

## Biblical Foundation

Deut. 32:47

**Intro.** This AM I want to talk about the first of ten core values our leadership team has identified as foundational to our ministries at MBC. Our plan is to use the first Sunday of the month to present one of these values until all ten have been covered. I realize this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of October, but I already told you where I was last Sunday so get over it.

To be sure we're all on the same page, let me say a few words to explain what we mean by "Core Values." By core values we're talking about the fundamental beliefs of our church. Our doctrinal statement defines what we believe the Bible teaches. But core values are guiding principles from the Bible that direct our behavior and support our purpose and vision. Most married people don't want to appear shallow when asked what initially caused them to fall in love with their spouse. So they say something academic like this, "*We discovered we have so much in common...or we share so many of the same interests.*" What a couple shares in common are often core values or internal beliefs that determine the way they live their lives. Core values define who we are. Because the core values of our church derive from God's Word, they're not elastic. They're solid and inflexible. We might say, "Each core value represents a hill worth dying on."

So why was it important for MBC to establish a list of core values? Why now? I mean the church has been in existence for 70 years! Let me suggest four reasons:

- First, core values are like a roadmap or a GPS that keep us on course. Core values help us make decisions. They help us determine and evaluate the success of our ministries.
- Second, the core values we have identified, distinguish us. They declare who we are and what we believe to be most important.
- Third, the core values established by our leadership team help provide continuity. Despite changes in leadership, these core values will remain the same. They were not compiled by a single individual but by a veteran team of spiritual leaders.
- Fourth, our younger generations have been trained to think in terms of core values / vision / and mission statements. This terminology speaks the language of our times just as other terminology spoke the language of previous generations. So the establishment of core values doesn't make us "hip", but it propels us into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Because of their importance, we've included a bookmark version of our core values in your bulletin this AM. I hope you'll keep this in your Bible and become familiar with these values. If someone asks what your church is about, you can say, this is who we are and these values are most important to us.

So let's consider the first one this AM. Even though this core value is at the top of the list, it's the foundation that undergirds everything.

### **1. Biblical Foundation – *God's Word is the basis for our lives and ministries.***

**Heb. 4:12** says, **For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.** The Bible isn't just a collection of stories about the power of God. We believe as this verse teaches...the Bible is the power of God for salvation and right living. Therefore, how we approach the powerful love letter from God is of utmost importance.

70 years ago, our church was given the name, Mayfair Bible Church. The Bible is our middle name. The motto that describes what we're about says, "*Proclaiming the whole Bible for the whole person.*"

This could just be another cute saying, like *“Our worms catch fish or die trying”*...but it’s meant to be a concise representation of who we are and the task we’re devoted to. When **II Tim. 3:16** says, **All Scripture is God breathed**, it means the whole Bible is God’s Word. Because the Bible is God’s Word and unlike any book written by man, the next verse says it is **useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.** (II Tim. 3:16, 17) **Thoroughly equipped for every good work** signifies wholeness or completeness. It means God’s Word has wisdom for every dimension of a believer’s life. **Col. 3:9, 10** say, **Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.** God’s Word is the textbook given to reveal God and renew our minds so we might be more like Him. Discipleship and various forms of preaching and teaching are the means God uses to help us learn, love and live His truth. I appreciate this quote from President Ronald Reagan. *“Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face.”* We believe that!

**1. Faulty Foundations** - Trevor McIlwain is an author, speaker and international coordinator for church planting and evangelism with New Tribes Mission. Trevor and his wife, Fran, have served with NTM since 1965. For ten of those years they served as missionaries to the Palawano people of the Philippine Islands. In his book entitled, Building on Firm Foundations, Trevor recounts a tragedy repeated many times both literally and metaphorically. Let me paraphrase his story...

*“With a thunderous sound, the walls cracked and crumbled. Timbers splintered. The roof buckled and fell into pieces. Floor after floor crashed one upon another, crushing, trapping and killing the tenants inside. In a few moments, the high rise apartments were reduced to rubble. How had the disaster happened? From all appearances, the building looked sturdy. Why would it suddenly collapse?”*

*Subsequent investigations proved the builder had not followed proper building specifications and plans. Willing to gamble with the lives and the safety of human beings, he cut corners and economized on every aspect of construction. The depth of concrete had been reduced, and not all of the required steel reinforcement had been installed. The foundations were inadequate for the height and weight of the structure. Walls and floors lacked what was necessary to secure and strengthen the building. Hasty construction and temporary financial gain resulted in misery, destruction and death.”*

If you’re a home-owner, you understand how important it is to have a solid foundation under your house. The drama team reminded us of the parable of the wise and foolish builders in **Matt. 7**. In **v.24** Jesus said, **“...everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”** Today, it’s not popular to take the Bible literally or to accept its teachings as the final authority. Many feel the Bible is outdated, irrelevant and unscientific. The Russian Dictionary defines the Bible as a *“collection of fantastic legends without scientific support. It is full of dark hints, historical mistakes and contradictions. It serves as a factor for gaining power and subjugating unknowing nations.”* That explains a lot about Russia. But that definition isn’t unlike the view of many Americans. Others respect the Bible as a great book, but their lives are lived a great distance from the principles and standards the Bible teaches.

In **Matt. 7** Jesus spoke of a foundation that can withstand the storms / forces / and tests of life. We’re in a spiritual war and the Adversary has launched an all out assault against this book God has given to be the foundation for our lives / our families / our churches / and our nation. There’s a reason the Bible and prayer have been eliminated from public education. The Adversary knows what havoc he can inflict when the foundations of our lives are weak and faulty. Rejecting the Bible, Pastor Rick Warren lists four options people base their lives on. The first is...

- **Popular culture.** Some choose to base their lives on what everybody around them is thinking and doing. They reason, *“if it’s popular, it must be right.”* So that’s what they do.

Yet what is popular today is almost guaranteed to not be popular tomorrow. Some may remember the permissive theories of child rearing espoused by Dr. Benjamin Spock. (no relation to the guy with pointy ears on Star Wars.) Even before his life ended, Spock recanted many of those theories. But, several generations were adversely affected by his popular ideas and society is still feeling the after-shocks. Basing your life on popular culture is like building a house on wheels because pop culture is never stationary.

- **Tradition.** Others build their lives on what has always been done or what their parents and grandparents believed and how they lived their lives. There's some sense in that. Tradition becomes ensconced because to some degree, it works. But no tradition lasts forever. It eventually wears out / becomes obsolete and invalid. In **Mk. 7:8** Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for ranked tradition ahead of truth. That's a good reminder for all of us.
- **Reason.** God gave us the ability to think logically and we need to use these faculties more than we do. But as we all know, human reason isn't infallible or mistake proof. **Prov. 16:25** says, **There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.** Our ability to reason and think things out is limited and will sometimes let us down. God alone has perfect wisdom. Only His Word can be trusted to be right in every situation.
- **Emotions.** Some foolishly build their lives on what feels right to them. If it feels right, they do it. But feelings can be very deceptive...they lie to us all the time. We lie to ourselves more than anyone else does. If we live by our feelings our lives will be spent manipulated by our moods. God has given us something far more reliable than feelings.

So it isn't wise to build our lives on things that change like shifting sand. The little cottage our family purchased in E. Tawas came with access to a private beach. During the past 3 years, we've seen the beach go from wide and spacious to narrow and crowded. It looks different every time we're there. The sandy shoreline is shaped by wind, waves, storms and rising water levels. Our changing beach reminds me of **Eph. 4:14** where Paul used several metaphors to describe the goal of discipleship and Christian Education. **Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.** Yet that's how life is for many people. They are immature and their shoreline is constantly changing. They base their life on what's popular / what tradition dictates / how reason and logic guides them / or on how they feel. These foundations are fluid and changing. Yet as Jesus said, the wise person builds his/her life on some-thing solid and substantial. That trustworthy foundation is obedience to His Word.

**2. Firm Foundations** - Here's the thing about God's Word...its forever relevant and it never changes. In **Matt. 5:18** Jesus said, **I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.** Because permanent truth is so foreign in a world where everything is viewed as fluid, Jesus repeated it again. In **Matt. 24:35** He said, **Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.** We may not always understand God's Word. We may not always like it. It will never be popular or politically correct. But the Word of God is the only platform stable enough to build our lives on. So in **Matt. 7:24** Jesus said, **Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** Notice carefully...hearing the Word of God is never enough. It's only one half the formula for building your life on a solid foundation.

Epoxy cements have amazing strength. In my mind's eye, I can still picture advertisement with the guy suspended high over a concrete floor by his hard hat glued to the underside of an I beam. These products come with two tubes. One tube contains resin...the other contains hardener.

The resin is soft and pliable until the hardener is added. The resin only becomes strong when the contents of the two tubes are mixed. The same is true with Bible knowledge. Unless faith and obedience is added to knowledge of the Word...the Word can't do anything for us. Israel proved that. **Heb. 4:2 - For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.** The same point is made in **Jas. 1:22** which says, **Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

Let's see how this first core value is supported by three passages in the book of Deuteronomy.

- The first is **Deut. 6:6-9 - These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** According to these verses, the home is the primary school of Christian Education. Parents are the primary communicators of God's truth. **v.6** explains that God's commands must be on a parent's heart first. Only when a parent knows and obeys God's commands can they talk about them and impress them on the hearts of their children. You see, the word of God is to be foundational in our homes. Because this first core value is a guiding principle that directs our behavior and supports our purpose and vision...MBC offers many opportunities for adults to be taught God's Word. Beyond adult learning, we have a SS curriculum called Disciple Land and an Awana Club Program. These have been intentionally selected because they encourage parents and children to talk about the things they're learning from God's Word. We do this because we believe the Bible is foundational for a life of meaning and purpose. To learn, love and live God's Word is a hill worthy dying on.
- The second verse I want to draw your attention to is **Deut. 8:3 - He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.** God designed Israel's wilderness trials to humble them and teach them valuable life lessons. He does the same today. As a church family, we do life together. And life brings many trials. Our weekly prayer sheet is just a partial representation of the trials our church family is presently experiencing. Yet God's purpose for trials is the same for us as it was for Israel. Trials humble us. They teach us we're not self-sufficient. We all need the help and resources only God can supply. We need the Lord. Our family had a specific answer to prayer last week. Jim's house in TN sold with a closing date the end of the month. We thank and praise the Lord for His faithfulness.

But notice in this verse...our specific need is the regular intake of God's Word. We were not designed to **live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.** Once again, our core belief is that every man, woman, boy and girl needs to regularly feed on God's Word. This is our commitment and a hill worth dying on.

- The third passage is **Deut. 32:46, 47 -"Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you--they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."** Notice, **the words of God's law are not just idle words for us.** We know what an **idle word** is. It's a frivolous word that no one takes seriously. An **idle word** is hollow, empty, trivial and perhaps even careless or foolish. In our lifetime, we've all spoken so many of these words. But God has never spoken an idle word. His word is never idle nor is it ever to be taken lightly.

We believe God's Word is the sure foundation for our lives and church and ministry because not a single word in this book is hollow, empty, trivial or spoken carelessly.

Technically speaking, we believe in **verbal plenary inspiration**. **Verbal** means the words in the original languages were chosen by God. **Plenary** means every part of the Bible was equally inspired. The story of the great fish that swallowed Jonah is just as inspired and reliable as **Jn. 3:16**. **Inspiration** means God supernaturally superintended the writing of His Word so the message was written down exactly as He intended.

But notice how v.47 continues. The words from God are not idle...**they are your life**. Like an umbilical cord between an unborn child and its mother...like a life support system to a patient in intensive care...God's Word is our life. And notice v.47 - **By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess**. The Bible is a book of life, not death. Its power is life-giving not life taking. Moses said, **by them** (that is, by keeping these words from God), **you will live long**. That's what Jesus meant when He told His disciples, "the words that I speak are spirit and life." A superior quality of life belongs to those who order their lives in obedience to God's Word! When obeyed the Bible will keep you out of jail / out of debt / out of conflict with neighbors and relatives / out of all sorts of trouble / and most importantly...out of Hell. It teaches us how to be good children / good parents / good neighbors / good employees / good employers / good citizens / and good church members. Doctors tell us Bible principles when obeyed even contribute to good health.

These passages in Deuteronomy are echoed and supported throughout both testaments. Today we have more opportunities to hear the Word than ever before. I even have a Bible app. on my phone I can listen to in bed before I fall asleep! The problem is, we've often settled for the resin without adding the hardener...the faith and obedience. The Word of God is perfect and infallible, so often our response to God's Word is faulty.

**3. Faithful building** – Each of us is building something. We're all building a life and a legacy. Many of us are also building a family. Hopefully many of us are involved building Christ's Church. But we're all building something. In **I Cor. 3:10** Paul wrote, **By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds.**

Let me use pastoral counseling to illustrate the way we sometimes respond to the truth of God's Word. A counselee comes in need of some help...some direction. After the pastor has listened to their story, he identifies their need. They need to get from where they are to some other place. Let's say they want to get from Flushing to Pt. Huron. So with Bible opened, the pastor explains the best route...the biblical route. He encourages them to take I-75 south to I-69 and then I-69 east to Pt. Huron. This route is clearly marked and direct. But no sooner than he recommends these route numbers (like Bible verses), the counselee begins to object. It seems they went that way one time before and didn't like it. They say a friend told them the pastor would probably send them that way. But they have a different idea...they prefer secondary roads like M-57 or M-46.

Still urging I-69 as the preferred route, the pastor suggests they take M-57 east. Once again they object. They like M-57 west better than M-57 east because M-57 passes through the historic town of Chesaning and a little diner with fabulous homemade pies...and M-57 east is so rural and boring. Are you tracking with me? Now M-57 west will eventually get you to Pt. Huron, but... Now maybe this analogy seems a bit cynical, but isn't it similar to the way we often respond to God's Word. Like Jonah, we hear God's Word and then set out the opposite direction. We go west when God said "go east." When we do this, we complicate our lives with all sorts of difficulties until we finally decide God's way is right after all.

So once again, the point is this...the firm foundation for our lives / our homes / our church / and our nation, is a two part formula. The first part is hearing the Word. The second part is faithful obedience to what we hear. In the face of Satanic Adversity and increasing hostility from the world, our first core value states that ***God's Word is the basis for our lives and ministries.*** It's a hill worth dying on.

And the Word itself has specified the primary task of pastors and teachers. Jesus told Peter, "*If you love me, feed my sheep.*" **II Tim. 4:2** identifies the food we all need. **Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.** Obedience to this command sets us apart from others that preach all sorts of upbeat happy topics people love to hear. Because of our commitment to preach the whole counsel of God, we may never be the biggest most popular church in town. But isn't it better to have God's forever approval than any momentary earthly applause?

Because God's Word isn't an idle word we take it seriously. It's our life. We handle it cautiously / studiously / and with utmost respect for what it is. We consistently urge you to approach God's Word with intentionality. God's Word must be absorbed and obeyed, not just listened to. This is why we gladly provide a Bible for any who need one. We provide sermon notes for every message / we've chosen to use a Bible version in a more up to date and easier to understand translation / we utilize power point / we record each message for later listening and our website offers a pdf. file. Finally, we discuss the passage or topic under consideration each Sunday evening as we gather for fellowship here or in Life Groups. You see, God has given what we need to build a solid foundation for our lives.

The other day Rick Weiss was telling me about a father/sons team who do meticulous tile work. Rick said he'd recommend them to anyone without a moment's hesitation. God's challenge to each of us who believe is stated in **II Tim. 2:15 - Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.**

The beach is a nice place to sunbathe and build sandcastles...but shifting sand is no platform for a life destined to spend eternity in God's presence in heaven, or banished from Him in Hell. So Paul wrote... **each one should be careful how he builds.**

So our first core value concerns a **Biblical Foundation.** *God's Word is the basis for our lives and ministries.*