**Study Series: More Than a Carpenter**

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**Lesson Title: “Are the Bible Records Reliable?” (pp. 31-41)**

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The main point of this lesson is: The New Testament is a reliable historical document accurately recording the teaching and actions of Jesus.

Focus on this goal: To help adults have confidence in the reliability of the Bible.

Key Bible Passages: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21

To the Leader: You may find it helpful to **read** the article “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament” by Craig Blomberg on pages 1986-1988 of the CSB Study Bible (available for purchase at LifeWay.com). You can also **find** the author speaking on this topic on YouTube.

During the Session

**Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion**

**Encourage** adults to identify resources they used for research when they were in high school.

**Record** responses on a board.

**Inquire** where they go now to gain information.

**Record** those responses.

**Ask:**

1. Which of these resources for news and information would you say are 100% reliable and accurate?
2. How can we determine what sources to trust to tell us what we need to know?

**State:** The first two sessions of this study used Scripture to affirm Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. This lesson affirms we can trust the Scriptures as a reliable, historical document. The author applies reasonable, logical, and intellectual tests to the New Testament to help learners have confidence in the reliability of the Bible.

**Step 2. Day One – Grounded in History**

**Explain** one argument against the reliability of the New Testament is the belief that it was written well over one hundred years after the events occurred. However, discoveries in the fields of history and archaeology have confirmed the New Testament was written within one generation of those events.

**Ask:** Why should an earlier date for New Testament books increase confidence in its reliability?

**Explain** that memorizing large amounts of data to pass along as oral history was a highly valued art in the ancient world. The accounts of Jesus were carefully and accurately passed down by His followers by word of mouth until they could be written down. This happened within such a relatively short period of time that these accounts did not take on the form of myths and legends as some claim. Additionally, New Testament writers such as Luke provided accurate details of the first century.

**Discuss** Day One, activity 2 (p. 32).

**Draw attention** to the board where you wrote the sources participants have used for information and **ask** how many of those sources can be tested to assure their accuracy.

**Assert** the New Testament can be confirmed as reliable by three rigorous tests that are applied to all historical documents.

**Identify** those three tests from Day One (pp. 31-33).

**Step 3. Day Two – Biographical Test, Part 1**

**Encourage** learners to consult the first sentence of Day Two (p. 33) and define the bibliographical test.

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 1 (pp. 33-34).

**Note** that the question is whether we can be confident the New Testament text we have now is what was originally recorded.

**Request** adults to underline in the Day Two first paragraph some questions that are asked in the bibliographical test.

**Ask** whether most people believe in the accuracy of the works we still have by Aristotle and Caesar.

**Request** adults identify from Day Two (p. 34) how many of those writers’ manuscripts have survived, and the time intervals between the originals and the copies.

Then **encourage** adults to apply the questions of number of surviving manuscripts and time interval between originals and copies to the New Testament, **drawing** information from Days One and Two (pp. 31-35).

**Step 4. Day Three – Biographical Test, Part 2**

**Read** the Day Three paragraph (p. 36) that begins, “The application of the bibliographical test ….”

**State** that some argue the question “How consistent are the manuscripts?” does not pass the bibliographical test.

**Briefly detail** the claim by Bart Ehrman (p. 36) based on biblical variants.

**Request** adults consult Day Three (pp. 35-37) and explore how they could explain those variants to a skeptic.

**Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 37).

**Step 5. Day Four – Internal Evidence Test**

**Instruct** learners to identify from the first Day Four paragraph (p. 37) the task of the internal evidence test.

**Request a volunteer read** the Day Four margin/pull quote (p. 38).

**Ask:** Why would Matthew’s and John’s Gospels be credible? (As apostles they were eyewitnesses to the accounts they wrote.)

**State:** John Mark was a young man whose Jerusalem home was used as a meeting place by the apostles (Acts 12:12). Peter called Mark his son (1 Pet. 5:13) and was likely the primary source for Mark’s Gospel.

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 38).

**Ask:**

1. Do the differences between the Gospels in details and chronology detract or add to their reliability? Explain your reasoning.
2. Why couldn’t the disciples afford to risk inaccuracies in the accounts they relayed about Jesus?

**Step 6. Day Five – External Evidence Test**

**Request** learners consult Day Five (p. 39) and describe the external evidence test.

**Guide the group** through Day Five (pp. 40-41) to see external evidences supporting the New Testament’s accuracy.

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Clark Pinnock quote (p. 41).

**Discuss** Day Five, activity 1 (pp. 41-42).

**Step 7. Practical Application - Live Out the Lesson**

**Read aloud** Deuteronomy 32:47.

**Urge learners:** Because Scripture is life and not just meaningless words, and because it is absolutely reliable, make the Bible the primary source you go to for wisdom, direction, comfort, and understanding.

**Close in prayer**, thanking God for the trustworthiness of His Word.