

Central Gwinnett Ministry

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Sola Scriptura

By Alan Rouse

Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

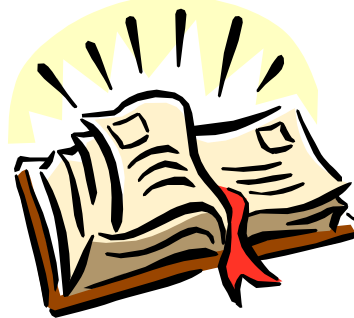
Proverbs 30:5-6

One of the fundamental tenets of the Protestant Reformation is that the Scriptures are the only source of divine authority for the Christian church. Martin Luther is credited with rediscovering this concept in the 16th century as he sought to correct the horrible errors in the practice of the Catholic church during his day. Luther chose the Latin term *sola scriptura* (“by Scripture alone”) to summarize his rejection of the authority of the traditions and decrees of the Catholic church. He pointed to many errors and contradictions in the church traditions and practices. And he correctly saw that the Scriptures were the only available source of divine authority, capable of correcting those contradictions and errors. When, under threat of his life, the Catholic rulers challenged him to recant this position, Luther said:

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen.

By that time the Catholic Church had drifted far from the original teachings of the apostles. Many practices and beliefs had been introduced that were not found in the Scriptures. In the centuries previous to Luther, there had been crusades and inquisitions, spreading Catholicism through terror, intimidation, and the use of the sword. In Luther's day, “indulgences” were being granted by priests in exchange for money. These “indulgences” were supposed to provide forgiveness of sins. Some church officials even claimed that the purchase of their particular indulgences could result in

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UPCOMING EVENTS

June

- 6/20** 4th Grade-Middle School: Lilburn Geriatric Ctr./ Lunch; Meet at Stevie B's at 1 PM; bring \$5
- 6/27** 4th Grade-Middle School: Fernbank Planetarium, 10-3 Meet at Collier's; bring \$5 for lunch
- 6/29** Midweek - House church (details TBA)

July

- 7/5** 4th Grade-Middle School: Movie “Dreamer” 10 AM at Discover Mills/Duluth Town Square Picnic
- 7/7** 4th Grade-Middle School: Evening at Fernbank Observatory, Meet at Robinson's at 7:30
- 7/12** 4th Grade-Middle School: Movie at Discover Mills at 10 AM/Duluth Town Square Picnic

The Swamp

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Week 1 June 11-17 | Week 2 June 18-24 |
| Week 3 June 25-July 1 | Week 4 7/5-8 (family camp) |
| Week 5 July 9-15 | Week 6 July 16-22 |

Check out www.centralgwinnett.org for more information!

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forgiveness for sins to be committed in the future. Over the approximately 1500 years of the churches' existence, its' teaching had strayed far from that of the Bible's. The creeds and traditions of men had corrupted the church. To Luther, that situation was intolerable.

Luther held the Scriptures to be the only then-existing source of the Word of God. In contrast, he insisted that the traditions and decrees of church councils were but the opinions of men, and were without authority. To correct the errors he saw in the church of his day, he called on the church to follow the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone—*sola scriptura*.

In the years following Luther, the idea of *sola scriptura* was applied in piecemeal fashion by various Protestant denominations, each group correcting those practices that seemed most important to them. Then in the 1800's, in Pennsylvania and in the American midwest, two groups almost simultaneously began to take *sola scriptura* further. Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Barton W. Stone, sought to restore the faith and practice of the first century church, starting from a "blank sheet of paper", and based on Scripture alone. The two groups joined together in 1832 in what became known as the Restoration Movement. The mantra of the Restoration Movement was to have no creed but the Bible, to call Bible things by Bible names, and to do Bible things in Bible ways. The Restoration Movement enjoyed mixed success, with some great triumphs and great setbacks. Their greatest setbacks can be traced to times when they strayed from *sola scriptura*, forming councils to define

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Women's Corner

Living Life to the Fullest

By Tracey Reynolds

Ecclesiastes 7:1, 2, 4 *A good reputation is more valuable than the most expensive perfume. In the same way, the day you die is better than the day you are born. It is better to spend your time at funerals than at festivals. For you are going to die, and you should think about it while there is still time...A wise person thinks much about death, while a fool thinks only about having a good time now.*

Ecclesiastes 5: 19b-20 *to enjoy your work and accept your lot in life-that is indeed a gift from God. People who do this rarely look with sorrow on the past, for God has given them reasons for joy.* (New Living Translation)

You have heard the saying, "Live each day as if it were your last, one day it will be true." The question we must ask ourselves is what will be the reputation or legacy that we leave behind?

Everyone will die. Do we think about that? Do we spend any time preparing for it? If we did, we would be able to enjoy each day and more fully treasure what this life has to offer.

"Live each day as if it were your last; one day it will be true."

Proverbs 18:22 *The man who finds a wife finds a treasure and receives favor from the Lord.* The proverb says we are a *treasure*. If we thought today was the last day to spend with our husband, would we spend it being a *treasure*? If today was our last day with our children, or at our job, how would we spend it?

The Bible encourages us to think soberly about death. I believe God does this to remind us that our time here is short. We must enjoy and accept our lot

as a gift. We must appreciate what we have and not look back. People do not like to think about death, but it is inevitable. The scriptures promise it. Will we be prepared? What will our reputation be? Will we have been considered a treasure?

FAMILY GROUPS

If you have not yet connected with a family group, we invite to join any of our eleven different groups below:

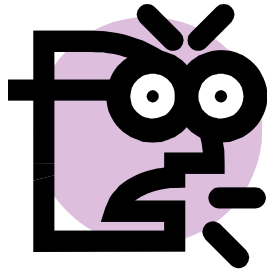
- John Yang — Lilburn
- Glenn Hayes— Loganville
- Phil Dawson—Lawrenceville
- Audie Flowers—Lawrenceville
- Russ McGarr—Lilburn
- Karl Lynn—Snellville
- Ward Rutland—Lawrenceville
- Barry Jennings—Lilburn
- Mike Garrett—Snellville
- Joe Washington—Lawrenceville
- Gary Roberson—Lawrenceville

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what is orthodox teaching.

These are our roots. Our love, respect, and dependence upon the Scriptures can be traced through the Restoration Movement back to Luther's *sola scriptura*. Like those who went before us, we also face the temptation to form councils and to write creeds.

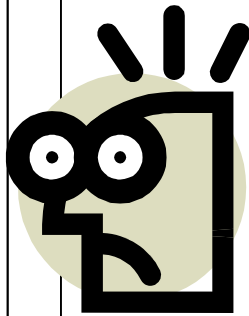
From the time of Luther to the present, church councils have repeatedly created creeds and statements of faith to supplement or simplify the Scriptures. Those who wrote these creeds generally hoped they would



provide a lowest common denominator of doctrine, on which Christians would unite.

However, four hundred and eighty-five years of church history clearly tells us that these man-made documents are much more effective at dividing than at uniting. Inherently,

these documents are fallible human efforts. They identify what the writers believe is *really important* in the Scriptures (and, indirectly, what is *not* really important). Since they result from human judgment, these documents are imperfect, and opinions vary. As a result, they become sources of controversy and dispute rather than of unity.



“...let's be devoted to *all* of the Scriptures God has delivered. And let's be united on the basis of all Scripture as we learn, believe, and obey God's Word together.”

Sola Scriptura is sufficient. “Every word of God is flawless” (Prov

30:5). We have received the Scriptures exactly as God chose for us to receive them. God has “once for all en-

trusted” the faith to the saints (Jude 3). That faith has been “revealed and made known through the prophetic writings [Scriptures] by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him.” (Rom 16:26). We do not need to boil down the Scriptures to an official, short list of shared beliefs, identifying those with whom we are united. Instead, let's be devoted to *all* of the Scriptures God has delivered. And let's be united on the basis of all Scripture as we learn, believe, and obey God's Word together.

Deacon Corner

Weekly Attendance and Contribution

Karl Lynn	Single Parents	770-978-4747
Ken Watson	Benevolence	678-376-2677
Peter Berry	Benevolence	678-376-1878
Patrick Freeman	Kingdom Kids	770-921-1811
Glenn Hayes	Kingdom Kids	770-985-6921
Dan Stehr	Visitation	770-925-2943
Bill Francis	Visitation	770-806-8645
Todd Reynolds	Middle School	770-682-0027
Russ McGarr	Middle School	770-381-5045
Steve Collier	Teens-Parents	770-717-5784
Joe Hartline	Teens-Parents	770-277-4765
Danny Emmett	Hope, events	770-985-4542
Todd Shultz	Communications	770-277-4276
Birt Anglin	Ushering	678-849-0180
Jeff Mueller	Order of Worship	770-492-0544
Kendall Knight	Music Service	770-972-6887

Date	Attendance	Contribution
5/7	340	\$6,827
5/14	360	\$8,844
5/21	325	\$5,360
5/28	315	\$6,347

It's All About Relationships

By Todd Reynolds

Randy Hall, who studied the Bible with me years ago, said to me during the study of *the Cross* that Jesus' crucifixion was the "heartbeat" of Christianity. I believe he was right. That is the ultimate display of God's love, which is at the heart of Christianity. But I had read about Jesus dying on the cross before, and it didn't really impact me. Why? I am a little slow on the uptake sometimes, but I don't think that was it. I believe what made the difference was that *he* delivered it to me.

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

—Acts 8:30-31

Given that the Ethiopian was in charge of a country's treasury, he was probably a well read man. But he still did not understand what he was reading until Philip came up, sat with him and explained things. This is by God's design. God could have sent the Ethiopian a "revelation," "vision" or "great wisdom" to discern the truth – but this is not His goal. God wants to teach love - and make no mistake, there is no better way than through relationships. So he sent a man to share the scriptures and his heart with the Ethiopian.

I was a long-haired disc jockey, and Randy was about as "country bumpkin" as you could get. But I grew to love him as he shared his heart and the scriptures with me. I still remember when we would walk across the University of South Carolina campus. He would always say "Hi" to slackers walking by, and they would just stare at him like he just killed their grandmother. Randy would just laugh and get a real "kick" out of it. I asked him why he would subject himself to these evil stares and

then laugh. He shared with me *Proverbs 25:21-22*. When I read this passage on my own, I hadn't quite grasped it the way I did after seeing him put it into practice. That's the spirit of God, living in the heart and actions of one, and shared with another. So, I started doing it. A wave to a passer-by or a "hello" to a stranger. Sometimes they'd reply, other times they'd stare blankly. And I'd just laugh to myself and keep on going.

Love is at the heart of Christianity, and relationships are the arteries and veins that infuse life wherever it's needed.



God's message is delivered through relationships; there's no way around it. I fell in love with God because I made every effort to learn about and pray to Him, and He sent me people. Think of the number of miracles performed by people as opposed to directly by God. He likes to work through people; he likes to work through you.

Focus on your relationships for a minute. First - your relationship with God. We must put time and energy into it. If you spend time listening and talking to our Father daily, the relationship will grow, if you don't, it won't. If you plan special times and events with God, He will feel special, if you don't, He won't. ALL other relationships trickle down from this one.

Second - your relationships with family - your own family and the family of

believers. Love, sacrifice and sharing are all necessary in these relationships. The world understands this. Difficulty comes in prioritizing these relationships and not letting other things crowd them out. Through these relationships God's love is delivered the most. With the family of believers, we must not be superficial. The only way to accomplish this is time together and well thought out, deep questions. Fellowship (commanded by God for building relationships) must contain probing questions, such as "What are you working on with God?" or "What are you struggling with?" We need to push ourselves to meet at least one person we don't know or normally talk with at each fellowship. We should be asking others to help and teach us because, again, God works through relationships. Isn't that how we became a Christian in the first place? Do not abandon this practice.

Third - relationships with others. When I get overwhelmed, I feel like I can't add another relationship to my life – so I don't. I don't reach out sometimes because I don't think I can give anymore. Shame on me. We *must* get involved. This is how God spreads his love; who am I to try and stop it. We shouldn't feel pressure; we just need to start being nice to people and get deeper. Leave the legalism of having to invite them to church or any other agenda behind. Who knows what will happen? Maybe you will be able to build a relationship and share the gospel with them, and they will become disciples. Maybe you will just help them, and they will walk away – it's alright, you don't need anything back. You're just spreading the message – love. Maybe you will do something nice, and they will stare at you with a flat, empty expression, not knowing how to take it.

Then you can just laugh to yourself and keep on going.