

2/21/10

Recentering for Growth in the New Reality  
(Elevating the Word)

We have begun a series on Getting Healthy in the New Reality. We are trying to stay true to that focus. We keep asking ourselves what is critical for Christians to survive and prevail in this season of national economic crisis that many are calling the New Reality.

We started out trying as best as we can to put this New Reality into context. The main questions being; where is God in all of this and what is God doing?

Then we talked about our relationship with God and how we don't need to allow difficult times to distance us from God. Prayer was and still is a focus. Speaking of relationship, didn't Leah and Greg do an awesome job last Sunday? I actually thought Leah outshined Greg just a little but I'm sure they planned it that way. Good job Greg.

Normally we go through our values this time of year and we will get to it and in fact today will be a value but only because it addresses the critical need for the moment. Our energy and focus right now is to give you what you must have to survive and prevail as Christians in this New Reality. No fluff, no extraneous info. Just pure red meat or if a veg...pure protein.

Today's topic is vital.

Today we are going to talk about the Bible.

What role does the Bible play in surviving the New Reality?

(I read in Francis Chan's new book *Forgotten God* about the South Korean missionaries captured by the Taliban in 2007. They secretly took a Bible and ripped it into 22 sections and handed a section out to each missionary. Two of the missionaries were executed before the rest was released. The book quoted a conversation between the ex-prisoner, "At times don't you want to go back? Wasn't it so powerful to have God speak to you so clearly through His Word and you could feel yourself being literally sustained by the Holy Spirit?")

I could so identify. There are aspects of time in prison I wish I could capture and retain. The intimacy, the tenderness and the life that flowed through the Word. But some of us today are in our own version of a prison experience. We are imprisoned by a lack of resources that makes it impossible for us to do what we want and go where we want to go. It is painful, embarrassing and

for many, unprecedented to all we have previously experienced in our lifetime.

In times like this there is no substitute for the Word of God. If you will, the Word waits for moments like this to demonstrate its power and relevance.

Today we will look more at this book than in this book. Next week we will unpack a few of the most important doctrines of Scripture. How important is knowing the fundamental truths of Scripture?

**NAS Hosea 4:6** *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*

Knowledge of the Word can save you in more ways than one.

We believe that the Bible is God's love letter to mankind. That is debatable. We know it is unique among all books on the planet. That is undisputed.

Here are some facts about the Bible.

The word Bible comes from the Greek word *Biblia* which means "book." It is the book of books.

The Bible was written by over 40 different writers over a span of 1,500+ years.

The first writer was Moses and the last was the Apostle John.

Beginning as early as 250 BC, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt. This translation became known as the "Septuagint", meaning 70, and referring to the tradition that 70 (probably 72) men comprised the translation team. It was during this process that the order of the books was changed to the order we have in today's Bible:

Historical (Genesis - Esther), poetic (Job - Song of Songs), and prophetic (Isaiah - Malachi).

The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew and contains 39 books.

The New Testament written in Greek contains 27 books.

By 150 AD the writings of the apostles were referred to by the early Christians as the New Covenant.

The Bible was divided into chapters in 1238 by Cardinal Hugo de S. Caroin.

The Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan in 1488 and the New Testament by Robertus Stephanus in 1551.

The entire Bible divided into chapters and verses first appeared in the Geneva Bible of 1560.

Purely for you trivia buffs between chapters 6 & 7 of Ezra, both Confucius and Buddha died (516-458 B.C.)

In spite of the 40 plus writers, the bible claims a unique authorship.

**NLT 2 Peter 1:20, 21** *Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.*

The Bible actually claims that God is its author. Amazing!  
How can it back up such a claim? Not easily.

Fortunately, God does not leave us with just empty claims of His divine handiwork in the Bible, but also supports it with compelling evidence that is profoundly unique.

First, the design of the Bible itself is a miracle. Written over more than 1,500 years by vastly different writers, yet every book in the Bible is consistent in its message. These 66 books talk about history, prophecy, poetry, and theology. Despite their complexity, differences in writing styles and vast time periods, the books of the Bible agree miraculously well in theme, facts and cross-referencing. No human beings could have planned such an intricate combination of books over a 1,500-year time span. If you think about it, there has been as much time elapse from the first book to the last book as from the last book until now. Lots of change between books.

Bible manuscripts (remember, there were no printing presses until 1455) have survived despite weather, persecution and time. Most ancient writings written on weak materials like papyrus have vanished all together. Yet many copies of the Old Testament scriptures survived. For instance, the Dead Sea Scrolls contain all books of the Old Testament, except Esther, and have been dated to before the time of Christ. Consider Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars. Only ten copies still in existence and they were written about 1,000 years after the event. In comparison, there are over 24,000+ New Testament manuscripts, the earliest one dating to within 24 years after Christ. So we know that the accounts were accurate in describing the life and work of Christ.

The most compelling evidence of divine authorship has to be the number of fulfilled prophecies. An astonishing 668 prophecies have been fulfilled and none have ever been proven false (three are unconfirmed). Can you imagine the odds of just one prophecy being fulfilled?

There is no other explanation possible than divine authorship of the Bible. And think of the implications for the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. 3400+- verses of fulfilled prophecy. 3100+- verses yet to be fulfilled.

Want to know the future? Read the Word.

Further, archeology confirms (or in some cases supports) accounts in the biblical record. No other holy book comes close to the Bible in the amount of evidence supporting its divine authorship.

Ex: Up until 1993 there was no evidence that King David existed outside the writings of Scripture. But then an archeological team near the city of Dan uncovered a stone inscribed in Aramaic "The House of David."

In Josh McDowell's classic treatise on the historical evidences supporting the Bible's veracity, renowned archaeologist Nelson Glueck is quoted as saying, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." That alone is powerful evidence.

What does this mean for you and me?

This is huge. It means that the Bible is reliable. Yes there are discrepancies in the Bible. One writer may say that there were two demoniacs and another says one demoniac but the key is what happened. What was the lesson?

God knows that man will always find a way to question and doubt. God has always dealt with mankind in a way that leaves room for doubt.

The Pharisees told Jesus hanging on the cross, "Come down and we will believe." Jesus knew they wouldn't. When Jesus arose and the temple guards told the Pharisees an angel came and opened the tomb the Pharisees paid them a bribe to say that the disciples of Jesus came and stole the body.

**NLT John 3:19** *And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

God came and He knew that not everyone would respond. Those that are hungry move to the light.

Disbelief is not an eye issue. It is a heart issue.

The Pharisees saw Jesus perform miracles right before their eyes. What was their response? They hated Him even more. The point is, the Bible is true in spite of the few discrepancies and things we don't understand. And if it is true, it is entirely true and the implications are far reaching.

The Bible stands alone in accuracy whether prophetic or geographical.

For us this means that you can rely on what the Word says.

The Bible tells us who God is, how to be saved from this dying planet.

The Bible describes the condition of man's heart and what to do about it.

The Bible tells us how to get along with people, have a good marriage and raise our children. There are instructions about sex, money, failure, success riches and poverty.

Every aspect of life is addressed by the One who gave life.

It's all in the Bible. That is why there is no excuse.

**NLT 2 Timothy 3:16, 17** *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

If every word is inspired and beneficial, what is the consequence of not knowing the Word? Remember, ignorance is no excuse.

Without the Word we are no different from the world. It is the Word that trains us to live as citizens of God's kingdom.

**NLT Rom.10:17** *Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*

So you are going through a hard time and you need faith to overcome.

How will you get faith if you are ignorant of the Word?

There are 1260 promises in the Bible. If you don't know them how can you receive them?

All that matters is what God has to say about something. God's Word is sure and will not change regardless of our actions. God's Word stands forever.

Listen to what the Psalmist has to say about God's promise to David.

**NLT Ps. 89:30-35** *But if his descendants forsake my instructions and fail to obey my regulations, if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating. But I will never stop loving him nor fail to keep my promise to him. No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said. I have sworn an oath to David, and in my holiness I cannot lie:*

Whatever God tells you, you can go to the bank on. When God says it, it's a done deal. What is God saying to you today through His Word?

If you don't know the Word you are subject to the forces that rule this earth.

The Word is our link to God and all that He offers us; that belongs to us.

The Word not only links you to God it reveals your true self.

Essential for change. If you don't know yourself you cannot grow or change.

**NAS Heb. 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

The Word reveals who you are on the inside so you can deal with it in the appropriate way. Without the Word we are all self deceived thinking we are one thing when we are not. *Active* means working.

How can you get more of God's Word in your heart?

**NLT Ps. 119:9-11** *"How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you— don't let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."*

Maybe the better question is, how can we hide God's Word in our hearts?

**Ps. 119** gives incredible insight as to the power of the Word.

We cannot live without the Word.

**NLT Ps. 1:1-3** *Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners or join in with mockers.*

*But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.*

*They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.*

**NLT James 1:21** *So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. Only the Word has the power to save you.*

Never forget the greatest enemy Satan has is the Word. It is how Jesus defeated him in the wilderness. Satan is no match for the Word and when the Word is in us he cannot touch us.

Satan has always hated the Word. There is always a war going on for the sole purpose of keeping you away from the Word of God.

So my challenge today is "what will it take to get you in the Word everyday?" What further loss must you incur?

Until we become centered in the Word we will be tossed by the winds of trials and difficulty. We will waver under the daily tests of life.

With the Word we grow stronger even when the winds of testing blow.

It is the daily Word that feeds us. It feeds our spirit even if we don't understand all we read. Our spirit understands so reading will build up your spirit man and make you strong.

**NLT Rom. 12:2** *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

I'm asking you to consider starting a Bible study in your home or attend one that's going on now. Ex: BSF for men and women.