

Word of God, Speak:

Sola Scriptura

Back to 1 Peter next week... We've been talking about the bible, how it was put together, how long it took, what it's function is in our lives.

There is so much more we could say, to say we have just scratched the surface would be an insulting understatement.

**Recommended book = Seven things I wish Christians knew about the bible.
Michael Bird.**

We will revisit this from time to time, because it's so important. In a time when the world is more divided and more confusing and more dangerous than ever – we need something we can trust. We need a plumbline. Do you know what that is?

A plumb line, also called a plummet, is a cord with a non-magnetic weight attached to one end. When the cord is held in such a way that the weight can dangle freely, an exact vertical can be determined. Painters and carpenters use plumb lines to keep their work straight. It is difficult, while in the middle of a project, to determine a true horizontal or vertical line without an objective measuring tool, so a plumb line is employed. A plumb line applies the law of gravity to find right angles, to indicate the most direct route from top to bottom, and to keep things plumb. A plumb line doesn't change or move with the whims of the carpenter. It remains true, and all work must line up with it or risk being crooked.

So this is what the Sovereign Lord says:

***"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation;***

the one who relies on it

will never be stricken with panic.

***¹⁷ I will make justice the measuring line
and righteousness the plumb line;***

Isaiah 28:16-17 (NIV)

Jesus is the plumbline for us and the bible is how we know who Jesus is and how we are supposed to interact with him.

And because Jesus is the center of Scripture – old and new testaments, we need the bible and we need to have confidence in it that this is God’s Word to us and here is the kicker – that is has authority over our lives.

Jesus has authority over us and the bible reveals who Jesus is and what he wants – therefore, the bible has authority over us. If we don’t submit to that – we’ve lost our plumb, we’ve lost our measuring stick.

In fact, there is a theological term that has been applied to that very idea – that the bible needs to be our final authority and measuring stick: *Sola Scriptura*.

Sola scriptura means that Scripture alone is authoritative for the faith and practice of the Christian. The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true. Final authority on what we believe and how we act.

Sola scriptura was the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation in response to what Martin Luther believed to be unbiblical teaching from the Catholic Church. Essentially, he said, we see a lot of traditions of men being followed and we want to get back to scripture.

They were giving other things besides scripture equal authority, like the pope and certain traditions in the church. These things were given too much importance and they were considered just as essential as scripture. Martin Luther said, nah.

The Catholic Church threatened Martin Luther with excommunication (and death) if he did not recant.

Martin Luther’s reply was, “Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me! Amen!”

Matthew 22: jesus corrects the sadducees with scripture. Jesus considered them authoritative.

Evaluate what you believe through scripture – it is the only authoritative source. How is not everything subjective if you don’t?

It's not to say that traditions are bad or that other things don't play a part – John Wesley quadrilateral. Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Those things play a part – but they weren't given equal authority.

So, giving scripture authority over how you live doesn't mean you don't use your brain or that you ignore experience – but let's be honest, our experiences aren't always reliable for how things should be and how they should work. You need something that trumps that.

Here is my concern – there are whole generations of kids and young adults that are growing up being taught – sometimes by their own church, that the bible isn't authoritative for them. In fact, One of the biggest challenges for the church today, is whether the Bible is in any sense authoritative at all.

The real issue is whether the Bible is in any sense prescriptive for Christian faith. For many liberal Christians and progressive churches, the Bible is not normative in any way; rather, it is negotiable in every place.

Michael F. Bird. *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew about the Bible* (Kindle Locations 1068-1069). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Let me give you an example that he uses in his book:

Union is a mainline seminary in New York City, They tweeted this:

“While divinely inspired, we deny the Bible is inerrant or infallible. It was written by men over centuries and thus reflects both God's truth and human sin & prejudice. We affirm that biblical scholarship and critical theory help us discern which messages are God's.”

This is his response to that – and these are his words, not mine, so send him your angry emails: but think about it:

The Bible has some bits that genuinely come from God and other bits that represent human prejudice and bigotry. Thanks to the invention of “critical theory,” a postmodern literary approach that teaches that all claims to truth are in reality claims to power, that everyone can be divided into either “oppressor” or “oppressed,” we can identify the divine bits of the Bible and the oppressive bits that are products of capitalist, patriarchal, heteronormative, racist, Zionist, and alt-right evil. No one else in church history was able to do this before us, because the

churches of previous ages were filled with insidiously evil cisgender white males, so we really are the ones the church has been waiting for, since only we have the privileged progressive perspective to show everyone which bits of the Bible actually come from God.

Michael F. Bird. *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew about the Bible* (Kindle Locations 1086-1092). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Strangely enough, the bits of the Bible that come from God just so happen to conform to politically progressive views on climate policy, immigration, socialism, gender fluidity, healthcare, abortion, religious freedom, education, geopolitical views of the EU and UN, and military expenditure—what an amazing coincidence! Alas, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). The second-century arch-heretic Marcion stripped the Bible of anything Jewish, Thomas Jefferson cut out all the miracles, and now Union Seminary consigns all the non-progressive bits to the dumpster of “human sin & prejudice.”

Michael F. Bird. *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew about the Bible* (Kindle Locations 1092-1097). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

I am just as concerned when the right misuses the bible. I fear that they put the constitution of the US on equal footing with scripture and they use the bible to say really mean and horrible things about people, and while prophets in the bible said pretty direct things, when directed by God – I don't think that's supposed to be a recipe for how we treat people. I'm preaching to the choir – you know this. Both sides do this.

The truth about scripture is complicated, not simple. It's not just a matter of saying the bible says it, so I believe it. As soon as you start digging into the scholarly portion of history on this stuff you'll quickly find that out. If you have ever read the whole bible, there are some complicated situations in it that make you go, huh. That doesn't seem right.

Unfortunately, There are people who highlight those situations and make the argument that the bible no longer applies or maybe it never did. And younger generations are questioning things that older people have just accepted as non-controversial truth their whole lives. And these young people are not accepting the bible as any kind of authority for themselves – unless it happens to agree with what they already believe.

The challenge for Christians – (young people who are Christians, too) is to stand for the authority of God’s word, but not oversimplify and ignore real issues, questions and debate on what certain things mean.

I promise I’ll wrap it up next week, but we will deal with some of those issues and debates next week. I just didn’t have room to do them justice today.

Here is the main point for today – you can have questions about meaning and application and still give scripture authority over your life. And it’s important that you do, because if you don’t – what is your plumbline? Your emotions? Tradition? Science? The people who are the most vocal in your life?

If we give other things the same authority, it opens us up to be led astray by a person in authority who we previously listened to.

It’s ok to question whether God used 6 24 hour periods to create the world. I have always thought a day was a day – but could it have represented a period of time? Sure. What’s the most important part of that story? God created the world. If you don’t believe God created the world, then that is a much bigger issue.

A healthy doctrine of Scripture, with a cogent and careful definition of inerrancy, should not deny apparent ambiguities nor mute anyone’s gnawing questions.

Michael F. Bird. *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew about the Bible* (Kindle Locations 975-976). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

*And the words of the Lord are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold refined seven times.
Psalm 12:6 (NIV)*

*The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.
Psalm 19:7-9 (NIV)*

*For the word of the Lord is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.
Psalm 33:4 (NIV)*

John of Patmos constantly emphasized that the words of his prophecy are “trustworthy and true” (Revelation 21:5; 22:6) because they come from Jesus who is himself faithful, holy, just, and true (Revelation 3:7, 14; 15:3). The testimony of God’s word to itself is that Scripture is an authentic and authoritative account of everything which it declares.

If we love our Lord, then we must love his word and strive to obey it with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul. The difference between the followers and the fans, the sheep and the goats, true Christianity and consumerist religion, is that followers are those who promise to “listen and obey” (Deuteronomy 5:27), who hide God’s word in their hearts (Psalm 119:11), who obey Jesus’s teaching as an expression of their love for him (John 14:23–24), and who build their house on the foundation of Jesus’s words (Matthew 7:24–26).

Michael F. Bird. *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew about the Bible* (Kindle Locations 1349-1353). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

