

Welcome to the Family of God!

The decision you have made to give your heart and life to Jesus Christ is the most important decision you will ever make. God has made His home in your heart and has now birthed you into His family. Paul reminds us in Second Corinthians 5:17, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

With that, you might be asking: What now? What did I just do? The very first thing you want to start doing is getting into the Word of God. That’s why we are giving you a Bible. This is God’s revelation of Himself to us. This is how we get to know the One who has now made His home in us. In it you will find all that you need to live a life pleasing to the Lord—a life of faithfulness and fruitfulness.

We know you will have many questions, which is why I encourage you to make your way to our many services each weekend and during the week. We even have a weekly New Believers class that you can be a part of, so that you can have the opportunity to meet one of our pastors and some of the other new believers within the church. We also have a School of Discipleship that will take you even deeper into your faith. So be sure to look for these classes as they are being offered throughout the year.

Again, welcome to the Family of God and may the Lord bless you as you journey with Him in your newfound faith.

Pastor Chris Fraley

The Importance of God's Word

You will be hard-pressed to find a service at Wildwood that does not include the phrase, "Open up your Bibles." From the very beginning, Pastor Chris was instructed by God to "feed the sheep and love the sheep" and that is what he has committed to do. What should a pastor feed Christ's flock? The Word of God.

In Acts 2:42 we're told, "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.*" It is not a coincidence that biblical doctrine is the first pillar listed that the early Church should adhere to. Neither is it a coincidence that "*the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (v. 47). Emaciated sheep don't grow or reproduce; healthy ones do.

Clearly, God's Word is powerful and important, but what makes it so?

1. The Bible is God Breathed

For one, these are not merely words on a page. They are powerful because they are the very breath of God. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*" The phrase translated as "given by inspiration" in Greek is *theopneustos* and it means "divinely breathed."

The origin of God's Word is God. He's the one who gives it life. And it is alive, as Hebrews 12:4 testifies: "*For the word of God is living and powerful.*" It's powerful because it's alive, and it's alive because God breathed it to life.

2. God Magnifies His Word

Secondly, God's Word is important because God Himself testifies that it is so. David writes in Psalm 138, "*For You have magnified Your word above all Your name*" (v. 2). In some ways that is a shocking statement! The names of God throughout scripture describe not only what He often does (as in Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals, or Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides), but they describe His very character (He's a healer, a provider). In other words, God's name speaks of His very nature. To magnify His Word above His name is to truly elevate it to a level of profound importance.

Therefore, because God's Word, the Bible, testifies of its own living power, and God testifies of its importance, we, too, should consider it an essential pillar in the life of a Christian.

3. The Bible Will Thoroughly Equip Us

There is also a third reason why the Bible is an absolute necessity in the life of a believer and that is simply because it contains the truth required to develop into mature believers. Referring back to Second Timothy 3:16-17, we read, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [divinely breathed], and is profitable for doctrine [instruction], for reproof [conviction], for correction [to straighten up again], for instruction in righteousness [training], that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"

Notice that reading the Bible is profitable. The Greek word here is *ophelimos* which can also be translated “helpful or advantageous.” So there is an advantage to studying God’s Word. How is the Bible helpful to us in our spiritual journey?

- The Bible provides instruction (it teaches us).
- The Bible convicts us (it gives us proof of our error).
- The Bible straightens us up again (it shows us how to get right).
- The Bible trains us (it shows us how to live).

All for what purpose? That “*the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” God’s goal is our completion and our equipping. The Bible is His method of conveying to us the information we need to experience both successfully.

4. Biblical Living Leads to a Prosperous and Successful Life

In fact, the Bible testifies of its power to bring about positive, impacting, and practical change in the life of a believer. We’re told in Joshua 1:8, “*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*”

Did you notice that prosperity and success are correlated to doing what God’s Word teaches, and doing it is correlated to meditating and conversing about the Bible all through the day and night? What

does this speak of? It means that when God's Word becomes an integral and essential part of our daily activities, thought processes, and routines, we will see God's blessing in our lives demonstrated through biblical prosperity and success.

This same promise of blessing and prosperity is echoed in Psalm 1:1-3, which proclaims:

1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

Again, we see fruitfulness and prosperity correlated to meditating in God's Word all throughout the day and finding true delight in doing so!

What rational person would not desire success and prosperity in their life? The way to obtain those results is so simple—dwell in God's Word constantly! Let it transform you, let it occupy your thoughts, let it wash over you every day. God wants us to live this life well and to make the most of every day. His Word is the key.

5. God's Word Protects Us from Sin

God's Word also offers us protection. No wonder Satan, the world system, and our own flesh drop a gauntlet of reasons to keep us away from enjoying

time in the Bible. Satan doesn't want us to have our guard up; he wants us vulnerable and exposed. This is what Paul is getting at when he describes the Bible, in Ephesians 6:17, as *"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* You see, the Bible isn't just a tool—it's a weapon! If you consider the armor of God that is listed in Ephesians 6:13-17 you'll notice that all the items are defensive in nature, except for the sword which can be utilized both defensively and offensively!

This is why the psalmist declares, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"* (Psalm 119:11). God's Word will actually protect and defend us from sin and attacks from our enemy. I heard someone once say, "This Book will keep you from sin, and sin will keep you from this Book." That statement encapsulates both God's plan and Satan's plan for our lives. Let's not give our enemy the satisfaction. Let's use the Bible as a weapon to fight against Satan's lies and to guard our hearts and minds against sin.

Conclusion

These are the reasons why we must resist the temptation to view the Bible as a boring obligation, a begrudging necessity, or a chore to simply accomplish. If this is an area of struggle (and it is for all believers at some point in the journey), simply pray to God to ignite or reignite a passion and hunger for His Word. Often, this will simply be a byproduct of a healthy relationship abiding in Jesus. Nonetheless, the enemy will continually attempt to beat us into surrender by doing all he can to keep us from God's

Word, whether it's through boredom and laziness, or excessive busyness and distractions.

I love Psalm 119 because it conveys the psalmist's deep, abiding passion for what God has to say to us. Look at some of these statements:

"This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life" (v. 50).

"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (v. 97).

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (v. 103).

"Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold!" (v. 127).

In beautiful, poetic language, the psalmist declares his devotion to God's Word. He proclaims that it gives him life, he professes his love for it, he describes its sweetness in his mouth, and compares its value to be more precious than fine gold.

Let's pray that we would be a people who also have a love and passion for the Bible. It is God's written revelation to us, a love letter, and a weapon all at once. A Christian who neglects time in the Word is like a soldier out on the battlefield without their gear—totally exposed. The Bible is another gift from God to us, so let's use it to the fullest.

In desperate passion for His Kingdom,
Pastor Erik V. Sahakian