

5 More Scriptures That Will Keep Drawing You Back to the Bible

On Thursday, I shared with you five passages of Scripture that are sure to keep drawing you back to the Bible day after day. They are some of my favorites, and I love how those well-known, familiar passages keep yielding insights and blessings.

So, I decided to share five more with you. I believe and pray that they bless you as much as they do me:

6. Acts 20 is Paul's valedictory message to the pastors of Ephesus. After reminiscing about his time in their city bringing the gospel of Jesus and informing them of the trial awaiting him in Jerusalem, Paul reminds these servants of the Lord of their call. That's verse 28. Here, we are given three terms for pastors—elders, pastors (shepherds), overseers. We have a high Christology here—in dying on the cross, Jesus shed the very blood of God. Pastors are appointed by the Holy Spirit as overseers of the church. And the pastor's priority is established: he is to be on guard for himself first (his health, his spirituality, his family) and for the flock second. Pastors who put care of the flock ahead of their own health, relationship to Christ and concern for their family often end up losing their ministry. The flight attendant tells passengers, "In the event of a loss of cabin pressure, the air masks will drop out of the ceiling. If you are traveling with a child or handicapped person, secure your own mask first." Take care of yourself so you can help others.

Verse 28 is followed by a warning of two problems the church of the future will face: "dreadful wolves" from outside and "perverse" people from inside. "Therefore watch" (Acts 20:31 a). To our dismay, God's people keep getting blindsided by the

group from inside the church. I hear them say, "But these were good people. How could they do such a thing?"

Answer: Read your Bible. Be prepared for anything.

Since Paul will not see these beloved friends again, their visit ends with this: "Having said these things, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept much and embraced Paul's neck and kissed him, grieving most over the words he spoke, that they were to see his face no more: (Acts 20:36-38a). So emotional and so tender. Oh, that every minister were so well-loved.

7. In John 3, the Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, the verses most people rush past to get to verse 16 have special meaning to me. Before the great John 3:16, Jesus establishes His credentials. That's critical, because before making such a grandiose claim as this gospel-in-a-sentence, it's important to know how He is able to do so. What is His authority?

– Verse 11. Jesus says, "I know what I'm talking about. I'm telling you what I have seen."

– Verse 12. "But," He says, "If you don't believe when I tell you earthly things—which are verifiable, observable—how can you believe when I speak to you of heaven?" That question pops the balloons of those who say Scripture is reliable only in spiritual matters but cannot be trusted regarding science, history and more. We are not given the option to pick and choose.

– Verse 13. "No one has been to heaven except the one who came from there—Me. Wow. Think of that! Jesus says, "I am a native of heaven. You can believe me when I talk about my home country." After all, who should know more about a country than a native? Everyone else speaking on heaven has just read the brochures, but Jesus knows.

– Verse 14. Then, Jesus points to the cross. He does this by

pulling out the single most obscure story in the Old Testament, the “snake on a pole” and shows how it points to the cross. The little incident takes up only four verses in Scripture (Num. 21:6-9). Interestingly, not one word of commentary or explanation is given after the incident in Numbers. The first indication the story had any spiritual value whatsoever came many hundreds of years later when Jesus spoke these words. That snake was the symbol of their sin. And we read, “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us ...” (2 Cor. 5:21a).

Oh, one thing more. All the Israelis had to do was look at the snake and they would live. Is that ever grace or what? No works whatsoever. I’m recalling that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted to Christ when he heard a layman preach on Isaiah 45:22a, “Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth.” Amen!

8. I revel in 1 John 3:1ff. “Consider how much love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

“Beloved, now are we children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (That’s reminiscent of Psalm 17:15). “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:1-2).

Confession: I don’t always quote these verses exactly right. But I do not obsess about it, and here’s why.

Throughout Scripture, other scriptures are often quoted. Interestingly, they are almost never quoted perfectly. In fact, not a single time that I know of. The wonderful self-revelation of God in Exodus 34:6-7 is quoted by Moses, David, Nehemiah, Joel, Jonah and others. But no one quotes it perfectly or fully. No doubt, this is because they

did not have written copies of the Word in front of them, whereas we do. But the point still stands, I think. In preaching, we must not be shackled by a slavish devotion to what “the original” says, but to stay with the sense of it.

Nothing profound about my love of 1 John 3:1 and following. It’s just wonderful in every way.

9. Ephesians 4-5 on the subject of unity in the body of Christ. Chapter 4 describes and defines the unity. And chapter 5 gives the means to it, specifically verse 21. “Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:21, NASB).

I have long suspected that the people in churches I know place small value on unity. In fact, some seem to glory in their varied opinions and divided votes. I’ve worked with deacons who would insist on their right to oppose the recommendation of their leadership on the floor of the church because “I’m an American.” Such thinking is shallow and contributes to the troubles of those churches. “Is Christ divided?” asked Paul (1 Corinthians 1:13a, MEV). In Ephesians 4:3 (NASB), leaders are told to be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Why unity? Because the reputation of the Lord depends on it, the work of Christ is more efficient with it, the enemy is defeated by it and fewer Christians are injured by the harshness of fellow believers in a unified church.

And where does unity come from? From loving believers submitting to Christ, their head, and to each other. That’s all over Ephesians 5. Submission to Him is easy, but submitting to one another is another story altogether. “Why should I submit when I’m in the right?” asks someone. Answer: So, when would you submit—when you’re in the wrong? That’s not submitting, but simply admitting you were wrong. To submit has to mean one thinks his position is the correct one, otherwise it’s a meaningless concept.

Two motorists met on a one-lane bridge. The first guy leans out and yells, "I never back up for fools!" The second throws his car into reverse and says, "I always do."

Only the strong can submit and yield. The weak are unable to do something requiring such strength and self-control.

In 1 Corinthians 6:7b, Paul asks a divided congregation, "Why not rather be wronged?" My opinion is that only the spiritual mature can handle such a concept. God help His church to be led by the mature.

10. 1 Thessalonians 4:14 (MEV) brings tears to my eyes every time. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus."

I have loved ones—dear, dear beloved family members who mean everything to me—who are with the Lord. I miss them every day. My heart aches with their absence. In the words of Psalm 27:13 (NASB), "I would have despaired had I not believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." But we have His word that we will see them again. Thank God for His promises. Thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ, our risen and living and returning Savior.

That's my list. I worked on this lengthy article for a week. And in that time, I thought of a dozen other Scriptures which mean everything to me and which cry out to be included. But, let's send it forth for the time being in hopes that it will encourage pastors to share with their people the texts that mean most to them. {eoa}

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