

Truth Series: Lesson 1

How We Got the Bible

Life Question:

Where did the Bible come from?

Scripture:

II Timothy 3:14-17

Key Passage:

II Timothy 3:14-17

Reality Impact:

Students will understand how the Bible was created.

Materials Needed:

Napoleon Dynamite video

I. Prayer

II. Introduction

- a. **Illustration:** Video Clip—Napoleon Dynamite Pulls Kip to Town
[*Before the video, you may want to announce, “We are about to learn about God from the brilliant theologian and scholar, Napoleon Dynamite.”*]
Napoleon’s socially challenged brother, Kip, asks Napoleon to pull him to town. Napoleon mounts his bike, throws the roller-blade laden Kip a rope, and tows him into town on the back of his bike.
 - i. **Application:** What do you depend on to pull you through life? Some of you might be grasping onto your grades. Others might be riding on the backs of your friends. Still others might be staking your journey through life on your athletic or artistic ability. But are grades, friends, and talents strong enough to pull you through life’s storms?
- b. We need to hold onto something that’s strong enough to pull our weight if we want to weather life’s storms. We need to ask ourselves questions such as:
 - Where do I place my value?
 - Where do I derive my ethics and morality?Teens without answers to these questions often struggle—and plummet—when they encounter serious, hard core pressure.
- c. Those who have attended church for a while have probably heard every Sunday School teacher and youth leader say that the Bible has all the answers, and it can pull us through life’s storms. But how do we *really* know that the Bible

is God's word? How do we know that we can trust it? Is the Bible true?

- d. The answer: If the Bible is true, then evidence of its truth *must* exist. For the next six weeks we're going to discuss some of the evidence that validates our faith in God, Jesus, and the Bible.
- e. Tonight's lesson will focus on the Bible, but before we can discuss the evidence that proves the Bible true, we need to understand how the Bible was created—how it traveled from scrolls in ancient Israel to this book I'm holding. We'll start at the beginning.

III. The "First Words"—How did they come about?

- a. Verbal: Israelites passed down many of the first Bible stories verbally—by word of mouth from generation to generation.
 - i. **Illustration**: Christmas Stories a la Uncle Bob
Most families have one family member—that Uncle Bob with a gut that's as large as his smile and a voice that echoes across the back yard during Thanksgiving football games—who loves to entertain family gatherings with stories that he has told at Christmas, and Thanksgiving, and the following Christmas, and the following Thanksgiving... Most of the other family members know these stories so well that they could recite them verbatim, and if Uncle Bob forgets a part—or if he tries to add a little more drama than what really happened—the family will make sure to set him straight.
 - 1. **Application**: Israelites passed down the early Bible stories the same way—by word of mouth among families. Picture Uncle Levi telling his nephews how he and his brothers threw Joseph into the well. The nephews probably rolled their eyes and muttered, "Yes, Uncle Levi, we know that you were once bigger and stronger than Uncle Vice-Pharaoh Joseph, and yes, we know he used to scream like a girl..." and so on.
- b. Written: Soon, the Israelites wrote the stories down.
 - i. At first they used Papyrus.
 - 1. Papyrus is a reed that grew in the shallow lakes of Egypt and Syria. It made a tough an inexpensive paper¹, but it was fragile and easily destroyed². It was also difficult to preserve papyrus writings except in dry areas—such as the sands of Egypt or caves.³ How long ago did people begin using papyrus? We know the oldest papyrus we have today dates back to 2400BC.⁴

2. Because papyrus was so flimsy, early man also used:

- ii. Vellum (calf skin)⁵
- iii. They also developed various writing instruments such as: a chisel (for rocks), a metal stylus (for clay and leather), a pen, and—of course—ink.⁶
- iv. Their writing was by no means primitive. They used both capital letters, (known as uncial writing) and lowercase letters (known as minuscule writing).⁷
- v. Most of you are probably thinking, “I came to Youth Group, which is supposed to be fun, and I feel like I’m in school! What’s the point?” Good question. The point is: God’s children *wanted* to preserve scripture. Passing stories on verbally was not enough for them—they wanted to write the stories down so future generations would remember all that God had done, and they made more than one copy.

c. Let’s discuss how they wrote it down.

- i. Have you ever copied a friend’s homework? How did you do it? Did you copy it word for word? Problem for problem? Did you ever mess up and write the wrong answer to the wrong question or skip a question entirely?
 - 1. Careless copying creates inaccurate copies. The Israelites wanted accurate copies so their scribes developed a method of copying that ensured few—if any mistakes.
- ii. As I read these, think about how long it would take you to copy your friend’s homework the scribes’ way.
 - 1. The length of each column of a copy *had* to extend no less than forty-eight lines and no more than sixty lines.
 - 2. Each column breadth needed to consist of exactly thirty letters.
 - 3. The space of a thread had to separate each consonant.
 - 4. The scribe had to insert a breadth of nine consonants between each section.
 - 5. —And a space of three lines between each book
 - 6. The fifth book of Moses (Deuteronomy) had to conclude exactly with a full line.
 - 7. The scribe was forbidden to copy anything—even the shortest word—from memory. He had to copy everything *letter by letter*.
 - 8. The scribe counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book and compared it to the original.
 - 9. The scribes discarded any manuscript that contained even one mistake.

d. The scribes did all this work to preserve scripture *accurately*.⁸ But was all the work worth it?

i. **Illustration:** Forehead for Sale

A man decided to sell advertising space—on his forehead just a like a billboard—on E-Bay. He told prospective buyers that he would wear a temporary tattoo of their advertisement on his forehead for thirty days.

He received:

- 108 Bids
- And the top bid was \$22,000
- He only lived in a town of 300,000!

How many of you think that was a good deal? How many of you think the winner got his money’s worth?⁹

1. **Application:** A business actually paid \$22,000 for thirty days of words that would be washed off and never seen again! How does that compare to God, who preserved his word for us for eternity? The Israelites preserved scripture because they considered the information valuable. What value do you place on the Bible? How much is it worth to you?

IV. **Canonized!** A bunch of scrolls lying around about are useless if no one can find them. The Israelites began collecting and categorizing scripture, and that collection became the Old Testament.

a. Scholars call a collection of categorized scripture “canonized.” Canonized means: a rule of faith, and eventually a catalogue or list. In present usage it signifies a collection of religious writings divinely inspired and hence authoritative, normative, sacred and binding¹⁰. In other words they believed it to be inspired. The Bible is not a volume—it’s a collection.

b. Below is a brief summary of these collections that we now call the Bible¹¹:

The First Collection—Old Testament		The Second Collection—New Testament	
39 Books		27 Books	
Law	Genesis—Deuteronomy	Gospels	Matthew—John
History	Joshua—Esther	History	Acts
Poetry/Wisdom	Job—Song of Solomon	Letters of Paul	Romans—Philemon
Major Prophets	Isaiah—Daniel	General Letters	Hebrews—Jude
Minor Prophets	Hosea—Malachi	Prophecy	Revelation

V. **The Final Collection:** To understand how these two collections work together, we shall turn back to our favorite scholar, Napoleon Dynamite.

a. **Illustration:** Video Clip—Napoleon at the School Dance

Napoleon's date for the dance deserted him, and he stood alone in the corner of the gym while Deb danced with her friend Pedro. The scene was sad and pathetic. Napoleon was lonely, and Deb was dancing with someone she wasn't really interested in. something was missing. Finally, Deb and Napoleon danced together and POW! Lightning! Electricity so intense that Napoleon could only look at Deb and say, "I like your sleeves. They're puffy."

- i. **Application:** It takes two to tango. Apart, Napoleon and Deb were two kids lost in a crowded gym. Together, they sizzled. The Bible is the same. It's not just an old collection and new collection. It's the Bible. Apart the Old Testament and the New Testament mean nothing. Together they are a force that can't be separated.
 - b. So how was the Bible divided?¹²
 - i. Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris and later Archbishop of Canterbury, broke it into chapters in 1227.
 - ii. We still use those divisions today.
 - c. The Bible was written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. The problem? Not all Christians speak ancient Greek, or Hebrew, or Aramaic—especially none of us in here. Let's discuss how our English translation evolved. The foundations for the English translations are:
 - i. Septuagint 250 BC (Old Testament Greek Translation)
 - ii. Jerome's Vulgate (Latin Translations)
 - d. The history of the English Translation
 - i. John Wycliffe dies translating the Old Testament from Latin to English in 1380's
 - ii. The protestant reformation, led by great reformers such as Martin Luther, begins with an unbelievable desire to get the Bible in the hands of the common people.
 - iii. William Tendale translates the New Testament into English from Greek (1500's).
 - iv. Miles Coverdale completed and published first complete Bible into English from Tyndale's work, Greek and Hebrew, and other sources.
 - v. Protestant scholars in Geneva produced the Geneva Bible using both the original languages and Tydale's work.
 - vi. King James I of England commissioned The King James Bible in (1611).
 - vii. And so on... until it was translated in today's language without losing the true meaning of the passage.
- VI. **But how do we know the Bible is accurate?** Some of you, especially those of you who've copied volumes of homework in your day, might be thinking, "Hold on. That's enough copying to make anyone's hand cramp. How do I know that what my Bible says is what they originally wrote 2000 years ago?"

- a. **Illustration:** The Twenty Dollar Bill
 [*Pull out a twenty dollar bill.*]
 Banks often send their tellers to seminars to teach them how to distinguish between real currency and counterfeit currency. Believe it or not, the seminars don't teach the tellers about all the counterfeits. That would take too much time. Instead, the seminars teach the tellers to compare dollars to the *original currency*. The tellers know the original currency so well that they can spot a counterfeit easily.
- i. **Application:** How do we know that our current Bible is authentic? Like bank tellers with currency, we compare the words in our Bible to the originals—in this case, really, really old copies.
- b. Dead Sea Scrolls—In 1947, a group of Bedouin shepherds discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls in the barren hills surrounding the Dead Sea. The scrolls had been buried 2000 years earlier, and had somehow survived for twenty centuries. The Dead Sea Scrolls are the largest and oldest body of manuscripts relating to the Bible and to the time of Jesus of Nazareth—a truly remarkable archaeological find!¹³
- i. Archeologists compared what was on the scrolls to the copies of what we have today—and they matched!
1. Form Criticism—what we have today matched the Dead Sea Scrolls in form.
 2. Textual Criticism—what we have today matched the Dead Sea Scrolls in text.
- ii. The date of the scrolls and the form and text criticisms leave us with the verdict that the scriptures we have today are authentic.

VII. Conclusion:

- a. Lesson Recap/Life Answers:
- i. God inspired scripture:
1. **Scripture:** II Tim 3:14-17
¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. NIV
- ii. Authority of the Bible.

iii.

1. The Bible's title implies its authority. "The Word of God." The written record of the Word of God, which came to prophets, apostles, and other spokesmen—which "became flesh" in Jesus Christ. Christians believe Jesus Christ was the Word of God in a unique sense. Through Jesus, God communicated the perfect revelation of Himself to mankind. For Christians the authority of the Bible relates to the authority of Christ. The Old Testament was the Bible that Jesus used—the authority to which He made constant appeal and whose teachings He accepted and followed. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and led away to His execution, He submitted with the words, "The Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14:49). He saw His mission in the world as a fulfillment of the predictions of the Old Testament.¹⁴

iv. God preserved the scripture:

1. He preserved it through the scribes
2. He preserved it physically with archeological finds like the Dead Sea Scrolls, which destroyed many of the critics' arguments.

v. God delivered the scripture:

1. Many gave their lives so we could have it today
2. Many are giving their lives in countries around the world

VIII. Action Steps:

- a. Respect the Word. The Bible is God's inspired scripture to us. It has survived over thousands of years, and it is worth looking into.
- b. Respect the Price. Understand how many people died to bring you this book.
- c. **Quote:** People are willing to pay MONEY for something temporary, like e-bay forehead tattoos, but they neglect things that are permanent and eternal.

1 _____, ed., **ISBE** (city: publisher, date) 2238
 2 _____ Bruce, **BP**, (City: Publisher, date) 176
 3 Josh McDowell, Evidence That Demands a Verdict (City: Publisher, date) pg#
 4 **Need Note**
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 10 **ISBE**, 554
 11 _____ Broadman and _____ Holeman, Broadman and Holeman Charts (city: Publisher, date) 20
 12 **Need Notes** for this whole section
 13 <http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/deadsea.scrolls.exhibit/Today/today.html>
 14 _____, ed. Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary (City: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986) pg#

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Small Group Questions

1. How did people first pass down early Biblical stories?
2. Name two things early Israelites could have written on.
3. What does canonized mean?
4. Why are the Dead Sea Scrolls important?
5. How can we know that our Bible is the Bible written thousands of years ago?

Works Cited