**The Word of God**

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Here are the six core values of Oakwood Church:

**Our Core Values - In all things we strive to be…**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Biblically Grounded  2. Prayerfully Dependent  3. Gospel Centered | 4. Relationally Connected  5. Empowering Everyone  6. Multiplying Disciplemakers |

We will spend the first half of this year walking through these six values. **Our MISSION** is to join God in His work of transforming people and communities through the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is ***WHY we exist*** - to see people changed, to see our city changed, to see the world changed by the gospel!

**Our PATHWAY** is the baseball diamond. That is ***WHAT we do*** - we seek to love God, grow in Christ, serve the church and reach the world. And we lead others along that path. Our first desire for you is that you GET IN THE GAME. Christianity is not a spectator sport. Get on the field, running the bases. And then become a coach - bringing others with you.

**Our VALUES** present ***HOW we accomplish our mission*** as we work our strategy. Values become culture - the way we do things. Our desire at Oakwood is that everything we do is firmly rooted in the Word of God. And we know that God’s work matters infinitely more than our work, so we begin with prayer and depend on God in prayer for everything. Our message is simply JESUS - His death, resurrection and soon return! The gospel is the good news by which you were saved and it is the power that helps you grow in the Christian life.

Relationships are key. We are a relational church - we value community. We encourage everyone to join a small group and regularly connect with others even beyond those group meetings. We believe in the priesthood of all believers - we want to empower all believers to use your gifts to build up the church and reach the world. And the only way we will reach our city and the world is as we make and MULTIPLY disciplemakers. The way of Jesus is not addition but multiplication.

We started with our first core value last week - Biblically Grounded. We saw last week:

**The only true Security for life and eternity:**

* Hear God’s Word
* Obey God’s Word

Jesus said the wise man not only hears His words but **DOES them**. The foolish man hears but does not obey. If you want a firm foundation for your life and security for all of eternity, you must HEAR the good news of Jesus and OBEY it. We need to be sure we hear the warning in that parable of the wise and foolish builder. We have so much access to knowledge there is a huge danger at churches like Oakwood to simply accumulate more truth we have no intention to obey. ***The more truth you know in God’s Word the more RESPONSIBLE you are to obey it.***

**The firm foundation for life is not KNOWLEDGE but OBEDIENCE.** A life grounded in God’s Word is a life built around APPLIED knowledge, not abstract information.

Today we will not just learn more ABOUT the Bible, our goal is to APPLY the truth we know. We’ll get a preview of ***one application*** right away in verse 14:

Persevere in the faith by **Feeding** on God’s Word

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.” 2 Timothy 3:14

Paul doesn’t remind Timothy of the nature and power of God’s Word for no reason. This is profoundly **RELEVANT TRUTH**. Because the Bible is God’s Word, we must FEED ON IT. Don’t just SNACK on the Bible - ***FEAST on Scripture as if your life depends on it*** - because it does.

As we have started the new year, have you committed to a ***Bible reading plan***? Do you have a regular time set aside with the Lord each day? Are you working to ***memorize a verse or more*** every week? Maybe a longer passage like 2 Timothy 3:14-17?

That’s one application - we’ll come back to that at the end. Now let’s look at what the Bible is and what the Bible does to motivate us to FEED on it and, you’ll see, to PROCLAIM the words of Scripture boldly!

**What the Bible is…**

* The **Inspired** revelation of God’s truth

“All Scripture is breathed out by God.” 2 Timothy 3:16

This is the key word and the main concept when it comes to understanding the Bible. It is **INSPIRED**. That word comes from this passage. Inspired means more than the English, which can just mean “a little touched,” or “surprisingly motivated.” Why did you get up this morning? I was inspired by a bird tweeting. Why did you write that poem? I was inspired by a little breeze at the beach one day.

The Greek combines our four words into one - “breathed out by God” is ***God-breathed***. And to make it even more interesting, the word for breath is the word for Spirit. So inspiration is the process by which the Holy Spirit led the Bible’s authors to write exactly what they wrote. It wasn’t dictation, it wasn’t possession, it was INSPIRATION. Here is how Peter says it - “No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but”

**What the Bible is…**

* The **Inspired** revelation of God’s truth

“Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21

***God breathed His Spirit into these men, who breathed out His words*** onto the parchment in front of them. Every book of the Bible has a different style, a different personality, a different context - all based on the life of the author. God used the personality and experiences of each writer, leading them along so they recorded the exact words He wanted them to say. And so the prophets of old could speak and write saying, “Thus saith the Lord.”

***From the first words of Moses to the final prophecies of John in Revelation, Scripture is the INSPIRED word of God*** - the complete revelation of God’s Truth. God breathed out these words so they carry His authority, His power with them. The Bible is INSPIRED. Second:

**What the Bible is…**

* The **Inerrant** presentation of God’s Will

“Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.” 2 Timothy 3:14

Because the Bible is God’s verbally inspired revelation, ***it cannot be wrong***. God cannot be wrong, God cannot lie, so Scripture - in its original form - could not have any errors. The Old Testament test for a **true prophet** as opposed to a false prophet was whether His words came true. If there was an error, that prophet was judged to be false and was executed. It was no small deal to claim to speak for God.

Paul exhorts his young protege to continue in what he had learned from the sacred writings as a child, to hold fast to what he believed. A few verses later Paul challenges Timothy to preach the Word because other teachers would come along who would teach falsehoods and lead people away into myths. Jesus warned his followers that false teachers would come in among them like wolves in sheep’s clothing - they had to watch out for these by holding fast to the truth - holding onto God’s Word. Here is how Jesus said it:

**What the Bible is…**

* The **Inerrant** presentation of God’s Will

“Until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law.” Matthew 5:18

Jesus said, “I did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.” ***The Law of God was holy, righteous and good. It was flawless.*** It had no errors or falsehoods in it - it was the revelation of God’s Word and God’s Will. So not a single dot above the I or cross of the T could pass away - every single mark was accurate - **nothing needed correction**.

Now, it’s important to understand **the copying process**. For 1,500 years from Moses to Jesus and then for the centuries to follow, SCRIBES meticulously wrote - by hand - copying and reproducing the words of Scripture. The amazing thing about the Bible is that after tens of thousands of copies were made the variation between one and another are so miniscule.

**ISAIAH 53**, for example - if you compare the Masoretic text, from 980 AD to the Great Isaiah scroll found in Qumran, among the Dead Sea Scrolls - more than 1,000 years apart - “Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53 only 17 letters are in question” (Geisler, Intro to the Bible) Each of those very minor differences are quite easily explained and none affects the meaning of a single verse.

The Bible is truly unique in its transmission and preservation. It is far more than just a human project, like the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. preserving historical artifacts from U.S. History. It is God’s personal faithfulness watching over His own Word to be sure it was not only written down accurately to begin with but to be sure the words were carefully preserved down through the centuries.

The inerrancy of Scripture gives us great confidence in the book we hold in our hands. After the cross of Jesus, the Bible is God’s greatest gift to us, proving His faithfulness, goodness, and truth.

The Bible is INSPIRED. It is INERRANT. Third,

**What the Bible is…**

* The **Sufficient** provision for God’s people

“For training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Breathed out by God, flawless and accurate, ***the Bible is God’s COMPLETE revelation for our COMPLETE sanctification***. This is the doctrine of the SUFFICIENCY of Scripture. God has not left anything out that we need. It’s all right here. After the book of revelation, the cannon of Scripture closed and there was nothing left to be added; nothing needing to be corrected.

The book of Revelation ends with a severe warning from Jesus about adding to or taking away from that book - which applies to all of Scripture. ***No one has the right to edit or add to God’s Holy Word.*** Those who have dared to do so are false prophets, false teachers - like Mohammed, who founded Islam or Joseph Smith who founded Mormonism. Both of those men claimed the Bible was corrupted and new revelation from God was needed to purify the true faith. Countless other cults have been founded with the same reasoning.

What has kept the true church pure and grounded through the centuries is ***a strong and unshakeable commitment to the authority and sufficiency of God’s Word***. Here is how strongly Paul says it in Galatians 1:

**What the Bible is…**

* The **Sufficient** provision for God’s people

“If we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:8

To be cursed is no small concern. It is ***to provoke the wrath and fury of God***. Anyone who tries to distort the good news of Jesus Christ - the gospel message - is accursed. They are a messenger of satan and a false prophet. That’s the negative side, the warning. Peter gives the positive side, the promise:

* The **Sufficient** provision for God’s people

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” 2 Peter 1:3

* The **Sufficient** provision for God’s people

“Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.” 2 Peter 1:4 (NIV)

***How has God given us EVERYTHING WE NEED?*** Through His very great and precious promises in the Bible! Through THEM we are enabled to participate in the divine nature! God, who breathed out the words of the Bible, breathes His Spirit into us as we read and study and obey the Bible!

That’s what the Bible IS - the inspired, inerrant, sufficient Word of God. Now let’s look at what the Bible does. **5 wonderful GIFTS of God’s Word**.

**What the Bible does…**

* **Reveals Truth**

“You, however, have followed my teaching…” 2 Timothy 3:10

***God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.*** It is the light of God that reveals the character and will of God. Apart from the Bible we would be lost in the darkness of this world and the sinfulness of our own hearts. But God has given us the light of truth in the words of the Bible!

The Bible shows us the truth about God and about everything else. Scripture obviously doesn’t address every single issue, but it shows us God’s will and gives principles to guide us in every situation.

* The Bible never mentions ***abortion***, but it does teach that life begins at conception.
* It never talks about the ***internet,*** but it warns consistently about the dangers of sexual immorality and calls us to God’s own holiness and to the covenant bonds of marriage.
* The Bible doesn’t know anything about ***New Year’s resolutions,*** but it teaches us to live godly, disciplined lives in this present evil age.
* Scripture doesn’t talk about ***smart phones***, but it warns us to guard our hearts, to protect our eyes and to fill our thoughts with what is holy, righteous and good.

The Bible is **our source of truth about God, ourselves, and this world**. It is the foundation of the Christian worldview - that God has spoken so we could know Him and know the truth. If you choose any other foundation your perspective will be distorted. The typical American way is to make YOURSELF the foundation. How do you know what is true and right and good? Whatever feels best to you. “Follow your heart.” Nonsense! Don’t trust your selfish, sinful heart! Trust in God’s holy Word! That is the light of truth! That is the complete revelation of God’s Word and God’s Will! The Bible reveals God’s truth. Second:

**What the Bible does…**

* **Rebukes Sin**

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof.” 2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible not only teaches us the truth, it rebukes us for our sin. ***The Holy Spirit’s job is to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment***. The first sign that God is working on a person is that they begin to feel conviction of sin from the Holy Spirit. The usual means the Holy Spirit uses for this is SCRIPTURE.

When **King David** sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan the prophet told him a parable about a rich man who had lots of sheep who stole a sheep from a poor man who only had that one sheep. The King was furious at such a flagrant evil. Then Nathan said to King David, ***“YOU are that man.”*** The Word of God through the prophet of God was a rebuke to David’s sin. Before that word David was justifying his behavior and he thought he had gotten away with it. He was, after all, the king.

You and I are not the King, but we often function like kings and queens, don’t we? We can be very **skillful at justifying our behavior.** But then the Holy Spirit whispers to you through Scripture.

* You’ve been ***annoyed with your wife***, frustrated that she keeps bringing up those three things on your Honey-Do list. You justify your football watching on Saturday, putting off her request. And then the Spirit brings to mind Ephesians 5: “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” You get up and get to work.
* You’ve been impatient and ***irritable with your husband***. Understandable, he’s a slacker. But then the Spirit reminds you of 1 Peter 3 - “Wives, submit to your husbands… win them over WITHOUT words when they see the purity and reverence of your lives… Clothe yourselves with the beauty of a GENTLE and QUIET spirit.”
* You’ve been ***halfhearted with your work*** lately - just going through the motions. But then the Lord brings to mind 1 Corinthians 10, “Whether you eat or drink or WHATEVER YOU DO, do it all for the glory of God.” We work for God, not for people.
* You’ve ***neglected your relationship with God***, putting other things in front of your daily time with the Lord. Jesus calls you, through the words of Scripture, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you REST!”

**The Bible rebukes our sin** - in whatever form it takes. The Holy Spirit expertly wields the Words of Scripture like the hammer and chisel of a sculptor, to chip away at our sin and draw us closer to the Lord. Scripture reveals truth, it rebukes sin, third:

**What the Bible does…**

* **Refutes** Error

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

There are an infinite number of dangers and pitfalls out there when it comes to the truth about God. Even **the smallest distortion of God’s character is idolatry** - trying to edit God to be more to our liking.

One pastor pictured it this way. Imagine you have **a photograph of your wife** in one hand and some scissors in the other. How would she feel if you trimmed off a little here and cut away a little there. Or if you went to photoshop and did some more serious editing? I betcha she would not be thrilled. Of course, ***any woman would be wildly offended*** that you were trying to remake her in an image more pleasing to you! But isn’t that what we do with GOD? We try to soften His edges; we try to make Him look more friendly and accepting. We try to downplay His righteous anger and emphasize His love and grace.

We listen to the devil, “Did God really say you had to spend time with him every day? Is that really reasonable? He is so demanding!”

“Did God really say you have to give 10%? Who can give that much! That’s ridiculous. 1% is plenty.”

“Did God really say anything about pornography? I don’t think that’s in the BIble - who does it really hurt? Anyway, he will forgive you, right?”

Those little compromises, those little “adjustments” are our attempt to give God a little makeover and remake him more in our own image. It is blasphemous idolatry - unimaginably disrespectful to the Creator God who gave His Son to save us from idolatry and gave His Word to show us the truth!

Any **attempt to change or edit God** and His will as recorded in Scripture is a terrible offense against God. ***The Bible corrects these attempts*** and consistently calls us back to the clear revelation of our Glorious Father, the Victorious Son and the every present Spirit!

And when it comes to the **“big errors” of other religions** and cults, the Bible is like a ***huge industrial FAN*** that blows away the smoke of falsehood. This is my picture of the Catholic Church - a beautiful cathedral lined with stained glass images from Scripture and images of Jesus. The truth of Scripture is all over in the Catholic Church, but the room is filled with the fog of additional false teachings - about Mary, about saints, about purgatory, about sacraments as means of salvation. The Bible can cut through all of that and reveal the clear, simple truth of God’s glory and the sacrificial love of Jesus on the cross. But you have to **use the Bible**, read, study, memorize, apply! The more fog you’ve got, the more Scripture you need to clear it away.

One woman I met at our church in Chicago said it was **Ephesians 2:8-9** that just sat in her mind. “It is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works - so that no one may boast.” NOT BY WORKS. It just played over and over in her heart and mind. And eventually she realized, “If Ephesians 2:8-9 is right, the Catholic teaching is wrong.” Scripture was the fan that cleared up the confusion.

The Bible reveals truth, it rebukes sin, it refutes error. Two more.

**What the Bible does…**

* Enables **Growth**

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable… for training in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16

**Whenever you get stuck**, whenever you are struggling with temptation and sin, whenever you get distracted or go through a dry season in your spiritual life - Notice what this passage teaches: “ALL SCRIPTURE.” The whole Bible is God’s good gift to us for our training in righteousness.

We wouldn’t know what righteousness is without the Bible. And we wouldn’t have any chance of growing in righteousness without the Bible.

Think of ***what TRAINING does***. Training takes you to the next level. You have a nice long, lazy summer, then when soccer or football season is coming up, you hit TRAINING CAMP. Professional athletes need a time of intense training to get their bodies ready for season. We do this on a smaller scale. Preparing for a test in school; working hard on a project at work; starting a new year with an effort to get in better shape. Training, training, training.

In any area that you want to improve, you have to work, practice, TRAIN. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote:

**What the Bible does…**

* Enables **Growth**

“While bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also the life to come.” 1 Timothy 4:8

***It’s worthwhile to take care of your physical body*** - to eat sensibly and exercise. But many people work themselves ragged with physical training while totally neglecting spiritual training. But training in righteousness is valuable both for this life and for all of eternity! Why take care of your body and neglect your soul? ***Better to neglect the physical body a little in order to devote yourself to training in righteousness.***

And the tool that best enables us to grow in righteousness is **Scripture**! Brother, sister, use this book! Deote yourself to reading, studying, memorizing, meditating on, analyzing, praying through God’s Word! For the sake of your present life; for the sake of your relationships; for the sake of your eternal soul - devote yourself to godliness by learning about God in Scripture, and by KNOWING GOD personally as He speaks to you through His Word.

One more gift of God’s Word.

**What the Bible does…**

* **Empowers** Ministry

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable… that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

***Do you want to be COMPLETE?*** Do you want to be mature? Do you want to grow up into the image of Christ? Then feed on Scripture! Feast on the Word of God. Through Scripture the Holy Spirit will confront your sin, correct your false ideas of God, clarify God’s supreme glory and unveil to you the person of the living Christ.

***Do you want to be EQUIPPED for every good work?*** Study this book! Don’t just READ the Bible, love it. Study it. Stick notes up all around your house. Memorize whole passages, whole chapters, whole books. Get the Word of God running through your mind so you can come back to it at any moment.

This will draw you closer to God and it will give you ***POWER to serve Him***. This is how God prepares us for ministry - He first calls us away to be with Him, to commune with Him, then He sends us out.

***Remember how Jesus started his public ministry?*** He didn’t rush to Jerusalem. He first went into the wilderness to get away from people to to commune with the Father. For 40 days he did not eat, but instead FEASTED on the Word of God. When the devil tempted him to turn stones into bread, remember what Jesus said?

* **The Bible Empowers Ministry**

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

If Jesus needed **40 days with the Father** before entering ministry, how much more time and feeding do we need to be fully equipped for every good work?

Oh brother, sister - ***God has given us EVERYTHING WE NEED*** in the pages of this book. He speaks to us in the full range of human experience. He weeps with us in Job and Lamentations. He sings with us in the Psalms. He quietly communes with us in Philippians. He shows us His power in the Gospels. He confronts our complacency in the Prophets. He unveils His righteousness in the Law.

The reason the Bible is so profitable and powerful is because it is our connection with GOD. What we need is **to HEAR from God** - and He speaks through His Word. What we need is **to KNOW God** - and we know Him through Scripture. What we need is **to trust God** - and He comforts us as we see His faithfulness in this book.

**What we need, ultimately, is GOD**. And we cannot know Him, love Him, trust Him or have a relationship with Him apart from His Word. Let’s not be those who dishonor God by trying to remake Him into an image more acceptable to us. Then we are not worshiping God, we are worshiping some idol of our own invention. We don’t need false ideas of God - we need the genuine article - we need God Himself. And we can only find Him - we can only connect with Him as we read and study and feed on the words of this book.

Here are two brief applications as we close.

Therefore:

* Persevere in the faith by **Feeding** on God’s Word

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.” 2 Timothy 3:14

In his two letters to Timothy, Paul was ***preparing this young leader*** for the challenges he was going to face. Like Paul, and Jesus before him, Timothy would face great opposition, great persecution, great temptations, and great frustration. How could that young man endure to the end? How could he finish well and win the crown of righteousness - the rewards Jesus promises to those who serve Him faithfully?

***CONTINUE in what you have learned***. Continue. Hold fast to what you know. Stand firm in the truth you have believed. That is the context for this section. Look at verse 12! “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus WILL BE persecuted.”

So persevere by feasting in God’s Word. Train yourself to become STRONG IN THE LORD - as you are a student of His Word.

And secondly,

Therefore:

* **Proclaim** the Word, for it is the only hope for the world!

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.” 2 Timothy 4:2

One of the best ways to treasure Christ and stand firm in what you believe is to SHARE IT. “Be active in sharing your faith so that you may KNOW all the good things we have in Christ.”

Following right after this theology of what the Bible is and what the Bible does, Paul charges Timothy very solemnly to preach the Word. As leaders we need to feed on Scripture, but we are also responsible to ***FEED the Word of God to our people***.

In 1950 three **Russian pastors** felt led to host a youth conference. It was illegal to get more than a couple of dozen Christians together, but these pastors felt it was vital to bring young people together for worship, fellowship and teaching. So, they set up a 3-4 day secret conference.

Very few believers in Russia in those days had Bibles due to all the persecution that had come with the communist takeover in 1917. For over 30 years believers had been isolated, Bibles confiscated, the church persecuted. So, one project they did was to **write out the four gospels FROM MEMORY**. Broken up in small groups, several hundred Russian students shared what they remembered from years and years of diligent memorization and sharing of God’s Word with others.

And that group of persecuted Russians produced every word of all four gospels - with only 17 mistakes.

***What was it that sustained these Christians through 33 years of persecution?*** Scripture. They didn’t just casually listen to a preacher once in a while, they feasted on Scripture and worked diligently to memorize whole passages. What a joy for them to share that experience and celebrate the Word of God that they had in their hearts!

Eventually that conference was reported and all three pastors were taken away, never to be heard from again. But they had chosen ahead of time to make that risk in order to encourage the next generation and strengthen them in the Word of God. What sustained them for 33 years would continue to feed them and fuel their ministry for another 33 years.

And the same is true for us!

***Persevere*** by FEASTING on God’s Word this year.

And let’s be increasingly bold to ***PROCLAIM the Word of God*** so that more and more people will come to rejoice in Jesus as we do!

Let’s pray.