

Back to the Basics: Scripture

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, February 1st, 2026. My name is Kent Dixon, and it is my joy to be the pastor here. And so if you weren't able to be with us in person, you can definitely check that sermon out on the website, the phone line.

There's some options there for you. So our return to the basics continues today with the Word of God, the Bible, Scripture, right? These are all different things that we call it.

So it may seem like a really obvious thing that's important to the Christian faith. And yet for some reason, the Bible, like our prioritizing of prayer, seems to be overlooked or ignored all too often in the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, right?

We know it's important, but we just may not get to it. And so the simple truth is that, and I hope you'll agree with me, the Bible is anything but unimportant.

And we're going to be remembering this morning that the Word of God is living and active, and Scripture itself tells us it's profitable for teaching and rebuking and correcting and training, and that's just scratching the surface.

[1 : 35] So as you know, the Bible is a collection of how many books? 66. Perfect. And it's divided into how many sections? Two.

The Old Testament and the New Testament. So another way to think about it is that the Old Testament is everything that happened before Jesus. Have you ever thought of it that way?

The New Testament then covers approximately 70 years, including the birth and ministry of Jesus, along with the beginning of the early church, which we just finished looking at last year and the year before in the book of Acts.

So for our study today, we're going to be primarily in the New Testament. And we're going to learn from Jesus, good place to start, and some of the original apostles. You know me, I like stats, right? According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the all-time best-selling book is the Christian Bible. Correct. It's impossible to know exactly how many copies have been printed in roughly 1,500 years since its contents were standardized.

[2 : 48] Trust me, I looked. So research conducted by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 2021 suggests that the total number of copies probably lies between 5 and 7 billion copies.

And I think that number is actually low. So as of September 2020, the Bible's been translated into 704 different languages.

Likely far more since then. Again, right? That's almost six years ago. But then there's entire Bible ministries, like the Wycliffe Bible Translators, for example, whose aim is to translate the Bible into every language on earth.

Cool, right? So I think we'd all agree that it's important for everyone on earth to have access to the Bible. And as I mentioned before, Scripture itself talks about itself this way.

Scripture is quite self-aware. It's living and active and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training.

[3 : 55] And as I said, those things, those descriptives just scratch the surface. So basically, the Bible is amazing. It's an incredible gift that God has given us.

And so this morning, we're going to see what we can learn about the Word from the Word. Have you ever been reading the Bible and something just jumps out at you?

Have you ever done that? Just opened your Bible or been reading, doing your devotions, and something just whack, hits you right in the face. Or you're thinking about something and you think, I wonder what Scripture, not like we're using it like a magic eight ball, right?

But you open Scripture and open to a passage, and the passage itself speaks to what you were thinking about. If that's happened to you, it's probably happened to you. It's happened to me a lot.

So as I just said, have you ever opened seemingly randomly to something in the Bible, and the passage there that you find speaks so clearly and dramatically into your life in ways that it almost seemed uncanny at the time?

[5 : 03] If you've ever felt either of those things before, you're absolutely correct. So as a preacher, I have actually lost track of the number of times, by the way, this weekend marks seven years.

What? Yeah, it's not like a, I'm not saying, yay me, I'm just saying, wow, that's, it feels like a little time, and it feels like a long time, but time is passing.

But I've actually lost track of the number of times in my relatively short pastoral ministry life where someone has told me that something they read during the week or something that they felt God was telling them was affirmed or confirmed by a passage I referred to in a sermon.

That's not me. It's really not me, because as I've told some of you before, my psychic abilities, zero. I'm very bad at reading minds.

So that is God at work, connecting dots, and affirming and encouraging people through his word.

So it's so powerful then, I think, that the writer of Hebrews describes the words of scripture as both alive and active.

[6 : 18] It is living and active. Hebrews 4.12 says, For the word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It penetrates even to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Wow.

That one verse says an awful lot about scripture, doesn't it? But for starters, let's take a look at these two words, alive and active.

So to be alive in a basic sense, we can probably all agree on this definition, it means to be counted among the living, right? Not the dead. If you're alive, you're not the other.

The word active also means effective. It means productive in the work and purpose for which it exists. So for those of us in this room who've been reading the Bible for some time, I think we can all agree that the Bible is both living and effective.

[7 : 24] Would you agree with that? So to drive that point home, the author of Hebrews says, the word is in fact more effective than a double-edged sword in terms of its ability to divide, to cut through soul and spirit.

Scripture is powerful and able to get down to the heart of the matter. So again, if you've ever read the Bible and it seemed to be speaking directly into your situation, then I think it's fair to say, it probably was.

As we grow in our faith, I think it's important to continue to return to Scripture again and again. So by immersing ourselves in and submitting to God's word, we're also allowing the spirit to work in and through our lives.

I know it may sound hokey or too overly spiritual, but I want to challenge you. Try it. Take note of what you're reading and in turn, what you are hearing or receiving.

So try giving yourself a consistent time every day. This is a pastor thing to say. Give yourself a consistent time every day in Bible study. We know what time the news is on.

[8 : 45] We know what time a doctor's appointment is. We know what time we have to be at work. We know what time our day ends. Try giving yourself a consistent time every day in the Bible. And maybe you already do.

This is not me standing up here saying, well, you better be finger wagging at you or trying to make you feel guilty. But see for yourself. I want you to see for yourself just how powerful and profitable the word of God is.

So I'm sure most of you here today understand the idea of something being profitable. profitable. You've all worked in jobs where you got paid. We exchange our time for money throughout our lives.

But more often than not, when we speak of profitability, we're referring to a monetary transaction, right? I do this and it profits me in this way. So a financial gain or a win of some kind is generally what we view as being profitable.

So it's interesting to me that the word is also synonymous with the words beneficial and useful, right? So it's not just a financial gain of some kind, but it has benefit and use for us.

[9 : 58] So when the Apostle Paul is writing to the young pastor Timothy in 2 Timothy 3.16, he tells him, and you know this passage, he tells him all scripture is God-breathed.

It's useful for teaching, as we've heard, teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. So that's the NIV translation of 2 Timothy 3.16, if you want to check. The ESV translation says, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. So you may have noticed that one verse says scripture is useful, and then the other translation says it's profitable. So the good news is, it's actually both. So adding to that, being living and active or effective in its work, the Bible's also great for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. [11:07] So I'm not going to go through every one of those concepts today. You can be thankful. I'm going to say that there's important words, all of these are important words in the life of a disciple or a student.

And as we follow Jesus, we must submit our lives, submit ourselves to his process, his plan, and his direction in our lives.

Simply put, the Bible is profitable in the life of a disciple. And its profit to us isn't financial gain, but something far more important, and that's spiritual gain.

Following Jesus may well cost you everything. Maybe just something, but ultimately, potentially everything. But the value of what you receive in return, it's beyond measure.

German theologian, pastor, activist, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, said, Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought out again and again and again.

[12:19] The gift which must be asked for. The door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow. And it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ.

It is costly because it costs a man his life. And it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. Maybe you know Bonhoeffer's story, but his faith ultimately did cost him his life. So here we are again, back at the feet of Jesus.

The place where it all begins and ends for anyone who chooses to follow him. So this brings us, I think, to our most important point this morning.

That scripture and spending time in it is actually one of the most important ways we can learn more about Jesus and also deepen our relationship with him.

[13:24] I want to spend a bit of time just briefly here this morning bringing some clarity, hopefully, to something that I believe can be confusing for people. And maybe you hear this, hear me say this this morning and just say, I don't know, never been a problem for me, I don't know what you're talking about.

But I've thought about it a lot. How can scripture be the word of God? Isn't Jesus the word? Good question.

So I've done some digging into this and I want to aim to bring some clarity for us. And like I said, maybe you think, nope, apples and onions, I get the difference. So I'm certainly not an expert theologian, but I'm good at doing research.

And so I'm going to do my best for us. And I'm going to use scripture for it. John 1 verses 1 to 5, and you can turn there, you know this passage well.

John 1, 1 to 5, says, In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made.

[14:35] Without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Now jump down to John 1 verse 14, just a few verses. The word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

So these passages, obviously, are speaking specifically about Jesus. They're not in any way suggesting that scripture as the word is ultimately Jesus himself.

Does that make sense? So scripture isn't somehow suggesting here that the Bible and Jesus are somehow the same. Does that make sense?

So the goal there is not to confuse us that somehow Jesus and scripture are the same thing, the same entity. So in Christian theology, calling both Jesus and the Bible the word, God or the word of God signifies that they are both distinct, but also complementary expressions of God's will.

[16:00] That make sense? Not yet? Uh-uh. So Jesus, let's figure it out. Jesus is referred to as the logos, the living word.

So the physical and supreme embodiment of God's character and salvation, as we've just seen in those passages from John, is Jesus. Jesus is the active agent in creation.

And he is the ultimate revelation of God's character and God's nature to humanity. Jesus is God in the flesh.

Does that make sense? Some nods, some puzzled looks still. So now in contrast, the Bible, scripture, is the written word.

The inspired and authoritative record of God's message. God's promises. God's truth to humanity. So the Bible is inspired by God and it serves as a guide for truth and wisdom and salvation ultimately.

[17 : 08] So scripture points to Jesus as the focus of its message. Well, Jesus then validates the scriptures as the word of God.

Does that make sense? So they complement each other, they point to one another, but they are not the same. Hopefully that makes sense. So in essence, the Bible is God's word to humanity while Jesus is God's word as humanity.

Does that help? Maybe. So both scripture and Jesus exist to convey God's word, God's will. And so with the Bible providing a written guidelines and Jesus is the living active fulfillment of those things. Everybody's going to go home with headaches. There'll be ibuprofen available after the sermon. So the phrase word of God means more than just printed words on the page because God is a communicator.

That's what I love about him. He's been speaking into our world, into the human realm since the very beginning. God speaks through his creation in lots of ways.

[18 : 30] He spoke through ancient prophets. He speaks through the Holy Spirit. He speaks through scripture and also through the person of his son Jesus Christ.

God is the greatest communicator of all. So ultimately we can learn to know God better by seeking to hear him in every way that he speaks.

Listening and seeking all of those things. God's communication and God's revelation through all those things. Turn to John 6 46 to 51.

John 6 46 to 51 and I'll read it. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God. Only he has seen the Father.

Very truly I tell you the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness yet they died.

[19 : 31] But here is the bread that comes down from heaven which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven.

Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I give for the life of the world. See Jesus knew that he didn't just need an earthly meal.

what he needed and what we need is the very word of God. The living bread. The bread of life. And this is then speaking specifically of Jesus again.

There's other bread that we can all acknowledge that may satisfy our earthly hunger. Maybe you're thinking about bread right now. but there's nothing else that will cure your spiritual starvation.

Only Jesus can do that as a perfect and living example of God in the flesh. The word made flesh. And only scripture can do that by pointing us to Jesus.

[20 : 42] By revealing God's character and his great, great love for humanity. his desire for everyone to come to know him.

I believe it's critical for every follower of Jesus to be spending time in the Bible every single day.

There's nothing like it. There's no book that's ever been written that is rewarding in the same way.

Certainly no other books can claim divine inspiration or revelation. Yet I also recognize, sometimes from personal experience, life gets complicated.

Almost before you know it, your well-intentioned Bible reading plan is a bust. Last Sunday we talked about resolutions, how people often end up dropping them within the first few weeks, and certainly by the beginning of February.

It is the beginning of February. But today, instead of another bullet point plan, some kind of a guilt trip, I'm just going to leave us with a few more words from Jesus.

[21 : 48] Many of you will be familiar with this line from Matthew 6, 11 in the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus simply says, give us today, sometimes we hear it as this day, our daily bread.

What if Jesus wasn't just talking about practical provision there? What if he was talking about the bread of life? God truly gives us daily access to Christ through scripture? Wouldn't that be an amazing way for God the Father to provide for all his people? So, give it a try this week. Invest some time reading your Bible. Listen for God's voice there, and expect that you will find it to be alive, and useful, and effective, and powerful.
Amen.