

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

What We Believe . . . Why It Matters!

A Study Of The Biblical Foundations Of Riverwood Bible Church With Application To Life Today!

*“A voice says, ‘Call out,’
Then he answered, ‘What shall I call out?’
All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the
flower of the field.*

*The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the Word of our God stands forever.”*

Isaiah 40:6,8

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Introduction

The announcement of a study of Biblical beliefs or “doctrine” is often met with a long sigh of anticipated boredom – “This is really going to put me to sleep!” or, with studied skepticism – “Since nobody can agree on what the Bible actually says, why waste the time trying to understand it!”

Both of these responses are deeply rooted in our modern culture:

- Many people are thoroughly convinced that the Bible is boring, that it only talks about “sin” or negative things, and that it has nothing relevant to say about real life!
- Others have come to believe that “doctrine divides!” It only brings division among Christians and within the Churches they attend. People want “love”, not “division!”

It is our hope that this study of Biblical beliefs or “doctrine” will not end up in boredom or division!

- We believe that a careful study of the Word of God will be of genuine interest to every Child of God because we will be studying things that matter to God!
- We hope this study will not be divisive, that it will not divide us along the lines of human opinion, but that it will unify us in what the Bible calls “the mind of Christ” . . . that we may agree with God and be pleasing to Him!

In each of the following sessions, we will ask two basic and vital questions:

1. What does God say in His Word?
2. What does this mean to us today?

What God says is our Truth – the foundation of what we “believe!”

What God says is our Guide – for living today and preparing for eternity!

What could be of greater importance?

We welcome you to the study of God’s revelation of Himself!

“The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session I

September 12, 2010

The Word Of God: The Foundation For What We Believe!

Our present moment of human history is marked by an emphasis on, even an insistence upon, “personal independence.” We resist anyone or anything that makes an attempt to take away our “personal rights” – to “tell us what to do!” We want to be the **final authority** in the living of life! These factors have led to many people to hold to a “belief system” in which personal opinion is the foundation or final authority of what is believed.

How important is this emphasis on “personal independence?” Quite simply, it is of **eternal significance**! It affects everything we do, especially our “belief system” about God, the Bible, and the purpose of life.

If our “personal opinion” is the final authority for what we believe, the result is that we become “god” unto ourselves! No room is left for the eternal “God”, Who is personal, and has created mankind in His “image.” There is no need for Him to **speak** to His creations, to provide divine **truth** for their lives, and to ask to hold the place of **final authority** for what they believe!

While personal independence, or “being god unto ourselves,” might seem like the ideal existence, one where we have the greatest level of “**freedom**”, in actuality, it brings the loss of personal freedom, meaning and purpose! We become “**slaves**” to ourselves!

The only resolution to this problem is the communication of the Creator to His creation -- the **revelation** of God to mankind! Such communication or “truth” would separate man and woman from mere “animal life” and elevate them the unique position of being able to know and enjoy the Creator – “Person” to “person!”

Has there been such a communication of the Creator to the creature? If so, it must be the **basis** of what we believe!

If there has been no such communication, then every human opinion and “belief system” is of equal value and authority!

I. What Does The Bible Claim For Itself?

A. The Bible Claims to be God's "REVELATION" of Himself!

1. "Revelation" = apokalupsis = "disclosure" or "unveiling".

"The word revelation is derived from the Greek word apokalupsis, which means 'disclosure' or 'unveiling.' Hence, revelation signifies God unveiling Himself to mankind. The fact that revelation has occurred renders theology possible; had God not revealed Himself there could be no accurate or propositional statements about God." --Paul Enns

2. "Revelation": Helpful Definitions.

a. Dr. Paul Enns:

"That act of God whereby He discloses Himself or communicates truth to the mind, whereby He makes manifest to His creatures that which could not be known any other way!"

b. Dr. Charles Ryrie:

"A disclosure . . . God's communicating His message to man."

3. "Revelation": Two Primary Forms.

a. Natural Revelation → Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21.

1. The order and design of the universe reveal a "Creator";

2. The magnificence of the human body demands a "Maker".

3. Note: "Natural" Revelation is adequate to establish God's existence, but is not sufficient to understand God's plan of redemption from sin!

b. Special Revelation → Hebrews 1:1-3.

1. God revealed Himself through the written Word.

– *"God . . . spoke . . . in the prophets in many portions . . ."*

2. God revealed Himself through His Son, the Living Word.

– *"God . . . has spoken to us . . . through His Son."*

3. Note: "Special" Revelation provides a full understanding of God's plan of redemption from sin and new life in Christ.

4. Scripture Reference: Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:3.

5. Observation: **God desires that we know Him!**

B. The Bible Claims to be God “SPEAKING” to Mankind!

1. Evidence in Scripture:

--3,800 times the Bible declares, “God said,” or “Thus says the Lord”. (Ex. 14:1; 20:1; Lev. 4:1; Num. 4:1; Deut. 4:2; 32:48; Isa. 1:10,24; Jer. 1:11; Ezek. 1:3; etc.)

2. Scripture Reference: II Timothy 3:16-17.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

a. The Scriptures are “inspired” by God.

“Inspired” = theopneustos = “God-breathed”, “breathed into by God”, “inspired”.

“The rabbinical teaching was that the Spirit of God rested on and in the prophets and spoke through them, so that their words did not come from themselves but from the mouth of God; they spoke in the Holy Spirit.”

--Cleon Rogers

b. The Scriptures are “adequate” to “equip” the Christian.

“Adequate” = artios = “fit”, “complete”, “capable”, “sufficient”; i.e., “able to meet all demands”.

“Equipped” = exegerismenos = “to completely outfit”, “fully furnish”, “fully equip or supply”.

“The word is used of documents – or of a wagon or rescue boat – which were completely outfitted, or of a machine sold in good condition; i.e., capable of performing the service expected of it.”

--Cleon Rogers

3. The Necessity of “Inspiration”:

“Inspiration is necessary to preserve the ‘revelation’ of God. If God has revealed Himself, but the record of the revelation is not accurately recorded, then the revelation of God is subject to question. Hence, inspiration guarantees the accuracy of the revelation.”

--Paul Enns

4. Helpful Definitions:

a. Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield:

“Inspiration is . . . a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Holy Spirit . . . by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.”

b. Dr. Charles Ryrie:

"Inspiration is . . . God's superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His 'revelation' to man in the words of the original autographs."

c. Dr. Edward J. Young:

"Inspiration is a superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess Divine authority and trustworthiness and, possessing such Divine authority and trustworthiness, are free from error."

5. The Necessity of "Verbal Plenary" Inspiration!

*"In the past it was sufficient to state that the Bible was 'inspired'; however it has now become necessary to define the Evangelical position more precisely . . . To state the orthodox view it is now necessary to include the terms 'verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant, unlimited inspiration!' **All this has been necessitated because of those who have retained words like 'inspiration, infallible, and even inerrant' while denying that the Bible is free from error."***

--Paul Enns

6. A Logical Conclusion: Language (the ability to communicate) did not originate with mankind, but with God!

*"If God created man in His own rational image and endowed him with the power of speech, then a purpose of language, in fact the chief purpose of language, would naturally be the revelation of truth to man and the prayers of man to God. In a Theistic philosophy one ought not to say that all language has been devised in order to describe and discuss the finite objects of our 'sense-experience' . . . On the contrary, language was **devised by God**, that is, God created man rational for the purpose of theological expression."*

--Gordon Clark

7. Observation: God has provided knowledge of Himself to mankind!

C. The Bible Claims to be God's "AUTHORITY" for Defining Truth!

1. The Biblical Statement: II Peter 1:19, 20-21.

"So we have the prophetic word made more sure . . . But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of the human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

2. The Result of “Verbal Plenary” Inspiration = “INERRANCY”!

a. Dr. Edward J. Young:

“By this word (‘inerrancy’) we mean that the Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability to mistake, incapable of error. In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth.”

b. Dr. Charles Ryrie: A syllogism.

1. “God is true (Rom. 3:4);
2. The Scriptures were ‘breathed out’ by God (II Tim. 3:16);
3. Therefore, the Scriptures are true (since they came from the breath of God who is true).”

c. The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (1978):

“Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives.”

3. Observation: God’s inspired and inerrant Word provides an “ACCURATE” and “ADEQUATE” knowledge of Himself!

II. What Does This Mean For Us?

A. It means that we have been created with “_____”!

--We are designed to _____ God
by His _____ with us!

B. It means that we have been created with “_____”!

--This is the highest “_____” a human can receive!

C. It means that we have been created with “_____”!

--This is the only sufficient “_____” for life!