Jesus:

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian was born around 38 AD and died around 100 AD. He mentions Jesus in his book, *Antiquities*. He says that Jesus was able to perform many surprising feats, that he was crucified, and that there were still followers of Jesus in existence at the time of his writing.

Cornelius Tacitus (55-120 AD), an historian of first-century Rome, is considered to be one of the most accurate historians of the ancient world. Tacitus tells us that the Roman emperor Nero "inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called 'Chrestians' by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate."

Pliny the Younger, Thallus, and even the Jewish Talmud describe major events that are consistent with New Testament accounts.

(Although, to be clear, these sources don't paint Jesus or Christianity in a very flattering light. For example, the Talmud says, Jesus was conceived out of wedlock. That he seduced, corrupted and destroyed Israel. And that he worked miracles before he was put to death, but these miracles were really sorcery and not from God.)

Still. If you think about it -- this is all pretty remarkable given the fact that most ancient historians focused on important political leaders and military leaders, not on homeless rabbis from backwoods parts of the Roman Empire.

Why would they talk about Jesus at all unless something interesting was happening?

In a way, this also answers the question: Why did it take 30 to 60 years after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection for the gospels to be written?

There's a very practical reason -- there wasn't a need!

I've been to Jerusalem. It's not a very big place. There's no reason to write a biography about Jesus when hundreds of eyewitnesses of his life, death, and resurrection are still alive and walking around and talking about what they had seen with their own eyes.

Dr. Edwin Yamauchi, Professor Emeritus from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, puts it this way:

"What gives a special authority to the list (of witnesses) as historical evidence is the reference [in 1 Corinthians 15:6] to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St. Paul says in effect, 'If you do not believe me, you can ask them.' Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for something that happened nearly two thousand years ago."

Of course, once the gospel spreads beyond Jerusalem, and the eyewitnesses are no longer right next door, and persecution is starting to grow, then there's a need for written accounts to educate people about Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection.

Here's a fun fact: How many of those hand-written copies exist? A dozen? A hundred? A thousand?

There are 5,700 hand-written copies of the Greek New Testament and another 10,000 in Latin. If you add in other languages (Coptic, Syriac) you get more than 25,000 handwritten copies.

If you compare that to other well-known Greek and Roman writings, it's startling. Take Homer's book, *The Illiad*. If you're an English major, you probably read it. *The Illiad* dates to 750 BC. Do we have 25,000 copies of that? No. We have 647. And of those, only 190 are actually 100% complete. The earliest copy is dated about 500 years after the original.

Or take Plato -- one of the most famous, most influential philosophers to ever live -- how many copies of his *Tetralogies* do we have? Seven. The original was written somewhere between 427 and 347 BC, and the earliest copy is dated 900 AD -- a gap of over 1,200 years.

There are, literally, thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than any other ancient writing -- and the earliest copies were written within decades of the originals, not hundreds or even thousands of years later, like Homer and Plato.

Of course, with a greater volume of writing comes a greater chance of textual errors, right, as scribes make their copies?

And that's another claim that people make -- that the church and the scribes somehow tampered with the documents, either intentionally or unintentionally.

One critic (Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 2005) claims that there are between 200,000 and 400,000 variations among the biblical texts, and that these variations alter the very meaning of the text.

Here's the thing, though: Only about one percent of the variants alters the meaning of the text. One of the examples -- Romans 5:1 -- does it say, "We have peace" or "Let us have peace"? More importantly, does it matter? No. Because none of these 200,000 to 400,000 variants -- none of them -- changes any core beliefs, any doctrine, of the Christian faith.

It's a bunch of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Ok. Now, I know, that was a lot of information. But the God of the Bible isn't just about information, he's about transformation. Right? It's where we get the name for our church.

Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" ... 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."...

So we have all this information.

Here's what the Bible is.

The question now -- what do we do with it?

How do we respond to all this?

Maybe you're out there thinking, "All that sounds great, sounds believable, but I don't need any of this Christian stuff because religion is basically a crutch for the weak, and I'm not a weak person, I'm a strong person."

I understand that response. I used to think that way myself. It's a very New England, very American mentality. We're strong, self-made people. You don't want a handout. You can do it all on your own. All you have to do is pull yourself together and pull yourself up by your bootstraps. If you want it bad enough, you can do anything. You can accomplish anything.

That's what the world tells us. That's what we tell ourselves sometimes.

But the reality is, everyone needs help and there are some things in life that are so big, so much bigger than us, that we cannot do it on our own, no matter how hard we try or how much we want it.

The truth is, Christians aren't weak; Christians are strong -- because they depend on Jesus for spiritual fulfillment, for peace, and for forgiveness -- things you can't get anywhere else. Not from work. Not from family. Not from video games. Not from drugs, not from alcohol, not from other people, or anywhere else.

If you're thinking all this Jesus stuff is a crutch, I'd like to ask you to ask yourself: What are you leaning on to get you through life, and how has that been working out for you? Really?

Or maybe you're thinking, "All religions basically say the same thing. There are many roads to God. The only thing that matters is that you're a good person and you do more good than bad."

That's a very popular idea, right? Can't we all just get along? It sounds nice. Tolerant.

But there's a huge difference between accepting and loving someone who believes something different than you, and actually accepting their belief system as Ultimate Truth.

If we study what different religions actually say, then it's clear they are not all the same and therefore can't all be true because they contradict each other in deep, fundamental ways.

Take salvation, for example: Are we saved by faith in Jesus, like Christianity says? Or are we saved by obeying the Five Pillars of Islam? Or are we saved through meditation, abstinence, and good works, like Buddhism says?

And what are we being saved from? Is our big problem desire, like Buddhism says? Or is it that we've forgotten our true identities as divine beings as Hinduism says? Or is it our failure to live by the law of God as Islam says? Or is it our broken and sinful nature as Christianity says? These are all different things.

Or Jesus: Christians believe Jesus is God and the Savior of the world. Muslims believe Jesus is just a prophet, not God, and should not be worshiped. Conservative Jews believe Jesus is a false prophet.

These are three very different ideas about the same man, and they can't all be the truth.

I know it can be difficult to accept that there's only one right way to God. It's hard for me sometimes to accept.

But Jesus makes it clear in John 14:6:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

It sounds cool and a lot more tolerant to say things like (like Ghandi), "One may drink out of the same great rivers with others, but one need not use the same cup"...

But just because something sounds nice, or sounds accepting, doesn't make it helpful or true.

Someone once said, "All roads lead to God, but only one road leads to His forgiveness, mercy, grace, and eternal life. All other roads lead to His judgment."

So the question is, which road are you going to choose and why?

Ready? Last one. What if you're just not feeling it right now? You believe in God but you don't feel as close to him as you once did? Or maybe you used to believe, but things in your life are pretty rough right now and it's making you doubt that any of this is real?

The first thing we should acknowledge is, you are not alone. Everyone who calls themselves a Christian has struggled with some part of their faith at some point in their life. And if they haven't yet, they will.

It's OK to have doubts.

Remember, the title of this sermon is "A Healthy Dose Of Skepticism." Doubt is okay, depending on what kind of doubt it is and what you do with it.

One of my favorite exchanges in the Bible is in Mark 9, between Jesus and the father of a boy who's been possessed by a demon. The father is like, "Jesus, we've tried everything. If you can do anything, please help my son." And Jesus tells the father, "All things are possible for one who believes." Then in verse 24:

24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"

And then, of course, Jesus drives out the demon and everyone's amazed and thankful.

You see, there's doubt that's destructive because it's seeking to escape the truth of God, and there's doubt that can drive our faith because it's seeking the truth of God. I think that's the kind of doubt driving the father in Mark 9; he's struggling to believe, but he sincerely wants to believe.

That dad wants to trust the Lord with all his heart -- but he knows, he's going to need some help to do it.

Okay. So practically. Where do we go from here?

I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon that there was going to be a challenge.

I'm encouraging everyone to take the month of July to read through the Gospel according to Mark.

If you've read it before, read it again and see what details you notice this time that you didn't the last time! That's how God's word works; there's always something new in it.

If you've never read Mark before, you'll get to see for yourself what the Bible says about Jesus and who he is.

If you read a chapter of Mark a day, you'll be done in 16 days.

(And when I say "chapter", it's not like in a novel where a chapter is like 10-15 pages. Most of the chapters in Mark are, literally, one or two pages long. That's it.)

This is not a huge time commitment; we're literally talking about 5-10 minutes a day.

You can do this. *We can do this.*

As you read, engage with the text.

Ask yourself: What is the main point of this passage? What did I learn about God? What did I learn about myself or my current circumstances?

If you're in a community group, talk about it with the people in your community group. What are you learning? What are you feeling? What jumps out at you? What do you have questions about?

Pray about what you're reading. Pray for understanding and insight.

Over the next 3 weeks, I'll post additional thoughts and questions to our website to help guide the conversation.

Let's do this together, Transformation Road, and see how it impacts our faith.

Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for revealing yourself to us in the Bible; for making sure that these ancient documents were preserved for thousands of years so that we could read them today and get to know you as you are. Please help us, help me, to trust you. I pray, Lord, that as we read your word, and as we read Mark for these next few weeks, that you would reveal yourself to us in new and meaningful ways, and that you would transform our hearts and our lives -- for your glory, for our joy, and for the good of the people around us. And we pray this in your beautiful name. Amen.

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