

THE BIBLE – WHO WROTE IT? AND CAN WE TRUST IT?

Instructions for Leaders in RED.

Leader's Notes: *In preparation for this lesson you may want to read the excerpts given regarding the authority of the Bible, as well as some stuff on manuscript evidence. The Leader's notes can be found at the end of this lesson. They are included to stoke your interest and passion for the lesson you are teaching, not so much to provide material you will use.*

Lesson Outcomes:

- 1) Students will understand the Bible is God's Word – breathed out by God and written by men.
- 2) Students will understand that the Bible can be trusted as God's Word and therefore trusted to learn more about him.

OPENER:

Give students handout for this study and have them silently fill out the opening question(s). Give them a couple minutes for this, once it seems like most of them are done, move on to discussion.

ASK: So let's talk a little bit about the questions you just answered, who is the most trustworthy person you know?

Who would you trust the most with your money?

... With your secrets?

Whose *word* do you trust the most? Who is the person that you trust what they say or listen to the most?

ASK: Why do you trust them? What is it about them that makes them so trustworthy?

INTRODUCTION:

So last time we talked about what the Bible is, and what it is about... **ASK** can anyone remember how we answered those two questions? (The Bible is God's written instrument to tell the world about himself; it is ultimately about Christ).

Yeah, so last time we talked about the Bible being God's book to tell the world about himself. But that brings up an interesting question:

ASK: Who wrote the Bible? (Let them struggle with this... some might say God, some might name authors like Paul, the Gospel writers, David, Solomon, or Moses. Wait and see if they discuss this at all on their own, but feel free to ask different students what they think to help facilitate this).

Trivia Question: Which author wrote the most in the New Testament? [Most people will say Paul because he wrote the most *books*, but between the books of Luke and Acts, Luke actually wrote the most content or pages and words overall].

Well we know that the Bible didn't materialize out of thin air, nor did it float down out of the sky riding on a rainbow. People - real humans - physically wrote down the words of each book of the Bible.

ASK: But why do we say it is God's Word then?

READ:

TURN in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3:16. Read the very first phrase...

¹⁶*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful...*

ASK: What does that mean? [Let them come up with their interpretation of "God-breathed"; and enjoy the creative and fun work of these young theologians!].

Paul when writing this actually made up a word that you can't find anywhere else in the Bible. Verse 16 says, *All scripture is...* and then we get the Greek word *theopneustos* (*thay-opp-new-stoss*). Paul essentially smashed two words together to make this new word, which literally means "God-breathed" or "breathed out by God."

Paul is saying, *"Yeah, it may be written down by men, but when you hear it or read it, it has God's breath behind it, it is God's voice."*

TURN to 2 Peter 1 and READ verses 16, and 19-21.

¹⁶We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

¹⁹And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

ASK: What is Peter saying here?

He's saying, *"Hey, we didn't just make this stuff up. We were there, we saw it for ourselves. Not only that but all of Scripture is God's Word. It might be written down by men, but they were speaking from God and moved by the Holy Spirit as they wrote."*

CAN WE TRUST IT?

So we get that the Bible claims that - though it was written down by men - it is the Word of God. To put it together with last week, the Bible is the Word of God, that tells us all about God. It's his way of telling us about himself and what he is doing in the world.

The question is, can we trust it? At the beginning of this lesson we talked a little bit about the people in your life that you trust the most.

ASK: What does it mean to trust someone? [trust: assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something].

So let's say you go to the store to buy sugar for your mom. She gives you a \$10 bill and you come back with the sugar and the change. When you give her the change you say, "It cost 3 dollars, here's the 7 dollars in change."

ASK: if she asks to see the receipt, does she trust what you said? Why or why not?

So to trust something, means you believe it to be reliable - but if you are going to trust it, it doesn't mean you can absolutely know. To trust essentially is to have faith in something.

Now here is an important distinction to make: when you talked about which friends you would trust and why, you mentioned a lot of reasons, a lot of evidence, of why you would trust them.

So even though we have to place our faith in the Bible, there is a lot – I mean, A LOT – of really good evidence to the trustworthiness and the truth of the Bible.

ASK: Did you notice what Peter wrote in verse 16 of what we read earlier? What did he say? [That the apostles were eyewitnesses].

Yeah, people who were witnesses to Jesus's life and ministry wrote the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says that there were over 500 witnesses who saw Jesus raised from the dead.

Not only this, but there is so much historical evidence, manuscript evidence, archeological evidence, and much more that shows that the Bible is reliable and trustworthy in all of its claims. [Cf. Leader notes if questions are asked].

There are other reasons why the bible is trustworthy: (move through these fast and feel free to skip a lot of this... its there for your assistance).

- parts of it are older than any other book;
- its miraculous preservation through history – the Bible that we have today is so unbelievably accurate to the original Bibles, so much more so than any other ancient writing archaeologists have found;
- prophecies about Jesus from the OT were accurate and happened;
- one really fun one to think about is that the stories that the writers tell aren't the most flattering. People say that History is written by the victor, which is just to say that the stories are most often told by those who won the wars, or those who conquered. But in the Bible we get story after story from people who really messed up. Most people don't tell about how they are such losers. The Biblical authors do: they show themselves to be weak and pitiful but God to be awesome!

One of the most powerful reasons for trusting the Bible, however, is the effect the Bible has had on generation after generation of believers. The Bible has power to change lives, and has! For 2000 years the church has attested to the power of the Scriptures, the truth of the Scriptures, and held them as the Word of God. This is true despite persecution, threat of death or suffering, the lure of temptation and the human propensity to get bored. Generation after generation of believers continue to be enamored with the Bible, they love it, they never get bored of it, because of its awe-inspiring truth, and its life changing power.

[Feel free at this point to talk about the power of God's Word in your own life, or get them to share a little bit about the power of God's Word in their lives. Maybe a time when a verse or a passage spoke to their hearts or situation, etc.].

REFLECTION:

Have them work on the Reflection Time on their handouts. Give them about 5 minutes to complete this (or until they are all done).

Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 33. Right at the beginning you get three verses all commanding people to praise God. And after that you get the reasons that they should. Read verses 1-9. Why should we sing, and play music and shout? Are these convincing reasons for you? Why or why not?

God's Word is faithful, trustworthy and powerful because God is each of those things. What do you do when God's Word conflicts with what you want to do in your life? Take some time to journal or write a prayer to God about His Word. Ask Him to show you how faithful, trustworthy, and powerful His Word is, and to help you trust it as a guide for your life.

PRAY

When everyone is done lead a time of prayer, asking God to help you to experience the power of his Word through studying the Bible, and grow to trust it as a guide for your lives!

LEADERS' NOTES:

Regarding Inspiration:

From "Doctrine" by Gerry Breshears and Mark Driscoll

Unlike any other book, the Bible is a book written by both God and man. But it was not coauthored, as is this book you are reading. It was not God and humans collaborating, or a human writing a draft with God making revisions, or God giving ideas that the human authors put into words. They were not words dictated to humans, as with the Koran. The Bible is not human writings that become divine when the reader discovers spiritual meaning in them, as with the writings of many Eastern religions. It is not one of many books containing the religious insights of ancient sages, as many liberals teach.

People who were providentially prepared by God, and motivated and superintended by the Holy Spirit, spoke and wrote according to their own personalities and circumstances in such a way that their words are the very Word of God. God's supernatural guidance of the writers and their situations enabled them to receive and communicate all God would have us know for his glory and our salvation.

We call this *divine inspiration*. Putting it a bit more technically, the writings themselves have the quality of being God-breathed. It is not the authors or the process that is inspired, but the writings.

The belief that God wrote Scripture in concert with human authors whom he inspired to perfectly record his words is called *verbal* (the very words of the Bible) *plenary* (every part of the Bible) *inspiration* (are God-breathed revelation). Very simply, this means that God the Holy Spirit inspired not just the thoughts of Scripture but also the very details and exact words that were perfectly recorded for us as Scripture.

Regarding the Formation of the Canon:

From "The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?" by F.F. Bruce

One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa – at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397 – but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of those communities.

Regarding Manuscript Evidence:

Skeptics today claim that our Bibles are full of errors, are nothing like what was originally written, and cannot be trusted as reliable. This is simply false.

From "Reinventing Jesus" by Komoszewski, Sawyer and Daniel Wallace

The New Testament manuscripts stand closer to the original and are more plentiful than virtually any other ancient literature. The New Testament is far and away the best attested work of Greek or Latin literature in the ancient world...

Approximately 5,700 full or partial New Testament manuscripts are known to exist at this writing. The number of sources is growing. Every decade and virtually every year new manuscripts are discovered. Meanwhile, the average classical author's [think Herodotus, Tacitus, and Homer] writings are found in about twenty extant manuscripts. The New Testament – in the Greek manuscripts *alone* – exceeds this by almost three hundred times. Besides the Greek, there are Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Gothic, Georgian, Arabic, and many other versions of the New Testament. The Latin manuscripts number over ten thousand. All told, the New Testament is represented by approximately one thousand times as many manuscripts as the average classical author's writings.

Though variants exist among the many manuscripts, most (almost 75%) are spelling errors and about 20% do not affect translation (or if they do involve synonyms). Of the miniscule number of variants that actually affect translation, none of them put any doubt on the validity of Biblical Doctrine.

From "New Testament Textual Criticism" by David Alan Black

No biblical doctrine would go unsupported if a favorite reading was abandoned in favor of a more valid variant. This does not mean, as is sometimes said, that no doctrine of Scripture is *affected* by textual variation. Rather, a doctrine that is affected by textual variation will *always* be adequately supported by other passages.

Regarding Reasons to Trust the Divinity of Scripture:

From Calvin's "Institutes of Christian Religion": Calvin lists 12 reasons, and expounds on each of them significantly. I'm only giving the headings here:

1. Scripture is superior to all human wisdom.
2. Not style but content is decisive [in evidence to its credibility]
3. The great antiquity of Scripture
4. The truthfulness of Scripture shown by Moses' example
5. Miracles strengthen the authority of God's messengers
6. Moses' miracles are incontestable
7. Prophecies that are fulfilled contrary to all human expectation
8. God has confirmed the prophetic words
9. God has marvelously preserved the Law and the Prophets
10. The simplicity and heavenly character of the New Testament
11. Unvarying testimony of the church to the Scripture
12. Martyrs died firmly for Scripture doctrine

From Thomas Watson's "Body of Divinity": Similar to Calvin, Watson expounds on each of these as answers to the question, "How does it appear that the Scriptures have a divine authority stamped upon them?":

1. Its antiquity. It is of ancient standing. The grey hairs of Scripture make it venerable...
2. We may know the Scriptures to be the Word of God by its miraculous preservation in all ages.
3. The Scripture appears to be the Word of God, by the matter contained in it. The mystery of Scripture is so abstruse and profound that no man or angel could have known it, had it not been divinely revealed...
4. That the Scripture is the Word of God is evident by its predictions. It prophesies of things to come, which shows the voice of God speaking in it.

5. The impartiality of those men of God who wrote the Scriptures, who do not spare to set down their own failings. What man that writes history would black his own face, by recording those things of himself that might stain his reputation?
6. The mighty power and efficacy that the Word has had upon the souls and consciences of men.
7. The miracles by which Scripture is confirmed.