Stacie Wood ([00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/CtMlnP614aC--ukqlmiK24kEbbvbBAN2gADlHwUX4F6P_wVOrvdU0HNWK1aH5ghNMwf6dhd2BG2CgIwfkiE8C2WHBc4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.09)):

And I want to start off today by telling a true story. Back in 2009, there were two Iranian women who were arrested and they were sentenced to death not just because of their faith in Jesus Christ, but also because they were actively distributing Bibles to people, their people. And so what they did was every night they would gather together, the two of them, and they would pack New Testament Bibles in their backpacks, and then they would go out and walk for miles, many hours sometimes, and they would distribute these Bibles into people's mailboxes. Well, over the course of about three years, these two women were able to distribute over 20,000 New Testament Bibles before they were discovered and arrested and sentenced to death.

([01:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/NBo8as9IZsyoMhUdKteo33Fq_3DRjqlt0QBBljCk_A3VBpchtr6nga6BPBWskFItmc6T4F576B3qIn0Idm5dlxzcHC0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=63.57)):

Now, in this particular case, the UN got involved. There was a lot of international pressure on Iran to release these women. And so these two women, unlike many others in their circumstance, actually lived to tell their story. But you have to think about the reality that these women, they knew what they were doing was illegal. They knew that what they were doing was very dangerous and it was probably just a matter of time before they were caught. And yet still, they were willing to risk their lives to get the Bible in the hands of their people. And you have to wonder why? These are people that they would never meet in person, people that they would never have a one-on-one conversation with, but it was worth it to them, as it has been to so many other people. There are so many stories of people like this. What is it that is so precious and so powerful about the Bible that people are willing to risk their lives so that others can have it?

([02:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/QiuTM0cjKld3y1OJK7LU3U8z4sw3hhRgjHBH3xH9qJAOZLRC2GskIFOhYNCigh-VyisaeLHF7vuxIBRNFDMK8G2JSgQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=131.82)):

Well, today marks a very significant moment in the life of Saddleback Church because today we are launching into this new series called The Anchored Life. And if you've been around for a few months, you know that we've been building towards this. Pastor Andy has been casting vision for this, and what we're doing is we are inviting our entire church family to read through the New Testament together over the course of an eight-week period of time. And I have been so expectant about this moment because I just know the power and the impact that this can have on us. For some of you, this is going to be a turning point in your life. And for our church family, I really believe that we're going to look back on this moment and say, "Something shifted there because we got engaged in the Bible together."

([03:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/UG4gnaiHa9FufNeTYr3R5VKEMXbI6nWYXVLC0Oe12q-uK7iHIh9fUwR3aHbe1Qcy-odBXtVxFdTh4tNOFnx9WMLncAk?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=182.79)):

So did you know that the Bible is the most popular book in the world? It is literally the all-time bestseller. And now in this digital age, the distribution of the Bible has just exploded. And with the YouVersion app for example, there have been over 600,000,000 unique downloads of the Bible. So the Bible is out there, but the irony is that even though it's the most popular book in the world, most people have never read it. Even most Christians have never actually read the Bible. We tend to have some verses or passages that we're familiar with, but why is that? Why don't people engage and actually make reading the Bible a part of their daily life? There's a lot of reasons for it. Some people feel like the Bible's outdated, "It's not relevant for my everyday, modern life." People say the Bible is boring or maybe that it's hard to understand. And then there are some people that have some serious hangups with the Bible, like the reliability of the Bible, the authenticity of the Bible.

([04:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/QbaowGN4LEKc0txrBgWuQ95hotahtG-Noq96ocR0SpVRtynOv9M8FQy1ws32zaG_Dt3l4bQrlB-CWsyugIbNSY3aSPs?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=253.26)):

And so I want to today address three specific questions when it comes to understanding the Bible and whether or not we should actually engage with it. And those questions are, is it accurate? Is it historically accurate? Is it true, the content of it? And is it worth it? Is it worth my time? And now, at Saddleback, we have people coming from a wide variety of spiritual backgrounds, people all along the place of their spiritual journey. And so those questions are going to hit us differently. For some of you, those first two questions of is it accurate and is it true? That's really what you're wrestling through right now, and that's a big barrier for you with the Bible. But for all of us, we have to look in the face of that question, is it worth it? Because we get hung up on that and it keeps us from actually reading our Bibles.

([05:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/7gA12EKqRM8JeUTqmMolcDEdeZJNCeJTt7qOkbqKX2-0rA9mgaXfRw_kOl3T21brFoqP_ZGl3rsJa_VCZ9vQCI2ohZ0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=305.1)):

But I do want to start off with addressing this question of is it accurate? Is it historically accurate? Is the Bible that we hold in our hands today, is it the same book, is it the same document that was written so many years ago? And what we're going to do is I would like to appeal to your mind first. So I would like to ask all of you to really engage your mind. Think of this like you're going to sit through a short college class about the history of the Bible and the accuracy of the Bible. And so that's how I'm going to appeal to you first. So let's just all together engage our minds. You guys are smart.

([05:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/odpf2IRZ4gpJZBowfDS3zckZAxswKslv1f2E30EItGBgFeumQwDsnC90NQgwKLxtU3JtRW4773ZLhYKM6JCsIO4jrJw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=343.59)):

Now, there's this whole field of study that's called textual criticism. And what that is, scholars will devote their whole lives to studying these ancient manuscripts and making sure that they're as close to the original as possible. So not just biblical text, but any ancient manuscripts. And these scholars, these textual critics, they have certain methods that they use to validate the integrity of an ancient document. And so we are going to watch a two-minute film clip. This is from the Alpha film series of one of these scholars, and he's going to give us an explanation of why he believes that the New Testament is accurate, it's authentic and it can be trusted.

([06:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/PAK1hkCECvkBjl67vFTZ83gXcd8cnfMBHIJF7E8unlO4L2KcEsPxOGRRjYo0jf8Rb-mgjLJlMJsME7cvA0CpDHzNdts?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=389.88)):

This guy's name is Dr. Alister McGrath, and he's a Professor at Oxford. And I don't know what kind of stereotypes you have of Oxford professors, but I just know that Dr. McGrath will not disappoint. So check it out.

Dr. Alister McGrath ([06:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/4I3ONP5EYNva6f1q5tFdmaehdzy4gLUBmouZ1d0LMByf_LCKoBxvXrFA80rnVS4XRspg_nWl6SThzSSBLGQe2h3VyDo?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=407.91)):

Textual criticism examines the number of copies of early texts that we have available to us today, and it looks at the time gap between the original document and the earliest copy that we have. And basically, the more manuscripts we have and the earlier they are, the less dark there's going to be about the original. So let's compare the Bible to other texts in ancient history, ones that are widely used in schools and universities. Let's look at the Greek historians, Herodotus and Thucydides. They both wrote in the 5th century BC, but the earliest copy of their writings that we have dates from AD 900 and that makes a 1,300-year time-lapse. And even then, we only have eight copies of these manuscripts in the first place.

([07:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/w7dzlu8FJXPt-3tF8dOXBi6uNL1gt3mGpBVb66fw7nLxkyV_cApmEoZaB3bog1LYgkWiJabU4JhGB5p1X75HpB6ovJ0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=456.63)):

Or look at the Roman historian, Tacitus. There's a 1,000-year gap between his book being written and our first manuscript, and we only have 20 copies. Or another classic, Caesar's Gallic War, 950 years between the book being written and our first manuscript copy. And even then, we only have nine or 10 copies of these manuscripts. Again, with Livy's famous History of Rome, a 900-year gap between the book being written and our first manuscript, and we only have 20 copies of this.

([08:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/jrd2LeDznOvVCLfthRkdfxrTwSLvo6vLYC4wO3sWmAq3qZZGx0l0YC7_1qGLmZHJ-vi9mtZPVEXgm6oxML5jy8_thag?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=489.09)):

But when it comes to New Testament, well, it's very different. The New Testament was written between about 40 and 100 AD, and we have manuscript evidence going back as early as 130 AD, and full manuscripts by 350 AD. And we have more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin translations, and 9,300 others. So we can be pretty confident in the accuracy, the authenticity and the integrity of the New Testament scriptures that have been passed on to us today.

Stacie Wood ([08:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/wbbYT_ta6ErkFPiBYa0BjyXSgRiOvTHRmPKBjSUtXRsYEZmiMvfpgy8P-0bK8F2y7-gClvcVV7EY5ZdbJIspLn6OHbc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=526.2)):

Now, I wanted to share all that information with you in person, but I just couldn't get the accent quite right, so I had to let Dr. McGrath share it with us. Now, it's pretty convincing proofs though, right? Even by secular standards, the New Testament is in a class all of its own. Now, there's one other test that is important when you think about the accuracy of the Bible. A question that I've heard often is, "But hasn't it changed over time, the content of it? How do we know that the Bible that we're holding in our hands has the same content as the authors originally wrote?" Well, back in 1947, which is not that long ago, that's actually the year my parents were born, so not too long ago, 1947, there was this massive discovery that took place. And what happened where there were some shepherds that were out in the desert, they came upon these caves and they found all of these ancient scrolls, nearly 1,000 ancient scrolls that had never been discovered. These ancient scrolls were the oldest biblical text that have ever been discovered. So this just happened 1947.

([10:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Eq2DWAOwtAaA1HnUhiqumbHz4TUz4geo_U0RP_EbzJz5QrBWy1Pta1S9Suyh_QcJvTEPgIaRrV9IZU8sPTjaxuqbLwM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=601.71)):

By 1947, we already have all of our modern-day translations of the Bible. And so what scholars are going to do is they're going to take these ancient scrolls called the Dead Sea Scrolls, and they're going to compare that text to our modern-day text, and they're going to see where are all the errors? Where are the inconsistencies? And what they found was truly astonishing. I want to show you two really familiar verses from the book of Isaiah, a side-by-side comparison from these ancient texts. Some of these texts, some of these scrolls date back to 200 years before Jesus was even born. So we're talking a 2,000-year time gap between this scroll that we're holding in our hands and the Bible, the modern-day translation that we're holding in our hands. They're going to compare those two things.

([10:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/YZpdWCLv4Vz0BxcL5JppP4_dXUDeQLo4WtH3C6yWIGh7Z9Evhgj7S8TVyQdJt-XDqh2sW7qVB4p5fpkS0x0khk9aCNw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=649.98)):

So check out these verses on the screen. On the left, it's the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Isaiah chapter 53, verse five, "He is wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The correction of our peace was upon him and by his wounds, he has healed us." Now look at the modern translation, the NIV, "But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed." You guys, that is remarkable. Is it not? That a 2,000-year time gap, you think about that game Telephone that we play sometimes, we can't even make it around the circle one time without getting it all messed up. How could that be? How could it be so accurate?

([11:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Zkhy3N4nx2maxf_rCOqmi3l32m1AOYAuqJfmbtjnaPUUqU6TmGADBSDrn4ypO4ReZo8ujABw_7T5WDQibCJnBO54ur4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=700.86)):

There's a couple of contributing factors. One is the scribes, the role of a scribe. It was a very esteemed position in that society. There was all kind of rigorous training that a scribe went through. There were all kind of rules around how they would transcribe it to protect the integrity of the written word. But the other factor that you have to bring into consideration is just the reality. This is the inspired word of God, and the Holy Spirit has literally been protecting the transcription of his word from one generation to the next. It is phenomenal to look at the evidence that this Bible is truly historically accurate.

([12:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/00UNOolzATb8Ld714eYfyb3phtHca7t09lHWl-wLWRdS7Kbl4GItTAl0MHBahrwHCJ7L-tcLo635IZdzIFBQSWETzxQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=743.64)):

So if you want to just jot down in your notes real quick, the three evidences that we've gone over here. The first evidence that the New Testament is reliable is the relatively small time gap between the original work and the later copies that we currently have. The second one is the vast number of early manuscripts, that's so much more than any other ancient document that we have. And then the third one is these Dead Sea Scrolls that we just looked at the comparison of how accurate that the Dead Sea Scrolls are when you lay it side by side with a modern translation. It's just a really phenomenal thing.

([13:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/KDMjt5iwvGH8MMxZ064TyAOhpFA6OLk1kTezbvTQgfGrzA18gTK4gnkwvhZ0D03PV2WI8Cx7d4d8cCv6b7Ve7nMqyvw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=782.73)):

So when you examine the evidence, there is so much confirmation that the Bible is indeed historically accurate, but that doesn't answer the question of is it true? Is the content in it true? Can it be trusted? Isn't it just myths and legends and these pithy sayings? How can I know that the Bible is true? The Bible itself claims to be true multiple times all throughout scripture. I gave you a couple of examples in your notes there. In Psalm chapter 12, it says, "The words of the Lord are flawless." And then over in John chapter 17, this is actually Jesus saying these words, he's praying and he says, "Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth." So the Bible itself claims that it is true, but how many of you know you can't always trust someone when they're claiming to tell you the truth, right? Because sometimes they're just not.

([14:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/cHQzI246vYcDuWXJ-P14PzW0jedC870j4jgSqFb0btEAgft92bAH7af0mu-wC2gLY_C7Eidmrw-TkiY-w7MXqUeSk9E?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=847.17)):

I want you to look at this picture of my daughter when she was four years old in her little Flash costume. Does that look on her face say that she's a truth teller to you? That day I had told her, "Karis, I want you to go clean your room." So she did, and she came back in a flash and she says to me, "Mom, it's done. And if you find any stolen things under my bed, I don't know how they got there." Not everyone that claims to be telling the truth is actually telling the truth, right? So if you just believe that the Bible is true because the Bible says that it's true, then that logic is not very strong. But let's look at it from a different line of logic.

([14:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/WwpsYRtW4NKaCAPqrJGRcPMny-JgBEOClRQ0A8paEHZfb7XNuLosoJIid6U5Nx6yuq7GEVN7cGVqUt0uL7ncBWhV70s?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=894.48)):

If one part of the Bible could be proven false, then it calls into question the integrity of the entire Bible. And the one part of the Bible that most people would call into question is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because that is the linchpin of the Bible. Everything else hangs on that. It's the central teaching of the Bible. It's also the most audacious claim of the Bible. And so if it could be proven that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth actually did not happen, then everything about the Bible should be considered suspect. But if you could prove that the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact, that it did happen, then you got to go with the guy that rose from the dead, right? You got to trust that guy.

([15:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/VKWFqyHIVxUSzaFw7a5DfMo9_60uTFxNi7u4LcVj6tciaKlcy3ORzlt9Nmce3cglXTZ2RuuQ5gN0BA6ejtizMVDHio0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=947.43)):

Listen to this quote by Tim Keller. He says, "If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said. If he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching, but whether or not he rose from the dead." And there's all kinds of evidence out there to support the fact that this was an actual historical event, that Jesus of Nazareth really did die. He was buried and he rose from the dead.

([16:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/_d1eYy2WSf6K-afBXCKzxXDTWro6RyKJlr2rig7wnERNumZvt4CyqWZ8V3y4RCcMvLP2ED48wltojTt-55oZ6A7JgLQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=981.45)):

But I want to just focus on two different evidences today, and the first one is found in First Corinthians, chapter 15. This is the Apostle Paul and he's writing to the early church at Corinth. He says, "For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the 12. After that," you're going to underline this phrase, "He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep." Think about that.

([17:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/JSMtS7yJ1SuMZwONfTfnNd9oz50W-2tiKGGiGBS-yI1GVzUTq5AzzWbSjmEa3whLWJCOX2l43uaQUbcZxpxZRfvD7vg?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1027.56)):

There were 500 people gathered together and suddenly, the living Jesus Christ is standing among them. They knew that he had died. They knew that he had been buried, but now they are seeing with their own eyes that he is alive. This was not some type of group hallucination. This was not just some dreamlike state of hoping for something to be true that really wasn't true. These were witnesses. They had seen it. And when this book of First Corinthians was being written and circulated among the early churches, these 500 people, most of them were still alive and could bear witness to the fact, "I saw that with my own eyes."

([17:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/IsYea_ujyTG01NT0i8YVjzrotf9hRWVsnVPZoEKfTcaUN7bwdKo3WX1zTArn2UcTNLFdEnCPiejBuC2QR4CY0-2tgsI?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1069.41)):

Now, these witnesses, they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by holding fast to this testimony because it's so unbelievable, right? Like all of us, we see things all the time that are unbelievable because we have these AI-generated photos. You've seen these on social media and stuff. I don't know if you've seen the one of the Pope wearing a white puffer jacket, or there's one of the Pope riding a skateboard. I don't know why they don't leave the Pope alone, poor guy. But those things didn't happen. It would be pretty funny if they did, but they didn't. And you and I, we're not passing along those images to people as if we believe that they're true because they're so unbelievable that we don't ourselves believe that they're true. But these people gave witness to something that was completely unbelievable because they had witnessed it with their own eyes and they knew it to be true.

([18:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/DrFHZ8zdLHEKr4I7O3NeamGTsx81P4IwUeagL1346yo-CTVVofb3sfd13ZJ00BQKtJYiY-tD8RRCX1LzYU8nr_7Gfzw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1123.89)):

Now, the other evidence that you have to take into consideration is the life of the 12 apostles. These were 12 guys that followed Jesus around during his time here on earth, but the night of Jesus' betrayal and death, they were cowards. All of them fled from him because they were scared that they were also going to be killed alongside Jesus. They didn't want to die. And then after he was buried, they were huddled together, hiding out in this room, trying to stay away from the Jews and the Romans. They didn't know what was going to happen and they were full of fear. But then there was something that happened that changed everything for them. Jesus showed up in their midst, in the flesh, and they saw him and they believed.

([19:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Ey3sawMh2Rv_brG0scSg78m9e7A3073TnAffi8qaCB-INGOBkln7apFaWoepCX1zWuGJHhoEvKVAGILqn6CckRN6J7M?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1169.79)):

And that emboldened these men that were cowards to now preach the gospel without fear of consequence. They traveled around the known world sharing this testimony that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead and he is God. It gave them the courage that they needed to face brutal death. 11 out of the 12 apostles were brutally martyred because of their testimony that they believed to be true. Look at this little graph right here of all the different ways that people, these 12 apostles were killed. Peter was crucified upside down. James was beheaded. Thomas was speared to death. This took a lot of courage. They would not have died because they believed a lie. They would not recant their testimony because they believed it to be true. And so this takes us back to our Timothy Keller quote that, "If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said." And when Jesus was here in his teachings, he affirmed that the Bible is the authoritative word of God.

([20:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/z8jJtaV4cQUa1K-NlGm2FHCgULcTBC5dc4Ofsg5v9ljixHaAGt-i8SV8Mc4K5hTdaaJMqxobIKQh1fxcOjCLI2THREU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1236.18)):

So what I've been trying to do the last few minutes is to build this case to support the fact that the Bible is in fact historically accurate and it's theologically true. And if the Bible is historically accurate and it's theologically true, then it can be trusted. It can be trusted. But what that doesn't answer is, is it worth it? And I think if we were honest with one another today, that's the main thing that holds us back from our own willingness to engage with the Bible, to invest the time in it. "Is it worth my time? I'm already busy. Is it actually going to provide any value to my everyday kind of life?" And I would just like to stand here as a big fan of the Bible and to say a resounding yes, it is worth it. This practice of reading the Bible on a daily basis, it is such a value add to our lives. This is not just one more thing that we are asking from you. This is all about what we want for you.

([21:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/It5rFbsXubuqk_6d_br8VupKaD7X3S1w7w4k0w0tDvPZWmFoPe6fobtyviD0NzSq7Vw-P9yKli5_6t5lPGzttFn2p-4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1303.11)):

A few weeks ago, Andy shared these statistics with you, and I found them to be so compelling that I wanted to just flash them up on the screen again. This is from a study, a research study done by the Center for Bible Engagement. And what they found is that people who will read the Bible at least four days a week, four days was the magic number, then they saw all of these dramatic changes in their life. Loneliness went down, bitterness went down, alcoholism dropped, sexual sin dropped. And when you look at that list, I'm just wondering, do you see yourself on it anywhere? I'm thinking about a single mom who is just really struggling with loneliness right now. I'm thinking about how so many of you have been through really difficult things in relationships and somehow that bitter root got in there and there's just anger and bitterness inside of you. I'm thinking about the statistic I read last week that said 50% of men sitting in church are engaged with pornography.

([22:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Xo86IN0xh-0erdwwbgKqef4Ro3Sbj6aRvBB97VnzYhsO3SRS19OgBPV3JRUm9JmL6_Mt5C3SjTOF97BOnen6kNJsv3Q?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1364.52)):

And I just wonder, do you want a different pattern for 2024? Would you like some help to do things differently, to break free from some of these habits that have entangled you for so long? Because what this research is showing us is that the Bible can literally help us to make significant changes in our life if we will just engage with it. I want us to read a passage of the Bible together, Psalm chapter 19, and the way we're going to do it, we're going to have a little audience participation right now. So if you've been sleeping, wake back up. I need you right now and I'm going to read the first line and then you'll read back to me the next line and we'll go back and forth like this. And the reason I want to do this is because I want you to pay close attention to the words that you are reading because these are the things that the Bible says, these are the benefits of reading the Bible.

([23:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/GyUZw3lLAl796M6yXByWmZjjR4zuNhQZxN5XnpP_QFgXoorpR6kupSeWu746WcbViDHQ-A_92ntookldpt8zT5oqWIw?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1419.57)):

So Psalm 19, here we go. "The law of the Lord is perfect... The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy... The precepts of the Lord are right... The commands of the Lord are radiant..." And you think about those four things, that the word of the Lord, it revives the soul. It makes wise the simple. It gives joy to our hearts and it gives light to our eyes. And you just think about, man, that's like the four-part harmony of a beautiful life. There are so many benefits of reading the Bible. Who among us is not weary and exhausted and we need something to revive our souls? How many of you are just in desperate need of wisdom right now because you're facing some decisions and you don't know how to make those decisions? How many of you came in here today and you just feel burdened and heavy and full of anxiety and you need there to be joy in your heart and light in your eyes?

([24:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/vzmDBqa7GwfnLAiKtgBrYM44NHSfTbAM_OwKpSvdOIK4xrEF0aj8xq-XWU8u5hkPG3bMZ6o4lbkazLZcy-8a7ab1Luc?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1488.66)):

So many benefits of reading the Bible, but the best way I know how to answer this question of is it really worth it? Is from my own personal experience. Over the last 25 years, I have read the Bible more days than not, and I would tell you that there are some days that I read this book and it's so interesting to me and it's enthralling and I have to force myself to put it down and do something else, but there are plenty of other days that I have read this book basically just to check a box, to get it done. There are some times that I open the word and I feel like God gives me a very specific thing he wanted me to learn, a specific revelation. And there are other days that I feel like everything I read just bounced right off my forehead and I didn't understand any of it.

([25:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/M7fet9tG--5QhaNXnhdRuxvZ7oQffr60_zM8IKrEM4i2A9cebgjeENOYmF8I9YN-M0Xke37SUqBVrQVPLSo_nEzS_ig?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1540.02)):

And it's frustrating because sometimes I think all of us would really like it if the Bible was a little bit more like just open it up, flip and point kind of situation, like, "Oh yeah, I need a promise for today, and there it is. Like a magic eight-ball where you just ask it a question and it answers you. You know what I'm saying? Like, "Okay, where should I go to college? Nineveh. No, maybe not there." Or, "Who should I marry? Judas. No, definitely not that," but it would be great, right? If you could just open the Bible and point and you'd get an answer, it'd be so easy. That's not exactly how the Bible is designed to work.

([26:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/ha2fDg82YDE8Rfg1AfzlNAxt5kjA9DqduharT1CVYtOCf51s-4YZzu9zHYNpaA_q1OdtO0I-CuleO77wQfhpuSFR8qI?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1584.24)):

The Bible doesn't always answer our very specific questions, but it does form us. It shapes us into becoming this wise person. It gives us a worldview, a set of values. It equips us with wisdom so that we know how to make decisions that honor God, but this doesn't happen overnight. You can't microwave this kind of maturity. You have to invest yourself deeply. This is a layer by layer kind of situation, that year after year of investing yourself in the Bible, you become this wise person. And I'll tell you what this pattern in my life has kind of done for me. This has anchored me through some really difficult storms in my life. It's helped me to remain rooted and established in life.

([27:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/orYCGM8MVR-Twh174WhofARdeVwQqUQIVAS0e635bootvBR3G57_tMvB9Nk8FSdpMu8nkPWrci6hoAZMLnValJqzRwA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1634.85)):

One of my all-time favorite passages of the Bible has to be Psalms Chapter one. I put it in your notes for you to look at and it says this, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers, but his delight is on the law of the Lord and on his law, he meditates day and night." I love this third verse. It says, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." I want to be like that. I want to be like a tree that is planted by streams of water because that tree has no fear of drought. All the other trees might be shriveled up and dying around it, but that tree, its roots go down into the living water and it cannot help but bear fruit in its life. That's the kind of tree that I want to be.

([28:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/iAZZEyg1zTw85eTlAKAvICcVnbw7Gz1wEPKKVYk6v7t9zw3Gamd6Pn219wld1whdOtKSMBs9oyysL1cVB-f8nj702ig?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1698.87)):

When I was 31 years old, Andy and I went through a miscarriage and it really rocked me. We had been trying to get pregnant for about six years and we finally got pregnant and then we lost that baby. And I would love to tell you that I was able just to open up the word of God and that his promises from these pages healed my broken heart, but that's not exactly how it went for me in that moment. I would have friends that would reach out and text me encouragement. They would text me Bible verses like, "God's near to the broken-hearted," and I was thankful for that.

([29:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/1IVil-pqS7UJ81bYxNlC0C8RP7KXVtVX-ZrqiN_f60JtTlnqlBicKeW5sxqdmJ2UmcghgJ_c3Fn3dMUttPhi5bvxxxY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1740.33)):

But honestly, I needed more than that right then. There were no flip and point promises that were going to reach me in that dark place. But in those soul-searching moments, you know what I had to do to rebuild my faith again? I had to go all the way back to the very beginning and to say, "I know Jesus rose from the dead, because there is so much evidence that supports that. And if Jesus rose from the dead, that means that he's God and he can be trusted. So I'll start there." And I began reading the teachings of Jesus again, and I began getting to know who he is all over again. And sometime in there, the word that was in me and the word that was in my hands, it met and it brought me back to life again. And here I stand.

([29:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/LE1TFoNNKkpNUFiDvga_kYlw5dH6b2ZurcGIWUtr1hCQIs8rmhvWB4wD-WBmAxqSBj_lc8EojpKpBM0V3GttbTEfJTQ?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1794.45)):

But listen, that kind of foundation, you don't just reach out for it in a moment when a crisis hits. It's very true that God can reach you in a moment with promises from his scripture, but if you want to have the root structure that will hold you fast when those kinds of storms in life come, that takes time to develop, that takes intentional investment, and that's what we're asking of you right now. Would you become the type of people that would be deeply rooted in scripture so that you could stand the storms of life?

([30:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/4r6PrjJeCFbD5zzQ0rny30C_nSjMJWdPNCaeMi55tIq-MOb7TpOKtTdBeVsIEusM6wQwN82BTZEvFb7djF34mLQXNQo?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1832.19)):

I want to tell you a couple of things that Andy and I have been through over the last year and a half. About a year and a half ago, God very unexpectedly called Andy and I to leave a church and a region that we deeply loved and it just flipped our whole world upside down. That same month that we made the announcement about the transition, we had a family member who tragically passed away and it was devastating to our family. And Andy and I performed that funeral and literally the very next day we moved here. During that same season, there was this onslaught of very public criticism about Andy and I, things attacking everything from our character to our calling. And all the while, we're trying to shepherd the hearts of our three kids and help them navigate this transition that was very destabilizing for them as well.

([31:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/5zU7FaM5S4kVAagJJGRtwL0v4vEUSzQ5GBTa5EQ9q4PDykQeIJ69IP_m6cfME2dCG9ocPNXKNwM-fMLaNP4aRa-l7Js?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1894.17)):

Listen, I don't tell you that because I need your sympathy. I really don't need your sympathy. I tell you that to say we've been through some things and if not for the word of God, I do not know how we would still be standing. You see, our lives were shaken, but you know what we did? Just as we've done almost every morning for the last 25 years, we would wake up and we would get our hot beverage of choice and we would go to our own quiet corners of the house and we would read the word of God, and it was an anchor for us to cling to during those times. Listen, friends, that is what Andy and I want so desperately for all of you, for our whole church family, that we would be trees planted by streams of water. This whole world might be going crazy, but we are rooted, we are established. We are growing into oaks of righteousness.

([32:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/TwIpRXPnOncP4FRxxyktFBah9NxBDiLgOiGVitwG3HQlFuYJXb07fJwuLUp2_ShJJS3stJubAW8j07V6weGVC79zLD4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1956.54)):

In a world that is constantly changing and opinions are flying all over the place and it feels like truth is up for grabs, you need something more than your own wisdom to anchor you, and that is what this Anchored Life challenge is all about. We want to invite you in to be a part of this. Before we jump into any logistics or details about how it's going to work, I just want to go back to that last question and ask you very personally, is it worth it to you? Is it worth it? It will take a commitment. It will require some of your time, and is it worth it to you?

([33:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/GK0iQLjUsa3wu_m12SRQdbRiPkIUWTE3ohOSx6IfjyabinTdLvNxxES7x3Pxo4uPfJ-yYk2oz6lzarZ6O0497ajGA8g?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1996.59)):

Only you can make that decision, but let me tell you something, friends, this has the potential to change not just 2024, but it has the potential to change generations, that you can have grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will have had a fork in the road that started with you because you made a decision, "I will be a man of God's word. I will be a woman of the word and for me in my house, this is how we're going to live. It starts now. It starts now." So is it worth it to you, the investment that will be required to take this challenge?

([33:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/FwMy9XySoSGHjN6ZnrItZiOs5XUJ6yaYoUBZBA6gxNnDKUg-S4VFlDCVHWYMk8kJTayx0luqTwNf1rI1ugcuEEpT5ZA?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2033.82)):

So here's how it's going to work. We're inviting all of you to join us. It's going to be an eight-week journey of reading through the New Testament together. The reading plan actually starts next week, but this weekend at all of our campuses, we have the Bibles that we're going to give you to do the reading plan. Now, I know some of you're like, "I don't need a Bible. I have a Bible," but my friends, do you have this Bible? This is the Immersed Bible, and it's the exact same content that is in your Bible. But the main thing that's different is that in this Bible, the chapters and the verses have been taken out, and so it reads more like in paragraph form, which is how it would have originally been written. And so we're all going to be reading out of the same book together. And you guys, Saddleback believes in this so much that we are literally giving away these Bibles. We believe that this can change your life, that it can change the whole trajectory of our church. And so we want everyone to be able to participate in this.

([34:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/Ff89-dr9s-pgh0-MjeabV8Szghf-x-3wX25WIJO2aRHXB3aSXRBvx-t4psN5HX2is2BZYvOscCZ7O3bOZdg6T2oXP0U?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2095.35)):

And so the way that we're going to do it is through what we're calling book clubs. And a book club, you're probably familiar with the concept of a book club. You all read the same book and then you get together and you chat about it, and that's what we're going to do. And so your small group, your current small group if you have one, can serve as your book club. If you don't have a small group yet, you got a couple of options. One is we're going to have a lot of on-campus book clubs that you can sign up for or, this is a cool idea, you could start one. You could start one with your friends or your neighbors and listen, you do not need to be a Bible scholar to start your own book club. All you got to do is read the content and ask some questions for discussion.

([35:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/wHeDL5h_GuNEGKNFwGfvZKXsLyhhovhinjfmTDiTJLdyMr_3NCKOOo9vXoT3KbtdU1EpZBAu12gIZhNFD9RrCf-SRyM?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2137.56)):

But think about this. Think about how many people are curious about what the Bible teaches. This challenge is not just for Christians. This challenge is for seekers, this challenge is for skeptics. Think about how many people have on their bucket list that they're going to read the Bible before they die. We should all read the Bible before we die. So we're just giving people the opportunity. We're just welcoming them in by making these book clubs available. So we're going to do it through book clubs, but I know some of you are like, "Why do I have to join a book club? I don't want to join. I don't have time for a book club. I don't even like people." The New Testament is going to help you with that, by the way.

([36:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/VDleuV7SwL0t5aIeTZMqeCN1RQ2lQ0HzGOFYDyGL2mnhe_7pM5KaQut41Oa8jzC-olOVrmLUH_fUiTBoUE-0qdOg15M?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2180.19)):

The reason we're doing it through book clubs is because you never really take on some type of heroic feat by yourself. If you sign up to train for your first Iron Man, you better hope you have a team around you. You better hope you've got some kind of coach that's speaking into your life. And so we believe in the power of community and doing things together because you're going to learn from each other and it's going to be more motivating. You're so much more likely to finish if you do it together in community, and it's just more fun. And so that's how we're going to do it. We're going to do it through book clubs.

([36:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/MAkmlGQI4_5EBN1rBUshE6sKj7v8F6ILS9oW0EEkHzv8xNeSDeHSyKjZLPHtEQaP9GdF2U5m1LySLpVQ59Mjq_WERNg?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2212.65)):

So logistically, everybody pull out your phone right now and scan the QR code that will take you back to the digital program. It's on the screen, it's on the chair in front of you. Pull that digital program out, and you're going to see on that digital program a button that says The Anchored Life Challenge. Click that button, and when you click it, you can accept the challenge to say, "Okay, I'm in. I'm going to do this." And then you can tell us how you're going to do it. Are you going to do it through your existing small group, an on-campus book club, or are you going to start a book club of your own? And once you fill out that information, make sure you click, "Submit," because here's what will happen. This is an important step. You're going to get a QR code that's sent to your email. And then that QR code is going to be your ticket to go out and pick up your Immersed Bible. Okay? So that's how we're going to do it.

([37:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/kogHSg5FrCRAE6Uxp-WClfQqb8Nr7Rno0HxEuHUVgA-ATViNxhotcHvYmCjCXE7L0F3YkqdQCO728_T6nw07c38sCy8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2266.77)):

Now, listen folks, I'm about to land this plane. We're about to finish up here, but can I just have your heart for two more minutes and can I just urge you to do it, to take the challenge, to let this be the year that you actually read the Bible? There is no other book like it. There is no other book that has been divinely inspired by God. There is no other book that can literally transform your life from the inside out. All throughout history, there have been people who have willingly laid down their life to get this book into the hands of other people because they know the power of this book, that literally over the next eight to 10 weeks, there are going to be people that come to salvation because they have read this book. There are going to be marriages that are healed because they've read this book. There are going to be so many people that find hope and peace and purpose again because they read this book.

([38:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/8VRJSGx9waTrU587w7menW80yHaLRBu2PGlIUY5Q3UcupHxLEQlFOIK00HU-noN82KZL_LcsS0YeTs8YKfMJEh2Y-u0?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2327.7)):

And friend, listen, the very best thing, you are going to get to know the God who loves you and who died for you because you read this book. Man, I want to get to know him more. I've been a Christian for a long time and I've been reading the Bible for a long time, but there is still so much that I don't know and I am hungry to know him more. So could we just bow our heads together right now and let's seal this moment. Let's seal this commitment in our hearts together. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to come and to minister to each person.

([39:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/uNwvvx80sT4R0zLo-9A-mMLj48K5-BV9JmZ8aYpyV7z1zShCJcKejfAB_u-El-pAKEdDGDSNRP9Lqeuc-wuM6ve7Kb4?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2370.78)):

There's a verse in the Bible that says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart." And I believe, I know that right now, God is working in many of your hearts and he's inviting you in to say, "Take this challenge. There's so much I want to show you about myself, if you will just read the Bible." And so today, if you are hearing his voice, don't harden your heart. Say yes to what he wants to do in your life over the next couple of months.

([39:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/x6mUTU5C706HLY4YzfcKMHbuz8PG_kxgFVWD-9OW6qzBXxVwp6p-BJ1UuHksHrS-Jw0LyJe__gt-6bwgslBXYhzL1mY?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2399.43)):

Father, we give this time to you. We just say thank you for the Bible. What a gift it is to us that we have this book and it teaches us about you and your heart and your character, and it makes us wise and it helps us in all kinds of practical ways. God, thank you for the gift of the Bible. I pray that we would not take it for granted, that we would not allow it to collect dust on our shelves, Lord, but that we would internalize it, that we would hide your word in our hearts.

([40:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/W7s5WDub926t6QYfv6SMx4_2tAcIYhJQaxy-wRk_s_MXsZ9-uqClL-TbjRm6Hl3Pw65rU4B68n7vc6JjcPDFjRUCSwI?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2431.53)):

Father, I pray that even right now in this space, that you would stir us up with this compelling motivation to say, "I'm going to take this challenge." May this be a year that Saddleback Church engages with the Bible at a whole new level, where you build us in to oaks of righteousness, trees planted by streams of water because we are planted in you. We pray all this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.