

My Relationship with the Bible

Prior to Sermon: We have Beginner's church for 3 and 4 year olds, so if you are a parent that would like some age-appropriate teaching at this time, you can take your child out to that area, which is right next to the Entrance 2 doors.

Introduction: At FBC, we talk a lot about the Bible. You might have figured out that it seems to be pretty important to this church body. Have you ever wondered why it is so important? Many of you have heard that you should read your Bibles – not just at church, but at home too. But, if you were honest with yourself, you might have thought before, “Well, I have gone lots of days without reading my Bible, and nothing dramatic or evil has happened to me.” I seem to be okay.

Why do we sometimes think this way? When it comes down to how we spend our time, why do we often choose other pursuits over studying Scripture? I think there could be several reasons, and we will touch on some later on, but many might say it's because they are busy, but it's not that we don't have enough time. Most everyone makes time for the things they want to do, right? The average Netflix subscriber watches Netflix for an hour and 23 minutes a day. The average smartphone consumer uses their phone an average of 5 hours a day. If you are a sports fan, you often are able to make room to see that big game. I know I do. So even though we are busy, time isn't the issue. I believe the issue is *need*. We think that we don't need it. We think we are good enough and wise enough to make it through okay by ourselves. So let's go after that thought today – I think that God gives us evidence that we have to have Scripture in our lives.

Whether you are a child, a teenager, or an adult, God wants you to understand what your relationship with the Bible should be. God wants you to know that the Bible is a vital part to the follower of Jesus' daily life. And as I have studied this subject, God doesn't motivate to dig into his word out of guilt. Rather, it motivates you because the Bible is simply so good – it's worth it. Let me show you a few reasons why.

The Bible offers you the gospel. It tells you good news. In fact, the very best news. Life-altering, eternity-changing news. The Bible answers the giant thoughts about life that people search for – all the time. It tells you the meaning of life. It gives the reason you are on this earth. The Bible declares that each one of us matter – created in the image of God. It describes what is wrong with this world, and it gives the solution. Scripture tells of God's

mammoth rescue to pull us from a deep, hellbound trouble. It tells you of a Savior. Just look at this verse on the screen...

Romans 3:23-24 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified (made just) by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Sinners made just. Lawbreakers declared innocent. This is no small thing. That's Jesus redeeming those that follow him.

This is the foundation. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the only way (*John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me)* – to repent of our sins and believe by faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Without reading these words of the good news or hearing them from someone, you have no way to know God's gift to you.

The source of truth is God. And if the source of truth is God, then where must we go to find the truth about everything? The Bible – the place where His truth has been communicated. Realize this is *the* truth, and it's for you.

Illustration: Growing up in Georgia, as I have told many of you, I became attached to sports teams from Georgia. As you know, it's almost un-American to leave the loyalty of your favorite childhood team. When my team made it to their first Super Bowl when I had just turned 13, I was ecstatic. This was right before the internet truly became what it is today, so my source for information was newspapers. That season, most Mondays after a big Atlanta win, my dad and I would drive to the gas station to get an Atlanta newspaper. I saved those newspapers for years because they had really good news about my favorite team. I went back many times to reread those articles because it reminded me of a great year. But you know, those old newspapers only told me about what happened back then.

Application: But this is what is different about the gospel news of the Bible. The gospel not only looks back in the past for the believer when Jesus paid our sin debt, it tells you what the gospel is doing right now for the believer as Jesus grows and matures all who follow after him. Further, the gospel tells you what is going to happen for the believer in the future when we will see Jesus face to face and he will reign as king. The gospel – past, present, and future - is *all* good! If you are a follower of Jesus, and you hear these words - *Praise God for his truth. He has given you life now and he will continue to give you life.* This is good. It's refreshing. It's marvelous to believe and know the way to God. Read the good news over and over again and remind yourself that you are an undeserving recipient of God's amazing grace.

So what do we do with this gospel news? Psalm 119 has the answer.

Psalm 119:29-31 - Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. I cling to your testimonies, O LORD. We go after God.

Do we not need the truth and the good news *right now*? What's the phrase of the last 12 months – *fake news*! Our culture is struggling right now attempting to figure out what is right and what is wrong – and often, even after all the talking and debating, can't solve the issues. It often appears that whoever protests the loudest or is the most outraged is right. But God's truth is unmovable. It's unchanging. It is good and right even when the majority differs from God's truth on relationships, marriage, speech, how we treat our enemies, and so on.

Transition: The Bible offers you the gospel, and it also....

The Bible fuels your spiritual life.

Right before Moses dies, he gives God's people some final advice. He talks about the law that God had given his people. He shows them why it is so critical to know God's word.

Deuteronomy 32:45-47 - And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

These aren't empty words – it's your life. The law was designed by God to show them how to love God and to love others. These words of God *matter*. They are the key to your growth of becoming more like Jesus. Now let show you a passage from the New Testament that shows what happens when continual study and application occurs in the believer's life.

Turn in your Bibles to II Timothy 3:16-17. If you don't have one with you, there are Bibles in the chairs around you – possibly in front of you or underneath your seat. In that Bible, you will find the passage on page _____.

*II Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete**, equipped for every good work.*

I love this passage. It tells me that everything I need for my walk with God is right there – in his word. You see that phrase in verse 17 – *that the man of God may be complete*? Your ESV might also have the word *competent* or another translation might say *thoroughly equipped*. All of those are excellent translations from the original Greek language, with the idea being that God has given me everything I need to be complete in him. Now will I often need help? Absolutely. Will I often need more understanding? Yes. So surround yourself with people that know the word. The verse says Scripture helps correct and train. Let me give you a brief example – in my stage of life right now, I need help parenting. The verdict was in a long time ago – George is not a good dad in his own power. I have heard parents say, "You just got to find whatever works for your kids." But I don't want whatever for my kids – I want Jesus for them. So I look for help from the Bible, and I study what it says about fathers and their children. I ask parenting questions to godly men and women. Our church has gone through a Bible-based Paul Tripp DVD series on parenting – I wanted that too. Do you see what I mean here? That's just one area of life where I need God's help. I need it in a lot of other areas too. But you have his Word. You can live a competent Christian life when you are powering your life on the word of God.

Application: So...*Feed on the Word*. Fuel your spiritual body with Scripture. In youth group and Sunday school, the teens and I often liken studying God's Word to physical food. Because, hey, if I understand teens correctly, teens love some good food. Maybe some of you might have skipped breakfast this morning. Some of you can do that. But lunch is coming and it sounds really good, right? You can't wait to dive in to that meal, especially if you missed the previous one. We can all skip meals, but sooner rather than later, that is to our own detriment. It harms us physically. Our bodies become weak, we can't function like we should, our energy levels run low, and working and living become a lot more difficult. We need nourishment. It's exactly the same for you following Jesus. You need nourishment. So keep feeding on Scripture. Don't go hungry. Don't starve yourself spiritually by being far from the truth of Scripture.

The Bible gives you God's will for your life. Loving, righteous, amazing Jesus wants to "transform" you.

Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

What does that mean to “test” and “discern”? You are carefully analyzing, checking it out, and weighing the options. If we are wise, you don’t try to be careless about how you make decisions. You aren’t rash; you want to do the right thing.

Illustration: We do careful decision making all the time...suppose you are buying a birthday gift for your girlfriend or boyfriend. If you want to keep dating this person, you are going to spend some time planning out what you should do. You think about it. You weigh the options. You check your supply of cash. You discern what they would like.

We do it for small things too – how should I spend my evening? Well, I could do that project in the garage or if you are a student, perhaps I should do some homework, but then again, maybe you have heard that YouTube has some new videos and you haven’t watched any YouTube since before dinner 45 minutes ago. So what do you do? It might take you just a few seconds to figure it out, but you test and discern to figure out what you need to do or want to do.

You face small decisions all the time, but we also face larger ones. Teens, how do I treat my parents even when I think they are wrong? Adults, how should I respond to those hateful words from my co-worker? Or, should I stay married to my husband?

So, how do you do the right thing? How do you know what how to make those decisions? Let me call you to Scripture in Colossians 2. You can see the verse on the screen.

Colossians 2:6-7 - Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

So how do you know how to do the right thing? What do you think is the key phrase in that verse? **Walk with Jesus.** This is an active thing. You must be walking with Jesus because there other views and other ideals from the enemy that desire to pull you away from his truth. Simply look at the very next verse in Colossians 2.

Colossians 2:8 - See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition...and not according to Christ.

With so many things that aren’t truthful pushing and clawing at your one life, you have got to gear up and see truth. Where to you find the truth of God’s will?

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

According to these verses, what is to lead and guide our thinking and living? *God’s Word.* And it seems from all the verses that we have looked at today is the Bible leading and guiding for specific areas, but not in others? *No, it doesn’t seem that way.* What should we understand from this? *The Bible is for my whole life and every decision I make.*

And if this is true, if the Bible is for my whole life and every decision that I should make, how now should we live?

The Bible provides truth for how we live each day. This is how we walk with Jesus. There is no mystery to being close to God. The Bible is like a unique pair of glasses through which we can see and understand everything in life...for the small and big questions. The Bible is the truth we need to see for how we live, the friends we make, how we do our school work, how I treat my wife, how I respond to my parents, and everything else. For every follower of Jesus, this is what we need – to see all of life through the truth of Scripture and Jesus will transform you. This is a worldview shaped by Scripture.

Application: *Delight in his law. It is good.*

Psalm 1:2 - His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

So delight in God’s instruction – his law. It’s not restricting – it’s your guide through troubling times.

Do you see how vital the Bible is to the follower of Jesus? It offers us the grandest news of all-time with the story of Jesus’ love for us in his life, death, and resurrection. The Bible fuels your spiritual life, where you can repeatedly feed on the hope and truth of the Creator God. The Bible gives you God’s will for your life, where you find answers for on how to live for God’s glory. From your way to God to the small decisions you make every day, the Bible is there.

In our remaining time, I would like to address a couple questions you might have as you think about your relationship with the Bible.

Parents, should you make your kids read their Bibles? No, that's too tough of a question. Next one. Okay, I am not saying this is God's law for your house, but can I give you some suggestions? We are in a home with two boys who can't read yet. So we read the Bible to them – nearly every day. One day, they will read the Bible for themselves. I am responsible to God to train my children and teach them diligently the words of the Lord. My prayer for my children is that one day they would become two young men that desire to seek God with their whole hearts. So what am I going to do? I am going to train them – I want them to see God all the time. I won't be able to turn their hearts to God, but I can give them opportunities to see over and over again how marvelous God is. I would encourage you to make a time for your children to read the Bible. There are several Bible reading plans for kids that are simple and help build their knowledge of God's truth.

But what if the Bible is boring? Ever heard this before? The Bible just doesn't interest me all that much. I can't get into it. Let me answer this in two ways – one, boring isn't bad. We live in a culture that feeds our flesh that if it isn't exciting, it not worth doing. That is a lie. There are lot of “boring” things that you do every day that are completely necessary to your existence. You brush your teeth. You eat vegetables. You mow the grass. There will be days where reading the Bible isn't a spectacular mountaintop experience. That's okay.

Secondly, ask God to change your heart. Reorient your perspective and remember what is true. This is God's Word to his people. It is good for me to read it, study it, and know it – even when it is difficult to understand.

What if I don't understand the Bible? Sometimes I just don't get what it says. Am I allowed to say this? Me too! There are difficult parts of Scripture. But there are also wonderfully simple, clear, rich, and flawless words leaping off of every page. Don't dismay when faced with difficult words. Pray for understanding and keep pursuing truth. What isn't the answer is giving up. For instance, teens, I have seen many of you passionately pursue things that you are interested in. Many of you creatively solve problems and work on hobbies over and over again. Many of you have a drive to excel. My prayer for you is that you would have that same drive toward fueling your spiritual life in the word.

Conclusion: It is my hope that you see that the Bible must be close to the follower of Jesus. As you take inventory of your life, maybe you realize that you need more of God's Word in your life. If that is true, then let me encourage you to put feet to the truth. Pick a Bible reading plan and then begin to follow through. Can I suggest one more thing? Often I view my relationship with the

Bible casually. You know, I see the Bible as a “when-I-get-around-to-it” type of thing. Look to elevate that thinking. Make feeding your spiritual life and developing your knowledge of God's will a thoughtful thing.

But understand that far too often, I have opened my Bible to check an assignment off my list rather than letting the life-fueling words of God sink in. I look to complete a task rather than see the beauty of the good news of Jesus. Delight in the word rather than it becoming your duty.

I am not here today to yell at you if you aren't reading your Bible every day. It's not that you are forced to do it, but rather you can't live well for Jesus without it. I am telling you that the Bible is so worth part of your day that it is critical to your relationship in following Jesus. This message today isn't to make you feel guilty, it's to make you hungry. Studying for this sermon this week increased my hunger. I need more meals from Scripture because that's where my God is.

That's God's Word for us today. If you have more questions about what it means to develop your relationship with the Bible, we would love to talk and praying with you. FBC is delighted to walk beside you as you learn and follow Jesus.