# How to Study the Bible – Week 10 – Apparent Contradiction – Bible Study Helps

**Title: Does the Bible Contradict Itself?**

Understanding Apparent Contradictions in Scripture

Sermon Summary: This sermon, part of a series called "How to Study the Bible in 2026," tackles the question of whether the Bible contains genuine contradictions or errors. The sermon argues that the Bible is a perfect, preserved Word of God with no actual contradictions, only apparent ones that dissolve under careful study. The message begins by establishing the character of God as the foundation, particularly His immutability and inability to lie, which guarantees the integrity of Scripture. The sermon then draws a sharp distinction between the majority position held by most pastors and Bible colleges, which concedes that all English translations contain errors, and the position that God has perfectly preserved His Word in the King James Bible. The sermon demonstrates through two detailed examples that passages which appear contradictory are fully reconcilable when historical, grammatical, and contextual details are considered. The overarching call is for believers to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt, approach it with a right heart, and grow in confidence and faith through consistent study.

Key Points:

- A contradiction, properly defined, is the assertion of the contrary to what has been said or affirmed, and if one genuine error existed in the Bible, the entire book would be called into question

- It is impossible for God to lie, as established in Hebrews 6 and Titus 1:2, and His immutability guarantees that His promise to preserve His Word in Psalm 12:6-7 has been fulfilled

- Most pastors and Bible colleges, including the position associated with John MacArthur and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, teach that inerrancy applies only to the original manuscripts, which no longer exist, and that all English translations contain some degree of error

- The true Bible-believer position holds that God not only inspired the original manuscripts but has perfectly preserved His Word in the English King James Bible

- Apparent contradictions exist in Scripture for two primary reasons: to expose and confirm the spiritual blindness of those who do not want to believe, and to reveal hidden truth to faithful believers who approach Scripture with an honest heart

- The 480-year figure in 1 Kings 6:1 and the longer chronology derived from Acts 13 are both accurate because God does not count the years Israel spent in captivity to enemy nations in the book of Judges, with the years of oppression totaling exactly 93, which is the precise difference between the two figures

- The apparent discrepancy between the third hour in Mark 15 and the sixth hour in John 19 is resolved by recognizing that Mark uses Jewish time, placing the crucifixion at 9 a.m., while John uses Roman time, placing the trial at 6 a.m., making the sequence historically coherent

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- Believers should always give the Bible the benefit of the doubt, ask whether both passages can be true before assuming error, and trust that every apparent contradiction has a resolution even if it is not immediately known

- The manuscript evidence for the New Testament shows that approximately 95 percent of all Greek copies discovered agree with one another and trace back to Antioch of Syria, supporting the Received Text underlying the King James Bible

Scripture Reference:

- John 16:12, where Jesus tells His disciples that He has many things yet to say but they cannot bear them now, and that the Spirit of truth will guide them into all truth

- Hebrews 6:13-19, establishing that God swore by Himself and that by two immutable things it is impossible for God to lie

- Psalm 12:6-7, affirming that the words of the Lord are pure and that He will preserve them from generation to generation for ever

- Hebrews 11:1, defining faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen

- Titus 1:2, stating that God cannot lie

- Ezekiel 14:1-9, showing that God gives over to deception those who have set up idols in their hearts

- Isaiah 29:9-12, describing how God closes the eyes and understanding of those who refuse to receive His truth

- Romans 1:21-25, referenced in connection with the spiritual darkening that results from rejecting God and His truth

- 1 Kings 6:1, the cornerstone of biblical chronology, recording 480 years from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign

- Acts 13:16-22, providing a chronological account of Israel's history that yields a longer figure when totaled

- Judges 3, 4, 6, and 13, recording the years Israel served enemy nations during the cycles of sin in the period of the judges

- Mark 15:21-25, recording the crucifixion at the third hour using Jewish time

- John 19:13-16, recording the trial before Pilate at the sixth hour using Roman time

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Stories:

- The parable of the sower in Matthew 13 is cited to illustrate how Jesus used parables to conceal truth from unbelievers and reveal it to faithful disciples, drawing a parallel to how apparent contradictions function similarly in Scripture

- The seven cycles of sin in the book of Judges are examined as a narrative framework, tracing Israel's repeated pattern of disobedience, enemy oppression, crying out to God, and deliverance, with the years of oppression totaling 93 and resolving the chronological tension between 1 Kings 6:1 and Acts 13

- The trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ is presented as a narrative example, walking through the gospel accounts of Mark and John to demonstrate how two apparently conflicting time references are reconciled through an understanding of Jewish versus Roman timekeeping

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Discipleship Questions

If it is truly impossible for God to lie as stated in Hebrews 6 and Titus 1, what does it mean for your personal faith to rest on the character of God rather than simply on your own understanding of Scripture?

The sermon argues that if there is even one error in the Bible, the entire book is called into question -- how does this all-or-nothing view of Scripture shape the way you approach difficult or confusing passages?

Jesus used parables to reveal truth to those with willing hearts while concealing it from those who were resistant -- in what ways might your own heart posture affect how clearly you receive and understand God's Word?

The sermon draws a distinction between blind faith and substantive faith grounded in evidence -- how would you explain to a skeptic the difference between these two kinds of faith using examples from your own walk with God?

Ezekiel 14 and Isaiah 29 suggest that God sometimes allows people who reject His truth to believe a lie -- how does this sobering reality shape the urgency with which you share the gospel with unbelievers?

The apparent contradiction between 1 Kings 6:1 and Acts 13 is resolved by recognizing that God did not count the years Israel was in captivity to its enemies -- what does this reveal about how God views seasons of spiritual unfaithfulness in the life of a believer?

The difference in time references between Mark and John regarding the crucifixion is explained by two different cultural timekeeping systems -- how does this example encourage you to investigate context and background before concluding that a passage is problematic?

The sermon challenges believers to ask others directly whether they believe their English Bible contains errors -- how prepared do you feel to have that conversation, and what would you need to study further to engage it more confidently?

John 16:12 reminds us that God reveals truth progressively and that we cannot bear everything at once -- how has your understanding of a particular passage or doctrine grown and deepened over time as God revealed more to you?

The sermon argues that rejecting the perfection of Scripture ultimately shifts authority from God to human scholars and pastors -- in what practical ways can a believer guard against allowing human opinion to quietly replace the authority of God's Word in their life?

# Small Group Guide:
# Does the Bible Contradict Itself?

*Based on the sermon series: How to Study the Bible in 2026*

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## Overview

This session examines one of the most common objections to the Christian faith: the claim that the Bible contains errors and contradictions. Through an honest look at the character of God, the doctrine of biblical preservation, and specific examples of apparent contradictions, this guide will help your group build confidence in the Word of God and equip members to respond faithfully when their faith is challenged.

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## Before You Meet

Ask each group member to read Psalm 12:6-7 and Hebrews 6:13-19 before gathering. Encourage them to come prepared to share one question they have heard someone raise about the reliability of the Bible.

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## Key Takeaways

**1. It is impossible for God to lie.** Hebrews 6:17-18 describes God's promises as immutable, meaning unchangeable. Because God cannot lie, His promise to preserve His Word is as certain as His own character.

**2. If there is one error in the Bible, the whole book is in question.** The reliability of Scripture is not a minor issue. Everything we believe about salvation, the character of God, and eternal life rests on the trustworthiness of the Bible. An error anywhere puts the entire foundation at risk.

**3. Most people who claim the Bible has contradictions cannot show you one.** The objection is often repeated without investigation. Believers should be prepared to ask challengers to identify a specific contradiction rather than accepting the claim without evidence.

**4. Apparent contradictions are not actual contradictions.** When two passages seem to disagree, the answer is not to conclude the Bible has failed. The answer is to study carefully, compare Scripture with Scripture, and trust that a solution exists even when we do not immediately know it.

**5. God uses apparent difficulties in Scripture to reveal truth to faithful believers and to expose the hearts of those who do not want to believe.** Just as Jesus used parables to reveal truth to disciples while concealing it from those who rejected Him, the Bible's apparent difficulties serve a similar purpose.

**6. We are to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt.** This is not blind faith. It is faith grounded in the proven character of God and the overwhelming evidence that His Word is reliable.

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# Discussion Questions

## Opening

1. Before this sermon, how would you have responded if someone told you the Bible is full of contradictions? Has your answer changed or been strengthened? How?
2. Have you ever personally encountered someone who used the idea of biblical contradictions to dismiss the Christian faith? What happened in that conversation?

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## The Character of God

3. Hebrews 6:17-18 teaches that it is impossible for God to lie. What does it mean for your daily faith to know that God's promises are not just unlikely to fail but actually impossible to fail?
4. The sermon described the word "immutable" as meaning unchangeable, a quality that makes change or alteration impossible. How does the immutability of God strengthen your confidence in the Bible specifically?
5. The sermon made the point that if there is one error in the Bible, the whole book is in question. Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not? What would be at risk for your own faith if the Bible were found to contain even a single genuine error?

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## What Most Churches Teach

6. The sermon presented the position held by many pastors and Bible colleges that inerrancy applies only to the original manuscripts, which no longer exist, and that all translations contain some errors. Were you aware that this is a widely held position? How does it make you feel to know that many believers are sitting in churches where this is taught?
7. The sermon asked a pointed question: Do you believe your English Bible has errors? How would you answer that question, and how would you explain your answer to someone who attends a church that teaches all translations have errors?

8. If a pastor teaches that all translations have some errors, who then becomes the authority over what the Bible actually says? What are the practical consequences of that shift in authority?

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## Apparent Contradictions

9. The sermon walked through the example of 1 Kings 6:1 and Acts 13, where one account gives 480 years from the Exodus to Solomon's fourth year and another, when the years are added up, gives 573 years. The resolution is that God does not count the years Israel spent serving foreign enemies. What does this tell you about the precision and intentionality of Scripture?
10. The second example involved the time of Christ's crucifixion. Mark records the third hour using Jewish time, while John records the sixth hour using Roman time. Both are accurate when understood in their proper context. What principle does this teach us about how to handle passages that appear to conflict?
11. The sermon suggested asking this question when facing an apparent contradiction: "If we give the Bible the benefit of the doubt, is it possible for both to be true?" How does that question change the way you approach difficult passages?
12. John 16:12 records Jesus telling His disciples that there were many things He had yet to say to them that they could not yet bear. How does this verse help you remain confident in the Bible even when you do not have an immediate answer to a challenging question?

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## The Heart Behind the Question

13. The sermon taught from Ezekiel 14 and Isaiah 29 that God sometimes gives people who resist His truth a lie to believe. How does understanding this principle change the way you approach conversations with people who are hostile toward the Bible?
14. The sermon noted that people who claim the Bible has contradictions often do so because believing the Bible would require them to submit to its authority. How does recognizing this motivation help you respond with both truth and compassion?
15. Matthew 13 shows that Jesus used parables to reveal truth to those with honest hearts while concealing it from those who rejected Him. What does this tell you about what God is looking for when someone approaches His Word?

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## Personal Reflection

16. The sermon described how confidence in the Bible grows over time as God proves Himself faithful year after year. Where are you in that journey? Do you have the kind of settled confidence that says, "I knew it," when someone tries to undermine Scripture, or is that still developing in you?

17. Is there a passage or a question about the Bible that you have never had answered? How can this group help you find the answer, or how can you be at peace while you wait for God to reveal it in His timing?

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# Practical Applications

**1. Ask the question.** The next time someone tells you the Bible has contradictions, ask them to show you one. Do this calmly and genuinely. Most people cannot produce an example, and the question itself opens the door for a meaningful conversation.

**2. Know what your church teaches.** If you are not certain whether your church or pastor holds to the full preservation and inerrancy of the English Bible, find out. Look at your church's statement of faith. Ask your pastor directly. The answer matters.

**3. Memorize John 16:12.** This verse is a stabilizing anchor for moments when you encounter a question you cannot immediately answer. Commit it to memory so it is available to you when you need it.

**4. Practice giving the Bible the benefit of the doubt.** This week, if you come across a passage that is confusing or seems to conflict with another passage, resist the urge to dismiss it or to immediately conclude there is a problem. Instead, write the question down, pray over it, and commit to researching it using the tools available to you, including comparing Scripture with Scripture and considering the historical and grammatical context.

**5. Share what you have learned.** Identify one person in your life who has expressed doubt about the reliability of the Bible. Pray for an opportunity to share one of the examples from this sermon, either the chronology of the Exodus or the time of the crucifixion, as a demonstration that apparent contradictions have real solutions.

**6. Invest in your confidence over time.** Consider joining a Bible study or Bible institute course that addresses the preservation of Scripture in greater depth. The more familiar you become with the evidence, the more naturally your confidence will express itself in conversations with others.

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# Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together along these lines:

- Thank God that it is impossible for Him to lie and that His promises are as certain as His own character.
- Ask God for boldness to stand on the truth of His Word when it is challenged.

- Pray for the people in your lives who have rejected the Bible based on the claim that it contains errors.
- Ask God for honest hearts that are willing to receive whatever truth He chooses to reveal, in His timing and by His grace.

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# For Further Study

- Psalm 12:6-7 on God's promise to preserve His Word
- Hebrews 6:13-19 on the immutability of God's promises
- Hebrews 11:1 on faith as having substance and evidence
- Romans 1:21-25 on the spiritual consequences of rejecting God's truth
- Titus 1:2 on God's inability to lie
- Matthew 13:1-23 on the purpose of parables

# 5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

## Anchored in the Word: Confidence, Faith, and the Perfection of Scripture

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Day 1: The God Who Cannot Lie Reading: Hebrews 6:13-19 Devotional: The anchor holds because the One who made the promise is incapable of breaking it. God swore by Himself because no greater authority exists. This is not a small comfort. It is the foundation beneath every promise He has ever spoken. When doubt rises and voices around you suggest that the Word of God is unreliable or filled with error, return to this truth: God's character is immutable. What He has said, He will do. What He has preserved, He has preserved perfectly. Rest your soul on that anchor today. It will not move.

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Day 2: The Benefit of the Doubt Reading: Psalm 12:6-7 Devotional: God promised to preserve His words. Not approximately. Not mostly. Completely. When a passage of Scripture seems difficult or appears to conflict with another, the right response is not to declare the Bible broken. The right response is to study, to seek, and to trust. God reveals truth to those who genuinely want it. He hides it from those who have already decided what they believe. Come to the Word with an open and honest heart today. Ask God to show you what is true. He will not disappoint the soul that sincerely seeks Him.

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Day 3: Truth Hidden and Truth Revealed Reading: Matthew 13:1-23 Devotional: Jesus did not speak in parables to confuse His followers. He spoke in parables to reveal truth to those with honest hearts while allowing the proud and resistant to walk away unchanged. The condition of the soil determines what the seed produces. Hard hearts, shallow roots, and crowded priorities all choke out the Word before it can bear fruit. But good ground receives the Word, holds it, and produces something lasting. Examine the condition of your heart today. Are you receiving what God is saying, or are you letting other things crowd out what He is planting in you?

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Day 4: When Answers Take Time Reading: John 16:12-15 Devotional: Jesus told His disciples plainly that there were things they were not yet ready to understand. God is not withholding truth to frustrate you. He is a patient teacher who knows exactly how much you can bear and exactly when you are ready to receive more. Faith is not the absence of unanswered questions. Faith is trusting the character of God while the answers are still forming. Every year of walking with the Lord is another year of evidence that He is faithful. Do not abandon the Word because something is not yet clear. Keep walking. Keep trusting. The Spirit of truth is still guiding.

Day 5: A Perfect Book for a Desperate World Reading: Romans 1:16-25 Devotional: The world does not lack access to truth. It lacks the willingness to receive it. God has spoken clearly, and the evidence of His faithfulness is woven through history, through fulfilled prophecy, through manuscript evidence, and through the lives of those who have staked everything on His Word and found it sure. The gospel is not an uncertain message built on uncertain documents. It is the power of God unto salvation. You hold in your hands a book that tells you how to be forgiven, how to live, and how to die with confidence. Share it boldly. The world is desperate, and the Word is perfect.