

Lesson 7

Is The Bible Reliable?

Objective

Students will learn that we can prove the Bible is from God by looking at comparative ancient writings and the acid test.

Supplies

Teachers and/or Coordinators ensure supplies are ready prior to each class.

Print From the Site:

- ☐ Bible Reliable - Student Activity Sheet - one per student
- ☐ Bible Reliable - Grade 5-6 Student Booklet - for each Gr. 5-6 student to take home or to read during the class time.
- ☐ Bible Reliable - Visual Aids for Lesson - one for teacher to show
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Pens/Pencils/Pencil Crayons
- ☐ Attendance Chart
- ☐ Stickers (for attendance)
- ☐ Blank Sheets of Paper (one for each student and teacher)
- ☐ Watch/Clock or Timer

Optional Supplies

- ☐ Snack: Your Choice - Crackers, Fruit etc.

Teacher Tips

- ★ See Lesson 1

1) Introduction to Lesson

As students enter, welcome them and help them find a chair to sit at. Thank them for coming. Take attendance.

Say: **Over the weeks we have talked about different kinds of evidence and prophecies. Today's lesson will be proving if the Bible is reliable. This will help you be able to know for sure that the Bible truly is from God and will help you share that knowledge with others.**

2) Class Time - Is The Bible Reliable

20 minutes

Have visual aid ready for students before class.

Ask the class: **Has anyone ever said to you the Bible isn't really from God?** (Let students answer).

Today we are going to prove the Bible is reliable by looking at what we call the Acid test and comparing different historical writings.

Without the Bible, we can tell you Jesus lived and died, but we can't give you the full details without the New Testament. So how do we know it is real and true?

One way is to look at: How does the New Testament compare to other ancient books?

These are the histories of different manuscripts or hand-written copies. But know this, there are no originals! For any of these or any other historical documents from these times. Copies would all be handwritten. Why? These were old! All of these would be 2000 years or older. So copies would be made of the originals and what we have today are the copies.

So all the documents that you see (Show Visual Aid Chart) are all based on copies. And that is ok.

Title of Book	Date Written	Earliest Manuscript	Number of Manuscripts
<i>Homer's Iliad</i>	700 B.C.	Unknown	643
<i>History of Herodotus</i>	425 B.C.	A.D. 900	8

<i>Josephus' Jewish Wars</i>	A.D. 70	A.D. 400	9
<i>Histories of Tacitus</i>	A.D. 100	A.D. 900	20
<i>New Testament</i>	A.D. 50-100	A.D. 125	5735

As you read, point to the right part of the chart you are discussing:

Notice the famous book shown on the left, the date it was written and then, when the earliest known copy was made. Let's start with:

Homer's Iliad – written in 700 BC and not known when the earliest copy was written. Yet no one denies Homer's Iliad is not a real epic poem that was really written.

History of Herodotus – written in 425 BC and the earliest copy is over a thousand years later with only eight known copies.

Josephus' Jewish Wars – the first known copy was written 330 years later and Tacitus 800 years later.

The New Testament is only 25 to 75 years later from the earliest hand-written copy.

Questions:

Which book has the most copies? (New Testament by thousands more)

Which book had the first known copy written closest to the original date? (Again the New Testament. Written in the same generation. A person could easily be alive to have read the original and first copy that was made.)

The number of manuscripts for the New Testament gets added to constantly because of the number of copies we still find today. At the time of this chart over 5000 copies exist compared with Homer's 643 and Herodotus' 8 copies, yet no one denies any of these books/stories were written or questions their authorship.

If you ask historians what is the most historically accurate, well-documented book in the world, they would say the New Testament Bible. So, if people are going to dismiss the

Bible because it is made from copies – they are going to have to do the same for all these other famous books and stories. Yet no classical scholar would ever say any of these are in doubt!

Church Fathers

During the first and second century, other non-biblical writers quoted from the Bible so much that even if we lost all manuscripts from the Bible itself, we could replicate it almost perfectly with quotes provided by these first century writers.

These writers show us that those who lived during the time of Jesus and the apostles believed the things they heard and saw. They wrote them down quoting the Bible as true and accurate. Why? They trusted the evidence. Listed here are some examples of the men who quoted many things from the Bible as early as the time of Christ. This shows that the Bible was being used, shared, quoted and passed around from the time of Christ and can be trusted.

So we have seen that the Bible has more manuscripts than any other historical documents of the time and that the early church fathers quoted the Bible so much it could be rewritten almost entirely from their quotes alone.

3) Activity Time - Reliable Game

15 minutes

Prep

Before class, have paper and pens/markers available and a watch/timer to keep time.

Activity

For the game if you have more than 5 students, split them into two groups and see who can get closest to the original phrase.

Say: Every once in a while, there is a great question that curious students ask. They say something like ‘how can we trust that the Bible matches what was written originally?’ We looked at that today in our study but let’s take this a step further and see how it would actually work.

Remember that telephone game, where people whisper from one person to the next hoping that there is no trickster that mangles the message. If the message is different, everyone laughs and then tries again...or not.

Hand out a sheet to each student and give a pen. Tell them: One person will have a phrase written, the one sitting beside you will draw a picture explaining the phrase. Then the next person will try to write a phrase based on what they see in the picture and so on.

1. Do not look at each other's sheets.
2. No speaking
3. If you are drawing the picture you cannot write any words.
4. Everyone face the other way except the student sitting next me until you have your turn.
5. You must write or draw in 30 seconds.

(Name the student sitting beside you) Write the phrase on your sheet: *The Bible is true.*

Tell the student they can now draw a picture of what they read. Do the best they can. When they are done, tell the next student to turn and look to see what they drew and now write the phrase they think matches the picture – NO TALKING! And make sure you as the teacher hide your phrase so they don't know the original. Go through until they all have a turn.

Say: **How did it turn out?** (Let students answer)

People wonder if we possibly distort messages, how was the Bible written accurately?

First of all in the telephone game, there is a 1 to 1 correspondence and regression. The message is only given to the next person who then transfers it. However, for the Bible, the process was different.

Everyone flip your page. Now write the phrase I have written on my sheet. This is the original. *The Bible is true.*

Now after you have written that, I want you to all check each other's work to make sure they all say the same thing. Do they all say: "The Bible is true"? (Let students answer)
This is how it would have been with the Bible. There would have been the original and a group would have each written what was written in the original and each would have checked each other's work.

How easy is it to make a mistake if everyone can see the original and copy from it and check it? It's not easy to make a mistake at all! If there was a mistake it would be noticed and fixed.

If the Bible was seen as the Word of God (which it was) professional scribes would painstakingly check for errors. And, even if there were small errors like a missing period, or the word "the" written 2 times, the message is still the same. Minor errors like spelling mistakes don't make the Bible inaccurate. We can trust it to be true and accurate and know it was copied and checked thoroughly. This is a small example of how it would have worked 2000 years ago. We can know and trust the reliability of the Bible – it is true, real and accurate. God is very capable of making sure the Bible is exactly the way He wanted and needed it to be. We can trust God and the Bible.

4) The Acid Test Lesson

5-10 minutes

Have visual aid sheet ready to show students

The Bible Passes the Acid Test

What is the Acid Test? A general term for something agreed on and tested by a large number of different experts. The Bible is proven because it passes the acid test!

- 1. The New Testament books were written in the same generation in which the events took place.**
- 2. They were also shared among the very people about whom the documents spoke, while they were still alive to deny them.**

For example, they found documents from 50 AD. Jesus died in 33-34 AD. The Gospel of Mark is one such document. It has to have survived the acid test – there were enough copies to be found all around to share. The people knew Mark's gospel was special and worthy to be copied.

So if the book was fake, it would have been found out. People wouldn't have been willing to die to keep the written document of something if they thought it was false.

Mr. Louis Cassels – a famous journalist and editor wrote:

“But if Mark's gospel were written within a dozen or so years of Jesus' death – as it must have been if a copy had circulated so far as the Essene library by A.D. 50 – then it had to survive the acid test of all historical writing or journalism: namely, being published at a time when it could be read, criticized, and if inauthentic, denounced by people who were alive and present at the time the alleged events occurred. Let me assure you, as a reporter, nothing makes a writer more careful of his facts than the knowledge that he'll be read by someone who can say, 'I was there.'”

The people who shared and copied these New Testament documents were persecuted for their faith. Why would they die for something that wasn't real?

It would have been impossible to have made up an account of Christianity and to have successfully shown it to people of the same generation who knew better.

So today we have seen that if you deny the Bible, then you must deny all of history and the records of it. And even if you did, that doesn't change the fact that it is a historical, true and real document.

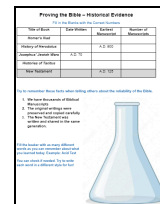
Next time we are going to look at eyewitness testimony which is a person who saw a certain event take place and then state that it did happen and is true.

Any thoughts or questions related to the lesson today? (Let students ask/answer.)

5) Activity Time - Student Activity Sheet

10 minutes

Hand out pencils or colored pencils to the class and an activity sheet to each. Have chart visual aid available for everyone to see as well.



Students will search through the visual aid chart to fill in their own chart from the Manuscript Copies to help remind them that the New Testament is a reliable, valid document. Help the students as needed. As a class, discuss the answers to the chart.

Then, move onto the next activity and have the students write as many words they can remember from today's class in the beaker. This can be done individually or together as a class. For additional fun, have a contest to see who can come up with the most words. For students who might be too young to write well. Have them draw a picture of a person copying word by word the pages of the Bible to make a copy.

6) Optional Activity - Snack (Your Choice)

5 minutes

Hand out a few snacks to each student. Say, **Today I want you to enjoy a snack while we remember all the fun facts we learned. The Bible is full of facts that are proven including historical evidence. What was your favorite historical fact you learned today and why? Let's go around the room and share.**

So if someone tries to tell you the Bible is not accurate, what can you say to them? Let students answer.

This is more evidence that the Bible is accurate, which we would expect if it came from God.

7) Optional Activity - Memory Verse

2-5 minutes

Everyone go to **John 8:32** in their Bibles and read the verse aloud as a class 2 times.

John 8:32 “and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Other options include:

- You saying a word and having them repeat it as you go through the verse
- Have students repeat a small phrase ex: “and you will know...” a few times before working on the next phrase.
- Have students repeat after each other

- Ask students to think of hand gestures. Ex: Point to themselves “AND YOU”, point to their heads when they say “WILL KNOW”, etc. and then go through verses as a class with gestures.

**Jesus is speaking about us having the ability to know what is true from the Bible.
Everything in the Bible is true and we need to follow it to live good, pleasing lives.**

8) Closing Prayer

Ask if there are any prayers the students want to share. Say closing prayer remembering to thank God for His Son and giving us the complete Word of God.