

CORE — BIBLE: Expository, Gospel-Centered Bible Teaching Is The Foundation Of Church Health

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Good morning, CrossWinds! Welcome to our new series, “Core.” In this series, Pastor Jordan and I will teach about CrossWinds' core values.

A little over 10 years ago, before we launched the Spencer campus, we took a look at our identity and the distinctive of CrossWinds. We are proud members of the Evangelical Free Church denomination, but we wrestled with the question, “What makes CrossWinds Church unique?” What is the heartbeat that we want to be sure we replicate on the Spencer Campus and in any other campuses God may give in the future? At the time, we developed seven core values. If you have been through membership class, you were introduced to them. Behind the scenes, they guide our decision-making processes and help align the campuses.

Pastor Jordan and I realized most people have not been through the membership class. Most are not familiar with our core values. If you know our core values, we haven't talked about them for a long time. It would be good for us to refresh ourselves on them. We pulled out the core values and planned to reteach them. In preparation for the series, with the elder's permission, we did a little editing. We didn't change any of the values, but we combined some and condensed others, so we have five instead of seven. Nothing changed about them. We felt it was hard for anyone to remember seven core values. It would be easier to remember five core values. We hope our little repackaging project will help our core values become a little stickier for all of us.

I put an insert in your bulletin with all five core values. In this series, we will teach one value a week. Today, we begin with my favorite. This is the value that is the deepest and most important of the five. It is what we believe about the Bible.

BIBLE: Expository, gospel-centered Bible teaching is the foundation of church health

The Bible and history show us that the health of the people of God is linked to their view of and teaching of the Word of God. As goes the pulpit, so goes the people. Everything in a church is tied to how people view the Bible and how it is taught in the pulpit. If Bible teaching is weak, the people will be weak. If Bible teaching is strong, the people will be healthy.

This morning, we are going to look at three things. First, why do we preach the way we do at CrossWinds? Second, we will look at a very brief history of expository preaching and how God has used it over the past 2,000 years. Third, we will explain why we have such a high view of the Bible and treat it as the trustworthy Word of God.

What are different styles of preaching?

There are roughly three different approaches to preaching: topical preaching, expository preaching, and consecutive expository preaching. Each has its strengths. Let's look at the different ways each style approaches the Bible and the strengths of each one.



Topical Preaching begins with the needs of the audience.

Topical preaching is popular. It has its place. It begins with the needs of people and looks in the Bible to see what it says about a subject. Topical sermons have titles like “What does the Bible say about prayer?” or “What does the Bible say about marriage?” or “Five pointers on parenting from the Bible.” The way you build this kind of sermon is the preacher starts with a topic, then rummages around the Bible to find verses that apply to the topic. There is nothing inherently wrong with this type of preaching. This kind of sermon begins with questions of people. It starts in the mind of the preacher. The preacher creates the points of the message from some verses in the Bible about the subject at hand.

This is good and appropriate. It helps us understand what the Bible says about a subject. I occasionally preach these types of sermons and have taught entire series in a topical fashion. For example, I taught a series entitled AfterLife - What does the Bible say about life after death? I also taught a series called Spiritual Health — Six Questions To Diagnose Your Spiritual Fitness. Another topical series we did was Hell — A Hard Look At A Hot Topic. We taught a topical series on sex titled, What Does the Bible Say About Sex? We taught a topical series titled, Alternatives to Christianity. In that series, we looked at the major world religions and how they compare to the Christian faith. Those messages are still online and available if you want them.

This style of preaching is popular because it is immediately applicable. It is much easier for a preacher to write these sermons.

Expositional preaching begins with the Bible.

Another style of preaching is expositional preaching. This type of preaching doesn't start with a topic and then sprinkle in a few verses for an answer. It starts with a Biblical text. It takes a chapter or a paragraph of the Bible and explains what it says and how that word of God applies today. This lets the Bible determine the subject of the sermon and the structure of the sermon, not the preacher. The preacher has to submit to the text and teach the text, not shape the text to fit the preacher's preconceived points.

While there are times when topical preaching is appropriate, if that is the only way a pastor teaches, the pastor always determines what they think people need to know. In expositional Bible teaching, the Bible determines what people need to hear. If a pastor only preaches topical sermons, the source of authority on Sunday shifts to the preacher. Each week, people wonder what the pastor thinks about the topic upon which he is preaching. In expositional Bible teaching, the source of authority on Sunday is the Bible. On Sunday, the question is not, "What does the pastor say?" But "What does the Bible say?"

In an expositional sermon, all the preacher can do is teach, illustrate, and apply what God has already spoken. The preacher lets God do the talking through his Word instead of the preacher talking instead of the Word.

If a pastor always preaches topically, he will shape people into his image since he determines what he thinks people need to hear. In expositional preaching, which starts with the Bible first, the preacher shapes people into God's image since God's Word determines what we need to hear. Expositional

preaching is typically the style of teaching you will hear at CrossWinds on all our campuses. We want the authority of our teaching to be anchored in God's Word and not in your pastors' words.

Consecutive expositional preaching covers entire books of the Bible.

There is a third style of preaching called consecutive expositional preaching. This is expositional because the Biblical text is the foundation for the sermon, but it is consecutive. We work through entire books of the Bible from beginning to end. This is the style of expositional teaching you will find most of the time at CrossWinds. That is intentional. While expositional teaching is good, helicopter dropping into a paragraph of a biblical book, knowing nothing that comes before or after that chapter, makes it easy to lose the context. It is easy to lose the purpose of a paragraph in a book if we don't study the purpose of that paragraph in the flow of the book. Context is what creates meaning. The more context we have, the better our understanding of the Bible and what it says. This is one of the reasons we preach straight through the books of the Bible. Let me give you three quick reasons why consecutive expositional Bible teaching is the dominant style of our teaching at CrossWinds.

1. Consecutive expositional preaching helps us understand verses in their context.

We just mentioned this, but let me flesh it out more. We all become frustrated when someone quotes us out of context, making it appear like we said something we didn't intend to say. If we don't like being quoted out of context,

know God doesn't like when we quote the Bible out of context and misrepresent what God said. Let me give you an example.

When we studied the Gospel of John, we read some amazing blanket statements on prayer. Let me give you one.

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. John 14:13–14 (ESV)

These verses are easy to quote out of context. It appears God will give us anything we want if we ask for it in prayer. We pray for a new car, a winning lottery ticket, and a new house, but God never answers our prayers. Why? The answer is we need to understand these verses in the context they were given.

When we preached through the Gospel of John, we noticed all of the blanket prayer promises in the Gospel of John; I think there were a total of five, are in a section of the book called the Upper Room Discourse. This is where Jesus was preparing his disciples for his absence and their mission to take the gospel to the world. In context, these blanket prayer promises are not about us asking God for anything we want. This was Jesus promising his disciples that when he was gone, he would provide them with everything they needed to successfully share the gospel with the world if they would ask for it in prayer. This promise is about God providing his disciples with everything they need to share the gospel. It is not about God promising us a new car if we would just ask for it. The context of the verses acts like a guardrail, keeping us faithful to the meaning of the verses. It is easier for a topical preacher, who never studies the context of verses, to miss this. Consecutive expositional preachers, who are working their way through entire books, likely won't miss this.

2. Consecutive expositional preaching forces us to look at parts of the Bible we wouldn't normally consider.

Look what the Bible says about itself.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

Notice that “all Scripture is profitable.” This means Genesis is good to study. It has something important to teach us. Leviticus is good and applicable to us. Revelation is good and applicable to us. All of the Bible is profitable to teach us, to rebuke us for what we are doing wrong, to correct us, sending us in the right direction to do what is right. God gave us *all of the Bible* because there is profit for us in *all of the Bible*. There is nothing God gave us in the Bible that is without purpose for us today.

While it is easy to quote 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and say we believe in all of the Bible, we naturally gravitate to the portions of the Bible we already know and the portions that are easier to understand. The problem is that if we don't grow beyond this, this creates a Bible within the Bible. God gave us all of the Bible, but don't look at parts of the Bible that are hard to understand. We only look at the parts of the Bible that are easy to understand. That can leave us spiritually undernourished because we are not taking advantage of all God has given us for our spiritual health and life.

Years ago, I heard Alistair Begg say it this way. When it comes to children, if they are left to choose their food, they will have hot dogs, French fries, and ice cream for every meal if they are allowed to eat only what they want to eat. When parents choose the food, they give children not just what they want to eat, what is

good for them, what they need to eat. They give them broccoli, carrots, and peas. It is the less savory food, the vegetables, that grows children into healthy adults. It is the same way with the Bible. God gave us all of the Bible. He gave all of the Bible because we need all of the Bible to be healthy in Jesus. If we are left to ourselves, we will only choose the tastiest portions of the Bible and neglect the parts that vegetable portions of the Bible, the parts that are less appetizing for us but are good for us.

I can say that is definitely true. In 30 years of preaching consecutive expositional sermons, where I find myself on some weeks wishing I was teaching on an easier chapter of the Bible instead of the next chapter in the Bible, God has constantly surprised me. I found that the harder portions of the Bible have yielded some of the most rewarding sermons I have ever preached. Under the biggest rocks, God hides his best diamonds. I am thankful we consecutively work our way through books of the Bible to discover things about Jesus, God, and the Bible we wouldn't have noticed unless we were forced to study them.

3. Consecutive expositional preaching teaches the Bible to a world that doesn't know it.

The statistics are clear: People are not reading. Two out of every five high school seniors reported not reading a single book for pleasure in the past year. I am sure the number is even lower when it comes to reading the Bible. This is a sharp decline from previous generations. One of the best things we can do is open the Word of God and read it to people. Chances are, they don't know the Bible stories, and if they do, they probably haven't read them thoughtfully and

prayerfully. Consecutive expositional preaching teaches the Bible to people who have never read it before.

This hit me hard about 20 years ago. I was a youth pastor for the first 10 years of my life before taking the leap to a lead pastor position. As a youth pastor, I was an all-topic preacher. I found engaging topics for the students, then rummaged through the Bible to find verses about the topic. As my students began graduating, I noticed something that broke my heart. My students had become like their pastor. They knew what their Bible said about a variety of topics from my topical teaching, but they didn't know their Bible. They didn't read their Bible. They didn't understand books of the Bible, their background, their purpose, and their message. God deeply convicted me on this. I needed to repent. I needed to believe 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and teach all of the Bible, even the stuff that is hard to understand. That is when I repented on only topical teaching and began my journey as an expositional preacher.

This may be a little too transparent, but I share it to show you how deeply committed I am to consecutive expositional Bible teaching. Before I came to CrossWinds, I pastored a church where the leadership was committed to short, topically-based messages. They didn't want a series lasting more than five or six weeks. As God began pulling me more toward expositional teaching, I struggled with how to teach entire books of the Bible in five weeks or less. I began teaching the Book of Hebrews. The series was going to be far longer than five weeks. I made it as far as Hebrews 3 when the church leaders and I decided to part ways.

When I came to CrossWinds, I figured I should begin with consecutive expositional Bible teaching and see what happened. I pulled out my notes and began again at Hebrews 1. God showed his favor. A year later, we finished the book of Hebrews. People fell in love with their Bibles. The church began to grow. That has been the backbone of our teaching ever since.

What role has expository preaching played in church history?

While topical preaching played an important role in the last 2,000 years of church history, expository preaching, especially consecutive expository preaching, was repeatedly used by God to bring people back to himself after they drifted away from him. Throughout history, when preachers started putting their finger in the Bible and teaching it, God's spirit showed up in remarkable ways. Let me give four small snapshots of expositional Bible teaching at work through history.

In the ancient church, from 347 to 407 A.D., lived a powerful preacher named John Chrysostom. His nickname was "Golden Mouth." He was an incredible preacher who called people back to the Bible in a day when many in the church were drifting toward secularism and following society instead of Jesus. Do you know how he preached? He taught verse by verse through the Bible. God used him and consecutive expositional teaching to draw people back to Himself.

In the medieval church, from the years 476 to 1500 A.D., the church frequently taught in strange ways called allegory. That means they made things up. You claim different parts of biblical stories symbolize various things. This is a misuse of the Bible. At that time, some people abandoned teaching from the

Bible altogether. Two great voices in those years criticized preaching that was allegorically out of men's minds instead of based on God's word. They were John Wycliffe and William Tyndale. Their goal was to get the Bible in people's hands so they could read it plus preach from the Bible, teaching it as it was written, not allegorically making things up out of the mind of men. They wanted to have people put their finger in the text. God changed the church through their biblical preaching and the Bibles that were published by them in languages people could read.

In the Reformation church, from 1500 to 1648 A.D., Martin Luther and John Calvin called people back to the teaching and preaching of the Bible. They usually taught straight through books of the Bible. Look at Martin Luther's famous quote about the Reformation and how it happened.

I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything. — Martin Luther, March 10, 1522.

Imagine telling people you just taught the Bible. Otherwise, you slept and drank beer. It was the expository preaching of the Bible that God used to ignite the Reformation and turn people back to Himself.

In the modern church, from 1649 A.D. to today, probably the most notable expository preachers were the Puritans. As they studied the Bible, they realized God brought life to his people and his church through the expository preaching of the Word of God. They did some radical things. In their day, the altar with the mass was the center of the church, and the pulpit was off to the side. They switched them around and put the pulpit in the front of the church and the altar

with the mass to the side of the church. They said first and foremost in the church is the teaching of the Bible. God uses his words to breathe life into his people. They developed the practice of leaving an open Bible in the pulpit to figuratively picture of the purpose of the pulpit. It was for teaching God's book to God's people.

Why do we trust the Bible?

Let's use the rest of the message not to discuss how we teach the Word of God but why we trust the Bible and have such high respect for it.

The Bible claims to be God's words, not man's words.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

We already read 2 Timothy 3:16, but remember what it says about all of the Bible. The entire Bible, not just portions of it, is the breath of God. That means it is God's words spoken to us. God used human authors to say exactly what he wanted to say to us. This verse tells us that is true for every portion of the Bible, not just some portions of the Bible.

Look what Peter says about the Bible.

...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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. 2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)

None of the Bible was made up in the heart of a man. Nobody wrote the Bible on their own will. People didn't just wake on a Friday, eat their Cornflakes, and decide to write a book of the Bible. Every book of the Bible was written by a man who spoke God's words to people, not their words to people.

Peter says they were carried along by the Holy Spirit to write exactly what God wanted them to say while still using their own words, God spoke his words, without error, through them. When Peter says the writers of the Bible were carried along by the Holy Spirit, that is a sailing term. It refers to what happens at sea when a sailing ship is struck by a massive wind and they are forced to be carried along by the wind that takes them where the wind wants them to go. The pilot of the boat may try steering the boat, but the wind is too strong. The power of the wind directs the boat, not the pilot of the boat. That is an apt analogy of what the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is like for biblical writers. They were along for the ride. The Holy Spirit was in charge.

The Word of God is alive!

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

God's words in the Bible are alive. They are not dead words but living words. When we read the Bible, the Holy Spirit uses his words to convict us of sin, reveal the thoughts and intentions of our hearts, and then lead us to Jesus. Since God's Words are alive, and the Holy Spirit promises to use the Bible's words to convict us of sin and lead us to Jesus, that means expository preaching of the Bible will be powerful, not because of the power of the preacher but because of the power of the Word of God that is explained and applied by the preacher. This is more incentive to preach God's Word.

The Word of God is truth in a world of deception.

You may wonder how God could give us exactly what he wanted to say without error when his words were written down by fallible human beings. Don't you think the authors of the Bible would write down some of God's Word wrong, or they would simply forget some of them?

First, if God could not direct human authors to flawlessly write down the flawless words He gave them, then he is not God. The sinful creation would then be more powerful than the sinless creator.

Second, the best way to understand how a flawed human being can be used by God to communicate a flawless message is to look at the virgin birth. Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit. She was a sinful woman, yet she gave birth to a sinless Jesus. God brought his sinless son into the world through the womb of a sinful woman. In a similar way, God brought his flawless word into this world through sinful flawed men.

As we consider if the truth of the Bible, it is best to see what the Bible says about itself. If the Bible claims to be true, we should consider it true. If the Bible claims to be true but is in error, then we shouldn't trust it. It should be discarded with the Monday morning trash. Let's see what the Bible says about itself.

The sum of your word is truth,... Psalm 119:160 (ESV)

This is an interesting statement. It says if you were to take all of God's words and add them up, the sum of them is truth. If you are summing a column of numbers and one of the numbers is wrong, the sum is wrong. This says the sum of God's word is truth because every single one of God's words is true. Not just most of God's words in the Bible, all of them.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (ESV)

Jesus says God's words in the Bible are true. If we can trust Jesus to save us from our sins, we can trust what Jesus says about the Bible. I want to have the same view of the Bible that Jesus had.

The law of the LORD is perfect,... Psalm 19:7 (ESV)

God's laws in the Old Testament are perfect. They are without error, not one of them is wrong.

Every word of God proves true;... Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)

Proverbs says every word of God in the Bible will prove true. Today, nobody knows what is true. The media spins a narrative, trying to get us to believe what they want us to think is true. We don't know what is true. One thing that we know is true and will always prove true is the word of God. As 2 Timothy 3:16 reminded us, all of the Bible is breathed out by God. All of it is true.

...God, who never lies, promised before the ages began Titus 1:2 (ESV)

If all of the Bible is God's Word, we can trust it. God never lies. Today, on the Internet, people are constantly lying to us. My father just celebrated his 91 birthday. Caring for him, we learned plenty of people are out to take advantage of senior citizens. They do it by lying to older people who naturally trust them. They call him up and tell him the IRS is coming for him because he didn't pay his taxes and he needs to pay on credit card today. They are scammers. They don't tell the truth. When we open the Bible, we know we have the truth because God doesn't lie.

The word of God creates and sustains spiritual life.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout,... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10–11 (ESV)

Not only is the Bible true, but it is effective. Just as rain makes the crops grow, in the same way, God's Word, when it is preached, taught, and read, will be used by God for the purpose for which he gave it to us. God uses the word of God to create and sustain life among the people of God.

...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 1 Peter 1:23 (ESV)

If you want to evangelize the world and reach people with Jesus, preaching and teaching the Bible is the way to do it. Remember, the Bible has a supernatural quality; the power of the Holy Spirit is behind it. God's Word is living and active. When we preach them and teach them, God uses them to bring people to Himself and create spiritual life. Remember Martin Luther. He preached, wrote, and taught the Bible. The rest of the time, he either slept or had a glass of beer with his friends. God used the power of the preached word to dismantle the papacy and create the Reformation.

Charles Spurgeon was an English preacher from the 1800s. He also preached expository sermons using the Bible as the foundation. One time, he was asked how he could defend preaching from the Bible, an outdated book. He replied with these words.

"The Bible is like a lion. I don't need to defend it. I just let it out of its cage. It will defend itself." — C.H. Spurgeon

That is Bible preaching. It is letting the lion of the Word of God out of its cage.

The preaching of God's word is important not only for creating spiritual life but it is also the way God maintains the spiritual health of His people.

But he answered, "It is written, " 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Matthew 4:4 (ESV)

Just as important as bread is to sustaining physical life, the Bible is to sustaining a Christian's spiritual life. This is why it is important for us to make time for Sunday worship. All week long, we get spin dumped into our brains. On Sundays, we come and get truth poured into our brains. Just as we need to eat every day to be healthy and strong, we need regular time with God's Word in our lives for our spiritual health and walk with Jesus.

We should not just read the Bible on Sunday, but we should, if possible, read it daily on our own. Too many Christians neglect their Bibles and live spiritually malnourished lives. When we regularly read the Bible, highlight what is important to us, and take time to journal on what we read, you will be shocked how the Holy Spirit takes what we read in the Bible and makes it the perfect text we need to know for a problem we face either later that day or that week. That is the Holy Spirit using God's Word to sustain us in Christ and grow us in Christ.

The Bible was created by God, not man.

Some people claim that while God inspired the words in the Bible, men decided which books to include. They claim it was men who decided which books to add to the Bible hundreds of years after the apostles.

That isn't true. While the Old Testament books were recognized as God's Word by the Jews, the New Testament books were recognized by churches in the ancient world as the Word of God shortly after they were written. All New Testament books were either written by an apostle or by someone closely connected with an apostle. The church quickly recognized the Holy Spirit, using the New Testament books to create spiritual life. It wasn't until 393 A.D. at the Council of Hippo and 397 A.D. at the Council of Carthage that church leaders gathered to publish a list of officially recognized New Testament books. It is easy to think that 300 years after the apostles, at those councils, men met to decide on the books in the New Testament. That is not the way it happened. At that time, false Gospels were being written, such as the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Thomas. The church published a list of recognized New Testament books to protect people from being deceived by false gospels that were being written and circulated among God's people. The lists of recognized New Testament books were not creative in nature but defensive in nature. They were to show people the New Testament books the churches around the ancient world recognized as authoritative and to exclude the false gospels that came later in history.

The church didn't invent the Bible any more than Newton invented gravity. All Newton did was recognize the existence of gravity. That is what the church did with the Bible in 393 and 397. They formally recognized the books of the New Testament that were already accepted as authoritative by the church. In a moment, I will show you how some books in the New Testament were recognized as Scripture while the apostles were still alive. This is fascinating.

The Bible claims to be God's Word.

Earlier, we looked at what the Bible said about itself. Let's continue looking at that theme. In the Old Testament, 3,808 times, the writers claim to be speaking God's words.

thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Haggai 1:5 (ESV)

The Old Testament is filled with little side claims like this claiming to be God's words. That means the Old Testament either is what it claims to be, the Word of God, or it is a complete lie and should be taken out with the Monday morning trash. There is no middle ground. The New Testament contains at least 1,000 references and allusions to the Old Testament. What does that tell us the New Testament writers believed about the Old Testament? They believed the Old Testament was authoritative and true. 320 times the New Testament directly quotes from the Old Testament. Let me show you an example.

Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas,... Acts 1:16 (ESV)

Luke claims the Holy Spirit inspired David in the Old Testament to write prophetic words about the future. The Holy Spirit spoke through David. The New Testament claims the words David spoke in the Old Testament was the Holy Spirit speaking through him.

It is not just the Old Testament writers who claim to be inspired by God 3,808 times, but the New Testament writers also claim to be inspired by God.

For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11–12 (ESV)

Paul says that when it comes to the good news of Jesus dying on the cross in our place for our sins and the forgiveness that is found by our faith and trust in him, that isn't something he made up or something he received from someone else. It was given to him directly by Jesus Christ. Then he went to Jerusalem and found it was the same message the apostles of Jesus were preaching. In Jerusalem, the apostles confirmed Paul's gospel message. They didn't give Paul the gospel message. That came directly from Jesus.

For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." 1 Timothy 5:18 (ESV)

These are fun quotes. Paul is talking about Scripture, God's words. Paul uses two quotes to justify paying pastors. The first quote about not muzzling an ox comes from Deuteronomy 25:4. He called the Old Testament Scripture. The second quote about the laborer deserving his wages comes from Luke 10:7. He also calls the Gospel of Luke Scripture. Paul considers Moses' writing in Deuteronomy in the Old Testament and Luke's writings in the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament as Scripture. Paul's letters to Timothy were some of the last things he wrote before his death. While Paul was alive, the New Testament church already accepted the Gospel of Luke as Scripture. As I said earlier, the Council of Carthage and the Council of Hippo did not create the New Testament. They just formally recognized the letters of the New Testament that were already accepted as New Scripture by churches in the ancient world.

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters... There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV)

Here is what Apostle Peter wrote about the letters of Apostle Paul, the ones we have in our Bible. He says some of Paul's writings are hard to understand, and people distort his words like they do the other Scriptures. Apostle Peter recognized Paul's letters as Scripture when he was still alive.

Jesus considered the Old Testament to be flawless.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17–18 (ESV)

This was Jesus' opinion on the Old Testament in his day. He didn't come to abolish it, but just to fulfill it. It spoke about Him and he came to fulfill the prophecy in the Old Testament written about Him. How trustworthy is the Old Testament in Jesus' eyes? He tells us. Until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota or a dot will pass away from

God's law until all is accomplished. What are an iota and a dot? If you were in



membership class, you have seen this before. An iota is the smallest consonant in Hebrew. It is the size of an apostrophe. In Hebrew, the vowels are placed under the consonants. The smallest vowel is a dot. It is a period. Jesus' view of the Old Testament is that every single consonant, even the smallest one, and every single vowel, even the smallest one, is exactly what God wanted to say and is without error. This is why people who say we don't have to take the words of the Bible seriously are dead wrong. Jesus considered every single consonant and every vowel in the Old Testament to be exactly what God wanted to say.

When Jesus was questioned about life after death, he argued for the existence of life after death based on the tense of one Hebrew verb in one Old Testament verse.

And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong." Mark 12:26–27 (ESV)

It is not, "I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." It is, "I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." It is a present tense verb. This means the patriarchs and not dead but are alive after death. Jesus had a very high view of the Bible. Every consonant, vowel, and verb tense is a hundred percent trustworthy. At CrossWinds, we hold the same view of the Bible as Jesus. We don't ignore parts that are uncomfortable or parts that some people want to consider culturally out-of-date. We study God's Words and submit to them, even if they aren't popular. Let me give you an example. Let's quote more of Jesus.

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:6–9 (ESV)

There are three things I want to point out. First, it is difficult not to consider the creation account in Genesis as literal, at least the literal creation of the first Adam and Eve. Jesus said God created a man and a woman. If you think we evolved from apes, take it up with Jesus. Jesus said God made the first man and the first woman as special creations by God. Second, God only made two genders, male and female. Today, it is popular to say there are 38 or more genders. Not according to Jesus. Jesus said in the creation account God only made two. You may think you are a different gender, but God only made two

genders. If you are someone suffering from gender dysphoria, know we have compassion. God has love and compassion for you. Just as the Bible corrects our understanding of many things in life, the Bible should guide our understanding of the number of genders. Third is the issue of marriage. Today it is popular to say marriage is created by the state so it can be redefined by the state. Not according to Jesus. According to Jesus, marriage is an institution created by God at creation. In marriage, it is God, not the state, who joins a man and woman together in the bond of marriage. God's plan is for a man and woman to be married for life. The Bible says marriage is not an institution created by the state. Therefore, the state is not free to redefine it. Marriage is an institution created by God. He defines it as between a man and a woman, not as between a man and a man.

Jesus leaves us with only three possible ways to view the Bible.

1. There are errors in the Bible, but Jesus didn't know about them.
2. There are errors in the Bible, but Jesus chose to cover them up.
3. There are no errors in the Bible, and Jesus is right.

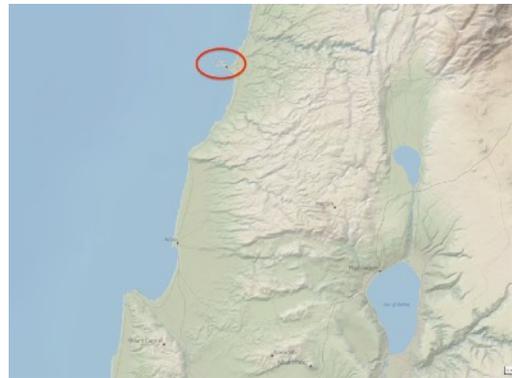
The problem with option 1 is that if there are errors in the Bible, and Jesus didn't know about them, then Jesus isn't God. The problem with option 2 is that if there are errors in the Bible and Jesus chose to cover them up, then Jesus is a liar and deceiver. That only leaves us with option 3. There are no errors in the Bible, just as Jesus said. If we can trust Jesus to save our souls, we can trust what Jesus says about the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Bible.

This morning, we talked about all of the Bible being profitable for us, even the parts that are hard to understand. This is why we teach all of the Bible at CrossWinds. To illustrate that for you, let's talk about a part of the Bible many of us ignore. That is the book of Ezekiel. What could that book have to teach us, especially about the trustworthiness of the Bible? Let's find out.

Biblical prophecy proves the Bible is trustworthy.

One thing that sets the Bible apart from the books of other religions is its prophecy. If you go to the Quran of Islam or the Bhagavad Gita of the Hindus, you will find prophecies about the future are missing. The Bible is different. It is filled with prophecy giving specific details about the future and the way things will unfold. This is a great opportunity for the Bible to prove itself wrong. It is also a great opportunity for the Bible to prove itself right.

The Old Testament book of Ezekiel has a decent amount of prophecy. Ezekiel 26 to 28 is a prophecy about the destruction of the ancient city of Tyre. Tyre was a Phoenician capital city located just north of Israel on the sea. God inspired



Ezekiel in those chapters to say Tyre would be destroyed in waves of attacks. The city on the coast would be scraped bare, and its rubble would be thrown into the sea. Fishermen would dry their nets on the bare rock, and the once massive city would never be rebuilt.

That is exactly what happened. The coastal city of Tyre was a large city—it was the New York City of its day. It was surrounded by walls 150 feet high and 15

feet thick. A fleet of ships protected it from the ocean. Hiram the First, the famous king of the city who built it up, reigned during the time of David and Solomon. David did business with Hiram to get much of the wood for the temple and his palace.

Three years after Tyre's destruction was prophesied by Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began a siege of the city that lasted 13 years. All you have to do with a walled city is cut it off from the outside world, and eventually, people will starve to death. It took 13 years, from 585 to 573 B.C. Finally, the city surrendered. Nebuchadnezzar broke down the massive walls and destroyed the defensive towers. As Ezekiel prophesied in Ezekiel 29, he didn't gain any treasure. The people of the city of Tyre moved all the treasure in the city to a large island located 1/2 mile off the coast. Since Nebuchadnezzar didn't have a navy, he was stuck. He abandoned his conquest of the city. The massive mainland city of Tyre was left in rubble, but the new island city of Tyre flourished for the next 250 years. Part of Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled, but the city wasn't completely destroyed, and the miles of rubble from the mainland city were still in place. It was not scrapped bare. Even the idea of scraping into the sea, as Ezekiel prophetically spoke about, seemed preposterous. It would be like scraping New York City down to the rock. Who could do that?

Then came a 24-year-old man named Alexander the Great. He had an infantry of 33,000 men and a cavalry of 15,000. He just defeated the Persians and was on his way to Egypt to defeat them in his bid to conquer the world. He needed supplies for his army, so as he passed the island city of Tyre, he sent

men in a boat to the island city asking for food and supplies. The people of the city refused to help him. What could he do about it? Like Nebuchadnezzar 250 years before, Alexander did have a navy.

One thing you didn't want to do was make Alexander the Great mad. He was angry and he had an idea. He directed his massive army to take the miles of rubble on the coast from the old city and push it into the sea. He built a 200-foot-wide 1/2 mile-long land bridge from the mainland to the island city. The island city was fortified. It was surrounded by walls that were 165 feet high. How would he conquer them? Alexander had an idea. He made massive wooden towers on wheels. His army pushed the 20-story high towers out to the island on the land

bridge he built from the rubble of the old city. On the top of the tower, he had a drawbridge. He dropped the bridge on the top of the city walls, and his army entered the city. He killed 8,000 in conquering the city, then



executed another 7,000 and sold the remaining 30,000 people of the city into slavery, fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy in every detail. The mainland city was scraped flat to the rock, the city was destroyed and has never been rebuilt, just as Ezekiel said. Today it is a place where fishermen dry their nets.

What good is Ezekiel's 26 to 28? It shows us the Word of God always proves true. It is flawless. It can always be trusted. Just as Jesus said.

That is why CrossWinds has such a high view of the Bible. It is why we preach from the Bible, and trust it in everything it says.



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