

Subject: *Living by the Book*

Scripture: *Psalm 119:105*

As we begin a new year it's a great time to refocus and make sure we're on the right track. We use different expressions when we are depending on our own judgment or our instincts: sometimes we say, "Just wing it, play it by ear, let your heart lead you, or fly by the seat of your pants." Apparently that expression "fly by the seat of your pants" goes back to February 1955, when a cocky teenage cadet in the Royal Air Force said he "could navigate by eye and the nearest railroad track and *fly by the seat of his pants.*" Flying by the seat of your pants might work well on a clear day, but what about flying in a fog or a blinding rain or at night? It's only safe when you fly by certain guidelines and dependable instruments. The same is true of our life. We need dependable guidance that can only be found in God's Word.

The Bible is described in many ways to describe what it does. It is like a mirror to reveal the sinful nature of man. It is like seed because it produces life and fruit. It is like water because it cleanses and purifies. It is like a double-edged sword to prick the heart and defeat the enemy. It is like gold because of its value. It is like milk and meat because it nourishes and strengthens the soul. It is like a hammer because it can break the hard heart and stubborn will. It is like a fire because of its power. And it is like a lamp because it shows us how to walk. The last one is what I want us to focus on, a lamp or a light. We need the light of truth in Scripture to guide us.

Psalms 119:130 *The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*

Proverbs 6:23 *For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.*

Proverbs 4:18-19 ¹⁸ *But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* ¹⁹ *The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.* The path of the just is a path of increasing light and the way of the wicked is the way of deeper darkness.

2 Peter 1:19 *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*

Three things must take place if we are going to live by the Book. We must know the Book, believe the Book, and apply the Book.

1. WE MUST KNOW THE BOOK

What do we need to know from the Bible?

- We need to know the God of the Bible

He is the one true God revealed in three Persons. Look for God on every page and in every chapter and verse. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself. **John 5:39** *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

- We need to know the story and main themes of the Bible

If you read any book, you need the main thought or purpose. Look for the main theme of God's plan of redemption on every page. What does this say about God's eternal plan of salvation? What does it reveal about man's sin? What does it teach about God's grace?

- We need to know the people and places of the Bible

The Bible is the story of God's work in real history, real places and the lives of real people, so we need to look for God's work. The Bible is a selective book. The people and places are in there for a reason. Look for God's work through and for the Jews, His chosen people. Look for God's work through and for the church. These are all special people that God used for a special purpose. Look for God's love for people, His grace and His patience with people. Look for the blessings when people obey God and the consequences when they disobey.

Knowing the Bible takes time, effort, discipline, dedication, humility, and prayer.

Psalms 119:18 *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

We need to have the mindset of someone digging for gold or buried treasure. The Weather Channel ran a series on prospectors who search for valuable gems and minerals underground and in caves. They keep going back to their digging site day after day. It's hard work, but it's worth it. They are searching for something valuable. So are we, things far more valuable!

Proverbs 3:13-15 ¹³ *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.* ¹⁴ *For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.* ¹⁵ *She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.*

Some of you may be wondering if I am trying to make you a Bible scholar. If you heard every sermon from this pulpit every week and went to every class we offer, you would never become a Bible scholar. To become a Bible scholar would take hours and hours of study. We are not called to be Bible scholars, but we are called to be Bible students.

2. WE MUST BELIEVE THE BOOK

When you read and study the truth, then believe it. Believe it regardless of what others may think or say. When the Bible teaches something that is contrary to what people say or believe, stick with the Bible and reject everything else. The Bible is like a sword that divides truth from error. When you have two opposing ideas, both can't be right.

Psalms 119:104 *Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

Proverbs 22:20-21 ²⁰ *Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,* ²¹ *That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?*

The hallmark of the Christian faith is certainty. We should trust the Bible, depend on it, rest in it, and live by it...without question and without apology. Why should we be dogmatic in our faith? Because it is God's Word: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."

2 Timothy 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

John 17:17 *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

We need to believe the Bible for ourselves. You can't live by somebody else's faith. Other people may trust the Bible with all their heart, but that won't do you any good. Dr. Adrian Rogers told the story about following another car on a deserted two-lane highway in Florida when his headlights went out. He kept on driving behind the other car, but that driver got suspicious and sped up. Before long it became a high speed chase and the front car began to pull away. Finally, Dr. Rogers finally gave up the chase and said he learned an important lesson. You can't drive very well by someone else's headlights.

3. WE MUST APPLY THE BOOK

Look at the text again, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The word for lamp is a foot lamp or a torch on a stick that would project enough light for the steps directly in front of you. We need to apply the Bible every day and in every situation. That's why we need to read it, study it, memorize it, and meditate on it. Here's a plan for every day:

- Read a chapter in Proverbs every day
- Read through the Bible using the daily reading guide
- Study the Bible every day

You may be in a men's study, women's study, SS class, or you may study something on your own—a topic, a Bible character, or an individual Bible book. As you read and study get in the habit of asking these questions:

- What does this teach about God?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to pray?
- Is there a principle to apply?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a mistake to avoid?
- Is there a temptation to watch out for?
- Is there a truth to share?

Romans 12:1-2 ¹ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* ² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

The Bible is not only written to inform us, but it is written to transform us. That means it changes the way we live. Some people say they believe the Bible from cover to cover, but they have never read the Bible from cover to cover. We need a consistent intake of God's Word every day and then once we know it, we believe it, and we live by it.