

## I. Seemingly Obvious

- A. You might find it surprising that a church would even need to have a statement that one of its core values is to uphold a biblical or scriptural foundation to all it does. For many, this seems like an obvious assumption of church rather than something that needs to be a core value. The truth is, that we are definitely living in a post-bible culture and even within the church, there are many streams and trends that in the name of God are walking away from the authority of scripture.

*The percentage of Americans who believe that the Bible is the inspired, true word of God is down more than 21 percentage points down to 26% since 2000 . This parallels a similarly precipitous 50% decrease in biblical worldview in America over the same time period, from 12% to the current 6%—the lowest number ever recorded. - Barna Research*

- B. We are truly living in unprecedented times concerning the cultural view of the bible, especially in the church itself. Currently, over half the population in America who identify as Christian believe that the source of guidance for right and wrong comes from common sense or thought, not the word of God.

## II. Specifically to Restoration Fellowship

- A. The stance of leadership here at Restoration concerning the Bible is as follows..
1. The Bible is Authoritative - All the words of the bible are God's words in such a way as to disbelieve or disobey any word of scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God, Himself. There are three pillars of belief concerning the bible that cause us to deem it authoritative.
    - a. Inspired - We believe that the scriptures are authored and guided by God, or as the scripture puts it, "God breathed". (Jn. 1:1,14; Act. 1:16; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21)
    - b. Infallible - We believe that the Bible is not able to lead us astray in matters of faith, truth, or practice. It serves as a completely trustworthy guide to know, understand, and obey God. (Ps. 12:6; Jn. 17:17)
    - c. Inerrant - We believe that the Bible, in its original form, does not affirm anything contrary to fact. This includes historical, scientific, and geographical data. (Pr. 30:5)

2. Through the lens of the authority of scripture, we also hold the conviction of the clarity of scripture (that it can be understood by all), the necessity of scripture (it is necessary for knowing God, salvation, and truth), and the sufficiency of scripture (it contains all we need for life, truth, and godliness).

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 16-17)*

B. Doctrinal Stances - We must recognize varying degrees of importance regarding Biblical beliefs, and themes:

1. Essential Doctrines - Those of primary importance that are essential for fellowship and continuity of saving faith. Essential doctrines are so critical to believe that if an individual does not believe them we view them as unbelievers. Example - Saved by Grace alone through Faith alone
2. Core Convictions - These doctrines are held by our leadership team. We are confident that the Bible is very clear on these subjects. Every ministry has a set of core convictions that, if they compromise them, they are compromising all together. We are not open to changing our core convictions, but still respect and honor those who hold to different convictions.
  - a. We must uphold the love, support, and brotherhood of the saints in Christ in differences of core convictions. However we understand that its very difficult to do ministry together with individuals who hold different core convictions. For this reason we encourage individuals to find the church family that best lines up with thier core convictions so they can flourish in ministry. Example - Level of intentionality with Spiritual Gifts
3. Personal Opinions - Some teachings or themes we believe are Biblical, but they are opinions. Meaning, we derive them as an implication from the Scripture. We believe they are informed opinions, but they are of a whole lesser level of weightiness. Example - Timing of the Rapture

C. Scripture over Tradition and Culture - The instructions of church function in methodology and intentionality found in scripture serve as the basis for why we do what we do when we gather corporately. Many times, our methodology seems to go against the grain of mainstream church expressions which find their methodology more rooted in tradition. We are in no way trying to be elite or saying we're right and others are wrong in their expression; we are simply doing what we believe is right for us based scripture forming the convictions of this leadership team. Examples of this are the following:

1. Shared Leadership by a team of elders
2. Place equal importance on small groups as sunday gatherings
3. Eagerly desiring and prioritizing spiritual gifts
4. Non-denominational allegiance
5. Do not require membership
6. Church decisions are not voted upon
7. Do not require tithing
8. Do not require formal theological training for leadership or messaging

### III. The Question of Clarity

A. It is my belief that the lack of conviction concerning the authority of scripture in the church stems from the growing stance that says, "we can't really know for sure the correct interpretation of scripture." Most people look at the vast differences of interpretation and fissures within the church concerning doctrine and decide their quest for personal confidence truth in scripture is unobtainable. This has led to two major errors in establishing personal conviction regarding truth.

1. Overreliance on "Bible Teachers" -
2. Overreliance on Experience - There is also an absolute sense within the church that truth is relative based on our experience, which stems from our standards being our own rather than the plain reading of scripture. (Jn. 17:17)

B. The scripture states clearly that it was written by God in such a way that His teachings and truth are able to be understood by all who read it, if they seek God's help and are willing to follow it. (Ps. 19:7; 119:130)

1. In other words, the common mindset of modern readers today regarding the difficulty of understanding the Bible has very little to do with the words themselves and their interpretation, and everything to do with the posture of our hearts as we read in humility, hunger, and steadfastness. (Mt. 21:42; 22:29)
2. The inspired writers of scripture not only expected their readers to be well-versed in the scriptures, but gave no indication that the uneducated congregation of believers to which they were writing would have any limitation in comprehending or interpreting the truths they were writing about. Why?, Because **none of the writers of scripture placed their confidence in human intellect but rather on the inspiration and work of the Holy Spirit, cultivated in the lives of believers through prayer and obedience.** (Jn. 14:26; 1 Jn. 2:27)

*When we inject the notion that the scripture is too difficult to be understood and even the highly educated disagree on interpretation we are placing our confidence in the native intellect not in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. - Stephen Venable*

- C. Not once in the Gospels do we ever hear Jesus saying anything like this: “*I see how your problem arose—the Scriptures are not very clear on that subject.*” Instead, whether he is speaking to scholars or untrained common people, He always confronts those who misunderstand or fail to accept what is written with questions or statements like, “*Have you not read...*” (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:14; 22:31), “*Have you never read in the scriptures . . .*” (Matt. 21:42), or even, “*You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God*” (Matt. 22:29; 9:13; 12:7; 15:3; 21:13, 22:29, John 3:10) He never places the blame on the scriptures being too hard to grasp.

1. Paul, as he wrote to the churches scattered throughout Asia Minor, not only expected Gentile believers to be well versed and knowledgeable in the scriptures, but gave no indication that the church in the city would have any limitation in comprehending them. (Romans 4:1-25, 15:4; I Corinthians 10:1-11)