



Reading The Compass

“True North” Series - #1

As a church we are about to begin an adventure. Much like a group of soldiers poised to head out on a field maneuver – into territory where they have never been – we are moving this fall into new territory.

On one of the Sundays in February, 2005 I plan to be standing right here and I will be asking you the question, “Are you willing to invest your time, your talent and your treasure so that we can do what God wants to do through us in the years to come?” I can’t ask you that question this morning because we aren’t totally sure what that is. We’re going to finding that out in the weeks and months to come.

To help us on this journey we have an “outfitter of sorts” (Doug Anderson of Nehemiah Ministries) who will be giving us some direction ... but most of the work will be ours to do. This journey will be challenging, exciting and even sometimes exhausting. It will not require that we have our watches synchronized but it will require that we all have our compasses set to true north.

To get our compasses set all on the same directional I’m going to be using our Constitution, and specifically our Statement of Faith. We’re going to make sure that before we head out we all are agreed on what we believe.

Several years ago I took a group of students white-water rafting in Colorado. As we were getting our gear and heading down to the river the group was talking, goofing around and basically not paying attention. The guide got their attention when he said, “What I’m going to say to you in the next few minutes is important. If you don’t know these things your life can be in danger. Just last week one of our rafters drowned on the same river you are about to go on.” Instantly he had their attention!

If you can’t make it each Sunday we’ll be taping the messages and making the tapes and notes available for you to pick up the next Sunday.
Let’s get started! - Prayer!!

What Do We Believe?

Article III. Statement of Faith

1. We believe in the absolute authority and accuracy of the 66 books of the Bible; its full verbal inspiration in the

original manuscripts, and its all-sufficiency as the Christian’s rule of faith and practice.

Let’s define some terms:

“Absolute authority” – there is no authority (person, organization or document) that supercedes for us as a church the truth of what the Bible teaches.

“Absolute accuracy” – the information contained in the Bible is true and does not mislead... it is not a roadmap with errors but is accurate in the material that it contains

“66 Books” – the books determined to meet the stringent guidelines of inspired Scripture are the 66 that are contained in our Bibles

“Verbal inspiration” – the Holy Spirit had control even over the words that were chosen by the writers. The author’s personality and writing style were not affected but guided by the Spirit nonetheless.

“All-sufficiency” – it does not address every question or every issue that we wonder about but it does provide the necessary principles so that we are never left without light

“Rule of faith” – it is the source book for all that we believe

“Rule of practice” – it is the source book for direction on how we live our lives.

That’s what we believe about the Bible... what it is and what it means to us as a church!

Why Do We Believe This?

The strongest reasons we have for believing what we do come from the Bible itself. First of all it claims to be the Word of God. It claims the things we just looked at from our Statement of Faith. Let’s see...

2 Timothy 3:16,17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Peter 1:20-21

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from

God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Another powerful reason is because of...

The Example of Jesus

He Knew It – Luke 2:46, 47

This is the story of the time Jesus, at the age of 12, stayed behind in Jerusalem and his parents frantically searched three days for him. When they found him he was in the Temple sitting with the elders listening and asking questions. “Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.” He knew the Scriptures.

He Used It –

After his baptism the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where he fasted for 40 days. Then the Devil came to tempt him. Each time he was presented with a temptation he countered with Scripture:

“If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Again, “It is written...” and again, “It is written...” (Matthew 4:4,7,10)

He Taught It –

“He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you; everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’” (Luke 24:44 – spoken to the disciples after his Resurrection)

How Do We Deal With

“Inconsistencies?”

There are places in the Bible where it seems that mistakes have been made or that things are said that don’t agree.

Matthew 20:29 and Luke 18:35 – Was it one or two blind beggars that were given their sight by Jesus as he came into Jericho?

We remember that the Bible is a book written by 40 different authors over a period of 1600 years. The Spirit of God has divinely protected the integrity of the story. Critics and scoffers have attempted to discredit this book yet no one has come up with conclusive proof

because it is not there. C.S. Lewis was one man who set out to prove that point and ended up placing his faith in not only the accuracy of the Scriptures but the Christ of the Scriptures!

“If we are unaware of the...principles which govern these words and forms, we shall interpret them differently than the way the author intended and misinterpretation cannot help but take place.” (Robert Stein, *Difficult Passages of the New Testament*, p.12)

This book from Mr. Stein is a compilation of 29 articles published over a period of 4 years just on difficult passages in the NT so it is an issue that you need to address if you are concerned about the truth of this book. Once you do, however, your faith is solidified and you move ahead with a sense of strong confidence.

Where Does This Affect Your Life?

Priorities – When Can I Read?

If this is true then we should be reading this book much more than we do – spending time with this rather than videos, TV, newspapers, novels. We take time for what we value! If you value keeping your house clean you will take the time to do it. If you don't, you won't even seem to find the time. The same can be said of fishing or golf, of going to the State Fair or being involved in politics. We make time for what's important to us! If we find the Bible boring then we need to learn how to read it so that it isn't boring. Dig deeper?

Direction – Where Should I Go?

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with my eye upon you. (Psalm 32:8)

That's a promise! When you're standing at a crossroads in your life and you need direction, don't depend on the Internet. Check out the Book! God uses His Book to speak to us at times when we are seeking direction. When you are lost on a trip what do you do? You bring out the map! This is our map! As we stand at a crossroads for us as a church...It is going to take a large amount of money to build!... how should we proceed? We will be looking in this book for direction!

Values – Who Do I Become?

How do you determine the kind of person you want to be? You want your kids to be? Do you check out what the

popular best sellers are saying? Not a bad idea but check it against the Bible. As a church – who are we? What does God want us to become? This is where our values are going to come from!

Courage – Will I Have Strength?

This book will give you the words that strengthen...

How can words give you strength? They can! We listen to the candidates for the upcoming election. The words they say and how they say them cause us to either doubt or gain strength! Watch the movie, “The Miracle” – Read the history of the WWII and the speeches of Winston Churchill – Remember the times in your life when just a spoken word gave new resolve to your flagging spirit! What you read here can give you the strength to go on when you are ready to give up!

This is an awesome book and we are the first in line to need to hear it! We know this already and yet so often we ignore it – forget it – devalue it.

The Reuters News Service in June '04 reported the story of a South African woman who became lax with a collection of very valuable coins that she had inherited from her mother. She allowed a gold Kreuger Sovereign minted in 1890 (and worth a small fortune) to become mixed in with her loose change. She used it to feed a parking meter.

Today, may we be reminded of the incredible value of this Book and renew our commitment to use it to its full potential in our lives!

This message was originally presented on Sunday, September 5, 2004 by Pastor Mark Coughlin at Immanuel Church of Forest Lake, Minnesota.

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