

The Truth

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn more about us, you can always go to the FCCGreensburg.com website or you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com.

But we are excited today to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let it get into us and transform these hearts. Now, I want to start off today with an anonymous poem that I love.

It says, Oh, the precious, precious Bible, God's messenger of love, ever lifting fallen mankind to a higher plane above. Tis a lamp unto my pathway, though old yet ever new, I'm acquainted with the author, and I know the book is true.

Each time I search its pages, new treasures rare I find, how the blessed, loving Savior cures sickness of all kind. Tis a message of salvation to the Gentile and the Jew.

I'm acquainted with the author, and I know that book is true. I know some people doubt it, this precious book divine, but I couldn't do without it.

[1 : 12] I believe it line for line. Tis the very same sweet gospel that my dear old mother knew. Get acquainted with the author, and you'll know the book is true.

You know, it's hard to believe that today starts the second half of our eight-week series called DNA. We have been talking through our new vision, mission, and values that make up our unique spiritual DNA as a church family.

And if you are listening for the first time today, let me give you a quick recap. But please, always know, you can go to our website, fccgreensburg.com, listen to previous messages.

But to put it simply, we are answering three questions with our vision, mission, values. Why, how, and what?

And where most churches used to just shove their mission statement on everything, there's been a little bit of a shift. We need to start with the why. Why do we do what we do here at FCC?

[2 : 14] Why am I compelled to devote my time, talents, and treasures to this pursuit? And why, our why here at the church, our vision is Jesus first.

See, that's what drives us when we look around at a world where Jesus often takes the back seat or no seat at all. When we see a church culture that's all about man-made ideas and traditions and history and creeds and doctrines before Jesus.

And while I'm thankful for our heritage, Jesus must come first in everything. His own words seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. And that's our heart.

Jesus first in everything. And then he will take care of the rest. The next question is how. How do we accomplish Jesus first?

Belong to, believe in, become like Jesus. He's been pursuing us all this time. He died on the cross and rose from the grave to set us free from our sin.

[3 : 21] To give us life on this earth and for eternity. We belong to Jesus and to a church family where we have that support system of encouragement and accountability.

So welcome home to a savior and to a family where you belong. A couple weeks ago you heard three testimonies of coming to believe in Jesus. And because we have been set free, we want to see others come to know his grace too.

And then the last part of our mission statement is to become like Jesus. One day at a time. We're not here to play church. We're not here to go through the motions.

We don't exist to just give you a religious feeling or experience. We're not here to have a fancy leadership title that we can add to our obituary someday. Or because we just really like control.

We're here to see the chains of bondage ripped off as we walk with and become like Jesus.

Because your salvation was not the end of the story.

[4 : 23] It was the beginning of your journey. Now let's grow every day led by the Holy Spirit. Walking even more in his purpose, his power, his peace.

So that's where we've been so far. Today starts four weeks of answering the what question. What guides this pursuit that we've been talking about? What are the parameters that keep us on the right track?

What are our values? And you know what? Number one on our list, on purpose, it starts with the Word of God. So when someone clicks on our website to learn more about us before they come to visit, and they go to the page that shares our values, here's the first value that they're going to read. It says, The Bible is our authority in all matters of faith and lifestyle. We believe God's Word is without error, and breathed directly from God to mankind for the purposes that He set forth in 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17.

It says, It says, All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[5 : 38] It goes on to say, FCC will preach and teach the truth of God's Word, whether it's popular or not, because it's the truth that sets us free.

So today, let's have that conversation about the Bible that you've probably heard before, and that you're going to hear again, because it's vital to be in a Jesus-first church and a Jesus-first Christian. Before we do that, I have some good news for some of you. This message today is probably going to be about 8 or 10 minutes shorter than normal, because we are blessed in the live services on Sunday morning.

We are having Tony Augsburger from Mahoning Valley Christian Service Camp. He's going to share all about the exciting summer coming up, and hopefully we're going to start to get some of our kids registered for camp.

So today, if you'd like to take notes, we do have a sermon outline. The way you can get to that through listening here on the radio is you can go to the YouVersion Bible app.

[6 : 39] That's Y-O-U-Version Bible app. Download that. Once you have that, go to the menu, go to Events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, and you'll see our outline that way.

But here's the first thing. The Bible is truth from God. So turn with me to 2 Timothy 3, and we're going to simply break down these two verses that we've already read today.

There are 66 books in your Bible that make up the Bible, 39 in the Old Testament. That's from creation until just a few hundred years before Jesus came.

That's probably three-quarters of your Bible, the Old Testament. And then 27 books in the New Testament, Jesus' life through the early church. And this is book number 55 of 66.

So you're going towards the back, okay? 2 Timothy 3, verse 16. And let's look at one of the best word pictures in all the Bible.

[7 : 40] Very simply put, first five words here. All Scripture is God-breathed. That means when we hold our Bible, we have the exact words that the God of creation breathed to us.

Especially for you artists and you creatives, what an awe-inspiring visual that really is. If I had any artistic painting ability whatsoever, which I don't, I think this is a picture I would try to paint.

The God who had the power to create everything in creation out of nothing, breathing truth and life that sets us free.

And here's the cool part that shows his incredible power even more. He chose to use around 40 different authors, 40 different people, from scholars to shepherds, from kings to commoners, across three different continents, over a period of roughly 2,000 years, to write down these inspired words that we have today.

They were simply his instrument to get his message on paper. And I love how 2 Peter 1, starting in verse 20, it says, Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.

[8 : 58] For prophecy never had its origin or its beginning in the human will. But prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

What that's saying is, Hey, every word of the Bible you can trust because the Holy Spirit was guiding those flawed people. He made that happen. So every word is inspired and breathed from the Holy Spirit.

And we can't forget that all the persecution that Christians have endured, including so many campaigns to burn and destroy the Scriptures, so that it would be gone forever. And guess what? God was awesome enough to preserve and protect his word throughout history. And although the original languages of mostly Hebrew in the Old Testament and Koine Greek in the New Testament, they have been translated into so many languages, which is good that people have it in their own tongue, right?

They've been translated into English in so many ways. But here's the thing I want you to understand. The word of God has not changed. And the reason we know this is because we have thousands of manuscripts, thousands of pieces of manuscripts, that can still be translated today to the very words that we can confirm that we have in our hands and hopefully in our hearts.

[10:17] Now, can I tell you one of my weaknesses that my wife would gladly verify? I have no sense of direction. And I can get lost so easily.

I may be able to point north from our church because I grew up in this area, but you take me to a place I'm not familiar with, and I couldn't tell you which way is which. So I am grateful that I've either had MapQuest, I don't know if you remember that or not, or GPS for the 25 years that I've been driving.

And I like GPS a lot better. But listen, I am thankful. I am thankful that we have that. But listen, we have the complete word of God that's better than any GPS system because it always points us in the right direction.

These hearts. And as the great theologian B.B. Warfield has said, the Bible is the word of God in such a way that when the Bible speaks, God speaks.

And all Scripture, not some, not just the parts I agree with, not just the parts I want to follow, but all Scripture is God-breathed. And when we choose to be all in following this God-breathed word, it changes everything.

[11:33] The Bible is truth from God. And then second, the Bible is truth for a purpose. I shared with you a couple weeks ago a little bit of my testimony, how when I was wrestling with God for the very first time as an 18-year-old who knew nothing about church and God, I really had this pretty bad cussing problem.

I wasn't dumb, so I didn't do it in front of my mama, but I sure let it fly in other places. And I remember saying to God, as I first gave my heart to Him, and I began to read His words of life that tell me not to let any unwholesome talk come out of this mouth, I remember saying, Lord Jesus, I can't do this without You.

Please take this away. Clean up this filthy mouth. And while I can't tell you that I've never slipped because I have, He took that desire to cuss away immediately, letting His word illuminate my heart and speak truth.

Now, look at me again at 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17. By the power of the Holy Spirit, here's what Paul says. He says, All Scripture is God-breathed.

Now watch this. And is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Why? So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[12:58] You know, for those of us who did not grow up in the church very much, it can be intimidating knowing that you want to learn more about God, but you walk into a church feeling maybe very insecure because you just don't have the understanding and the head knowledge.

I remember this vividly when I was first a Christian. You know, you'd go to a church and they'd all start singing hymns from memory, and they were kind of new to me. They'd even stand up suddenly after the offering and sing this thing called the doxology, and everyone knew the words except for me.

And I was just like, Whoa, what is going on here? And then the preacher gets up, and he starts talking about a familiar Bible story that he assumes everybody knows about, but I've never heard it, and he's teaching it in a way that I don't understand because he's assuming I know.

And that's one of the purposes of Scripture that we just read in 2 Timothy. No matter where you are in your biblical understanding, one of the purposes of the Word is to teach you, to educate you, to inform you, to give you that knowledge.

So here at FCC, we're okay that we all may be in a little different place in our journey in our understanding of God's Word. It's okay that you are where you are.

[14:15] You don't need to feel embarrassed. You don't need to have shame. But here's the thing. It's not okay to stay there. And the Bible is a treasure trove of truth, promises, prophecies, practical

living, hope, and so much more that we have to get into and we have to learn.

And the good news is there's a lot of study helps that can help you do that. But in Psalm 119, this incredibly long psalm, Psalm 119, starting in verse 103.

I love these words. It says, How sweet, Lord, are your words to my taste. Sweeter than honey to my mouth. I gain understanding from your precepts. Therefore, I hate every wrong path.

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. So let's make that oath, church.

Let's do that. That we will get into the word and let that word get into us and change us. And then the second purpose is to rebuke.

[15:22] And this takes humility because it may go something like this. You're reading the word and you get to a passage like 1 Corinthians 9 that tells us to be spiritually disciplined, to go into strict training in our relationship with Jesus, running after his heart.

And if you're like me, sometimes you've got to be like, Oh man, God, I've been so lazy. I've made time for everything except for you. I waste so much time on my phone when I could be in your word. Lord, help me. Help me. Thank you for showing me this. Now help me change for your glory. Or maybe you're in a relationship and you're not doing it God's way.

Or maybe you're not loving your spouse the way God has called you to. And you're reading about the purity and the healthy boundaries that God wants us to walk in so that we have a God-honoring relationship.

And all of a sudden that word just kind of kicks our butt, right? It stops us in our tracks. Church, I've seen this too many times in my ministry where we have someone walking with Jesus who's single.

[16:25] Maybe they've been divorced and it's a sweet season of growth because they're so focused on God and that's the priority. And then she meets a man or he meets a woman.

And too often, I've seen this too many times. It breaks my heart every time. Our faith goes out the window. And sadly, that relationship that could have been God-honoring possibly, if you chose the right person, it becomes an idol that leads down a destructive path instead.

So like a great parent, the Lord loves you too much to let that happen. That's why his word speaks truth into our rebellion. See, in Hebrews chapter 12, it says, And have you forgotten the encouraging words that God spoke to you as his children?

He said, And some of us right now, we're thinking, man, God must really love me because I be getting those spiritual spankings all the time.

But that shows his love. And that's what we have to understand. He wouldn't be correcting us. He wouldn't be rebuking us if he didn't love us.

[17:41] And then I just kind of gave it away. The third purpose of the word is to correct. The passage we just read said, Don't give up when he corrects you. Got to tell you, my wife is amazing at this with our children.

As you very well know, if you're a parent, children need a lot of correcting. Whenever they do something wrong, which is every day, not only does she rebuke and give the appropriate punishment, but probably the worst part for them is they have to look right in her face as she talks to them about it, as she deals with the heart, and as she corrects them, as she shows them the right path.

And our God is the same way. He's not just looking to hurt us. He's not looking to hurt us at all. But that punishment always leads to correction so that we can walk in the purposes that he has designed us for.

So, let that word not only call out attitudes and behaviors that go against the heart of God, but let them correct it so we can become more like Jesus.

And then the fourth purpose is to train. To train you and I in righteousness, in holiness. You know, some of you are much more disciplined in how you take care of your body than I am.

[18:55] You have a routine of working out. You eat and don't eat certain foods. You take your health very seriously. And that's great. I commend you for it. And just like maybe you have some resources that have helped you get healthy along the way, we have the ultimate resource in the Word of God that trains us for righteousness.

The perfect training manual, breathe from the Creator, preparing us to be used by God wherever He chooses to lead. You know, I love the visual.

I love the visual from Ephesians chapter 6. We did this series probably a year or two ago where we just talked all through this visual here.

But in Ephesians 6, 10 and 11, the Apostle Paul says, finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Paul goes on to list each piece of the armor. Stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, holding everything together. Protect your heart with the breastplate of righteousness.

[20 : 06] Stand firm with your feet, fitted and solid in the gospel of peace. Take up your shield of faith that blocks those lies Satan's firing your way.

Put on the helmet of salvation that protects your mind. And last but definitely not least, take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God that trains and that prepares you to be the man, to be the woman of God that you are called to be in this world, making a difference in the lives of others and doing it all for His glory.

FCC, this body of believers, this leadership we have at our church will always stand on the perfect Word of God because it is the truth that sets us free.

Everything we do, every decision we make, every ministry we pursue will be filtered through the Word of God. And I am convinced, and statistics will prove this, you can look around at churches and communities and see this as well, but I'm convinced that God has blessed this church family so much lately because of our unashamed stance on the truth of the Word of God as our authority while also preaching it in love.

Because God will not bless churches that stray from the truth. So let me leave you with one last quote by the Prince of Preachers named Charles Spurgeon. He said, a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't.

[21 : 37] Let me say that again. And a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't. A Jesus-first church and a Jesus-first Christian are committed to the truth of God's Word.

And we can make that promise to you here at FCC. Everything we do, we have this parameter around us that we will follow the Word of God because it's the Word of God that has changed our hearts.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I just come here and thank you for how good and holy and righteous you are.

Thank you for your Word. Thank you that you have breathed this to us for the purposes that we have talked about today. And Father, I struggle with this too.

It's so easy just to get caught up in our routine and other things that we don't make time for what's most important. And that is getting into the truth and letting the truth get into us. So Father, I just pray that you will give us the courage, the discipline, and the joy to get into your Word and discover this truth that's going to change everything.

[22 : 53] Thank you for the Word of God that you have breathed to us, that you have protected through the centuries, and that you make so readily available. May we truly seek your heart through it.

And we pray all of this in Jesus' precious and holy name. And God's people said, right where you are, amen and amen. Hey, I want to just give you a quick invitation.

Just a reminder, we've shortened this message a little bit today because we are having a Mahoning Valley Christian service camp. Their director there is Tony Augsburger, and he is speaking at our church for five, six, seven, eight minutes today.

So we have shortened the message a little bit. So if you're on here and you're like, oh wow, this is shorter than normal, that's why. But thank you for letting us do that today. But if you have any questions about faith, if you have any questions about giving your life to Jesus, if you have any questions about our church, please reach out to us.

You can do it in a couple different ways. You can go ahead and email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com, ray at fccgreensburg.com, or you can call us at 812-663-8488.

[24 : 09] That's 812-663-8488. And just ask for Ray. I would love to just spend some time talking to you and getting to know your story a little bit.

So hey, God bless you. I hope you have an incredible week.