INTRODUCTION

I. COURSE SUMMARY

The Reliability of the Scriptures class is a six-week interactive apologetics course that explores common questions surrounding the Bible. Session one looks at important concepts such as revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. Session two gives multiple reasons why the Bible is reliable with emphasis on the surviving manuscripts. Session three evaluates the development of the canon of our Bible answering the question, "How did we get the books in our Bible?" Session four investigates the discipline of textual criticism which helps to understand the variances in the Biblical text and how ancient documents allow us to learn about the original writings. Session five evaluates the historical transmission of the Biblical text ultimately culminating in our different English Bible versions. This course concludes in session six with dialogue on how to have meaningful conversations about the Bible with others who may disagree with its authority. At the conclusion of the course, you will discover there is convincing theological and historical evidence that give us great confidence that the Bible is God's revealed Word to us.

II. COURSE OVERVIEW

SESSION 1: Doctrine of the Scripture

An introduction to the Doctrine of Scripture will be discussed relative to the concepts of authority, revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy. The question, "What does it mean for the Bible to be inspired?" and "How do I understand the idea of Biblical authority in my life?" will be addressed. Many of the terms used in common churches and Bible discussions will be defined and highlighted within the scope of orthodox Christianity. Cultural controversies, arguments, and counter-arguments involving these terms will be discussed.

SESSION 2: The Reliability of the Bible

Factors that influence the reliability of the Bible will be explored. The question, "How do we know the Bible is reliable and trustworthy?" will be answered. The evidence is simply overwhelming. Reasons that will be discussed include the self-authenticating power of the Scriptures themselves, its cohesiveness throughout the Biblical story, consistent belief

throughout the centuries, existing Old Testament and New Testament manuscripts, the principle of embarrassment in the text, and validating patristic citations.

SESSION 3: The Development of the Biblical Canon

The canonization of the Old Testament and New Testament will be examined. The question, "How did we get the books in our Bible?" will be answered. The principles of apostolicity, catholicity, and orthodoxy will be defined in light of individual New Testament book selection. Common misconceptions about this process will be debunked and the idea that an organic process led by the Holy Spirit—in addition to affirmation by theologians and church councils, will be demonstrated.

SESSION 4: Textual Criticism and Variants

This session will discuss the important work of textual scholars through the discipline of textual criticism. Questions addressed include "Are there mistakes in the Bible?" and "How do we know the Bible we read today reflects the words of the original authors?" In addition, general principles of the transmission of the text over the centuries will be reviewed.

SESSION 5: What Bible Translation Should I Use?

This session will investigate the numerous options of Bibles that are available to the English-speaking world. Questions such as "Is one Bible better than the other?" and "Which Bible should I read?" will be answered. The lineage of each of our common Bibles—Textus Receptus, Majority Text, or Critical Text, will be noted and the basic principles of selection—word-for-word, thought-for-thought, and idea-for-idea, will be explored.

SESSION 6: Everyday Apologetics: Bringing the Bible into Meaningful Conversations

This session guides the student in the practical application of the course content in common everyday conversations. This lively, interactive time will allow for the student to formulate a five-minute reliability of the Bible argument, experience one-on-one discussions, observe role-playing, and participate in case studies. Biblical principles from Colossians 4:6 and 1 Peter 3:15 will be applied to each of the arguments. This session is intended to merge the academic study of Bibliology to everyday apologetics and meaningful conversations.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

SESSION 1

• Explain the two types of revelation. What are each of their subtypes?

• Describe the divine flow of inspiration.

• Explain the meaning of inerrancy. What is its logical flow?

SESSION 2

• List five ways the Bible is reliable.

• Explain the importance of the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices to the trustworthiness of the Bible.

• Draw a timeline that contains the second, third, and fourth century New Testament fragments and manuscripts.

SESSION 3

• List the three major criteria for a book's inclusion into the New Testament canon.

• Explain the flow of major events for the development of the Old Testament canon.

• Describe important events in the development of the New Testament canon. What role did councils have in the process?

SESSION 4

• Explain how existing New Testament manuscripts allow scholars to understand the autographs.

• Explain the concept of textual variants. How does the nature of these variants effect our confidence in the Scripture?

• Describe the different text-types within Greek manuscripts. What role do each of these play in future English translations?

SESSION 5

• Diagram a timeline that contains the historical transmission of the Biblical text.

• What are the three types of competing primary New Testament sources? Explain how these sources are reflected in our English versions.

• List and explain the three general types of Bible versions.

SESSION 6

• Present your personalized five-minute argument for the reliability of the Scripture.

• How does 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:6 shape the tone of your response?

• Explain how textual criticism supports the validity of the autographa and therefore, supports the content of our English Bibles and its authority.

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