

## **SERMON SERIES ON WHAT WE BELIEVE - We Believe That The Bible Is The Only Inspired, Infallible, And Authoritative Word Of God.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I guess with so many streets, we ought to know that they're always going to be working on them. But have you ever tried to go somewhere and found that, no matter which way you went, they were working on the street you needed to go on!? I've tried to go around a street where they were working the other day, only to go down another one being worked on! I tell you, it's a conspiracy!

They remind me of a story I'm sure many of you have heard:

A traveler on a country road comes to a creek where the bridge has been swept away by a recent flood. The traveler sees an old farmer standing next to where the bridge used to be and asks, "Is there a way to back track and find some where else to get across the creek?"

The farmer responds, "Yep. Just, go back two miles turn right and... No, go back one mile and turn left..." The farmer stops for a minute, shrugs his shoulders, scratches his head, and then says to the traveler, "Come to think of it, you can't get there from here."

We live in a time when the concept of truth has been "swept away" by a flood of relativism, pluralism and general skepticism. By "truth" we mean, "that which best represents reality." But such worldviews as relativism, pluralism and skepticism, result in the conundrum illustrated in our story: you can't get to reality from these worldviews.

What is relativism? Relativism says, there is no *absolute* truth; everything is relative—relative to the situation, relative to what a person's background is, or what their environment is; relative to what a person's goals are, ad nauseam! Whenever I hear someone espouse the view that there is no absolute truth, I always want to ask them, "Is that absolutely true!?"

Pluralism says, every viewpoint has value and merit. No one viewpoint is better or truer than another. And we must honor all viewpoints equally. I want to ask that person, "Even the viewpoint that says your viewpoint is ridiculous!?"

And skepticism says, you can never really discover truth—even if it really exists. The best you can do is determine what's true for you in the moment. But aren't they presenting a viewpoint they think is true for everyone!?

Can you see the contradictions in all these alternate viewpoints!? Can you see how such views can lead to the conclusion, "You can't get there from here"!?

Perhaps the farmer had problems not being able to give directions to the traveler because he was ignorant of where he was in relationship to the bigger picture. His “world” was too small; it only consisted of his farm and the immediate surroundings—the things he was familiar with. If he would have taken a higher view he could have provided the directions the traveler needed.

We need to do the same thing theologically—gain a higher view—whether to initially determine where we are, or to re-orient ourselves from time-to-time.

Our church will undergo a major transition in a few months when we find a new pastor. And to insure that we continue to proceed to our destination—i.e., God’s plan for our church and our individual lives—we need to be sure we know where we are. Or to put it another way: we need to know what we believe.

The elders of our church—myself included, as I too am an elder—have determined that it is necessary especially at this time to consider what we believe and teach as a church. Before we can really determine what kind of a pastor we need, we need to know what kind of a church we are.

So over the course of the next few months, I will be preaching and teaching on what we believe. I want to present these messages with three major points:

*What* we believe,  
*Why* we believe what we believe, and then  
*How* such beliefs impacts our lives, or the practical application of such a beliefs.

I believe such a focus on our core beliefs was confirmed by a statement I heard recently. In a conversation that mentioned in passing the fact that there are many religions, someone said, “All religions worship the same god; each religion just has different names for him.”

Such a belief would be like the farmer in our story telling the traveler, “It doesn’t matter which way you go; any way will get you to where you want to go.” Not only is such direction illogical, it’s not true!

Now God is certainly more than a name. And yet, He has given us a name so that we might know Him, and so we can distinguish Him from all the false gods.

When a crippled beggar was miraculously healed when Peter and John spoke to him in a name, the religious authorities questioned them, “***By what power or what name did you do this?***” (Acts 4:7).

And Luke records the response:

***Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone". Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*** (Acts 4:8-12 NIV)

Jesus Himself said, ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*** (John 14:6 NIV)

Now, either what the Bible says is true, or it's not. It can't be both—or neither, as the pluralists and relativists would say. And contrary to the skeptics, we can determine whether it's true or not.

## **WHAT**

So this provides a starting point for us, because our first fundamental belief is:

**WE BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY INSPIRED, INFALLIBLE, AND AUTHORITATIVE WORD OF GOD.**

That's a pretty audacious and comprehensive statement! Let's break that statement down to its individual components.

### *The Bible*

By "the Bible," we mean the 66 books that comprise the Old and New Testaments. But we mean specifically the original documents that were used to make the many translations we have today. We don't mean any one particular translation. So where there is any significant difference between translations, we need to consult the most reliable ancient documents to determine what was actually recorded.

And while most of us can't read the ancient languages the Bible was originally written in—we have adequate resources that we can consult to accurately know what was originally written.

### *Only*

By the term "only," we mean there is no other source or document that we look to, to determine truth. The Bible is the final and complete word; there has been no further "revelation" like the Quran or the Book of Mormon. The Bible alone, is the Word of God, and it is all we need.

### *Inspired*

By “inspired,” we mean that, though the Bible was written by humans, the content of the Bible did not come from their own imagination or will. They were inspired by God to write what they wrote.

As the Scriptures say, ***For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*** (2 Peter 1:21 NIV)

In other words, they were guided by God, so that what they wrote was “infallible.”

### *Infallible*

And by “infallible,” we mean, the Bible does not contain any error or mistakes (*infallible* and *inerrancy* are often used interchangeably—though a definite distinction can be made between them). It is fully trustworthy. We don’t have to sift through it to determine what is true and what is not.

### *Authoritative*

By “authoritative,” we mean the Bible is more than just a book. ***For the word of God is living 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.*** (Hebrews 4:12 NIV)

And it will be the standard by which every person’s life will be judged.

### *Word of God*

By “the word of God,” we mean it is God’s Word to us, and not man’s word to man. The Bible presents a God who loves us—so much that He went to the ultimate extent to rescue us from destruction and insure eternal joy. If God is truly like that, wouldn’t you expect Him to communicate with us, and in a way we could know it was from Him!?

## **WHY**

Why do we believe these things about the Bible?

We believe them because of the evidence. The Bible has proven itself to be authentic, truthful and reliable.

Ancient manuscript evidence demonstrates that the Bible is authentic.

Archeological finds corroborate people, dates and sites in the Bible showing

us that the Bible is truthful and reliable.

And fulfilled prophecies make the Bible unique among all other holy books.

We believe it because of the powerful nature of the Bible.

No book has undergone the scrutiny and outright attacks that the Bible has, and yet, no one has ever been able to discredit the Bible. With such specific information as names, dates, places and events, it would be easy to discredit it. And yet, it's these very details that serve to authenticate and verify the Bible's reliability.

And no book has ever changed individuals, governments, art, music and history itself, as the Bible has. Indeed, it's just such power that the atheistic communist governments and strict Islamic nations fear, so that they prohibit private ownership of a Bible. Why is this if the Bible is only a book—and one that's full of myths!?

The Bible is really a miracle in itself! Written by some 40 authors, over a period of about 2,000 years, it nevertheless has a common theme from beginning to end: God's love and plan for mankind.

We believe the Bible because without it, we have no objective, universal standard by which to view and have hope for our world. It's true that the Bible contains mysteries—things we can't understand. But really, it's the things we do understand that often cause us to doubt and even reject it, because it reveals mankind for who we really are. And it reveals a holy God that is awesome in power!

The Bible is not merely a book. It is the living, active and eternal Word of God! ***Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away***, Says the Lord. (Matthew 24:35 NIV)

## **HOW**

How does such a belief in the Bible impact our lives?

The Bible is like a map or a GPS, giving us a satellite view of life. It tells us where we are and speaks to us, giving us direction and correction for life and salvation.

As the Scriptures say, ***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV)

Without the authoritative Word of God, we are left to our own resources, which truly are relative, and therefore, unreliable, because they are affected by factors

which are constantly changing.

How would you navigate if your landmarks—or the points of the compass—were always changing!? That's what life is without truth—without the Bible, the eternal and unchanging Word of God.

## CONCLUSION

But it all boils down to choice. We can choose to believe the Bible is the *only, inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God*. This is what the Thessalonians did. And Paul wrote to them saying, ***And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*** (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV)

Or we can choose to believe the Bible is only a book—at best, only one of many religious books containing perhaps some good principles—but mostly a lot of myths. But where does that leave us!?

The farmer was relying only on his limited view and experience when he concluded, “You can't get there from here.” He could have said, “It doesn't matter. You can get there any way you go.” But we've already said that is ludicrous.

Or he could have engaged the traveler in a philosophical discussion by saying, “Well, that all depends on where you've come from; what your cultural background is; what schools you went to; whether you really want to go there, or maybe somewhere else . . . “

At the very least, he should have said, “I don't know how you can get there from here.” But instead, he settled for the skeptical answer, “You CAN'T get there from here.”

But if we choose to believe the Bible is a road map, an actual satellite view of our world, guiding us to hope and help and the reality we're all seeking, we find the bridge to cross the river.

If only our farmer had a map or a GPS!