

Every week when I come in here, I'm usually trying to deconstruct a certain world view and reconstruct the biblical one. But I'm going to do it a little different this week. I'm actually going to construct what's right and erode and attack what I believe to be erroneous. If you missed last week, all we did last week was start into our new series on the idea of authority, how authority works itself out and even when it's time to rebel against authority. So we said last week that you and I breathe the air of the Enlightenment. That's not necessarily a bad thing, because there were some very good things that came out of the French idea of enlightenment where our country is just steeped in those ideas. So the idea of individual freedoms, the idea of intrinsic rights, the idea of the autonomous self, those are all Enlightenment ideas that we breathe. From our movies to our music to our politicians to our businessmen, we operate within the framework of, "I can do whatever I want to do." Now most people wouldn't say it like that. There are some jerks who would say it like that, but most people quietly do what they want to do and behave as though the rules simply don't apply to them. And you can watch people complain about speeding tickets and see it as clear as day. "I can't believe he stopped me." "Well, what were you doing?" "I was going only 47mph." "Well, what was the speed limit?" "40mph." "Well, you were speeding." "Not really. Besides, it's not fair." "Why isn't it fair?" "It shouldn't be that slow on that street." "Says who?" And on and on you could go. Now why I say there are good things that came out of the Enlightenment is because when it come to man on man, we get things like rights and intrinsic freedoms. In fact, the biblical idea here is the Imago Dei or the "image of God" in every man, which gives every man and woman intrinsic worth because they were made in the image of their Creator. So the Enlightenment ideas of self, individualism and all of those work, insomuch as they communicate that our God is a creative, brilliant, unreal, glorious God. And we celebrate that in our individualism. We are not alike, we are different, we dress different ways, we act different ways, some of us are fight people, some of us are flight people and some of us are slap people and run people. We have been uniquely designed, uniquely place by God. That is a celebration of the creativity of God, which is why once you begin to say, "This is beautiful and this is not," you have begun an assault on the creativity of God in regards to His creation. You're saying that what God has made like this is unlovely.

So we talked about the good things of the Enlightenment, but we also talked about the logical conclusion of man being the center of his own universe is outright rebellion against any authority that tries to shape that man. And that's when we walked through all those examples of how this plays itself out. In the end, we talked about the reality that man was not designed by God to be the center of his own universe and when he becomes the center of his own universe, he rebels against everything. And this is what we've seen throughout the history of mankind, as well as in our culture in particular when, since post WWII, you have seen a growing disrespect for any and all authority, any and all rule, any and all law. Now I also said last week that I'm not trying to take us back some glory day. I don't think there ever was one. Legislative morality isn't a win. In fact, it can make things darker, because people have a tendency to be far more judgmental when morality is legislated than when grace is understood. And so, I'm not getting into a culture war here; I'm just simply stating some facts.

To sum up what we said last week, we said that you have rights in regards to our government, and you have rights in regards to one another. When it comes to you and God, the ideas of the Enlightenment do not work. And I walked you through some difficult passages. Daniel 4, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"" Nobody likes that verse. You have never seen that on a bumper sticker, not because it's just long but because nobody celebrates God's sovereignty like that. Nobody celebrates our tininess and how giant

He is. People who I know celebrate their own smallness and God's infinite power are those who have bled and wept and felt their guts come out all over the ground. Those are men and women who say, "He is God, and I've got nothing else." So since God is the Creator of all things, there is nothing that is that He did not create, He and He alone is sovereign over all of that creation. So there is nothing He doesn't rightfully stand over and say, "That's Mine." And then in the end, He can do whatever He wants, which is why we went to Psalm 115:3, "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." Now, how does this God roll out that authority? God discloses Himself to us and how we should live in the 66 books of the Bible. This is book that is primarily about God. It is about the nature and character of God, and in view of that nature and character of God, it's about how we should then live. That's what this book is about.

So let's look at 2 Timothy 3. I'm going to pick it up in verse 16. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." So how do we know about God? The Bible. How do we know how we should respond to that God? The Bible. How should we know what behavior should look like once we're in Him? This says that the Bible teaches, reproofs and corrects the man of God. The pagan who is outside of our faith, they don't see this as authoritative. They don't see this as somehow bearing weight on their life, which is why some people, in their attempt to convince people that Jesus is real, will stray away from the Bible and will quote people who didn't believe the Bible. This is that whole "seeker sensitive" movement that I find somewhat silly. If they're seekers, it would make sense that they're seeking something. So then why should we tone down this God thing so we don't offend them? You would think we would say all the more. Anyway, we believe at the Village Church that this is the sufficient, inerrant words of God, which means there are no errors in here and all we need for life and faith is found in this book. Now let me make clear from the beginning that I do not love the Bible; I love the God of the Bible. And the Bible was given to me by that God to know Him and love Him all the more. Because if you love your Bible but you don't love God, you become a hard-hearted moron who does more damage to the kingdom than you ever bring life to the kingdom. So it's sufficient and it's inerrant, but it is not God.

So how do we know that? Let me run through just a couple of reasons. Three thousand times in the Bible, you will find the phrase "The Lord says. . ." Which means the writers of the Scriptures believed that they are not penning their words but they're penning the words of God. They believed this. Three thousand times, "The Lord says. . ." is in the Bible. You've got peasants, you've got kings, you've got shepherds, on and on we could go with who wrote the Scriptures. You have this unbelievably diverse background and yet you have unreal unity when it comes to the Scriptures themselves. On top of that being stated three thousand times, 46 times in the Bible with 33 of those taking place in the New Testament, you'll see the phrase, "It is written." Which means the New Testament writers are writing back and quoting the Old Testament and saying, "This is the inerrant word of God. . . these are the words of God." The other 13 times are in the Old Testament where a guy like Isaiah is quoting God in Deuteronomy in saying, "Thus says the Lord." So we have, "as it is written" and "the Lord says." The Bible testifies to itself that it is the word of God. So follow my logic here. The words of God are authoritative, and we saw that last week. God speaks and He creates. He makes promises and He fulfills them. There is not a promise that He has not fulfilled. When He tells Abram that He's going to do this, He does it. When He tells Isaiah He's going to do this, He does it. In fact, a real good way to look at your Bible is the Old Testament is promises made, and the New Testament is promises kept. That's just a great simple way to view your Bible. So you can get into the Old Testament, see all these shadows of the person and work of Jesus Christ, you can hear all these promises that God makes to His chosen people and then fulfills in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And to this day, He continues to make those promises known to you and me. We see this in Jesus cursing the fig tree and it withers, His rebuking the storm and it stops and on and on we could go. The words of God are authoritative, which means since He's the sovereign Creator God, what He says goes.

That then rolls us to the common objections. Some of you are probably going, "Are you being legitimate here, Chandler? You believe in a seven day creation? You believe God actually parted the Red Sea? You're serious? Matt, I've

always liked the Village because you seem like a thinker, and right now I want to lump you in with Qur'an boy. I want to lump you in with that idiot in Florida who thinks he will serve God faithfully by burning Qur'ans." Okay, let's do the two major objections when it comes to seeing the Scriptures as authoritative, because if the words of God are authoritative and if they can command us what to do and if the Bible is God's word, then the Bible then becomes authoritative on your life and mine in regards to who God is and what He expects of us in regards to obedience to Him. So here are your two big arguments. The first one is miracles. People look at what they see in the Bible and go, "It's impossible. No way." I think that not the big one these days. I'll tell you how I arrived at it. For me, when I started digging around into Christianity, I'm looking at Jesus and the person and work of Jesus Christ. So for me, it started with the resurrection, and once I believed the resurrection, then it wasn't hard to go back and go, "If He can raise somebody from the dead and reign and rule over everything, then why couldn't He do this. . .why couldn't He do that?" So for me, it started in the resurrection.

So let's do this, because I know some of you might even doubt the resurrection. Let's just take the resurrection of Jesus Christ and let's bring it into a Western, democratic, good ol' US of A courtroom. Let's start with circumstantial evidence on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' mother and brothers worshiped Him as God. His brother James was the pastor, the lead elder at the church in Jerusalem and was martyred. They took him up on the Temple Mount and said, "Recant!" And he wouldn't. So they threw him off the Temple Mount, he falls on the ground and busts both of his legs open. They ask him to recant again, he refuses and then prays to Jesus that Jesus might forgive them and enlighten them and open their hearts and minds. History tells us that they take a club and bash his head open. How do you get your brother to worship you as God? I don't feel like I'm a family expert, but I don't know how you get your brother to think you're God. I think I've done well with my family, I think my family respects me, I think they even like me, but Jesus' brother is willing to be killed while praying to Jesus after He was crucified. How in the world does that happen?

The day of worship shifts from Saturday to Sunday. How many of you grew up in and around church? In your interactions with church people, has there been anything in those interactions that has shown a heart that loves fast, drastic change? No. Even here at the Village, we're 8 years old and when we change something, people will freak out. Can you imagine doing something one way for two thousand years and then all of a sudden the day shifts? Why do you think they rolled it to Sunday? Was it that the Roman roads had opened up some shopping centers and they were like, "Why don't we do this? Let's shop on Saturday, let's watch the lions eat people on Saturday and then on Sunday that frees us up for worship. So let's just swap the days."

And we could go on and on with the circumstantial evidence, but here's what we know. Circumstantial evidence doesn't win in a court of law. In fact, you'll lose a trial if all you have is circumstantial evidence. What you need is eye-witness testimony. And it just so happens that we have quite a few. Acts 26:26 is Paul sharing the gospel with king Agrippa, and he says this, "For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner." So in 2010, we as preachers will say, "Have faith." That's not Paul's argument. Paul's argument is not, "Have faith." Paul's argument is, "You know these things. You've seen these things. This did not happen in some far off corner." For us, it's a far off corner, but Paul is going, "You know, you've heard and you've seen."

You have this unbelievable spread of Christianity through the empire. In Luke 1:1-4, you're going to see it again. "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." So he had been taught in the gospel and he's got some doubts. The whole gospel of Luke is written to a Gentile, a skeptic, and Luke is going,

"This is coming from eye-witnesses. This is not coming from some guess. This is not politically motivated. They are eye-witnesses."

I'll give you a couple more. "And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry [Jesus'] cross." So it seems that whoever is reading Mark knows Alexander and Rufus, and Mark is going, "Alexander and Rufus' daddy carried the cross. They were there for these things." Let me give you one more that I think wins the case. 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. . . ." So he keeps pointing back to the Old Testament. This is Paul saying, "Christ died like the Scriptures said, and Christ was raised like the Scriptures said He would." Let's keep reading ". . . and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep." Paul's argument is not blind faith. He's saying that there were five hundred people that Christ ministered to and taught after He was raised from the dead. And then he doesn't stop there. He's going, "Many of them are still alive." His appeal is to eye-witnesses who saw the resurrected Jesus Christ.

So let's look at this just through our system. Let's forget how dumb 1<sup>st</sup> century humanity was. Let's consider are much more enlightened and brilliant we are than these men and women. In a court of law, with a mound of circumstantial evidence and hundreds and hundreds of eye-witnesses, did Jesus Christ raise from the dead? There would be no deliberation necessary. He absolutely did. Now, that's why every year around Easter, you're going to have to watch something on The Discovery Channel that gives you what must have happened, because that can't happen. So I believe the theories are sillier than an actual resurrection. The biggest one, the one that has gained the most ground is that Jesus didn't actually die. His pulse was so low that they thought He was dead, and so they put Him in a tomb. And then apparently Jesus was like Wolverine from the X-Men, because three days later, despite the fact that they peeled the skin off His back, drove a spear through His ribcage, piercing the sac around His heart, through one of His lungs, after stringing Him up onto nails for seven hours, Jesus pops out of the grave, moves the stone and jogs to Emmaus seven miles away, where He then appears to the disciples, only to go back to Jerusalem and appear to the twelve upstairs. So here's the question I've asked for years when it comes to this argument. I broke my toe once, and trying to walk looked like my pelvis had turned into liquid. I want to know how a man had the skin beat off His back, who was beaten so severely that men and women couldn't look at Him, somehow three days later, wasn't just alive again, but was fit enough to teach hundreds and hundreds of people how He fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures according to the eye-witness accounts of His resurrection. So pay attention this Spring. Jesus is going to be on the front cover of Time, He'll be on the cover of US News & World Report, Jesus is going to make the cover of all these magazines. Why? Because we've got to do something with the fact that historically something occurred here. But it can't be the resurrection. Because if the resurrection is true, then it's not a far stretch to believe that everything else was true.

But that's not the primary argument. The primary argument against the Scriptures these days revolves around one of two ideas, primarily the second one. The first idea is that there is too much in here, that there are books that don't belong in here. In fact, there are a lot of people who think that we shouldn't use the Old Testament at all, that the Old Testament should be thrown out. "God is very cranky in the Old Testament, and He does not do our case very well in the modern world. So let's throw out God killing a guy in Numbers 15 for picking up sticks on the Sabbath, and let's throw away God using Israel as the tip of His spear to destroy wicked nations. Let's throw all of that out, because then Jesus becomes more palatable. We love Tinker Bell Jesus. We love Jesus who just heals everybody's diseases, He's never angry (except that He is over and over again in the Bible). Once again, this comes back to an absolute ignorance over what the Scriptures actually teach concerning Jesus. Jesus was a ferocious man, both in love and in His absolute frustration at man's rebellion. He wept over Jerusalem because He wanted to save and He wanted to deliver, and yet they refused. The Scriptures sell us on two separate instances that He pulls outside of Jerusalem, looks down and

weeps and laments because they stoned and killed their prophets. And He knew what was soon coming for Him. So there are those who go, "You know, Job's just not going to get it done. We've got to get Job out of there. All his kids die, all his camels and all his donkeys get leprosy all because the devil wanted to and God let him? That's not going to sell. If we're selling Jesus here, we're going to have to give Him a makeover." In fact, there was a huge book just a couple of years ago that talked about giving Jesus a face lift, talked about making Jesus more palatable. The problem with changing the Jesus of the Bible is once you've done it, you no longer have Jesus. Now you've got some deformed, weird, figure of your imagination.

But that's not the big argument. Dan Brown brought us a whole new argument and that's that there should be books in here that aren't in here. "So what about the Gospel of Thomas? What about the Gospel of Mary Magdalene?" These are actually letters. If a Mormon ever shows up in your house, what they're going to say, "Surely there were other letters written." The answer is, "Yes, there were. But they're not in the closed canon of Scripture." So the argument is made that, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Emperor of Rome Constantine gathers together church leaders and, motivated by politics and power, they pick the books they want, exclude the books they don't want, seal it up and then you have the rise of the church with all its influence, wealth and power. The only problem with that is actually history.

Let me tell you how the New Testament was formed. Already in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Scriptures are being compiled and being seen as authoritative. So the apostles and the disciples of the apostles are writing Scriptures. In fact, there is no book you have in the New Testament that was not written by an apostle of Jesus Christ, someone who walked with and was taught by Jesus Christ, or a direct disciple of one of those apostles. So in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it's being put together and gathered by apostles, their disciples and early church fathers. The idea that the canon, the Scriptures were put together in the 4<sup>th</sup> century is completely show to kingdom come by Irenaeus, who in 160 A.D. writes that there are four gospels only: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. That's one 160 A.D.; that's not the 4<sup>th</sup> century. On top of that, he lays down the Old Testament and the books of the New Testament in his writings to his congregation and to other congregations around France that these are the inerrant words of God. That's not 4<sup>th</sup> century, and it's not politically motivational because Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon, was killed along with 177 of his congregation. This is not motivated by control and money, not when people are being killed for it. This is motivated by a desire for truth to be secured in the face of Gnosticism.

Now I don't know what you know about the Gnostics and Gnosticism, but the Gospel of Thomas is a Gnostic writing, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene is a Gnostic writing. Gnosticism is like Mormonism meets Scientology. I'll just read you a little bit about it. The Gnostics believed that they and they alone had a bead on the teaching of Jesus Christ and everyone else had the teaching and meaning of Jesus Christ wrong. Now, here's their belief. They believe that there is a god/goddess that is unknowable. It is unknowable by human detection, by our senses, by our knowledge. There is a god, and that god is unknowable. But this god created finite mini-gods and one of those mini-gods named Sophia, a virgin, gives birth to a deformed, wicked god named Jehovah. And Jehovah is the creator of this world only. He is a jealous, angry, wicked god that has gotten man in the state he is in. Let me read you just a little bit more from their own language. Jehovah thinks that he is supreme. His pride and his incompetence have resulted in the sorry state of the world as we know it. In the blind and ignorant condition of most of mankind, a person can attain to salvation only by being made aware of the inner life, the inner spirit that is inside of them. So Gnosticism says that you are saved by some sort of esoteric information inside of you, and it doesn't need to change in any way how you need to live your life, because the spirit is good and matter is bad, because the physical was created by Jehovah and therefore is wicked. So if you were enlightened (and you'd find them hard pressed to ever define that because it's secret knowledge that only a few get), then you can live however you want, sleep with whomever you want, do whatever you want, because that's a physical issue, not a spiritual issue. They separate out the spirit and the body, and everyone knows, even the secular scientists know that that's a ridiculous notion. If you get melancholy, down in your soul, that has physical applications, doesn't it? Absolutely. If you feel guilty, real genuine guilt and shame, that has a physical effect, doesn't it? David says

in the Psalms, "When I kept quiet about my sins, my body wasted away." But this is what the Gnostics do, they separate out these two ideas. They say, "Here's the spiritual and here's the physical, and the spirit does not affect the physical." In fact, they would teach that Jesus didn't really have a body, He had a phantom body. He would eat food, but it was phantom food. He bleed, but apparently it was phantom blood. All of that was phantom, because Jesus, being this great guide into light that He was, was leading us away from Jehovah, not into Jehovah. And so He can't have a physical body, because physical bodies are wicked and we need to be set free from these physical bodies. So they believe that Jesus didn't have a body, He had a phantom body. And then His resurrection occurred before His crucifixion. I have tried to get to the bottom of what's being taught there, but I ran out of time. I think it's a result of getting yourself trapped in a cage when you go, "Jesus didn't have a physical body." That's what they teach. I could go on and on here, but it's not really my point.

So let's read 2 Peter 3 and let's get back to why the New Testament and why the Bible as a whole is the authoritative Word of God. Let's pick it up in verse 15. "And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, . . ." So what we read earlier in 2 Timothy 3 that all Scripture was given to us by God for teaching, for correction, for reproof and for training in righteousness, that Paul is who Peter is referencing here 2 Peter. He says, ". . . just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, . . ." I have always just enjoyed that the Bible says Romans is hard to understand. Peter says, "Paul writes to you. The dude is smart." "There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." So Peter, an apostle who walked and was trained by Jesus Christ says, "There are those who are distorting the word of God." This is an assault on the Gnostics. "And they are assaulting and twisting the other Scriptures that Paul has written." The Old Testament speaks to the validity of the New Testament as the inerrant, authoritative word of God. So by the time we get to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, before we get to Constantine as emperor of Rome where the Scriptures are closed and canonized, what you see happening is the filters put in place are dying out, and so there can't be anything added to our Scriptures.

Let me give you the four filters. Filter number one is apostolicity. Apostolicity simply means nothing belongs in the New Testament that was not written by someone who walked with Jesus Christ or someone who was mentored and disciplined by someone who walked with Jesus Christ. So by the 4<sup>th</sup> century, that first filter is gone. So nothing else is going to be able to come into the New Testament. Filter number two is nothing gets in that is not in harmony with the Old Testament. Filter number three is nothing gets in that is not universal but simply cultural. So Paul has this epic fight with the Gnostics and the Judaizers. The Judaizers would teach that in order to become a Christian, you first had to become a Jew. So you had to be circumcised, which doesn't go over well when you're a grown man in another culture. You had to follow Jewish dietary laws. There was this massive step within 1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity that says, "Do you want to be a Christian? You first have to be a Jew." So Paul would just ferociously fight that. Because it's cultural and not universal. It's not going to work in China, Africa and South America. So in order for it to get into the New Testament, which is primarily a missionary handbook, it works in all cultures everywhere. The filter was put in place that it has to be universal and not cultural. It has to work in China, it has to work in South America, it has to work on the North Pole if anybody lives there, it has to work in Canada and it has to work all over the world. The fourth filter is nothing gets in that doesn't point to the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Those are the four filters.

Now, let's chat about why this being the inerrant and authoritative Word of God is such good news. It's good news because it says some really beautiful things about God's pursuit of us and God making a way for us to stand rightly and holy before Him despite our reality of not being holy and blameless before Him. I know there is a whole slew of things that talk about our wickedness and our depravity. Once again, that's not popular language despite the fact that it's true. So I know you're the most awesome man you know, but unfortunately in God's eyes, even on your best day, the book of

Romans calls you filthy rags. So as much as people hate that about how God sees us, that's actually the foundation of our hope. So if you try to get rid of the sinfulness of man, you no longer need a Savior. If you no longer need a Savior, you are uppermost in your own affection, you are your own savior and the whole thing unravels because your eyes are on you. You were not designed or created to live that way, which is why there is a distinct pattern of loneliness and frustration present in most of our lives. That's why we're always doing more and more and trying to get more and more. It's because we're trying to get created things to satisfy us when we were designed for a Creator. It doesn't matter what it is, you're always going to want a bigger house, you're always going to want a nicer car. No matter how nice, no matter how amazing, whatever it is you have, it's going to lose its magic and you're going to be wanting more. That has always been true. It's the whole point of the book of Ecclesiastes. But the Bible says that in our wickedness and depravity, God has loved us, called us to Himself and made a way for us to have right standing.

The whole point of the Bible is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the greater Adam. So man has his beginning in Adam, and Adam fails. Adam part 2 is Jesus Christ who is tempted in the desert and does not give in. He's tempted in the garden and does not give in. He is the better Adam, He is the better Noah, He is the better Abraham calling a people to God. In the Old Testament, it was Israel. That moves into all the nations through the church of Jesus Christ. He is the greater David conquering Goliath. He is the greater priest, the greater sacrifice. He is the greater prophet. If you'll read the book of Hebrews, Hebrews is a simple breakdown of how Jesus is better than the Law, He is better than the angels, He is better than Abraham, He is better than Moses as He leads His people out of slavery and into the Promised Land. And on and on we could go. If Jesus is real and He is resurrected and if this Bible is telling the truth, then there is salvation available for all of us, regardless of our background.

In fact, God tends to relish in saving what appears to be the unsavable. Find me a guy in the Bible who is not an idiot outside of Jesus. You can do it, but there is only a couple of them and they're not easy finds. Peter is your number one case study, but let's just run down the list. Abraham once feared for his life and told a king that his wife Sarah was his sister so they wouldn't be killed. So the king took Sarah into his harem. This is the father of our faith, Abraham. Now, the king is about to go in and sleep with Sarah when an angel of the Lord shows up and says, "That ain't happening. In fact, I'm going to kill you." The king is like, "Whoa! Why? I didn't know." So the angel is like, "That is Abraham's wife, Sarah." Apparently Sarah was a hottie. She was very beautiful. It doesn't say "hottie" in the Hebrew, but it does say she was a very attractive woman. Listen, I'm a married man and I've been married for ten years. I just think that Abraham hears about that later. Even fifteen years later, it's, "Hey, remember that time you tried to pawn me off to the king because you were scared and you were less than a man? I'm just saying. God's forgiven you. We're putting our hope in a future Christ, so you're cool. But I'm just saying do you remember when you did that? So I'm not doing that. You can do it." I just have to believe that came up again. Didn't Moses murder a man with his hands? And did not Moses argue with God for a full chapter about how he could not do what God had asked him to do? Didn't David, a man after God's own heart, commit adultery with one of his generals wives only to then put that general at the front of his line and have him killed? Should I keep going? You would be hard pressed to find a guy in the Bible that is not a mess. God relishes the salvation of those who seem to be beyond salvation.

So the good news of the truth of this Bible is that God is wooing you unto Himself under the power of the cross of Jesus Christ, away from your effort and into life in Christ. You simply have to submit yourself. And then all the commands, the commands that can feel like chains, the commands that you may not want to submit to, all of that evaporates when you know Christ, because you begin to trust Him to lead you into life no matter how difficult the command is. And when you begin to know the God of the Bible and not the god you've invented in your brain, when it hurts, you know He's there. I'm not saying you don't hate the moment, I'm not saying you don't grieve and weep and maybe even gnash your teeth and tear your cloths. Job did. He tore his clothes, he threw dirt on his head, ashes on his head and said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name

of the LORD.” Do you see that his view of who God is protects him when he loses seven children and all his wealth in a moment? Job’s confidence was not in what he accomplished as a father or what he accomplished as a businessman. His confidence was in the Creator God of the universe being sovereign over all.

And that’s why it’s so important for you to know what this book says about our God. It’s why biblical literacy has to come up, not just at the Village but everywhere. Because we get very confused when we watch The Discovery Channel and all of a sudden they begin to say things and you go, “Huh! I didn’t know there was a Gospel of Thomas. Jesus slept with Mary Magdalene? When did that happen? Oh, they ran off to Egypt and got married and had kids? Matt never talks about that.” You’re right, I don’t. I don’t talk about that, not only because it’s not in the Bible, but because it’s historically inaccurate. It’s also why, at the Village Church, we’re always going to preach this book.

Just as another little test on the Bible’s sufficiency and authority, over the last 200 years, every time a main-line denomination has said, “We’re not reaching people with this book, so let’s soften what this books says. Let’s change it and tweak it to soften the message of Jesus,” they have just rang the death bell and it’s not long before that denomination goes from a slight decline into an absolute free fall straight into nonexistence. The Word of God is sufficient to save, which means I don’t need to be cute, I just need to preach it and God will draw, God will harden and that’s God’s business. And that’s why, as long as you come to this church, you’re always going to hear me preach the Bible, even the verses you don’t want to hear and even the verses that make culture think we’re closed-minded bigots. Unfortunately, some of us are, but even those closed-minded bigots don’t understand the Bible they confess to love.

So my hope is that you would see God as lovely, that you would understand Him more fully and that you would begin to love the Scriptures not because you feel guilty because you’re supposed to read them. The last thing I want to do tonight is a drive-by guilting. But rather my hope is that you would have a desire to know the God who saved you, redeemed you and calls you unto Himself and that you might grow confident that when God says, “Sex works like this. . .money works like this. . .life works like this,” you wouldn’t go, “Oh, I had better do that because God is really big and can blow me up or give me this disease or might not bless this endeavor.” My hope is that you would go, “I want to know Him and this is where I get to know Him,” and that that would drive you to the Scriptures.

Let’s pray. “Father, I pray as we move into a time of response that maybe You would bring some verses in this Scripture of ours to our mind and to our heart. I pray that the reality of them would overwhelm us like they did when David looked up at the stars and said, ‘What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?’ Even the simple ones that we’ve known since Bible, I pray that we would think about those and think about how this Creator God of the universe is mindful of us, knows our thoughts, knows our lives, knows what we’ve done and where we’ve been, and yet He still loves and still provides a way of salvation. And I pray that our confidence in Your and in Your love for us would grow. May we be men and women who know You because we’ve pressed into Your self-disclosure of Yourself to us in the Scriptures. Help us. It’s for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen.”