

FAMILY THEME

How Did We Get the Bible?

LESSON AIM

Understand that God has faithfully preserved and communicated His Word so people can know, trust, and follow Him.

STUDY TEXT

[Psalm 119:89; Acts 2:6–8](#)



Scan to access
handouts and
digital materials
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d6.family/6939



BIG IDEAS

1. The People of God Treasure the Word of God ([Job 23:11–12](#))
2. God Has Assured Us His Word Will Endure ([Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; Mark 13:31](#))
3. God Communicates His Word in the Language of the People ([Mark 15:34–35; Acts 2:6–8](#))

Encourage learners to memorize the Family Scripture of the Month (**Hebrews 4:12**) along with family members.

Preview videos in advance. Ads may appear and are not controlled by D6.



AH 2-1



AH 2-2

Leader Lens

This lesson includes history, apologetics, and manuscript evidence. Use these details to help your group develop confidence in Scripture and a greater appreciation for how God has preserved and communicated His Word throughout history.

Connect

Choose the option that best fits your group.

VIDEO: Share this video of New Testament textual scholar Daniel Wallace addressing how we can trust the New Testament when the copies of manuscripts have differences: tinyurl.com/D6Wallace. Discuss the video with your group. Then say, *Today we will examine how we got the Bible and why we can trust it.*

OBJECT LESSON: Write this sentence in a small notebook: *The bewildered bookkeeper carefully compared the committee's complicated recommendation before approving the final copy.* Pass the notebook to another group member and ask them to copy the sentence onto the next page. Continue passing the notebook to several people in the group, allowing each person to compare their copy to the previous page for accuracy. After several copies have been made, compare the sentences and discuss whether any mistakes occurred. Then explain, *This process of copying and comparing manuscripts is much closer to how biblical manuscripts were preserved than the "Telephone Game," which critics sometimes use to describe the transmission of Scripture. Today we'll examine this deeper and see why we can trust the Bible.*

CONVERSATION STARTER: Ask group members to guess how much the following documents sold for:

- UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION – original first-printing copy \$43,200,000 (2021)
- CODEX SASSOON – 1,100-year-old Hebrew Bible manuscript \$38,126,000 (2023)
- CODEX LEICESTER – Leonardo da Vinci's scientific notebook \$30,802,500 (1994)

Then ask, *What makes these documents so valuable?* Conclude by saying, *Today we will examine a document so valuable that for thousands of years, people have dedicated their lives to copying it, studying it, and teaching it. In some cases, those efforts even cost people their lives.*

Teaching the Truth

Distribute the *Adult Member Outline* (AH 2-2).

Gospel Connection

This lesson highlights how God has faithfully preserved and communicated His Word so people from every generation and every nation can hear the gospel and respond to Jesus Christ in faith. Hearing and understanding God's Word is essential for salvation and spiritual growth ([Luke 8:11–15](#); [Romans 10:14–17](#)).

As with the inspiration of Scripture and spreading the message of the gospel, God has involved people in the preservation of His Word. It is an amazing testimony to the sovereignty and providence of God that He has entrusted fallible humans with a role in these most important endeavors and yet He has accomplished His purpose.

✧ BIG IDEA 1 ✧

The People of God Treasure the Word of God

[Job 23:11–12](#)

Job probably lived before the time of Abraham, so he had no written Scripture, but he did have the oral traditions passed down from earlier generations (**Job 23:11–12**). Eventually, these traditions were written down under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ([2 Peter 1:21](#)). God's people collected the Scriptures as they were written. A copy of the Law of Moses was kept with the ark of the covenant ([Deuteronomy 31:25–26](#)). Joshua and the prophets continued the practice of writing and preserving the record of God's work among His people ([Joshua 24:26](#); [1 Samuel 10:25](#); [Isaiah 30:8](#); [Jeremiah 30:2](#)). Daniel, while exiled in Babylon, had access to significant portions of the Hebrew Scriptures in order to calculate the timeline of the 70-year exile ([Daniel 9:2](#)), cite the Law of Moses ([Daniel 9:13](#)), and echo themes from Solomon's prayer of dedication ([1 Kings 8:46–52](#); [Daniel 6:10](#); [9:4–19](#)). These examples demonstrate the value God's people placed on preserving and studying His Word.

Jesus referenced the three major sections of the Hebrew Scriptures—Law of Moses, Prophets, and Psalms (the Writings)—as including prophecy about Him ([Luke 24:44](#)). This demonstrates that the entire Old Testament had already been collected and was available for reading and study. Paul noted that Timothy had studied these “sacred writings” from childhood ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)) and encouraged the public reading and teaching of Scripture ([1 Timothy 4:13](#)). Both Jews and Christians recognized the Hebrew Scriptures as the

Apologetics

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1946 and 1956 in the Qumran caves, included copies or portions of every Old Testament book except Esther. These scrolls were around a thousand years older than any biblical manuscript known at the time, dating from approximately 250 BC to AD 50. The remarkable agreement between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Old Testament demonstrates the careful preservation of Scripture across centuries and confirms that the Scriptures used by Jesus and the apostles are the same as those we read today. To see photos of the Qumran caves, visit tinyurl.com/D6Qumran.

Discussion questions are also included on the *Adult Teaching Outline* (AH 2-1) and PowerPoint 2 (editable).



PowerPoint 2



AH 2-3

Go Deeper

For additional information on how the New Testament was recognized, see **AH 2-3 (Canon)**. Consider giving a copy to each group member.

authoritative Word of God, using them as the foundation for teaching and the standard for evaluating doctrine ([Acts 17:2, 11; 18:28](#)).

Live It Out: Treasure God's Word by reading it, studying it, and trusting it.

Discuss Together:

- *Why was preserving and studying Scripture so important to God's people throughout history?*
- *How does Jesus' use of the Old Testament strengthen confidence in the Hebrew Scriptures?*

The New Testament church continued the practice of collecting the writings recognized as authoritative and sharing them with other believers ([Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27](#)). Paul frequently quoted Jesus, suggesting that records of His sayings were already circulating among believers ([Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 7:10; 9:14; 11:23–25; 1 Timothy 5:18b](#)). Peter even referred to Paul's writings as "Scripture" ([2 Peter 3:15–16](#)). These examples show that the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the apostles were recognized early as authoritative and were being collected, copied, and shared among churches. These writings became the foundation of the New Testament as it developed during the first century.

In the decades following the first century, Christians continued collecting and circulating the writings of the apostles, accounts of Jesus' life, and works explaining Christian doctrine. Over time, a process developed that recognized specific books as authoritative Scripture using several key criteria:

1. APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

- Written by an apostle or someone closely associated with the apostles.

2. ORTHODOXY

- In harmony with apostolic doctrine and basic teachings of Christianity.

3. CHURCH APPROVED

- Received and recognized by the whole church from the earliest days.

Live It Out: Approach Scripture with confidence, knowing God faithfully preserved His Word through generations of believers.

Discuss Together:

- *Why would the early Christians consider the writings of the apostles as authoritative?*

- *Why is it important to understand that the Church recognized Scripture rather than creating it?*

✱ BIG IDEA 2 ✱

God Has Assured Us His Word Will Endure

[Psalm 119:89](#); [Isaiah 40:8](#); [Mark 13:31](#)

Scripture explains how God inspired His Word, teaching that men spoke from God as they were guided by the Holy Spirit ([2 Peter 1:21](#)). However, the Bible does not explain exactly how God preserves His Word; it simply assures us that He will. Since God inspired Scripture and protected it from error, it is logical to trust that He has also preserved it. Because Scripture does not describe one specific method of preservation, believers should avoid building a doctrine around a single theory. Instead, we can rest confidently in God's promise that His Word will endure.

We can observe God's preservation of Scripture through the abundance of surviving manuscripts. As the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated, the Hebrew Scriptures were copied and passed down through the centuries with remarkable consistency. The New Testament writings show the same reliability. Scholars have catalogued around 5,800 handwritten Greek manuscripts containing portions of the New Testament. Some manuscripts are only small fragments, while others contain hundreds of pages. Although none of the original manuscripts still exist, the large number of surviving copies allows scholars to compare texts carefully and identify variations. Critics sometimes point to these textual differences as evidence that the Bible cannot be trusted, but this misrepresents the facts. From the beginning, Satan has challenged and questioned the truthfulness of God's Word ([Genesis 3:1, 4-5](#)), so believers should not be surprised when similar attacks continue today.

Live It Out: Rely on the unchanging Word of God as the trustworthy guide for your life.

Discuss Together:

- *What is the significance of having such an abundance of manuscripts of the biblical text?*
- *What does the preservation of Scripture across centuries reveal about God's character?*

Variations between handwritten copies are exactly what we would expect to find in documents copied by hand over many centuries. The reason for so many variations is the sheer number of manuscripts that exist. As New Testament textual scholar Daniel Wallace explains, many variants are so minor they

Go Deeper

A dramatic difference exists between the number of New Testament manuscripts and other ancient writings. Around 5,800 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament exist, with the earliest surviving fragment of the gospel of John dating within about 50 years of the original writing, and complete New Testament manuscripts appearing less than 300 years after the original writings. By comparison, around 1,800 copies of Homer's *Iliad* exist, with the earliest copies appearing about 400 years after the original. Around 250 copies of Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars* survive, with the earliest copy dating roughly 950 years later. About 210 copies of Plato's dialogues exist, separated from the originals by approximately 1,300 years. For more information, see tinyurl.com/D6Biblio.



AH 2-4

Major World Events That Shaped English Bible Translation

AD 1066

The Norman Invasion slowed Scripture translation into the English language.

AD 1453

The fall of Constantinople moved Greek culture and language westward, expanding access to the Greek New Testament.

AD 1455

Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press, greatly increasing the spread of printed Bibles.

do not meaningfully affect translation—things like spelling differences and word order. Textual scholars, such as Dr. Wallace, who devote their lives to studying these manuscripts, consistently affirm that no essential Christian doctrine depends on a disputed text. Believers can have confidence that God has faithfully preserved His Word and that the Bible we hold today accurately communicates His message. **For more on this, see AH 2-4 (Translations).**

For a deeper study of New Testament manuscript research, visit The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts at csntm.org or search for videos by Daniel Wallace on YouTube.

Live It Out: Trust that God has faithfully preserved His truth, even when critics question the reliability of Scripture.

Discuss Together:

- *Some critics will use textual variations to question the reliability of Scripture. Why should textual variations not undermine a believer's confidence in Scripture?*
- *How should confidence in the truthfulness and preservation of Scripture shape the way Christians live today?*

✧ BIG IDEA 3 ✧

God Communicates His Word in the Language of the People

[Mark 15:34–35](#); [Acts 2:6–8](#)

While on the cross, Jesus cried out using the words of Psalm 22:1 in Aramaic: “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (**Mark 15:34**). [Psalm 22](#) was originally written in Hebrew, Jesus appears to have quoted it in Aramaic, Mark explained its meaning in Greek, and modern Bibles translate it into English and other languages. Without translation, many readers would not understand what Jesus said, just as some bystanders mistakenly thought He was calling for Elijah (**Mark 15:35**). Translation is essential for communicating God's Word to people of different languages and cultures.

The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew because it was the common language of the Israelites. Portions of Ezra and Daniel, along with scattered phrases elsewhere in Scripture, were written in Aramaic, which became a dominant administrative and international language during the Persian Empire. Following the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek emerged as the dominant international language, so the New Testament was written in Greek. Between approximately 280 and 100 BC, the Old Testament was translated

into Greek in a version known as the Septuagint, which became the standard Bible for many Greek-speaking Jews. Old Testament quotations in the New Testament often reflect the wording of the Septuagint.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit miraculously enabled people from many nations to hear God's message in their own languages (**Acts 2:6–8**). Jesus also commissioned His followers to make disciples among all nations (**Matthew 28:19**). In John's vision of Heaven, he saw a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language worshiping before the throne of God (**Revelation 7:9**). These passages reinforce God's desire for His Word to be understood by people in their own languages.

Live It Out: Help others understand God's Word by supporting efforts to make Scripture available in every heart language.

Discuss Together:

- *Why is it important for people to have the Bible in their heart language?*
- *What does Pentecost reveal about God's desire for people from every culture and language to hear His truth?*
- *What can Christians do to help make the Bible more understandable and accessible to others?*
- *What can Christians do to help younger generations better understand and engage with God's Word?*

Respond

Use one of these options to help your group put this lesson into practice this week.

REFLECTION: Challenge group members to consider the dedication and sacrifice of those who copied, translated, and preserved Scripture throughout history. Encourage them to thank God for preserving His Word and to take advantage of the access we have to Scripture today by reading, studying, and applying God's Word consistently in their daily lives.

APOLOGETICS: Remind group members that from the beginning of human history, Satan has challenged and questioned the accuracy and trustworthiness of God's Word. We need to equip ourselves with answers to the challenges we encounter. Encourage group members to explore videos and resources from scholars such as Daniel Wallace and Michael J. Kruger.

SHARING ONE'S FAITH: Encourage group members to help make God's Word understandable and accessible to others. Suggest supporting Bible

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Principle

Passing the faith to the next generation involves helping them understand, trust, and engage with God's Word in ways they can clearly understand.

D6 Discipleship Journals

Remind group members to bring their *D6 Discipleship Journals* each week for lesson notes, sermon notes, journaling, and class discussion. These journals are designed to support discipleship both at church and at home.

Bible Engagement

Encourage your group members to complete the daily devotions in the *D6 Discipleship Journals* this week and use the journaling pages to reflect on what God is teaching them through personal study, class discussion, and Sunday sermons.

translation ministries, providing Bibles to younger Christians or seekers, or helping others engage with Scripture in ways that connect to their heart language and life experiences.

Notes:



AYG-2

As You Go (AYG-2) is a resource to help parents discuss the truths of this lesson with their children at home. Give copies of this page to those who will benefit from it and encourage them to use it at home this week. *As You Go* is also available for FREE download at D6curriculum.com/bonus (No password required.)



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