**God Spoke**

2 Peter 1:16-21



Last week we started a series called **FOUNDATIONS**. We are exploring the basic beliefs of the Christian worldview, starting with Genesis 1:1. The starting point to understand the world and yourself, is GOD. Genesis 1:1 opens, “In the beginning, GOD.” It’s like a giant ***“start here” arrow***.

If you want to understand the world, **start with God**. How do we know God? Through the Bible. So you can see the foundation of a Christian worldview is God at the most fundamental layer, and ***God’s Word***. And we saw last week that there is no separation between God and His Word. God is so unified with the words He speaks that He IDENTIFIED Himself with His Word.

John 1:1 starts just like Genesis 1:1 but with reference to **Jesus**. “In the beginning was the WORD and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” Throughout history God spoke through prophets and it was written down in holy Scriptures. Then, in the fullness of time, God sent His only Son to be born of a virgin, to live a life of perfect righteousness and ultimately to die on a cross. The New Testament was written in response to this history changing event - because Jesus did not just die on the cross, he rose again, victorious over sin and death forever.

This is the truth that provides the foundation for an understanding of the world we live in. You can see **the outline for the rest of this series**. We will build from the truth about God and His Word to explore the ***origin of everything*** in God’s perfectly good creation. Then we will discuss ***how God designed this world***, focusing in especially on how He created PEOPLE - with male and female gender built into the way humans would reflect His image and glory in this world. And we will see God’s good gift of marriage and the boundaries God placed around it.

All of that is left of ***the big jagged crack***. Genesis 1-2 show us God’s good creation - with no sin, no sadness, no pain, no illness, no death. But you can’t understand the world without **understanding what went wrong**. So we will turn the page to Genesis 3 and study ***the Fall of man*** - why the rebellion of Adam and Eve ruined everything. We will see not only the original sin but also ***the consequences*** of it - primarily in God’s righteous judgment that must fall on sin.

But **we will not end with bad news** - we will go on to Genesis 12 where God called Abraham and promised to bless him and bless the whole world through his family. The Christian worldview is based on God and God’s Word, and it is centered on Christ. We recognize the bad news as the necessary preparation to receive the good news. The world that we have broken, Jesus is fixing as He changes us - one heart at a time.

**Understanding your worldview is so important** to rightly diagnose the problems in this world and the solutions to them. It is also vital to know that ***EVERYONE has a worldview***, even if they don’t believe in God at all. They simply have a different source of truth, a different explanation for the origins of the universe, a different idea about the problems in the world and the solutions to them. Everyone exercises faith. The question is: what are they trusting in? What do they believe about God, themselves and this world? And how does that shape their lives?

Last week we laid the foundation stone - that **GOD IS**. Today we look at the layer above that - that GOD SPOKE. These two facts provide ***the two layer rock solid foundation for the Christian worldview***. This is our source of truth and the anchor or our reality. God exists. And we know for sure He exists because He has spoken over and over again, as recorded in the Bible.

**Ted Olsen** is one of my heroes in the EFCA. He was pastor to seniors at the church we were serving in Chicago. He finally retired at the age of 83 after a full 60 years in pastoral ministry in the Free Church. I interviewed him one time to ask about his experiences over all those years as a pastor and this story has stuck with me.

He said when he started out as a youth pastor, he went to a pastor conference and all ***the “big dogs” were there*** - the older pastors from the region - the seasoned, experienced preachers and leaders.

It was around 1955 at a conference center in Wisconsin. Ted was 22, just starting as a youth pastor. He was walking around the camp and heard voices by one of the buildings so he went over to see what was happening. There they were: around 20-25 of the established pastors and leaders of the EFCA. Godly, older men. Men who had served in ministry for 20, 30, 40 years.

And ***guess what they were singing*** as they prepared for their pastor gathering to begin?

“The B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me. I stand alone on the Word of God. The B-I-B-L-E.”

No kidding. Grown ups. Pastors. And they were singing the B-I-B-L-E.

That is what the EFCA is all about. **We are a Bible movement**. Ted never forgot that moment - seeing that the heroes of our denomination LOVE the Bible; believe the Bible; follow the Bible. He held onto that and it enabled him to serve the Lord for over 60 years. My life and ministry have been shaped by people like Ted Olsen - who love the Bible, who believe deep in their souls that it is the Word of God, and who live every day based on those convictions.

So here are **three reasons to trust the Bible**. First:

1. The Bible is from **Trustworthy** people

 “We did not follow cleverly devised myths… but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16

Here is Peter, one of the original twelve disciples and one of Jesus’ inner circle of three. He is explaining why people can trust the apostles’ message about Jesus - saying it wasn’t some clever plot. **They were simple guys** - four of them, including Peter, were fishermen. They were not fantasy-theology writers. They were not academics. They were ordinary guys who simply documented what they saw and experienced.

The key word here is ***“eyewitnesses.”*** Peter is saying, “Listen. This is what we saw. We aren’t the Machowski’s! We didn’t have a Joss Wheedon on the team or a Kevin Fiege. We just passed on what we saw.” (Those are references to the Matrix writers and some of the folks who brought us the Avengers. Those are fantasy-adventure action movies if you are really, truly lost.) Let’s get back to Peter.

1. The Bible is from **Trustworthy** people

“When he received honor and glory from God the Father… ‘This is my beloved Son…’ We ourselves heard this very voice.” 2 Peter 1:17-18

Look at what Peter is doing here. Of all the events in Jesus’ ministry he could have mentioned, he brings us up on **the mountain where Jesus was transfigured** - where his full divinity was briefly revealed to Peter, James and John.

Peter could have pointed to the ***calming of the storm***. He could have mentioned the ***resurrection of Lazarus.*** He could have talked about the ***resurrection of Jesus*** Himself. But Peter is saying, “Listen. We didn’t make up this whole thing about Jesus being God in the flesh. We didn’t invent the idea of God incarnate. **It was SHOWN to us - very vividly**. And we really didn’t understand for a long time. But looking back, this is the moment when we should have understood who He was. Up on this mountain.”

On that mountain the gospel - the full mystery of Jesus the Son of God - was revealed.

Imagine being up there with Peter, James and John. Remember these were Jewish young men. They had been raised hearing stories about Moses on Mount Sinai. That was **how Jewish Moms got their little boys to behave** - they literally put the fear of God in them. “When Moses was on the mountain, do you know what the rule was? You step across this line and you die. Zap. Lightning. Done. No negotiation. No discussion. Just dead. Moses went up on the mountain, no one else did. Certainly not obnoxious, ungrateful little boys. The thunder and lightning was for them. Now, do you want to eat your green beans?”

Maybe some of you have used that approach. Some of you are writing it down as something to try.

The point is - those three guys understood **the Shekinah Glory of God**. They understood that you cannot see God and live. They knew the stories of God’s presence coming down on Mount Sinai. They knew how the glory of the Lord filled Solomon’s temple and the priests couldn’t come near it. They heard about the brothers who snuck into the temple to offer unauthorized fire before the Lord and were struck dead. (Their moms probably used that story too - “You want to break the rules? You know what happened when these two guys broke the rules?”)

So when they were up on the mountain with Jesus and a cloud came down to cover them - they thought they were about to die. They thought - “This is the glory of God - this is the Shekinah Glory - we are dead!” But instead of being struck down, they were allowed to see Jesus as He really is, and to chit chat with him (and with Moses and Elijah, just for a little more fun). Look again at verse 16.

1. The Bible is from **Trustworthy** people

 “When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus… we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16

It’s interesting that this is ***how Peter summarizes the gospel message***: “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus.” This is the wonder of the good news - the LORD, the God of Israel, the Almighty Creator of all things - CAME to earth! He was born as a helpless baby and raised as Jesus of Nazareth. THE LORD. His power and coming.

Peter says, “That is what we saw - the glory of the Lord revealed - literally revealed - in the person of Jesus.” They saw the radiance of the majesty of the Son of God. And they heard the voice of the Father saying, “This is my beloved Son, with Him I am well pleased.” They heard that same voice and same message at Jesus’ baptism - but the glory manifestation came later up on the mountain.

The point as it relates to the Bible is that ***we can trust it completely***. The Bible is not a collection of myths and fables. It is the well documented, meticulously preserved historical account of creation, Israel and Jesus. No other ancient document has been as well cared for or as systemically fought against. There is no book like the Bible. Check out the church blog for more resources on why you can trust the Bible.

The first reason Peter points to is the eyewitness testimony of the apostles. **Documented eyewitness reports from multiple sources** that agree with each other are the best kind of history. Multiple attestation. Confirmation from outside sources like Josephus the Jewish historian and Tacitus the Roman historian. Agreement with archaeology and other disciplines. Fulfillment of prophecy. The meticulous discipline of the Jewish scribes and then the monastics who preserved the New Testament. The Bible is trustworthy!

Here is the second reason we can trust the Bible.

1. The Bible is from **God**

“No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21

The first reason shows the human side of where Scripture came from. This second reason shows **the divine side**. The Bible was written by over ***30 authors over more than 1500 years*** - from Moses to the Apostle John. The fact that the Bible fits together so beautifully and flows so naturally is a testament to God’s sovereignty in guiding each author to add their part at just the right time.

The phrase here is that they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.” The word ***“carried along”*** isn’t a fancy or technical term. When I looked it up I hoped it was from sailing. But it just means “moved or brought along.” It’s the word Jesus used when the little boy had five loaves and two fish and they were going to use that little lunch to feed the 5,000 - he said, “Bring them to me.”

So Peter is not telling us exactly how it worked, but he is telling us that ***the Holy Spirit made sure the authors got it done correctly***. He brought them along. He moved them. It wasn’t their will that predominated, it was God’s will. It wasn’t the writer’s understanding or interpretation - it was God’s direction.

**This is not to say that the Holy Spirit used DICTATION** - telling the writers exactly the words to say and treating them like stenographers. It’s clear when you read the Bible that God used the different personalities and styles of the different authors. Paul’s writing is very different from that of James or John. David’s psalms are different from the sons of Korah.

Here is one example that shows the authors of Scripture knew when they were writing God’s Word and when they were not.

2. The Bible is from **God**

“To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord)... To the rest I say (I, not the Lord)...” 1 Corinthians 7:10,12

Paul knew that **some of his opinions were just that** - his opinions. He shared them, for sure, but made it clear that those were just his ideas. In other places he knew he had the authority of God for what he wrote.

The same is true throughout the Bible. Moses literally sat with God in a tent and the Lord directly guided him in writing the first five books of the Bible. The other prophets used the phrase, ***“Thus says the Lord.”*** So they knew when the words they spoke carried divine authority. Here is the other key passage about how we got the Bible:

1. The Bible is from **God**

“All Scripture is ***breathed out by God*** and profitable for teaching…” 2 Timothy 3:16

This is where we get the word ***“inspired.”*** Imagine the writers of Scripture, like Paul, breathing in and out. Just as God gave them air to breathe and lungs to breathe it in, so God breathed into them the words of Scripture. These writers had to be in tune with God to breathe His air, but the Holy Spirit carried them along to be sure they got it all down correctly.

Remember, the word for ***“breathe” in Greek and Hebrew is the word for Spirit*** or wind. The Breath of God by which He inspired the writers, was the Holy Spirit. Picture **Isaiah** the prophet with quill in hand and ink pot before him, breathing in the Holy Spirit and breathing out as the Lord gave him those sixty-six chapters of amazing prophecy.

If you’ve ever ***written a long paper or especially a novel***, you know what it feels like to be “inspired,” and also what it feels like to be STUCK. I worked with our boys a few years ago - just for fun - to write a fantasy adventure story together. I wrote the line very carefully: **“The dragons had been killed off many years before the earthquake.”**

Clever, right? You want to read that story. (No, you really don’t. It’s very poorly constructed.) The idea - introduce a world with dragons but immediately point out that somehow they had been killed off, and introduce a recent earthquake. Genius.

Guess what the boys did as Seth, then Caleb, then Joel, each wrote their first chapters? Guess what all three included in their chapters - in a world, remember - where the dragons were all gone…? Yep. **Dragons**. Lots of them. All perfectly alive and well and fire breathing.

Why are you telling us this pastor? Good question. Only to say that ***we felt a little of that inspiration process as the story unfolded.*** That simple idea - the dragons had been dead but suddenly lots of dragons are back - forced us to keep writing to explain how that happened. As our characters ran for their lives and eventually found each other, the story moved along. One chapter led to the next and we just kept writing.

To make a wild leap into actually good writing - **J.R.R. Tolkien** famously said that he did not initially create a master plot for the Lord of the Rings. At first he set out to write a fun little fable for children about a Hobbit. But the story that came from that one idea, Tolkien said, was “given to him.” He just put it down on paper. He was inspired - I will say by God - to tell the story of the one ring and Frodo’s quest to destroy it. As he wrote, the next part came to him. It took years and decades and he invented languages and ages of history. But he always insisted that he didn’t create Middle Earth - it was “given to him.”

Those kind of experiences with fiction give us a small idea of what it might have been like for the Biblical writers to be “inspired” or “carried along” by the Holy Spirit. God breathed out the words of Scripture, through the authors - their lives, their hearts, their thoughts, their words - but God’s Spirit guiding them along.

The Bible is from God. This is a supernatural book. This is God’s revealed Word. And isn’t it just like God to customize His word at different places and times for different people?

* **Job** was probably the first book written - documenting that suffering man’s personal encounter with the living God.
* **Moses** wrote the first five books of the Bible.
* Scribes kept notes on the **history of Israel** and collected them in official chronicles - 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles.
* Hymn writers collected spiritual songs in **the Psalm book** - many from David but also from a half dozen others.
* And then all **the prophets** - short ones like Jonah to long ones like Ezekiel - all with a different message, given at a specific place and time.
* Think about **Jonah** - being sent, of all places, to the heart of pagan Assyria in Nineveh! There’s a reason he didn’t want to go!
* Then came **John the Baptist and Jesus Himself**. What inspired the New Testament was the arrival of the Son of God - concluding with His death, resurrection and ascension, followed a few weeks later by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That’s a lot for the apostles to write about.

The Bible is from trustworthy people. Ultimately we can trust those people because we trust the God who spoke to them. One more reason to trust the Bible:

1. The Bible is will **Change** your life

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

This list of what the Bible is useful for is meant to communicate that **it is profitable for EVERYTHING**. The point is not that the Bible is only really good for correcting sins and misunderstandings but it’s really not that good for establishing positive truths. No - the Bible is the best resource for teaching the truth about God. The Bible is the best tool for correcting error, for reproving sinners who stray and it’s the best tool for the general training and discipleship of all believers in all stages of life, in every culture and time - ever on earth.

Is that broad enough for you? And if that list isn’t comprehensive enough, listen to the next verse.

1. The Bible is will **Change** your life

“That the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:17

This is the doctrine of the **SUFFICIENCY of Scripture**. God’s Word is SUFFICIENT for all of our needs. God has not left anything out that we might need. He has made Himself fully known in the pages of Scripture. GOD is all we need for life and godliness and eternity. And God’s Word is all we need in order to know and walk with God. This verse proves the point - the godly person will find in Scripture everything he or she needs to be fully prepared, complete, ready and able to do every good work.

And this makes sense. **God breathed out the Bible** through human authors. As we read and study, meditate on and apply Scripture, ***God breathes His life into us***. He breathes HIMSELF into us. And that is all we need to serve Him - to do every good work.

Brother, sister - ***do you LOVE the Bible?*** Do you trust in the Bible? Do you connect with God through the Bible?

**This book is our lifeline**. It is our oxygen supply. It is our banqueting table. Scripture is our connection point to God.

As we construct a Christian worldview, this is the wonderfully good news: **God exists and we know He exists because He has spoken in the Bible**. God and His Word - this is the firm foundation that undergirds our entire understanding of the world, ourselves, salvation and eternity. Everything rests on this - that God is, and God has spoken. And this is the most secure foundation - we can trust completely in the God of the Bible.

Next week we will dive into **Genesis 1** and study the origins of all things - that God is the Creator, and everything He made was good. Then we will look at Genesis 1-2 and God’s design for this world. He made this good world with specific instructions and plans - including biological gender identity, roles for men and women and marriage.

Let’s close today with some reflections on George Whitefield, that anointed gospel preacher from the first great awakening. He was with John and Charles Wesley at Oxford and helped form that first holiness club that made commitments to daily prayer, Bible study and personal holiness.

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/preeminence-scripture-george-whitefields-life/>

“I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees… . This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh light and power from above.” George Whitefield

The Bible became his soul’s delight - like a fire on the altar of his soul, fueling his love for Christ.

***How did God prepare this special man of God*** to bring revival to England and America? Through the Bible. Young Whitefield didn’t just read the Bible, he feasted on the Bible. He prayed through passages, one line at a time. He had little time to read anything else, but chose to focus his studies on Scripture alone. And as the fires of his worship burned ever brighter, that passion for Jesus came out in his preaching and captured the hearts and minds of thousands upon thousands on both sides of the Atlantic.

<https://reasonabletheology.org/how-to-read-the-bible-like-george-whitefield/>

***What are your habits right now with the Bible?*** Is God’s Word your daily feast? Is it the first thought of your day and the last thought at night? Do you pause at different times in the day to reflect on a Bible verse or pray it to the Lord?

The Bible will change your life if you read it, study it, pray it - LOVE it. Let God speak to you through His Word. The B-I-B-L-E, yes that’s the book for me, I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E.

Listen to this final exhortation from Whitefield:

“Search, therefore, the Scriptures, my dear brethren. Taste and see how good the Word of God is, and then you will never leave that heavenly manna, that angel’s food, to feed on dry husks, that light bread, those trifling, sinful compositions in which men of false taste delight themselves.

“No, you will then disdain such poor entertainment, and blush that yourselves once were fond of it. The Word of God will then be sweeter to you than honey, and the honey-comb, and dearer than gold and silver.

“Your souls by reading it will be filled, as it were, with marrow and fatness, and your hearts insensibly molded into the spirit of its blessed Author. In short, you will be guided by God’s wisdom here, and conducted by the light of his divine Word into glory hereafter.” George Whitefield

Let’s pray.