

Scripture

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[0 : 00] Well, again, welcome to you. Those of you that we didn't get to welcome at the beginning, welcome to you now on behalf of Church of the Advent. If you're new, really glad that you're here.

My name's Tommy. If I haven't had a chance to meet you, hopefully we'll get a chance to do so after the service. There'll be some refreshments in the room next door if you'd like to hang around and get to know some new, see some new faces and shake some new hands.

Before we do that, in the midst of this service, we're, as Dan said a moment ago, we're at this place in our gathering where we turn our attention to God's Word. We do that knowing that people come from all different backgrounds and sets of assumptions.

Some of you are here as followers of Jesus, and some of you are here, you're not sure what you believe. And some of you are here, and maybe you already decided that there's nothing here for you. And so what we're gonna do today is we're gonna look at God's Word, the Bible, in light of that. We are doing a series in this season of the church calendar, which is called Lent. And this is a series where we're looking at some of the various habits and practices that Christians engage in as we seek to grow and mature in our faith.

[1 : 15] These are habits that Tom Wright sort of calls freedom habits. Freedom habits. Now, when you hear that, you think, well, there's nothing about habit that sounds like freedom.

They sound opposed, actually. But, you know, the image is this. Imagine if you're a slave and you've lived your entire life in captivity, and then one day somebody comes along and they unlock the cage and the chains drop from your hands.

Well, what do you do? See, technically you've been freed, but you're still going to think like a slave. You're still going to have desires like a slave.

You're still going to live like a slave. And so you would then have to begin to learn how to think and to live like a free person. And so this is the image that Wright uses. He says, Christians have been set free by the power of Jesus Christ.

We have the freedom of knowing that we're fully known and fully loved by the God of the universe. And yet our minds and our hearts and our lives would still convince anyone watching that we are still, in fact, slaves to sin and death.

[2 : 23] And so we have to learn how to live this freedom out. And so we're talking about what these habits might be. And so for those who are here who are Christians, this is, we're asking how we grow in our faith.

For those who are here who are not Christians or not sure what you believe, you know, one of the main reasons that people don't take the claims of Christianity seriously are because they look at Christians and they wonder, does this faith actually make any difference in their lives?

And so what we're really focusing on is what kind of change or transformation can we expect in this life as Christians? And so tonight's focus is really a foundational one and that is the focus is Scripture itself.

The role of Scripture and the ways we habitually engage Scripture in our following of Christ. A lot of people, a lot of Christians, a lot of people in this church say various forms of the same thing to me, which is, yeah, I believe in Jesus and I follow Jesus, but why bother with the Bible?

You know, why bother with it? It's hard to understand and I don't even really know if I can trust it and everybody thinks it says something different and so why bother with it? Why not just follow Jesus? So that's what we're going to talk about tonight and we're going to do so by looking at 2 Timothy chapter 3.

[3 : 47] We're going to focus on verses 14, 15, and 16 to help us understand the role of Scripture in our lives. Fair warning, there's going to be more teaching tonight than preaching.

I'm going to probably be giving more information than I normally do and hopefully you'll understand the reason for that, but there's going to be more information and so some of you are note takers and some of you aren't, but if you are not a note taker, this might be a time when you want to jot things down if there are things that I bring up or hit on that you want to follow up on.

Just so fair warning, I'm going to, but you'll understand why, hopefully as we get into it. But we're going to see two things from this passage in 2 Timothy, Paul's letter to Timothy, his sort of protege in the ministry.

We're going to see the origin of Scripture and we're going to see the purpose of Scripture and how knowing that helps us understand why Scripture is central in the life of those who follow Christ. So let's pray.

Our Father, far be it from us to put our faith in the words of human beings. Lord, our hope tonight is not that we would be moved or inspired or that we would think differently because of anything that human beings might have said or might say tonight.

[5 : 04] Rather, our hope is that these spoken words would faithfully lead us into your written word and that your written word would reveal to us the living word, Jesus Christ.

And we pray this, Lord, for our glory, but also for our good, but also for your glory. That you would be glorified as we encounter you afresh tonight. We pray this in your Son's name.

Amen. So first of all, we see the origin of Scripture. Where does the Bible come from? When I say the Bible, I'm talking about something that's really quite a unique work.

It's not really like anything else you're going to see out there. It has two sections, right? So it's like a two-act play, the Old Testament and the New Testament. And you'll notice your Bible is pretty lopsided.

A lot of it is Old Testament, and then there's just a little bit in the front, which is the New Testament. And so you can think of it as though the Old Testament lays the foundation for what happens in the New, and the New Testament fulfills everything that's predicted in the Old.

[6 : 03] That's kind of their relationship. It's made up of 66 books. It's been composed over the course of about a thousand years.

It was originally written in many different languages, mostly Greek and Hebrew, but also some other ancient languages are found in there. It's been composed by as many as 40 different authors.

It's been composed in places as far apart as Babylon and Rome. So if you think about all this, you realize that the first thing we've got to recognize about the Bible is it's not really a book.

It's a library. It's an entire library spanning a thousand years, multiple authors, cultures, societies, historical contexts. But of all the things that make the Bible unique, the most unique thing about the Bible, which makes it unlike any other work, is its origin.

The Bible is, as Paul says, breathed out by God. It is God breathed. So ultimately, the church didn't write the Bible.

[7 : 12] You know, people think, well, the church, you know, the church formed, we got together, they said, we've got to have some documents, so the church wrote the Bible and then started copying the Bible and that's how it happened. No. What Paul's saying is the church didn't write the Bible that God, using all different kinds of authors and contexts and genres, from poetry to history to prose to even parts of it that are liturgy, that God, through all of these means, wrote the Bible for the church.

So God breathed is a very carefully chosen phrase. What this means, by the way, is that the authors weren't automatons. You know, they weren't word processors with legs.

I used to hear this phrase, especially before I was a Christian, and I thought that somebody would be walking along and all of a sudden they would be seized up by God and they would just start writing. You know? And they would just, and all of a sudden they'd be like, oh!

And they would look and they would be like, what is this? Where did this come from? And that's not at all what he's saying. He's saying it's God breathed. And I think the best image of this comes from the Bible itself.

There's a place in 2 Peter where Peter's talking about where Scripture comes from and he says, in 1 Peter 1.21, For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 39] As they were carried along. Now, this same word shows up in Acts chapter 27. You know, Paul and his crew, they're in a boat and they put up their sails and a storm comes along and it says, the storm, the wind was so strong that in the boat they were driven along.

And they just had to submit to the direction of the wind. It was too strong. They couldn't turn either to the right or the left. They were driven along. It's the same word. The idea being that these biblical authors, these 40-some biblical authors, you know, they put the sail up of their life, but the Holy Spirit was the wind.

It filled the sail. It determined the course. So they sat down and they wrote to their various historical contexts. They wrote to the political and social and economic issues of their day.

They wrote with their own distinctive voice, their own turns of phrase, their own favorite language. They wrote representing their own culture, their own dialect, their own sense of poetry, their own ability.

They wrote within all of these constraints and yet, they did so in a way that reflects exactly what God wants them to say. So God is able to use their distinctive personalities and to not violate who they are to deliver his message and they're able to write in a way that doesn't violate what God wants to say.

[10:02] It's God-breathed. So I know this raises some questions and it raises some objections. The first being, well, people say, well, okay, Peter and Paul, they're talking about the Old Testament.

What about the New Testament? Does this apply to the New Testament as well? What we need to understand is that when the apostles began to die out, when the apostles, these are people who had seen Jesus face-to-face, they knew him, they had been trained by him and their purpose as given by him was to send his word out to continue his teaching.

When they began to die out, they and their secretaries, their associates, their assistants began to write their teaching down and these became letters that were then circulated to all of the known churches.

And so from the very beginning, their teachings were treated with the same authority as the rest of Scripture. So you actually have places like 2 Peter 3 where at the very end, Peter refers to Paul's letters as Scripture.

He says, now I know that there are some things that are hard to understand in Paul's letters as with the rest of Scripture. So you see Peter right there acknowledging that Paul's writing is part of what is recognized as Holy Scripture.

[11:19] And then you have the earliest Christian writers like Clement who quote New Testament writings right alongside the Old Testament writings as Scripture.

And by the end of the first century, Paul's letters were already in circulation. And we know this because in the very early part of the second century, Justin Martyr refers to the writings of Paul. So some of you hear this and you say, well, okay, well, all this is fine and well if you lived in the second century. But these books that we have today, this Bible is a translation of a translation of a translation and it's got all kinds of errors and who knows what they had but this is definitely not it. You know, this was very obviously published by Crossway. You know, and you say, well, that's not what you're talking about. And what we have to understand is that's actually not true. This is actually just one translation from the original language.

And most likely the Bible that you have at worst is just one translation from the original language.

And moreover, we actually have all of this in the original language. So you can go and you can actually read all of these texts in the original language they were written.

[12:34] So we have actually 5,800 complete or fragmented Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. 5,800. We have, you know, in addition to that 10,000 Latin manuscripts, almost 10,000, 9,300 manuscripts in various other ancient languages, all that came about before the invention of the printing press.

And when you compare all of the errors and all of the kind of little misspellings and all of that across all of this, the vast majority are utterly meaningless.

In fact, less than 1% of all of the errors, less than 1%, are both plausible and meaningful. In other words, less than 1% are plausible in the sense that you can have either or reading.

They're both well supported in the text and you're not sure which is right and meaningful in the sense that they might affect a phrase that would have some effect on the meaning of that section of scripture. Less than 1% would fall into that category.

The vast majority are just tiny little omissions or issues that you immediately look at and you realize, well, this copyist made this slight error, a slight misspelling, a slight error in punctuation. And even if you look at that 1% of errors that are plausible and meaningful, they in no way affect a single

doctrine of scripture, a single doctrine of the Christian faith.

[13:56] In fact, I've got to be a little careful saying this, but really, there's so much interconnectivity between all of the various books of the Bible, Old Testament, New Testament, that you could actually throw out entire books of the Bible and still no doctrine of the Christian faith would be meaningfully affected.

Because there's so much interconnectivity. You can have a doctrine of creation built out of the New Testament, you don't need Genesis. You can have a pretty clear understanding of who Jesus is without reading one of the Gospels.

Because there's so much interconnectivity there. It all fits. So another thing I hear a lot is this, well, okay, okay, so the Bible, maybe it's reliable and all that, but doesn't it make sense that the church would claim that it's divinely inspired?

I mean, isn't that really convenient for the church? Isn't that really, if you're totally honest, a kind of power play so that the church can use the Bible to sort of manipulate and control people? And certainly, the Bible has been used and abused and some of you are victims of that.

But if you look back at what actually, at the sort of the core of this question, didn't the church invent this idea? There's a lot of problems with that, but the central problem is this, that there's nobody in history, nobody in history before or since that had a higher view of Scripture than Jesus Christ.

[15:23] He has the highest view of Scripture of anybody there is. You can see it in many ways. You can see it because Jesus quoted from almost every book of the Old Testament throughout His ministry.

In fact, between Jesus and the other New Testament writers, I think every single book in the Old Testament is quoted except for Esther. Not sure why they left that one out, but every single book is quoted.

And when Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, what does He do? He relies 100% on Scripture. He quotes Scripture. He explicitly taught that the Old Testament was written about Him and points toward Him.

So in John 5, He says, you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me. You know, Luke 4 is one of my favorite places. This is one of Jesus' first sermons. He gets invited to be a guest preacher at a synagogue in Galilee, shows up. You know, he's expected to stand up, read a scroll, preach a little sermon and then sit down so it can be discussed.

[16:27] So he stands up, opens the scroll of Isaiah, reads from Isaiah chapter 61, first couple of verses, rolls the scroll up and guess what his sermon is? Today this has been fulfilled in your hearing.

And then he sits down. It's like the ultimate drop the mic moment. You know, it's like, Isaiah 61, yeah, this is about me. Boom. And then he just sits down. Can you imagine?

And it incites ultimately a riot, right? But Jesus is saying this is all about me. And then Jesus himself goes on to teach that the primary nourishment that we're designed to require as human beings is not food, but what?

God's word. Man shall live not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So Christians don't believe in Jesus because of the Bible. We believe in the Bible because of Jesus. And then you say, okay, well, those are God's words.

What about Jesus' words? Well, Jesus made it very clear that his words are God's word. So he says this in Matthew 24, heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will not pass away.

[17:35] Now, either Jesus is a lunatic heretic or he's making very explicit the fact that when he speaks, God is speaking. He says in John 5, 46, if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me.

But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? And then finally, Jesus defines for us what does it mean to be my disciple?

What does it mean to follow me? What does it mean to have a relationship with me? What does it mean to be counted as belonging to me? Well, he says this in John 8, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

Not just hear and understand, but live out, abide, have it define all of who you are. So he asks, well, what difference does this make? Well, when people today say, I love Jesus, I believe in Jesus, I follow Jesus, but I don't bother with the Bible, I want to humbly suggest that that is actually a kind of

power play.

And what I want to suggest is this, is that when you say, I'm all about Jesus, but not the Bible, I'm just about following Jesus, what you're really saying is, I have discovered a more true, more pure version of Christianity.

[18 : 56] It's sort of, you know, capital T, capital C, true Christianity, trademark pending, you know, and it's more pure than your version of Christianity because it doesn't have this baggage of the Bible.

So it becomes a kind of power play. And this sounds like a great idea, and this sounds like the kind of thing, wow, that's really cool. But the only problem is that Jesus would have completely disagreed.

If you look at what Jesus says about himself and about God's word and about his words and about what it means to be his follower, you realize that he's saying, and one of the best places to see this is Luke chapter 24, he says, to these disciples on the road to Emmaus, if you want to understand these scriptures, you need to understand that they're about me.

And if you have any hope of understanding me, you have to understand the scripture. And if you believe in me, that means that you believe in scripture. If you love me, that means you love scripture.

He did everything he could to tie even his moments of greatest suffering. When he's hanging on the cross, what does he do? He quotes scripture, Psalm 22. So the origin of the Bible and what makes it unique, the origin is God himself.

[20 : 08] It is God-breathed words for God's people. So this is why we can say with confidence, the word of God does the work of God. You know, if people say, I want to see God at work in my life, the first question should be, well, where is the word in your life?

So the origin of the Bible is God. God breathed through all of these different people and cultures for God's people. So that leads us to the second point.

What's the purpose of the Bible? And in this passage in 2 Timothy, Paul lays out three sort of interrelated purposes. He says, scripture leads us to salvation, it shapes what we believe, and it shapes how we live.

In verse 15, you see he says, the scriptures are, quote, able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. So first of all, it's about salvation.

As we said before, the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation is ultimately about Jesus. It's meant to show us the reality of our sin. It's meant to show us the necessity in every human life for the grace of God that comes through the sacrifice of Jesus.

[21 : 19] It's meant to show us how to become a part of God's renewal project, how he's making all things new in this world. So first of all, the Bible is meant to show us how to have a relationship and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

But then Paul goes on, it's not just about getting saved, as we might say. The Bible is meant to, scripture is meant to, shape what we believe. Now, that's an important point because again, in terms of objections, something I hear a lot, and you may hear some of this too, is more and more and more people, individuals, as well as entire churches.

I knew a church up in New York that tried this for a little while. They realized it didn't work. But it's more and more common for entire churches to say, you know, we don't really believe in the whole idea of doctrine. We want to do away with doctrine.

Doctrine, all that does is divide people, it confuses people, and it causes all kinds of problems. We're going to get rid of doctrine because we just want to be about worshiping God. That's what we're about, worshiping God.

And again, that's really great for your marketing campaign. I mean, that will preach well. And if I said that, you could probably get standing ovation for that, right? It's one problem.

[22 : 34] Okay, so you want to worship God. What do you mean by God? That's a doctrinal question. Oh, so you want to worship God. What do you mean by worship? How does that happen?

It's a doctrinal question. In other words, doctrine is inevitable. You cannot get away from doctrine.

The minute you try to answer that question is doctrine. So everybody has doctrinal assumptions.

Now, you may be forward with them and honest with them, or you may hide them and conceal them. But everybody makes, you know, atheists have doctrinal assumptions. So the question is, are your doctrinal assumptions grounded in anything beyond you, or are they just your opinions?

So doctrine is inevitable. So what do you or whatever we believe about God? What do you believe about this world? What do you believe about what it means to be a human being, our purpose and identity here? You know, what do you believe about what life is all about?

What do you believe about other religions? What do you believe about marriage and gender and sexuality? What do you believe about family? What do you believe about parenting? What do you believe about our jobs? What do you believe about human institutions and the role of government in everyday life?

[23 : 44] there's hardly a question you can ask that doesn't somehow flow out of doctrinal assumptions and so paul is saying here that all of scripture has been given for the express purpose of shaping what we believe about all of these things he says it's profitable for teaching for reproof for correction of all of our beliefs and he actually says in ephesians chapter 4 that that a big part of maturity is growing in our understanding of doctrines so that we're rooted in scripture in instead of being tossed to and fro by every new idea that comes along he says that's how you tell a mature person so scripture is for our salvation it shapes our beliefs thirdly it's meant to shape how we live how we live now by that i do not mean that it's just a wooden set of rules and you follow the rules and you're right with god that's not that has nothing to do with the christian faith he says scripture is in verse 16 he says it's for training in righteousness that the man or woman of god may be complete equipped for every good work so this is by the way why we started our series last week by talking about submission to god if you're an athlete or a musician or an artist you know what it's like to submit yourself to their authority because their job is to train you is to take your innate gifts and talents and to help you hone them so that you can then express i mean how how is it how can hillary sit down and play so beautifully and bring such beauty into the world well it's because she has trained and trained and trained and trained she has a doctorate in performance piano which meant she hours and hours and hours and hours and training under some very demanding instruction so he uses this phrase deliberately it's for our training in righteousness and it's interesting in ephesians 2 10 paul says that christians are god's workmanship created in christ jesus for good works and you know the word there is actually poema in other words i mean a kind of a loose way of translating that would be to say your life is meant to be god's poetry in the world it's meant to be god's poetry in the world it's meant to be the the beautiful art that god brings into the world to glorify himself we know we're not saved by our good works we're saved by the finished work of jesus christ but the question then is why why are we why are we saved it's so that our lives can become god's poetry in the world so scripture is our coach it's our guide it's our instructor it's meant to show us how that happens so the purpose of the bible is what to lead us to salvation to shape our beliefs and to shape how we live now i'll deal with another objection another objection some people say okay that sounds good but you know i've found in my walk with god that i don't actually need the bible because i hear directly from god you know the holy spirit prompts me and leads me and if i'm sensitive to that and if i listen to that then that's all i need and that raises a number of questions you know people ask well and people debate this hotly debate this you know in some of the theological circles i come from people this is a huge debate can god does god still speak today well to the question of can god still speak today absolutely i mean god is god he can do whatever he wants but the more important and more salient point here is this that god has spoken god has spoken so paul says right here that the scripture is sufficient to make us complete for every good work i mean what does that mean he's saying you have

right here everything you need to become complete for every good work in other words you don't need a special personalized message you've got this this is enough it's sufficient for everything that god's going to call you to do and everything god's going to call you to be is right here so we should be very wary and i apologize if i've ever said this you should be very wary of people who say well god said this to me you know in my prayer time the other day you know god said god told me this or you know i was just really thinking about you and your situation and god god told me to tell you this i think you should be really careful because the thing is unless you are deeply deeply deeply immersed and intimately familiar with every corner of god's word how do you know that god is saying that and how do you know it's not just you i don't think you can to paraphrase ann kennedy who's a somebody that i love to read her her stuff she says why would god take the trouble of using so many different people over such a huge span of time representing so many different cultures representing so many different genres to weave together this beautiful tapestry of a witness to describe who he is what he's done in the world what that means and how we can be a part of it why

would he go to all that trouble only two thousand years later to say ah never mind i'm just going to whisper some vaguely spiritual stuff in tommy's ear that kind of sounds like the bible but not as good why would god do that and frankly i i don't think that's how he works so what does this actually look like in our lives i mean that so the question becomes okay well then how do we actually engage scripture and the answer is there's there's a number of different ways and think of these not as a choose one but rather as all of the different angles or approaches or means by which we seek to hear from god so first of all there's there's personal study of scripture if you have never sat down and read the bible before i will warn you it is hard there there are places in there just like peter the apostle peter says that are hard to understand because it's written by so many different people in so many different genres representing so many different cultures and societies there's an enormous amount of work and learning to be done to understand those cultures and societies because the goal is to understand what was this originally written for what did it originally speak to who was the original audience and then how from knowing that can we apply it to us today so you have to understand this piece before you can understand this piece and that takes study it takes work so it's great to rely on commentaries it's great to rely on study bibles it's great to rely on people who are more knowledgeable than you but what we need to remember is in our personal study of scripture the goal is to understand ultimately more about jesus and so if you've never read the bible it's not necessarily the best idea to start at the beginning you know i talked to this one sweet amazing woman who was marrying get you know getting married she was engaged and she said well you know i really you know you know studying the bible is is really important and in his life and this is something we've talked about and so i for him like i want to read the bible um i want to read the whole bible before we get married and i said okay well how long is your engagement and you know and engagement for some of you know is it's stressful enough and i'm like and you're gonna just kind of kind of like squeeze in there reading the whole bible you know and i said well how's it going she's like not very good i can't read it back to front i would suggest if you've never read the bible before start in the middle in other words don't start at the beginning start in the center jesus is the center pick one of the gospels read one of the gospels begin to learn about who jesus is and then wherever you are in scripture wherever you're studying if you get lost and try to start to lose your way and you're not sure what is happening just remember this is somehow meant to point me to jesus and normally that will get you back

on track last thing i'll say about personal study is this yes we study for understanding but more than that we read the bible so that it can read us and we study it so it can study us the goal is to have your heart laid bare by scripture you read it and you realize oh my gosh this is talking about me and then you begin to understand more your need for christ so that's one way some other ways right quick we we engage scripture through prayer you want to guarantee that god is going to hear and answer your prayer pray scripture guaranteed we we do it in community there's a there's a time and place for discussing and interacting that's why we do this in small groups we sing god's word together we sing god's word most of what we sing up here is in some way directly taken from scripture we do it in the preaching hopefully the goal of preaching is to reveal scripture faithfully to exposit it and then to reveal christ through that and then lastly through our liturgy you know the book of common prayer on which our service is based three quarters of that is just directly quoting scripture that was the goal of the book of common prayer you know so we we decide okay do people want to hear whatever i make up every week or do they want to hear god's word we just went with the latter and how we put the service together but the goal is through all of these means to just be utterly saturated with god's word to be completely saturated by god's word in every way and and the goal is not to have spiritual highs all the time sometimes you do and sometimes you don't the goal listen to this the goal of all of this as we're doing it all together is a kind of mutually reinforcing cumulative effect on our hearts and minds over time that's the goal the more you personally study the bible the more you're going to get out of gathered worship the more you listen to good preaching and the more you sing and the more you learn to pray scripture the more you're going to get out of your personal study it all works together but the goal is the accumulative effect over time a great way of thinking about this comes from the chicago shakespeare improv group and some of you have heard me talk about this before i love it um the chicago shakespeare improv group they give two 90 minute performances every time they they they perform two 90 minute performances and it starts this way they say give me some topics and the audience yells out they yell out different different like whose line is it anyway they they they shout out different ideas and then from that on the spot totally improv they construct a full-length 90 minute shakespearean verse

play and people looking at and then how do you do the verses in the rhyming and how did it sounds just like shakespeare and how do you just how does that come out of you well guess what they do they spend all of their off time studying shakespeare they read and they read and they read and they read and they study and they study and they study and they study and they study and the goal is that they become so immersed in the real thing in shakespeare that they're able to just exude it it just comes out

So our goal in reading Scripture is that we would become so familiar with it that whenever you find yourself in a situation and Scripture doesn't speak directly to that situation, and Lord knows there's a ton of those, you can just exude it.

You have a kind of gospel-shaped instinct because you're so familiar with God's Word. So all this brings us back to our original question as we wrap up.

[35 : 26] But for those of us who do follow Christ, for those of us who consider ourselves to be His disciples, why bother with the Bible? And I would say there's two reasons.

Because of its origin, because the entire purpose of this is that it is God-breathed for us. God does God's work through God's Word. And the second is this, because of its stated purpose.

The Bible itself all throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament says again and again and again that God's Word in Scripture is the way to have a relationship with Him.

So do you want to know God intimately? Do you want to feel a sense of His presence and His love in your life? Then open His Word, sit at His feet, and listen to what He has to say.

Let's pray. Father, again, the great danger is putting our hope in human words. And we pray that whatever is of You would be empowered by Your Spirit and driven deep into our hearts.

[36 : 38] Lord, that if we have resistance to this, that You would help penetrate to the core of that resistance. That for those of us who are open and who desire to hear from You through Your Word, I pray that You would bless and empower that desire and give us the means to hear from You and to be transformed from the inside out by Your Word in our lives.

We pray this not only for us as individuals, but for our entire community, that one of the things we would be known for is a church that values and seeks to live under Your Word in all things.

We pray this in Your Son's holy name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.