**WHAT IS THE BIBLE? By Nathan Combs**

The ancient book we call the Bible is many things. It is a collection of 66 individual books, authored by more than 30 people, written over a timespan of thousands of years. It is a carefully crafted masterpiece, using various literary techniques like poetry, narrative, and discourse. Astoundingly, it is a book authored by God Himself using the pens of men (2 Tim. 3.16, 2 Pet. 1.20-21). Although these facts help us grasp an idea of the Bible’s structure, history, and authorship, we’re still left with our original question: what is the Bible? What is the point of this book?

 In short, the Bible was written to captivate us by God’s goodness. From the very beginning of time, He has been the maker of good things. Seven times in Genesis 1 we are told that as God looked at the creation He had just made “He saw that it was *good*.” He created the first woman (Eve) for the first man (Adam) because He saw that it was “not *good*” for man to be alone (Gen. 2.18). Although mankind quickly chose to define their own goodness by eating from the forbidden “tree of the knowledge of *good* and evil,” all they found was destruction and death. Throughout the storyline of the Bible, each new generation of people added to the brokenness of the world, even God’s righteous servants like Noah, Abraham, and David. But rather than destroy the world and remove all good things, God carried out His eternal plan to bring the ultimate goodness to our planet: His Son. “But when the *goodness* and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Tit. 3.4-6). When Jesus started preaching in Israel, His message about the kingdom of God was called a gospel (meaning “*good* news”). Although we were unrighteous, the good news of Jesus displays the “righteousness of God” (Rom.1.16-17), charted throughout time in the story of Israel. When we read about God’s plan to rescue all mankind through His Son, we cannot fail to love Him and the people He died to save.

 With this perspective of what the Bible is, we are better prepared to understand what it is not. It is not merely a collection of facts, like a mathematics textbook. It is not merely a manual telling us how to live everyday life more effectively, like a typical self-help book written by man. It is not merely a collection of commandments, providing a list of what we can and cannot do with our lives. The Bible isn’t just designed to fill our brains, nor is it intended to merely produce outward behavioral changes. Fundamentally, the Bible was written to transform our hearts by showing us the Son of God.