

Our Core Values I: *We are Bible Believing*

Sermon:

Good morning/afternoon!

Today we're beginning a new series... one I'm **very** excited about!
This series is titled ***Our Core Values***.

Over the course of the next **three** weeks, we'll be talking about those qualities... those ***intrinsic values***... those ***essential ingredients*** God has ***baked into*** this church that makes us ***us***.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a group of believers called ***and*** equipped by The Holy Spirit... and ***charged*** by ***Jesus*** Himself to,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.”* (**Matthew 28:19-20**)

The thing is... in order to ***be*** and to ***do*** what Jesus has ***called*** us to ***be*** and ***do***... we ***need*** to have a ***true*** understanding of who...***exactly***... ***we*** are.

That's what this series is about.

Over the course of the last year, the elders and pastors here at Baxter Road Bible Church... have wrestled and prayed through a ***process*** to identify ***who*** we are. As a result of ***that*** journey... we've come up ***three*** core values... that ***we*** believe our identity... as a local body of the Church of Jesus Christ... are inextricably bound ***by*** and ***to***.

Some churches have ***more*** than three core values... some have ***a lot*** more than three core values.

We settled on three because we wanted to not only keep things **simple** and **understandable**... but also **memorable**. We want you to **know** these core values... by **heart**! We want them **imprinted** on the heart of **every** member of Baxter Road Bible Church!

When I preach through what these three core values **are**... it's **my** belief... and the belief of the other pastors and elders... that **your** response will be something along the lines of, "**Yeah, that's us! I see that in us! Of course that's us!**"

We want **everyone**... from our members, to our visitors... and everyone **in between**... to know... to **really** know **who** we are... and **why** it's **important**... that we know **who** we are.

Before I get into our **first** core value, I imagine you may be curious as to what it is we're covering up on the wall to my right.

We put it up there on Wednesday... and we've been doing our best to keep it **secret**... keep it **under wraps**! Though... we know **some** of you have **peeked**. And to those who **have**... you need to know... we **forgive** you!

So let me explain what it is that we have **behind** the cover. In an attempt to help **express** and **communicate** our core values... we've commissioned a local artist, Chuck Westphale, to incorporate our core values... into **artwork** that we can hang on our walls to inform and remind us... of the **essentials** God has designed and equipped this church **with**.

So... before we unveil our **first** piece... and we'll have one piece each week of this series... depicting **each** core value... let me share with you our **first** core value. Are you **ready**?

At Baxter Road Bible Church... we **are Bible Believing**. (*Unveil art piece*)

At Baxter Road Bible Church...The Bible is **the** foundation for **everything** we do!

As Paul explains in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

I hope you **know** that!

Baxter Road Bible Church is a church that **believes** The Bible!

We believe The Bible to be **God's** book... written **by**, preserved **by**, and powered **by** God!

With His hand **directing** the pen of the 40 some humans who put the **ink** to the **paper**... **as** dictated... **God** wrote a book!

Hear me clearly loved ones... while there have been **countless** books written **about** God... God wrote **one** book! It's **this** book! **The** Holy Bible! And it is **the** book... the **only** book... you can stake your **life** upon! And... **we do!**

Some of you might be thinking, *"That's a pretty bold statement! But anyone can make a **statement**, how do you **back** that statement **up**? How do you **know** for sure, God wrote The Bible?"*

That... will be what I spend the rest of my time on in this message.

I want you to know... off the top... this won't be a **typical** message... in that we'll park on one passage and go through it.

In **this** message, I want to examine the evidence for the **authenticity** of Scripture and **why** we, here at Baxter Road Bible Church **believe** The Bible... and I want to examine that evidence from **three** aspects:

- External Evidence – That is evidence from outside The Bible that demonstrates the **uniqueness** of The Bible among **all other** books in the world.
- Internal Evidence – Evidence from **within** The Bible **itself** that **proves** it was written **by** God Himself.
- Experiential Evidence – How God’s Book **impacts** and **changes** our lives in ways that **can’t** be explained **outside** of an infinite, supernatural God reaching out to finite humans... through the book **He** wrote **to** us and **for** us.

Got it? Are you ready? **Buckle up**... because there’s going to be **a lot** of information coming at you in the next few minutes. But I **hope** it won’t be information that **bounces** off your brain and off your heart... and turns into just some guy standing up here babbling on and on. But **rather** information that will either **strengthen** your faith in God’s book... and **the power** it has to guide you into a **closer and closer** relationship **with** Him. **Or**... if you **don’t** share our faith about Scripture... it’s our hope this will be information that will cause you to **re-examine** what you believe about God... and whether or not you can **continue** to **dismiss** The Bible... **God’s** book... as simply another man-made **religious** manual.

So... here we go!

External evidence that proves The Bible... is God’s Book... written by God.

The **first** thing I want to talk about... is **how** The Bible stacks up against other books... where the Bible falls on the **all-time** best seller list.

That's important... because **if** God really **did** write The Bible... and it really **is** His Word... then you would naturally **assume** that God would make **sure** His Book would **always** be available... in a **reliable** form... for people to **read** and have access **to**!

If you assumed that... you assumed **correctly**!

Isaiah 40:7 tells us... and we **believe**, *The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*

You need to know... The Bible... **God's** Book... is the best-selling book of all time... **by far**!

The Bible is the **most printed** book in human history... **by far**!

The Bible **has** been... and **is** being read by **more** people in **more** languages than any other book in history... **by far**!

As of October of last year... 2017... The Bible has been printed in its entirety... in **670 different languages**! **No** other book is even close!

In at least **parts**... the Old Testament has been translated into **1,121 languages**... the New Testament has been translated into **1,521 languages**... and at least **one** book of The Bible has been translated and printed in **2,883 languages**. Again... **no other** book comes **close**!

And... if that weren't enough... the **piece de resistance**... according to John Lloyd's book **1,277 Quite Interesting Facts to Blow Your Socks Off**, In the United States...The Bible... is the most **shoplifted book** of all time!

That's **true**! It's right there on page 194 of that book! You can't make this stuff **up** folks!

Seriously... there is **no** debate... The Bible... the book **God** wrote... is **way** on top of the all-time best seller list... say it with me... **by far**!

Not only is The Bible the **most printed** book in human history... it's also the book that's had the most **influence** in human history!

Think about it! More books have been written **about** The Bible than **any other** book **since** books began to be written!

Bernard Ramm, a noted Baptist theologian, author and Christian apologist, wrote **this**:

*"From the apostolic fathers dating AD 95 to modern times, there is **one great literary river** streaming **from** The Bible; Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, Bible lexicons and atlases and geographies. These may be taken as a starter. Then at random we may mention the vast bibliographies around theology; religious education, hymnology, missions, the Biblical languages, religious biography, devotional works, commentaries, philosophy of religion, evidences, apologetics and on and on, an endless stream of writings."*

An endless stream of writings... and it's **all** centered on people dealing with **this** book... The Bible... the book **God** wrote!

So... you might be thinking, "OK, there are **a lot** of Bibles out there, and there are **a lot** of books about The Bible out there, but how do we **know** what we have **today**... is a **reliable translation** of the book God wrote?"

That's a **good** question! And it's an **important** question! Especially when you consider God wrote His book using more than **40 authors** from various ways of life, shepherds and kings, doctors and tax

collectors... and He wrote it over a period of about **1500 years**... from around 1400 BC, to about 100 AD.

So how can we be **sure** what we have **today** is an accurate representation of what was written some 35-hundred years ago? Sure... God **wrote** a book, but is this **it**?

There are three main categories that historians generally use in deciding the authenticity of ancient writings...

- The number of manuscripts they have.
- The agreement between the manuscripts.
- And... how much time is there between when the original was written, and the oldest copies we have.

Let's quickly go through those...

Prior to the invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century... **all** books were copied by hand. Historians refer to those copies as **manuscripts**. So the question becomes, "How **many** manuscripts of the books of *The Bible* do we **have**?"

The answer is... **a lot!**

Of the New Testament, there are more than **53-hundred** ancient **Greek** manuscripts... more than **10-thousand** very old **Latin** manuscripts... and more than **93-hundred** ancient manuscripts in various **other** languages.

All together... we have more than **24-thousand manuscripts** of the New Testament!

Again... that tops the list... **by far!**

So what's number **two** on that list? A book called **Homer's Iliad**.

Homer's Iliad is a book of poems and stories about the Trojan Wars which was written about 900 BC... and the earliest manuscript copy of the Iliad in existence today... is dated at about 400 BC... leaving a gap of about 500 years between the original and the oldest manuscript.

So... how many ancient manuscripts of the Iliad are there? **643**.

643 manuscripts written about events that happened more than half a millennium **prior** to the earliest manuscript we have.

Compare that to more than **24-thousand** ancient manuscripts of the New Testament with the earliest manuscripts we have only 25 years **after** the events being written about!

And keep in mind... those originals were written about the life of Jesus and the early church... by people who were there **during the life** of Jesus and the early church!

The Apostle John... who was **with** Jesus at the time of Jesus' **ministry**... the time of Jesus' **crucifixion**... the time of Jesus' **resurrection** and **ascension**... **declares** to us in **1 John 1:1-3**, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you ...*

In other words... this is **eyewitness** testimony!

So... do the manuscripts we have of the New Testament **agree** with each other?

There are approximately 20-thousand lines of the New Testament... of those... **only 40** of those lines are in question as to whether they were there in the original... that comes to **one half of one percent** of the New Testament is questioned.

One half of one percent! I think we can rest easy that the words we have **now**... are indeed **faithful** to the words God originally wrote in His book!

Or... as British biblical and classical scholar Sir Fredric Kenyon wrote:

“No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading... This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.”

That’s the **New** Testament... what about the **Old** Testament?

Up until the late 1940’s... the oldest manuscript of the Old Testament we had, was from about 900 AD. That was a gap of about 1300 years.

Not surprisingly, the skeptics and critics had speculated that **a lot** had been **added** to the original manuscripts... and that they had become greatly **corrupted**.

For instance, they postulated that Isaiah 53... the chapter with those famous prophecies about Jesus, you know: *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.* (**Isaiah 53:5**) The critics were claiming those Messianic references were **added** to the original writings to **bolster** the Christian claim that Jesus was the Messiah.

Then... in 1947... a young Shepherd boy chasing after lost goat in an area about 8 miles from Jericho... tossed a rock into a hole in a cliff on the west side of the Dead Sea.

When he did... he heard the sound of shattering pottery. Then the boy went to see what it was... and **what** it was... was the Dead Sea Scrolls!

Hundreds scrolls of the Old Testament... one thousand years **older** than any we had before!

Included in that find... was a **complete** copy of the Book of Isaiah... dated at about **125 BC**! Let me read to you what biblical scholar Ralph Earle wrote about **that**:

Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only 17 letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word 'light,' which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly.

...Thus in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission – and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage.”

People... one reason we are Bible Believing... is because we can **comfortably** believe in the authenticity of what is written in here!

That's some of the external evidence of the reliability of Scripture... evidence outside The Bible... that The Bible **is** the Word of God... and I only barely scratched the **surface** of **that** evidence!

I didn't even **talk** about how historians and archaeologists have **confirmed** The Bible **correctly** names... **in** chronological order... about 40 kings from the area... living from between 2000 BC to 400 BC.

And the mathematical **odds** for that... are 1 times 75, to the 21st power... or a 75... with **21 zeroes** behind it.

Let's move on to **internal evidence** that supports the reliability of Scripture.

And in that category... I'm only going to focus on **one** area... the area of **fulfilled** prophecy. Prophecy, simply stated... is history pre-written.

You see... if God **is** God... and He's a supernatural being **outside** of space, matter and time... He can tell us what's going to happen **before** it happens.

And God is **indeed** God... and He **has** told us about things in advance.

Lots of things!

Do you know there are more than **18-hundred prophecies** in God's book? More than **18-hundred times** in The Bible, God has shown He **is** who He **says** He is... and that we **can** trust Him to **do** what He **says** He'll do... and He's **done** that through bringing to pass, what He **says** He'll bring to pass... fulfilled prophecy!

In The Bible... the book of Daniel... God foretells the rise and fall of the world empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.

In **Isaiah 45:1-3** God tells the prophet Isaiah, *Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue the nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed; I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze cut through the bars of iron, I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in*

secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

Cyrus was, the Persian King who led the overthrow of Babylon in 538 BC... and Isaiah's **prophecy** about Cyrus... was written about 150 years **before** Cyrus came to power.

That's fulfilled prophecy!

But the prophecies I want to focus on... are the prophecies fulfilled in the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are more than **60** major prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament... and more than **300** references to Jesus in the Old Testament. And understand this: the Old Testament writings were completed 450 years **before** Jesus was born!

Some critics will say they don't **trust** that number... *"It wasn't really 450 years before Christ!"*

OK... we know the Septuagint... the **Greek translation** of the Hebrew Old Testament... was written in 250 BC. And if you have the Greek translation of those prophecies 250 years **before** the birth of Christ... that means those prophecies **had** to be written **at least** 250 years **before** Christ. That makes sense, **right?**

So what about those prophecies?

In his book **Evidence That Demands A Verdict**, Josh McDowell says that **through** fulfilled prophecy... God was writing an **address** of sorts for Jesus as the Messiah.

What's that mean? Well... there are about **7 billion people** on the face of the earth today... give or take a few hundred million.

If you were to write a letter to **me** here **at** the church... you would send it to my **address** here at the church: Pastor John Carpenter, care of Baxter Road Bible Church, 3600 Baxter Road, Anchorage, Alaska, 99504.

That address separates **me**... from the rest of the 7 billion people alive on planet Earth.

In the **same** way... God uses fulfilled prophecy to separate **Jesus** from the tens of billions of people who have **ever** lived. The address of fulfilled prophecy in the life and person of Jesus Christ... **clearly** identifies **Jesus**... as God's promised Messiah.

On the back of your note page... you'll see 13 of those major prophecies that make up just **part** of the address God has written for Jesus... **all** of which were fulfilled **by** Jesus!

They are... that Jesus would be:

- Of the seed of the woman (everyone else in Scripture is referred to as the seed of the man... except Jesus!)
- Would be born in Bethlehem
- Be of the lineage of Shem
- A descendant of Abraham
- From the line of Isaac
- From the line of Jacob
- From the tribe of Judah
- From the family of Jesse
- From the house of David
- Be rejected by his own people, the Jews
- Be betrayed... by a friend

- For 30 pieces of silver, thrown onto the floor of the temple and used to purchase a potter's field.
- Be crucified.

Those are just **13** of the **60** major prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament... **all** fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ!

What are the odds of anyone **other** than Jesus fulfilling those prophecies?

In chapter 10 of his book, Josh McDowell runs through those numbers... The odds of anyone **other** than Christ fulfilling **just 8** of those prophecies... is 1×10^{17} ... basically, a 10... with **17 zeroes after it!**

The odds of anyone other than Christ fulfilling **48** of those prophecies... which is only **three quarters** of what Jesus did... are even **more** staggering... 1×10^{157} **power!** There's not even a **name** for a number that big!

No wonder Jesus appealed to the prophecies of the Old Testament to substantiate His claim of **who** He was!

In **John 5:39** Jesus tells the people, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that **in them** you have eternal life; and it is **they** that bear witness about **me**...”*

Listen! God made **sure** that there would be **no** coincidence... not even a **hint** of a possibility that anyone **other** than His Son, Jesus Christ could be the **true** Messiah! **No** chance! None... zip... zero... nada... **squadoosh!**

Fulfilled prophecy **is** a powerful, **powerful** proof of the reliability and authenticity of The Bible... **God's** Book!

There's **external** evidence that proves God wrote this book... and **internal** evidence that proves God wrote this book!

And finally... as we examine **why** Baxter Road Bible Church is a Bible believing church... we turn to **experiential** evidence for **proof** that God did **indeed** write this book... The Bible!

I saved this category for last... because it's the most **personal**.

How many of us, who have called on Jesus as our Lord and Savior... can think of at least **one time**... when you've felt the **power** of God... the **presence** of God... the **love** of God... just **reading** your Bible?

How is that possible? It's **possible** because this **is** God's book! God **did** write it! And **because** God wrote it **to** us and **for** us...The Bible will have an **impact** on our lives in ways **no other** book **possibly** could!

Reading **God's** book... reading The Bible **isn't** like reading People Magazine! Reading God's book **isn't** like reading a good novel, or a text book... or anything **else** that's ever been written!

Why? Because **God** wrote it!

We read The Bible and we're ***gripped*** by its stories! We read about Adam and Eve... Noah and the Ark... Job and Jonah... and even though we ***know*** how it ends... we ***can't*** put it ***down!***

We read The Bible... and we hear Jesus' words from the cross, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (**Luke 23:34**) and our hearts are ***crushed***... because we ***know*** Jesus did ***that***... for ***us!***

We read Jesus' words in the parable of the talents where He says, "*Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your master...*" (**Matthew 25:21**) and our hearts ***long*** to hear God say those words ***to us!***

And when we read Jesus words to Martha... as He's on His way to raise her brother Lazarus from the grave... and He declares, "*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,* ²⁶ *and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?*" (**John 11:25-26**) our hearts ***shout***, "***Yes, Lord! I believe!***"

Why? Why do we react ***this*** way to this book and ***what's*** in it?

We react this way because ***each*** of us... as followers, ***disciples*** of Jesus Christ have personally ***experienced*** the love of God... over and over and over in our lives! We've ***experienced*** God's Holy Spirit ***move*** from the pages of The Bible... and ***change our hearts***... save ***our souls!*** And ***because*** we've experienced that... we ***know*** The Bible ***is*** the book God wrote!

British evangelist Gipsy Smith, told of a man who said he had received **no inspiration** from the Bible... although he had "*gone through it*" several times. Smith replied to the man "*Let it go through you... once... then* you will tell a **different** story!"

If you **haven't** experienced the Holy Spirit of God speaking to **you** through **His** Word... through The Bible... What are you **waiting** for?

No one who picks up this book with a heart **genuinely seeking the truth**... can go away **unchanged!**

This book God wrote is **too** wonderful... **too** powerful... to leave a sincere heart **unchanged!**

J.K. Johnston, in his book **Why Christians Sin**, tells the story of Alexander Rostovzev... a matinee idol in a Soviet Moscow theater group. Rostovzev was playing the role of Jesus in a sacrilegious play entitled **Christ in a Tuxedo**. In his role... he was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and irreverently cry out, "*Give me my tuxedo and top hat!*"

But something happened to him as he read the words from the Bible he was holding, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,*" Rostovzev began to **tremble**.

He paused... and then... instead of following the script, Rostovzev kept reading from Matthew 5... ignoring the **coughs**, the **calls**, and **foot-stamping** of his fellow actors who were trying to get him **back** on script. Finally... recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood growing up in a Russian Orthodox church, the plea of the thief on the cross in **Luke 23:42**. Rostovzev cried out, "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!*"

Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev... reading **The Bible**... the book **God wrote**... had met Jesus Christ... his **Savior**!

Listen! The **external** evidence for the **reliability** of The Bible... and the **internal** evidence for the **truth** of The Bible... are **powerful** proofs The Bible **is** the book **God** wrote! But they have no power to change the human heart... unless and until they are **combined** with a **personal experience** with the **Jesus** of The Bible!

Facts and figures can **never** replace... nor were they **designed** to replace... a **genuine**, personal relationship **with** God **through** His Son Jesus Christ!

Whether you recognize it or not... that **relationship**... that **personal experience** with God... is what our hearts **cry out** for! It's what **Jesus'** heart cried out for in that **marvelous** prayer in John 17! *O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*” (John 17:25-26)

And it's our **experience** with that love... our **experience** with **God's book**... that has **convinced us** of the **truth** of **Hebrews 4:12**!
For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

That's why Baxter Road Bible Church **is**... and will always **be**... Bible Believing! It's **who** we **are**... down in the **deepest part** of our hearts!

It is... **truly** our **core value**! And O righteous Father, we **thank you** for making us **this way**!

Amen? Let's pray!