

Have you ever been rock climbing? I've only done it on a couple of occasions but when I have there's a piece of equipment that I've found absolutely crucial. The rope! When you're dangling from the side of a cliff and there's one thing that is keeping you from crashing towards the ground, you realize just how necessary that one thing is. You are literally trusting that rope with your life; you cling to it knowing that your life is dependent on it if you're going to live another day.

In the same way that you would cling to that rope, I want to encourage you this morning to **Cling to the Word of God**. I want to challenge you to bank your life on the truth that is found in this book. For the words that are contained in this book have the ability to revive your soul, it opens our eyes to who God is, and it reveals our needs before a holy God. This truth is essential!

This is the fourth week of the series, "Follow the Spirit." I need to understand this morning, before we even jump into our text, that these two things are not separate issues. Following after the Spirit and clinging to the Word, are not to be divided. But sadly, you will see from time to time that people will lean towards one side or the other; and there's a ditch on both sides of this road.

On one side, you find individual's who really *love* the Holy Spirit. And they pursue the Spirit apart from the Word. These individuals seem to mention quite often as to how God has spoken to them recently, or how God has stirred in their heart to pursue a certain action or do a certain thing. But they don't very often tie their lives back to the Word.

Then on the other side you've got a group that seek to know and obey the Word without any interaction with, or real dependence on, the Spirit. These Christians might know who the Holy Spirit is and that He indwells our lives in some manner. They might even know they produce "spiritual fruit" in their lives, but they don't relate to him in a meaningful way whatsoever.

But the Spirit and the Word work inseparably. One without the other leads to a dysfunctional Christianity.<sup>1</sup> So this morning as we give more room to talking about the Word of God, keep in mind that you cannot separate the two. Keep in mind that when you pick up your Bible to read it, that even if you are alone, you are not alone. "God has not left us to ourselves to understand his words and feed our own souls. No matter how thin your training, no matter how spotty your routine, the Helper stands ready."<sup>2</sup>

So if you would, pick up your Bibles this morning, open them to 2 Peter 1, and I want to challenge you to **Cling to the Word**.

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<sup>1</sup> **Jesus Continued**. J.D. Greear pg. 23

<sup>2</sup> **Habits of Grace**. David Mathis pg. 54

## READ 2 PETER 1:16-21

I'm going to give you two reasons this morning to Cling to the Word...

### **First, The Word is More Reliable than Experience.**

Peter doesn't dismiss his experience and I want you to hear that as we walk through this first portion of our message this morning. Because the experiences that God brings into our lives can be rather significant. You probably point to several experiences that God has brought into your life that has had profound impact on bringing you to point that you are at right now. And so can I. Two of those experiences I would say are pretty monumental. First, I would point to the moment of salvation, where my eyes were opened to my own sin and my need for a Savior. I can go into great detail of the experiences I had at a camp in northern Michigan, that God used those moments to get ahold of my life and draw me into pastoral ministry.

Those experiences, of salvation and of attending a Bible camp as a teenager, are fundamental components of why I am standing in front of you today as one of your pastor's.

Peter in his letter talks in verses 16, 17, and 18 all about his experience with Jesus. And he doesn't say that it's not important. In fact, he uses the time that he spent with Jesus, while Jesus was walking on this earth, as a defense to why he had the authority to talk about God in the way that he had done so far. Peter goes into detail explaining what he had *seen* with his own eyes and *heard* with own ears.

Peter's experience is something that he didn't overlook and neither can we. Because what Peter's describes is phenomenal. In this letter Peter references the day that he went with Jesus along with his two friends, James and John, up to a high mountain. It's laid out for us in Matthew 17 and it gives the details of what Peter refers to here. Let me Matthew 17:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup> And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. <sup>3</sup> And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. <sup>4</sup> And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>5</sup> He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." <sup>6</sup> When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. <sup>7</sup> But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." <sup>8</sup> And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Peter was with Jesus as He was transfigured. The word “transfigured” has a basic meaning of changing into another form. We don’t get a lot of description and I’m not sure of that a description of Jesus at that moment could be fully put into words. But of what we do know is that the divine glory of Jesus’ was put on display and “face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.” For Peter, James, and John, this was the greatest confirmation of Jesus’ deity that they had witness so far. Jesus is God would have been the thought that would have been echoing in their mind after walking away from seeing Jesus’ transfigured, after seeing the saints of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, after hearing God the Father speak from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

That’s not a moment that you walk away from going, “no big deal.” But this is where Peter turns the corner and ultimately says, “As great as that moment was... we’ve got something better!”

### **Read 2 Peter 1:19a**

We’ve got the Word of God! As good as experience is and as much as we enjoy it when God brings it to us, an incredible experience is not what is most consistent nor is it something that we ever called to depend on. God Himself has repeatedly emphasized that His inspired Word is inerrant (incapable of being wrong), is infallible (never failing, always effective), and the all-sufficient source of truth.

### **Here’s what God has to say about His Word:**

**Psalms 19** –The law of the Lord is perfect, the testimony of the Lord is sure, the precepts of the Lord are right, the commandment of the Lord is pure, the fear of the Lord is clean, the rules of the Lord are true! The Word of the Lord is to be desired more than gold and it’s to be enjoyed more than finest comforts this world has to offer.

**Psalms 119:160** –“The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” What it’s saying is that there’s not a speck of untruth in *all* of scripture, and *all* of scripture will stand throughout *all* of eternity. It’s all true and it’s not going anywhere. It’s not fading away. Experience fades away –just ask the Israelites who had experiences with God that you and I can only imagine having. They witnessed the 10 plagues; they were led by God through the Red Sea... they experience after experience after experience. But those experiences faded and it didn’t take them long to be grumbling and complaining and wishing that they had been left back in Egypt as slaves.

Experiences fade. But the Word of God endures forever.

God looks very highly on His Word. Do you want to know God? Do you want to trust God? Do you want to follow after God faithfully wherever He leads you? Start by diving

into the Word that He has placed in your hand. It is reliable, it is the truth, and it will endure for eternity.

These couple of references only scratches the surface of how significant God describes His Word to be. If we had time we could look at a lot more, but for the sake of time, let's look back at 2 Peter to see what he lays out as to why the Word of God is so important.

### **Read 2 Peter 1:20-21**

The Bible *is not* something that was haphazardly and randomly put together by a group of guys. Not one of the Bible's author's sat down and went, "Hmmm... what is something really interesting that I could write about the eternal God?" NO! That is not what happened. The Holy Spirit, the One that we've been talking about for the past four weeks, has spoken through these many different authors so that God can be fully known to the degree that He needs to be known, and also so that we can have what we need to fully follow after Him.

#### **Application:**

My hope would be that you would cling to the Word of God! That you would turn to it because it is reliable. That you would seek to be led by the Holy Spirit through His Word as you seek to answer some of the most difficult questions of this life. You know what, I am confident that there are many of you who do; you believe this book to be the very words of the eternal God. And you turn to it often.

Recently, I came across a letter that was written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and in this letter he expresses his dependency on his Bible. *Bonhoeffer was a German theologian and pastor who stood bravely against Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime.* But I want to read a portion of this letter that he wrote in 1936 to his brother-in-law, who did not hold a high view of Scripture.

*First of all I will confess quite simply – I believe that the Bible alone is the answer to all our questions, and that we need only to ask repeatedly and a little humbly, in order to receive this answer. One cannot simply read the Bible, like other books. One must be prepared really to enquire of it. Only thus will it reveal itself. Only if we expect from it the ultimate answer, shall we receive it. That is because in the bible God speaks to us. And one cannot simply think about God in one's own strength, one has to enquire of him. Only if we seek him, will he answer us...*

He continues his letter by saying that you can't just look for God wherever you want, he says

*... If it is I who determine where God is to be found, then I shall always find a God who corresponds to me in some way, who is obliging, who is connected with my own nature. But if God determines where he is to be found, then it will be in a place which is not at all congenial to me. This place is the Cross of Christ. And whoever would find*

*him must go to the foot of the Cross, as the Sermon on the Mount commands. This is not according to our nature at all, it is entirely contrary to it. But this is the message of the Bible, not only in the New but also in the Old Testament...*

He encourages us, go to your Bible. Find it reliable. Find that reveals who God is, and be confident that it can and that it will change your life. This moves us into the second reason to Cling to the Word of God, and that reason is because, **The Word Will Change Your Life.**

### **READ 2 PETER 1:19**

Pay attention. He says, “you will do well to pay attention” to the Word. This is not something that you read through once and then move onto something else.

Think about it like this: What are the things that you check on over and over? What are the things you pay attention to? That one thing you are drawn back to again and again? I don’t know what it is for you: Stock Market, Facebook, Fantasy Football, a good mystery novel, and video games.

My wife and I were out for a walk this past week and I asked her that question: what are things your drawn to pay attention to? She talked about the experience of when each one of our kids was born. Being a young mom and having a human life placed into her care is a big responsibility. And when she would place one of our daughters into their crib, she mentioned how she would constantly go back and forth to make sure that precious life was doing well. If that little girl were asleep for *too* long, Laura would pop her head in to just make sure our daughter was still breathing. Once we had older girls, Laura paid even closer attention to ensure that no two old, big sister, was attempting to pick up that child. She paid attention; she went back and again.

I want to invite you to make **that** the pattern of your life when it comes to the Word. You read the Word, you study the Word, and you meditate on the Word. That you go back to your Bible again and again. One of the primary tools that the Spirit uses to lead and direct your life is through his written Word. It will give you guidance as to how you ought to live.

Peter encourages you to pay attention to it in the same way you would if it were a lamp and you were in a dark place. *I’m not sure if you been in a really dark place. I’m not talking about the darkness that if you wait awhile, and let your eyes adjust, and then you’ll be able to see a little bit. NO. I’m talking about the type of place that if no light is brought in, you’re stumbling around and lost. Think about being in a cave, and the light that is provided is crucial in order for you not to get lost or stumble around. The smallest of lights gives you guidance through the darkness.*

The Word of God is that guidance. Your Bible is that light! The Spirit of God uses His Word to shape your life, to point you in the direction that you ought to go to follow

faithfully after His will for your life. Do you realize that about 99% of what God wants you to do with your life is contained in His Word? What the Spirit is actively doing is leading you to obey God's revealed commands in Scripture. That's the will of God for your life.

God calls us to pursue His will as it's laid out in His Word and then to trust Him for the details. I do believe that God cares about what house you buy, or the individual that you do or do not marry, or the career path that you decide to head toward. He is concerned about the things that you do. But I would say that there are some things that He is more concerned about. The Spirit is more concerned about who we should be rather than the things that you do.

If you allow the Spirit to develop within you a heart that loves God, that is deeply concerned about the things that He is concerned about, that your hearts desire is to first to bring honor and glory to Him... so many of the questions that you ask about what you should be doing, will be answered already.

How do you develop a heart like that? You cling to the Word of God. You allow the Holy Spirit to you lead you through His Word; teaching you, shaping you, molding you into the individual that brings glory to His Name.

Do you love the Word? Just real practically do you get into it on a regular basis?

- What I've been doing: The Kingdom Bible Reading Plan
  - Statistically speaking: You can read through the entire bible in 70 hours, cover to cover.
- A Message from James MacDonald
  - i. Read it
  - ii. Question it
  - iii. Plan it
  - iv. Share it

This is a good light for your life; it will guide you, it is reliable, it will change you. Peter says to pay attention to it as you would to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Do you know what Peter is referring to? Peters references a greater light, he's referring to Jesus. There will come a day when Jesus will return and what Jesus will do is exchange the perfect revelation of Scripture with the perfect revelation of Himself. So until that day arrives we take up the Word and read it and study it. We cling to this book that leads us to Christ.

The Word is all about Jesus from the very beginning to the very end. It points to our need for Him and we have an extraordinary opportunity to focus on Jesus even further today as we get to get to gather today around the communion table in remembrance of Jesus has done for us.