

Dear friends and family,

I am writing from the NC Baptist State Convention this week. I am enjoying hearing the word of the Lord taught by fellow believers as I am able to sit, listen, and learn. It has been a time of refreshing and catching up with old friends. I'd like to take this week's devotion in a new direction and share some highlights of what I have been learning here.

B.H. Carroll wrote: *“A church with a little creed is a church with a little life. The more divine doctrines a church can agree on, the greater its power, and the wider its usefulness. The fewer its articles of faith, the fewer its bonds of union, and compactness.”*

The direct correlation is that the strength of a church is dependent on the strength of its doctrine. And what is the source of divine doctrine? Scripture! So a Biblical, scriptural church will be stronger, greater, and more useful. What an encouragement to stay true to Scripture!

Pastor's point of view

Do you personally understand the importance of Scripture and its full authority in your life?

Day 1 – God's word is Essential

Read Psalm 119:97-105

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm. Did you know that **each** verse in Psalm 119 refers back to God's word (Scripture) using a variety of synonyms for Scripture? In every verse of Psalm 119, one of these words is included: law, word, precepts, commands, statutes. If you get time this week, I challenge you to read through all of Psalm 119 and underline these words.

Although the author of this Psalm is anonymous, some suggest it is Ezra. Ezra was a priest, a scribe, and a leader of the Jews. He knew God's word, loved it, and obeyed it. Historically, it is believed that Ezra led the council of 120 men who canonized the Old Testament.

1. What is the author focusing on throughout this Psalm?
2. Why would there be such an emphasis on the word of God?
3. The author clearly values the word of the Lord above all else and understands its benefits, so much so that he refers to God's law/ word in every verse!
4. What are some of the benefits listed in these verses?
5. Do you have the same view of Scripture?

Day 2 - The Heavenly Authority

Read Psalm 119:105

This simple verse has probably been in your memory bank for a long time. There is even a song that goes along with it. Let's examine it a little further. This verse speaks volumes about the authority of Scripture.

Psalm 119:105

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.”

1. Study the word **Your**. To whom does the word belong?
God! The word comes from God himself. It has heavenly authorship!
2. Study the following term, **word**. It has human penmanship, but is still from God. Read **2 Peter 1:21**. What insight does this verse provide?
3. Take a moment and flip to **Psalm 119:11**. You have probably memorized this verse as well. To whom does the word belong? Who is the author of the word? What are we to do with it?
4. Compare Psalm 119:11 and Psalm 119:105. How are these two verses similar? What is the goal for a believer?
5. Take a moment and write down some of the benefits from memorizing and applying these two verses to your life.

Day 3 - Perpetual in its authority

Psalm 119:105

“Your word **is** a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.”

1. Study the tiny word: **is**.
2. This is perpetual present tense. It applies now and for the future, in a constant state of being. The use of this word assigns authority in every scriptural text. Read Matthew 5:18. What insight does this verse provide in context with Psalm 119:105?
3. Consider that in Hebrew, the word “**is**” has no presence in this verse.
In Hebrew, translated directly, the verse reads such as this:

“A lamp
to my feet
Your word
and a light

to my path.”

4. There is no verb in this verse in Hebrew. But what is the clear focus of the verse? What is being highlighted as the authority?
5. God’s Word is central to this verse and bookended with how it applies to our lives for the present and the future. Marinate on this thought in preparation for tomorrow.

Day 4 - Profitable in its application

Psalm 119:104

“I gain understanding from your precepts;
therefore I hate every wrong path.”

Psalm 119:105

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.”

Psalm 119:133

“Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me.”

1. Yesterday we briefly studied how God’s word serves as a lamp to guard your walk and a light to guide your way. Contrast verse 104 with 105. Notice how in verse 104 the author hates every **wrong** path. He then follows up in verse 105 with how and what will guide him on the **right** path.
2. How do we know what path is correct? How do we know what is true? (Remember Psalm 119:11)
3. Do you see a theme here? Our paths, our directions, our footsteps, our lives must be directed by something. We will be led by something. Sin will rule or light will lead.
4. Reflect for a moment on the idea of light. What does light do?
5. Read **Psalm 107:14**. What is sin typically equated to?
6. Can light and darkness exist at the same time? How does one rule over the other?
7. Think of a lamp in a dark room. When we saturate our lives with Scripture, we are allowing the light and truth of God to illuminate every aspect of our lives. When this happens, what would our lives look like? Should we seem different than those who don’t know Christ?

My prayer for you this week is that God’s word will serve as a light unto your path in a very personal way. May the truth of Scripture fill your heart and mind. May God’s laws and

precepts, his commands, be a passion, the love of your life. Remember the quote from the beginning of the week.

May each of us personally be grounded in sound doctrine, walking in truth, allowing God to light our path.

I echo the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21

“...for this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

I ask that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, will have power, together with all the saints, to comprehend the length and width and height and depth of His love, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do infinitely more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

In faith and sound doctrine,
Pastor Matt

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Numbers 6:24-25

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*