

WONDER

Week 2 - Can We Trust the Bible?

"I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book that you can by reason and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man. It is the best Book which God has given to man." -Abraham Lincoln

THE MAIN POINT

It can be difficult for students to put any faith in a book that was written so long ago. How do we know that it hasn't been changed? Or that it wasn't made up? It can also be a bit weird...

In this session we are going to look at whether or not the Bible can be trusted as an accurate account of events that took place over 2,000 years ago and as a guide for everyday life in the 21st century.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Piece of paper & pencil for each person in the small group
- If you can get your hands on a copy of *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell, much of the information below is taken from there. Chapter 3 is a great read before going into this discussion.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome students back for meeting 2. Ask them how their week was. If you want to take a few extra

minutes you can go around and have each person share a high point and low point from their week. Remind them of the rules of small group:

RULES FOR SMALL GROUP:

Commitment - Commit to being at every group meeting (make it a priority!)

Confidentiality - What is shared here stays here.

Be honest or be silent - don't make up an answer just to have one. Sometimes the most honest answer is no answer, so if you need to, just say pass.

Respect - for one another, their thoughts/ideas/opinions (no put downs).

- If there was one person from history that you would want to sit and talk to, who would it be?
- What is one thing about that person that makes you want to sit and talk to them?

Those are some pretty awesome people from history!

- How do you know anything about those people? (you read about them in a book or someone told you about them)
- How do you know that what you learned about them is true?

Sometimes what we learn about people and events from history can be kind of like this game....

ACTIVITY

Telephone Pictionary

Pass out the piece of paper and pencil to each person, then have them sit in a line. Play "telephone" but rather than whispering something to each person, have the first person write a sentence that includes a person in a place doing something. The next person draws what they read on the first paper. Then the next person writes a description of the picture, then the next person draws, etc. all the way down the line. Make sure they're not cheating and looking at previous papers!

At the end compare what is written/drawn with what the first paper says. Then go back and see where it went wrong down the line!

GOING DEEPER

If you notice in that activity, the closer the person was to the original story, the more accurate their sentence or picture was. That is a lot like history. When it comes to the stories of history, there are some ways to determine if a historical account is a good or trusted source or not.

- We've all seen someone pass some article or meme around social media that is not true. What are some fake news stories or false posts you've seen buzzing around the internet?
- When you read about someone from history, how do you know that the source you're reading is telling the truth or is not fake news? What do you look for in a good source? (Ideas: written around the time of the events, non-biased sources, lots of sources, etc.)
- What do you know about the Bible? Do you think the Bible is real or is it fake news? Why?
- What % of the Bible do you think is accurate? Explain your answer.

You gave a lot of great ideas on how to determine if a source is accurate. You'd want it to be written pretty close to when the events happened. You'd want eyewitness accounts. You'd want to have multiple sources. Let's see how the Bible stacks up.

- How close to the events taking place in history do you think an original should be written so that we can be fairly certain it is reliable and true?
 - Scholars believe that the entire New Testament of the Bible was written before A.D. 70 - meaning within the lifetime of the people it was being written about and within 40 years of the death and resurrection of Christ. In other words, it was written when the participants and eyewitnesses would have still been alive. Not only that, but enemies of Christianity would've been able to stop it from growing fairly easily because it would be based on things that never happened.
 - Also, except for Judas who betrayed Jesus, all of the 12 closest followers of Jesus died proclaiming the truth of what they had seen and heard (which they also wrote down in the form of the Gospels and other letters we have in our Bible today). These guys went from smelly fishermen to suddenly going around talking about these events and changing the world. One cannot help but think something very real happened in these guys' lives. They all ended up dying defending the truth of what happened when believing in Jesus was illegal. People generally won't defend a lie to the death...and certainly not 12 people defending that same lie.

Ok, but what we have as the Bible today isn't the original copy written before A.D. 70 right? We just have translated copies. How do we know the copy we have is like the original? Remember the telephone Pictionary game earlier? Is the Bible like the telephone Pictionary game in that over time

it became less and less true to the original?

- What do you think? Do you think the Bible we have today is true to the original? Why does that matter?
- Unlike the game, you didn't have people blindly copying at random. You had the original, and people took that original and painstakingly made thousands and thousands of copies of that original so that more people could read it. Right now we have at least 5600 copies of the New Testament that were made in the 2nd and 15th centuries. Comparing them to one another, there is very little to no errors or differences. On the whole Bible, there are 66,000 ancient copies discovered so far! The copies and their translations are extremely good. It is by far the best preserved ancient literature in human history. We don't have time to go into all of that, but we'd be happy to show you a few books that you could read on the subject.
- I know we are throwing a lot at you right now. What questions do you have so far? How does this change your view of the Bible? Do you think it's a source you can trust?
- If the Bible is true, what might that mean for your life?

On top of everything we've already discussed, there are archaeological discoveries every day that verify the events recorded in the Bible, there are sources outside of the Bible (such as the Roman historian Josephus) who write about these same events from an outside perspective. You can book a plane ticket to Israel today and walk through the spots where some of these things happened. There are also lives being changed still today by the Bible's words. The Bible is more than just a book. It's filled with history, life lessons, wisdom, poetry, struggle, grace, and the very words of God.

Last question about the Bible that I'm sure you're wondering about: we're saying the Bible is God's words, but wasn't it written down by people? If it was written by people, how is it God's word?

- What do you think? How would that work?

In 2 Peter 1:20-21 it says "...no prophecy in 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 Spirit." The words "carried along" in their original language were commonly used to describe when the wind blew a sailboat to make it go through the water. So when the guys wrote down the words of the Bible, it was like God was moving through them giving them the direction and the words to say. Pretty cool huh?

TAKE AWAY

The Bible is more than just a book. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT) I believe that the Bible is accurate and trustworthy. Not only that, but it can change your life if you let it. Our challenge to you is to think about whether you will decide to trust in God's word.