

What's Holding Your Pants Up?

Ephesians 6:14

Main focus of this series: This series is a formulation of key teachings and understandings from the book of Ephesians. In an effort to decipher each statement of Paul in Ephesians we believe we will learn how to successfully operate in the three positions of the believer: to **sit** (Ephesians 1-3), to **walk** (Ephesians 4-6:9) and over the next few weeks we will address the thought... **stand** (Ephesians 6:10-24) .

The importance of this message today: Paul is giving the church at Ephesus seven weapons in which they can fight Satan and his destructive plan. These weapons are to assist us as we increase and establish victory quicker and broader in territories captivated by the enemy of the cross. Of the seven weapons, only one of them are offensive, the other six are defensive in nature. The first weapon that Paul describes, and the we will address today, is the one in the center of the armor, the one that holds everything together, the belt of truth.

Satan's attempt once again to destroy the very work of God was rampant. As one scripture says, Satan came with full intention, full of fury and knowing he had a short time to do all the damage he could do he was going to wreak havoc on God's people and he is still doing it today. Satan will not wait or step back because you dislike him, **he doesn't care at all what you think. What he is concerned with what you know! To know Christ as savior but not understand Him as Lord Redeemer is falling short of all that God has provided for you as a believer.**

The hatred of the Christian's in the early church, both from the Romans and Satan, Dead, martyred Christians were strung to poles and set on fire to assist the night crew as they built roads. Many were being burned alive as well as being eaten alive by wild animals in the coliseum and the annihilation of so many believer's by the gladiators in the amphitheaters. This became so popular one Coliseum had to expand it's seating to 87,000 seats to handle the crowds.

Morality was in shambles, homosexuality was acceptable and even their emperor, Nero, was a bisexual. It was not uncommon for the Roman theater to have live sexual scenes to feed the appetite of lust and sensuality. Female believers who would not renounce Jesus Christ could be sold as sex slaves to defame their faith in God.

This persecution pushed new believing Jews and others to outward laying countries where demonic paganism, witches, astrologers, mediums and idol worship were the norm. These Christian's were not welcomed, but opposed in every facet of life, socially, religiously, and politically. This is the picture of Ephesus.

"...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

1 John 5:4

We do not live in that much of a different world concerning the attacks and mission of Satan than they did at the beginning of the New Testament. If anything is true, he has developed his trade that much more in the last 2000 years. The spiritual attack is not as obvious today as it was back then, but we are still dealing with the same core issue, the world needs Jesus and

without Him, Satan will take his pleasure in manipulating and wreaking havoc on families and individuals that Christ died for. Satan would love nothing more than the church lay in its own ashes, charred rubble of a history gone by.

The prince of the air still wants to dominate this world. He would like nothing more than for the people of God, the church, His bride to neglect their mission on this earth. Be we not only need to share the goodness of the love of Christ, but to also disrupt Satan's plan and overtake his turf. These battles we fight today are for real and demand commitment and care. To have this kind of impact we must learn to use the proper weapons in the arsenal that God has given us.

"¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."

Ephesians 6:14-18

III. Napoleon and Waterloo: Here are some truths that I have come to understand. Some people have a love for some of these weapons more than the others. I found it interesting while reading a few years ago that one of the main reasons that Napoleon lost the war at Waterloo was because he was strangely attached to a certain weapon, the cannon. When Napoleon first started his military career he came up through the ranks of artillery, cannons was his first love. He became incredibly tactful and successful utilizing this weapon. Historians say that on the day that Napoleon was fighting at Waterloo that the rain so muddied the field that it was impossible to maneuver the cannons in a way to position them against enemy troupes. What is also a shocking reality, Napoleon had all the weapons in his arsenal to defeat the enemy that day. Napoleon would not lower his pride to allow other weapons to help defeat the enemy. He had too much dependency on one weapon rather than the arsenal.

In the same way we may have a delight in one or more of the weapons that God has provided for us to defeat the enemy. But we must be aware that Satan is strategic and will look for the weakness of your arsenal. You need to be aware of them all and work with them to skill level.

The Weapons Of Our Warfare

The simple truth is that these weapons can only work when we understand and use them correctly. Sitting idly in our arsenal of weapons will never achieve anything. We must respond, learn to use them, handle them with care and make sure they we are properly trained to be use them. Paul was teaching the Ephesians how to live victorious in probably one of the most difficult times in their history. Roman soldiers were on a conquering spree as well as Satan was out to destroy the church with a violent rush.

The whole armor of God is provided and expected to be worn as a believer who has victory in mind. This armor is our source to defeat the enemy. Remember, the Blood of Jesus is sufficient for us, there is no name or source greater than that. **But, God has resourced us to be equipped, ready to fight Satan's strategy that wants to destroy us.**

We can stand alone in the work of the cross, blessed, forgiven and integrated into the heavenly Kingdom while taking a beating along the way. Or, we can utilize the weapons that God has provided so that we may be able to give a beating to Satan along the journey. The difference here is are you going to be a victim of Satan's attack or are you going to bring more havoc on the enemy? I would rather have the latter and so should you!

Satan's attack on you is to destroy you at a critical time in your life and ministry. Satan wants to take you out when you are invested in one of the greatest Kingdom impact moments of your life. His "sneak attacks" are attempts to topple your spirit and thwart the plan of God's will in your life. **Stopping you is stopping God's plan for this earth. Don't you see it. We are the messengers, the light the salt of the earth. Of course no man comes to the Father but by Christ, but who is going to tell people about Christ. Who is going to quicken the hearts of men and women that are searching for the answer to their souls hunger? We are!** But there is confusion among those who consider themselves believers. They don't clearly understand or acknowledge the Word of God for what it says. They conveniently transpose some of it's teachings to match their way of thinking, but mostly to justify their own lustful or selfish desires.

(From Last Weeks Notes) A recent professional baseball player who set many records and will undoubtedly be placed in the hall of fame retired just a few years ago. Newspapers featured an article about him that revealed that he had impregnated two women while he was getting a divorce from his first wife and getting ready to marry his 2nd wife.

The newspapers reported that these two women were suing him for child support. When this particular individual was interviewed, he commented, **"I will live up to my moral responsibilities. I take them seriously because I am a Christian."**

For being a Christian, he didn't have a very good understanding of his moral responsibilities. It doesn't matter what you claim, if it does not line up with God's Word then you are out of step with God as the next guy. Have we gone so far that we don't even realize that impregnating women and casting them and these fatherless children aside as useless toys is not a moral responsibility as much as it is a moral atrocity?

Dressed To Kill

The work of Christ in our life is victorious, Satan cannot take that from us. Christ's work over Satan is a final conflict. But the day to day victories of a believer are played out on a battle ground. The blood of Christ saved us, but it does not insulate us from the attacks of the enemy or the attack of those under our care. Paul says,

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

II Corinthians 10:3-4

The Belt of Truth

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist..."

Ephesians 6:14a

When we are talking about the Bible, we are actually talking about a library of 66 books written over the course of a few thousand years by some 40 authors, and written in primarily three languages, Hebrew, in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament. When we read the Bible, we are reading all kinds of history, poetry, stories of rich men and poor, sick men and mighty warriors.

If you have ever attempted to read the Bible it can really get confusing like it was for me for many years because it seemed to be jumping around. One of the main reasons for that is because it is not written in chronological order, But much like a library it is put together by genre of literature. So you will have the law together, the history together, the poetry together and the prophets together.

One of the things we take for granted is the chapters we have in our bibles, they were not added until about the 1200's. But it wasn't until about 1551 when the verses of those chapters were added. There is nothing wrong with that, it helps us find places in the bible easier. Last year I was in the city of Kampala, Uganda, Africa. A city of two million people and there was not one street sign. Chapters and verses actually help us with the Bible but sometimes it can altar some of the reading because the chapter breaks before the full thought is complete or develop. So you can lose the flow of thought that the author is trying to bring across.

One thing you will find is that the New Testament writers will always defend and support the Old Testament writers. The New Testament authors quote the Old Testament authors on at least 300 occasions. It is hard to read anywhere in the New Testament in a 15 minute setting that you don't read a quote or an illusion to an Old Testament verse. This is why we often say, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."

It tells us we have got to wrap this truth around our waist. **It needs to be the center of our armor. When you put this belt of truth around you, the Word of God, you are determining to make it the priority of your life, the basis of your decisions, the source of your wisdom. By doing so you are in the process of establishing a weapon that all the rulers, authorities and powers in the heavenly realm has to respond to.**

The Roman soldier was completely cover from head to toe. His helmet covered his head, a breastplate covered his upper torso and midsection. He had metal from the top of his knees to the bottom of his legs. Even his feet had special attention, a heavy piece of metal covered the top of the foot, made ready for battle. A metal helmet, metal breastplate, shins, ankles and top of his feet covered with metal. And attached to his "loinbelt," or waist belt was a little ring where he could clip on the shield, which was partially made of metal. Along the ridge of his back was a lance or spear and sat in a specially designed pouch attached to the loinbelt.

There is nothing special to look at when it came to the loinbelt. It was the least noticeable piece of armor and could hardly be seen. But this insignificant article of weapon kept your pants up, if you were a soldier. It kept you together, which is why it had the reputation of the most vital part of all weaponry of a Roman soldier.

On his loinbelt rested his shield, his sward, his lance and his breastplate. It held all things together. This belt was located in the middle of the man and is most important to the man. It is the belt of truth. It is the Word of God. Without it you are fighting without content and

connectedness. Since all our faith depends on the Word of God and God only honors His Word, don't you think it would be good to have that as a priority in our lives at all times?

This loincloth reminds us of our relationship with God. It tells us what is truth and what is not. It tells us how to deal with people around us and how to treat one another. This Word wrapped around our waist is the source of our strength and direction.

III. **While playing football**, it was a common fact that if you were going to tackle someone in open field all you had to do was concentrate on their waist, it never lied. The running back could jut and jive all he wanted to but if you only looked at his waist you knew where he was going. If I looked at his head, eyes or feet I would be tricked every time. But when I trusted my training and looked at his waist I would make the tackle every time.

You cannot function without applying the Word of Truth "around" you. Not just in front or back, but completely around you. If this belt is not in its place as you enter your war, you pants will fall down, embarrassing...you bet, terminal...absolutely!

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."

II Timothy 3:16

This is the place to begin. This is the foundational article that all other things rest on. The lack of participation here, in the Word of God, causes everything to be lost and separate from each other.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

Colossians 3:16

- **Dwell**, enoikeo- to take up residence. It means to take up residence or make yourself at home.
- **Richly**- plousios- Extreme extravagance and luxurious living.

To let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly is to say, "Let the Word of Christ take up residence within you and give it the most extravagant opportunity to live luxuriously just how He says He wants to.

What Do The Scriptures Say About This Truth?

- **Solomon's Caution- Proverbs 1:20-33**

"Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech: "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?"

Proverbs 1:20-22

- **Three Types Of People Identified:**

1. **Simple:** These people love the simplicity, the naivety of their life. It is not that simple is not good, it is that they refuse to complicate their life with any truth at all. They just don't want to go there. They are inactive in making any judgment

at all, of themselves or others. Solomon says, "You are in love with these simple ways...not in love with the wisdom of God." You don't want to be bothered with the inconvenience of thinking or pursuing truth.

2. **Mockers:** These people delight to mock and deride those around them. They get a thrill to be inflated and to scoff as a scorner. They are active in making judgment of others for whatever stance the other individual might take, for truth or wrong. Mockers get a kick out of mocking others. It brings them great pleasure. Mocking is entertaining, with unending resources and a constant platform is easy to find. How they delight in it.
3. **Fools:** The fool, the commentary calls them a stupid fellow, dullard, simpleton, arrogant one. This person probably has a foundation of a mocker, but they are a step above, they are telling everyone what you should think and what you should do. They are a fool because they believe what they think is the truth and everyone else is ignorant. They are active in making everyone else inferior to their own perspective of right and wrong without the basis of any foundational support. He is a fool! Now a fool, they just hate any opinion that is not their own. They resent any other thought other than the ones generated by their own mind and horribly never understanding that even those thoughts are not their own, but they are inserts of lies and death planted by Satan and his imps.

"If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke..."

Proverbs 1:23-25

"I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you- when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me."

Proverbs 1:26-28

"Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

Proverbs 1:29-33

Does The Bible Have Any Errors or Contradictions?

We say no to that. Many verses say that God cannot lie and so why would he make a mistake?

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:9

This is not an excuse or avoiding the question, but the reality is that we don't understand everything or know how some things are said or what they mean. Our arrogance demands not answers, but arguable resolve. In other words, we don't like

anything left to question and if there is, then the credibility must not be in me...I'm smart, very smart, so it must be you, the scripture that has a problem. What pride, what illusion. Many men bask today in the arrogance of their "knowledge" to find fault in God's Word tripping on a twig next to the ocean of truth. And as they sit on their rear gazing at all who sail on this incredible sea they confidently, without question say, "I wanted to sit here."

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

Deuteronomy 29:29

It tells us that the secret things belong to the Lord. There may be some things that God has just not revealed to us. But what is ours is what He has revealed all for the purpose of helping us living in His light, love and truth!

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

I Corinthians 13:12

We don't see clearly. Our human thoughts and imagination carry with it distractions and tainted thoughts that blur our vision. But one day we will see it all in living color. We are only being revealed in part. Think of all you know, all the studying you have done, all the revelation that has come your direction through the work of the Holy Spirit and it is just a bit of all that God has to say. One day we will know it completely, without question or distortion.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Romans 1:16

Because some do not know the gospel they withdraw from interacting with what they know. They are ashamed of what they know rather than confident in what they have come to believe. There are those who are so arrogant in what little they know and those who are ashamed of the little gospel that actually revolutionized their life. If you have come to know God through an encounter with Christ, you have come to know far more scripture than any scholar who has written many books that scrutinize and defend error in God's Word.

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Romans 1:18-20

The loud statement that Paul is making here in this scripture is not that the truth is not made known, but the truth is not loved. Man's wickedness hides the revelation of the truth of God's Word. They continue on their way, deceived in the knowledge they gained while in an intimate relationship with God. But now they are blind to the fact of what all that was saying, and what all was being revealed. God's Word was being illuminated to them by God Himself, down to some of the most incredible details, His invisible qualities that would make you shiver if you knew, the frightening, awesome power and all that He has to transfer to the believe out

of His divine nature...but they fall into error. Refusing to turn around they become delusional and convinced of lies and deception.

The truth is, the Word of God is confrontational and it says things that we don't like. It is revealing and it leaves us with a choice to respond or try to make it go away. Mark Twain once said, "It's not the parts of the Bible that I read and don't understand that troubles me, but it's the parts of the Bible that I read and do understand that troubles me."

III. There was a college professor of drama at a particular college who memorized the entire New Testament because his brother was a missionary and he loved to argue the Bible and he loved to mock him and he used verses to trap and pester him, because he was not a believer. He was asked by a Christian, "You have the whole New Testament memorized, you don't want to have anything to do with Jesus and your brother is a missionary for Christ, honestly, what is the one big reason you won't become a Christian?" His response was, "I just want to do what I want to do!"

His response had nothing to do with Jesus or the scriptures other than, he just didn't want God telling him what to do. It's that same type of suppression of truth we find in Romans 1. It's not that he didn't know what the Bible said, but it was that he didn't want to yield to what it said. He didn't like it and wouldn't submit to it.

Paul's Presence In The Bible

Probably today the most debate surrounding the Word of God is the writings of Paul. How do we respond to Paul's writings in the Bible? According to our present environment and social challenges, Paul looks like a sexist telling wives to submit to their husbands. Another place he looks like a homophobic saying that sexual offenders will not inherit the Kingdom of God. He talks about hell and sin and about a lot of things that people don't agree with and want to cut out of the Bible. Many churches today are trying to figure out how they can discreetly cut away portions of Paul's writings from the Bible because they don't like what it says and they want to continue their lifestyles without having anything contradict it.

See, the idea that many have is that these men, Paul and others in the New Testament were not able to write scripture because they lived so much later than when the Old Testament was written and they could not possibly have a handle of what the Old Testament was saying and it was never intended to be viewed the way Paul wrote it.

Let's look at what Peter had to say about Paul's writings. Peter was the one who Jesus said, "I will build my church on you." Peter was always the first of men mentioned when the disciples were active. He was given the highest credibility to be listened to and considered the authoritative leader of the New Testament.

¹⁵Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

II Peter 3:15-16

Have you ever read Paul's writings and said, "What?" Here are some of the challenging things he writes on: Predestination, tongues, prophesy, women in ministry and many others. Most of what different churches fight about is things that Paul has written. Peter says, "Some

of the things that Paul writes is hard to understand, but he writes with the wisdom of God and because of it, ignorant and unstable people try to twist it which ultimately will cause their damnation."

Question:

- Does the Bible have any contradictions and errors? NO!
- Is the Bible hard to understand? YES! Even Peter made claims to that.

Peter says that ignorant and unstable people twist and distort Paul's writings. Where he says, "Don't have sex outside of marriage." These people say, "It's alright to have sex outside of marriage, just make sure you love them." Where Paul says, "Don't be drunk with wine." These people say, "Party till you drop, that's not what Paul was really saying."

Peter is saying that you need to listen to Paul. That his words are inspired by God and you have to be careful not to distort what he is saying or change what he is saying and believe that God will not judge you because you don't see it that way. Peter says that your response to Paul's writings will have eternal consequences. See, we believe that when it comes to the scriptures that the problem is not that the scriptures are unclear, they are just hard to understand, primarily because we harbor sin in our heart that blinds us to the truth.

III. Mark Driscoll, Pastor of Mars Hill Church describes why he didn't become a Christian until he was 19 years of age. Here's what he said, "I didn't have a problem with the scriptures or with it's authenticity. I just didn't want to stop fighting and having sex with my girlfriend. That was it. I was hard hearted and refused to allow God have control of my life. I was in rebellion toward God and I didn't like the limitations that God put on my life." Finally he got it. Paul's words are now imprinted on Mark's heart and he has several churches that he speaks to every Sunday.

Sometimes scripture is hard to understand, but don't let that allow you to justify a hardheartedness and rebellion toward God and sinning by distorting or ignoring what scripture plainly states.

What Does The Word of God Say About Itself?

God's Word is bold enough to make statements about itself. There are many references that declare it's reliability, perfection and power. Because what is to know about God has been made known.

I was recently listening to a pastor who did not grow up in the church and, as a freshman in college, figured that if he was going to have an opinion about God, then he should read the Bible to find out what he thought. In his simplicity and without much understanding he began reading his bible and his philosophy teacher started telling the class how ridiculous and stupid it was to believe God's Word. He also stated that anyone who believed that was an idiot in the class. In his simple reasoning he raised his hand and asked a simple but powerful question. He asked, "Are you telling that I should follow you rather than Jesus? Are you saying that you are wiser, smarter and far more worthy to be followed than him? If I were to follow you, would my life be better and would I contribute to create a better community than the one I live in now? Would I be better off following you or this Jesus of the Bible?" The class grew quiet and the teacher said, "I really don't know. I know I don't have all the answers." Most people are mockers, they have no personal life plan or standard in which

they stand, they just don't like yours. And we have not been taught to challenge their intimidation and since less attack.

God's heart is to make his thoughts known to you. He wants you to know and understand the wonders of God. But we reject Him when we do not respond to Him, ignoring His advise and refuse to humble ourselves. There are consequences the scripture says, disaster will come your way and God will feel like a million miles away. It seems that He is absolutely unreachable and impossible to find. Simply because they actually hated knowledge, any advice to do life. I'll do it my way. They chose not to fear the Lord and because of that they will get to eat the fruit of their ways. For the simple, their life will be revealed to them in living color. For the mocker, God will echo their cries for help. For the fool, it will destroy them. **BUT IF YOU LISTEN TO GOD...YOU WILL LIVE IN SAFETY, BE AT EASE AND WILL NOT BE TERRIFIED OF HARM.**

The Scripture is Thoroughly Tested

"Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them."

Psalm 119:140

It has endured the testing of time. In the KJV it says that, "...your word is pure..." It is saying that the best of the best is read when we read the Word of God. It has been purified and tested to be true. You can count on it, it is truth. It is not stained with human reasoning or tainted with mans philosophies. It is pure, thoroughly tested.

This is what separates Christianity from philosophies and religions. We believe that philosophies and religions are human dialog *about* the idea of God while the Word of God is a divine revelation *from* God, proclaiming His existing character. And it is accurately pure and unbiased and matter of fact.

One of the reasons why we know the Word of God is true is because it tells us that we are at best evil and our own righteousness are as filthy rags to Him...who would want to make that up?

It also tells us that God loves us and that God sent His son to die on the cross. It is nothing of our own doing that we are free, but the grace of God has interfered with Satan's attempt on your life. He has blundered the enemies plan, and now He invites us to join Him in destroying the works of Satan on other people's lives.

The Scripture is Flawless

"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."

Proverbs 30:5-6

We believe the Word of God to be flawless and nothing should be added to or taken away from it.

The Scripture is Perfect

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Psalm 19:7

You may have heard the theological term, inerrant, meaning, "without error." We believe that the Bible with without error. It is one of the many truths we hold in our hand firmly.

We also believe in what the reformers would say, "***Sola scriptura***," ([Latin ablative](#), "by scripture alone") meaning the highest authority. *Sola scriptura* may be contrasted with [Roman Catholic](#) and [Eastern Orthodox](#) teaching, in which doctrine is taught by the teaching authority of the Church, drawing on the "Deposit of Faith", based on what they consider to be "[Sacred Tradition](#)", of which Scripture is a subset. It means that scripture is above reason, tradition and history. The Word of God is the highest supreme court of authority, not dislodging or contradicting lesser authority.

The foundational difference between the Catholic and Protestant churches is the position that is placed on the authority of the Bible, does it rule or is it ruled? We believe that there is nothing above the Word of God, that's where cults and false teachers get into trouble, they put books, teachings of men and traditions above the Word of God.

The Scripture is Affective

"...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55:11

We know that when we allow the Word of God to be spoken into our lives that it will have great effect. We know that when we proclaim the Word of God in the heavenlies, it will have great effect. We know that when we hear the Word of God it will have great effect! It is powerful and will not return void.

The Scripture is Valuable

"They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb."

Psalm 19:10

There should be a high regard for the Word of God. You should treat it with respect. It is truly black ink on white paper, but when you understand that is it God's Word, you will actually treat it differently. It is thoroughly tested, it is flawless, it is perfect, it is affective, it is valuable. You shouldn't throw your Bible around or setting drinks on it. It is precious.

This Scripture Is Powerful

"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

Here's what it is saying, "It is alive and moving, sharper than a two edged sword. It goes deep into your soul and spirit, joints and marrow and makes judgment with in you. You are not interpreting it, it is interpreting you!" This Word will confront issues in your life, it will convict you, it will expose sin issues and darkness in the smallest of crevasses. It will tell on you to yourself. It will expose you and then tell you what you should do. It will not leave you the same, it will cut away, burn up, tear down, bring to life, purify, cleanse and renew your life.

This Scripture Is For Everyone

"...but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him..."

Romans 16:26

This Word is for everyone. It is for our children and for our friends. It is for our nation and the nations around the world. Why? So that they may believe and so they will obey him!

Why is this so difficult to live by and why is it hard to grasp? Because it has to be planted deep within us. Most of us understand that our life actions and responses as an adult hinge on the lessons and beliefs we gained as a child. A recent study at the National Association for the Education of Young Children had this to say about children,

"How humans develop and learn depends critically and continually on the interplay between an individual's genetic endowment and the nutrition, surroundings, care, stimulation, and teaching that are provided or withheld...Early care has decisive and long-lasting effects on how people develop and learn, how they cope with stress, and how they regulate their own emotions. "

Research shows that the best years for learning are from **birth through age six** because brain development is greatest during that period. **Newborns learn fastest**, followed by **one-year-olds**. Then come **two-year-olds**, who learn faster than **three-year-olds**. Some would argue that the greatest amount, 90% of a child's learning and development is from birth to age three. So it goes, in **diminishing order, until age seven**.

"These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life."

Deuteronomy 6:1-2

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **strength**. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your **hearts**. **Impress them on your children**. **Talk** about them when you **sit** at home and when you **walk along the road**, when you **lie down** and when you **get up**. **Tie** them as **symbols** on your **hands** and bind them on your **foreheads**. **Write** them on the **doorframes** of your houses and on your **gates**."*

Deuteronomy 5:4-9

This Scripture Is Demanding

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

James 1:22

James is telling us that the Word of God is not just for information..."Knowledge that puffs us up," and not just transformational, but it is activating. Some people can learn a lot of Bible, they have doctrine down, they know what is correct in their eyes, but they are deceived if it does not move them into action. It is not a matter of listening to God's Word, it is also a matter of responding to it and acting on it.

Some people believe that their knowledge has made them mature. Even Satan and the

demons know scripture, they agree in saying that there is only one God, but that doesn't make them mature. They actually have some doctrine correct, but that doesn't make them mature. They are deceived.

Scripture is to be read, to be meditated upon, to be prayed and memorized, but if it is going to be helpful to you it must be obeyed.

This Scripture Is Crushing

"Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Jeremiah 23:29

God's Word is a fire and a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces. His Word takes an all out attack on our sin and deception. He is relentless at breaks the meaningless, untruth that is buried so deep in our lives. We are so easily deceived, we need to be easily purified and dealt with.

This Scripture Has A Warning

"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you."

Deuteronomy 4:2

"See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it."

Deuteronomy 12:32

Be careful that you do not take away or add to God's word. You may like to read and have many neat thoughts but you cannot add or take away from the Word of God. It is something you will judge your life by now or you will be judged by it later. Not only was there no authority above the scripture, there is also no book above the scripture.

Questions:

- Do we believe the Bible is the **inerrant Word of God**? YES!
- Do we believe in the "***Sola scriptura***," the highest level of authority? YES!

The Prophets Declared It So

"¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things."

I Peter 1:10-12

What we have in this scripture is three different individuals working together for the same purpose.

1. The prophets who searched intently and with greatest care to describe the time and

- circumstances that the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ, was moving them.
2. You, who needed to hear this message, a message not of themselves but of one that was going to be spoken by those who recently shared it with you
 3. The Holy Spirit who enabled those who recently shared the message and preached the gospel
 4. The angels who are curiously wondering what it all means, to which God will not reveal, but gives us the power to do so.

What Does The Bible Say About Itself?

If the Bible doesn't say it is true then we shouldn't believe it is the Word of God. If the Bible says it is true then we should believe it is the Word of God. If the Bible doesn't make truth claims about itself then we should make truth claims about it.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."

II Timothy 3:16

Just like God-breathed life into Adam, God breaths life into His Word and gives it life.

"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.**"

II Thessalonians 2:13

When we are receiving instruction on the Word of God we are actually receiving the Word of God. Many people say, "Well I don't hear God." All you have to do is pick up the Word of God and start reading it. It is His Word. Many people immediately have confusion when they read the Word of God because they have fear: fear of misinterpreting it, fear of it revealing something, fear of not hearing God, fear of being sent to Africa as a missionary, fear of giving up a girl friend. There are several reasons why someone fears to read the Word of God. But He is speaking and wants to speak to you through His Word. There is a sure way to hear God and that is by His Word.

In Luke 16, the wealthy man was in hell crying out to Abraham for Lazarus to go and tell his five brothers and tell them that this hell thing was true so that they would not go there as well. But Jesus says that Abraham tells the rich man,

"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' " "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

Luke 16:29-31

Jesus is saying, "What we need to know about God and all the details are found in God's Word. They are true." **Unfortunately, the scripture teaches us all that we WANT to know about God. Fortunately, the scriptures teach us all that we NEED to know about God! I'm glad that the Holy Spirit continues to draw me to what I need to know rather than what I want to know.**

Tony Illustration- One of my friends in High School who I had the privilege to bring to Christ had a few beautiful, healthy marijuana plants in his back yard. If he had a green thumb, it

was to grow pot. He had given his heart to God a few months back but he was still watering his plant, propping it up, shielding it from too much sunshine and wind. One day I went in his back yard and pulled it up. I didn't tell him, I just left it there on the ground, wilting under the sun. He was so angry at me. He knew that me or a couple of other guys must have done it. He like being a Christian and he loved the idea and he loved the Bible, but he loved what he WANTED to know, not what he NEEDED to know. He eventually got it turned around in the right direction.

What we need to know about God is found in the sufficiency of the scriptures. The Word of God is practical and full of practical application. It is about people's lives, it's about sexuality, relationships, marriage, child-rearing, food, clothing, financing, friendship and work. It is intensely practical in our everyday human matters. It is not something that you learn about and have some ritual that surrounds it, but has a practical daily application.

What Did Jesus Say About The Scripture?

Some people like the whole idea of Jesus but they think that the Bible gets in the way. They want the readers digest concept, the cliff notes of Jesus and avoid all the Bible says. Here's how Jesus looked at the Bible, he constantly referenced the Old testament, referring to prophets, cities and events. He was a teacher of the Old Testament, a Rabbi. He challenged the religious authorities at that time with the Word of God. What's interesting is that there are many questions that Jesus resolved concerning issues of creation, Adam and Eve, a real Noah or a real Jonah. Jesus talked about all these people and issues and more as factual and truth. Shouldn't we be concerned when someone else discredits what Jesus says to be true?

In times of crisis Jesus quoted scripture. Even at His death he quotes the Psalms, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Even after His death and resurrection He refers to Old Testament scripture.

*"He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
Luke 24:44*

*"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."
Luke 24:45*

Jesus is referring to Himself in the scripture. He was giving them insight to the whole purpose of Christ. To be a Bible teacher is to be a teacher of Christ. It was about Him, it is about Him and it will be about Him! In the old Testament when you hear about a priest, you think of how Christ became the great high priest. When you hear about a sacrifice, you think of how Christ became our sufficient sacrifice. When you hear about the Word of God you realize that Jesus is the Word and is with God.

Look at all the ways to express God's Word in your children. God's Word tells us how we can be in accordance with His desire for our lives and receive the blessings of that live. No one understood the need to focus on God's Word more than David in Psalms 119,

*"Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk **according to the law of the LORD**. Blessed are they who keep his **statutes** and seek him with all their heart."
Psalm 119:1-2*

"You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands."

Psalm 119:4-6

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth."

Psalm 119:9-13

"You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey your Commands."

Psalm 119:57-60

"Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law. At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws. I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts. The earth is filled with your love, O LORD; teach me your decrees."

Psalm 119:61-64

- No matter what the circumstances- I will not forget your law. (bound with ropes)
- No matter what the time- I will give you thanks for your laws. (midnight)
- No matter what the person- I will only befriend those who fear God, to all who follow your precepts.
- No matter what the world situation- I will look and proclaim your love by understanding your decrees.