

“Abide”  
August 14, 2022

Good morning, go ahead and open your Bibles to **Luke 4**; we’ll get there in a little bit. I’ve got a story to share with you first.

**William Tyndale**

In the 16th century, there was a man by the name of William Tyndale. Tyndale was a professor at Cambridge University, and he’s without a doubt one of the great minds not only of his time, but of western civilization in general. He was a linguist and became fluent in both Greek and Hebrew, and was able to read the Bible in its original languages; which, was very rare, even for a priest. Most priests at that time could not even identify where the ten commandments were in the Bible because it was all in Latin, and most priests weren’t trained in those languages.

After reading, he came to two very simple conclusions:

- 1 - The Bible should function as the source of authority.
- 2 - Every follower of Jesus should be able to read the Bible in his or her own language.

It was actually illegal in England to distribute the Bible in English. So, Tyndale escaped to Germany where the German reformation was in full force. It’s not certain, but he was most likely hiding under Martin Luther's protection. There he translated the first ever English version of the New Testament, and with help he smuggled 18,000 Bibles across the channel into England. Followers of Jesus would hold secret meetings in homes, they would find somebody who could read, and they would whisper as they read the Bible. Most were hearing the Bible read out loud in their language for the first time.

When King Henry VIII found out, he was enraged. He bought up 6,000 copies and then he had them burned on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Can you imagine? Burning Bibles on the steps of the church.

He then passed a new law saying that all Tyndale's Bibles were to be destroyed upon contact and anyone found with one was to be put to death. Eventually, he sent a spy across the English Channel to befriend Tyndale. Tyndale fell for the ploy, he was arrested, and after a year of torture when he refused to stop translating and spreading the English Bible, he was burned at the stake. Witnesses to his execution report that his last words were a prayer: **“Lord, open the king of England's eyes.”**

And God answered that prayer. In fact, just a few years later the king recanted, and he let the Bible be translated into English for the first time for all to read. 85% of the King James Bible a number of years later is literally cut and copied from Tyndale's; and, a good chunk of the English Bible that you have in your lap, if you have something like the ESV, NASB, NIV, is still from his translation. Scholars call him the father of modern English due to his great influence on the English language itself.

**This was not the first time** a powerful leader or empire in history tried very hard to keep people from having access to the Bible. Even now across the world, based on the country you live in, you could risk persecution and death if you have the Bible app on your phone. Which raises a question: **what is it about this library that is open in your lap, or more likely in an app, that some of the most powerful leaders of history were willing to torture, maim, and kill just to keep it out of your hands?**

**Why is it that almost all of the great empires of history, from the Roman Empire, to King Henry VIII in England, to Nazi Germany, to Soviet Russia have all put at least a censorship ban on the Bible and its teachings, if not made it full-on illegal?**

**Why is it today that the ideological empires of both the progressive left and the conservative right often take such issue with the Bible?** Today, we don't live under political oppression as others around the world or in history have; but, these ideological empires either take great issue with the Bible and try to deny it, or they work suspiciously hard to make it seem like the Bible says that "we" are *always* right and "they" are *always* wrong. One side can cut parts out and say, "it's outdated and out of touch; we have progressed past these ideas." And, another can cut lines out and say, "this is why you should put your total faith in us and our agenda."

**What is it about this Bible, this library of different authors over time, that is such a threat to those in power and the status quo, and yet so compelling to so many over thousands of years?**

**That's what we're gonna address this morning - what is the Bible? Why is it a big deal? And how can we grow into a people who spend time in God's Word?**

### **Intro to the Series**

Most of you, when you walked in, should have gotten a handout as to what our covenant practices are. And today, we're going to zoom in on what I would argue is the bedrock practice of a Christian: abiding. Here's what it says if you want to follow along on your sheet or read on the screen, **"Abiding in Jesus connects us to Him as the source of life as He produces fruit in us. Therefore, I commit to the consistent disciplines of meditating on God's Word and prayer."**

This is something that if you're a member of our church, we're saying, "Hey, we're gonna commit to this because we think it's a big deal." Also, to give you a peek behind the curtain a bit, we recently did our Annual Member Check-Ups where we asked all of our church members - how ya doing with these seven practices? And, it was overall pretty encouraging; but, we did notice that about 25% of our members would say they have a hard time spending time abiding with Jesus. So, as a pastoral team, we thought it would be really helpful and beneficial to spend some time breaking down why this is so valuable and critical to the life of our church.

### **What is the Bible?**

Now, what is the Bible? Because, the better we understand this, we're able to better understand the big picture of the Bible itself. Here's our working definition this morning for the Bible. We've taught it this way over the past several years, and we picked it up from Dr. Tim Mackie.

**"The Bible is a library of books written by God and man that tells a unified story that leads to Jesus."**

Love that. Let's just break that down for a second: it's a library - specifically 66 books. 39 in the Hebrew Bible, 27 in the New Testament. Written by dozens of authors over a span of about 1,500 years in 3 different languages - Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek - with loads of different genres and stories, but all the while we acknowledge that God was overseeing all of that writing process to tell us one big grand story that connects it all together - namely to the person and work of Jesus.

Now, how does that all work and make sense? How can you tell a hundred different seemingly disconnected stories and have it tell one story? Well, I've got a great analogy for you:

In 2008, a story began that took 11 years to complete. It took 23 separate stories to tell it and was written by numerous authors all around the world, all the while being overseen by one main author. I'm talking about the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

23 individual movies. Written and directed and starring different characters telling their own separate stories all while overseen by one author Kevin Feige to tell one grand story, the person and work of Thanos the Mad Titan.

I mean, it works. When it comes to the Bible, all these genres and time periods and seemingly random things - all find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.

To show you what I mean, take a look at **Luke 4**, starting in verse 14.

**Luke 4:14-21**

**14** And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. **15** And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

**16** And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. **17** And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

Ok, now you gotta see the humor going on here. This is a really funny scene. So, the custom was, a rabbi would pull out a scroll from the Hebrew Bible and read it and expound upon it. Very similar to what you might expect at a church service. And so Jesus gets up there...you know the bumper video played and all that, lights come up on him - and he reads from the scroll of Isaiah.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

**18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

**19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he reads the passage and it's from **Isaiah 61** that talks about how there's a prophet who will come one day. In **v.18** of Luke 4 it talks about how he will be anointed - the Hebrew for this is - **משח (Meshach)**. It's where we get the word Messiah. And that a day will come when this Messiah prophet will bring freedom to the people of Israel and usher in the Kingdom of God. Now at that time, Israel was under Roman occupation; they weren't free at all. And so verses like **Isaiah 61** that Jesus quotes are near and dear to their hearts. They longed collectively for the day when this would happen. For a Messiah King to come and set them free once and for all.

Now, the custom is Jesus is supposed to, at the synagogue, unpack the passage; but, he doesn't. What does he do instead? Take a look.

**20** And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Instead of teaching it, he just rolls it back up, hands it to the worship pastor or whoever, and makes his way back to his seat. And everyone sorta follows him as he goes back to his pew or whatever and it's crickets. Everyone's waiting for him to say something. And, I don't know maybe it's because I watch too many SNL skits; but, I almost imagine Jesus goes back to his seat and tries to play it off, and then sort of wakes back up and says, "Oh yea, the teaching part." And then he says this:

**21** And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

So here - Jesus just makes a wild claim. He says the Meshach - the Messiah - the promised Davidic King who will set the captive Israel free in **Isaiah 61** has come. And, he's the guy. Jesus sees it as a promise that is fulfilled in and through Him. **The Greek word "fulfilled" - πεπληρωται (peplerotai)** - means a story or prophecy coming to pass. It's only used a handful of times in the New Testament; but, it comes from the root word, **πληροο, which means to complete.**

Jesus reads the Scriptures and sees himself as the climax of the story. He's what was missing the whole time, and all the things were pointing to him. All the twists and turns of the Bible are all in God's providence leading to Jesus.

Jesus is saying here that He is the key to understanding the Hebrew Bible. That the Jewish faith inevitably all points to Him, the Messiah, as the natural conclusion to it all. It's all about Him, and as part of the Messiah ushering in His Kingdom, **AND HERE'S WHAT'S WILD**, is that He is now inviting you and me into that story.

**To center your life on this story and this story alone....**

### **We Want to Live in a Story**

And far from being some abstract or fanciful idea, the truth is we all want to live into a story. We all want some narrative or some thing to make sense of our lives, to make sense of the world around us. In fact, scientists are even noting that even from a neurological level - we as human beings are hard-wired for stories to make sense of our lives.

#### **Mark Turner**

"story is the basic principle of how the human mind works. Most of our experience, our knowledge and our thinking is organized as a set of stories. Narrative structure is essential not only for effective communication, but for thinking itself. When children ask to hear a story, it's not simply a biological craving for amusement or demand for attention, but it arises out of a genuine human need to make sense of the disparate experiences of our lives, and that need is addressed in storytelling. Through stories we learn how to see patterns, we learn about cause and effect, to discover the consequences of our choices, our sense of right and wrong, what is important or least valuable in life. All of these are shaped for us by the stories we hear and live."

So this guy, who as far as I know, is not a Christian - says there is something even from a biological, neurological level - that happens when we hear stories. Stories link up to the wiring in our brains to help us process who we are and how we are to live. This is not something unique to Christians, or to people who are religious; every human being is hardwired in their minds to map their lives onto some overarching narrative.

And the message of the Bible is that the Bible, while being this unified story, ultimately leads you to encounter a person named Jesus. You see, the Bible is more than just a set of static, inter-related beliefs and ideas. It's more than a story to impart good morals. It's something to stake your life on and root your whole personhood into.

And, this is good news for us because all of us long to live into a story. Think about it, have you ever wanted to live in a story? Like, when you were a kid, did you ever wish that what you saw on TV was true of your life?

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I remember clearly for me the year was 1992, which I know for college students in the room - you were negative 10 years old - so, that's cool. Now, as a huge Ghostbusters fan, I watched the Saturday morning cartoon. Watched the movies on repeat. I drank the special Hi-C juice with Slimer on it. I wanted to BE a ghostbuster. And, I remember that year getting from my parents a Ghostbusters proton pack. And, my jaw dropped because this was it. All my dreams and wishes of becoming a real life Ghostbuster were all gonna come true. So, I strap on the proton pack and I get the little gun that's attached to it, and I step outside to use it for the first time because, as everyone knows, those things do some real damage. And so I pull the trigger and it makes like a little whirring sound, but nothing close to the proton blast that I saw in the movie. It's like, how can I capture ghosts with a toy!?! So, I remember as a kid, getting a black marker and coloring every square inch of my proton pack to look more like it does in the movie and less like a toy. And my line of thinking was - if it actually looked like it did in the movie, it would be real.

And guys, sad news. It didn't work. And, it may have been my first experience with disappointment in my life.

But, my point is - all of us want to live in a story. All of us want to, like that neuroscientist said, be ingrained into some higher story to make sense of our lives.

**This is why** in popular culture we have terminology like "main character moment." Has anyone ever heard that before? I had no idea prior to preparing this sermon what that was. But, a "main character moment" is essentially used to describe something significant that happens to you as though you were the main character in your own movie. Where you are the center of attention and all eyes are fixed on you, and life is meant to be about this grand story that you write.

You are the main character. I'm Bill Murray from Ghostbusters. If you can go to Florida and spend lots of money, you are now a part of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. If you find your soulmate, then you're Rose and you've got your Jack, and there's room on the door for both of you.

- it is why kids love Halloween and dressing up and playing make believe
- it's why people gravitate towards social media - we want to write our own story
- it's why people love Enneagram and personality tests - we all want some sort of story to shape our lives and to make sense of the world around us

**\*BUT ON A MORE SERIOUS NOTE\***

- it's why people will hop from job to job, city to city because they've been fed the story that your career and your success and your salary are ultimately what define you

- OR, they've been told that if you have more money, you can have more opportunities to make your life comfortable and more stress free; and, that's where true freedom comes in
- It's why people will exhaust themselves to the bone performing for other people, looking good in front of others, spending countless hours in front of the mirror - because they've been told the story that your appearance and what others think of you is the true story

I could keep going, but my point is just this: we all want to take part in some story. **But, here's the thing about stories, not all stories are true.** And, the story you believe or trust in will determine the person you become, for better or for worse. As Pete Hughes puts it:

**“the story you live in is the story you live out.”**

The stories you hear and listen to shape you and do something to you over time. They turn you into someone over time whether you know it or not. But, the question we need to ask ourselves is - is the story we're living in actually true? Is the story we're living in and living out lining up with Reality about who we are as human beings and who God is?

And we believe as followers of Jesus that the Bible is telling us this unified story that leads to Jesus, and **THIS IS** the true story we should live in.

That's why we sing the songs we sing, many of which quote scripture. And, that's why we preach from the Bible every week. It's why in your LifeGroups we make such a big deal about opening your Bibles every single week.

Because, when you step back and think about it - do you know the preacher you listen to the most? It's not me or Adam. It's the world. The world is preaching to you, telling you the story that you should live into, far more than any of us on stage ever can. I mean, we get about 30-35 minutes once a week to say something, but that's nothing compared to the hours of messaging and media the world is telling each week. The world is always telling you a story, a story about what is true, about what is right, about how you should interpret other people's actions, about how you should respond to your circumstances - from the articles you read, to the songs you listen to, to the movies you watch, to the politicians you listen to...

- The world is pulling you into their story - into how they define reality.
- The world is telling you how to determine a person's value and worth.
- The world is constantly telling you who to follow and who to obey.

The things the world tells you are hollow and shallow. And, more often than not, those stories are toxic and corrosive and untrue. It's not real Reality. And, over time the world's stories will turn you into a hollow and shallow human being.

And the truth is, I need a better story to live in, and you *need* a better story to live in because if we don't, we will fall susceptible to whatever the world tells us.

This is, in large part, why empires and societies and cultures have for hundreds of years tried to stop people from reading their Bibles. It's why kings and queens and regimes have burned people at the stake and committed some unspeakable horrors in human history over this. Because, the Bible

contains a better, truer story with more power and authority than any government or empire can ever muster. And, they know that if you have the Bible in your hands and actually read it and follow it, they will be utterly powerless to stop God's people from spreading God's kingdom.

You need the Bible. You need Jesus's Story. **You need the story.**

And here's the beautiful thing: when we study Scripture, over time, as we read and submit to it, it works to tear down the lies we've been fed by the world – and it gives us a truer story to live in - we actually begin to live in the freedom of how the world really works, and we can begin to live out the type of life Jesus wants for us.

Jesus gets at this in **John 8:31** -

**31** “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.”

The Bible, God's Word, the story that leads us to Jesus, gives us the true story that sets us free from the lies that we are imprisoned to, and it frees us up to live in the reality of God's truth.

We just spent the summer talking about the fruit of the Spirit, and how beautiful it is in contrast to the world around us. You want to know the chief way the Spirit works this stuff in us? By spending consistent time with Him through prayer and His Word.

This is why it's one of our covenant practices. It's why we made the website, **FollowingJesusTogether.com**. There are reading plans to help you in reading the Bible, as well as training videos on ways that we can abide with Jesus. It's why a part of LifeGroup time is dedicated to reading the Scriptures and seeking to boil it down to how we are to repent and follow Jesus. It's because the story you live in is the story you live out, and we need to hear it over and over again lest we fall susceptible to the lies of the world.

### **Conclusion/Application -**

The World's story says that the true path to freedom **is to be in control of your life**. But, Jesus' story, the true story says, you're ultimately not in control of your life, God is. And, when you step back and think about it, that actually gives us so much freedom because you're not big enough to be in control. You can't see all the outcomes. But, God can, and He loves you and He has a future for you. And, there's freedom in that to know, no matter what happens, God's in control, so you don't have to be.

The World's story is that the only way to freedom **is to win**. To win that promotion, to be the best parent, to be the best employee, to be seen as the most successful, to have influence over the people around you. To look successful; to have it all together. But, Jesus' story, the true story says, “the same power that raised Christ from the dead lives in You.”...**AND** Jesus' story says...“My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness.” Which means, on your own you can't do anything. We are weak and helpless, and thank God because that's all the more opportunity to tap into the power of the Spirit made available to you. So, rather than buy into the story of this world, we give ourselves over to a better story that recognizes our flaws and weaknesses so that we can embrace God all the more because that's where true freedom is found.

The World's story says true freedom is found in being approved of by those around you. You need that coworker's, or that friend's, or that moms group's approval above anything else. The world says that you do not meet the standard of beauty, and therefore you are less valuable. **Jesus'** story says that in Christ, God sees you and says, "this is my child, whom I love, and in whom I am well pleased"; "you are fearfully and wonderfully made". You have all the approval you will ever need in Christ.

The world's story says true freedom is found in throwing off your burdens and stress. If only you were to cut out negative people from your life, if only your kids were 18 and out of the house, if only I had the time and money to go on that trip, if only I were out of debt, or when the mortgage is paid off; then, I would be happy. **Jesus'** story says, "take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy and my burden is light." So, you see, everything you do, whether it's working a 9-5, or taking care of kids, or doing your school work, it's all seen under the banner of God's call for your life. You now have purpose and meaning, and that's to live into God's mission and call for your life wherever you are once and for all.

That's why God's people, over generations, like William Tyndale, have been willing to give their life to this story.

That's why powerful people throughout history have tried to seize control of the story, and they fail every time. The story offers real freedom for people who are physically in chains. It offers a freedom money can't buy and that empires can't take away. The story offers power to those in the bottom rungs of society with no chance to climb. It offers worth and worthiness to the orphan and the widow, the prostitute and the destitute.

Jesus' story, *the* story, places *you* in the true story of the world -

- Here you already have a King, so you can't be politically owned.
- Here you have a mission, so the news channel or a news feed can't shape and mold you into a zealot or use you for their own cause.
- Here you have a sure future, so people near or far from you can't use fear or anger against you in a way to make money off of you.
- You have a core identity and a clear purpose, so you aren't buying the bill of goods social media is selling.
- *Jesus'* story gives you power over the role your anxiety plays in your life, telling you when, how, and why you should live.

Through abiding with Jesus, we can **fight back** with a better story. Jesus now invites us to abide so that He can shape us, so the story we live in becomes the story we live out.

This is why reading our Bibles and praying can't be just a cliché! If we miss this, we miss it all!

It's not a "ho-hum, read your Bible tomorrow morning" sermon; no, we realize the thorns of lies that the world, our flesh, and the devil tell us want to choke the very life out of us, and your Savior King Jesus has given you His Word and Spirit that you may have life and have it to the fullest. We've made it a covenant practice, we've made so many resources because we *know* it matters. It matters to your life tomorrow and 10 years from now and an eternity from now.

The story you live in is the story you live out, and Jesus invites you into the story about Him.

**Pray.**