

**Learning Together**  
**Being the Church | Selected Scriptures**  
**Southern Hills Baptist Church**  
**April 30, 2017**

**WELCOME**

Happy Sunday! We are going to be in a few passages tonight so I'll go ahead and ask you to turn over to Matthew 16:13. Once you get there, put a finger there and turn over to Matthew 28:18 as well.

**INTRODUCING "BEING THE CHURCH"**

Last week we kicked off a new series entitled, "Being the Church." As we learned last week, the church isn't a building, it isn't a service, it's a people, a people who gather together over a shared love of Jesus and His Gospel of Grace.

**Timeliness of the Series**

We really believe that this is an important time for us to revisit and reconsider all that it means to be the church as we are in the midst of undergoing a great deal of change as a church family. Where we meet is about to be different. We are meeting at a different time starting next week. Not only this, but recently our body has been suffering through trials more than normal. So in the midst of all of this we thought it would be good to take time and remember who it is that we are as a church, who it is that God has called us to be as a people.

- So what does it mean to be the church?
- What should be central to our identity as a church?
- Where should we focus our effort and energy as a church?
- What should be primary to who we are?

**Tonight's Focus: Learning Together**

There are many answers to these questions, but our focus tonight will be on learning. Being the Church means that we are a people who Learn Together.

**Topical Warning**

I'll warn you now, this is abnormal, but we are going to jump around a bit in the Bible. We generally like to pick one passage and work our way through it. Tonight we will be in a number of passages as we try to get a few different angles on this important call to Learn Together as the church.

**Roadmap**

With that in mind, here are 3 questions I want to answer tonight as we consider Learning Together as part of what it means to Be the Church...

- Where is the call for us to Learn God's Word Together?
- Why is it important to Learn God's Word? What value does it add? What is God doing through this?
- Why is it important to Learn God's Word Together? Why do we need one another in this process?

## **WHERE IS THE CALL FOR US TO LEARN GOD'S WORD TOGETHER?**

The church should never be defined by personal preferences or proclivities. We want Southern Hills to be defined by who God has called us to be. So before we spend time considering this matter of learning together let's make sure we see the mandate clearly in the Scriptures.

Let's start by looking at Matthew 16:13-18...

### **Matthew 16:13-18**

[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [17] And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

So Jesus is asking His followers who they believe Him to be. Peter proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Peter has proclaimed Jesus' deity and position as Savior. Peter answered well. Jesus is absolutely those things.

### **Building the Church on Truth**

Upon hearing this confession of faith in Himself from Peter, Jesus replies that **it is upon these truths that Peter has shared that He will build His church. Jesus' church will be founded upon the truth of the Gospel that is proclaimed by faithful men, like Peter.**

So note this, it is upon the truth of the Gospel, upon the truth of the person of Jesus that the church is to be built and established. **We are to be a people founded upon a set of truths, of doctrines.**

### **Rightly Worship = Rightly Know**

This inherently means that **to worship God rightly we must rightly know God.** How can we rightly know God? Through His Word of course. **Thus, we need to be a people of the Word,** studying it, meditating on it, feeding on it.

Jesus reaffirms this yet again in Matthew 28:16-20...

### **Matthew 28:16-20**

[16] Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

These are Jesus' final words to His followers before ascending up into the Heavens to dwell with God the Father. What does He tell them? He gives them marching orders, a mission. They are to go and make disciples, telling others of the truth of the Gospel. As people believe they are to baptize them. What do we have here with people who have heard the Gospel of Grace, believed, and followed Jesus in baptism? We have a church and what are the Disciples called to do with these

bodies they establish? They are to teach their congregations the words and teachings of Jesus. Jesus specifically said, “teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.”

### **The Other Side: Learn All Jesus Commanded**

So the command to the Disciples, those early church leaders, was to go and teach God’s Word. If we look at the command from the other perspective, from the perspective of those who are coming to faith, the command is to learn God’s Word.

### **Summary**

Both of these passages are critical passages. In the first, Jesus tells us what the church is to be built upon. It is to be built upon the truth of the Gospel. The second passage is Jesus giving final words, final direction to His closest followers to set them out on their mission of establishing the church and those marching orders included teaching God’s Word and thus learning God’s Word.

Thus, what does it mean to “Be the Church?” **We are to be a learning people. We are to spend time in God’s Word,**

- Learning who He is,
- Learning what He has commanded of us,
- Learning how He is working for us,
- Learning of His Gospel.

### **Transition**

Why? What is God up to with this? What is God’s purpose in calling us to be a people who Learn Together? That is the next question I want us to tackle.

### **WHY IS LEARNING GOD’S WORD IMPORTANT? – 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**

To answer this question we need to turn to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Go ahead and head in that direction. This should be a familiar passage for many of you, nevertheless I want your eyes on it as it is probably the most important passage of Scripture on the Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us the supernatural nature of the Scriptures along with the purpose for which God has delivered them to us. These two verses tell us a great deal about why it is important and joyous to Learn God’s Word.

Let me read these verses for us now...

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

[16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

There is so much here for us to consider.

### **1. God’s Word is Here to Show You God**

Take note that the we are told that the Scriptures were “**breathed out by God,**” meaning that **all of the Bible was divinely inspired.** The Scriptures find their origin in the divine, in God Himself.

Thus that all of **the Bible is a reflection of God**, it reveals His character, it shows us His values, it teaches us who God is.

### **The Most Important, Joy-Giving Book**

With this being true about the Bible, and with the church being a group of people who have placed their faith in God,

- The Bible has to immediately become the most **important** book in our lives.
- It has to become **authoritative** for life.
- It becomes a path to incredible **joy**.
- It has to become something we **hunger** and **thirst** for,

as it is revealing to us this God of grace who has gone to unthinkable lengths to rescue us.

### **Made For God**

Know this, you were made by God and you were made for God. You were made to know God.

#### **Romans 11:36**

[36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

### **Read the Bible = Find Your Purpose**

You were made by God, for God, therefore **your greatest and truest meaning and purpose can be found in Him alone. Where can you find God?** His Word, which was breathed out into the Scriptures.

### **More Than Duty, Delight!**

Therefore, Learning God's Word together ought **not be something we do out of mere duty, but it ought to be our delight, as God's Word gives us more of God**, which is who our souls hunger for.

### **Summary - Leads to God, Joy**

I asked the question, why is it important to learn God's Word? The first answer is that it leads us to ultimate, fulfilling joy as we encounter the God our souls were created by and for. Learning God's Word is a path to deep and abiding joy.

## **2. God's Word is for You**

The second reason why learning God's Word is important is because God's Word was written for you. The Scriptures were breathed-out by God, meaning they find their source in God, but the means by which God chose to send forth His Word has a deeply human element. Listen to Peter describe the act of God-Breathing out or inspiring His Word in 2 Peter 1...

#### **2 Peter 1:19-21**

[19] And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

### **Human Delivery**

God is the origin of the truth of the Scriptures, yet He chose to use humanity to deliver this message. The truth of God was communicated in a human language, it was communicated through vessels/authors who had real experiences in life that we could relate to, it was written in the context of history, it was communicated in written form that it might be preserved for all generations of people.

### **God Wants You to Engage Him**

The fact that God chose to deliver His Word in this way is proof that His Word was written, it was delivered, it was revealed **for you**. How wonderful is this? He has tailored His message for you, that you might engage with it and understand it. **The God of all creation, the God of Heaven and Earth, the King of Glory and Beauty has delivered unto you a message.**

### **How Could You Pass This Invitation?**

So how are we to respond to this? **Will you make time for God? Sounds like a silly question, but it is one we grapple with every week, isn't it? How foolish it is when we ignore the message divinely given to us by our Creator?** The One who made us felt it necessary to give to us a book, how could we not devote our lives to knowing it? The Bible is a gift from God, an important one at that, and learning this Book is central to being the church.

### **3. God's Word is here to Teach You**

As we continue in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read what the Bible is good for. It is good for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Here is an easy way to think about it...

The Bible is here to teach you...

- What is right
- What is NOT right
- How to get right
- How to stay right

### **Relativism**

We live in a **world that tells us that truth is relative**. We live in a world where we can't come to an agreement on basic moral issues. This is the source of some of the deepest divides that our country is experiencing right now. Clearly, on our own we are lost. We are creatures who are living without the definition we need. We are walking in the pitch black of night with no light.

#### **Isaiah 53:6a**

[6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;

Doesn't that sound like the world we live in? Everyone has turned to his own way, they have sought to define life on their own. They individualize truth and believe they can define truth for them, as if truth were not universal, but a personal choice.

### **Truth**

Thankfully, God has given us a message, a Word that was tailored for us. It is a message where He is revealing Himself to us that we may know Him, our Maker. It is also a message that was meant to teach us that which we don't know. He teaches us right from wrong. He teaches us how to get right when we have gone wrong. He teaches us how to stay right and avoid wrong, all in His Word.

## Summary – Lost Without It

So why is learning the Word of God important? **Because we are lost without it.** God is giving us what we need. God's Word gives us objective truth as defined by our Designer. Thus, we must be learners, right? Lest we too go astray on our own way as Isaiah spoke of.

## 4. God's Word is here to Grow/Change You

One final reason that learning God's Word is important from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is that God's Word is here to change you. **Simply learning the truth of God's Word is not the end goal that God has for us in the Scriptures. God, through the Scriptures, is at work to do more than merely create a bunch of Bible scholars.** He doesn't merely want us to know the Scriptures, but to live them and be changed by them.

## God's Ultimate Purpose in the Scriptures...

We see this in verse 17 when Paul writes that the Scriptures were given that we may be complete and equipped for every good work. **God's ultimate purpose in giving us the Scriptures was that we may know Him and be changed to be like Him for His glory.**

## Glorify God – Your Purpose

This is important. Glorifying God, showing His goodness, beauty, and worth to the world around us is the purpose for which we were created.

### Isaiah 43:7

[7] everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Our created design and purpose is to bring God glory and this purpose is to stretch to every corner of our lives.

### 1 Corinthians 10:31

[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

## Scripture – Primary Tool to Equip for our Purpose

And it is the Scriptures, which are one of the primary tools that God has given to equip us for this calling. It is when we learn the Scriptures and consider how we might apply them to our lives that we are equipped to be who God has called us to be.

**So learning the Scriptures is central to living out our purpose, to finding meaning and significance in our lives. You cannot be who you were made to be apart from learning and living God's Word.**

## Application

So the Scriptures, God's Word, clearly, undeniably, **is meant to play a central role in the life of the Believer**, right? God is using the Scriptures to reveal Himself, to connect with you personally, to teach you the most important truths you will ever need to know, and ultimately change/grow you that you might be who you were created to be.

## How Central is the Bible in Your Life?

**So, how central of a role does the Bible play in your life? You can't be who God created you to be apart from His Word. Do you live as if that were true?** Evaluate this question. Where does

the Bible fit into your life? Are you a student of God's Word? Better yet, do you go to God's Word to eagerly hear from your Heavenly Father? Or is the Bible something you think you can get your weekly dose of at church alone?

### **Intake of God's Word**

You need God's Word in your life on a daily basis. You can take God's Word in, in a number of ways.

- You should plan time to read God's Word for pleasure. Sit down and read it without getting bogged down in investigating every question that pops into your head. Try to read chunks of it at a time, like you would any other novel you might pick up.
- You should also plan time to study God's Word in detail. This is where you are ok without reading larger chunks and you stop to find answers to the questions you have as you read through a passage.
- Read God's Word for application. This should happen every time you read the Bible, you need to ask yourself, "How does this change the way I live?" or "How could I apply the truth I have learned today to my life?"
- Use commutes to listen to the preaching of God's Word, whether it be a sermon you missed here or another trusted teacher of God's Word.

Again, the **bottom line is that you need God's Word. You need it badly.** Live like it. Make it a priority that you may know God, that you may learn of what God wants for you, that you may be changed.

### **Transition**

So, the call to Learn God's Word is clear, we can see that God's Word plays a central role in our lives as Believers, but what is this talk of learning together?

### **WHY IS LEARNING THE GOD'S WORD TOGETHER IMPORTANT? – "ONE ANOTHER" PASSAGES**

I mean we live in 2017, why can't we just podcast sermons or lessons? With the internet at our fingertips we have access to the world's best preachers and teachers at the click of a mouse. We don't even need to leave our home to get all of this. I mean, isn't that the direction that everything is moving to? Amazon makes shopping in brick and mortar stores a thing of the past. Grocery stores allow you to place your order online so you don't have to walk the aisles and sit in the long lines. The internet is making so many things easier to do, which is amazing. It is also removing a lot of the need we had in the past to interact with people. Wouldn't the same be true when it comes to the idea of church and learning God's Word?

### **Online Church Suggestion**

Before I moved down here I had a friend at work who I was talking to about starting Southern Hills here in Round Rock. They asked if I had thought about starting an online church. They were thinking that I could put lessons or sermons up online and have people attend virtually. At my work we hold virtual meetings all the time, so they were thinking maybe that principle would apply to church. The truth is that there are already online churches out there.

### **God's Call Requires More**

While the Internet has brought incredible blessing to the joy of Bible study with the incredible access it has given us to good teaching, **the call for the church to learn God's Word is a call that**

**requires more of us than the Internet can give.** The call to learn God's Word is a call to go on this journey together.

### **Learn Together to Live God's Word**

The reason this is so is because **the call to Learn God's Word does not stop at mere knowledge**, the calling is higher, the calling is to live God's Word, apply it to your life. As great as it is to podcast my favorite preachers, and I do that regularly, **those recordings are not going to check in with me to see how I am doing, to hold me accountable, to encourage me to go further with my application of God's Word. I need someone who is an active part of my life for that.** This is where the church comes in, right? This is part of God's good and gracious design in calling believers into the church. You are not called to learn God's Word and to try to grow in isolation, you are blessed with a community around you, who is here to be involved in helping you grow and who relies on you to help them grow.

This kind of mentality and thought about the church permeates the New Testament. Listen to a few of the commands the church is given throughout the New Testament. All of these verses come from Paul's letters to various churches so the audience is the church.

### **1. Encourage One Another (1 Thess 5:11 and 4:18)**

#### **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

[11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:18**

[18] Therefore encourage one another with these words.

### **Help When Hit by a Curve**

The calling in these verses is to take the truth of the Scriptures and encourage one another. When life throws a curve ball your way you are going to be tempted to interpret or respond to that event or situation in a number of ways. It is often easy to give up or walk the path of least resistance. This is often not that direction that God's Word gives, but in moments of surprise or pain it can be hard to take time and think through things clearly, or we are often just dazed and weak, not feeling we have the strength to stand, so we often just react. We need other believers who will come alongside of us and encourage us with God's Word. Men and women who will hold us up with the hope and strength that can only come from God's Word.

### **Overwhelmed with Hebrew**

**Have you ever been overwhelmed by a responsibility, so much so, that you were ready just to give up and throw in the towel?** I remember when I studied Hebrew in seminary. Like any course it started off relatively easy. Learning the alphabet wasn't too hard, but the deeper we got into the class the harder things got. Eventually we were deep into grammar and frankly none of it was making sense. There were a million exceptions to the rule that existed that had to be memorized and after a while I started to question what I was doing in the class. Thankfully, I have a friend in class that felt the same way I did. At moments when I was low he pushed me, he encouraged me, he held me accountable. Momentum would change and he would be down and I would return the favor. We both made it to the finish line, completing two years of Hebrew and neither one of us would have made it if it were not for the other.

### **The Parallel in the Christian Life**

The Christian life is very similar. We are called to learn God's Word together in order that we may



live God's Word. We do this together so when life gets hard we can stand next to one another and support one another, lifting each other up so that we may continue to stand in the face of temptation and trial.

Listen to yet another command in the New Testament that points to our need for one another as we Learn God's Word...

## **2. Build Up One Another (Romans 14:19)**

### **Romans 14:19**

[19] So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

### **Taking Encouragement to the Next Level**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of 1 Thess 5:11 tells us exactly what Romans 14:19 tells us... we are to build one another up. **Building each other up takes encouragement to the next level. Maybe encouragement is not enough.** Possibly reminding someone of their mission, purpose, or reward is not enough. Someone might need extra time and attention spent doing work on particular problem.

### **More Help – Adding Missing Pieces**

I will go back to my example with Hebrew. When I was working hard to learn and live Hebrew sometimes the help I needed was not a reminder as to why I should keep pushing forward, sometimes I needed someone who would take time to strengthen my understanding. Often this came from a call I would make to a friend who was a year ahead of me in Hebrew or even extra time after class with my professor, Dr. Schrader. They would take the time to show and explain the grammatical principles I was missing.

### **Parallel in the Christian Life**

Often in our Christian walks we are missing important biblical principles in our lives that we need to have explained. We might understand what the Bible teaches on a certain issue, but not understand what it looks like or how it is lived out. Often someone else's perspective or explanation can make all the difference. It casts a new light on something we have been thinking through and we finally start to see the puzzle pieces come together. As we Learn Together we are put in a position to come alongside one another, building each other up. We will all need this kind of help from time to time and you will be in a position to offer this help at times. That is the beauty of Learning Together... we can be there for one another to help each other Live out the Word.

## **3. Admonish One Another (Romans 15:14 and 1 Thessalonians 5:14)**

### **Romans 15:14**

[14] I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:14**

[14] And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

## **Accountability and Togetherness**

The Greek word for instruct is *Noutheteo*. It means to warn or admonish. The idea in these verses is of loving confrontation. As we learn truth together we ought to hold one another accountable in a loving manner to that truth. This is a difficult task. It is difficult to have the courage to confront someone else and I would say it is equally hard to do it in a way that is loving. What makes this whole process easier is Learning Together. Within the church we have the opportunity to sit shoulder to shoulder with one another under the teaching of God's word with people that we know and love, people that we care for and invest in. **The "Together" aspect of our learning gives us the foundation to take our learning to a new level, to the level that the Bibles calls us to, where we lovingly point one another towards truth when we start to stray.**

### **The Necessity of Learning Together in "One Another" Commands**

**The commands that Paul gives churches about interacting with one another and growing in Christ necessitate learning God's Word together. If this isn't central to a church, how would we ever dream to live out these "one another" commands** of encouraging one another, building each other up, and admonishing one another. Some might argue it could be done, but it would be awkward, wooden, forced, and contentious, all things the church was never meant to be. The church is a family of believers that are to live in love and unity. Thus, we must be a people who Learn God's Word Together.

### **APPLICATION**

Let me close with a few ideas of application as we think about this calling to Be the Church by Learning God's Word together.

#### **1. Be Here**

The first thing you can do is be here. As we are studying God's Word on Sundays and we are talking about the application of God's Word on Wednesdays at Life Groups, do what you can to prioritize and be a part of what we are doing. I know it isn't possible for everyone with work, but if it is, make it a priority **because you need God's Word in your life and you need other believers who are going to encourage you with it**, build you up with it, and even hold you accountable with it.

#### **We Need You!**

Not only do you need God's Word, but know this, **we need you. I need someone to encourage me, to build me up, to hold me accountable with God's Word. When you are gone we are weaker.** I think this is often forgotten, but when you miss time with the body it isn't just you who is missing out, we all miss out. We are better together. We are stronger when we are learning together. Don't forget that. **Other are depending on you.**

#### **2. Engage Around God's Word Together**

Secondly, look for ways to get learn with others in our church family. Sitting under the same sermon on Sundays is good and important, but engage with others as well. Have you ever asked someone after service what they thought about the passage we just studied, or maybe asked what their favorite aspect is of the truth that we considered together? Engage people around God's Word. When you just sat under the same sermon as someone else you have a shared experience you can talk about around God's Word. Take your time of fellowship after service to a new level and I can almost promise you, you will walk away encouraged.

#### **3. Invest in One Another to Encourage**

Finally, part of Learning Together means that we encourage one another, build one another up, and even lovingly hold one another accountable. So of course I'm going to tell you to be a part of Life Groups because this is what Life Groups were designed around. What I'll also say though is that you

need to be very intentional with building relationships with one another. You can't encourage someone you don't know well enough to know they are in need. You can't build someone up if you don't know they are down. It is really hard to lovingly hold someone accountable that you don't know well. So build relationships with one another so you can be available to help others and so that others can help you when you are in need. When was the last time you invited someone from the church over to your house for coffee or went out and grabbed a meal with someone? This is the together part of Learning Together. Invest in one another so that we can all play an active role in each other's growth, just as God intended.

## **CONCLUSION**

I'll close with this... **We need God's Word in our lives desperately. We are lost without it. We also need one another desperately. We are too weak to go it alone. The gracious gift of the Bible and the merciful gift of the church are gifts that only get better when combined.** Southern Hills, let us people a people who Learn Together. Let us be a people who put God's Word as central in our lives, not only individually, but also corporately. Let's be the church by Learning God's Word Together.