

SAMPLE PAPER #2

(This paper was reduced to single spacing to save pages so it could be downloaded faster)

I began this course with some doubts and questions about Christianity and the Bible. I had not read much of the Bible and I had been very interested in the scientific facts of creation. I came into the class with an open mind and I was interested in learning more about what Christianity had to offer. The new Bible we received for class was very easy to understand and it explained what difficult sections in the book meant. It also gave an overview of each book to explain what the message of the story meant. The only other Bible I had read was the King James version, and it was quite confusing and seemed complicated. The survey book that was used also gave me a better understanding of the stories and answering the questions at the end of the chapters described them even more.

I was baptized a Catholic and I am a member of a Presbyterian church in Kingfisher. I had never read the entire Bible and the thought of reading and understanding the entire book was a little overwhelming. It is very surprising that many normal church-goers know so much about the stories and people of the Bible. One thing that was new to me was that Jewish and Christian peoples wrote the Bible from the beginning. It has always seemed to me that the Jewish and Christian religions were very different. I realized that many things about the two religions are similar.

I attended a church youth group from approximately 6th grade until my senior year in high school. The meetings were usually fun and interesting and I decided that I liked the Wednesday group meetings better than going to Sunday services. I found that I understood the stories better and I was able to interact with people my age.

During my Biblical perspectives class at SNU I learned that the Bible is more than just a book of scripture. I realized that it is also a compilation of history. The books do not necessarily read in historical order, but they do describe what it was like to live during those times. The readings during the class made me realize that the people in the stories seemed sharp and they tried to do what was right. My ideas before the class were altered somewhat, and I learned that I must strive to keep an open mind. One of the key points that I thought was scientifically sound was the Big Bang theory. The classes I had taken and the books and articles I had read seemed to prove to me that it was a sound concept. I have believed that science and religion are both responsible for creation and our existence for years. There are some instances of Bible stories that do not seem believable, and I have needed to see proof to be able to believe in things. I have come to understand that all of the specific occurrences of the Bible should not be taken apart and analyzed for concrete data. The readings made me stop and think of the possibilities of God being able to perform acts without our understanding. There are many things that cannot be understood in the world, and I realize that there may not be answers for all questions.

The entire course helped me to become better acquainted with some of the characters in the Bible. The Life Application Bible assisted me by describing the stories in a more simple language. Each book began with a story that related to modern day life as in pertains to some part of the Bible and what it is teaching. It also gave information about what the book was covering such as; whom the author was, when the book was written, the setting, and the purpose. This information helped me place the stories with the characters and geographical areas. It is amazing to me that all of these stories were written in a basically general area.

It was also interesting to learn that so much information and different types of artifacts have been found where the books explained they would be. This type of information helps me to better understand the Bible as

being more than just a book, but also as a historical and religious compilation. Another amazing fact is that the Bible was developed over many years by many different people, and it has continuity even though it has been translated and broken down into terms that more people can understand. I first started reading the King James Bible when I was in my early teens. It seemed so overwhelming and complicated that I became disinterested and stopped reading it. I think that if I could have been exposed to the Good News Bible or the Life Application Bible sooner, I would have become more interested. They gave me a better understanding of the entire theme of the stories.

One idea that I had not realized before was that Christianity and believing in God take faith. In the readings, faith is a true believing in the Bible that comes from reading and trying to fully understand the message. Doubts must be erased if at all possible. That does not mean that I cannot ask questions about my curiosities, but I must try not to focus on every little detail of the stories. There are some questions that may not be answered and those should not be dwelled upon. I have found that faith has a different meaning than what I first thought it to be. Faith can be different for each person and if I truly think I am sincere in my beliefs, then I feel that I will be saved. Another point that made me think about my position was reading the stories of God's people who disobeyed him. He promised swift punishment and he delivered it. That really made me think about the things I do that are not what God wants. I want to be able to go to heaven when it is time and I know I must do more to become a better Christian.

By finding out more factual evidence through the course work and through the video presentations, I have realized that many of the Bible's stories are backed up by evidence. For some reason the evidence has been very important to help me believe in the Bible. I suppose I have needed concrete evidence to be able to realize that something is true or exists. This is part of the reason why the Bible has been difficult for me to devote myself to. This course has helped me to better understand the entire story of the Bible. It exposed me to the larger picture instead of my concentration on specific places and events. The survey book also helped describe the characters and meanings throughout the Bible.

I thought coming into this class that I probably would not be able to learn much more than I knew about the Bible. I was mistaken, and I found a better description of the stories by reading through the Life Application Bible. The easy to understand language opened my mind to the message that the stories were trying to portray. I hope that in the future I can take some time to go back through the Bible and reread some of the selections to better understand them. I still have many questions about conflicting writings and scientific evidence. Dr. Culbertson made strong points about how the many magnificent science phenomenon that occur are not always fully explained. There are so many detailed occurrences that are not explained. So, I have come to realize that all my so called "science answers", cannot explain everything. I have gained a larger understanding of faith and the Bible, but I have also found many more questions and more confusion. I believe that as I grow older my views will change on both sides of the religion/science issue. I have always thought that they must somehow both mesh, because there are so many things that can be explained using the issues together. I am sure I will always be curious about related topics that I know I will never find answers to, but it is very interesting to search for the information.

I hope that someday I can become closer to God, and I will have to work on it to be successful. The issue that stays in my mind the most is that I should not look at the Bible and God under microscope, but instead I should try to look at the larger picture as a way to happiness and salvation.