

Is the Bible REALLY That Important?

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Preacher: Eric Scott

[0 : 00] Okay. Everybody meet at least one person? How are you guys doing?

Wow. How are you guys doing? Okay. Hey, my name is Tobin. I'm the teaching pastor here. If this is your first time at Watermark, or it was your second time, or it's interesting, we believe that God has you here for a reason, that you're not here by a mistake.

Some of you might feel like you're here by a mistake after this is over with, but you are not here by a mistake. God has you here for a reason, and we believe the biggest reason that he has you here for is that he wants to meet you, and he wants you to meet him.

When we started this church a while back, one of the first things we did was we said, we pulled out a book like this, and on the very first page of this book, we wrote down this.

It says, attempt something so great for God that it's destined to fail unless God is in it. And that's why we've started this church to trust that God's name would be made great and he'd be glorified.

[1 : 16] What we need from you, because people have asked me, this is a very strange church. The last four weeks I've had people come and go, this is very strange. You're family-oriented, your community, the kids are involved, you do communion together, you're on a mission, you're serving, you're reaching out.

It's very unusual, and I usually say that's great because that's what we want to be like. But what we need from you if you come in here and sit here is we need you to do a couple things, because we don't want you just to come in and sit down, listen and sing, and then get up and walk away.

Because if you do that, we feel like you've missed God. If you do that, we feel like we've failed as a church, we feel like we've failed as a staff, we feel like we've failed as a pastor.

What we need for you to do as you go on this journey with God is we need you to do four things. We need you to pray. We need you to pray that God's name would be made great.

We need you to pray that people would come to know him. You know, some of the things we pray as a staff, we pray for this venue, because we don't know where we're going to meet next week. We're hoping that we're meeting in Cyreport, and I think we are going to meet on the third floor for the next couple months, but we're not sure.

[2 : 29] We lost our storage facility last week, so we don't have a place to store our stuff here. So today, a whole bunch of us are going to get together, and we're going to take it down to the garage, and we're going to store it in the garage. And so we pray for things like that, because we don't know what's going to happen next week.

We're kind of on the edge, kind of raw, or you'd probably say kind of raw. We pray for you. Before the service starts, we go through these chairs, and we pray for everybody who's going to sit in these chairs.

We pray that you would meet God. We pray for the burdens that you have on your heart today. We pray for the heaviness that you feel. We pray for the things that might block out the message and the music and the worship and the community, and we pray that those things wouldn't happen.

We pray for those people in those buildings right there. You know, if statistics are right, 95% of those people have never heard about Christ, and that when they die, they will go to a place where God is not, if Christ is not in their life.

And so we pray for the people in those buildings, that they would have a chance to hear the gospel message that we as a church could reach out to them and spend time with them. The next thing we need you to do is we need you to serve.

[3 : 45] We believe that if you don't use your gifts, your talents, if you're not coming in here and being a part of this church, if you just come in and you sit down, you watch, you listen, and you walk away and you sneak out really quick, you grab some coffee, that you've missed out what it means to be on a journey with Christ.

That everybody in here has gifts and talents, and we need you to serve and to use those to make the body of Christ better. The third thing we need you to do is we just need you to give.

We need to give of your time. We need to give of your money. All these things that allow these things to happen. We don't, a couple weeks ago someone came up to me and said, you know, if you pass the bucket in front of everybody and you put the money bucket in front of them, your offering would increase by 20%.

Because statistically, that's just what happens. And I said, you know, that's probably true. But that's not what we want to be about as a church. Because we believe that your offering financially and everything else back to God is the greatest indicator of where your heart is.

And so we have these little blue envelopes that are everywhere, and we talk about it all the time. But we don't want to guilt you into giving, because that's how you worship the Lord. It's the greatest indicator of how you worship the Lord.

[4 : 59] And so the tithe that you give today or throughout this time, we want you to do that because you love God. Not because someone passes a bucket in front of you and guilts you into giving. And we promise as a church that we'll use all of those things to create opportunities for people to hear of Christ.

People who've never had the chance, we promise that we'll use these things to give them that chance, because that's why we're here as a church. So we need you to pray, we need you to serve, we need you to give, and finally we need you to invest.

We need you, if you're here and you're on a journey with Christ, you're a Christ follower, we need you to act like that in your workplace. I was talking to somebody two weeks ago, and they came, I said, why did you come here?

And he says, well, I was watching someone in my office, and I realized that they interacted and they reacted differently when everybody was getting fired. They actually prayed for those people who were getting fired with all these layoffs. And so I went up to them, I said, why do you do that?

And he goes, well, I'm a follower of Christ. And I pray that God would use this opportunity to open up other opportunities in those people's lives. And the person said, well, what church do you go to? Because I want to go there too.

[6 : 09] We need you to invest. We need you to walk like you're supposed to walk as a follower of Christ. This month, 40 years ago, a family saw this little 10-year-old boy wandering the streets of his neighborhood.

They saw his family that was having issues and difficulties, and they invited him to church. They invested in my life. And I saw the husband and wife love God and love each other.

Because they invested in my life, I believe I'm here right now. And so we need you as a family of God on this journey together in community to pray, to serve, to give, and to invest, so that God's name would be made great, his kingdom would be glorified, and eternity would be different.

Amen? Let me pray for us. Father, we thank you for this day. I thank you for my brothers and sisters here. We thank you for all the gifts that you give us, all the talents, all the resources.

We know that all these things, even these kids that are sitting around and making our lives uncomfortable sometimes because they're crazy, all these things are gifts from you.

[7 : 33] And so, Lord, we worship you, we praise you, and we thank you for these amazing, amazing gifts. We realize one day that we'll come before you, and you're going to ask us how we use these gifts.

Did we use these gifts to make your name great? Did we use these gifts to give people an opportunity to hear about your son? And, Lord, as a church, we want to be able to say, yes, we did. We probably failed more than we succeeded, but we failed a lot because we wanted to attempt something so great for you that unless you were in it, it would fail.

So, Lord, I thank you for my brothers and sisters in here today as we go on this journey together. I pray that you would touch our hearts. I pray that we would be different, that we would be different, that we'd be different as we look at your son and see how different and beautiful he is.

We pray for the youth as they're about to go to their Sunday school classes, that you'd watch over them, that you'd open their eyes, that they would see your son, Jesus, at 10 years old, like a little boy did 40 years ago, and he fell in love with you.

Lord, we pray the same. We pray for mercy on their teachers, mercy for their parents. We pray, most of all, that your son would be made great in their lives. So, Lord, we come before you and we deeply need you.

[8 : 48] Lord, we deeply need you. Be with us. We pray these things in your son, Jesus' holy name. Amen. Watermark kids, you are dismissed, parents.

The kids will be brought back up for you at the end of the service. So, kids out the back and youth are in the service today because Eric is preaching. This morning, Eric Scott will be teaching us as we continue our guerrilla letter series.

This week, we take a closer look at some of the letters you sent in regarding questions you had about the Bible. Here are just a few. Dear Pastor, I find it difficult to read the Bible.

Well, some of the stories just seem too impossible to believe in or understand. Are we to believe that they are all true? Or are they just symbols of what the truth should look like?

I was always told we should read the Old Testament as fiction and the New Testament as non-fiction. How am I supposed to handle the Bible? I mean, what kind of role should I allow it to play in my life?

[9 : 58] It seems to me that either I can abide by it all, or I can go half and half and leave out the things that do not seem relevant to my life. Or I can just use it as a good word to encourage me when I am down.

How do you determine which way to use it? What would you recommend as a good amount of time to read the Bible every week? I am pretty busy these days and find it hard to read it at all.

Help! Help! There are so many different translations of the Bible out there. What am I to make of all these? And how am I to navigate my way through the differences?

Pastor, my friends mock me because I tell them that I believe the Bible is literally true. Am I being foolish? How should I respond to them on this?

They tell me that the Bible was written for primitive people during primitive times, not for us modern men. 2 Timothy 3 says, All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for a teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[11 : 33] And in 2 Peter 1 we find this, For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyeing witnesses of His majesty.

For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was born to Him by the majestic glory, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

We ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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.

This is today's reading. Good morning. My name is Eric Scott.

[12 : 54] I'm the youth guy here at Watermark, if you don't recognize me. And like they just said, we'll be talking about the Bible today. Surprise, surprise, it's church. We're talking about the Bible. And as you can tell also from the questions, these questions about the Bible cover a large range of topics about the Bible, and there's no way that we can in-depth answer every single one of these questions without this just becoming really dry and academic, which is not what anyone wants to sit through this morning.

So I'm going to try to touch on all of these, but some we will cover more in-depth than others. And as I listened to the questions and read through the questions this week, it really seemed to me like there were two major questions that were running throughout all of these other questions.

So I want to start by looking at question number one, is the Bible true? And then we'll transition to how much or how relevant should the Bible be to my life?

And if there's a question that was asked and you feel like at the end of the day, like, ah, Eric didn't answer my question adequately. I really want more depth and insight into this. Remember that this morning, this talk is not the be-all end-all on Watermark's teaching on the Bible, but it's part of an ongoing conversation that will be carried on throughout the life of the church.

So, you know, keep coming back, keep listening, keep talking with people within the church in your community groups, and I guarantee you every single one of these questions has an answer.

[14 : 22] So question number one, is the Bible true? Well, yes. Yes. And, again, my tendency is to just go into academic reasoning of, here's argument A, B, C, D, E, F, G of why the Bible is true.

But we don't have time for that today. So I'm going to say three quick things about the truth of the Bible, and then we're going to move on. Thing number one, there's a lot of evidence out there to point to the truth of the Bible.

Archaeology is constantly making finds that back up stories from the Bible. There are a lot of stories out there. People think, oh, this story seems too unbelievable.

The city of Jericho couldn't have had their walls just fall in on them or fall down just from people walking around it. And then even if that did happen, the Israelites, when they came in to take over the city, they wouldn't have just burned everything.

They would have taken all this stuff for themselves. And then archaeology goes out and finds the city where all of these supplies that would have been so useful to someone conquering it have just been burned inside it. And again, this doesn't conclusively prove that absolutely, yes, the Bible is true.

[15 : 28] But archaeology consistently points towards the truth of the Bible. Also, throughout history, there are historical records of things happening that were prophesied in the Bible hundreds of years before that couldn't have come in the Bible beforehand without the Bible being true and coming from God.

So, for example, there was a rich port city called Tyre. And in the Bible, it was predicted that this city would be destroyed and it was predicted how it would be destroyed. And hundreds of years later, it was destroyed in the exact way that the Bible predicted that it would be destroyed.

Also, the Bible is very internally consistent. It consists of 66 smaller books written by dozens of authors over thousands of years. And this internal consistency is hard to explain apart from it being consistent because it's true and it coming from a divine source.

And like I said, these can't conclusively prove that, yes, the Bible is absolutely 100% true. But there's strong evidence to point towards it. And if this is a topic that you're more interested in, there are a lot of great resources out there that you can look at for further personal study.

Some that I would recommend are a book called *The Reason for God* by a guy named Tim Keller, a book called *But Is It Real* by a girl named Amy Orr Ewing, and *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by a guy named Josh McDowell.

[16 : 53] So that's the first thing about the truth of the Bible. The second thing, that Jesus believed that the Old Testament was true. If you look at the teachings of Jesus, he consistently says, it is written.

And when he uses this phrase, he's pointing back towards the Old Testament. He's using teachings from the Old Testament and saying that these are true and carrying them forward to the people of his day. Not only this, but also he believed that not only the teachings, but also the stories of the Old Testament are true.

So if you look at Matthew chapter 12, Jesus talks about the story of Jonah. If you don't know the story of Jonah, there's this guy, he disobeyed God, tried to run away, got thrown overboard from a boat, swallowed by a big fish, stayed in there for three days and three nights, and then got spat out onto the land and decided this time maybe I should obey God.

And Jesus is talking about his coming death and his coming resurrection. And he points back to the story of Jonah and he says, just like Jonah was swallowed by this fish and stayed three nights and three days in the belly of this fish and then came back.

I'm going to die. I'm going to spend three days and three nights in the ground and then I'll be back. And he doesn't look back on this story and say like, you know, there's this old myth, this old legend that these gullible people in olden times believed that this guy was actually swallowed by a fish.

[18 : 19] He says, hey, this happened. And if we are Christians and we believe that Jesus was actually God in the flesh, the God who made the world, who became a person, and he believes that the Old Testament stories are actually true, then I believe that that should be sufficient evidence for us as Christians to believe that the Old Testament teachings and stories are true.

And I know not everyone in here is Christians, but if we are, then I think that Jesus believing these stories should be sufficient for us to believe them. The third thing I want to say about the truth of the Bible is that the internal claims of the Bible about itself mean that it either has to be entirely true or it loses all of its validity.

It either has to be entirely true or it loses all of its validity. And here's why I say this. Because in 2 Timothy 3.16, like the readers just read, it says that all scripture, all of the Bible is breathed out by God.

It comes directly from him. It has a divine source. And then if we look at the book of Hebrews, it says that Hebrews 6.18 says that it is impossible for God to lie.

So we have a claim that the Bible comes from God and a claim that it is impossible for God to lie. Which means that if there is something in the Bible that is not true, say, you know, the Bible says that Jesus died and then rose again from the dead.

[19 : 50] If that is not true, if Jesus did not rise from the dead after he died, then that means that the Bible has a lie in it. Which means either God can't lie, but the Bible came from somewhere else and the Bible loses its divine source.

Or the Bible actually came from God, but God can tell lies. And so we can't really trust that this source that it comes from is reliable. And so the Bible claims that either it has to be entirely true or it loses all of its validity because either the source or the character of the source is thrown into question.

And so in terms of the question of, you know, what should I do? Should I choose parts of it that I think are true and leave the rest off as stories? If we decide to do that, that puts us in a very dangerous position.

Because all of a sudden when we do this, when we say, I'm not so sure that this story is true, maybe I'll just ignore that. That puts us at a point where we are either saying, the Bible didn't come from God or God is not trustworthy.

And either way, we're saying, I am wiser than God. I know better than God. I'm going to make a decision for myself about whether what God actually says is true.

[21 : 10] So there's lots of evidence out there to point to the truth of the Bible. Jesus believed that the entire Bible, including the Old Testament, was true. And the Bible either has to be entirely true or it loses all of its validity.

But okay, the Bible is true. What difference does it make in my life? There's a lot of stuff out there that's true that makes absolutely no difference in my life. Take the user guide for a NASA space shuttle.

I'm sure that the contents of that are absolutely true. But it makes absolutely no difference in my life. I've never read the user guide for a NASA space shuttle. And even if I did, I've never been on one.

I never planned to be on one. So the stuff that I could learn from that wouldn't make an impact on my day-to-day life. If I was an astronaut, great. But I'm not. And so the fact that this true information is out here doesn't mean a thing to me.

It's cool that other people can go into space, but that's not going to save my life if stuff starts breaking down on the space shuttle. And so, you know, I think the fact that it's true in and of itself doesn't make it impactful on our lives.

[22 : 20] And there are a number of things that could keep it from being impactful. So I think of the security guards at my building. The security guards at my building don't speak English.

One of them speaks enough English that when I walk in, he goes, Hi, Eric, how are you? And I say, I'm good, Mr. Wong, how are you? He says, I am fine. And that is the extent of his English.

Try and talk about anything else, and he just gives up. I even, like, try and type it out on my phone in English and hit the translate button so he can read it in Chinese. Still doesn't work. He's just lost.

But he actually speaks significantly more English than the other security guard that's regularly at my building. This woman speaks not a word of English, except for, Hello! In that tone of voice.

But this doesn't stop her from trying to communicate with me on a regular basis. Sometimes it's pretty easy. I walk inside on a cold day in shorts and a t-shirt, and she's like, Oh, brrr.

[23 : 18] I'm like, Yes, I am cold. Or I walk inside at mealtime, and she's like, Oh, six for me, ah. I'm like, Hi, hi. That means, Have you eaten yet?

And I say, Yes. But other times, she tries to talk to me, and I just have no clue at all what she's saying. And so it turns into this game of charades where she tries to act out something and communicate to me, and I'm just like, I have no idea what's going on.

And usually, it's not that big of a deal. I just hop in the elevator, say bye-bye, and go up to my apartment. But sometimes I can tell from her tone of voice that what she's trying to communicate with me is very urgent and important.

And in these moments, I have to pull out my phone, call up Jeremy, my roommate who speaks Canto, say, Hey, listen to what this lady is saying, and then tell me what it means. Hand her the phone.

Let her explain it. Take back the phone. Have him relay the message. And then depending on the message, I either turn to the lady and say, Okay, okay, I'm good. Or I say something to him, hand the phone back, have him pass the message on for me again, and we just do this phone relay game.

[24 : 27] And a lot of the times, the messages aren't that important, but sometimes they are. One time, I walk downstairs, and the lady's like, you can tell from the way that she's talking that it's very important. And all I hear is like, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Dixai, Dixai, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, there's water dripping. It's not raining outside. Do I need an umbrella when I go out? What's going on? And she's just like, blah, blah, blah, Dixai, Dixai.

I'm like, what's going on? So I bust out my phone. I call Jeremy, and I'm like, I can't understand what's going on here. So I hand the phone to the lady.

She explains it, hands it back, and he's like, Oh, someone in our side of the building has a dripping air conditioner, so she wants us to just check and make sure it's not us. You know, it's really simple, really easy message to pass on, but because of the fact that we don't speak the same language, I couldn't get that message.

I think a lot of people have this idea that the Bible is like this, that it is difficult to understand, that it's reliant upon somewhat sketchy at best interpretation on our part, like the game of charades that I play with my security guard where I think she's talking about, you know, it's raining, you need an umbrella, and she's actually saying your air conditioner is dripping, or they think that it absolutely requires highly skilled interpreters for us to be able to actually understand what it is saying.

[25 : 55] But I have good news. The Bible is not like that. The Bible is clearly communicated to us by God in human language that we can easily understand, and it has been translated, thankfully, into many, many languages so that even if we don't speak English, we can still get a translation in our language.

And even better, the Bible says that God sent Jesus to the earth, that Jesus is the word of God made flesh, so that God did not simply tell us what he wants from us, but he sent Jesus to show us what he wants from us as well.

And so I want to look today at two major ways the Bible is relevant to our lives, and I get these from the passage that we read in 2 Timothy this morning.

Two big things that the Bible does, two incredibly relevant ways that it impacts our lives. The first one, in 2 Timothy 3, verse 15, it says that you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible makes us wise for salvation. The Bible tells us about Jesus, the Savior. There are a lot of different ways that people approach reading the Bible.

[27 : 16] Some people look through the Bible and they think, oh, there's lots of rules in here. I need to get a notebook and pen and make a list of all the rules so that I can keep all the rules perfectly.

And they get their list and they keep their rules and they look around at everyone else who hasn't kept the rules and says, look at them. Can't believe how messed up they are.

Or they get their list, they write out the rules, they realize they can't keep the rules, and then they just feel so disappointed with themselves because I should be better than this. And while the Bible does have lots of rules, the Bible is not primarily a book about rules.

The primary goal of the Bible is not just to get us to follow a list of rules. Some people read the Bible as an inspiration guide for life. They have the little Bible app on their iPhone so that throughout the day when things go bad, they can just bust it out and play Bible roulette, spin through the books and tap, and here's my verse for this moment.

And you know, sometimes I'm sure they get a great one, like, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And then, you know, some days it turns up and it's like, depart from me, men of bloodshed.

[28 : 30] Oh, how I hate the wicked. Like, what's that supposed to say about my situation right now? And they, or maybe, maybe just randomly in the morning, flip open, read the first chapter that comes up.

Oh, how lonely sits the city that was full of people. Like a widow she has become, she who was great among the nations. That's a depressing way to start your morning. And they, they look to the Bible for inspiration.

Just read until they find something that maybe speaks to their lives. And while I believe that the Bible is very inspirational, it is not first and foremost a self-help motivational book. Another way people read the Bible is as a book of heroes.

They look through and they see these great heroes and say, I need to be just like them. David went and fought Goliath. He faced the giants in his life. And now I need to face my giants.

So they identify the giants in their lives and they go out and they face those giants. Here's the problem with this. All of the heroes in the Bible, except for Jesus, failed.

[29 : 36] Many of them in huge giant ways, often on purpose. So if we're following David, trying to be just like him, facing our giants, what do we do about the fact that David slept with his neighbor's wife and had the neighbor murdered to cover it up?

Are we supposed to go follow him in that one too? No. If you don't get the sarcasm, no. The answer is no. And while the Bible does have, you know, examples of faith that we are supposed to look at and follow, it even says, the Bible is not primarily a book of heroes that we are supposed to be, try to be like.

So what is the Bible, first and foremost? It's a story. There's a children's Bible called the Jesus Storybook Bible, and I feel like the Jesus Storybook Bible explains this best.

So I'm just going to read a little passage from the Jesus Storybook Bible to us. If you have kids and you're looking for a children's Bible for them, this is an excellent one. If you don't have kids, but you still want an excellent book to read, just pick it up and read through the Storybook Bible by yourself.

It also has cool pictures, so it's even more fun to read. But it says, no, the Bible isn't a book of rules or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a story.

[30 : 52] It's an adventure story about a young hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave prince who leaves his palace, his throne, everything, to rescue the ones he loves.

It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life. You see, the best thing about this story is it's true. There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one big story, the story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.

It takes the whole Bible to tell this story, and at the center of the story, there is a baby. Every story in the Bible whispers his name. He's like the missing piece in the puzzle, the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly, you can see a beautiful picture.

The Bible is, first and foremost, a story about a God who loves and rescues his people. And that is how it makes us wise for salvation.

It points us to this hero, the one Jesus. Every part of the Bible whispers his name. The Old Testament rules, they're there not just so that we can have a list and feel good about our ability to keep them or bad about our inability to keep them.

[32 : 12] They're there because when we look at them and realize how impossible it is for us to keep all of them, it shows us how far short we fall of being good enough for God and how much we need a Savior in Jesus.

The heroes are there as pictures of Christ. We're not supposed to go out and be David and face our giants. We have a David who's already come and conquered the giant. We have Jesus who came and conquered sin and death for us.

And where are we in the story? We're the Israelites sitting back too scared, hiding, trying to avoid having to see this giant. But then we have a hero who comes in and conquers the giant for us.

And we who were living in fear and in defeat now are all of a sudden enabled to go out and live in victory because someone else has won the battle for us. And when David fails, when David goes out and sleeps with his neighbor's wife and has the neighbor murdered so that he can cover it up, it gives us a longing for the hero who won't fail, for the one who will perfectly obey at all times.

In every way, this story points us back to Jesus. And, you know, the whole Bible is a part of this story, even parts that at times we may be like, genealogies, why are they in the Bible?

[33 : 33] Why is it significant in our lives that the tabernacle has to be this long by this wide and made out of this material? It doesn't make sense. Why do I care how many people were counted in the census of Israel thousands of years ago?

But the thing is that every single one of these aspects is a part of the story. Every single one of these aspects points us to the way that God is working in and among his people to rescue and save them.

so that every single part of the Bible, the stories, the teachings, the historical records, is relevant directly to our lives because it is a part of this story.

The Bible, in its entirety, makes us wise for salvation by introducing us to this story and to Jesus, the Savior, at the center of the story.

So the second thing that the Bible does, it says in verse 17 of 2 Timothy 3, it says that it may, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

[34 : 40] The Bible equips us for every good work. And here's how the Bible doesn't equip us for every good work. There's not a book in the Bible that is called The Letter to Eric that says, chapter 1, verse 1, You shall move to Hong Kong in the year 2010 and work at a church there after graduating from your undergraduate degree in Dallas.

No verse like that in the Bible. There's no list of here's where you should live, here's what you should do, here's what you should study in school and where you should study it. Here's who you should marry, here's how you should name your kids as they are born.

None of that's in there. But the Bible equips us for every good work by introducing us to God and calling us to love Him. See, if there were verses in the Bible that said, here's where you need to live, here's what you need to do, here's what you need to study, that just becomes the law.

And as the Bible repeatedly tells us, the law kills. In Romans chapter 7, Paul talks about this. He says, you know, before, I thought that I was alive, I thought that I had things going on, had it all together, and then I read the commandments in God's law.

And I realized that I was messed up. I realized that coveting, that wanting what someone else has so desperately is wrong. And when I realized this, it didn't make me want to obey it, it made me want to covet even more.

[36 : 07] I was alive, the law came, it killed me. And it couldn't bring me back to life. And what the Bible consistently, repeatedly tells us is that it is grace that brings us life.

It is not a list of commands that tells us what to do that transforms our hearts and equips us for every good work, but it is God's work in us that transforms our hearts and equips us for every good work.

You know, the movie just came out, so I think that probably a bunch of us have seen it, and if not, probably some of us have read the book or seen the musical. But Les Mis, there is a character named John Valjean. And John Valjean, before the story even starts, he breaks into a bakery and steals a loaf of bread.

And he is sent to prison to be reformed by the law. But rather than reforming him, the law hardens him. So that rather than changing his ways, he tries to escape and gets sentenced to longer and longer stays in the prison.

So that what originally started out as a short sentence for stealing a loaf of bread turns into 19 years of his life in prison. He suffers the wrath of the law. And when he gets out of the prison, instead of being reformed, he is even more hardened than ever.

[37 : 28] And so the first thing he does after being set free from prison is go and steal a bunch of silver from the bishop and try to escape with it so he can start a new life.

And the thing in John Valjean's life that ultimately changes him, that transforms him, is not him getting arrested again and getting sent back to prison, but it's the fact that when he gets caught, when he gets brought back to the bishop and the people say, look, bishop, we caught this guy with your silver.

Rather than saying, lock him up and take him away, the bishop says, of course he would have my silver. It was a gift. I gave it to him. And he sets him free. And at this moment, to paraphrase the book, John Valjean realizes that either he had to become as righteous as an angel or he would be as terrible as the devil of hell because the grace that had been shown to him had to have an impact on his life.

The law had hardened him and it was only grace that allowed him to go out, to start a new life, to be charitable to others, to show love to others and to be a completely new man. And it's the same way with the Bible.

The Bible doesn't just give us these list of rules so that we can keep them and be different, but it shows us grace. It shows us the Savior so that we can love him. And naturally, the Bible says that we don't love God on our own.

[38 : 57] And so another way that the Bible transforms us and equips us for every good work is by changing what we love. Changing it from us wanting to be the God of our lives, to do what we want and serve ourselves to loving the God of the universe and wanting what he wants.

You know, in my life, when I was younger, I used to run cross-country at my school. But it sort of destroyed my knees, so I stopped after a few years. And for years, I didn't run.

Now, I used my knees as an excuse for not running, but seriously, even if my knees were okay, who enjoys running? Who wants to go for runs?

Right? Yes? Are you with me there? And when I went home this past summer, my dad started talking to me about these new running shoes that he had gotten that cut down on the impact on his knees so he could run without hurting his knees.

I thought, oh, this sounds so wonderful. I got a pair of these shoes and I was like, when I come back to Hong Kong, I will start running. I will be fit. I got these shoes, I brought them back to Hong Kong and these shoes sat on my shelf for five straight months untouched.

[40 : 08] because I realized that as much as I loved the idea of running, I did not love running. I loved the comfort of my bed early in the morning and did not want to leave that comfort to go do something like sweat and have to breathe deeply early in the morning and then be all gross and, ugh, why would I do that?

I did not love running. But then something happened. Around November, I started dating this girl who loves running. And in our discussions, someone recommended, hey, how about sometime we go for a run together?

And I, being the caring guy that I am, said, oh, that would definitely be a great way for us to have common activities to do together. And then thought to myself, crap.

So I busted out the shoes. I went for a couple runs to get in shape so that once we started running together, I wouldn't be just like miles and miles behind her.

I broke in these new shoes. We started going for runs together occasionally. And I realized that I developed an enjoyment for running, not because I enjoy running in and of itself, but because I enjoyed the person that I was running with.

[41 : 27] And having that person around transformed my desire to run to the extent that now I even go for runs on my own midweek when I'm not with her so that, because I've just learned to enjoy running.

And so it's the same way with the Bible. The Bible doesn't, doesn't just take us and give us these rules and say, do this so that you'll be different. It says, enter into this relationship, fall in love with God, get to know him.

And in that process, you will be transformed. You know, my love, I don't know if I would call it a love for running yet, my enjoyment of running did not come because some expert came and said, Eric, if you don't start exercising more, you will die of a heart attack at a very early age.

It also didn't come because my girlfriend came up to me and said, hey, the only way that I would ever consider dating you is if you actually were willing to go on a run with me. It simply came out of a relationship.

And the way that the Bible equips us for every good work is by introducing us to a relationship with the God of the universe. So as we look at these two things that the Bible does, equipping us for salvation and equipping us for every good work, we realize that how we handle the Bible is ultimately a matter of life and death for us.

[42 : 49] how we handle the Bible is a matter of life and death for us. Because the Bible is where we learn of God's salvation and the Bible is how God equips us for every good work in our lives.

And absolutely, there are ways that we can learn the contents of the Bible without actually reading it. In the book of Colossians, Paul commands the Christians to teach one another using songs and hymns that you can learn the contents of the Bible through songs.

Or nowadays, we have cool technology like audiobooks so you can listen to the contents of the Bible. Or if you're like me and you enjoy actual books, there are dozens of translations of the Bible that are relative or different levels of readability so that you can have the level of readability that is best for you.

And here's the thing. The primary thing is not how these truths get into your life. It's that they get into your life. Because it is through these truths that God makes us wise for salvation and equips us for every good work.

Think of it this way. The Bible is a matter of life and death for us. Another thing that is a matter of life and death for us is food. When you get home after a long day of work, it's been hard and grueling at the office, you don't think, oh, do I really have to eat dinner tonight?

[44 : 14] At least most people I know don't do that. With me, I get home, I'm like, all right, what's to eat? I am starving. And I know that I want this food because this food gives me life and I crave life.

It's the same way with the Bible. The Bible gives us life. Do we crave this life? Or would we rather just set it aside, forget about it, go on living life the way that we have been?

We have the words that can equip us for salvation and for every good work. What are we going to do with them? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for speaking your word. We thank you that it comes directly from you and that you are a reliable source, that you are good, that you do not tell lies, and that you have made your whole Bible sufficient to make us wise for salvation and to equip us for every good work.

Please create in us a desire for the life that your word gives. Please create in us a love for your son Jesus and for the work that he has done for us. please transform us and help us to grow as a community through your word.

[45 : 44] And in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Hey, if you're like me, like I was 40 years ago, someone just gave me a Bible and just said, hey, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they're right in the center of your Bible.

Open up to one of those books, start at the beginning, and read for about 10 minutes. And just talk to the Lord as you're reading. If you don't have a Bible, come by the Church Community Center this week.

We'll give you one for free. We'll have them next week when we're downstairs. We'll be downstairs next week on the third floor. We'll have a lot of Bibles there. Now, you can't take them and resell them, okay? But if they're for your use, you can take them and we'll have them there.

So take one, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, read 10 minutes a day and it will change you. Thanks so much, Eric, for bringing us to God's Word. And we want to encourage you to hang out afterwards, get some food, coffee.

Check out your bulletin. There's a lot of great things happening. There's a very interesting women's study coming up in November. The Israel trip is still on for May, so there's still a couple of slots available for that.

[46 : 46] So check that out. We'd love for you to come. That will change your life. February. Yeah. Oh, the women's thing. February, right, okay. Yeah, that's why the women are leading, not the men.

So let me pray for us. Father, we just thank you for this day. We thank you that we can come together and know that your Word is true and that you are good and that we can trust you. And so we come and we lay all of our life before you as we look at your Son, the perfect hero, who came to save us from all especially sin, that he gathers us and prevents us from coming to you.

So, Lord, we come this morning and we just give our lives to you and we worship you. We thank you for what you're doing in the church and in the community groups and with the outreaches. Lord, we know that if all those things, if you're not there, if you're not at the center of it, if you're not the center of our story, then it's useless and meaningless.

And so, Lord, we pray that we would always focus on you and that you would be the hero of our lives. So we lift up this time and this fellowship in your Word.

We pray that they would change us to make us more like our hero, Jesus. Lord, we love you. We pray these things in your Son Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.

[48 : 07] Remember, next week we're on the third floor, so we'll see you there.