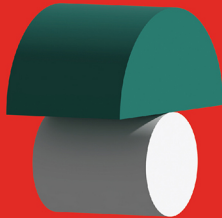
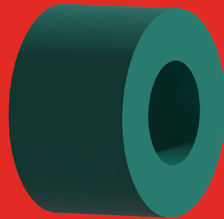
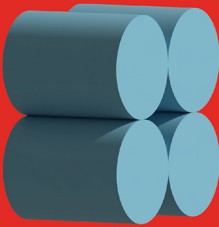
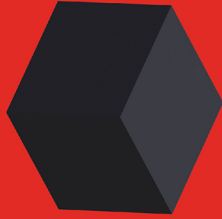


Core Beliefs of
the Christian
Faith That
Will Change
Your Life



12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust



Paul David Tripp

“Paul Tripp is a trusted, fatherly guide to shepherd us through the core doctrines of Christianity. This readable, Scripture-soaked resource is simply fantastic. I can think of no finer tool for helping instruct our teenagers in the basic truths of the gospel. I hope churches, parents, and teachers everywhere will immediately put it into use!”

Gavin Ortlund, President, Truth Unites; Theologian in Residence,
Immanuel Nashville, Tennessee

“As a parent, I deeply value any resource that helps guide those who are growing to know and love God through his word amid the complexities of faith and life. *12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust* does just that—offering an important, accessible, and thoughtful presentation of core Christian beliefs. This book breaks down timeless truths into clear, manageable ideas that resonate with the challenges many teenagers face today. It not only builds a strong spiritual foundation for young minds but also provides parents with a trusted tool to support meaningful conversations about faith.”

Amy Gannett, Writer and Bible teacher, The Bible Study Schoolhouse;
Founder and Creator, Tiny Theologians; author, *Fix Your Eyes*

“Being a part of a church plant has reminded me that new disciples need careful consideration and instruction. This book is a great resource to help guide young believers in their journey with Christ. Build your life on these truths!”

Quina Aragon, author, *Love Has a Story*

“Paul Tripp is a gift from God to the church, and this book will bring clarity and grace to those looking for solid ground to stand on. Highly recommended!”

Sam Allberry, Associate Pastor, Immanuel Nashville, Tennessee; author,
One with My Lord

12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust

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40 Days of Grace

40 Days of Hope

40 Days of Love

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12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust

**Core Beliefs of the Christian
Faith That Will Change Your Life**

Paul David Tripp

12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust: Core Beliefs of the Christian Faith That Will Change Your Life
© 2025 by Paul David Tripp

Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: David Fassett

Cover images: Cover and interior geometric shapes originally designed by Ordinary Folk
First printing 2025

Printed in China

The text of *12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust* has been adapted from Paul David Tripp, *Do You Believe? 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life* (Crossway, 2021).

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Hardcover ISBN: 979-8-8749-0538-5
ePub ISBN: 979-8-8749-0540-8
PDF ISBN: 979-8-8749-0539-2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Tripp, Paul David, 1950- author. | Tripp, Paul David, 1950- Do You Believe?
Title: 12 truths every teen can trust: core beliefs of the Christian faith that will change your life / Paul David Tripp.
Other titles: Twelve truths every teen can trust
Description: Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, [2025] | Includes index. |
Audience: Ages 13–18
Identifiers: LCCN 2024059834 (print) | LCCN 2024059835 (ebook) | ISBN 9798874905385 (hardcover) | ISBN 9798874905392 (pdf) | ISBN 9798874905408 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Theology, Doctrinal—Juvenile literature. | Christian Life—Biblical teaching—Juvenile literature.
Classification: LCC BT77 .T7649 2025 (print) | LCC BT77 (ebook) | DDC 230—dc23/eng/20250409
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024059834>
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024059835>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

RRD			34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25		
15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

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Introduction

Everyone loves a great story. Maybe it's *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or something from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Stories capture us, entertain us, teach us, warn us, and even change us. Stories can give us courage or make us afraid. Stories can supply us with hope or leave us hopeless. Stories can teach us what is right or tempt us to love what is wrong. Stories can transport us to other worlds or help us understand our own. Stories can lead us toward the light of truth or take us to dark places. Every generation, every culture, every location, and every human is shaped by stories.

You may not know it, but you tell yourself stories. More significantly, in your everyday life, the stories you are telling yourself are the ones you live out. Maybe you're telling yourself the story of your family. Perhaps your story is one of athleticism or physical beauty. Maybe you're telling yourself a story of being misunderstood and rejected. Perhaps it's a story of academic ability and future promise. Maybe in your story, you end up with lots of success and money.

In all this, here's what's so important to recognize: The way you think, what you desire, the things you say, the decisions you make, and the actions you take are all shaped by the story you tell yourself.

There is one story that is better than any story you and I could ever tell ourselves. It is the story that God tells us in his word. When you hold a Bible in your hands, you are holding the greatest story that has ever been or ever will be told. This story has been recorded and preserved for you because God loves you and wants you to know him, and in knowing him, to thrive. In this grand redemptive narrative, you will learn who God is, what life is about, who you are, what went

wrong in our world, and how it will get fixed. God's great story has only one hero: Jesus. He is the hope of God's story because he came to fix everything sin left broken. He came as our substitute; he came to do for us and in us what we could never do. Why? So that in him we might find forgiveness, acceptance with God, and the grace of personal transformation.

This book you are about to read is a storybook too. That may confuse you at first because it doesn't read like a story. It doesn't have characters, villains, creatures, and mythical lands. But *12 Truths Every Teen Can Trust* really is a story. This book walks you through twelve core beliefs that God preserved for us in his word. Each of these twelve truths—also known as doctrines—tells you something important about God's great story.

Doctrines are quick summaries of essential things in the biblical story. When you understand these twelve truths, you will know who God is, what life is about, how sin damaged us and this world, and how Jesus entered this world to rescue us and make everything new again. These twelve truths are meant to give you personal identity, meaning and purpose, an inner sense of well-being, courage for today, and hope for the future. They are intended to free you from living for yourself and introduce you to the freedom and joy of living for something and someone much bigger than yourself—God. They are meant to help you recognize right from wrong and worship from idolatry. God recorded and preserved these twelve truths to change you and how you think about everything in your life.

You are reading this book because, by grace, your story has already been embedded in the Bible's incredible story of redemption. This means the biblical story is your story. The Bible's plot—creation, fall, and redemption—is the plot of your personal story. So dig in and discover the core beliefs of the best story ever told.

Here's what you'll find in each of the following twelve chapters:

First, I'll briefly lay out the doctrine we'll be considering in a section titled "What We Believe." These summaries are simplified paraphrases from parts of the Westminster Confession of Faith, a beautiful statement of the truths of the Christian faith from the seventeenth century.

Second, in a section titled "Why We Believe It," you'll see a selection of Bible passages that form a solid foundation for the doctrine we're considering.

Finally, in the "How It Matters" section, I'll give you seven readings that will help you better understand and love the doctrine that is our focus.

May this book help you to understand how to live out your story wherever you are, whomever you're with, and whatever you're facing. And may it cause you to love Jesus and his word more than you ever have before.

1



Scripture

What We Believe

God has revealed himself and perfectly declared his will by committing his truth to writing. This makes Scripture (the Old and New Testaments of the Bible) essential and authoritative. Because it is God's word, it is to be believed, obeyed, and joyfully received. In Scripture, we have all things necessary for God's own glory and for our salvation, faith, and life.

Why We Believe It

The passages below inform the Christian doctrine of Scripture. God has spoken in the Bible, so we believe what he has said there. In the following pages, we'll explore this key doctrine and what it means for us as we follow Christ.

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;

the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalms 19:1–11

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

John 16:12–14

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:14–17

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:19–21

How It Matters



Throughout this chapter, we'll focus on God's word. The same God who made the world tells us how to live in it. His word is the only place to find true wisdom, which we need every day. Thankfully, God doesn't leave us on our own to figure out the meaning of the Bible. He graciously teaches us what he has written and how it relates to all of life. In love, he warns us about dangers and shines his light into our darkness. For the Christian, God's word is daily food, healthy and sweet as honey.

1. World and Word

Every morning when we get up, we bump into God and come face-to-face with his existence.

He is revealed in the wind and the rain, in the bird and the flower, in the rock and the tree, in the sun and the moon, in the grass and the clouds, in sights, smells, touches, and tastes. Everything that exists is a finger that points to God's existence and glory.

The cycle of the seasons points to his wisdom and faithfulness. The fact that we all see creation's beauty, are warmed by its sun, and are drenched by its rain points us to his love and mercy. The thunderous storms, with crashes of lightning and violent winds, point to the immensity of his power. The created world is a stunning display of the existence and attributes of the one who created it all.

God is so good to build into creation reminders of himself everywhere. He wants us to constantly think of him when we look at the world he created.

But in his infinite wisdom, God knew that creation was not enough. Creation could never teach us to truly know him or ourselves. If we just

look at creation, we can't understand the meaning and purpose of life. We can't know the disaster of our sin or the glory of his saving grace. So God gave us the wonderful and amazing gift of his word.

Here's why this is so important: If there were no word of God, then we would be left to ourselves to decide what is true. This would mean that there would be no way of being sure that what we think and believe is right. We wouldn't have any basis to guide our thinking, desires, decisions, words, and actions. But in his grace, God has given us his word so we would know how to live as children of that same grace.

Read: "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." PSALM 119:130

Reflect: What's your favorite part of God's world (nature) and his word (Scripture)? How do they help you know God more closely?

2. Wisdom for Fools

One of the devastating results of sin is that it reduces all of us to fools.

A fool looks at truth and sees falsehood. A fool looks at bad and sees good. A fool ignores God and inserts himself into God's position. A fool rebels against God's wise and loving law, and writes his own rules. A fool thinks he can live on his own, not needing anyone's help.

But here is what is deadly about all of this: A fool doesn't know he is a fool. If a fool isn't given eyes to see his foolishness, then he will continue to think he is wise.

So God, in his grace, did not turn his back on our foolishness and walk away. God looked on foolish humanity with a heart of compassion. He not only sent his Son to rescue fools from themselves but also gave us the wonderful gift of his word. In this way, fools could recognize their foolishness and have a tool by which they could grow in wisdom.

How do you start the search for wisdom? The first steps are not in university classrooms, on the pages of research papers, on popular podcasts, or in the books on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Wisdom begins in the pages of God's word.

You can be highly trained and still be a fool. You can be a well-educated and gifted communicator and still be a fool. You can be successful and

famous and still be a fool. You can have social media dominance and still be a fool. You can be a person whom people look to for guidance and still be a fool. But no one is hopelessly trapped in foolishness. Why? Because God, who is the source of all true wisdom, is a God of tender, forgiving, and rescuing grace (1 Cor. 1:18–31).

To all who confess their foolishness and run to him for wisdom, he offers mercy and grace in their time of need.

Read: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” PSALM 19:7

Reflect: When you need advice, where do you turn first for ideas, help, or guidance?

3. True Confession

I would not know how to live without the wisdom of God’s word.

I would not know how to be a responsible man without the wisdom of God’s word. I would not know how to be a husband, a father, a neighbor, a friend, a member of the body of Christ, a citizen, or a worker without the Bible.

Without Scripture, I would not know right from wrong. Without the truths of the word, I would not know how to understand and respond to suffering. Without Scripture, I would be confused about who I am and my purpose in life. Without my Bible, I would not know about sin or understand true righteousness. Without God’s word, I would not know how to handle money, success, power, or fame.

Without Scripture, I would have no understanding of origins and no concept of eternity. Without God’s word, I would have no idea of my need for rescue, reconciliation, and restoration. Without my Bible, I would have no understanding of what it means to love or what I should hate.

Apart from God’s word, I would have no wise and holy law to follow. I’d have no amazing grace to give me hope. If it were not for Scripture, I would have no wisdom of any worth to share.

But here’s what I have experienced: My Bible is my lifelong friend and companion. My Bible is my wisest and most faithful teacher. My Bible is my mentor and my guide. My Bible confronts me when I am wrong and comforts me when I am struggling.

My Bible is my most treasured physical possession. I know that as long as sin still lives in me, I need divine wisdom. So I approach my Bible every day as a needy and thankful man.

Read: “For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.”
PSALM 36:9

Reflect: What is your daily plan for spending time with God in his word and prayer?

4. Not Just the Word

Not only do we have the gift of God’s word, but we also have the gift of the Holy Spirit. He’s the one who guides us, teaching us through his word. As a result, we can know, understand, confess, and repent.

I not only need the content of God’s word, but I also need the help of the Holy Spirit. He enables me to understand it. He assists me to apply it, empowers me to live it, and equips me to take its message to others. God rescues me from my foolishness not just by handing me a book but also by giving me himself—and he opens the wisdom of that book to me.

As an author of books, I don’t do this. I write a book and move on. Then it’s up to the reader to make sense of what I have written. I don’t travel to reader after reader, sitting with them as long as it takes, shining light on the things I have written, making sure they understand, and helping them to apply the content of the book to their everyday lives.

But that is exactly what God does. He goes everywhere his word goes. He patiently sits with readers every time they open his book. He teaches them out of his word. God is not only the author of his word, he’s also its primary teacher.

When you get the word of God, you also get the God of the word, and that is a beautiful thing.

Read: “Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.” PSALM 86:11

Reflect: When reading God’s word, in what ways are you inviting the Lord to speak to you? How are you tempted to depend on your own ability to understand the Bible?

5. God's Word Teaches

I remember my days as a seminary student with fondness and thankfulness. By God's grace, I was able to focus three years of my life on one solitary thing: studying God's word. This was a once-in-a-lifetime blessing. I don't know when I have been more thankful and motivated by anything in all of my life.

I soaked it all in. And at the end of each day (and to the suffering of my wife), I repeated to her—in great detail and length—each lecture I had heard. I read long portions to her from dense biblical theology books. I was obsessed with and thrilled by what I was learning. It got me up early in the morning and kept me up late at night. It was just about all I thought and talked about. My mind was blown away by the word of God in a way that it had never been before.

One day after classes, I ran up the steps to our third-floor apartment and said to Luella, "It's not just that I'm learning the content of the Bible and learning theology. But for the first time, I'm learning to think—really, truly think!"

Not only was the Bible opening up to me, the whole world was opening up to me with levels of meaning I had never known before. As I sat day after day studying the word, I was, in fact, sitting at the feet of the Creator of the world. Yes, the word was the tool, but it was held in the hands of the ultimate teacher, my Lord. I was being taught as I had never been taught before, but not just by wise and seasoned professors. I was also being instructed by my Master through the majestic wisdom of his word.

God's word teaches in ways unlike anything else. It teaches you things that you will learn nowhere else. It doesn't just impart knowledge to you—it also forms wisdom in you. It reveals to you the deepest, most profound spiritual mysteries that could ever be considered.

Read: "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation." PSALM 119:97–99

Reflect: What is the difference between mastering God's word and *being mastered* by God's word? Why is that difference so important?

6. Words of Warning

Why are there so many warnings in Scripture? They are there because God loves us.

You see, a warning isn't judgment. If all God intended to do was to judge you, he wouldn't first warn you. Think about how parents constantly warn their children. They first warn them not to touch the hot stove, the lit candle, or the electrical outlet. Later they warn them what is safe to eat and what is dangerous, and down the road they warn them about the dangers of the internet and social media. Every one of these warnings is motivated by tenderhearted parental love.

God is our heavenly Father. And like our parents, he's committed to warning us about the dangers of life in this fallen world. In each warning, he is loving us. Each warning exhibits his patience, faithfulness, wisdom, and grace. Each warning reminds us of his care. Each warning teaches us again that he is ready and willing to forgive and restore. Each warning is a call to trust him and to follow him by faith. Each warning reminds us that our Father is infinitely smarter than us. He really does know better. So we should listen and obey.

You don't want to be like the toddler who refuses to listen to Mommy's warnings and burns his finger on the oven door. You don't want to be like the teenager who blows off her dad's warnings and makes decisions that mess up the rest of her life. God loves us, so he has dotted his word with warnings. With fatherly care he says, "Don't look there, don't say that, don't desire this, don't do that, don't choose that, don't love that, watch out for this."

Don't think you are smarter than God. Don't believe the lie that there will be no cost for ignoring his wise and loving warnings. Every sin, and every mess that follows, is a result of a failure to humbly heed God's warnings. And remember, he not only warns you but also gives you the grace you need to live inside of his warnings.

Read: "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." HEBREWS 2:1

Reflect: Where have you neglected to submit your heart and life to God's loving warnings?

7. Words That Guide

When was the last time you needed to use your cell phone as a flashlight? Maybe you were looking for something in the garage, trying to read a menu at a dimly lit restaurant, or finding something in the backyard at night.

Why did you need the light? Your answer probably includes something about the dark or darkness. As a sinner living with other sinners in a fallen world, you encounter darkness every day. While you may experience Instagram-worthy sunny-day picnic lunches, real life is more like a midnight walk through the woods.

On any given day, you probably encounter more darkness than truth—both in you and around you. So to move forward without danger and get to where you are meant to go, you need something to light your way. No passage gets at this need and God's provision better than Psalm 119:105 (see below).

You need light for your school and your friendships. You need light for your struggles and temptations. You need light to handle difficulties. You need light for when you have been sinned against. You need light for when you feel alone and overwhelmed.

You need light for all the unknowns that will show up on your doorstep tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and for the rest of your life.

You don't have to grope around fearfully in the darkness. You don't need to bloody your nose and bruise your toes by bumping into trees and tripping over roots. The light of the world has graced you with the light of his word! It will shine around your feet in the midst of the darkness so that you won't stumble and fall.

Read: “Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
PSALM 119:104–5

Reflect: Are there areas in your life that you're keeping in the dark? Why has it been difficult for you to bring them into the light of God's word?

