

## **Core Values: Biblically Based**

II Timothy 3:16-17

### **O Give Me That Book**

I got this Bible a long time ago. In fact, I got it when I was here some 25 years ago. It's an NIV Study Bible that has been an important part of my walk with Christ for a long time.

I got it from Bob and Robbie Battoe. They were in a clean-up and restoration business at the time. They cleaned up homes that might have incurred a fire or flood. This Bible was a survivor of one of those calamities, I don't know which.

As I said this Bible has been with me for a long time. It's well marked up and dog-eared. I have kept it together with tape for longer than I care to admit.

Its pages though still speak. God is present when I read. What's written comes alive and works to mold and shape my life. Whenever I open the pages of this book, I am profoundly affected. I am thankful for God's Word.

Just recently, I have been reading the Bible more and more from my iPad. While that's taken a bit of an adjustment, God still speaks and my life is just as affected.

John Wesley in commenting on the importance of scripture in his life had this to say, *"I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven.*

*He had written it down in a book. O, give me that book! At any price, give me that book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book.*

*Here I am, far from the busy ways of man. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven."*

### **Core Values**

Last week we began a new sermon series with the intent of focusing on our Core Values as a church.

I can think of no better season for us to consider who we are, why with Southeast Christian moving in just next door and with all that's before the General Church later this month.

I have said that all we can do is live out who we are to the best of our ability, all the while depending on God's power to help us do just that.

Last week we had said that *"core values are those guiding principles that dictate behavior and help determine if a person or an organization is on the right path."*

Last week, if you remember, we affirmed right out of the gate that we are Christ-centered. *“We have a deep desire to follow Christ’s leadership and do as he did.”*

This week we consider the fact that we are Biblically-based. This is not an aspirational value for us, but is one that is actually a part of who we are. It was that way years ago when I was here before. It is that way today.

In regard to being Biblically-based, we have said that *“We view the Bible as authoritative and foundational to everyday life.”*

## **God Breathed**

The Apostle Paul has said this about scripture, *“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* (II Timothy 3:16-17)

Of course, he was referencing scripture as contained in the Old Testament, but it is not a big leap for us to include the New Testament as well.

God breathes into scripture when we open its pages and read, just as God breathed life into humankind at creation.

God’s Spirit is always at work and particularly so through his Word.

That’s why we can read one passage at one time and the same passage at another time and hear a fresh word from God.

I have often said about scripture that it *“is a present revelation of the very things God wants to speak into life and because of that becomes an encounter with the living God.”*

To say that scripture is God-breathed asserts God’s active involvement.

We’d do well to let him speak when we read scripture and not try and twist what we read into what we want him to say.

You can go into any theological library in the country and find one commentary saying one thing and another commentary saying another on the very same passage, so much so that it can leave your head spinning.

We’d do well to let God speak as we dig into scripture.

The Benedictines for centuries have employed what’s called, *Lectio Divina* in their reading of scripture.

*“Divine Reading,”* as they call it, is a practice that not only involves reading scripture, but includes meditation and prayer, all with an interest of communing with God.

*Lectio Divina* does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living Word.

I heard someone say a long time ago that “*when it comes to reading God’s Word read until you hear something from God. That might involve a lot of reading or a little. Read though until you hear from God.*”

### **Thoroughly Equipped**

Paul doesn’t mince any words in writing to his young protégé, Timothy in II Timothy 3:16-17, and he doesn’t with us as well.

Scripture is critical to the health of our spiritual lives and the vitality of our witness.

Paul talks about scripture “*thoroughly equipping*” us for the work God has set before us. That’s true for every individual and certainly true for the church.

That’s why we gather around God’s Word every time we worship together.

Paul touts the utility of scripture. It is useful in every way he says—“*for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.*”

We not only learn from God when we read scripture, but we are kept on the right path. Our minds and hearts are adjusted—corrected, if you will, to the end that we have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

By staying true to scripture, we will find ourselves well-trained in the way we should go, which always includes the righteousness of God living in us and through us.

If we aren’t staying close to scripture then we’re apt to simply make it up as we go along.

Imagine where the church would be if didn’t have the scripture.

Psalm 119:105 states, “*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*” (Psalm 119:105)

The image is of a light that illuminates our way. While that might have been a lantern when Psalm 119 was written, today we are more prone to use a flashlight when it’s dark outside.

Cheryl takes out every morning before the sun comes up to get in her walk. It’s as dark as pitch where we live off of North Buckeye. Cheryl uses a flashlight to guide her way. Without it she’d be lost.

The same is true for us in trying to traverse the darkness of this world without the light of God’s Word. Without scripture, we are left to grope in the dark.

## **Authoritative for Life**

And so, we state as a matter of core value that *“we view the Bible as authoritative and foundational to everyday life.”*

I would add that it is quite essential.

For you and me, it comes down to trusting and believing that God’s word has the power and authority it claims and that we can live in the same.

Considering the Bible as authoritative means living in such a way that we reflect what’s written in scripture.

It certainly doesn’t mean that we we’ll dismiss what’s written when it doesn’t suit.

In being asked to recant what he had said about scripture by the Roman Catholic Church, the great reformer, Martin Luther, responded by saying, *“My conscience is captive to the Word of God. Here I stand, I can do no other.”* Martin Luther

For him, scripture was authoritative and he would challenge others to live as if it was as well.

In fact, it was Luther, with the help of the printing press, whose every desire was to put the Bible in the hands of the people.

## **Foundational for Life**

Jesus teaches about the importance of founding our lives on him and his words.

He tells a great parable at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27.

He talks about a man who built his house on the rock. Even though the rains came, the streams rose, and the winds beat against that house, it did not fall.

In contrast, Jesus also talks about a man who built his house on the sand. When the same rains came and the same wind blew, the house fell and was washed away.

*“Therefore,”* says Jesus, *“everyone who hears these words of mind and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock.”* (Matthew 7:24)

The foolish are those who do just the opposite.

## **Authoritative and Foundational**

God’s Word is not only authoritative, but foundational for life.

We have at home a Bible that stretches back to the late 1800's. It was my great, great grandfather's. He was a Baptist preacher back in the day. Talk about needing some tape. I have worked hard to try and keep it together.

That Bible has always served as a firm reminder of how enduring God's Word really is.

I also have a couple of other Bibles that mean a lot to me.

One is a paraphrase of the New Testament called *Reach Out*. I cut my spiritual eye teeth on that Bible.

Another is a copy of *The Living Bible*. I read through it as a high schooler like I couldn't get enough. The words just seemed to leap off the page.

Where's your Bible? Is it dusty or frayed? How you answer says a lot about the condition of your spiritual life.

Is your Bible front and center in your life? Do you allow God to speak authoritatively through it? Are you heeding his authority or would you much rather do your own thing?

Does your Bible provide the sort of foundation you need to meet the challenges of life? Are you listening to what God is trying to say to you and then making an effort to follow?

Being Biblically-based is a right important thing—for you, for me, for the life of the church.