

More Precious Than Gold – January 19, 2025

[PP] Church Wide Prayer #3... Next Gen: Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ

- Pray for Southland to grow in hunger for God's Word
- ...NEXT GEN to rise up and own their faith. For God to stir them up with Holy passion!
- Pray for the Bible Memorization Challenges @ Midweek and HSYN!
 - o M.W. students aiming to memorize 2300 verses this ministry year!!
 - o HSYN students aiming to memorize 2000 verses this ministry year!!
- Pray for NEXT GEN at Southland to find their identity in Christ, and to build a foundation on the Scriptures "from infancy" (ref. 2 Timothy 3:15)!!

Intro: By show of hands, who in this room would be the kind of person to read/follow instructions? Presumably the rest of you without hands raised are like me... *the ready, fire, aim type!* Raise your hand if you are the type of person that immediately disregards the instructions because you can 'figure it out' on your own? Take note, we're the type you don't want help from when assembling your Ikea kitchen!

- [PP] **Share Neti Pot Story!** (didn't read instructions, instead 'followed my heart'. I put boiling water inside because I thought it cleared your sinuses with STEAM... turns out I was WRONG!!)
- [PP] **At risk of reducing the Bible to merely an instruction manual...** because its more than that... allow me to draw a comparison. **"More Precious Than Gold" Message Title**

As followers of The Way, how do we know what's true? How do we navigate life in every season?

- **If only there was a guide of some kind to help us!** A 'manual for life' so to speak...
- Something that could adequately answer all of life's big questions, including the **BIG THREE**: **Identity** (who am I?), **Purpose** (why am I here?), and **Belonging** (where do I fit?). Something that could help us avoid major pitfalls that bring so many down.
 - o Oh wait, there is – **THE Word of God!**
- **If you're new to the Bible, I hope to provide a basic overview that will help you. If you have been at it for a while, this will be a review. Either way, this is more precious than Gold. Let's learn to mine it!**
- [PP] *The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. **They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.** Ps. 19:7-11*
- **The Bible is certainly more than an instruction manual for life, but it's not less than that.** It's literally chalked FULL of answers to "ordinary questions" of day-to-day life. How do I handle conflict? How do I build strong relationships? Run a business? Be a good employee? Manage finances? Navigate singleness? Date (well)? Marriage? Parent? Grow in character? Anxiety? Whether *directly or indirectly*, the Bible addresses all these things & more! *"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."* G.K. Chesterton
 - o The Bible isn't some dusty old textbook; It's not irrelevant! It's the living, breathing Word of God! It's a treasure chest, filled with applicable, life-giving, awe-inspiring, stunningly beautiful wisdom, encouragement, comfort, perspective & hope. It's an action-packed, thrilling library available at our fingertips... daring us to dive in and discover!
 - o **In short, the Word of God is a gift "more precious than gold".**

[PP] A | What does the Bible say about... *THE BIBLE?*

I borrowed this phrase, of course, from Pastor Stefan's recent series. I think it is an interesting question... what does the Bible say about itself? You can tell a lot about someone/something by the way it presents to the world. Example: one of the ways we know that Jesus was Divine, the Son of God in Flesh, is by his own Words about himself. So let's take a quick look at what the Bible says about itself:

- ...it is a pathway to life!
 - o [PP] *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, **so that it might go well with them** and their children forever! Deut. 5:29*
 - o [PP] *Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:8*
- ...it is a joy and delight!
 - o [PP] *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but **whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night**. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. Ps. 1:1-3*
 - o [PP] *...they are **sweeter than honey**, than honey from the honeycomb. Psalm 19:10b*
- ...it is Eternal & Enduring!
 - o [PP] *Your word, Lord, is **eternal**; it stands firm in the heavens. Psalm 119:89*
 - o [PP] *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God **endures forever**." Isaiah 40:8*
- ...it is Authoritative!
 - o [PP] *All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting and training** in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17*
- ...it is Alive and Active!
 - o [PP] *For the word of God is **alive and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; **it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart**...But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 4:12, 5:14*
- Whether you have come to trust that the Bible is the true/reliable Word of God yet or not, one thing we can say for sure is that when the Bible speaks about itself, **it presents as essential for life, godliness and wisdom!** Not optional, irrelevant or boring.

[PP] B | Primary Purpose(s) of Scripture:

1. [PP] To Know God (there's a reason this is #1)
 - **REMEMBER:** God wants us to KNOW Him! *Now this is eternal life: that they **know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3*
 - o **Keeping the main things the main things...** We are in the month of Prayer and Fasting, and over the previous two Sunday's, P. Stefan has repeated this truth for each of the disciplines (prayer and fasting) – the primary purpose is to know God!
 - o **The same is true for the discipline of reading Scripture! The Scriptures reveal God.**

[PP] *"The Disciplines are God's way of getting us into the ground; they put us where he can work within us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God's means of grace."* **Richard Foster**

- **What do I do with those times in Scripture that feel dry, or like I didn't get much out of it?** Don't get hung up on it – commit to the practice of regularly getting into the Word, let the fruit follow. Example: Bible reading plan doesn't do the work... just puts us where the work can be done by God!
- **[PP]** *It's never too early, or too late! "...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* **2 Timothy 3:15**
 - o **This process starts EARLY, with our kids!** Don't undervalue the work that is being done in parenting and within our kids ministries!! **And it never ends!! Students of the Word for life!**
- **[PP]** *Jesus warned that we can miss the point: You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.* **John 5:39-40**
 - o **'THE LINK' (Scripture & Prayer):** The goal is to find life in Jesus – to know Him! The Scriptures reveal God to us, show us how to pray, give us Heaven's perspective.

2. **[PP]** To Experience Freedom

- Freedom comes from knowing truth, and living in accordance with it. **For example:** iPad illustration! *"What's is this? (iPad). What's it for? It's a sophisticated piece of technology that I can use to watch videos, write emails, do homework, read, edit photos, play candy crush, etc. No wonder it didn't work so well as... a cutting board!"*
 - o **When you know the TRUTH, it sets you free to use it according to its intended purpose.**
- **[PP]** *Jesus said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* **John 8:31-32 (NIV)**
 - o God's Word sets us free to live in accordance with truth according to God's good design!
 - o **Biblical Worldview in Four Chapters**
 - Where did we come from? **(Creation)**
 - What went wrong? **(Fall)**
 - How can it be fixed? **(Redemption)**
 - How will the story end? **(Restoration)**
 - + Big Three Questions **(Identity, Purpose, Belonging)**

3. **[PP]** To Renew Our Minds (For Discernment)

- **If truth brings freedom/life, then lies bring slavery/death.** (Dr. McDowell, 2024 EquipCon)
- *Do not **conform to the pattern of this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* **Romans 12:2**
 - o **We don't start in a place of neutrality...** our thinking has been corrupted by the Fall (sin). And we live in a world full of blurry lines and half truths, which only perpetuates.
 - o **The Bible as a Formative Agent:** read the Bible for formation, not just information.
 - o **Share knotcher story...** if one out of a hundred pieces was short, I know it is the defect. Similarly, we can detect counterfeit by knowing the real thing well!
- **[PP]** *But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.* **Hebrews 5:14**
 - o **[PP]** *"Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right."* **Charles Spurgeon**
 - o **[PP]** **Ice Cream vs. Frozen Mayo Example** (the best lies are the ones that are mostly true)
- **In a world full of blurry lines and half truths, it is VERY important that we are able to think Biblically.** This requires constant use and training in the Word of God.

4. [PP] For Comfort In Trial, to Resist Temptation, and Endurance

- Jesus in the Wilderness (Matthew 4) – 3 times our Lord was tested in the Wilderness, and three times Jesus responded with “IT IS WRITTEN”... that says something!!
- Mention 1 Corinthians 10 – Paul advised believers to read the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly the stories of Israel's history AS EXAMPLES to learn from NOW! (1 Cor. 10:6, 11).
- [PP] **Temptation:** *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11*
 - o **Trial:** *My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. Psalm 119:28*
 - o Buildings need foundations to stand, but we are more like trees. We need a living foundation!!
 - o **Share story of Scripture helping me to keep fasting!**
- I've found memorization to be one of the BEST THINGS I can do to invest in my faith! The payoff is immediate (the process is rich), but it has a multiplying effect down the road!
 - o **A quick word on the M.W. + HSYN Challenge:** paper copies of the verse lists available at the info desk... or join our groups on the Bible Memory App! Southland HSYN or Renew 42

[PP] C | Four Keys For Effective Scripture Reading

Read With The Right Posture, Guided By The Holy Spirit, Within Community, and Be Ready To Obey!

- [PP] **Read With Right Posture:** *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.” Psalm 111:10*
 - o I heard Tim Keller once say, *“The Bible doesn’t exist to answer all your questions, but to show you which questions should be asked.”* To be clear, questions are GOOD! and the Bible can stand up to scrutiny just fine – it has endured thousands of years!
 - The point is, there is a difference between asking honest questions and questioning... it comes down to humility in the heart of the questioner.
 - **Fear Of The Lord?** a whole message could be devoted to this topic. What is it? To fear the Lord is to recognize God for who He is, and respect Him. Pastor Ray's example of fear/respect for an airplane.
 - o The Bible is WISDOM, but fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because we need humble hearts that are ready to listen, consider and obey. We should pray for this!
- [PP] **Guided By The Holy Spirit:** *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26*
 - o We need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand and apply Scripture. This does not mean that there isn't a place for study. Study guided by the Holy Spirit!
 - o *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. Luke 24:45*
 - Have you ever had a verse 'stand out' to you? That's the work of the Holy Spirit!
 - **Share story about my first Bible Orange Bible**... it was thrilling to read!
- [PP] **Within Community:** *Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11*
 - o The Psalms are a community Prayer Book & Hymnal! (Ex. Psalm 136, “His love endures forever.”)
 - **Ephesians 5:19** – speak to one another in Psalms, hymns and songs of the Spirit!
 - **Colossians 4:16** – read this letter out loud, then pass it along!
 - **1 Tim. 4:13** – devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture (preach/teach)
 - o For mutual encouragement, protection from deception, vision for the church and more... reading the Bible in community has many benefits! On Sundays we gather to hear the Word publicly preached, and throughout the week we can read Scripture within small groups or as families/friend groups!

- **[PP] Be Ready To Obey:**
- *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever **looks intently** into the perfect law that gives freedom, **AND continues in it**—not forgetting what they have heard, **but doing it**—they will be blessed in what they do. James 1:22-25*
 - o **Did you catch that?** You can DECIEVE yourself by listening to the Word and not obeying it!
- **[PP]** *“Therefore everyone who **hears** these words of mine AND **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”* Matthew 7:24-27
 - o **[PP]** *You have laid down precepts that are to be **fully obeyed.*** Psalm 119:4
- **Story of Devo Time That Turned Into Obedience Step** – “Chris, put your shoes on!”
 - o **[PP]** **This is why I love the SMORP acronym as a baseline for my devotional life.** While I don’t use it every day, I regularly come back to it and make a habit of teaching others how/why to use it. I like the tool because it keeps us balanced!

[PP] D | Constant over Casual... Training over Trying!

- **[PP]** **Pay attention to what this passage is saying:** *But solid food is for the mature, who by **CASUAL** use have tried hard to.... Oh, wait... that’s not quite right, is it?*
 - o **[PP]** *But solid food is for the mature, who by **CONSTANT** use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.* Hebrews 5:14 (NIV)
 - o Recently Pastor Stefan and I were having a conversation about this verse and he made a comment that stood out to me. He said – “*we all have things we go to constantly, and those are the things that really shape us.*” He’s right. That is convicting...
 - o So here is the question – what do you find yourself going to *constantly*?
 - What are you drawn to first thing in the morning? Last thing before bed? When you have a dull moment, what do you “slip away to”? News? Shopping? Media?
 - Good news is that we can reshape our appetites by partnering with God and changing our habits. What if we aimed at getting into the Word/Prayer constantly?
- **I want you to notice a second feature of this verse:** Does it say that by constant use the mature will try really hard to have all the answers? NO! It says they will be TRAINED.
 - o There is a difference between trying and training.
 - o **[PP]** **We don’t try to think Biblically, we TRAIN to think Biblically! Focus on the process, let the fruit follow!**
- **Example:** marathon training... *one does not simply “try” to run a marathon* (to quote Boromir). It requires training. In fact, if you decide one day to just try, what will likely happen is that your experience will be AWFUL, and you might swear off running indefinitely!
- *“Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and **almost right.**”* Charles Spurgeon
 - o In a world full of blurry lines and half truths, it is VERY important that we are able to think Biblically. This requires constant us and training in the Word of God.

[PP] Reflection: How would you describe your current relationship with the Bible? *Casual? Constant?*

PAUSE: Give people a chance to reflect. Confess. Commit time to Read & Obey God's Word!

- **Do you have a plan for getting into the Word regularly? What is it?**
 - o **When** will you get into the Word? (morning? noon-hour? evening?)
 - o **Where** will you get into the Word? (where's a quiet space, distraction free? at the table? driving? walking? while doing dishes?)
 - o **Why** will you get into the Word? (remember, primary purpose is to know God! But don't shy away from applying effort and honouring commitments!)
 - o **How** will you get into the Word? (Bible reading plan? B.I.A.Y? memorization? audio Bible?)

Reminder: If you are new/just getting started... start where you are at! If you've been at this a while, keep going. Don't become apathetic! In the school of spiritual formation, there is no graduation, only commissioning for more! We are apprentices for life under Jesus!

[PP] ENDING: "More Precious Than Gold..." Psalm 19:10

- <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/faberge-third-imperial-egg/index.html>
- **[PP] Story of the Missing Third Imperial Faberge Egg** – crafted in 1887 by Peter Carl Faberge for the Russian Imperial Family. It is actually quite small, could fit in your hand, and is made to represent the love of God as well as the Resurrection of Christ!
 - o **I wonder if we even realize the worth of what God has given us in his Word??**
- It's like the man who found this small golden egg at a flea market. Totally unaware of what it was, he bought it with plans to melt it down and sell it for its weight in gold. He actually came to believe that it was a poor investment as he wouldn't be able to make a profit on it by melting it down. He was prepared to cut his losses.
 - o Luckily, before doing so he felt a nudge to quickly google it to see what it was and where it came from. Smart man! What he discovered is that this was no ordinary golden trinket. This was the lost Imperial Faberge Easter Egg, **worth 33 million dollars.**
 - o The materials the egg was made of were valuable in and of themselves (gold, diamonds, etc). That is what this man saw at the flea market. What he didn't see initially was it's value as a piece of art made by the master artisan Peter Faberge.
 - **God's Word is IMMEASURABLY VALUABLE. Not only for its wisdom, but because of its DEVINE INSPIRATION! It is a work of art that lacks any comparison.**
 - **WRITTEN BY THE FATHER TO REVEAL HIS HEART!**
 - **Written to all humanity, and to the Church – but also written to YOU – His child!**

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 19:10-11