

Why the Word of God?

Imperative #3: The Value and Meaning of Scripture.

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Matthew 4:4 NASB

Because we are a Christ-centered church, we are, and must be, a "Bible" church. We have a high view of Scripture – its inspiration, its authority, its trustworthiness. The Word of God is an expression of His loving desire to communicate with us. He created us with the capacity to know Him. So God has spoken, and "it is written!" Through the Bible, your heavenly Father continues to speak to us directly, truthfully, absolutely and personally.

What Does "Inspiration" of Scripture Mean?

Our doctrine states: "**WE BELIEVE** the 66 books of the Bible are God's authoritative and inspired Word. The whole of the Bible is true and accurate, and is our supreme authority, both individually and corporately, in all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16-17)." To explain further, consider these terms:

- **Inspiration:** As to its *matter*, the Bible is "God-breathed." It is the verbally inspired word and revelation of God, inerrant in the original writings, infallible as a true source of divine truth. God has supernaturally preserved it for us. We can trust the Bible.
- **Authority:** As to its *message*, the Bible is God's self-disclosure. It reveals the person and character of God as well as His plan of redemption and principles by which He will judge this fallen race. Biblical "authority" means that God has given us a standard of absolute truth in written form. We must submit to God's Word.
- **Translation:** As to its *transmission*, the Bible has been faithfully translated from the original languages into English versions which we can trust. Three English translations we value and use most often here are the New American Standard Bible (NASV), New International Version (NIV) and New King James Version (NKJV).
- **Illumination:** As to its *power*, the Bible is the foundation for a supernatural relationship with God. God the Holy Spirit makes the Word of God come alive, and become life-giving to those who believe. "Illumination" is a work of the Spirit in the heart and mind, which enables us to come face-to-face with the glory of God. With each glimpse, we are changed into the image of Christ. We receive eternal life through faith in God's Word.

Therefore, the Bible is the final authority and supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, attitudes and opinions are to be tested. **2 Timothy 3:16-17; Proverbs 30:5-6; Romans 2:12; Philippians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18; John 16:12-13; 1 John 4:1; Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 3:15-18**

What Place Does the Bible Have in the Ministry in Our Church?

The Word of God is foundational truth for all that we are and do in our lives and our church. It is our source for knowing God personally and understanding His will for us. Therefore, we give attention to the Bible as follows:

- **Expository Teaching in Pulpit and Classroom:** From the pulpit, the Word of God is taught as the foundation of our convictions, motivation, training and worship. The "expository" method, as compared to the "topical" method, involves teaching verse-by-verse through whole books or extended portions of Scripture in context in order to gain the whole council of God. Before we apply the text, we ask, "What did it mean to them then?"
- **Biblical Decision-Making:** We are committed to allowing Jesus Christ to be Head of our church. That means we seek the mind of Christ as we make decisions. Our leadership team has identified what we call the "Spirit-Led Decision Making" process. We focus on Scripture in prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit for His wisdom.

- **Measure of Spiritual Promptings:** Individuals who sense a leading from the Spirit – by way of a prophecy, word of knowledge, dream, discerning of spirits, etc. – are guided to test all such promptings by God’s written word. *“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 The Word is the standard.

How Do We Study the Word of God?

1. **Language:** Any given passage of Scripture must be understood at face value, in its most natural, normal, customary sense. Sometimes this is called the “grammatical–historical” method of interpretation. We are cautious not to “spiritualize” the meaning of a passage, believing it was intended to be understood in a single, natural sense. It has been said, “If the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.”
2. **Cross-Reference:** When in doubt as to the meaning of a particular word or phrase, we seek to let Scripture interpret Scripture! We look carefully at the context and seek the common denominator that harmonizes all other passages dealing with a given subject. It is said, “A text without a context may be a proof-text.”
3. **Literary Form:** We should also make appropriate allowances for obvious figures of speak, such as analogy and hyperbole. The literary genre of the biblical passage should be handled appropriately – genres like history, teaching, poetry, prophesy, and parables – and the plain meaning and application discerned.
4. **Authority:** Once the interpretation of the passage is found, we are under obligation to believe and apply the truth to our lives. Biblical truth stands in judgment of us; never do we stand in judgment of it!

How Do We Apply the Word of God?

1. **Conference:** Proper interpretation requires that we answer the question, *“What did this passage mean to the original readers in their historical context?”* In other words, what did God’s inspired writer intend to convey to the recipients? Historical, grammatical interpretation seeks the single, primary meaning first.
2. **Inference:** Next, we ask, *“What timeless truth does this portion of Scripture teach?”* Is it a command, a promise, a description of God’s character, an example of how God dealt with men in a specific set of circumstances from which we can form a principle that applies generally? State the principle clearly.
3. **Reference:** Finally, we are ready to ask, *“To whom and under what circumstances does this principle or promise apply in our day?”* You can count on our immutable God to stand behind His Word, and respond consistently with His perfect character. At this point, we ask, “What should be our obedient response?”

An Appeal to Christians in the 21st Century American Church.

With all the urgency and passion we can express, we declare the crucial need to return the Word of God to its rightful place of trusted authority in the church. The world is awash in relativity. America has moved beyond the “post-Christian” era into a “neo-paganistic” darkness. And the “cultural Christianity” of our day has lost its power, having compromised morally and intellectually. It is time for Christ’s church to arise to re-embrace the truth of the Bible with courage and faith. It is time once again for our generation to join Paul the Apostle in saying . . .

***“I am not ashamed of the gospel,
for it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who believes!”***