

Foundations 502: **God's Word Is Our Authority**
Thinking Biblically, Living Covenantally
ROUGH DRAFT

Our Non-Negotiables

God's Word is our only rule as to how we may glorify God and enjoy Him.

2 Timothy 3.16-17, ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

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.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Question 2

What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, (2 Tim. 3:16, Eph. 2:20) is the only rule (sole authority) to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. (1 John 1:3-4)

Question 3

What do the scriptures principally teach?

The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. (2 Tim. 1:13, 2 Tim. 3:16)¹

2 Tim 4.3-4, ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

1 Tim 4.7, Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;

1 Tim 1.3-4, ³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

2 Pet 2.16, For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Introduction

¹ [*The Westminster shorter catechism: with Scripture proofs*](#) (3rd edition.). (1996). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

If ever there were a time that we need **God's Word as our ultimate authority**, it is now. Will we succumb to Satan's lies? Will we accommodate the culture by affirming their "truth?" Will we lean on our own understanding for faith and life? Or, will we make **God's Word our ultimate authority**?

The Bible is under attack. Before the Fall, **God's Word was the ultimate authority** for Adam and Eve. From the beginning, Satan has attacked the Word of God. The very first question in the Bible is from Satan, [Gen 3.1](#): "*Did God actually say? Did God really say?*" This is also the first time in Scripture that there is deception and lies. With this encounter, Satan, both God's nemesis and ours, earns his name as the "father of lies" ([Jn 8.44](#)). With Eve, Satan planted seeds of doubt and distrust in God's Word, and he's been doing the same thing ever since.

As with Eve, so also with us: Satan casts doubt on the nature of God and the Word of God. As with Eve, Satan wants us to see God as restrictive, as withholding from us what will make us happy, as hampering our freedom, as keeping the best for himself. "*Did God really say?*"

As soon as Eve did not trust unequivocally in what God had told her and Adam, she sinned, and we have been paying the price ever since. She did not trust in **God's Word as her ultimate authority**.

[Have you ever heard any of these lies? Are there some that you hear often? Are you struggling with any of these lies?](#) Let me list some of Satan's most common and believable lies.^{2 3}

- God is a liar.
- God is not worthy.
- This life is everything. ("My Best Life Now")
- Satan's way is the best way.
- Don't go to the cross.
- God is whatever we want him to be.
- Many paths lead to God.
- God is more tolerant than he used to be.
- God has never personally suffered.
- God is obligated to save followers of other religions.
- God does not know our decisions before we make them.
- The fall ruined God's plan.
- We must choose between God's pleasures and our own.

In her book *Five Lies for Our Anti-Christian Age*, Rosaria Butterfield lists some contemporary lies that Satan is peddling, with great success.⁴

- Homosexuality is normal.
- Being a spiritual person is kinder than being a biblical Christian.
- Feminism is good for the world and the church.

² Breese, David. (1974). [Satan's Ten Most Believable Lies](#). David Breese.

³ Lutzer, Erwin. (2000). [Ten Lies About God](#). Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group.

⁴ Butterfield, Rosaria. (2023). [Five Lies for Our Anti-Christian Age](#). Wheaton, Illinois. Crossway.

- Transgenderism is normal.
- Modesty is an outdated burden that serves male dominance and holds women back.

Postmodernism

Our culture today is rampant with lies: the news, politicians, influencers, commercials, government officials, health officials, activists, the people we know, and on and on. Satan is having a field day.

Have you heard any of these quotes before?

“Love is love.” “Women’s rights are human rights.” “No human is illegal.” “Trust the science.”

In and of themselves, these slogans seem caring, fair, and good. Yet what (most of) us think they mean is not what is meant by those speaking these seemingly innocuous phrases. [What are they really saying by the phrase “love is love”?](#) Our postmodern culture interprets this as meaning all sexual relationships are equal and valid and should be accepted and celebrated. “Women’s rights are human rights” is code for: it should be legal for a woman to have an abortion, some even advocating for abortion up to 9 months. “No human is illegal” advocates for specific immigration policies. “Trust the science.” Well, we’ve seen where that led with mandatory Covid vaccines and shut-downs and punishments for not “following the science.” The claims of science, in this instance, proved to be, at the least, faulty.

[Where did these ideas come from?](#) The turbulent, rebellious 1960s produced a philosophy called postmodernism, which affects nearly every aspect of our lives today. It affects marriage and the family, it affects sex and gender, it affects identity, it affects the meaning of words, it affects ethnicity, it affects the law, it affects law enforcement and the justice system, it affects crime rates and homelessness, it affects how money is spent, it affects farming and industry, it affects domestic and foreign policy, it even affects your appliances. I hope you don’t have to get a new oven or refrigerator any time soon!

Postmodernism rejects the idea of objective truth and is highly suspicious and even hostile to those who hold to objective truth. Note the bakers, florists, and photographers, among others, who have been targeted and prosecuted for holding to objective truth.

Postmodernism says truth can’t be fully known and probably doesn’t even exist. It says truth is not objective, it is subjective, that whatever a person feels to be true is true. Their adage is, “What’s true for you is true for you. What’s true for me is true for me.” In other words, truth is whatever a person wants it to be. Truth is relative. If you’re a woman and say you’re a man, that is true for you, and all areas of society are expected, or by law commanded, to accommodate you. If you say you are a cat, who is to say you are not a cat? That is your truth. It sounds to me like they have *“turned away from listening to the truth and wandered off into myths,”* (2 Tim. 4.4), that they are *“devoting themselves to myths”* (1 Tim 1.4).

Harold Pinter, a British dramatist, defined postmodernism in this way: “There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.”

Ravi Zacharias (I know), in his book Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message writes: “We are living in a time when sensitivities are at the surface, often vented with cutting words. Philosophically, you can believe anything so as you do not claim it as a better way. Religiously, you can hold to anything, so long as you do not bring Jesus Christ into it. If a spiritual idea is eastern, it is granted critical immunity; if western, it is thoroughly criticized. Thus, a journalist can walk into a church and mock its carryings on, but he or she dare not do the same if the ceremony is from eastern fold. Such is the mood at the end of the twentieth century. A mood can be a dangerous state of mind, because it can crush reason under the weight of feeling. But that is precisely what I believe postmodernism best represents - a mood.”

Postmodernism is not only in the world, it also has infiltrated the church and brought with it corruption and confusion. In general, the church has ceased to be salt and light as it has reordered truth to accommodate the world. Postmodernism is a direct assault on the Word of God. The tenets of postmodernism are diametrically opposed to the absolute truth of the Bible. Postmodernism, by its very definition, exalts tolerance. We are to validate the truth claims of others even if they are not objectively true. If not, we will be cancelled.

By its very nature, the Word of God is not tolerant. Sin, rebellion, lies must be confronted with the Word of God because **God’s Word is our ultimate authority.**

All sinners, both in the culture and in the church, have a hostility towards God’s Word. We have to admit we don’t want anyone to tell us we are wrong or where we fall short. We are prideful. We don’t want correction. “Don’t tell me the truth if it’s going to make me feel bad about myself.”

However, if we are to be people of the Book, we must deny worldly philosophies, values, and practices. Paul reminds us in [1 Tim 4.7](#), “*Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;*” We deny these worldly ideas and cling to the Word of God, knowing that it won’t make up popular. Jesus told his disciples, “¹⁸ *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you*” ([Jn 15.18-19](#)). He warns, “*Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets*” ([Lk 6.26](#)).

The antipathy, the hatred, the hostility of postmodernism and the church’s accommodation of the culture is ultimately a battle with the truth of God’s Word.

The Significance of Truth to Jesus and Martin Luther

Let’s look at how absolutely significant Truth is to Jesus and at examples from church history. These show us the **reason for God’s Word to be our ultimate authority.**

There are many in churches today who make light of biblical and theological doctrine, who view error as insignificant. Although they make light of theology, nevertheless they hold to a theology. RC Sproul said, “Everyone is a theologian.” Everyone has an opinion about God, who he is, how he works, who is man, one’s purpose in life, the way of salvation... Recently (3-10-24) Dr. Dan Doriani in his sermon said, “Bad theology can kill you.” *What do you think he meant by that?* What a person believes shows up in how he lives. If a person does not believe the gospel of JC and believes he is good enough and all roads go to heaven, guess what? He’s not going there. Theology is a matter of life or death.

I think Martin Luther would fervently and vociferously disagree with those who view untruths, no truths, and error in biblical and theological doctrine as insignificant. In fact, the formal cause of the Reformation, one of the most pivotal points in all history, declared that **Scripture alone** is our only rule or authority for faith and practice, our only rule for faith and life. Not the interpretations of popes and bishops and councils. *Sola scriptura was the formal cause of the Reformation. God’s Word alone is the ultimate authority.*

Luther came to this belief by the Holy Spirit working through him as he studied the Scriptures. He compared the Scriptures to what was taught in the Roman Catholic Church. He found great discrepancies between the two. On October 31, 1517, he nailed 95 theses to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The 95 theses objected to specific Roman Catholic Church practices. Keep in mind, he wasn’t seeking to divide the church but to reform the church.

Luther used his preaching, teaching, and writing to try to convince the Roman Catholic Church of the truths of Scripture. His purpose was not only to declare the sole authority of the Scriptures, sola Scriptura, but also to emphasize that justification is by faith alone, sola fide, (the material cause of the Reformation), and not by any works that a person could do to try to earn God’s favor. The Roman Catholic Church was not persuaded. In fact, they sought to marginalize Luther, then kill him. They were unsuccessful, and the Reformation spread throughout western Europe and to the new world.

While I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer ... the Word so greatly weakened the Papacy that never a Prince or Emperor inflicted such damage upon it. I did nothing. The Word did it all.

—Martin Luther⁵

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was founded upon the authority of the Bible, yet it set the world aflame.

—J. Gresham Machen⁶

To Luther and the Reformers, **God’s Word alone was the ultimate authority.**

⁵ Barrett, M., & Mohler, R. A., Jr. (2016). [*God’s word alone—the authority of scripture: what the reformers taught...and why it still matters*](#) (p. 33). Zondervan.

⁶ Barrett, M., & Mohler, R. A., Jr. (2016). [*God’s word alone—the authority of scripture: what the reformers taught...and why it still matters*](#) (p. 33). Zondervan.

How did Luther and the Roman Catholic Church disagree regarding the source of Truth? Instead of Scripture Alone, the Roman Catholic Church claimed a three-fold structure of authority: Scripture, tradition, and the Magisterium. Yes, Scripture was a source of truth as were the traditions of the church. But the key component in this three-fold authority was the Magisterium itself. I first learned about the Magisterium from Harry Reeder.

What is the Magisterium? It is the authoritative teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, manifested primarily in the pope. **Who does the Roman Catholic Church believe the pope to be?** The successor of the Apostle Peter. Since they believe this, then his official pronouncements (called *ex-cathedra* or “*from the chair*” as the vicar of Christ on earth), his official pronouncements were regarded as the very words of God Himself. The pope’s pronouncements were as binding and infallible as the holy Word of God.⁷ The Reformers did not believe the pope and bishops were infallible; they believed **Scripture alone was the true authority**.

The sentiments of the doctrine of sola scriptura are expressed in Martin Luther’s famous speech at the Diet (Deet) of Worms (1521) after he was asked to recant his teachings:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience . . . May God help me. Amen.

For Luther, the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone, were the final arbiter of what we should believe. **God’s Word, God’s Word alone, was his ultimate authority**. And that’s what we at Briarwood believe-Scriptural or biblical Magisterium.

Scripture is completely trustworthy because God was in control of its writing. Its words are entirely authoritative for our faith and lives.

- **2 Peter 1.21** *For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*
- **2 Tim 3. 14-17** ¹⁴*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching (or doctrine KJV or instruction NIV);, reproof, correction, and training in*

⁷ Kruger, Michael, [Understanding Sola Scriptura](#). Ligonier.

righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This is probably the most famous verse in the Bible about the Bible. God tells us that “*all Scripture*” meaning every word, every jot and tittle, every book, every genre, is God’s Word.

“*All Scripture is God-breathed.*” Scripture is inspired by God. The idea is that God breathed out the Scripture or God produced the Scripture somewhat like He did creation. “*By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Ps. 33:6).⁸*

The preacher Oliver Greene said: “God Almighty is sovereign; and if we are saved through the power of the Gospel; if the Gospel makes us wise unto salvation; if it is not God’s will that any man perish but that all come to repentance, we can rest assured that He has preserved and protected His holy Scriptures down through the centuries!... Anything we need to know about our relationship to God and His relationship to us is found in the Bible. We need no added books, and we cannot afford to take any away. If we add to or take from His Word, God will take away our part out of the book of life. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”⁹

When one studies what the Scripture says about itself, he sees accuracy and dependability. Note these facts.

- The Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture. 1 Peter 1.21, *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*
- The writers of the OT say that the Scriptures are the Word of God. Jer. 1.9, *Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.* Heb 1.1, *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,*
- Jesus Christ claims that the Bible is the Word of God. Luke 24.25-27
²⁵ *And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”* ²⁶ *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”* ²⁷ *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*
- The Bible is absolutely trustworthy. Mt 24.35, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*¹⁰ Jn 10.34-35, *The Scripture cannot be broken.*

“*All Scripture is profitable,*” meaning useful, helpful, beneficial. God lists 4 ways Scripture is profitable.

1. The Bible is profitable for doctrine or teaching.

What is doctrine? According to *Logos Bible Software Factbook*:

⁸ Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2006). [*1 Thessalonians–Philemon*](#) (p. 259). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

⁹ Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2006). [*1 Thessalonians–Philemon*](#) (p. 260). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

¹⁰ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Mt 24:35). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

- “Doctrine is the body of teachings of the Christian faith concerning its central beliefs: the deity of Christ, salvation by God’s grace and not by works, salvation through Jesus Christ alone, the resurrection of Christ, the Gospel, monotheism and the Holy Trinity.
- Doctrine is grounded in Scripture and aims to maintain the integrity of Christianity by distinguishing it from non-Christian beliefs.
- Doctrine is of central importance in Christian preaching and teaching in that it equips the people of God for effective and faithful service in his world.”¹¹

The doctrines of Scripture are the standard, the benchmark, the measuring stick by which we examine our lives. The Scriptures are not meant fill our heads with information; they are meant to transform us. We are to be changed by the WOG. God is not working to improve our lives, he is making us into different people, those who are conformed to the image of his Son.

Paul Tripp explains the applicable aspects of doctrine: “Those doctrines are meant to turn you inside out and your world upside down. Biblical doctrine is much more than an outline you give confessional assent to. Doctrine is something you live in even the smallest and most mundane moments of your life. Biblical doctrine is meant to transform your identity, alter your relationships, and reshape your finances. It’s meant to change the way you think and talk, how you approach your job, how you conduct yourself in time of leisure, how you act in your marriage, and the things you do as a parent. It’s meant to change the way you think about your past, interpret the present, and view the future.”¹²

Are you daily studying the Scriptures? Is it a regular part of your diet? Are you meditating on the Word of God? Are you carrying the Word into your life circumstances? Is the Bible transforming your life? Do you think, speak, and act differently as God’s Word and Spirit work in you?

2. The Bible is profitable for reproof.

Reproof reveals that you have been compared to the standard (the doctrine) and have come short. Although we are no longer under the curse and penalty of the law, we obey the law because we love Jesus. In fact, obedience is how we demonstrate our love. So, the law of God serves as a mirror and shows us as we really are.

John Calvin wrote what has become known as the “Threefold Use of the Law” in order to show the importance of the law for the Christian life.

- a. The law of God is a mirror of God’s holiness and our unrighteousness. It serves to reveal to us our need of a savior and show us our sin.
- b. The law of God is a restraint against sin.
- c. The law of God reveals what is pleasing and what is offensive to God.
- d. The Christian is to love the law of God and to obey the moral law of God.

¹¹ *Doctrine*, Factbook, Logos Bible Software

¹² Tripp, P. D. (2021). *Do You Believe?: 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life* (p. 22). Crossway.

Calvin: “By studying or meditating on the law of God, we attend the school of righteousness. We learn what pleases God and what offends Him. The moral law that God reveals in Scripture is always binding upon us. Our redemption is from the curse of God’s law, not from our duty to obey it. We are justified, not because of our obedience to the law, but in order that we may become obedient to God’s law. To love Christ is to keep His commandments. To love God is to obey His law.”¹³

The truth of Scripture is the gauge by which we measure our thoughts, words, actions, desires, motivations, choices, relationships, work ethic, and more. The Scripture reveals not only knowledge of God but knowledge of self. This should produce in us a deep humility as we are shown our utter depravity apart from Christ.

In what areas of your life are you falling short of the standard of God’s Word? Are you being obedient to what God has shown you in his Word?

3. The Bible is profitable for correction. This involves closing the gap between where we are and where God wants us to be.

As we read and study Scripture, we should ask, “What does this truth reveal to me about what is to be corrected? How will that correction take place in a way that is consistent with who God is and the provision he has made for me in Christ?

4. The Bible is profitable for training in righteousness.

How do we faithfully put God’s standard into practice? What change does God want us to put into practice in our thoughts, words, and deeds? In what ways and in what situations am I not thinking, speaking, and acting righteously?

These 4 points make clear that the Scriptures call for a life of self-examination that leads to orthodox beliefs, confession and repentance of sin, moving toward God, endurance during trial, and an intentional pursuit to know God through his Word and in submission to his Spirit.

Be honest, do we normally approach the Word in this way? Or, do we inhibit God’s Word in our lives because we don’t want to examine our lives too closely? Do we just want to move on? As a result, are there gaps in the things we say we believe and in how we actually live? **Are we making God’s Word our ultimate authority?**

Christ’s concern for the truth

Read Christ’s letter to the church at Pergamum (Rev 2.12-17), and you will see how deeply concerned the exalted Christ is regarding the truth. How can he be otherwise? After all, how does He describe Himself in John 14.6? “**I am ...the Truth.**” Jesus wants his followers to believe the truth, be committed to the truth, and obey the truth. What a Christian believes about Christ will show up in how he lives. Jesus not only wants the truth to be preserved but to spread to every tribe and tongue and nation. Christ’s concern for the truth is the thread running through his

¹³ Calvin, John. *Threefold Use of the Law*. Institutes, bk. II, 1:304-310.

message to Pergamum. And his concern is that God's Word permeates your life, so that **his Word is your ultimate authority.**

Romans 12.2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

May our minds be saturated with the Word of God. May our lives be transformed by the Word of God. May what Spurgeon said of John Bunyan be true of us today: "Why, this man is a living Bible! Prick him anywhere; his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God."¹⁴
God was Bunyan's ultimate authority. May it be ours.

¹⁴ Spurgeon, Charles. *"The Last Words of Christ on the Cross,"* #2644, on Luke 23:46. Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Vol. 45.