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## What We Believe: The Scriptures

**John 17:14-17**

**I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**

We are going to be taking the rest of the summer to preach through our core beliefs here at North Ridge Life Church.

If you were to go to our website and click on the 'Statement of Beliefs' tab, you would find 10 subheadings and a brief description of what we believe about each one.

They are the Scriptures, the Trinity, God the Father, Jesus Christ, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, Regeneration, the Gospel, the Kingdom, the Church, and the Consummation.

We will be taking a week to look at each one of these over the summer because we want to know what we believe; and we should know why we believe it; and we should be able to articulate what we believe (that's not just the pastors job).

And we want to start this morning by looking at what we believe about the Scriptures, or the Bible.

And this is a vital place to start, since our core beliefs are founded and built on God's word. And the Scriptures and their authority are being more frequently questioned and rejected in this day and age, not just by the world, but even by people in the church.

So we here at North Ridge want to be very clear on what we believe about the Scriptures.

We believe in the sufficiency, the necessity, the clarity and the authority of Scripture.

**Sufficiency: Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.**

Or in other words, we don't need new revelation from some other source to be able to know and trust God.

Joseph Smith, the founder of mormonism, claimed that he received revelation that led him to a buried book of golden plates, which he subsequently translated into the book of mormon. He claimed that he had new revelation from God that held the same authority as the Bible.

Many others have claimed over the years to have new revelation about God, but we trust the sufficiency of his word, revealed in the Scriptures.

Listen, if God told you something, that is in any way contrary to the Bible, then it wasn't God!

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**Necessity: The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.**

So we can look at the majesty of creation and know in our hearts that God exists, as Romans 1 makes clear, but to know the good news of the gospel and what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf, we rely absolutely on the Bible.

That means that if you want your family and friends and neighbors to know Jesus, you need to introduce them to the gospel, revealed in God's word.

**Clarity: The Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it.**

This means that you don't have to go to seminary to be able to read and understand the Bible. Are there difficult sections? Yes! But do you need an advanced theological degree to understand the gospel and follow Jesus? No!

If a group of fishermen could know and follow Jesus, then so can we!

We sometimes use our lack of theological education as an excuse to not open our Bibles, but the clarity of Scripture means that God's word is for everyone. PhD or 2nd grade drop-out...doesn't matter! God's word is for you.

**Authority: All the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.**

We wholeheartedly believe in all four of these attributes, but I want to focus this morning on the authority of Scripture, because that is what I believe is most under attack in our present day.

We believe in the authority of Scripture, because we believe that the Bible is God's word, and not man's word.

You might think that's obvious, but we believe that the Bible is literally God's word to us, and not some kind of approximation of his word.

Imagine if my parents, who are missionaries we support, were to write a letter to the church. There would be a big difference between me saying "My parents send their greetings, they're doing great, ministry is good..." and actually reading the letter they wrote.

The former is my attempt to convey what they said in my own words, and that's what some people today believe about the Scriptures. They believe the Bible is a human attempt to relay God's message, and can therefore contain errors and sometimes contradict itself.

We reject this idea.

**2nd Timothy 3:16**

**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.**

The greek word **theopneustos** does not mean merely that Scripture was inspired by God (as in His idea). It literally means 'breathed out' by God.

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So Paul is making the point that Scripture is literally God's word in written form. That's what makes it profitable for all things!

So every time you open your Bible, you are reading words that came directly from the mind and heart of God.

### **2nd Peter 1:21**

**For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

Peter is referring here to the prophecy's of OT Scripture, and he says that though they were spoken by men, the ultimate source of Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is how each book of the Bible can take on the personality of the author, but still be God's word. Yes, God used human beings with different personalities and different styles to write his word down, but it is still completely his word that he transmits to us without error.

So if the Scriptures are God's literal words to us, then we can trust that they are absolutely true and without error. This is what theologians call the inerrancy of Scripture.

That means that when you read passages like Romans 8:1, 'There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' you don't have to sit and think, 'man, I really hope that's true; it would be great if that were true'.

It's true because God, who never lies (Titus 1:2), God for whom it is impossible to lie (Hebrews 6:18), God said it, and that makes it true!

### **Proverbs 30:5**

**Every word of God proves true.**

Every word! This is not true of you and me. We lie; we exaggerate; we make mistakes; we make promises that we do not or can not keep.

But not God! He's not like us! He only speaks what is true.

That means you won't find mistakes in the Bible; you won't find errors; you won't find contradictions; you won't find false promises in the Bible.

And listen to me church, because the Scriptures are God's word, and because they are absolutely true and without error, that means that they are the highest authority for the follower of Jesus.

So everything we say, everything we preach, everything we sing, everything we prophecy, everything we feel impressed on us by the Holy Spirit...All of it must be measured and weighed according to the Scriptures.

I've read some great books by men and women that I admire very much, but they are not my authority.

I've talked to many people much wiser and experienced than myself, people who love the Lord with all their heart, but they are not my authority.

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The elders here at North Ridge are not your authority! God has made us stewards of His authority, but the authority that we steward comes from God, and His word!

I've talked to people over the years that are doing things because 'God told me', even when it contradicts the Scriptures. But God will never tell you anything that contradicts what he says in his word. Never!

God's word is our authority.

This has major implications for us. This means that our professions of faith in Christ, must be accompanied by obedience to God's word. That's not optional.

So many people today want to associate themselves with Jesus, but completely ignore a lot of the things he says.

I want to go to heaven, but I also want to live in a way that puts me first. I want to pursue comfort and wealth. I want the praise and esteem of people around me. I want to enjoy my sexuality, whether I'm married to my partner or not. I want all this AND I want Jesus too.

**John 14:15**

**If you love me, you will keep my commandments.**

In other words, if you want to follow Jesus (how many of you want to follow Jesus?) then submitting yourself to the whole word of God IS NOT OPTIONAL!

This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls 'costly grace'.

Cheap grace says I can live however I want because I have grace.  
Costly grace recognizes that when Jesus calls a man, he calls him to die.

Submitting to God's word means dying to ourselves, but listen, if you don't die you can't be resurrected. If you aren't crucified with Christ, you can't be raised with Christ!

If we claim to follow Jesus, we must submit to and obey all of his word, not just the parts we like.

This also means that in our present day lives we must view and interact with culture through the lens of Scripture, and not the other way around.

As the culture around us has changed Christians have been tempted to change or disregard what the Bible says in order to better fit in to cultural norms.

Let me give you some examples.

The Bible is absolutely clear that God created sexuality to be enjoyed by a husband and wife in the covenant of marriage. And by the way, God doesn't command that to ruin your fun. He actually wants you to have more fun, and greater intimacy, and deeper fulfillment.

Now in my parents and definitely my grandparents generation, culture generally agreed with this, Christian or not.

Today culture says something different. It says that restricting yourself to just one sexual pattern is boring.

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It says that waiting to have sex until you're married is old fashioned and out dated. In fact it may even be harmful to your normal development.

Many years ago I remember one professing Christian telling another professing Christian that it was good that she and her boyfriend were moving in together and that it would be a really good thing for their relationship.

But where did she get an idea like that? Was it from God's word?

So the Bible needs to be tweaked in order to accommodate the changing times.

1 Corinthians 6 says that the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God. That should be an alarm bell in our current culture!

Let me give you another example.

How about the way a lot of Christians in Texas feel about refugees.

A lot of us don't want them here. America first!

We see them as a threat to our safety, security and comfort, so we want them gone.

Where are those kinds of ideas coming from? Are they coming from God's word? Are we more loyal to our political ideologies than the Bible?

**Deuteronomy 10:17-19**

**For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.**

We, out of all people, should be least concerned about our safety and comfort and security, and most concerned about showing compassion to the world.

Or how about our pursuit of wealth and materialism in this country? And we have even taken and distorted Scripture to justify this pursuit.

**1 Timothy 6:9**

**But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.**

Again, this should set off alarm bells in our culture! And there are many more examples I could give.

My point is this. The word of God, not the world, is the authority for how we must live! And we must use God's word to understand and engage in the culture we currently live in, and not use culture to shape our view of Scripture.

God's word is our authority, and is absolutely necessary for our salvation and for us to know the gospel and live a godly life, but there are many people, some even in Christian circles, who would suggest that the Scriptures are not necessary, or at least less necessary than we think.

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Andy Stanley, a popular Christian pastor and speaker preached a sermon a couple years back that brought into question the authority and the necessity of the Bible.

**“Appealing to post-Christian people on the basis of the authority of Scripture has essentially the same effect as a Muslim imam appealing to you on the basis of the authority of the Quran. You may or may not already know what it says. But it doesn’t matter. The Quran doesn’t carry any weight with you. You don’t view the Quran as authoritative.” - Andy Stanley**

His point is that many people simply don’t believe that the Bible is true, so telling them “the Bible says...” is not an adequate foundation for faith. He argues that instead we should work to prove the historicity of events in the Bible, especially the resurrection.

But here’s the problem with what Stanley says. The Bible is not just a book. The Bible is nothing like the Quran! The Quran is a book, written by man. The Bible is the living word of the living God who created us and gives us life!

God’s word is living and active, Hebrews 4 tells us. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

You could spend years convincing someone of the historicity of the resurrection, but if that person is not cut to the heart by the Spirit-filled word of God, then they will never be saved!

So the Bible is our authority, and we need it to understand the gospel, but we can’t stop with that. If we stopped here we might just become really good rule followers, but miss the whole point of the Bible.

What makes the Bible so wonderful and so necessary, is that it reveals to us, like nothing else, the glory of Jesus Christ!

Through the Scriptures, our blinded eyes are opened to see the majesty of Jesus!

### **2 Corinthians 4:3-4,6**

**And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

**For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

This is why you should read your Bibles and read them all the time. Not so you can have more memorized than someone else. Not so you can be a better rule follower. Not so you can explain it better to someone else.

You should read it because through it you will behold the glory of Jesus Christ!!!

And Christians, this is what transforms us. That’s why you won’t hear us preach 5 steps to a better this or that sermon.

You don’t need 5 steps. You need to see Jesus in all his glory, revealed in God’s word. You don’t need a spiritual pep talk. You need to be like Moses who saw the Lord and whose face was literally glowing because he encountered the living God!

### **2 Corinthians 3:18**

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**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.**

So in God's word we see and behold the glory of THE WORD, Jesus Christ; and the more we behold his glory the more we become like him and are transformed into his image. This is what we call sanctification. The process of being transformed more into the image of Jesus where we begin to desire Jesus more than our sin.

**Psalm 119:11**

**I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.**

How do we overcome sin in our lives? Is it through more Biblical knowledge or trying harder or having more accountability partners or being more educated?

No, we overcome sin by seeing the glory of Jesus and recognizing that the fleeting pleasure of sin can't hold a candle to the beauty and majesty of the resurrected Jesus!

And this brings us all the way back to the passage in **John 17** that we started with.

**Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.**

Listen, living according to God's word will cause the world to hate you. That's what Jesus says. You can be a friend of God, or a friend of the world, but not both. You can't serve 2 masters.

So how will we live here at North Ridge Life?

Our confession is that there is nothing we want more or need more than to behold the glory of Jesus, and so we will be a people who are passionate about God's word and sharing it with the world around us!

## **Communion**

One of the ways we see the glory of Jesus more clearly is by celebrating communion together.

We see his glory in his broken body. We see his glory in his blood poured out for the forgiveness of our sins. And we see his glory in his defeat of death and his invitation to his church to come and commune with him now and in eternity.

## **Announcements**

Picnic at the Park

Ladies night at the Bohn's

Life Groups