

### Media and Graphics Notes

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sermon Starter Video?</b> | Yes   |
| <b>Sermon Notes?</b>         | There are scripture and notes for the screen throughout the sermon. |

## Key Questions

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about the nature of the Bible and how we might engage with the Bible today.



### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because God is still speaking through the Bible. In the Bible we find the opportunity to be in relationship with Jesus and find the words of life.

### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This sermon is adapted from the HTB Transcripts of Alpha Talk 6 – Why and How Should I Read the Bible?

### ***What are the next action steps?***

The next action steps are to pick up a Bible, if you need one and plan to read through the Gospel according to Mark next month.

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that God has spoken and continues to speak through the Bible – inviting us into relationship with Jesus.

### ***What are other key takeaways? (140 characters or less)***

- Theopneustos literally means "God-breathed". The Bible is God speaking.
- In the Bible we find the opportunity to be in relationship with Jesus and find the words of life.

## Metadata

### **Topic(s)**

1. Grow
2. Making Disciples

1st Sunday after the Epiphany  
FAQ - Why and how should I read the Bible?  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1mrTIIU>

January 10, 2016  
John 5:31-47  
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,000  
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/1JFspoR>

## Sermon Books of the Bible

1. Hebrews
2. John
3. Matthew

## Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist,  
UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains,  
AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, Bible, scripture,

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Quote – Martin Luther

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## John 5:31-47, CEB

"If I testify about myself, my testimony isn't true. There is someone else who testifies about me, and I know his testimony about me is true. You sent a delegation to John, and he testified to the truth. Although I don't accept human testimony, I say these things so that you can be saved. John was a burning and shining lamp, and, at least for a while, you were willing to celebrate in his light.

"I have a witness greater than John's testimony. The Father has given me works to do so that I might complete them. These works I do testify about me that the Father sent me. And the Father who sent me testifies about me. You have never even heard his voice or seen his form, and you don't have his word dwelling with you because you don't believe the one whom he has sent. Examine the scriptures, since you think that in them you have eternal life. They also testify about me, yet you don't want to come to me so that you can have life.

"I don't accept praise from people, but I know you, that you don't have God's love in you. I have come in my Father's name, and you don't receive me. If others come in their own name, you receive them. How can you believe when you receive praise from each other but don't seek the praise that comes from the only God?

"Don't think that I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, the one in whom your hope rests. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, because Moses wrote about me. If you don't believe the writings of Moses, how will you believe my words?"

### Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

### Series Review

We all have questions. Sometimes the answers are easy. But, sometimes, our questions are complicated and the answers are difficult to see and even harder to articulate. Join us for worship at First United Methodist Church in January as we address some of the most frequently asked questions about the Christian faith.

### Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions

- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

## **Prayer**

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## **Introduction**

### **What's So Special?**

Many people today would see the Bible as rather dull — a kind of outdated rulebook, full of contradictions maybe, irrelevant to the lives of twenty-first century people. What's so special about the Bible?

#### ***Popular***

Well, it's uniquely popular.

It's the most successful literary creation ever, more influential than Shakespeare or any other great texts. In the United States 88% of households own a Bible with an average of 4.4 Bibles per household.

#### ***International***

It's completely international.

Homer has been translated into forty languages, Shakespeare into sixty, the Bible into almost three thousand.<sup>1</sup> It's every publisher's dream, really! It's the world's bestseller — millions of copies of the Bible sell every year.

#### ***Powerful***

It's uniquely powerful — it has the power to change individuals and it has the power to change societies.

#### ***Precious***

And it's uniquely precious. The psalmist says about the Scriptures that he had that they were 'more precious than gold'. Now, why is that?

In Matthew 4:4, we read this:

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<sup>1</sup> American Bible Society, "State of the Bible 2015," February, 2015, accessed January 9, 2016, [http://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/State\\_of\\_the\\_Bible\\_2015\\_report.pdf](http://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/State_of_the_Bible_2015_report.pdf)

Jesus replied, "It's written, People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God."<sup>2</sup>

Material things alone don't satisfy.

As well as a physical hunger, which can be satisfied by bread, we also have this spiritual hunger, which can only be satisfied by spiritual things. It's a kind of longing for God that is in every human heart, longing for a relationship with our Creator.

And Jesus says people can't live on bread alone, but the words that come out of God's mouth. God's longing to communicate with us, to be in a relationship with us. And God speaks to us primarily through the Bible.

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## God has spoken – Revelation

### God's Self Revelation

The Bible is first of all God's revelation of God's self.  
In the Bible God has spoken.

### Jesus Christ and the Bible

God's supreme revelation, which is in a person, in Jesus Christ. The writer to the Hebrews says this in Hebrews 1:1-2

In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways. In these final days, though, he spoke to us through a Son. God made his Son the heir of everything and created the world through him.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is God's ultimate revelation.

And the main way we know about Jesus is through the the Bible.

### Creation

God has also revealed himself through creation and last week we considered the possibility of miracles in creation. But you can't discover very much about God by observing creation.

Science is an exploration of the way in which God has been revealed in creation and Biblical theology is an exploration of how God has been revealed in the Bible.

### Key Quote – Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists of all time, said:

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*'A legitimate conflict between science and religion cannot exist. Religion without science is blind, and science without religion is lame.'*

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:4, CEB.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2, CEB.

We need both.  
Science answers the how and when questions.  
Bible answers the who and why questions.

## Authorship

### **Key Bible Passage – 2 Timothy 3:16**

The Bible is inspired by God.

The Apostle Paul puts it like this in 2 Timothy 3:16:

Every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character,

The word translated here as “inspired by God” is the Greek word

**theopneustos**

Theos - God

Pneustos - breath

God-Breathed.

What the writer is saying is that the Bible is God speaking.

### **Human Authors**

Not that, sort of, God dictated the Bible. Of course, God used human authors. Over a period of 1500 years at least forty authors — kings, scholars, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, historians, doctors — they wrote different types of literature such as history, poetry, prophecy and letters.

It's 100 percent the work of human beings.

But what the writer is saying here is it's also 100 percent inspired by God.

How can that be?

### **Story – Sir Christopher Wren**

Let me use an analogy, if I may. Sir Christopher Wren, the greatest English architect of his time, built St Paul's Cathedral. He started at age 44 in the year 1676, and for 35 years the cathedral was built under one architect. It was completed in 1711, when Wren was 79 years of age.

Sir Christopher Wren 'built' St Paul's Cathedral. But actually he didn't lay a single stone. Other people put the stones in. Many different builders were involved. But there was one mind, one architect, one inspiration behind it. And so it is with the Bible — many different writers, one architect, one inspiration behind it all: God.

### **Difficulties in the Bible**

That doesn't mean to say that there are no difficulties. Of course, there are many difficulties in the Bible. The apostle Peter, talking about some of Paul's letters, says, 'There's some things in them that are really hard to understand!' Well, if one apostle couldn't understand another, what hope have we got!



### **Crossword Puzzle**

It's a bit like a crossword puzzle. My dad loves to do crossword puzzles and I have tried them out at different times in my life. I'm not very good at them, but what I have found is that you start with the clues until you come across one you just can't answer. You don't stop. You go on to the next clue. Maybe that one's a bit easier. Then you start to fill in a number of the clues and that give you the letters that you need to understand the more difficult clues.

I have found that this is what it is like with the Bible. As I wrestle with the Bible, I become to understand more and more. It's not that the difficulties all disappear. There are still things in the Bible that I struggle with.

Believe that it inspired by God and wrestle with the difficulties.

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### **God Speaks – Relationship**

The Bible is like a love letter from God. When you get a letter from someone you love, you treasure that letter. The letter itself is nothing really, it's because of the person who wrote it. It is the same with the Bible.

The book itself is nothing. It is because of the author and because the author wants to be in a relationship with you. God wants to speak to you.

#### **Quote – St. Gregory the Great**

St Gregory the Great said,

.....  
*'The Bible is a letter from God.'*  
.....

St Augustine says that

.....  
*'the Bible does nothing but speak of God's love for us.'*  
.....

#### **Key Bible Passage – John 5:39-40**

In John 5:38-40, Jesus said:

"Examine the scriptures, since you think that in them you have eternal life. They also testify about me, yet you don't want to come to me so that you can have life."<sup>4</sup>

The whole point of the Bible is so that you and I can be in relationship with Jesus. The book itself is only a means to an end.

#### **Personal Story – Car Manual**

Again, if I can use an analogy: I have a Toyota Camry. And supposing I got a new one delivered to our front door, and I went out, looked at the Toyota car, looked around

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<sup>4</sup> John 5:39-40, CEB.

and in the glove compartment I found the Toyota manual — beautiful, glossy manual, and I thought ‘Wow, that is fantastic!’ Took it indoors and I started studying it. And I got out my highlighter, started underlining bits that looked really interesting, started learning particular bits that I liked off by heart, maybe cutting out bits of it and sticking it on my mirror so I could look at it while I was shaving!

I thought, ‘Well, maybe we could set some of this to song’ — I asked Charles or Bobby to compose a song so we could sing bits of the Toyota manual! I thought, ‘Well, you know, I wonder whether other people like the Toyota manual. Perhaps I’ll join the Toyota Club. Or maybe I should learn Japanese so I can study it in its original language!’ But I would have missed the point — the point of the manual is to help you drive the car. And unless we drive the car, unless we have that relationship with Jesus, we’ve missed the point.

## Two-Way Relationship

So God still speaks to us today, he wants to be in a love relationship with us. So it’s no good studying the Bible without coming to Jesus. It’s a two-way relationship: we speak to God and God speaks to us.

The writer of Hebrews says, when he’s quoting the Old Testament: **‘the Holy Spirit says’** — not **‘the Holy Spirit said’** but **‘the Holy Spirit says’**.

It’s not just that the Holy Spirit spoke in the past; he speaks afresh through what he has spoken.

### Quote – Martin Luther

As Martin Luther said:

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*‘The Bible is alive. It speaks to me. It has feet, it runs after me. It has hands, it lays hold of me.’*

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## How do I read the Bible?

So how in practice do we hear God speak to us through the Bible?

How do I read the Bible?

### Time

Well, first of all we need to set aside time.

Time is our most valuable possession.

Someone said, ‘Money is power, but time is life.’

So I would suggest finding some kind of regular pattern.

You know, if you can read the Bible for fifteen minutes a day, you will get through the whole Bible in one year.

## **Place**

And then a place. Jesus, we read, went off to a solitary place, and there he prayed. He went very early in the morning, and I still find that's the best time to do it. I sit at a table in the side room at home – very early before our children are awake.

## **Pattern**

The key, of course, is putting it into practice, and that's the hardest part. And I would commend to you reading the Bible each day, praying that God would speak to you, as a regular pattern over the years, is the most amazing thing. Very often it's mundane, but sometimes it's very significant.

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## **Conclusion**

In the Bible we find the opportunity to be in relationship with Jesus and find the words of life.

## **Call to Action**

If you don't have a Bible, we have one for you today. These Bibles will be stacked in the church office. Just pick one up, they are there for you to take.

Beginning one month from today, on February 10, we are going to read through the Gospel according to Mark as an entire church. Mark is where I recommend that people start reading the Bible. It is one of the four books that tell the stories of Jesus, it is the shortest and it is likely the one that was written first. We will have a reading plan available for you and with just a few verses a day we will read the entire book of Mark during the season of Lent which will bring us to Easter Sunday. Plan to read through the book of Mark as a congregation beginning in a few weeks.

## **Good News**

In the Bible we find the opportunity to be in relationship with Jesus and find the words of life. The good news is that God has spoken and continues to speak through the Bible – inviting us into relationship with Jesus.

## **Invitation**

### ***My Call Story***

Many of you know that I have lived in Kansas for most of my life. I attended high school at Salina Central and college at Pittsburg State University. In the fall of 2002, I knew that the career in molecular biology that I had been planning on for several years was not what was next for me. During that fall semester, I considered many possibilities for what might be next for me after graduation.

At a campus ministry retreat, I was reading the account of Jesus calling his disciples in the Gospel according to John and I heard God speaking to me. The disciples' question, "Where are you staying?" corresponded to my question, "What might seminary be like?"

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Jesus responded clearly to them and to me: "Come and see."  
God was calling me to go to seminary and spoke through the Bible.

### ***Transition***

Do you think God may be trying to speak to you?

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, we thank you so much that not only have you spoken through the Bible, but you still speak to us today through this book. And Lord, I pray for every one of us here that you would help us to find a pattern of hearing your voice in each of our lives. For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.