
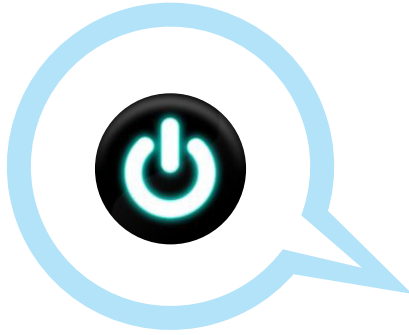


TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- Read Ecclesiastes 7:2. Tell us about someone who **had been** unconcerned about "*the ultimate questions of life*", but changed as a result of an illness, accident, or death of someone near to them.

How often do **you** think about your own eventual death? How has that changed your behavior?

- Tell about someone you know (or, you yourself) who ridiculed the Bible as a reliable source of truth. What alternate source were they trusting in? Have they changed their mind yet? If so, how/why?

- What questions still nag you regarding the reliability of Scripture to answer life's "ultimate questions"?

- Read 1 Peter 2:2-3. What is the significance of the fact that the Scriptures are called "pure" milk?

What exactly is **commanded** in v. 2? Do you do that? Why or why not?

What exactly is **promised** in v. 2? What evidence is there that that is happening in your life?

What needs to change in order for you to
"**long even more for the pure milk of the Word**"?

Application-Challenge

- Know the evidence for the uniqueness, reliability, and authority of Scripture. Review "**Foundations of the Faith**" (go to tcc.org click on **MEDIA** then **Sermons**, and search for January 22 & 29, 2017). Also buy and read Josh McDowell's **The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict**.
- Decide to trust the Bible rather than man's opinions. Both require faith—so choose God over man. Living in obedience to God's Word is the way that we express our love to God.
- Study Scripture daily and then evaluate **everything** you hear by one single standard:
"**What does Scripture say on that subject?**"

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

Over the centuries, Christianity got off-course. What started out as a shockingly simple story of God's "search and rescue mission" of sinful humanity became an elaborate maze of man-made rules and regulations. Five hundred years ago a reformation of Christianity began. At the time, individuals such as you and I were not allowed to pick up a Bible, to read it, to learn about Christ, to repent and to believe. And common people such as you and I, they said, could not establish a relationship with God without a priest's help—or permission! So, "Who decides what is true?". This is a question of authority: who has the final say? And, how can we know that we've vested authority in the right place? What is "truth"? Is there such a thing as absolute truth in the religious realm? How should we respond to others when they claim that their views—which contradict our views—are the right way to think? These were the questions which sparked the Reformation 500 years ago, and we're still asking them today!

In matters such as these—matters which lie beyond the five senses—the scientific method is of no use. If you can't taste, see, touch, hear, or smell it—and if you can't repeatedly measure it—then the scientific method cannot be used. Yet there is truth which lies beyond the five senses—truths regarding good and evil, kindness and harshness, love versus apathy, guilt and forgiveness. In order to answer the ultimate questions, we're going to need an authority which lies beyond ourselves.

The Bible claims to be a love message directly from God to us (2 Pet. 1:3-4; Matt. 5:18). What is life? Does life come from God—or elsewhere? What is godliness? Can we achieve godliness, and if so, how? Those are about as "ultimate" as one can get. The Bible claims that God has given us everything pertaining to these ultimate issues. Now, the fact that the Bible claims to be true doesn't make it true—we have to study the evidence to determine that (see today's "Application-Challenge").

Most Christians know that we claim that the Bible is true. But I'm afraid that many of us get tripped up by attacks such as: "There's no way that a book written 2,000 years ago, by a bunch of pre-scientific flat-earthers, can possibly be authoritative for today!" or "There's no way that Christianity can be the only way to God." No evidence is given to support these claims. They're simply stated as self-evident truths. And many Christians are cowed into silence when they hear statements such as these, stated with absolute conviction, yet without a shred of proof to back them up. They're stated with such certitude and contempt that Christians just back down.

When it comes to answering the ultimate questions of life, neither the scientific method nor individual sentiments can give us an answer. If we're to answer them, then the answers will need to come from God. Either we project our own ideas onto God or God reveals the truth to mankind. The former is called "mythology"; the latter is "theology". No matter how sophisticated the ideas, when they originate with us, it's just mythology. Today we still have rival religious mythologies—not only within the Christian traditions, but now also Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and many others. (Individuals construct their own mythologies, typically beginning with phrases such as: "I like to think of God as..." or "I don't think God would ever...") And now we've added scientific-sounding mythologies, including the "big bang" in which matter comes into being—from literally nothing! But it's simply an illogical myth that something that had a beginning doesn't need a cause.

In contrast to mythologies is the Reformation affirmation of "Sola Scriptura"—Scripture alone! We believe that the only solid foundation for answering ultimate questions is to let God tell us what's really true, and we believe that God has told us in the Scriptures. Don't allow the simplicity of this idea cause you to think that it's a gimmick. If Stephen Hawking's book, Neil de Grasse Tyson's book, or Bill Nye's book can have truth in them—and many people believe that they do—why can't God's book have truth in it?

Does the Reformation doctrine of "Scripture Alone" mean that we should not read any other books or listen to any teachers? Not at all—in fact, the Bible itself tells us to teach each another, and to receive teaching from each other (Col. 3:16). People need teachers and teaching. But the teaching needs to be an explanation and an application of what the Bible teaches (2 Pet. 3:16b). Many, many self-help books—including Christian ones—fall into this category. They'll use Bible verses, but unless they place glorifying God as the goal of our entire lives, they are not teaching the Bible. "Sola Scriptura" also means that there's nothing better than God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

Inspiration is the activity of God by which his special revelation was put into permanent, authoritative, written form by the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, working through the thought processes, literary styles, and personalities of select people in such a way that the product of their labors, in its entirety, is the very word of God (both the ideas and the specific vocabulary), infallible, and inerrant in the original manuscripts.

Monday - Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17

- According to verse 15, what is the first and primary purpose of Scripture?
- How did God go about giving us that wisdom, according to verse 16?
- While holding your hand in front of your mouth, say the words, "I love you." Did you feel your breath? Why do you think Paul used the word "breathed" to describe the way God gave us His truth?
- Do you think Paul used the word "every" and "all" (v. 16) on purpose? Have you ever found yourself thinking that some Scripture applies to you and other parts do not? What is one Scripture that you have felt didn't apply to you? How could you apply it to yourself today?
- In what area of your life would you like to be "equipped" for "good action?" Can you think of a Bible verse that could encourage or guide you in that area? Why don't you post that verse in Facebook or send it to your friends by e-mail?

Tuesday - Re-read 2 Timothy 3:15-17

- As you study the purpose of the "God-breathed" Scripture (v.16), why is it important for the Scripture to contain the very words of God and not just a person's understanding of God?
- Theologians often refer to the inspiration of the Bible as "plenary" - unconditional, absolute, comprehensive and complete. What implications does this have for you and your understating of the Bible? But we don't use the Bible to learn how to change the tire on my car—so what is the purpose of an unconditional, absolute, comprehensive and complete Bible?
- Why do you think that God used human authors (rather than writing the entire Scriptures himself, as he did the Ten Commandments for Moses)?
- According to Jesus in Matthew 4:4, why are the very words of Scriptures so important? Can you think of a verse that has brought you life? Write it down and stick on your bathroom mirror.

Wednesday - Read 2 Peter 1:17-21

- Why do you think Peter is so confident in the message of the prophets (v.18)?
- If you had been with Peter on that night that Jesus was glorified, how might that have affected your confidence in the Scriptures?
- Give some concrete examples of how the Scriptures have been or could be a "lamp" to your heart. (v.19)
Write out that verse and leave it for a spouse/co-workers/friends to be encouraged.
- According to v. 20, where did the interpretation/ thought/understanding/explanation come from that was written down by the authors of Scripture?
- In verse 21, different translations of the Bible say that the human author was controlled/guided/led/carried along/directed by the Holy Spirit to write the Scriptures. What implications does this have for the authority of the Scriptures in our lives?
- If the human authors were controlled/guided/led/carried along/directed by the Holy Spirit, were they just robots mechanically transcribing God's words or clairvoyants channeling the words of the Spirit or were they fully alert and involved in the process? If they were involved, what implications does that have in our understanding of the Scriptures?
- Some may say that the Bible is just a collection of myths or human ideas. From Peter's words, how would you refute that?

Thursday - Read Jeremiah 1:9; John 14:26b, Isaiah 55:8-9

- In Jeremiah 1:9, why do you think it was important for God to put his words in Jeremiah's mouth? Why didn't God just give the prophecy directly to the people?
- After reading John 14:26, do you have more or less confidence in the Scriptures? Why?
- According to Isaiah 55:8-9, why didn't God just give the ideas to human authors and just let them write what they want?
- Theologians often refer to the inspiration of the Bible as "verbal" - the very words of Scripture are inspired. What implications does this have for you and your understanding of the Bible?
- So, if the Scriptures actually have dual authorship—divine and human, what part did each one play? How will this affect the way you interpret Scripture?

Friday - Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

- How does Paul believe that the words he taught are actually from God?
- What was the purpose of God's divine revelation (v.12)?
- Should there ever be a cost associated with knowing the very words of God? Do we have to do something, know someone or wear something to understand what God wants to teach us?
- Did Paul use Freudian psychology, the latest debating techniques, special marketing strategies etc. to come up with his teachings?
- Have you ever met a person who thinks the Bible's teachings are "nonsense?" What is Paul's reason for their understanding? Should we judge them or feel compassion for them who don't understand. How can they get understanding?
- Should we accept spiritual facts/teachings from someone who isn't a Christian? Why or why not?
- Can you and I have the "mind of Christ" just like Paul? Does this mean that we can start writing our own new Scriptures? Besides having the "mind of Christ", what is the other important ingredient for writing Scripture?

Saturday - Because the Scriptures are inspired, what else do we know?

- Read Numbers 23:19 and Titus 1:2b. From these passages we can know that the inspired Scriptures are _____.
- Read Isaiah 55:10-11. From this passage we can know that the inspired Scriptures are _____.
- Read Matthew 5:18. From this passage we can know that the inspired Scriptures are _____.
- Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. From this passage we can know that the inspired Scriptures are _____.