

## A GUIDE FOR LEADERS AND LEARNERS

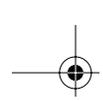
This guide provides the resources you will need to lead a small group through a five-week study of the materials in *Misquoting Truth*. These materials are designed for groups that may include pre-Christians, so, if your group only includes believers, you may need to adapt the materials. (Then again, perhaps you should rework your *group* so that it's more open to pre-Christians.)

Each session is intended to *precede* the study of that portion of the book. For example, students will read the introduction, chapter one and chapter two of the book *after* attending session one. As such, each week's study will be primarily preparatory, priming the students to understand what they will read in the upcoming week.

### SESSION ONE: TRUTH ABOUT “THE ORIGINALS THAT MATTER” AND TRUTH ABOUT THE COPYISTS

#### *Before the Session*

- Two weeks before the session, begin encouraging students to obtain and to read *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* or another book by Dr. Bart D. Ehrman. Be certain that you have studied both Dr. Ehrman's books and *Misquoting Truth*. Inform students that, if they have concerns as they read Ehr-



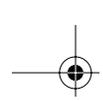
man's book, they should feel free discuss those concerns with you.

- Encourage potential students to keep a journal as they read Ehrman's book, writing questions that come to mind.
- Before the session, gather a piece of paper and a pen for each student. Select a biblical text for the learning exercise that's described in the introduction to part one of *Misquoting Truth*. You will also need a large piece of paper, a marker and an easel.
- Prayerfully review the introduction, chapter one, chapter two and the "Concluding Reflections" of *Misquoting Truth*. Also, check the *Misquoting Truth* link at <http://www.timothypauljones.com> for additional learning resources.
- Ask God to work in such a way that he sets the agenda for your gathering.

*During the Session*

- Read some of the quotations from Ehrman that are found in the introduction of *Misquoting Truth*. (The primary sources for these quotations are pages 7, 10-11 of the hardcover edition of Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*.)
- Ask students, "As you read Ehrman's book, how did you feel?"
- After several persons have responded, focus on this thought: "What specific questions came to your minds as you read Ehrman's book?" Write the questions on the large piece of paper so that everyone can see them.
- Don't try to answer the questions; simply affirm the importance of each question. Let the students know that you will keep their questions visible and mark them off as they are answered in upcoming weeks. Discuss with the students, "Why are these questions important?"





- Have students compare two parallel texts in the Gospels that are not quite identical (for example, Mark 4:35–5:43 and Matthew 8:23–9:26). Ask students to list every difference—even minuscule ones—between the texts. Discuss the questions “Why aren’t the texts identical? Should they be identical?” As you discuss the differences, work toward these thoughts that are found in chapter one of *Misquoting Truth*:

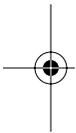
The inspired truth of Scripture does not depend on word-for-word agreement between every biblical manuscript or between every parallel account of the same event. Though they may have been imperfectly copied at times and though different writers may have described the same events in different ways, the biblical texts that are available to us still provide sufficient testimony for us to understand God’s inspired truth.

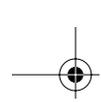
- Distribute the paper and pens to the students, reading your selected text as suggested in the introduction of part one. Don’t tell students the details of what you’re doing, but assure them that it is part of a learning activity that will continue in a couple of weeks. Afterward, gather the students’ papers.
- Before dismissing the group, strongly urge students to read the introduction, chapter one and chapter two of *Misquoting Truth* before the next session.

## SESSION TWO: TRUTH ABOUT “SIGNIFICANT CHANGES” AND TRUTH ABOUT *MISQUOTING JESUS*

### *Before the Session*

- Fill a box with sand, mercilessly rip and destroy portions from the students’ papers, then bury them in the sand. Handwrite a completely different text—perhaps the selection from *Gospel of Peter*



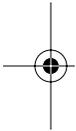


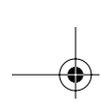
that's quoted in chapter eight of *Misquoting Truth*—on a different piece of paper. After ripping portions from this text, mix the remaining scraps in the sand with the students' papers.

- Study chapters three and four of *Misquoting Truth*. Carefully read the text box that explains the Western, Byzantine and Alexandrian textual families.
- Check the *Misquoting Truth* link at <http://www.timothyjones.com> for additional learning resources.
- Set up the easel and paper that has the questions from the first session.
- Ask God to work in such a way that his Spirit—not you and not this guide—sets the agenda for your gathering.

*During the Session*

- Briefly review the introduction, chapter one and chapter two with the students. Focus your review on answering these questions: (1) What is textual criticism? (2) Approximately what percentage of the manuscript differences is even noticeable after translation? (3) How do textual critics determine which variation of a text was probably the original reading? (4) How did *codices* differ from *scrolls*? (5) How did the earliest Christians preserve copies of their sacred writings?
- On the large paper, discuss and mark through each question that has now been answered.
- Work with students to help them learn about the textual notations in most Bibles. If possible, obtain copies of several translations, including the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the New International Version or the New Revised Standard Version. Most NKJV editions allow readers to see the differ-





ences between different textual families. The Byzantine textual family is referred to as *M*, for Majority Text. Readings from the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies' Greek New Testaments—which rely primarily on the Alexandrian textual family—are marked *NU*, for Nestle-Aland and UBS. Help students see how each translation deals with passages such as Matthew 24:36; Mark 1:41; Luke 22:19-20, 43-44; 23:34; Acts 17:4; 18:26; 1 John 5:7-8.

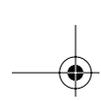
- As you look at each passage, use information from chapters three and four to emphasize repeatedly that *none* of these textual differences changes or challenges any essential belief about Jesus.
- It is possible that someone may be involved in your group who is convinced that the King James Version or the *Textus Receptus* represents the only authoritative Word of God. If so, continually guide the discussion toward the overwhelming *agreement* between the manuscript families; more than 99 percent agreement exists among the manuscripts in places that affect one's translation of the texts. The following books might also prove helpful: D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978); Roy E. Beacham, ed., *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001); J. R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 1995).
- Before dismissing the group, strongly urge students to read chapters three and four of *Misquoting Truth* before the next session.

### SESSION THREE: TRUTH ABOUT ORAL TRADITIONS AND TRUTH ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THE GOSPELS

#### *Before the Session*

- Be certain to take your box of sand and papers to the group's gathering.



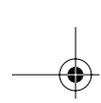


- Study chapters five and six of *Misquoting Truth*.
- Check the *Misquoting Truth* link at <http://www.timothypauljones.com> for additional learning resources.
- Gather an easel, a marker and the large piece of paper from the first session.
- Ask God to work in such a way that he sets the agenda for your gathering.

*During the Session*

- Briefly review chapters three and four with the students. Focus your review on answering these questions: (1) How often are textual critics able to reconstruct the original form of a New Testament manuscript? (2) How many textual variations in the New Testament have forced Christians to change an essential belief about Jesus or to rethink the historical integrity of the New Testament? (3) What were some of the motives for the intentional changes in the New Testament documents? (4) The cover copy of Bart Ehrman's book *Misquoting Jesus* makes this claim: "Ehrman makes the provocative case that many of our cherished biblical stories and widely held beliefs concerning the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, and the divine origins of the Bible itself stem from both intentional and accidental alterations by scribes." Are these words completely true? If not, where do they go wrong? (5) What are the three primary textual families?
- On the large piece of paper, discuss and mark through each question that has now been answered.
- Tell the students that a previously unknown cache of biblical manuscripts has been discovered. Bring out the sand-filled box and have students reconstruct the text that they copied two weeks





ago. (Be certain that no one looks at her or his Bible!) After they have reconstructed the text, read the original text as well as the students' reconstruction, and estimate what percentage of words perfectly reflect the original text. Emphasize, in light of this exercise, how amazing it is that the New Testament has come to us with such strong agreement among the ancient manuscripts.

- Explain the concept of oral tradition. Look carefully at 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. Help the students to see the reasons why scholars believe this was an early oral tradition that circulated in Aramaic.
- Focus the students' attention on the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ—not the accuracy of textual copies—is the crucial event on which Christian faith stands or falls.
- Before dismissing the group, strongly urge students to read chapters five and six of *Misquoting Truth* before the next session.



#### **SESSION FOUR: TRUTH ABOUT THE EYEWITNESSES AND TRUTH ABOUT HOW THE BOOKS WERE CHOSEN**

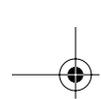
##### *Before the Session*

- Study chapters seven and eight in *Misquoting Truth*.
- Check the *Misquoting Truth* link at <http://www.timothypauljones.com> for additional learning resources.
- Gather an easel, a marker and the large piece of paper from the first session.
- Ask God to work in such a way that he sets the agenda for your gathering.

##### *During the Session*

- Briefly review chapters five and six with the students. Focus your review on answering these questions: (1) How did oral traditions





function in the ancient world? (2) Why is 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 so significant? (3) Why is it probable that the names Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were associated with the New Testament Gospels soon after the books were written?

- On the large piece of paper, discuss and mark through each question that has now been answered.
- Basing your teaching on the first portion of chapter seven, work with the students to help them to see that *no* historical event can be proven beyond any doubt. What evidence from the past can create is the *probability* that certain events occurred.
- Discuss the importance of the claim that the New Testament represents eyewitness testimony.
- Ask your students how they think the New Testament books were chosen. Guide them toward understanding that one standard for the selection of New Testament writings was *eyewitness testimony*.
- Before dismissing the group, strongly urge students to read chapter seven, chapter eight and the “Concluding Reflections” in *Misquoting Truth* before the next session.

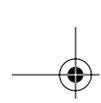


#### SESSION FIVE: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

##### *Before the Session*

- Study the “Concluding Reflections” in *Misquoting Truth*.
- Check the *Misquoting Truth* link at <http://www.timothypauljones.com> for additional learning resources.
- Gather an easel, a marker and the large piece of paper from the first session.
- Prepare to discuss the questions that *haven't* been marked off.



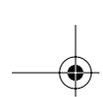


- Ask God to work in such a way that he sets the agenda for your gathering.

*During the Session*

- Briefly review chapters seven and eight with the students. Focus your review on answering these questions: (1) Why was eyewitness testimony so important to the earliest Christians? (2) Were the first followers of Jesus illiterate? (3) If the first followers of Jesus *were* illiterate, does this mean that they could *not* have been the sources of the New Testament Gospels? (4) How did early Christians decide which writings were authoritative? (5) Which books of the New Testament were never disputed?
- On the large paper, discuss and mark through each question that has now been answered.
- Discuss the questions that *haven't* been marked off.
- Basing your discussion on the “Concluding Reflections” in *Misquoting Truth*, discuss what it means to say that the New Testament is true, the Word of God, without error and historically accurate.
- Turn the discussion toward Jesus. Point out that if Jesus *was* raised from the dead, his resurrection calls for some sort of response.



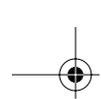


# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

*Which Books Were Considered,  
Which Books Were Rejected—and Why*

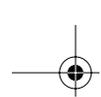
	NEW TESTAMENT CANONICAL WRITINGS	NONCANONICAL WRITINGS
Matthew	One of the first followers of Jesus, Matthew was an eyewitness of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.	
Mark	John Mark served as the apostle Peter's translator; as such, the words in Mark's Gospel reflect the eyewitness testimony of Peter.	
Luke and Acts	Luke was an associate of Paul, an apostle specially commissioned by Jesus Christ (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24).	
John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Revelation	One of the first followers of Jesus, John was an eyewitness of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is possible that "John the elder" was a disciple of John the apostle and that 2 John, 3 John and Revelation were penned by him.	





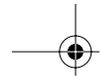
Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philip- pians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Tim- othy, Titus, Philemon	Paul was an eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus, commis- sioned by Jesus himself as an apostle (Acts 9:1–9; 1 Corin- thians 15:8; Galatians 1:13– 16).	
Hebrews	Although disputed for de- cades, Hebrews was eventu- ally accepted into the canon because of its connection, through Timothy, to the apos- tle Paul (see Hebrews 13:23).	
James	Because James was the physi- cal half-brother of Jesus, his testimony about Jesus was viewed as apostolic and au- thoritative (see Galatians 1:19).	
1 and 2 Peter	One of the first followers of Jesus, Simon Peter was an eyewitness of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The style of 2 Peter differs so rad- ically from 1 Peter that many scholars believe 2 Peter was penned on Peter's behalf by someone else.	
Jude	Jude seems to have been a physical half-brother of Jesus. As such, his testimony—like the testimony of James—was viewed as apostolic and au- thoritative (see Galatians 1:19).	





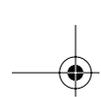
<i>1 Clement</i>		Although the book is orthodox and agrees with the canonical New Testament, <i>1 Clement</i> came from a prominent pastor of the Roman church; no evidence existed to connect the book with an apostle.
<i>Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)</i>		Although the book is orthodox and agrees with the canonical New Testament, the <i>Didache</i> was eventually excluded from the canon, possibly because the book could not be clearly connected to an apostle.
<i>Epistle of Barnabas</i>		The <i>Epistle of Barnabas</i> appears in Codex Sinaiticus in an appendix to the New Testament. The book was, however, ultimately excluded from the New Testament, probably because it contains a questionable prophecy.
<i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>		The <i>Shepherd of Hermas</i> was excluded primarily because it could not be connected to an eyewitness of Jesus. The book was probably written around A.D. 150 by the brother of Pius, bishop of Rome.
<i>Diatessaron</i>		A harmonized version of the four canonical Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—the <i>Diatessaron</i> was probably excluded because it did not provide any new material. It was simply an edited version of the New Testament Gospels.





<i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i>		This document has been lost, but it may have been an early version of the canonical Gospel of Matthew.
<i>Acts of Paul</i>		The <i>Acts of Paul</i> was excluded because it did not represent historical testimony. A church leader admitted around A.D. 160 that he had written this novel “out of respect for Paul.”
<i>Apocalypse of Peter and Gospel of Peter</i>		Even though the <i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> and <i>Gospel of Peter</i> did not directly contradict the apostolic writings, they were rejected because Peter did not actually write them. Plus, some phrases in the books might be misused to support Docetism—the belief that Jesus only <i>seemed</i> human.





*Documents from “the Lost Christianities”*

	Gnostic and anti-orthodox writings ( <i>Noncanonical</i> )	Christian writings ( <i>Noncanonical</i> )	Christian writings ( <i>Canonical</i> )
First Century		<p>1 Clement # Didache #</p>	<p>Galatians (49) James (50–70) 1 Thessalonians (51) 2 Thessalonians (52) 1 Corinthians (55) 2 Corinthians (57) Romans (58) Matthew (60–85) 1 Peter (60s?) Hebrews (60s?) Jude (60–70?) Philippians (61) Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon (62) 2 Peter (65?) Mark (65–70) Luke-Acts (65–85) 1 Timothy (66?) 2 Timothy, Titus (67?) Revelation (late 60s or mid-90s) John and 1, 2, 3 John (75–95)</p>



Second Century	<p><i>Eugnostos the Blessed</i> (NH)  <i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i>  <i>Gospel of Thomas</i>                      (some segments stem from first century)                      (NH)  <i>Dialogue of the Savior</i> (NH)  <i>Gospel of Basilides</i>  <i>Gospel of Truth</i> (NH)  <i>Gospel of Judas</i>  <i>Gospel of Eve</i>  <i>Acts of Thomas</i> (NH)  <i>Apocryphon of John</i> (NH)  <i>Apocryphon of James</i> (NH)  <i>Gospel of Mary</i>  <i>Apocalypse of James</i> (NH)</p>	<p><i>Epistle of Barnabas</i> #  <i>Gospel of Matthias</i>  <i>Shepherd of Hermas</i>  <i>Diatessaron</i> #  <i>Infancy Gospel of Thomas</i>  <i>Infancy Gospel of James</i>  <i>Gospel of the Egyptians</i>  <i>Gospel of Peter</i> (some segments stem from first century)  <i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> #  <i>Acts of Peter</i>  <i>Acts of John</i>  <i>Acts of Paul</i></p>	
Third Century	<p><i>Epistle of Peter to Philip</i> (NH)  <i>Acts of Peter and the Twelve</i> (NH)  <i>Gospel of Philip</i> (NH)  <i>Vision of the Savior</i>  <i>Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians</i> (NH)  <i>Coptic Apocalypse of Peter</i> (NH)</p>	<p><i>Acts of Andres</i></p>	
Fourth Century	<p><i>Apocalypse of Adam</i> (NH)  <i>Allogenes</i> (NH)  <i>Coptic Apocalypse of Paul</i> (NH)</p>	<p><i>Gospel of Nicodemus</i>  <i>Apocalypse of Paul</i></p>	

# = Writings that some early Christians may have treated as authoritative but that were ultimately excluded from the canon

(NH) = Writings found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt