

The Word-Centered Church

Foothills Residency Project

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.¹

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.²

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;
but his delight is in the law of the LORD,

¹ John 1:1-18. Unless Otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright© 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Genesis 1:1-3

and on his law he meditates day and night.³
How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
Blessed are you, O Lord;
teach me your statutes!
With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.
I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.⁴

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to keep your righteous rules.
I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O Lord, according to your word!
Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord,
and teach me your rules.
I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
Your testimonies are my heritage forever,
for they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.⁵

³ Psalm 1:1-2

⁴ Psalm 119:9-16

⁵ Psalm 119:105-112

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”⁶

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.⁷

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. or he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.⁸

1. Being a Word-Centered Church Requires a Personal Commitment from the Leader

- A Word-centered church will be led by a Word-centered leader. Especially as you are starting out in ministry, it is imperative that you decide now that your ministry will be tethered completely to the Word. You should commit that you will reject any and all ministry that is not rooted in the Word—that where the Word says, “go,” you’ll go and where the Word says, “no,” you’ll stop.

2. Being a Word-Centered Church Starts in the Pulpit

- The pulpit is the most public display of the priorities of the church. Right or wrong, this is the most forward-facing display of the church’s priorities. If the pulpit is Word-centered, it sets a tone for the rest of the church to follow suit. In contrast, it is difficult to say that the Word is

⁶ Isaiah 55:10-11

⁷ Hebrews 4:12

⁸ James 1:22-25

important if the opposite message comes from the pulpit ministry of the church.

3. Being a Word-Centered Church Means the Word is Ever Before the People

- Worship – The preaching event cannot be the only time the Word is before the people. Other Scriptures outside of the main preaching text can be shared. Prayers are saturated with Scripture. Songs are rooted in the Word. The ordinances draw people back to their scriptural roots.
- Leaders – Leaders must make the conscience decision to keep the Word in front of the people. When decisions are made, the decisions are rooted in the Word. When teaching takes place, the teaching draws the people back to the Word.

4. Being a Word-Centered Church Means the Word Takes Priority Over All Else

- The priorities of the Word-Centered Church are set by the Word. Not a pastor or a committee. Not ever-changing trends. Those change and become dated. Sometimes trends once thought wise or important, become a stumbling block.

*The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
but the word of the Lord remains forever.⁹*

5. Being a Word-Centered Church Means the Word Structures the Home

- Husband/Wife – Husbands will be leaders in their homes in the Word-centered church. *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers*

⁹ 1 Peter 1:24b-25; Isaiah 40:8

*to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*¹⁰

- Parent/Children – Parents will exercise proper authority over their children and children will be taught to honor their parents. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*¹¹

6. Being a Word-Centered Church Means the Word Structures the Church

- Polity – The Word-centered church will not simply accept their own history for the structure of the church. This church will commit to using the Word to structure their leadership.
- Calendar – What “things” should the church be doing? What will be on the church’s calendar? The Word-centered church will examine the Scriptures to see where the priorities of the church’s time should be focused. The Word guides the calendar. The calendar does not drive the church.
- Budget – Where do you put your money? The church will examine the word to see where financial resources are to be spent. The Word-centered church will consider how finances are used for pastoral care,¹² missions, and evangelism.

7. Being a Word-Centered Church Takes Time

- Becoming or building a Word-centered church does not happen overnight. It does not happen with only small changes. It is a long process. Truly a life-long process.

¹⁰ Ephesians 5:25-33

¹¹ Ephesians 6:1-4

¹² 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Are you Word-Centered? Is your church Word-Centered?

	What am I doing to cultivate this in my own life?	Where do I still lack?	Where does my church do this well?	Where does my church lack in this area?
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