

Sermon #131  
Psalm 119:105-112  
January 7, 2018

## The Grand Blueprint Part 1

Most people love a good story. I've invited you to my book room this morning. Thanks for coming. I have many different types of books in this room. I enjoy coming in here, curling up in my comfortable chair and just reading a good book. I've chosen a book to read for you this morning. Oh, don't worry, I'm not going to read the whole story, just the first opening chapter. The book is entitled, "The Grand Blueprint." I think you will enjoy it. Maybe you'll even find something of interest for your life today. It all begins with the Grand Architect, doing what he loves to do. Just listen. The story begins like this... (Pick up the book)

"Hush... Be quiet... The Grand Architect is in his room. Let everyone be still. He's working on a masterpiece. He's creating and recreating. He follows the Grand Blueprint that he himself made. It, too, is a masterpiece and it reflects his very nature. And it's all good. Everything and everyone in his work is good."

"Unfortunately, an arch enemy has sown seeds of doubt, unbelief, and evil all throughout the Grand Architect's masterpiece. The whole work has now been duly affected by these enemy seeds. But that does not deter the Grand Architect. He continues his masterpiece, all based on his grand blueprint. He's in charge and the enemy is not. He knows the outcome, which is not in jeopardy at all. He has already done all that is necessary to remake the masterpiece what it was originally intended to be. A big smile crosses his face as he reflects on the final product."

"Just at this moment when all is quiet in the Grand Architect's room, a worried helper comes rushing in from outside, his arms flinging wildly. The Grand Architect looks up to see young "Scooter" Cadbury running in with a huge frown on his face. Everyone calls him Scooter, but his real name is Stuart William Bennet Cadbury the third. It was just easier to call him Scooter."

"Almost out of breath and totally beside himself, Scooter cries out, 'Sir, many of the workers are listening to other voices and have disregarded your grand blueprint. Some have totally rejected it and have chosen other options. Some are trying to rewrite it and are teaching others that it says something that it doesn't say. Some are just neglecting it. They say they are just too busy to even read your grand blueprint. Imagine that, Sir! Some are writing their own blueprints, saying that they know better today than when your blueprint was written. Some dislike what you have written. Some say it's just simply too hard to understand or too difficult to accomplish. Some say it disrupts the unity of their group. They seem to care more about their understanding of unity than your blueprint. What are we to do, oh grand master!'"

“Without fury or frustration, the Grand Architect puts down his pen and turns to his young apprentice. He calmly tells him to sit down in his big chair. He orders his attendant to bring him a glass of lemonade. Then he begins, ‘Yes, my young friend,’ he replies, ‘I know all about that. I am not unaware of all that happens in my masterpiece. I know how the enemy hates my blueprint and how well he distracts my helpers from reading it and using it correctly. But come and look at my blueprint for yourself.’”

“Scooter stops sipping his lemonade and gets up from the large chair. He takes a closer look at the grand blueprint for himself. Suddenly, a joy fills his heart almost like never. He begins reading and a new light dawns within him. He can see how wholesome, how enduring, and how penetrating the grand blueprint is. What a beauty to behold. He is overwhelmed with love and appreciation for this great work. Sure, it had the ability to change all that was bad within him and for that he was very grateful. It also gave him great comfort. Gone was his anxiety and fear. Through it he could also see well beyond himself to the needs of so many people. Oh, how this blueprint could help so many if they would only at least read it and then yes, learn it thoroughly.”

“He needed no other words from the Grand Architect. Just a simple look into the beauty of the grand blueprint itself gave him authority and strength to go back and stand firm against all those who were disregarding it. He now knew that the masterpiece would not fail, because the grand blueprint and the grand architect would never fail. And all the enemy’s attempts to attack it would never prevail. Victory was already assured. All he had to do was stand firm on the blueprint itself, reading it, proclaiming it, and knowing the one who made the blueprint himself.”

Thus ends, chapter 1. Oh, yes, there is more to the story, but we’ll save that for next week in part 2. You can visit again next week. (Put the book down and go out of character)

The Grand Blueprint. No, it’s not a fictional story. It’s real. It’s all about God’s Word and the way people handle or mishandle it today. As we begin a New Year, it’s always important for personal and communal evaluation. Are we growing in our faith? Are we living the way God wants us to live? Are we making a difference in our society? One of the best ways to do that is to reflect on the grand blueprint, God’s Word. Are we standing boldly on his Word? That’s our theme for the next two Sundays. It’s part of our overall theme for the year, “Stand boldly in the faith.” And the best way to stand boldly is to start with God’s Word. How do we stand boldly on God’s Word?

### 1. Know what the Word says

If we want to stand boldly on God’s Word, we need to know what it says. Psalm 119 is the longest and one of the most beautifully written psalms of all. The author has arranged this psalm as an acrostic, using the Hebrew alphabet. All twenty-two stanzas begin with a letter in alphabetical order (Alpha to Omega). Each stanza has eight verses. And the whole Psalm reflects a deep appreciation and respect for the Word of God. The psalmist uses several different words to indicate God’s Word, the Bible,

which at that time would have been mostly the first five books of the Bible. He uses the terms law, word, statutes, commands, decrees and precepts or promises, all with different nuances, but all referring to God's Word, his instruction, his grand blueprint.

In the two sections that we read earlier, the psalmist has a firm grasp of the importance of God's Word in his life. He says things like, "Oh, how I love your law" (v. 97)! And "Your statutes are... the joy of my heart" (v. 111). He knows God's Word. It has made a significant difference in his life. Just a quick read through the whole psalm indicates his knowledge. Even more so, he knows the God of the Word. Knowledge of the Word leads him to knowledge of God himself. It leads him to a relationship with his God. Thus, he can say triumphantly. "I meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me and they make me wiser than my enemies" (v. 97, 98).

God's Word gives him guidance. He declares, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (v. 105). It protects him by preserving his life from harm. It keeps his feet from every evil path (v. 101). Much like bumper bars on a bowling alley help young kids keep their bowling balls out of the gutter, so God's Word helps keep our lives out of the gutter. Praise God.

God's Word not only guides and protects him from harm, but it also comforts him. When the wicked set a trap for him, he does not stray from God's precepts (v. 110). He considers God's Word sweeter than honey. Oh, how great is God's Word and how wonderful the knowledge of God's Word!

Do we know God's Word today? I mean really, truly know it? Do we read it and study it? Do we make our major decisions based on his word, or do we let other voices in society take its place? In the story, Scooter was worried about the other voices that were distracting the workers from the grand blueprint. As we begin the new year, what might be distracting us from God's Word?

I've been in many churches here in the States and I've heard Christians often say things like, "You know, I don't really know the Bible." It always grieves me when I hear this, because I know it doesn't have to be this way, and it shouldn't. Recent studies of North American Christians reveal that more than half of Americans have read little or none of the Bible. Most have a positive view of the Bible, but they don't read it.

Church consultant, Ed Stetzer is very concerned about that. He says, "Americans, including church goers, aren't reading much of any book, including the Good Book." 1 in 4 of us have not read any book in a year. A recent LifeWay Research study found only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the same group read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible. Many children growing up today don't even know the basic Bible stories. Some think that Superman, Harry Potter or Hunger Games might be biblical stories. Because we don't read God's Word, we don't know it. And therefore, how can we really know the

God of the Bible. The psalmist knew it was crucial to be in God's Word, meditating on it, memorizing it, reading it, and knowing it.

There's really no excuse for not knowing God's Word. I say that not to put a guilt trip on any one, but to strongly encourage us all to know God's Word. It's never too late to start the practice of reading and knowing God's Word. Even just a commitment to read one chapter a day, is a great start. Knowing God's Word is the beginning, but then we must apply it to our lives.

## 2. Do what the Word says

We must put the knowledge of his Word into practice. In this way, we will obey God through the power of his Word. That's exactly what the Psalmist did. In verse 100 he affirmed, "I obey your precepts." "I will follow your righteous laws," he also said. And he concluded this stanza by saying, "My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end" (v. 112). That's a great commitment – to the very end. He would continue putting God's Word into practice for the rest of his life. He needed it always.

In Matt 7:24-27, Jesus uses the metaphor of the House on the Rock. In his story, Jesus says that anyone who hears his words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on a rock. When the rains and the winds beat against it, the house did not fall because it had a firm foundation. So are those who stand on his words. But those who don't are like foolish people who build their houses on sand, and the winds and the rains come to destroy it with a great crash. The point is to hear his words and do them, put them into practice.

How can we put God's Word into practice? Yes, we can reflect on it and make journal notes to help us. We can meditate on it and memorize it. Earlier in this same psalm, the author says, "I have hidden your word [memorized] in my heart that I might not sin against you" (v. 11). That's another way he put it into practice. But ultimately, we need accountability. We need others to help us. We can do this through small group accountability groups, Bible study groups, prayer groups, etc. In order to put God's Word into practice we need each other. We need to teach each other and teach our families.

This psalm has a similar concern as that of the author of Deuteronomy chapter 6. The commands that Moses gave his people were given to teach others. "Impress them on your children," he said. "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" (6:7, 8). The best way to put God's Word into practice is to do so in community – in the church – in the family.

Ed Stetzer's group has found that small group Bible studies are one key element in changing our epidemic of biblical illiteracy. In small groups, we get to know each other and we are more apt to confess our sins, seek forgiveness, share our stories, follow Jesus, and learn his Word together. Here at Belmont UMC, we have small

groups, Sunday school classes at 9 a.m. every Sunday, Bible study groups on Wednesday nights at 6:30 (show this on a slide). And we always preach God's Word and read it on Sunday mornings.

I want to strongly encourage each of us this year to make a commitment to know God's Word better and put it into practice. That means starting your own personal time in God's Word every day, if you are not already doing so. And commit yourself to study God's Word in a small group with other people. You have many opportunities.

I'm sensing God calling me back to memorizing his Word. As I study through the book of Acts on my own this year, I am picking out key verses and committing them to memory. It's a commitment yes, but it's not hard. When studying for this sermon, I also sensed God convicting me when I get more excited about reading other books than his Book. Yes, I read and reflect on his book every day. But that needs to be more of a passion even than any other books or article I read.

### 3. Tell what the Word says

We can't just keep the knowledge of the Word of God to ourselves. Others need to hear it as well. There are many broken people, people that we know, who need even just the simple knowledge of some aspect of God's Word, maybe just a reminder that God truly loves them. That's his Word. This whole psalm 119, was all about sharing with others what the psalmist had learned. Like the other psalms, this was a song. It was sung for the purpose that others would hear and know God's Word too. Yes, it has individual expression, but it is meant for a community to sing, live out and proclaim. Think of all the thousands, millions of people throughout the ages, who have heard or read this psalm or any of the psalms and have responded to it. Knowledge of God's Word is to be lived out and proclaimed.

As we study his Word together, we will grow together. As we share it with others, our church will grow. We've done a lot of things to prepare for growth. The sanctuary renovation and all the other building renovations were much needed and we are very thankful for that. But the most important foundation is knowing, practicing, and sharing God's Word. Don't get distracted by other voices in society. But listen and learn from God's Word. Stand firm on his Word! Oh, I almost forgot. There's an epilogue to chapter 1. (Pick up book again)

### Conclusion (epilogue)

"Scooter was practically mesmerized as he continued gazing into the Grand Blueprint. Yes, he had been faithful to it all his life. But today, in the presence of the Grand Architect himself, it seemed to take on a new depth. He was doing more than just reading; he was engaged. It was taking hold of him and he was changed. Knowing the grand blueprint, truly meant knowing the Grand Architect. He could now stand boldly without fear, and without worry. With renewed vigor, he could continue to be faithful and help others do the same."