

Growing in Our Shared Faith



Words of Life

John 5:39-40; Luke 24:26-27, 44-49

The What:
**All Scripture is a testimony to
Christ, who is Himself the focus
of divine revelation.**

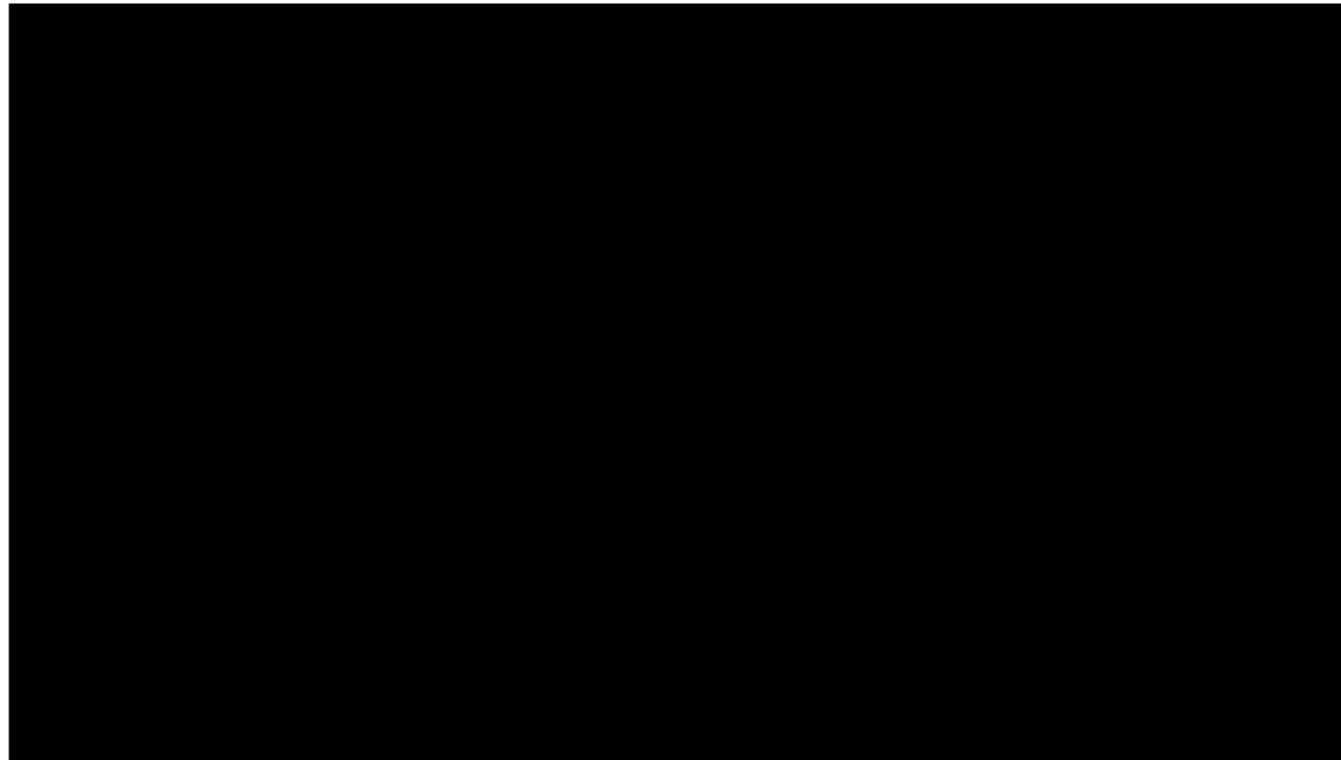
How (does it connect to Scripture) Intro:

Have you ever lifted a fork to your mouth, expecting all kinds of flavor, only to taste nothing? I was told a story this past week from a church member of a loved one who tested positive for Covid-19. The loved one called to share bad news; he could not taste the food he got from Chick-fil-a.

According to my general physician, those who lose their taste and smell from the virus tend to get it back within 3 weeks. But have you lost a more important taste? Have you lost your craving for the words of life? Have you set aside living water for the sake of sugary colas or juice boxes?

If you have reached a point where the idea of taking in Scripture is optional or boring, compare your perspective to born again believers who have not had the benefit of having their own copy of God's Word. Here is a video of Chinese believers getting copies of God's Word for the first time:

[Insert video here]



If God's Word has become like stale bread to you, perhaps you have had the wrong focus as you take it in. Perhaps you have not read it as relationship, of God's relating to you with grace by means of Jesus.

In John 5, Jesus spoke to people who thought they knew Scripture, supposing that life was in it. Jesus told them God's Word does contain life within it, but they had misread and misunderstood it so that they used to keep people from coming to life. They thought the form of obedience was the answer without the substance of relationship. They had thrown out the food of life for the sake of the bag that it came in. They were trying to keep the law without the Spirit of God and the Messiah.

John 5:39-40

**39 You search the Scriptures
because you think that in them you
have eternal life; and it is they that
bear witness about me, 40 yet you
refuse to come to me that you may
have life.**

Jesus is saying that** Scripture is not first about how to live but a book about how to have life!**

Scripture is not first about how to live but a book about how to have life!

It is as Sally Lloyd-Jones puts at the beginning of the Jesus Story Book Bible:

(holding a copy of it—Read the intro)

++If the Bible's story is about this Jesus and is about life, first what is the Bible?++

Our English translations of the Bible contain 66 books, 39 in the OT and 27 in the NT. All those in the OT were embraced by Jesus as being God's Word. He did not include other historical books after Malachi, the last book of our English translations, or after 2 Chronicles, the last book of some Hebrew compilations. When speaking about the martyrs within the OT, Jesus started with Abel as the first and Zechariah as the last, whose death is recorded near the end of 2 Chronicles.

As I mentioned before, our statement of Faith, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is like Confession of the Faith Lite. If it were one of the three billy goats gruff, it would be on the smaller side. A bigger brother to our statement of faith is the 1689 Baptist Confession, also known as the Second London Baptist Confession. This bigger brother in terms of confessions is really helpful in clearly stating what writings we consider Scripture and which we do not and how we should respond to each. An updated English version reads:

Therefore, the Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church.³ To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God's former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased.⁴

2. The Holy Scriptures, or the Word of God written, consist of all the books of the Old and New Testaments. These are:

THE OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

THE NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

All of these are given by the inspiration of God to be the standard of faith and life.⁵

⁵2 Timothy 3:16.

3. The books commonly called the Apocrypha were not given by divine inspiration and so are not part of the canon or standard of the Scriptures. Therefore, they have no authority for the church of God and are not to be recognized or used in any way different from other human writings.⁶

⁶Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2.

In other words, it was not the job of the church to determine what is divine Scripture but to recognize what is divine Scripture and upon recognizing it, having it as our foundation of objectively knowing God. And as Scripture is ultimately a testimony to our need for salvation, to Christ and the gospel, and to the mission of God, as written and recorded by prophets and apostles divinely inspired, we dare not add anything to it, take anything from it, or treat any other writing with the same place of prominence in our lives.

But say that we have the right books in our Bible, does that mean that we will take in the life it intends to give us?

Jesus reprimanded his disciples about missing the main point of Scripture. He tells us that we can still miss the main point of Scripture if we are not looking for Him.

**26 Was it not necessary that the
Christ should suffer these
things and enter into his glory?”**

**27 And beginning with Moses
and all the Prophets, he
interpreted to them in all the
Scriptures the things
concerning himself.**

**44 Then he said to them, “These
are my words that I spoke to
you while I was still with you,
that everything**

**written about me in the Law of
Moses and the Prophets and
the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45
Then he opened their minds to
understand the Scriptures,**

46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be

**proclaimed in his name to all
nations, beginning from
Jerusalem. 48 You are
witnesses of these things.**

**49 And behold, I am sending the
promise of my Father upon you.
But stay in the city until you are
clothed with power from on
high.”**

**Eternal life is found in Christ
Jesus, the focus of Scripture.
He has accomplished salvation
according to God's mission.**

The story of Scripture has many threads and themes running throughout it, throughout individual books or connected between them. It has many individual stories that seem to end shortly after beginning but an overarching story containing all of them. By means of covenants and their progression, themes, types, intensifying degeneration into sin that is mirrored by an intensifying desire for a rescuer, and even through poetic pondering and musings on beauty, God wove together a tapestry through the prophets and apostles to point the world to a Savior, a bloody cross, and an empty tomb.

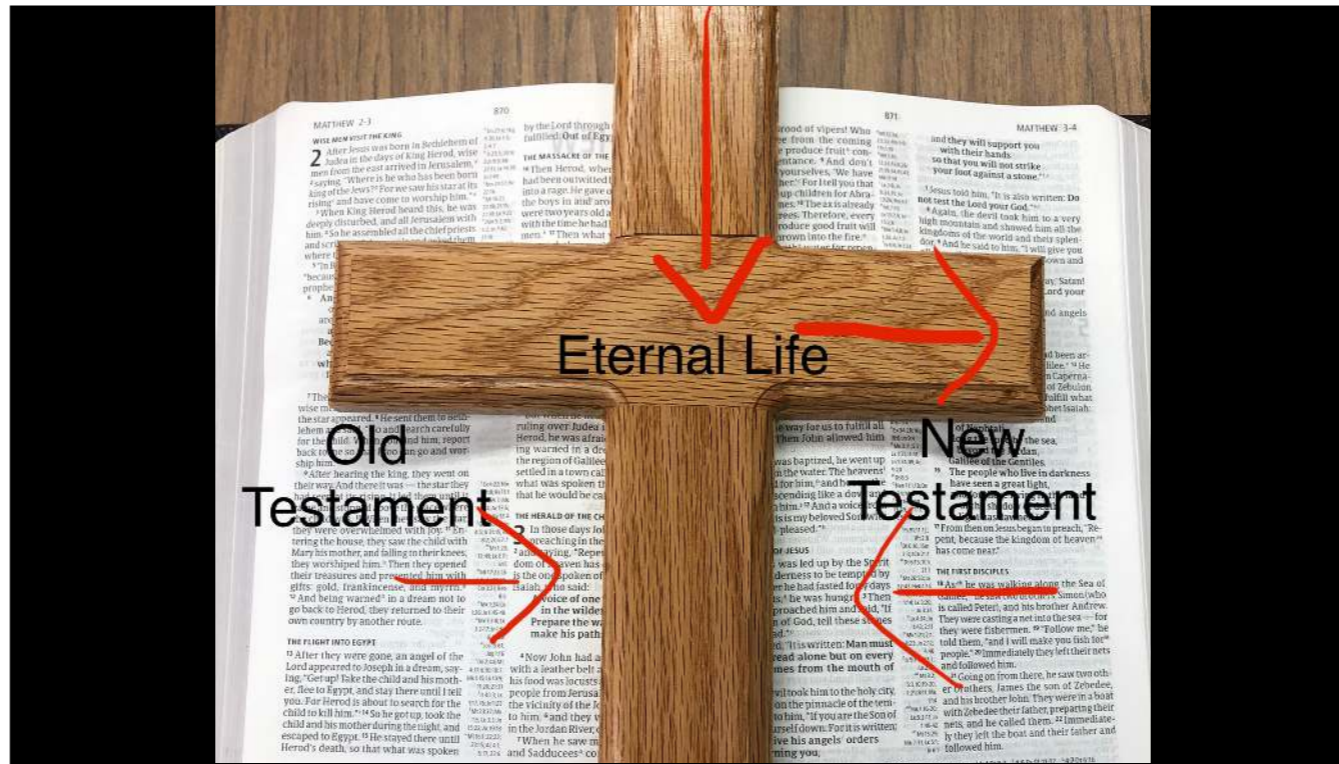
Here is an image that may help:

(Return to previous slide) ** Scripture is not first about how to live but a book about how to have life!**

++Eternal life is found in Christ Jesus, the focus of Scripture. He has accomplished salvation according to God's mission.++

[expose parts of the Luke passage]

There a couple of things I want you to notice today regarding what Jesus says in this passage.



**Scripture has a united focus on
the good news of Christ's death
and resurrection and the
proclamation of the gospel to all
nations.**

There are a couple of things I want you to notice today regarding what Jesus says in this passage.

First, Jesus appeals to the Law of Moses, to all the prophets, and to the Psalms, which could refer just to the book of Psalms to an entire section of the OT known as wisdom literature.

Jesus is saying that every book, every grouping of books, every section of OT books, and the entire OT all together ultimately prepare us for the gospel.

Jesus did not just summarize for the disciples walking with him. He walked them through many passages, starting in Genesis and working his way through the various books and genres of the OT to show them over and over again that there is this funneling effect in the OT. Jesus acknowledged to the people of Israel in John 5 that the Scripture of the OT contains the promise of life, for it is God's Word and the testimony to the Word made flesh.

Jesus didn't change the wording of the books to communicate his point. He did not change the meaning of the human authors. He honored their intended meaning according to their understanding, but he showed how the fulfillment of their statements was beyond what the old covenant could bear. God has used the OT authors to make clear to us that we are sinful and in need of a substitute to die in our place in order to make atonement for sin and reconcile us to God.

When you read the OT, you are supposed to "look for" and "long for." You are to take in the Scripture and then look for how it points you forward to the promised hope of Jesus and the gospel without destroying the intended meaning of the text. You don't take a sharpie and J-E-S-U-S all over the pages of your Bible. You are supposed to read it like it is full of literature.

Why do people need to read anymore? Seriously, why? Current generations are showing you that they are able to communicate by means of spoken words and pictures.

Or You can get audiobooks to read to you.

You have the power to investigate, explore, and enjoy literature for yourself. This Bible that we proclaim as God's Word is still literature. It may take time to learn how to read or understand literary styles, but it is worth it. What if you met someone you believed could be the love of your life, but they spoke a different language. Would you go on using an interpreter for the rest of your days together, or would you value this relationship so dearly that you learned to speak and hear according to the language of your loved one?

If you do not read because you do not enjoy reading, can you reconsider the issue as a matter of love? as a matter of relationship? Take in reading so that you can take in God's Word.

Only God can rightly inform you of how you are designed and made for worship and only God can speak life into you. And if you do not get this help from God, then you will not be rightly oriented to this world as He has made and as His Word depicts it. That would mean you have spiritual and worldview vertigo, not knowing whether you can be confident which way is really up. But there is one book, or compilation of books, that does tell these matters to you and does so by means of a grand story throughout the ages.

Read your OT to look for this answer. Read your OT to long for this answer. Read the NT to delight in this answer already fulfilled. If you have already come to know Christ, I'm still speaking to you. By taking in God's Word, you walk with God as he gives you the right questions. As you do, you enjoy relationship with the very one who ultimately wrote it all, who wrote your story, and who rescues you as part of the grand story of life.

Still considering Luke 24, Jesus says "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Jesus says, "It is written." That is usually jargon for saying, "It reads in the Bible," but this is not a passage that Jesus is quoting. Rather, He exposed the whole OT according to this single message.

In order to arrive at this conclusion, Jesus would have had to show them many passages.

I'm not going to go through them this morning. We're not accustomed to the practice of staying here all day in order to study the Word of God for the sake of taking in its nourishment deeply. But if you are willing to meet with me and another disciple on Thursday morning of this week, we can set aside time to begin going through a good bit of those passages that prepare our hearts for this message.

For now, see that God is saying that this is the most important message throughout the entire history of the universe. If God is telling us that, then you should want to take in this message, be transformed by it, and pass it along.

All of the OT propels us forward to expect the Messiah to suffer, die, raise again to new life and for the proclamation of this good news to go to all nations through those who have believed it. All of the NT is a testimony of the gospel accomplished, proclaimed, and applied.

Why it matters?

Because we recognize Scripture as God's Word, whatever we believe is its focus will shape our priorities.

***Why does it matter if we believe that the prominent theme of all of Scripture is that Jesus has accomplished salvation and the good news of Christ is to be shared with all nations?

Why it matters?

As we recognize Scripture as God's Word, whatever we believe is its focus will shape our priorities.

This comes back to our original statement and passage. If you take in the words of this book according to a believing focus on the gospel, then you prepare your heart to love and obey God according to His will ... instead of living according to the world's rebellion. John writes that the things of this world are passing away, but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

If you try to read Scripture without Christ and the mission of God as your starting point, then you may end up in a few different extremes. A) You may walk away thinking none of it matters, even though it sounds like a really hopeful version of life. B) You may be tempted to make Scripture's focus about you. C) You may think that it is a book of rules for you to follow or people you are to try to live like. Or D) you may read it as a license to do whatever you like, as if God has no expectation for your life.

But if you do read it according to a believing focus on Christ, the gospel, and the mission God has for us, then God will use it to transform you more and more into the image of Christ. The Spirit who inspired every stroke, every letter, and every word has agenda for your life. That agenda is to conform you more and more to the likeness of Jesus. You can either get on board by taking in God's Word with interest in the gospel; it prepares you for the gospel; it shows how this good news was fulfilled; it tells you what is the gospel; and it teaches you how this good news is applied to your life.

This is what you need most, and the gospel is the message that it is proclaiming if you will hear it.