



# Missing the Obvious in the Bible

## The Invisible Gorillas



Harvard University’s experiment has implications for the average Bible reader, pastor, teacher, and Ph.D. scholar.

“Imagine you are asked to watch a short video in which six people—three in white shirts and three in black shirts—pass basketballs around. While you watch, you must keep a silent count of the number of passes made by the people in white shirts. At some point, a gorilla strolls into the middle of the action, faces the camera and thumps its chest, and then leaves, spending nine seconds on screen. Would you see the gorilla? Almost everyone has the intuition that the answer is “yes, of course I would.” How could something so obvious go completely unnoticed? But when we did this experiment at Harvard University several years ago, we found that **half of the people** who watched the video and counted the passes missed the gorilla. It was as though the gorilla was invisible.”<sup>1, 2</sup>

In a latter experiment published in 2013, expert searchers who have spent years honing their ability to detect small abnormalities in specific types of images missed the gorilla in the images presented to them **eighty-three percent** of the time, due to what is now been dubbed **inattentional blindness**.<sup>3</sup> This problem is thought to occur because the subjects are told to look for something other than the Gorilla, and their minds are focused and preoccupied with that task. If an instructor teaches students to look for certain things, and not told to look for other things, the mind will automatically not register the other things, even if the other things are important.

In the case of the Bible, “other things” are compounded many times over. Besides inattentional blindness, confirmation bias also plays a role. **Confirmation bias** is “the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one’s existing beliefs. This biased approach to decision making is largely unintentional and often results in ignoring inconsistent information”.<sup>4</sup> Examples of confirmation bias are readily available.<sup>5</sup> **Cultural blindness** also has a significant effect and is defined as “the incapacity to comprehend how specific situations may be seen by individuals belonging to another culture due to a strict alignment with the viewpoints, outlooks, and morals of one’s own society or culture.”<sup>6</sup> This is even before considering that the Bible must be “spiritually discerned” [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) (KJV).

The following are a few **biblical examples** where either *inattentional blindness*, *confirmation bias*, or *cultural blindness* has impaired biblical understanding:

Misunderstanding About	Resulting From
<a href="#">Dragons</a> <sup>7</sup>	<b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">Wine</a> <sup>8</sup>	<b>Confirmation Bias</b> and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">Holy Trinity</a> <sup>9</sup>	<b>Inattentional Blindness</b> , <b>Confirmation Bias</b> , and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">Sons of God</a> <sup>10</sup>	<b>Confirmation Bias</b> and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">Sabbath</a> <sup>11</sup>	<b>Inattentional Blindness</b> , <b>Confirmation Bias</b> , and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">Mystery of the Bride and Bridegroom</a> <sup>12</sup>	<b>Inattentional Blindness</b> and or <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">Genesis</a> <sup>13</sup>	<b>Inattentional Blindness</b> , <b>Confirmation Bias</b> , and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">God’s Holiness</a> <sup>14</sup>	<b>Inattentional Blindness</b> , <b>Confirmation Bias</b> , and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>
<a href="#">God’s Justice</a> <sup>15</sup>	<b>Inattentional Blindness</b> , <b>Confirmation Bias</b> , and <b>Cultural Blindness</b>

Note: Besides the previously mentioned challenges, it is important to understand the correct methods to interpret the Bible. Ideally, understanding the use of ‘[The Seven Golden Rules of Bible Interpretation](#)’.

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!

## Bibliography

Note: Whenever possible, the Wayback Machine (<https://web.archive.org>) was used to permanently archive and preserve the integrity of the web based reference, at the time it was used as a reference. Since the Wayback Machine appends the original website onto the end of the Wayback Machine link, you need to manually copy and paste the entire link into a web browser for the archive.org links to work correctly. Also, a large number of old and/or out of print books are available for free to download from the world's largest library and university repository at <http://www.archive.org>, and can also be located at <https://books.google.com>.

- <sup>1</sup> Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons. “[The Invisible Gorilla Video](#)” *TheInvisibleGorilla.com*. 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> Christopher Chabris. “[Paying Attention: You might think you're focused and observant, until Christopher Chabris points out the invisible gorilla in the room](#)” *Harvard University*. July 25, 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> Trafton Drew, Melissa L.-H. Võ, and Jeremy M. Wolfe. “[The Invisible Gorilla Strikes Again: Sustained Inattention Blindness in Expert Observers](#)” *Harvard University*. January 27, 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> Bettina J. Casad. “[Confirmation bias](#)” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. October 9, 2019.
- <sup>5</sup> Shahram Heshmat Ph.D. “[What Is Confirmation Bias? People are prone to believe what they want to believe.](#)” *Psychology Today*. April 23, 2015.
- <sup>6</sup> N., Pam M.S. “[Cultural blindness.](#)” *PsychologyDictionary.org*. April 7, 2013.
- <sup>7</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 3, Section 6, page 28, #2](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October 3, 2019.
- <sup>8</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 3, Section 6: Wine – Understanding the Hidden Biblical Importance](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October 3, 2019.
- <sup>9</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 1, 2, and 3](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October, 2019.
- <sup>10</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[Sons of God – Earthly Men or Angelic Beings?](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. April 29, 2020.
- <sup>11</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 3, Section 7: The Sabbath – End of the Bride and Bridegroom Mystery](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October 3, 2019.
- <sup>12</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 3, Section 7, page 52-57](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October 3, 2019.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 3, Section 2: Christian Torchbearer Doctrines – The Basic Beliefs](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October 3, 2019.
- <sup>14</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 1, 2, and 3](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October, 2019.
- <sup>15</sup> Peter D. Arvo. “[The Torchbearer Series: Session 1, 2, and 3](#)” *The Torchbearer Series*. October, 2019.

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