



FIRST STONE  
MINISTRIES

# Article

## christian living

## The Bible

### *What We Believe and Why It Matters*

*Keith Adams*

### What We Believe

#### ***First Stone Ministries***

*We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God; and therefore the supreme authoritative revelation of Truth for all Christian faith and life. We believe that devotion and obedience to God's Word is essential in bringing about the healing process and freedom from the bondage of sexual brokenness.*

*We believe Jesus has come to set the captives free from all areas of bondage. We believe sexual and relational brokenness is not part of God's intent; and believe that through a personal relationship with Jesus, our hearts and lives can be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*From FSM Doctrinal Statement*

#### ***A Representation of Partnering Local Church Statements regarding The Bible***

- We believe that the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of his will for the salvation of mankind, and final authority for all Christian faith and life. (Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).*
- We believe that the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, living, eternally reliable Word of God. We believe that it is equal in all parts and without error in its*



*original manuscript, absolutely infallible, and our source of supreme revelation from God, superior to conscience and reason, though not contrary to reason; and therefore our infallible rule of faith and practice and necessary to our daily lives. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Hebrews 4:12)*

- We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired, and without error in the original transcripts. It was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (2 Timothy 3:16)*
- The Bible, our complete revelation from God to His people, has given us the purposes for which His Church exists in the world.*
- The Bible is our ultimate authority. It trumps our culture, our traditions and ourselves.*

## ***First Stone Ministries and Biblical Integrity***

First Stone Ministries wants to be very clear to individuals, families, churches and our community that a biblical perspective has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of truth in all FSM ministry efforts. It is essential that FSM continues to speak and operate with clarity and integrity regarding the biblical underpinnings of truth and hope from which we minister.

FSM's primary purpose is to lead the sexually and relationally broken into a liberating relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Discipleship and restoration in every area of life is stressed; however there is detailed emphasis on overcoming homosexuality, lesbianism, abuse, as well as addiction to pornography.

At the center of the FSM heartbeat in shaping and living out our purpose is the divine revelation of God as is expressed in the Holy Scriptures. We believe the Bible reveals the truth of God's heart and mind leading Christ-Followers to understand and encounter ultimate hope in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

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### ***The Issue***

Why is it necessary, after over 35 years of ministry, to make such a declarative statement regarding The Bible, its place and interpretation in the life of First Stone Ministries?

This document is intended to heighten awareness of defining and escalating issues that are clearly on the horizon. The *Doctrine of Scripture*, briefly defined as what one really believes to be true about The Bible is an issue that FSM encounters daily.

- Is the Bible, Holy Scripture the “Word of God”?
- Is it really true that Scripture is the *revelation* of God Himself?
- Is His revelation, expressed in the *content* of the Bible, trustworthy and relevant today? Can it really be *interpreted* and *applied* meaningfully today?

- Is Scripture Divinely Inspired, Authoritative, Infallible and Inerrant? What do these terms really mean?
- What are the influences that have and are currently impacting how these terms and their meanings have come to be used and understood?
- How can an ancient document be *interpreted* and *applied* accurately to bring us life-giving, life-transforming wisdom and hope?

How one thinks about these kinds of questions is foundational to one's Doctrine of Scripture.

1 Timothy 1:8 says: “*We know that the law is good when one uses it properly.*”

Jude 3 says: “*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*”

Therein lay glaring tensions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century Body of Christ. Is the law really “God's law”? Is the law really “good”? How does the Body of Christ “use the law properly”? How does The Body “contend for the faith” well?

How an individual, a church or ministry interacts with real-life issues is significantly impacted by their *core trust, interpretation and application* of the Word of God. Life's priorities and purposes are defined, developed and ultimately expressed in light of what voice of influence rises to the top of the heap. Is it the wisdom of humanity or is it the wisdom of God; the One the Bible reveals to be the Creator and Sustainer of Heaven and Earth? Firestorms are raging because of radically differing perspectives related to this central issue of the Bible as it relates to today's Christian life and purpose.

### ***How Did We Get Here***

These issues related to Scripture as it relates to life are not new. Some important roots of this particular controversy stretch back generations. Resulting questions have rippled with such a force they have carved undeniable marks on the spiritual landscape of Christian life. Early seeds of question were sown during the *Age of Reason* or the *Enlightenment*, elevating a principal focus of intellectual thought on the supremacy of *human autonomy* and *human reason*. Although these seeds began to bear their fruit in the Church almost immediately, the voracity of this movement exploded in the dawning of Theological Liberalism, coming to full fruition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the mid to late 18<sup>th</sup> century, new interpretive biblical principles known as *higher criticism* began to gain deeper influence **rejecting** the *authenticity* and *authority* of the Gospels, particularly the *miracles*, with strident denial of *the supernatural* and also many central *historic doctrines of the Christian faith*. These trends to “*demythologize*” the Bible continued to unfold and progressively gained deeper footholds.

These dramatic theological shifts resulted in approaching Scripture with a skepticism that had previously been unknown. This spawned a shaken trust in viewing Scripture as the *Inspired or God-Breathed Word of God*. Because of these inroads, uncertainties swirled concerning the *source, authority, trustworthiness, interpretation and application* of Scripture within orthodox Christian circles and continued to escalate.

How does the Christian Church really view Scripture and therefore, what place of *authority, credibility and practical application* does it really hold in the lives of Christians? These issues moved front and center.

Full-scale debates gained steam coming to critical juncture in the 1920’s and 1930’s. By that time, the theological institutions and theologians of Europe had been greatly influenced by these liberal theological movements and many had moved away from orthodox Christian *beliefs, interpretation and application*. In American and Canadian circles, these influences lagged several years behind the Europeans, but by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing and significant presence of liberalism within major denominations and theological institutions that had been previously clearly devoted and identified with orthodoxy. These institutions educated an entire generation of scholars and pastors. The result was a predictable movement among many professing evangelicals away from the traditional doctrines of *biblical authority, infallibility and inerrancy*.

Unreconciled tensions continued to reverberate with growing intensity. Core questions of Christian faith began to be asked from very different perspectives and answered in ways that dramatically altered the world of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Christendom.

## ***Where We Are Today***

With a decline of trust in The Bible as the authoritative spiritual voice, many religious leaders began to rethink long held, biblically based assumptions, deferring more to “enlightened” biblical interpretations, alternative spiritual and secular sources to redefine authoritative perspectives

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for Christianity. The Church began to take its moral and doctrinal cues from culture rather than the Church being the shaper and influencer of culture.

Today, the paradigm shift is in full bloom. The Church has become a splintered theological and spiritual presence with little or no ringing resonance of unity regarding historic foundational biblical and spiritual truth. Increasingly, more evangelicals are being confronted and influenced both by 1) the growing internal diversity within Christendom that is impacting and reshaping core Christian understanding as well as 2) the escalating external pressure of cultural voices as the church faces and ministers to the volcanic spectrum of contemporary issues.

It has become more and more difficult to distinguish the voice of the Church from the voice of culture. Secular perspective as well as a wide array of other “spiritual” influences often trumps biblical teaching as the superior expression of wisdom. Sadly, the Church has increasingly become the ***influenced rather than the influencer***.

- Between the 1950’s and 1960’s, radical shifts became dramatically apparent. Alternative spiritual views and secular thought had gained clear strongholds, influencing large segments of culture to reject traditional Christian teaching and turn to other influences for enlightenment and direction.
- The Church and its leadership have been affected. As a result of a declining presence of biblical *authority* and the erosion of historic *interpretive* cornerstones; the door has been opened to progressive shifts in *application* toward alternate spiritual and secular influences within many churches and ministries.
- *Avoiding* the cornerstone of objective biblical truth as the defining and central spiritual voice for Christian life has become increasingly common.
- *Minimizing* the life-giving and life-transforming spiritual power and presence of biblical truth as it relates to controversial spiritual and social issues, continues to infiltrate the evangelical point of view.
- *Revising* historic views of biblical *authority, credibility, interpretation and application*; especially as it relates to controversial spiritual and social issues, has become a prominent practice within a

number of churches, denominations and Christian leaders.

## ***The Issue and First Stone Ministries***

Perhaps one of the most highly charged social issues of our day is any discussion related to homosexuality. The issues of sexuality, certainly including homosexuality, have not been immune to the reverberating discussions related to The Doctrine of Scripture. As you might imagine, First Stone Ministries is deeply engaged in those discussions. As stated earlier, the reason FSM exists is to serve those in the Name and Power of Christ, who are searching for liberation and life beyond the bondage of sexual and relational brokenness.

Unapologetically, FSM clings desperately and faithfully to the Word of God and the ultimate hope in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to redeem and to transform. Our belief and our experience is that Jesus shows up. He draws us into intimacy with Him to restores our souls. He awakens us and empowers us to see all things from a new perspective; His perspective, the distinctive perspective which embraces both the need and reality of resurrection, including our sexuality.

### ***Biblical Integrity***

*“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”*

*2 Timothy 4:1-5*

*If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, then I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is tested.*

*Martin Luther*

## ***Why It Matters***

***No contemporary or historic issue sits in isolation from one’s Doctrine of Scripture.***

The Bible, Holy Scripture; speaks with soaring and historic Truth about and to:

### ***The Nature of God, of humanity and of life.***

If we *remove, avoid, minimize or revise* any of these elements, we have an incomplete, inadequate and fraudulent Gospel. The Body of Christ, expressed through the Church and its ministries, essentially has nothing to say if the cornerstone of its message of Redemption, Eternal Hope and Transforming Power is yanked from beneath its feet.

The Doctrine of Scripture matters. It is absolutely necessary today for Christian leaders to understand the myriad of “spiritual” perspectives present and how they have and how they are impacting the *use* and *interpretation* of the Word of God.

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“It is the triune God that sees with perfection and not me.”

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Therefore, the Body of Christ must continue to be engaged and alert in exploring this central issue of God’s Truth in a way that is faithful to Him and His purposes. Believers in Jesus Christ are called not only to understand His Truth, but also to understand the radical nature of its importance to the life and mission of His people and His Church.

C. S. Lewis brings illumination as only he could in helping us sharpen our perspectives and deepen our understanding.

**I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.<sup>1</sup>**

This Lewis’ thought compels us to ask life-shaping questions. Do I merely *see the sun* or do I *see by the sun*? There’s a big difference. Do I just look *at* Christianity or is it the lens *through* which I see everything else? Again, there’s a big difference. David Powlison, uses a phrase “The Gaze of God” as he interacts with Lewis’ quote. Do I dare join Powlison and ask God to teach me His gaze? Do I dare ask God to help me see *what* He sees, to see *as* He sees?

“This seeing, this gaze, means to wake us up from our fantasies, fictions, and nightmares to see things as they are in fact. God has the real take on things.”<sup>2</sup>

“To think Christianly is to think God’s thoughts after him. Christianity is both a way of seeing and a way of proceeding. Christ enters and engages the world He sees. His gaze brings with it ways of experiencing, patterns of appropriate reaction and a game plan for engaging what He sees. So we learn to pursue God’s pursuits after Him, to act God’s acts, feel God’s feelings, love God’s loves, hate God’s hates, desire God’s desires. When the Word became flesh, Jesus lived all God’s communicable attributes on the human level.”<sup>3</sup>

Theologian John Frame exhorts us to gain insight for today by reflecting on what the Bible itself actually teaches us about God’s revealed Word.

“It would be well for us to remind ourselves, in more general terms, of what the historic faith and the Bible itself teaches us about Scripture.”<sup>4</sup>

Scripture is **the covenant constitution of the people of God**. Please note below the biblical references.<sup>5</sup>

How powerful. God’s in charge. His ways are above our ways. It is the triune God that sees with perfection and not me. My life question is, can I live with that or do I continue to wrestle Him about what the real definition of wisdom and goodness is? Do I trust Him or do I try to manipulate Him and mold His created world into what I think life ought to be? Trusting God is hard and it’s scary, but it’s the only path to His greater hope for us.

Loraine Boettner also speaks very clearly to the authority and source of Scripture, the central relevance of God’s revelation of divine wisdom and how it defines and applies to the Christian and the totality of their lives.

“The answer that we give to the question, “What is Christianity?” depends largely on the view we take of Scripture. If we believe that the Bible is the very word of God and infallible, we will develop a conception of Christianity. If we believe that it is only a collection of human writings, perhaps considerably above average in its spiritual and moral teachings but nevertheless containing many errors, we will develop a radically different conception of Christianity. Hence we can hardly over-estimate the importance of a correct doctrine concerning the inspiration of Scripture.

That the question of inspiration is of vital importance for the Christian Church is easily seen. If she has a definitive and authoritative body of Scripture to which she can go, it is a comparatively easy task to formulate her doctrines. All she has to do is search out the teachings of Scripture and embody them in her creed. But if the Scriptures are not authoritative, if they are to be corrected and edited and some parts are to be openly rejected, the Church has a much more difficult task, and there can be no end of conflicting opinions concerning either the purpose of the Church or the system of doctrine which she is to set forth. It is small wonder that determined controversy rages around this question today when Christianity is in a life and death struggle with unbelief.<sup>6</sup>

Another pastor uses these words to exhort us:

*“God clearly calls us to contend for His Truth. As His people, we are to come in the authority of the exalted Jesus, but also in the example of the humble incarnated Jesus.*

*This means we must come into culture as Jesus did – filled with the Holy Spirit, in constant prayer to the Father, saturated with the Truth of Scripture, humble in our approach, loving in expressing His Truth and serving in our deeds.”<sup>7</sup>*

The stakes are high. We must realize the magnitude of God’s Truth. The people of God have been called to be “devoted to the apostle’s teachings”<sup>8</sup> and although the pressures to ‘accommodate’ culture are increasingly present, biblical devotion cannot be ignored. Neither can Christ-followers afford the seduction of safety and comfort and simply retreat into a sub-cultural cocoon. There is a higher calling and it is called “*discipleship*.”

We are being challenged to “court” His Holy Word, to cherish it, to plumb its depths so that we can meet Him in the life-changing intimacy of both Spirit and Truth. This journey requires revival of our souls and immersion in the promised power of the Holy Spirit. Radical dependence on such power is the exclusive sojourn of His people; coming to live from a place of awe, knowing His Heart and being equipped and empowered as impassioned ambassadors of Christ.

First Stone Ministries wants to stand in the torrential stream of living water; the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Our desire is to seek Him with all our heart, all our mind and all our strength so that we may know Him and with an intimate surety, point others to

Him as the Great Healer. It is He and He alone that defines and forgives sin. He alone awakens us to our desperate need of redemption and reveals Himself as the exclusive source of our transforming hope. He is our rescuer. He resurrects, He restores, He transforms and sets the captives free to live as glorious new creations reflecting the amazing wonder of new life in Him.

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, "Is Theology Poetry?" *They Asked for a Paper* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962) p. 165

<sup>2</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003) p. 10, 11

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12

<sup>4</sup> John Frame, *IIM Magazine Online*, "Is the Bible Inerrant?", Volume 4, Number 19, (May 13 to May 20, 2002) p. 1

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 24:12, 31:18, 32:15, 34:1; Deuteronomy 4:1-14, 5:32-6:25, 18:18-20, 31:26, 32; Psalm 119; Joshua 24:25; Matthew 5:17-19, 7:24-27; Mark 8:38; John 5:45, 6:68, 10:33-36, 12:47, 14:15, 21, 23, 26, 15:7, 10, 14, 26, 16:13, 17:6; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; James 4:5, 11; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, 4:1, 14:37; Galatians 1:1, 11, 16, 2:2; 1 John 2:3-5, 3:22, 5:2; 2 John 6; 1 Timothy 6:3; Revelation 12:17, 14:12

<sup>6</sup> Loraine Boettner, "The Inspiration of Scripture" [part 1], 1940, 7

<sup>7</sup> John Piper and Justin Taylor, eds., *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), p. 133

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:42

