Week 2 – How the Bible Forms Us

Can we trust the Bible?

https://youtu.be/UtyOqPBGhno?feature=shared

How God's Word Was Preserved and Passed Down
Lesson Length: 30 Minutes

Key Question:
Can we trust that the Bible we have today is the same message God gave long ago?

Key Verse:
Read Isaiah 40:8

Introduction (5 Minutes)

Opening Question

Ask:
Have you ever played the game “Telephone”?

In that game, a message is whispered from one person to another. By the end, the message is usually quite different.

Ask:
If people passed stories about Jesus from one person to another, how do we know the stories didn’t get changed?

Stories in the Bible were passed down through generations. Today we will explore why Christians can be confident that the Bible we read today accurately reflects what was originally written.

Part 1: People Were Good at Remembering Important Things (7 Minutes)

Modern vs. Ancient Cultures

Today we write everything down:

- Notes on phones

- Calendars
- Text messages
- Computers

Ancient cultures were different.

People trained their memories and passed important information through **oral history**.

They learned to memorize important information.

Jewish children and adults often memorized large parts of God's Word.

Teachers would repeat lessons over and over so students could remember them correctly.

Discussion Question

"Can you think of something you memorized years ago that you still remember today?"

Examples:

- The Pledge of Allegiance
- Song lyrics
- Bible verses
- The alphabet

Just like you can remember those things, people in the Bible times remembered important stories about Jesus.

Oral Histories Were Reliable

Among Jewish people:

- Important teachings were repeated regularly.
- Stories were told in rhythmic and memorable ways.
- Students memorized large amounts of information.

Because these stories were continually repeated, they remained remarkably accurate.

Application

The stories about Jesus were not invented centuries later.

They were circulating among eyewitnesses shortly after Jesus' resurrection and remained consistent as Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Part 2: The Stories Came from People Who Saw Jesus? (8 Minutes)

The Gospels Were Written Early

Most scholars place the Gospels within **35–65 years after Jesus' death.**

Many eyewitnesses were still alive.

If false stories had been written, people who witnessed the events could have challenged them.

The stories about Jesus were written by people who either saw Jesus themselves or talked to people who knew Him personally.

Who Wrote the Gospels?

Mark

- Recorded Peter's eyewitness testimony.
- Peter was one of Jesus' closest disciples.

Matthew

- Former tax collector.
- Literate and skilled in record keeping.
- Left a profitable career to follow Jesus.

Luke

- Physician and companion of Paul.
- Investigated eyewitness accounts carefully.
- Luke 1:2 specifically mentions eyewitness sources.

John

- One of Jesus' closest disciples.
- Direct eyewitness to Jesus' ministry.

These weren’t stories made up hundreds of years later.

Interesting Evidence

Ask:
"If you were making up a story, would you include embarrassing details about yourself?"

The Gospel writers did.

Examples:

- Matthew identifies himself as a tax collector.
- The disciples frequently appear confused or fearful.
- Peter's failures are openly recorded.

These details add credibility because they are not what people normally invent to make themselves look impressive.

Part 3: Has the Bible Been Changed? (5 Minutes)

The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1946–1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls, some ancient Bible scrolls, were discovered in caves near the Dead Sea, in Israel.

This discovery was one of the most important archaeological finds in biblical history.

When scholars compared them to newer copies of the Bible, they discovered something amazing.

The copies matched almost perfectly, even though they were over 1,000 years older than the oldest previously known documents.

A copy of every book of the Old Testament, except the book of Esther was found.

The Result

When scholars compared them:

- More than 95% matched word-for-word.
- Differences were mostly spelling variations.
- No major doctrine was affected.

New Testament Evidence

Today scholars possess approximately:

- 5,700+ Greek New Testament manuscripts
- Thousands of additional manuscripts in other ancient languages

Despite minor variations:

- More than 99% agree.
- No essential Christian doctrine is affected by any variation.

Discussion

"Why do you think God allowed so many manuscript copies to survive?"

Possible answer: Because multiple copies allow scholars to compare them and verify accuracy.

Part 4: Who Chose the Books of the Bible? (3 Minutes)

Many people assume church leaders arbitrarily chose the books.

Actually, early Christians asked a simple question:

Did this book come from someone who knew Jesus or learned directly from His followers?

Books were accepted because they were:

- Written by apostles,
- Written by close associates of apostles,

- Consistent with known apostolic teaching.

The church did not create Scripture.

The church recognized the writings that already carried apostolic authority and God's truth.

Conclusion (2 Minutes)

What Have We Learned?

The Bible can be trusted because:

✓ The stories were preserved through reliable oral traditions.
✓ The Gospels are rooted in eyewitness testimony.
✓ Thousands of manuscripts confirm remarkable accuracy.
✓ The books were recognized because of their connection to eyewitnesses of Jesus.
✓ Archaeological discoveries continue to support the reliability of Scripture.

Final Thought

The Bible has been read for thousands of years.

Many people have tried to destroy it or prove it wrong, but God's Word remains.

The Bible isn't just an old book.

It is God's message to us today.

Read Hebrews 4:12

Closing Discussion Question

"After today's lesson, what gives you the most confidence that the Bible can be trusted?"