

Origin story



Psalm 119:105



In our session today we'll be diving into the origin story of the Bible. It will focus on how the Bible came to be, look at the history of how it was formed and consider whether it can be trusted. As Christians, it is important that we keep the purpose of the Bible, found in Psalm 119:105, at the centre of our focus. We'll see fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls and evidence of manuscripts building the content of God's word. Like pieces of a jigsaw, they were placed together to create the book we call the Bible, and today we're going to discover its origin story.

You will need:

- Bible verse Jigsaw handout - one set for each group
- Extract from *Why Trust the Bible?* by Dr Amy Orr-Ewing (optional)



Beat

Say:

For our Beat activity today, we'll get the chance to find out how good you are at jigsaw puzzles.

Leader's notes:

For this activity, the 'Bible Verse Jigsaw' handout can be copied, cut up and divided into sets. You will need a set for each group. The winning group is the one who completes the jigsaw first and reads out the Bible verse together.

Read:

'Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.' (Psalm 119:105 NLT)

Say:

In our session today we'll be diving into the origin story of the Bible. It will focus on how the Bible came to be, look at the history of how it was formed and consider whether it can be trusted. As Christians, it is important that we keep the purpose of the Bible, found in Psalm 119:105, at the centre of our focus. We'll see fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls and evidence of manuscripts building the content of God's word. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, they were placed together to create the book we call the Bible, and today we're going to discover its origin story.

 **Bridge****Leader's notes:**

Watch the clip and discuss how it reflects, or contrasts, the lifelong journey of studying God's word

Watch:

60,000 piece Costco puzzle finished by San Luis Obispo puzzler – The Tribune (1:35)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOUNIwHgQEQ>

 **Amplify****Leader's notes:**

The Amplify section today will be led by the knowledge and understanding of your group. Resources are provided to explore the origin story of the Bible, but they may raise further questions for the young people to explore. The aim is for the group to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible, where it came from and what they would like to discover in the future.

Say:

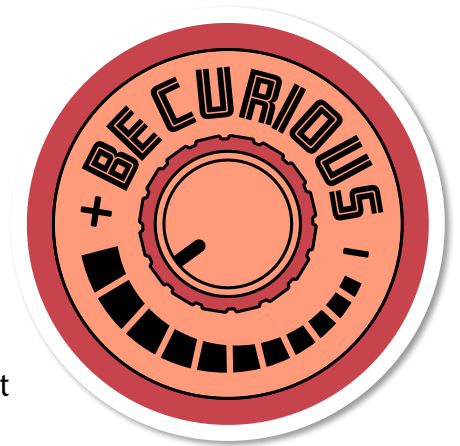
In her book *Why Trust the Bible?* Dr Amy Orr-Ewing compares the Bible with the validity of other historical texts and discusses how it measures up to documents that are well respected today.

Leader's notes:

You may wish to share Dr Orr-Ewing's *Why Trust the Bible?* extract with the group, or just read it to them. As you read through each paragraph, stop to discuss their reflections on what they are reading. Is this new information to them? How does it change or reinforce their understanding of the Bible's origin story?

Extract from *Why Trust the Bible?* Dr Amy Orr-Ewing pp28-29

'When we talk about the Bible, what do we actually mean? It is worth observing that the Bible is not just one book written or compiled by one person; it is a collection of 66 books divided into two sections. There are 39 books in the first, largest part, and 27 in the New Testament. The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 authors. These people came from all kinds of different backgrounds; among them were kings, diplomats, poor people, fishermen and tentmakers. The Bible was originally written in three languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek – and on three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. The vast spread of the Bible's original social, geographical, and cultural



contexts was further increased by a multiplication of diversities as the manuscripts were copied and distributed throughout the known world. This means that there is a huge number of ancient manuscripts to be examined, and the text of the Bible is extremely well-attested.

‘The integrity of any ancient writing is determined by multiple factors, one of which is the number of documented manuscripts (or fragments of manuscripts) that still exist. It may be helpful to look at an example from the ancient world for a sense of how the New Testament fares in the landscape of the preservation of classical literature. For example, there are well over 200 witnesses of the ancient manuscripts of Plato’s Tetralogies, the earliest fragments of which are from the third century BC. These can be studied and compared to determine the accuracy and quality of the transmission of his writings throughout the years. This text is read and respected in the present day. When it comes to the Bible, there are more than 5,100 handwritten manuscripts in the Greek language in support of the New Testament alone that help us determine the accuracy of its text. The earliest fragments are from the second century AD. The New Testament fares well alongside classical literature preserved in a manuscript tradition.’

Say:

So, how were these manuscripts discovered, and how did they become the Bible that we use today?

Leader’s notes:

Watch and discuss the following clip as it traces the origin story of the Bible. Again, as you review the material, discuss with the group what information is new to them and how it informs their perception of the Bible.

Watch:

The History of the Bible, Animated – National Geographic (3:45)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AuDhWiO2D4&t=121s>

Ask:

How has the use of the Bible continued to evolve and develop?

What format of the Bible do you use the most? Why is it your preferred choice?

 **Bridge****Leader’s notes:**

If your group would like to explore the origins of the Bible in more depth, then watch and discuss the following clip together.

Watch:

How Were the Books of the Bible Chosen? (John Meade) – Crossway (3:57)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7iMDlnJeW8>

Sound Check

Say:

How does what you have discovered today impact your understanding of the Bible?

Say:

In the next clip Dr Orr-Ewing makes the question of Biblical trust personal to us. She pulls together everything we have looked at so far and encourages us to answer the question of trust for ourselves.

Watch:

Bible Shorts Episode 2: 'Can We Trust the Bible?' with Amy Orr-Ewing (3:30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17IkeRbkza8>

Leader's notes:

Follow up the clip with a group discussion. Challenge the group to answer, for themselves, the question, 'Do you trust the Bible?'

Say:

Dr Orr-Ewing says the following:

'My experience is, as you look into this, the more you study the texts of the Scriptures, the clearer it becomes that this is an incredible document even just on historical terms.'

Ask:

The question is, are we taking the time to explore and discover the book given to us by God?

Leader's notes:

Give the group time to identify three questions that they would like answered about the Bible. Ask them to write down the questions or keep them in a notes app. When they have completed their three questions, encourage them to share with the rest of the group. Are there any overlapping themes or questions that could be combined? Note down the key questions from the whole group and ask each member to choose one to research. There will be an opportunity to feed back on what they have discovered in next week's session.



 **Bridge****Ask:**

What is your response to the following quote?

‘When we come to the Bible and try to listen to its claims, we can easily misjudge those claims if we hear them only from within the framework of our own modern assumptions. Letting the Bible speak for itself, that is, letting it speak in its own terms, includes letting the Bible speak from within its own worldview rather than merely our own.’

– Vern Poythress

 **Selah****Say:**

For our time of reflection today, we’re going to focus on the words of Psalm 119:105. As you listen to the music, ask God to guide you as you discover more about his word.

Watch:

‘Thy Word – Psalm 119’ – sung by Ellie Holcomb – Official Lyric Video (3:18)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmFzKYa6EHU>

Leader’s notes:

When the music finishes, encourage the group to spend time in shared prayer, asking God to help them deepen their understanding of Scripture.

 **Coda****Say:**

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

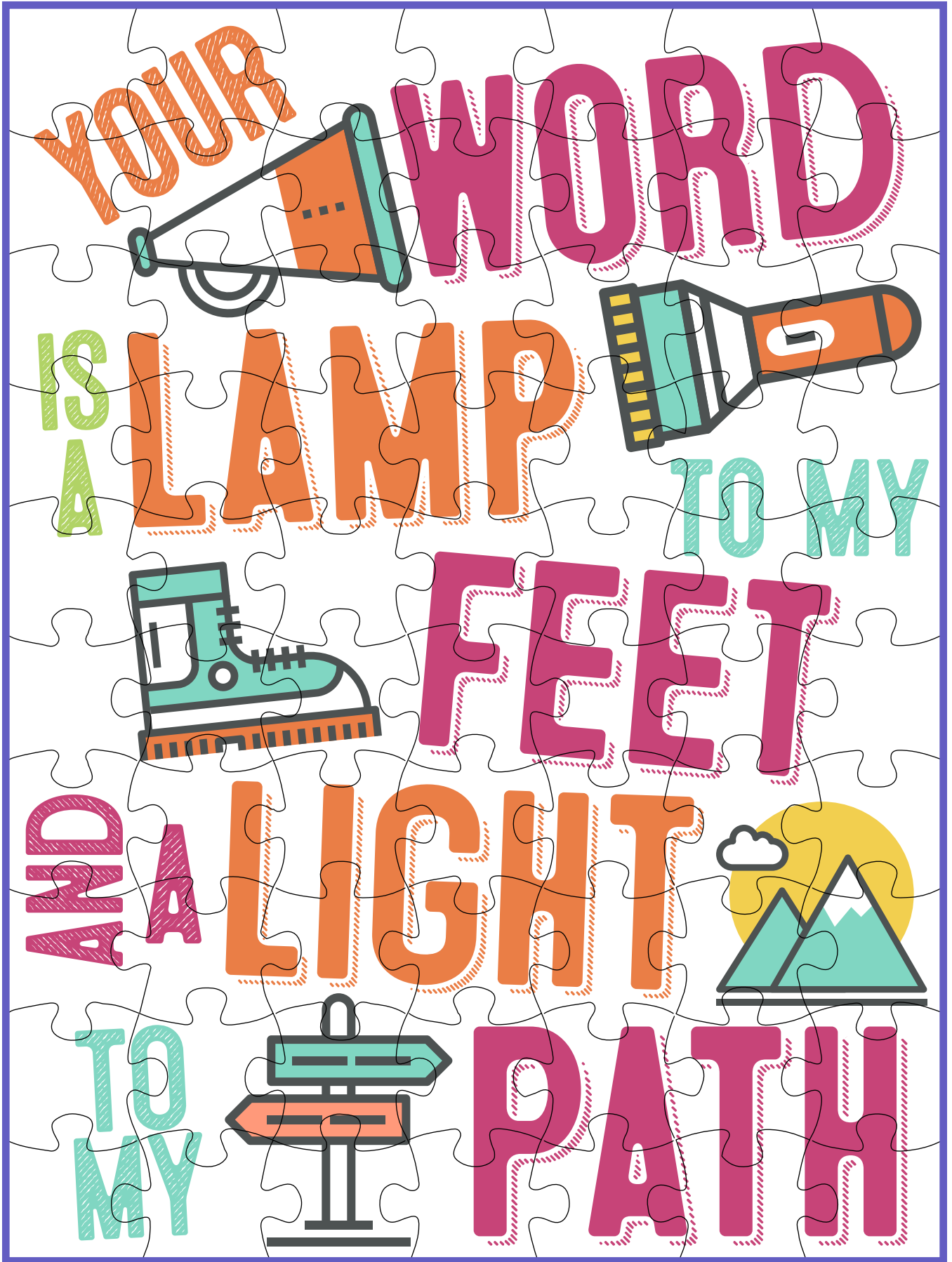
As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from all we have discovered about the origin story of the Bible?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.





Extract from *Why Trust the Bible?*

By Dr Amy Orr-Ewing p.28-29

‘When we talk about the Bible, what do we actually mean? It is worth observing that the Bible is not just one book written or compiled by one person; it is a collection of 66 books divided into two sections. There are 39 books in the first, largest part, and 27 in the New Testament. The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 authors. These people came from all kinds of different backgrounds; among them were kings, diplomats, poor people, fishermen and tentmakers. The Bible was originally written in three languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek – and on three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. The vast spread of the Bible’s original social, geographical, and cultural contexts was further increased by a multiplication of diversities as the manuscripts were copied and distributed throughout the known world. This means that there is a huge number of ancient manuscripts to be examined, and the text of the Bible is extremely well-attested.

‘The integrity of any ancient writing is determined by multiple factors, one of which is the number of documented manuscripts (or fragments of manuscripts) that still exist. It may be helpful to look at an example from the ancient world for a sense of how the New Testament fares in the landscape of the preservation of classical literature. For example, there are well over 200 witnesses of the ancient manuscripts of Plato’s Tetralogies, the earliest fragments of which are from the third century BC. These can be studied and compared to determine the accuracy and quality of the transmission of his writings throughout the years. This text is read and respected in the present day. When it comes to the Bible, there are more than 5,100 handwritten manuscripts in the Greek language in support of the New Testament alone that help us determine the accuracy of its text. The earliest fragments are from the second century AD. The New Testament fares well alongside classical literature preserved in a manuscript tradition.’