

Biblically Integrated

I imagine many of us, in recent weeks, saw the dramatic pictures of homes wasted by the power of surging floodwaters. With hurricane Ian there was massive devastation in South West Florida. Six weeks later, hurricane Nicole slammed into the East Coast and caused unprecedented damage in a small area locally. An online article on Reuters said: The beaches (*talking about Wilbur by the Sea just South of South Daytona*) were littered with piles of concrete, wood, and rebar, the remnants of large homes with picturesque views of the ocean. Residents surveyed the ruins in disbelief. One man whose entire home collapsed into the sea said: "*We didn't think it would be this bad.*" It's pretty striking to think about those images and the reality of the impact on real lives and then reflect on the fact that Jesus uses that same imagery of devastation to describe the life of someone who fails to build their life on the high ground and solid foundation of hearing and doing the things revealed by him in the Word of God. Sometimes the storms we face come from within. We struggle with emotions, relationships, habits, sins, guilt, shame, and bitterness. Sometimes they come from the floodwaters of a rapidly changing culture, the external pressures of the world pushing a dramatically different view of the origin and meaning of life and humanity, sex, sexuality, and identity. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus at this time and in this world?

This morning we're looking at the third of seven facets of discipleship. The first was that a disciple of Jesus is focused on God. The second is that a disciple of Jesus finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ. The third is that a disciple of Jesus is Biblically integrated. What does that mean? The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines "to integrate" this way: "to form, coordinate or blend into a functional unified whole. So to be biblically integrated is to bring all of the diverse and varied aspects of life under the life-giving, unifying wisdom and authority of the Bible.

We can put it this way: ***A disciple of Jesus Christ is committed to living all of life in light of the Bible as the life-giving, life-shaping Word of God.*** A disciple is a follower of Jesus, and Jesus continually affirmed the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. In **Matthew 4:4**, he says, *Man does not live on bread alone but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God.* He said the written words of the Bible

are words that come from God. In the little parable of the wise and foolish builder we just read from **Luke 6**, the wise man who digs deep and builds on the rock and whose house stands firm in the flood is the one who hears the words of Jesus and does what he says.

I. THE BIBLE IS THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION ON WHICH A DISCIPLE OF JESUS BUILDS HIS OR HER LIFE.

A. Jesus uses this illustration to teach us that his words, are foundational to all that we believe about life and how to live it.

He used a different but similar image in **John 8:31-32**. In **John 8**, he said, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* This is similar because the Word "abide" brings to mind the idea of a house or a home. It means to *live within* or *remain in a place*. When Jesus says, "I want you to abide in my teachings." He is saying don't just turn to my teaching for occasional inspiration or pick from my teaching the parts that appeal to you and fit well in the current culture. Let my teaching surround and enfold you. Live in them, don't leave them or let them go, and they will set you free. We are to *build on* and *abide in* the Words of Jesus.

B. Jesus spoke of *his* words and *his* teaching. Is it legitimate to apply that to the whole Bible? The answer is yes.

Jesus repeatedly spoke of the Bible that he had in his day as the Word of God. That is the same as the biggest part of our Bibles. What we call the Old Testament. Jesus had the same Scripture we have today, and the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that those Scriptures have been remarkably and accurately preserved throughout the centuries.

Not only did Jesus affirm the part of the Bible that preceded his life, he prophesied and affirmed the inspiration of the Scriptures that would follow him. In **John 14**, Jesus told his disciples that, as with the prophets of the Old Testament Scriptures, the Holy Spirit would ensure they accurately remembered, reported, and recorded his teachings. **John 14:24–26**, *These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

This is why **2 Timothy 3:16-17** can say, *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.* The phrase “every good work” tells us that every area of life, every sphere of life, every relationship in life in which good is to be done by followers of Jesus is to be Biblically informed and Biblically shaped for good works.

II. THE BIBLE REVEALS CRUCIAL TRUTHS FOR THE WHOLE OF OUR LIVES AND EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES.

Think of the illustration Jesus gives us in **Luke 6**. If you are building a home, how much of the home do you build on the foundation? Every bit of it. If you want your house (your life) to be strong and successful, you have to build every bit of it on the right foundation. You don't build your house and put the living room on the foundation but then build the bedroom out on the sand. One of the dangers we all face as Christians is that we build some of our lives on the foundation but not all of it. Some of us are tempted to end up with whole wings and additions and important rooms in the building of our lives out on the sand and not on the rock of God's truth at all!

A. The Bible is a sufficient foundation for your life because it speaks to a huge variety of issues and concerns.

When I was a child, my mother bought me a prism at a museum. I thought it was so cool to see how in the white light, there was actually a multi-colored spectrum of various shades and hues. Then one time, when I was studying the book of Ephesians, I noticed how there is something like this in the Bible, and Ephesians is an especially clear example of it. In the first three chapters of Ephesians, you have this clearly unified truth of the gospel – the redemptive love of God in Christ. But then, in the second half of Ephesians, you can think of it as if that unified light passes through a prism of application and reflection that reveals its wide variety of implications for every part of our lives.

1. The first half (Ephesians 1-3) tells us all about what God has done for us in Christ. In **Ephesians 1** it says God has chosen us, redeemed us, forgiven us, lavished us with grace, and sealed us by his Spirit. In **Ephesians 2** it says that in Christ, we are made alive, saved by grace, granted peace, given access to God the Father, and made a dwelling place for his Holy Spirit. **Ephesians 3** says we are made

partakers of the promise of salvation, given unsearchable riches, entrusted with God's mysteries, and given boldness in our access to God. It ends with a prayer to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge.

In those three chapters, the only command is to remember where we came from so we can see God's grace the more clearly.

2. The last three chapters of Ephesians begin to reveal all the implications of that grace for every aspect of our lives. To be biblically integrated is to see that Scripture shows how the love of God in Christ has implications for every sphere of life. In **Ephesians 4** It talks about guarding our unity and walking in humility. Our words, the way we speak to others, and the impact of what we say. It talks about generosity and anger, our emotions, and the way they affect our relationships with people. It calls us to kindness and compassion, and peace-making. In **Ephesians 5** it talks about sex, sexual immorality, covetousness, idolatry, wisdom and making the most of your time, not being drunk, being filled with the Holy Spirit, Marriage, and the relationship between husband and wife in the home. In **Ephesians 6** It teaches us about the relationship between parent and child. It goes on to talk about our work life. How to be in a position of authority as a boss, and how to work well when you work for or under someone else. The Bible speaks to all of that and tells us how we can relate all of that to our relationship with God. In the end, it tells us about spiritual warfare, the unseen spiritual enemies we face, and how to stand firm in the Lord when evil days come doing all things in prayer.

Ephesians is just showing us an example of the many ways the Bible, centered on the gospel, speaks to every area of life. Our inner lives, our emotions, our strongly felt reactions to people, our bad habits, and hang-ups. How we live in the home with husband and wife, parents and children, the day at work, and the times of prayer. Every area of life.

B. What insights can we draw from all of this?

Two simple truths.

1. For disciples of Jesus, the commands in the Bible are to be obeyed in every part of our lives. Jesus said the wise man who builds on the rock is the one who hears his Word *and* does what he says. In the great commission, Jesus says we are to make disciples teaching them to obey *all* things I have commanded you. I think we struggle to obey when to obey goes against self-will, requires us to

step out of our comfort zone, or goes against popular opinion. Jesus teaches us that our feelings, perceptions, popular opinions, and cultural pressures can all lead us astray. He is the good shepherd. He calls us to follow him.

Sometimes it seems as if almost every week, I see people shrug their shoulders at what they perceive to be difficult Scriptures and excuse themselves and others from obedience to the one they say is Lord and in whom they claim to believe. We can have many biblical influences in our lives and yet not be biblically integrated. If our own subjective feelings, our personal opinions, what seems right or makes sense to us, or whichever way the wind is blowing culturally - if those things determine our values, opinions, and our choices. We are not integrating the truth of Scripture into all of life, and our discipleship is selective and partial, and powerless for that reason. Almost every week, I also see people who bow their knees and say, *“Lord, you’ve saved my soul, You have redeemed my life, I believe in your love, I trust in your will, and by your grace, I will integrate the truth of your Word into every realm of my life even when it’s hard to do so, when it pushes me outside my comfort zone and when it is counter-cultural. I can’t do it on my own, but Lord, I am going to keep repenting and believing and coming to you for strength as I build my life on your Word and follow Jesus.”*

What Jesus makes clear over and over again is that our obedience is not begrudging conformity to arbitrary rules but grateful submission to the wisdom of God. **Psalm 119:105** says, The Bible is a light for our path and a lamp for our feet. The Bible is filled with page after page of clear instructions for day-to-day life as well as the big issues of life. To follow Jesus is to embrace the wisdom of God's Word.

A disciple of Jesus obeys the commands of the Bible.

2. For disciples of Jesus, the promises of the Bible are to be believed in all that they promise. You see that all through the Bible and the teaching of Jesus. It is reflected clearly in the whole structure of the book of Ephesians. There are three chapters filled with gracious promises before the wisdom and the commands even begin to unfold. The promises in the Bible are as essential for a disciple of Jesus as are his commands or his wisdom. Whether it is the waves of a hostile culture or the turmoil of our own inner struggles, we have to stand, first of all, on the promises of God. We find them revealed with richness, beauty, poetry, and power in the Bible.

Psalm 1:1-3 says, *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law, he meditates day and night.³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

We should come to church, listen to sermons, go to Bible studies, and read and meditate on the Bible on our own so that we can believe its promises and, believing its promises, be enlightened by its wisdom and enlightened by its wisdom, obey its commands. The commands and the promises of God are as relevant and true for us today as they were in the days of Jesus.

In the movie, *Hosiers*, Gene Hackman plays a coach named Norman Dale, who is trying to take a rural high-school basketball team from Hickory, Indiana, to their state finals. On the day of the semifinals, the team arrives at the famous Hinkle Field House, at Butler University in Indianapolis. It's a huge arena sometimes called the basketball Cathedral. When the players enter the arena, they are shocked by how huge it all seems. Gawking at the seats, the stand-alone goals, the suspended scoreboard, and the lights, they are awestruck and intimidated. Coach Dale tells one of the players to take a tape measure and measure the distance between the free-throw line and the goal. "What's the distance?" he asks. "Fifteen feet," the player says. Dale then tells the smallest player on the team to climb on the shoulders of a taller player so they can measure the goal. "How high is it?" he asks. "Ten feet," the player says. Coach Dale says, "I believe you'll find these are the exact same measurements as our gym back in Hickory." The team members share in some nervous laughter, but everybody begins to relax. Sometimes the challenges we face in the modern world can seem to loom monumental before us. We need to remember we're playing the same game that has always been played. We're facing the same or similar issues, the same human problems, struggles, and temptations, and we have the same source of life and truth in the Bible, and it can sustain us through any storm.

Get a Bible that you can and will read, like the English Standard Version. Get into it. An essential part of discipleship is learning to feed yourself spiritually from the Bible, believing its promises and obeying its commands, and growing in its wisdom. Get a good study bible, so you have notes that help you with the hard parts. If it is new to you, by all means, start with the easier, most accessible books like the four

gospels, the New Testament epistles, Psalms, and Proverbs. Sign up for discipleship so someone can help lead you as you get focused on God, fulfilled in Christ, and Biblically integrated.

CONCLUSION

A disciple of Jesus is committed to continually growing in the knowledge of God's Word and applying it to every aspect of life.

In **John 10:27**, Jesus says: *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* When you read the Bible, hear in it the voice of Christ, your Savior, and shepherd. The Good Shepherd, who speaks to us in Scripture to guide us, gave himself on the cross to save us.

One of the greatest and most frequently repeated promises in the Bible is the promise from God that he will save your eternal soul, forgive your sins, and give you eternal life with him in heaven if you will admit that you need forgiveness, recognize his Lordship, and surrender your self-righteousness in order to trust in Jesus Christ alone as your Savior. That promise is made, in various ways, well over one hundred times in the New Testament alone. What God promises in the Bible is total forgiveness and eternal life. That promise is offered freely by grace. It is not dependent on your imperfect performance but is offered as His gift of love, received through faith in Jesus, as revealed in the Bible. The same love that saves our souls gives us this book, the Bible.

It is a priceless treasure, and it is meant to be believed in all that it promises and obeyed in all that it commands. Its wisdom is to be integrated into every aspect of life at every level of our lives.

Amen.

A Prayer Expressing Faith In Christ

Almighty God, You have beautifully revealed your love in Jesus whose body was broken, whose blood was shed for our salvation. I confess my sins and admit my need for your saving grace. I have gone my own way, disbelieving and disobeying your Word. I turn to Christ. I trust in him for my redemption. I believe he died on the cross to pay for my sins and rose again as Lord and Savior. I receive and rest on him alone for my salvation. Grant me the eternal life promised in your Word to all who come to him in faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Prayer for Spiritual Renewal

Lord Jesus, May I grow to increasingly embrace the wisdom you reveal, trust the promises you have made and do those things that you command. May your word be in practice, a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Help me

to see the blessing and beauty of your word so that I treasure its truths and honor it's wisdom. May your Holy Spirit use Holy Scripture to enable and equip me to fully follow Jesus Christ.
Amen