

A Rationale for a Bible Curriculum

What We Need to Know (NTK) About the Bible and Why

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Introduction

Despite its title, this pamphlet is about security and joy. I could have named it *How To Find Security and Joy*, but that would be misleading. Why? Because you would open the pamphlet and find it is all about the Bible. In *What We Need To Know About The Bible and Why*, I explain how knowing its essential ideas can be a great source of security and joy. Why? Because I have found, along with millions of others who love and study the Bible, that this process produces security and joy.

You might also consider this pamphlet a long introduction to a curriculum that I wrote that would allow public school students to experience the same transformation of character that many people experience when they become familiar with the Bible's wholesome message.

I understand that there has been a lot of pushbacks on making the Bible accessible to public school students over concern about the separation of church and state. But having experienced decades of the absence of religion generally, and the Bible in particular, people are beginning to reconsider the value of having a curriculum that opens the door to the discussion of ideas about cultural values. The courts have decided that if such a curriculum has a secular purpose and neither promotes nor denigrates any particular world view, school districts need not fear litigation over using such a curriculum. The point is that no proselytizing is allowed. The texts must speak for themselves. Teachers do not need to be trained in promoting any particular ideas because that would not be allowed. But it is hoped that discussion of religious texts among students will better ground them in the moral values found there.

My curriculum introduces a brief summary of comparative religions, then moves to the outsized influence that the Bible has had in Western culture generally and American culture in particular. The Old Testament holds the interesting stories of Abraham and his descendants. As we know, the Abrahamic religions include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The fact that Christianity has become the world's largest religion, and the Bible the world's bestselling book of all time justifies spending some time on its essential points which I have boiled down to ten.

An obvious question is how I believe these ten points relate to security and joy. If one believes that the Creator of the universe has your back, it eliminates a lot of things to be worried about. One indication of security is the ability to laugh at trouble. There is a

great song about David and Goliath that paints the picture of Goliath *“laughing like a tiger being sassed by a calf.”* In fact, in the Psalms there are several verses that picture God laughing at the plots of nations. *“But the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming...”* and *“but thou, O lord, dost laugh at them, thou dost hold all the nations in derision.”*

Too often religion is portrayed as rather gloomy. It does not have to be. When the security issues are covered, there is a lot to laugh about. We believe it is Bathsheba, the wife of King David, who describes a virtuous wife who, among other things, “laughs at the time to come.” She has no fear of the future. In Proverbs 31 she describes for her son, Solomon, what to look for in a wife, a woman without fear.

I can’t resist filling in this story, among the more interesting in the Bible. This is the same woman who became pregnant with her first child through King David, who lusted after her and summoned her to his palace and had his way with her and tried to coverup the crime by having her husband killed in battle. The child died as punishment for David’s sin after the prophet Nathan told David an interesting parable about a rich man who visited a poor man and took the household pet lamb and had it for dinner. David declared: *“that man should die.”* Nathan said: *“you are the man,”* implying that he could have had any woman but you took Bathsheba.

Now you might recall that David did many good things to put on the scale, in fact so much so that God described him as a man after his own heart. Perhaps God put in the scale David’s restraint toward Shemei who cursed and threw stones and dirt at David as he left Jerusalem being sieged by his own son, Absalom. This man, David, with all his faults and virtues might give encouragement to those of us who have similar traits, as somehow in the end being acceptable to God.

A sense of security can lead to joy and laughter. Fear only creates trouble for everyone. The Bible continually makes the case that in the end, everything will be alright, more than alright, absolutely wonderful. Of course, there are times when that belief is challenged. We all go through dark nights of the soul where it is hard to imagine that things will ever turn out alright. But it is only God’s confidence that He has the power to make all things good, that He allows human free will to go so far off the tracks.

The Bible is long and complex. There is something there for everyone. It asks all the right questions and gets answers from a variety of sources. Perhaps the most direct discussion of the meaning of life and the ups and downs of existence are found among the twelve short chapters of Ecclesiastes, supposedly written by Solomon, supposedly the wisest man who ever lived. One reason he got that title was as a young man he ended a squabble between two women who claimed to have birthed a particular child. To flush out the real mother, Solomon suggested they divide the child in two and give each half. Clearly the real mother was the one who conceded. Solomon’s polemic about

what life is all about or not concludes that the best thing for a person to do is to fear God and have a good time, and laugh a lot. God not only laughs at his enemies, as Jesus, He promises in the Beatitudes in Luke 6: *“Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.”*

In Psalm 126 we read: *“When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy... He that goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.”*

Can you see that there is material in the Bible that gives a basis for security? And security is the basis of joy and laughter. Joy is better, deeper, and longer lasting than happiness that can be transient and may rely on material things.

Joy, and a sense of security, come from the distance between your needs and your resources. For example, if your financial needs are few and you have deep financial resources, you are unlikely to stress over money issues. The same is true of emotional issues. If you have few emotional needs and great resources of friends, you will tend to be joyful.

Of course, the opposite is true. If you have many financial needs and few financial resources, you will tend to be stressed all the time. Likewise, if your emotional needs are great and you have few friends (and maybe that's the reason that you may have few friends), well, letting your heavenly Friend fill those needs may help solve the problem.

This pamphlet is about how I and many others found security and joy within the pages of the Bible and why if you want security and joy in your life, I encourage you to follow me through my brief synopsis of the Bible.

NTK (need to know) is a military reference required to access certain classified information. Though I held a top-secret clearance and often carried top-secret communications, I was not allowed to access that information if I didn't have a NTK.

Having been an academic most of my life, as well as an airline pilot, I came across a lot of NTK material of a different kind. I called it “nice to know.” Using those nomenclatures help me to put aside a lot of material that was interesting but not relevant to what I felt I needed to know to have a good life.

The reason I am writing this pamphlet and developing a curriculum for teaching the Bible in the public schools is because of my desire to point you and several generations of young people to material that historically has given great security and joy to millions. This is truly NTK (need to know) information.

What This Pamphlet Will Not Tell You or Questions I Cannot Answer and Won't Try To

They say these days that we don't know what we don't know. Well, there are a lot of things I know that I don't know, so now is the time for true confessions, especially when it comes to the Bible.

It has also been said that the longer we live the more we realize that there are a whole lot of things we don't know. Tell that to a teenager and you will face a hard sell. Of course, they will agree with you that you couldn't know much if you don't know how to operate a smart phone very well, especially when it makes you feel so stupid. But putting aside technical issues for the moment, there is still a lot of general information that is generally beyond our reach.

Putting the Bible aside for a moment, let's look at a few of these. Even though the generally accepted Big Bang Theory has given us a rough estimate of the age of the universe by working backward from its rate of speed and expansion that we are now able to observe, we don't know whether there may have been other Big Bangs in the distance past or are going on now in other places or parallel universes.

We aren't sure how many dimensions of life there may be. We can't be sure if what we call reality, or our current dimension may be some kind of virtual reality, a dream, or an AI matrix.

What we thought we knew about the speed of light being as fast as it gets is blown apart by quantum physics' idea of entanglement, where things at huge distances occur simultaneously when one of two entangled particles is somehow modified. We also don't know how observing something changes outcomes not only in life but in quantum physics. According to the uncertainty principle it appears that random acts may occur and that, despite Einstein, God may be playing dice with the universe.

Certainly, it appears that way when we see how far off the rails humanity can get because of what we think of as free will.

But let's get back to the Bible. Why did God stack the deck against Adam and Eve by allowing a clever snake to fool them and then hold them responsible, and all humankind as well for all eternity, for their buying into the lie thinking that the snake had important missing information, "if you eat the apple, you will become like God"?

Why did God favor Abel's sacrifice more than Cain that led the latter to kill his brother?

Why did God get fed up with humanity and decide to destroy the world, except for Noah and his family? Why did God shorten human life span after the Flood? So they couldn't create so much evil? Is that why He also confused their languages?

How did the Jews supposedly build the pyramids while enslaved in Egypt with limited technology? And while we are on the subject, who build all the other megalithic structures being found all over the world?

Are crop circles evidence of other advanced civilizations that visited the Earth? If so, why don't we read about it in the Bible? Or maybe we do in Genesis 6th chapter where pre-flood creatures called sons of God found the women of earth fair and had babies with them creating the Nephilim, or giant creatures who maybe knew how to move the huge stones that make up the megaliths.

Why did God choose one man, Abraham, to begin the Jewish nation and let him pass off his beautiful wife as his sister so he wouldn't be killed by jealous monarchs?

Why did God give Moses so many draconian laws that spelled death for what we would consider minor offenses?

Why did God demand genocide of the local inhabitants when the Jewish nation entered the Holy Land? One theory is that the local inhabitants practiced child sacrifice.

Why did David and Solomon and others have so many wives and concubines? And the list goes on. For instance, how do we explain near death experiencers' testimonies?

If you are looking for answers to these questions, there are many books trying to explain all these things. But I revert back to my original thesis: I am more interested in what I need to know rather than what may be nice to know information.

So what is the need to know info? Spoiler alert: briefly, "do justice, love kindness, walk humbly..." Micah 6:8

Ten Major Ideas Addressed by The Bible

The Bible being sixty-six different books makes it more like an encyclopedia. There is a lot of information there that doesn't fall into the category of "need to know."

People sometimes say: "Don't miss the forest for the trees." I think they mean not to get too bogged down in individual details that you miss the big picture. But it could work the other way around where we are so overwhelmed with the big picture that we fail to distinguish some important individual ideas.

I would like to direct your attention to ten prominent ideas, or trees, as it were, that make up the forest or the Biblical narrative. Many people have commented on how the sixty-six books of the Bible end up telling essentially a single story.

Of course, in this short essay, I will not include the various interpretations that created what we know as Christianity in general and all the denominations in particular. I will try to stick to what the texts of the various books in the Bible suggest as important related ideas.

If one wants to go directly to the heart of things, I would direct you to the four gospels in the New Testament, **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John** and in particular to Jesus' teachings especially what is known as **The Sermon on the Mount**.

But let's step back for a moment to frame these teachings.

The first idea is that God, or Source, or the Creator is knowable. Some would characterize God as so transcendent, that He is shrouded in mystery, which creates a convenient place to put everything that we don't understand. Many would say you just have to trust God and take what you see as problems on faith. It is true that God is transcendent, but as Francis Schaeffer preached, He is also imminent. In fact, so imminent it can make you uncomfortable.

So under the first idea we have two categories of knowable: God's existence based on transcendence is argued by David Psalm 8 and Paul in Romans 1st Chapter, is immanence by any believers testimony. See Black Gospel song: God is Real!

The second major idea found in the Bible is that God is good, as the black gospel song goes, "all the time." Now that creates a lot of problems for a lot of people. Depending on how your life is working out, you may disagree. This issue is taken up in the book of Ecclesiastes that tells how supposedly Solomon, allegedly the wisest person who ever lived, wrestled with this problem. If he doesn't adequately solve this issue to your satisfaction, you can turn to the book of Job that tries to answer the issue written about by the good rabbi, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

The third major idea found in the Bible is that God chose Abraham and his descendants to be the channel for God's most explicit communication with humans. That doesn't mean that they would have a corner on truth. It simply means that God chose to have an orderly process in conveying important information to his Creation. For instance, when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He was conveying a synopsis of the many laws that the Jews were expected to obey. To certify this unique relationship, Abraham was directed to cut off the foreskin of the penises of eighth day old Jewish boys and anyone living with them. Make of that what you will.

A large part of the Bible is devoted to the consequences of disobedience and what happened to Israel when they disobeyed God. Likewise, Israel's success was linked to their obedience to the law that later Jesus would simplify down to two commandments: love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

Speaking of Jesus, the Bible contends that Jesus was in fact God come to earth to be sure that humans got the message loud and clear. **This is the fourth major idea** and perhaps the most important. The whole narrative of His predicted coming by the prophets, His being born as a baby in relative poverty, His growing up and finally preaching for three years ending in His crucifixion is indeed a unique story.

This leads us to **the fifth major idea**: the manner of His death. There are a number of theories about that. One is that He died voluntarily as an example for us of non-violence and charity even to one's enemies. Another theory is that it was the culmination of the sacrificial practices in Old Testament law, the idea that Jesus paid the price for our sins, so He could forgive us and maintain God's judgment that the penalty of sin is death.

It is likely that both can be argued from the texts and it is generally conceded that He could have avoided crucifixion if He wanted to. What is most important about the manner of His death is the degree of love expressed by the passion of the Christ, or anointed one, and how in His tragic suffering, with arms outstretched, nailed to a cross, He asks His heavenly Father to forgive his tormentors.

The sixth major idea of the Bible is the record of success of the disciples. They were transformed from a band of disillusioned followers, some who expected Jesus to mount a rebellion against Rome, to a group willing to die like their Savior Jesus in the process of preaching about His life, death, and resurrection. The book of Acts carefully records this turnaround when the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven and empowers the disciples to preach the gospel, good news, to the whole world. In retrospect they did pretty well becoming the worlds largest religion and the Bible the bestselling book of the ages.

The seventh major idea is the resurrection itself. Without the resurrection there would be no Christianity and probably no New Testament. The New Testament is essentially a record of Christ's life, teachings, death, resurrection, and promise to return to earth to judge the living and the dead.

The eighth major idea is that of judgment. There are many theories in that regard, but the general idea is that God is keeping score and people are not going to get away with most of what they think they may get away with. Because of free will, God allows some pretty bad things to go on, but not forever. One could say that life is a test, and if you flunk, the consequences are not nice. The church wanting to use the biggest stick it could find to keep the sheep in line has said the lost will burn in hell forever. A kinder a

gentle version of retribution is based on the idea that Christ's sacrifice on the cross allows God to forgive even His enemies and so no one has to pay the full penalty of their sins. However, they are not allowed to pollute heaven, so their fate, after judgment is annihilation, oblivion.

The ninth major idea of the Bible revolves around the end times. These doctrines stem from the Old Testament, the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, the New Testament Epistles, and the final book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Generally, the end times picture a period of tribulation, a final battle between the forces of good and evil, both physical and spiritual, resulting in the defeat of evil and the Devil or Satan and his cohorts and their ultimate destruction. A particular feature that has received attention recently is the statement in the thirteen chapter of Revelation that says without the sign or number of the beast, one will not be able to buy or sell. For the first time in history the logistics of that are attainable. In China it is called "the social credit score" that can limit your travel and access to money.

The tenth and final major idea of the Bible is that of a return to paradise, or the new heaven and new earth where God lives with humans and every tear is wiped away and there is no more pain or suffering, and we may live immersed in overwhelming love, beauty, and joy. Voluminous NDE (near death testimonies) attest to this vision.

Now I will admit, this is one incredible story. But imagine if it is true. It would explain the power of the Holy Spirit as it works in the hearts and minds of humans transforming them from prodigal sons and daughters to real sons and daughters of God and heirs of paradise.

It is a legitimate question: why should anyone care about a collection of sixty-six books called *The Bible*? Most people who try to understand the *Bible* realize that it is not a simple document. I'm tempted to say it is a weird document. Some would say it is magical. People who read it become changed for the better, generally.

Miracles

Let me say that I am a bit of a mystic. I believe in miracles which are simply events that we don't have scientific answers for, yet. And this book is a litany of miracles from beginning to end. If you don't believe in miracles, you may when you finish reading the book, because you will likely experience a miracle or more in your life.

We live in a time that needs miracles to get us out of the mess we are in, a mess of our own making.

Let me tell you about one miracle that happened about 2500 years ago in Babylon. It is recorded in the book of the prophet *Daniel*, third chapter. Here is the background to the story. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel and took the best and brightest young men to

serve him in Babylon. Among them was Daniel and his three friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They became prominent in the king's government.

But one day, Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden statue ninety feet tall and said everyone in his kingdom had to bow down and worship the statue whenever the music played. This didn't set well with Daniel and his friends and word got back to the king that they refused to bend the knee. After a personal invitation to do so and being refused, the king in a fury had the three young men thrown into a fiery furnace. To the amazement of everyone, a fourth figure who the king described as "like a son of God" appeared in the furnace and eventually he called out the three young men who were unharmed and didn't even have the smell of smoke on them.

If you don't want to read this interesting story, you can get the musical gist of it from a gospel song, written about 2500 years after this alleged event called Smell of Smoke. My favorite version is sung by three siblings from the Midwest, The Martins, in their album *Still Standing*. [\(296\) Smell Of Smoke - YouTube](#)

If you don't believe in miracles, you will be challenged every step of the way if you read the Bible. From the big bang miracle of creation in Genesis to the final judgment at the return of Jesus to earth in Revelation, if you delete the miracles, there is not much left but a lot of laws and wise sayings. For some that's enough to justify reading it. But beware that you might just experience a miracle yourself in ways I can't explain.

Inferences From The Ten Major Ideas in the Bible

In my listing of what I believe are ten major ideas in the Bible, let us assume for a minute that they are true and that the ideas have a basis in reality, To summarize, they are: 1) God is knowable, 2) God is good, 3) God chose Abraham to found a nation that would become an object lesson regarding His expectations for human behavior, 4) Jesus of Nazareth was God come to earth to further explain God's expectations, 5) Christ's death on the cross manifests how far God would go to bring about reconciliation with humans, 6) the success of the church in spreading the gospel worldwide with the help of the Holy Spirit, 7) the validity of Christ's resurrection without which the whole story falls apart, 8) the expectation of a day of judgment without which life makes no moral sense, 9) the expectation of a difficult end time scenario culminating in the spiritual warfare and defeat of the forces of darkness, and finally 10) the ultimate success of God's creation resolving into a place of eternal bliss.

One could also say that this whole conception is an elaborate means of dealing with the knotty problem of free will. Let's look at it from God's perspective. He couldn't just create robots who had no ability to reject Him. What would be the point of that? But if He gave His creatures free will, the problem of a happy ending becomes much more complex.

Actually, I can't imagine any other way to win over the hearts and minds of humankind than by doing what He did. Love cannot survive without freedom, but in that freedom, there is the risk of rejection. How more compelling could it be than for God to come to earth as a vulnerable child, be subjected to all the difficulties and temptations of life, and yet live a sinless life ending in a dramatic display of affection by going to the cross in an effort to redeem humans and reconcile God and His creation? This brings up the specter of co-dependency. How lonely could God have been in His universe to go to such lengths for company? I know Calvinists will shutter at such a thought that their immutable God could be so vulnerable. But what if He had in mind the ultimate argument that life is all about love. I personally don't like the term unconditional love. When looked at closely, there are always conditions beyond which any relationship will fall apart. In the case of God, if one persistently stands against everything that is good, God has no choice but to call foul and send the offender to the locker room, so to speak. Take them out of the game. That doesn't necessarily require a whipping. In this analogy, the coach or God may still love the offender, but in God's case He is justified in recalling the soul. So, in any case, whether by enlightenment or disobedience, the soul is subsumed into Source. But in the latter case, the soul never knows what it is truly missing.

This, in the final analysis, is the whole point of the Bible and why we need to know this story. If one truly believes this scenario, one can't help but be changed for the better. It is the only path to peace on earth. We must learn to love our enemies just as God did. There is no future for the planet if mankind continues to play this destructive "eye for an eye" game.

Embracing this story allows one to begin to embody humility, forgiveness, and compassion, the three traits that are at the center of Christ's teaching while on earth. Can you imagine a world where those traits were broadly embraced? It would bring about heaven on earth. And even if it never happens this side of Armageddon, what better way to live life than to embrace those ideals. The story of the Bible insures that those who do will experience an eternity of joy in heaven that has the power to erase the memories of the worst trials and tribulations of earth.

I invite you to explore the Bible and discover for yourself what an amazing story it tells and what it promises for a wonderful future: the blessed hope. As G. K. Chesterton would say: *"I am a short-term pessimist, but a long-term optimist."*

As you fill in the spaces between the principles that I can only touch on here, you will be drawn into a community of others who have discovered the joy of life in the midst of hardship. The choice is simple; as Jesus said you can serve God or money, not both. And He said no one has greater love than one who gives up his life for another. These and other seminal ideas found in the pages of this great book can and have been world

changing to the degree that their positive messages are known, studied, and applied. Our world desperately needs to consider where it is going, how it got there, and how to find a better direction. I believe those answers can be found in this great book.