

# Roman Catholicism: An Examination of Its Teachings

by Charlie H. Campbell

Right at the outset, I want to say that this is not a mean-spirited attack on Catholic people. I love Catholics. I have Catholic friends. This is an examination or comparison with what the Catholic Church teaches side by side with what the Bible teaches. I pray that it would be helpful to evangelicals who desire to share the truth in love with their Catholic friends and eye opening to Catholics who may have not seriously considered these issues previously.

In this examination of the Roman Catholic Church, we want to first consider

I. The Origin of the Catholic Church

II. Areas of Agreement between Evangelicals and Catholics

III. Areas of Disagreement

IV. Sharing the Truth in Love with Catholics

IV. Book recommendations for further reading.

## I. THE ORIGIN OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Book of Acts records for us the birth of the New Testament Church, and some of the history of the first 30 years of Christianity. In spite of great persecution, by the end of the first century A.D. Christian churches had been established in numerous cities throughout the Roman Empire. Primarily because of its location in the capital of the Roman Empire, the church in Rome slowly began gaining some prominence. When the Roman Emperor Constantine legalized the Christian faith, and ended the persecution of Christians with the Edict of Milan in 313, the church in Rome gained even further prominence. As the church in Rome allied itself with the Roman government, it continued to grow in its authority, and influence. As early as the 3rd century the leaders of the church in Rome were claiming for themselves a supremacy over other churches throughout the Empire when it came to matters of doctrine. And by the 6th century the Church in Rome

was exercising jurisdiction over the churches. And thus, the Roman Catholic Church was born.

Most scholars, outside of the Catholic Church, reject the popular teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, that the Church at Rome was established by Christ Himself through the apostle Peter. Why?

1. There is no record that Peter was ever the bishop of Rome as the Catholic Church claims.

2. Irenaeus, a Bishop in the early church [at Lyons, in modern day France] from 178 – 200 A.D. provided a list of the first 12 bishops of Rome. Peter's name does not appear. Irenaeus says that the first Bishop of Rome was a man by the name of Linus. Irenaeus is a very trusted source. He was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the apostle John.

3. Eusebius, (c.260- sometime before 341) who is called the "Father of Church History," never mentions Peter as the Bishop of Rome.

He does tell us that Peter came to Rome "about the end of his days" and was crucified there.

4. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Church at Rome, greets more than two dozen people by name at the end of his letter. But not Peter. That would be a strange omission if Peter was living in Rome, and especially if he was the bishop there.

Most scholars date the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church at 590 A.D. when the leader of the church in Rome, Gregory I consolidated the power of the bishops in Rome and set the church on a new course.

Rome's claim to supremacy and legal jurisdiction was vigorously resisted by other church leaders and could never be enforced in the eastern portion of the Empire. Dissension remained in the Church between those in the West, based in Rome, and those in the East, based in Constantinople.

This finally led to a major split in the church in 1054, when the Eastern churches broke away from the Church in Rome. The Church in the East went on to be known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, (also known as the Greek Orthodox Church). The next major split came in the sixteenth century (the 1500's). In Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, a Catholic monk by the name of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the local Catholic Church, protesting numerous teachings of the Catholic Church. Martin Luther's disagreements with the Catholic Church sparked a fire of protest against the Catholic Church that spread throughout Europe. That movement became known as the Reformation.

If you haven't see the movie Luther: One Man's Faith in God Launched the Greatest Revolution of All. I highly recommend it! It is very well done.

Far more than protesting trivial, debatable matters, the protest of the Catholic Church revolved around the Gospel message itself (which we'll talk about more in a few minutes).

The Greek word for the word "gospel" is evangelion, and, as you know, means "the good news." So Martin Luther dubbed his breakaway movement the "evangelical church." And the division that took place nearly 500 years ago between Catholics and Evangelicals exists to this day. [Evangelicals would include: Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, just about all Christians outside of the Catholic Church].

Today, nearly 1 out of every 6 people alive today would call themselves a follower of the Roman Catholic Church. Out of the 6 billion people alive today, there are approximately 1 billion Catholics worldwide. The word "Catholic" comes from the Greek word "katholikos" meaning: universal. The Catholic Church began referring to itself as the Catholic Church because for so long it believed that it was the one and only true church universally. For centuries it was taught that there was no salvation outside of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope Innocent III said in A.D. 1208:

"With our hearts we believe and with our lips we confess but one Church, not that of the heretics, but the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, outside which we believe that no one is saved."

Pope Pius IX said in A.D. 1854:

"It must be held by faith that outside the Apostolic Roman Church, no one can be saved; that this is the only ark of salvation; that he who shall not have entered therein will perish in the flood."

In 1965 at an event known as "Vatican II" (mentioned in your book) a change took place. Pope Paul VI delivered a message [entitled: "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions"] that elevated protestant evangelical believers from being lost to being QUOTE: "separated brethren." Unfortunately it was also suggested that even non-Christians, in faiths such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, might also be saved.

## II. SOME AGREEMENTS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND EVANGELICALS

There are many doctrines that Evangelical, Bible believing Christians, and Catholics agree upon. For instance, both Evangelicals (Protestants) and Catholics believe...

1. That the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the sovereign creator and sustainer of the universe
2. That there is one God that exists eternally in three separate, but co-equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

3. That Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into Heaven, and is returning in glory to judge mankind

4. That there is a future resurrection of the bodies of both the righteous and the wicked

5. That the Old and New Testaments are the inspired and infallible Word of God

### III. SOME DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND EVANGELICALS

#### 1. The Gospel

According to the Roman Catholic Church, salvation is not by grace alone through faith alone. According to the Catholic Church, being justified [or declared righteous] before God is a process that begins at the moment of baptism and then progresses and is maintained by a person's participation in what are called the Seven Sacraments.

The Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church are:

##### A. Baptism

B. Penance (Penance must involve a.) contrition over sin, b.) confession to a priest, and then c.) following the instructions of the priest, typically involving praying ten "Our Fathers" or ten "Hail Mary's")

C. Eucharist (also known as Mass. Mass involves the re-sacrificing or re-presenting of the sacrifice of Jesus to the Father, in order to appease God's wrath and cover people's sins.)

D. Confirmation (this occurs when a bishop lays his hand on the head of the Catholic, signifying that they are coming of age).

E. Matrimony (marriage)

F. Holy Orders (ordination to the office of a bishop, priest, or deacon)

G. Anointing of the sick

Evangelicals think this is a perversion of the Biblical Gospel. Why?

The Bible, over and over, teaches that salvation is by grace, through faith alone, and not the result of any effort or work of man. Listen carefully to the following verses (which interestingly enough were all written originally to the believers in the city of Rome).

Romans 3:28 says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified [how?] by faith apart from the deeds of the law."

Romans 4:3 says, "For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Romans 4:5 says, "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness"

Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

These verses clearly, and I think forcefully, refute the Catholic notion that salvation is not by grace alone, through faith alone, but by grace plus our participation in the Seven Sacraments.

Jesus Himself said there was only one condition for salvation and that was belief. In John 3:16 He said, "...whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John the Baptist taught that there was only one condition for eternal life. In John 3:36 he said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The Apostle John taught that there was only one condition for eternal life. In 1 John 5:13 he said, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..."

The apostle Paul taught that there was only one condition for eternal life. In Galatians 2:16 he said, "a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." In Ephesians 2:8-9 he said, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Over and over again, the Bible affirms that there is nothing a person can do, or must do in exchange for his salvation. But, at the Council of Trent in 1546 the Catholic Church stated something that stands to this day. Listen carefully:

"If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be anathema." [defined by Catholics as being excommunicated]

Now, is this a serious issue? I think it is. Listen to these words in God's holy, inspired Word.

Galatians 1:8-9 says, "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be [what?] accursed."

The Greek word there for accursed is anathema. The word refers to that which is doomed to eternal destruction. That is a heavy warning. My heart aches when I think about how many people in the Catholic Church today think that they are going to heaven because of their good works, their attendance at mass, their baptism or their confirmation but who have never placed their trust in Jesus Christ.

A second area that Evangelicals and the Catholic Church disagree has to do with...

## 2. Purgatory

The Catholic Church teaches that the souls of believers who have died will suffer for a time of purging that will prepare them to enter heaven. The purpose of purgatory, says the Catholic Church, is to cleanse an individual of imperfections, venial sins [less serious than mortal sins], and faults and to do away with the temporal punishment due to mortal sins that have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance. Catholics differ in their opinions as to the nature of the suffering in purgatory. Most believe that suffering will include the physical pain of burning in fire.

Evangelicals believe that the doctrine of purgatory is a man made invention that denies the sufficiency of what Christ did on the cross for our sins. The Bible teaches, that Christians are immediately, upon death, ushered into the presence of God totally blameless, and forgiven of their sins. It does? Where? In verses like 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:21-23, Jude 24, Hebrews 10:14.

If ever there was a person who deserved to go to "purgatory" (if there was such a thing) it would have been the thief on the cross next to Jesus. He had just believed, and had no time to do any good works before he breathed his last, or to be baptized, confirmed, etc. But where did he go? Jesus said to him...

Luke 23:43

"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

For the person who has put their faith in Christ, they too will immediately go into the presence of God in "Paradise" (Rev. 2:7). In fact, the word "purgatory" does not even appear a single time in the Bible.

A third area that Evangelicals and the Catholic Church disagree has to do with...

## 3. Praying for the dead, and to the saints

First, let's consider praying for the dead. The Catholic Church teaches that Christians who are alive on earth can come to the assistance of the souls in Purgatory by (among others) intercessory prayers as well as alms giving [giving to the poor] and other pious works.

Evangelicals reject this on the basis that there is no Scriptural support whatsoever for this doctrine. [see Geisler, p. 348ff] There is not a single example, in the Bible of a person praying for a person who has died.

Second, let's consider praying to Mary and the saints. The Catholic Catechism says:

"The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives... They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them [the saints] to intercede for us and for the whole world." Pg. 645, #2683 (See also Pg. 249, #956)

And so the church encourages its followers to pray prayers like this popular pray to Mary...

"O Mother of Perpetual Help, thou art the dispenser of all the gifts which God grants to us miserable sinners; and for this end He has made thee so powerful, so rich, and so bountiful, in order that thou mayest help us in our misery. Thou art the advocate of the most wretched and abandoned sinners who have recourse to thee: come to my aid, for I recommend myself to thee. In thy hands I place my eternal salvation, and to thee I entrust my soul. Count me among thy most devoted servants; take me under thy protection, and it is enough for me. For, if thou protect me, I fear nothing; not from my sins, because thou wilt obtain for me the pardon of them; nor from the devils, because thou art more powerful than all hell together; nor even from Jesus, my judge, because by one prayer from thee He will be appeased. But one thing I fear: that in the hour of temptation I may through negligence fail to call on thee and thus perish miserably. Obtain for me, therefore, the pardon of my sins, love for Jesus, final perseverance, and the grace ever to have recourse to thee, O Mother of Perpetual Help."

Catholics are encouraged by the Roman Catholic Church to pray prayers like this, not to God, but to Mary!! I read this and I gasp! Can we talk favorably about a religion who would encourage its followers to pray to something, or someone else rather than God?

This is absolutely contradicted by the Bible. The Bible says...

Philippians 4:6

"...let your requests be made known to [who?] God"

Jesus taught us to pray to...

Matthew 6:9

“Our Father who art in heaven...”

The Apostle Paul writes...

1 Timothy 2:5

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”

There are prayers in the Bible from Genesis all the way to the Book of Revelation, and NONE of them are addressed to a saint, an angel, or anyone other than God. In fact, numerous passages in the Old Testament condemn all attempts to communicate with the dead. Those verses include:

--Deuteronomy 18:10-12

--Leviticus 20:6, 27

--1 Samuel 28:5-18

--Isaiah 8:19-20

Is it a serious thing that the Catholic Church would mislead multitudes of people away from the living God and into prayer to the dead? Absolutely! Did you know that in the Old Testament, if a person violated these commands they were to be put to death? Am I suggesting that anybody do that now? God forbid! It does show you though how serious God takes the issue though.

A fourth area that Evangelicals and the Catholic Church disagree has to do with...

#### 4. Mary

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was immaculately conceived (that is to say, “preserved free from all stain of original sin”-Pope Pius IX, 1854), lived a sinless life, remained a virgin after the birth of Christ, was bodily assumed up into heaven and plays a part in our salvation as a co-redeemer with Christ.

Evangelicals believe Mary was a great example for believers in her trust for the Lord and in her obedience, but there are numerous Scriptures that contradict the traditions that the Catholic Church has attached to her. For example, regarding the Catholic teaching on Mary’s supposed sinlessness, Evangelicals believe that the Bible clearly contradicts this in Scriptures like:

Luke 1:46 where Mary herself states,

“my spirit rejoices in God my savior”

Her reference here to God as here savior implies that she too was a sinner, just as the Bible tells us in...

Romans 3:10.

“There is none righteous, no not one.”

Mark 10:18 where Jesus said...

“...No one is good except God alone.”

Or there is the passage in Luke 2:22-24 where Mary presents an offering to the Jewish priest for her sinful condition (cross reference that with Leviticus 12). That would not have been necessary if she had been sinless.

A fifth area that Evangelicals and the Catholic Church disagree has to do with...

## 5. The Bible

Evangelicals believe that the Bible is made up of 66 books (If you want to read about how the church discovered the books that God decided were to be included in the Bible, get a copy of From God to Us, How We Got the Bible by Dr. Norman Geisler).

The Catholic Church, in 1546 at an event known as the Council of Trent, added eleven Jewish writings to the Bible known as the “Apocrypha” to Protestants and the “Deuterocanonical books” (lit. “second canon”) to the Catholics.

What is the Apocrypha? The Apocrypha is a collection of fourteen Jewish writings that were written down between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. Eleven of those fourteen books were accepted by the Catholic Church as God-inspired Scriptures and were placed in the Catholic Bible. If you were to open up a Catholic Bible today you would see books in there with titles like Tobit, Judith, 1 & 2 Maccabees, and Baruch.

The Catholic Church made this official statement about the Apocrypha:

"If anyone, however, should not accept the said books as sacred and canonical [ i.e. part of the Bible], entire with all their parts...and if both knowingly and deliberately he should condemn the aforesaid tradition let him be anathema (Cited in Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences, by Geisler and MacKenzie, p. 157)."

There are numerous reasons why the early church and believers down through the centuries have rejected the apocryphal books as authoritative or divinely inspired.

1. Neither Jesus nor the New Testament writers ever quoted from the Apocrypha as Scripture.

Though Jesus and the Apostles cite the Old Testament nearly 300 times in the pages of the New Testament, they never quote any of the apocryphal books accepted by the Roman Catholic Church.

[There are in Jude, v. 9 as well as v. 14-15 some allusions to some extra-biblical false writings, such as the Book of Enoch (v.14-15) and the Bodily Assumption of Moses. But this doesn't lend any support to the Catholic position because even they reject those books as non-canonical. And none of these are cited as Scripture nor as divinely authoritative. The NT simply refers to a truth contained in those books which otherwise may (and do) have many errors. These writings are rejected by Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. Remember that even the Apostle Paul quotes pagan poets in Acts 17:28. That didn't mean they were divinely inspired.]

2. The Apocrypha contains numerous historical, geographical and chronological errors.

There are many examples of this.

One error is found in the Book of Judith where it speaks of Nebuchadnezzar reigning in Nineveh. But it is a historical fact that this was never the case. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon.

For instance, the Apocrypha claims that Tobit was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 B.C. and also when Jeroboam revolted against Judah in 931 B.C., which would make him at least 209 years old; yet according to the account, he died when he was 158 years.

[See [www.christiancourier.com/archives/apocrypha.htm](http://www.christiancourier.com/archives/apocrypha.htm) for some additional information on the errors of the apocrypha.]

3. The Jews themselves never accepted the Apocrypha as inspired.

The Jewish people themselves and the leading Jewish teachers of that era recognized that this collection of Jewish writings did not belong in the Hebrew Bible. The first century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, tells us in his writings that the Hebrew Bible was composed of the same books that make up our Old Testament today. Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish teacher, who lived from 20 B.C. to A.D. 40 quoted the Old Testament numerous times from virtually every Old Testament book. And he never once quotes from the Apocrypha.

4. The Apocrypha contains no predictive prophecy to help substantiate it's claims.

The Bible over and over substantiates its claim to divine inspiration with hundreds of fulfilled prophecies. In fact, 27% percent of the Bible contains predictive prophecy, and half of them have already been fulfilled (see Every Prophecy of the Bible by John Walvoord).

Unlike the books of the Bible, the Apocrypha contains none.

5. The Apocrypha never claims to be the inspired Word of God.

Unlike the Old Testament books that over and over say things, like "thus says the Lord" or "the word of the LORD came unto him" the Apocrypha never says anything like this.

Since that is the case, it seems unwise to call the authors of the Apocrypha "prophets" or "spokespersons of God," when that is something that they themselves did not claim to be.

6. The Apocrypha was rejected by many of the leading early church fathers.

The early church recognized a distinction between the Old Testament and the apocryphal books. Many of them, men such as Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Origen, spoke out against them.

7. Jerome rejected the Apocrypha and left them out of His Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate).

Jerome (who lived from 340-420 A.D.) was the man, who translated, for the first time, the Bible from Greek into Latin. Jerome is considered to be the greatest biblical and Hebrew scholars of the early medieval period. Jerome's translation (known as the Vulgate) became the Bible translation for centuries to follow. It even became the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church.

So if Jerome left them out of his translation, how did the Apocryphal books end up in the Vulgate, the Catholic Bible? The Church inserted them into the Vulgate after he died.

8. The Apocrypha contains numerous non-biblical and heretical doctrines.

--The Apocrypha teaches the erroneous unbiblical doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, suggesting that the kind of body one now has is determined by the character of his soul in a previous life (Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20).

--The Apocrypha teaches prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:41-46)

--The doctrine of purgatory (that even the righteous must suffer after death for a time before they will be accepted into heaven).

--The Apocrypha teaches that salvation is available through good works in Tobit 12:19.

--The Apocrypha also teaches that salvation is available through the giving of alms.

Tobit 3:9 says, "It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin"

Tobit 4:11 says, "For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness."

These are doctrines that are not supported in the Bible, and are clearly even contradicted by authentic, proven Scripture, Scripture that was validated as true by Jesus Himself.

9. The Apocrypha was not formally declared to be authoritative and inspired by the Catholic Church until 1546.

1500 plus years after they were written!! Why did they do this so late? They did it to counter the teachings of Martin Luther and the other reformers. These men were exposing the fact that the Catholic Church was basing certain teachings on the Apocrypha, and not the sixty-six books of the Bible. So, the Catholic Church, officially declared that the Apocrypha was part of the Bible, inspired by God, and to be accepted with the rest of the Bible!

So for these reasons Evangelicals reject the Apocrypha.

A sixth area of disagreement between Evangelicals and Catholics (and this will be the last one that we look at today is...

## 6. The Authority of Church Tradition

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that authority for faith and practice rests on two foundations:

### A. The Bible (which includes their 11 added apocryphal books that they added to the Bible, the Apocrypha)

## B. The Church, (or Sacred church tradition).

Authoritative Church tradition includes the decrees of various councils (meetings of Church leaders) as well as certain sayings of the Popes.

The Catholic Church teaches that when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, (which literally means “from the chair”) he is absolutely infallible.

Throughout the history of the Church, the various Popes have said numerous things in this manner. Those things stand irreversibly to this day, as truths that are equal in authority to the written Word of God.

So, when you read something on the Vatican’s official website, or in a Catholic book on theology, you’ll read something that says something like “Such and such is true” and instead of it giving you a Scripture reference for justification for a particular belief, it will just say something like: “Pope Pius XII” because to the Catholic Church that is equal to Biblical revelation.

Evangelicals believe that authority for faith and practice rests solely upon one foundation, the sixty-six books of Scripture.

This is something that the men who led the reformation (i.e. Martin Luther and John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli) called *sola scriptura*, Latin for “Scripture alone.”

We believe that Scripture alone is the final court of appeal on all doctrinal and moral matters. Evangelicals believe that any tradition or teaching that contradicts the Scripture it is to be rejected, no matter how sacred or old it is!!!

Turn over with me to Colossians. Colossians, chapter two says...

Colossians 2:8-10

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition [the what? ] of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

Any “tradition” (v.8) that conflicts with the absolute Word of God, as contained in the Scripture, is to be rejected (Acts 17:11, Isa. 8:20)

Turn over to Matthew 15 with me. Listen to Jesus rebuke the Pharisees here for voiding the Word of God with their traditions...

## Matthew 15:1-9

15:1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." 3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"-- 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

This is a why Evangelicals reject many of the Catholic traditions. They often contradict the commandments of God, and of course God does not contradict Himself.

Another reason Evangelicals reject most of the traditions of the Catholic Church as authoritative is because if tradition is needed to supplement God's Word (as the Catholic Church teaches) then that means the Bible is insufficient as a guide for living. But that is exactly the opposite of what the Bible says about itself.

The Bible tells us that written "Scripture" is sufficient. Turn with me to...

2 Timothy 3:14-17 Paul, writing to Timothy said...

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, [notice: nothing else] which are able to make you wise for salvation [Scripture is sufficient to lead a person to salvation] through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture [notice again, Paul doesn't mention tradition] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be [what?] complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

The Word of God, "the Holy Scriptures" (v.15) are able to make a man "complete" (v.17). The Greek word there for "complete" (in v. 17) can also be translated:

--adequate

--capable

--fully furnished

--proficient in the sense of being able to meet all demands [Source: The Bible Knowledge Commentary].

Jesus said...

John 10:35

“...the Scripture cannot be broken.” He never said, “Tradition cannot be broken.”

Jesus said...

Matthew 5:18

“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

Again referring to the authority of written Scripture, not oral tradition.

Jesus used Scripture as the final court of appeal in every matter under dispute.

To the Sadducees He said...

Matthew 22:29

“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”

To the devil, Jesus consistently responded...

Matthew 4:4, 7, 10

“It is written...” (x3)

To the Pharisees, Jesus said...

Mark 7:8-9

“For laying aside the commandment of God [the written Word], you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. 9 He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you

may keep your tradition.”

It was the man made traditions that people elevated above the written commandments of God that Jesus consistently had to condemn!

So, Evangelicals follow Jesus' lead and believe that Scripture alone is the supreme and final authority. The Word of God itself tells us that it will equip us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

But what about those verses that uphold “tradition” as being valuable? Paul does tell the Thessalonians to: “hold the traditions” in 2 Thessalonians 2:15. Let’s quickly look at them.

Turn to...

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Paul writes to the believers in Thessalonica...

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word [i.e. word of mouth] or our epistle.”

Paul seems to say here that believers should hold on to “tradition”!!!

But, notice the critically important word there in v.15: “our”

Paul’s not referring to traditions in general, but things that he, along with Silas, and Timothy [see 1:1] had taught them previously.

And notice, Paul said...

“...hold the traditions which you were [notice that it’s in the past tense] taught [that is, when Paul was with the Thessalonian believers], whether by word or our epistle.” (2:15)

Paul was writing to people here in this epistle that he had previously and personally “taught” (v.15, 1 Thess. 2:1-2, 13) as an apostle of God.

The apostles, for a time, communicated their teachings orally until those teachings could be permanently recorded in written form.

Those are the traditions that Paul had in mind, not the traditions that the Roman Catholic Church would develop hundreds and even a thousand plus years later!

Did you realize that many of the traditions of the Catholic Church have no ties to the apostles or to Jesus?

Many of them were developed long after the Apostles. Listen to when the following Roman Catholic Church doctrines came into being:

--The perpetual virginity of Mary.....553 A.D. Fifth Ecumenical

Council at Constantinople

--Purgatory.....593 A.D.

--Prayer to Mary, the saints and angels.....600 A.D.

--The practice of kissing the Pope's foot.....709 A.D.

--The canonization of the dead saints.....995 A.D.

--Celibacy of the priesthood.....1079 A.D.

--Praying the Rosary.....1090 A.D.

--Transubstantiation and confessing sins to a priest.....1215 A.D.

--Belief in the Seven Sacraments.....Late 13th century

--The Sinlessness of Mary.....1547 A.D. @ Council of Trent

--The Infallibility of the Pope.....1870 A.D.

--Mary being the Co-Redeemer with Christ.....1891 A.D. Pope Leo XIII

--Mary being caught up to heaven in bodily form...1950 A.D. Pope Pius XII

(These dates are taken from The Moody Handbook of Theology, p.404, 531-32 & Roman Catholics & Evangelicals by Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie).

The other verse the Catholic Church points to is 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

Again, notice the words “from us” here in this verse. Not from the church to come and the leaders that will come on the scene hundreds of years from now.

--The traditions or teachings that came directly from the apostles are the ones that are binding.

Also, notice that Paul speaks again in the past tense (v.6)...

“...according to the tradition which he received from us.”

--Those are the traditions that are authoritative (and we believe that were even written down) not the Catholic traditions introduced centuries later!!!

So, again, Paul said to hold to the tradition which “you were taught” (in 2 Thess. 2:15) and that which you “received from us” (in 2 Thess. 3:6). Those would exclude the traditions of the Catholic Church.

So those are some of the areas that Catholics and Evangelicals disagree.

1. The Gospel

2. Purgatory

3. Praying for the dead and to the saints and Mary

4. Mary

5. The Bible

6. Authority of Church Tradition

Because so many differences exist, we need to look upon our Catholic neighbors, and not just assume that they are saved, but look upon them as people who still possibly have never been born again (John 3:3).

#### IV. SHARING THE TRUTH IN LOVE WITH CATHOLICS

1. Remember to be speak kindly, with humility and gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 says, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth."

Remember that we are to be "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

2. Ask them about their beliefs.

This is a good place to start with people of all faiths.

I never like to assume anything. When that person on the plane tells me they are a Catholic, I never assume, "Oh they are probably not saved." Or, if they tell me that they go to a Calvary Chapel, I never assume, "Oh, I'm sure he's saved." You never know. So ask them about their beliefs.

Catholics can't be lumped together into one big basket.

There are Ultratraditionalist Catholics, Traditionalists Catholics, Liberal Catholics, Charismatic/Evangelical Catholics, Cultural Catholics and others.

3. Identify some of the beliefs you have in common.

As I mentioned earlier there are a lot of beliefs that we share with Catholics (the deity of Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Bible, etc.).

There is a lot there to build on in your conversation.

I would bring up those some of those things before I would ever mention any of the things that I disagree with them about.

4. Ask them about their salvation.

I like to ask Catholics, "If you were to die tonight do you think you would go to heaven?" Follow it up with "Why?" or "Why not?"

Many of them do not know if they would. That allows you the opportunity to talk to them about the assurance that they can have if they put their faith in Christ.

I have found that most Catholics do want to know for sure if they are going to heaven.

5. Share the gospel of grace clearly and simply from the Bible.

Explain the gospel to them very clearly and simply right out of the Bible. Many Catholics don't read the Bible, and will benefit from seeing it with their own eyes.

6. Encourage them to read the Bible.

Challenge them to read through the NT over the next few months, marking any verses that support the doctrine of purgatory, praying to Mary, etc. and tell them that you'd be interested to find out what they discover and even look at any verses they come across.

## V. BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

If you have Catholic friends or family that you would like to dialog with, but could use some extra help, there are some wonderful books that examine the teachings of the Catholic Church and compare them side by side with the Scriptures.

If you have a Catholic friend or relative that you have an ongoing relationship with and dialog with, I would highly recommend any of these three books.

1. Roman Catholics & Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences by Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie

2. Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics by Ron Rhodes

3. The Roman Catholic Controversy: Catholics & Protestants—Do the Differences Still Matter? by James R. White

They are all very well written, and provide lots of good, well researched answers to tough questions and issues that may come up in your conversation. If you'd like to find the official Catholic teaching on a variety of different doctrines, you can do some research right on the Vatican's website by clicking [here](#).

-----

#### ABOUT CHARLIE CAMPBELL

Charlie Campbell is the Director of The Always Be Ready Apologetics Ministry, the author of One Minute Answers to Skeptics' Top Forty Questions, and a popular guest speaker at churches around the United States on issues related to the defense of the Christian faith. His teachings and resources have been endorsed by Dr. Norman Geisler, Charles Colson, Chuck Smith, Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Jeremy Camp, and Brian Brodersen. He resides in southern California with his wife and four children.

**BOOKING:** If you would like to inquire about having Charlie Campbell teach at your church, conference, Christian school, or retreat please click [here](#) for further details.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** For additional resources, including notes, audio messages, and DVDs, that will help you always be ready to defend the faith (1 Peter 3:15) check out [www.AlwaysBeReady.com](http://www.AlwaysBeReady.com)