

# Women of the Word

## Welcome

Somehow, another year is drawing to a close. Time is funny like that. In the mundane routine, the days seem long. Meanwhile, the years are fleeting. In many ways, all we truly have is *now*. *Now* is the time to draw close to God. *Now* is the time to be the hands and feet of Jesus. *Now* is the time to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself!! Let's thank God for every 'now' that we have and live in the present, being present with those God has put in our lives. May we realize how truly blessed we are and praise Him!!

In Christ,

Melanie Woltje

Women's Ministry Team Leader

## Mission Statement

FBC Women's Ministry exists to empower our ladies to use their God-given gifts in accordance with God's will.

## Christmas in a Box - Melanie Woltje

I wrote the bulk of this article in November 2018 in the wake of my sister-in-law's diagnosis with stage four cancer. At the time, I desperately desired the *hope* that Christmas symbolizes to me and wanted to begin the season celebrations early, but I waited. This article is a blog post explaining why I guard the celebration of Jesus' birth so closely.

I *never* decorate for Christmas before Thanksgiving. It's funny. Sometimes, I hold myself to very strict, self-imposed guidelines. Other times, I throw such boundaries out the window. Decorating for Christmas falls into the former category.

Christmas is, perhaps, my most favorite time of the year. I actually try not to have *favorite* times. I try to find the good in every season. Every holiday. Every month. Every day of the week. But there is something extra special about Christmas, for me. As the celebration of Jesus' birth, Christmas represents hope. Love. Joy. Peace. Because Christmas is so special to me, I try to keep it "in a box". I don't allow it to flow over into other holidays. I don't let it get diluted by spreading it out over several months—I keep it nice and concentrated from right after Thanksgiving through the month of December. I keep it set apart. Sacred. Holy, if you will.

I treasure Christmas in my heart. The scriptures. The music. The traditions. The family time. But most of all—the focus on Jesus. Sometimes, this can be the most challenging part. The world is calling me to focus on a million things all at once, and it is easy to get overwhelmed. In a devotion I read recently, I learned a new term—*hallothankmas*. The tendency in our modern society to blend Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas into one big festive season. It is a very easy thing to do. The first part of that word—*hallo*—sticks out to me. It sounds an awful lot like *hollow*. It troubles my spirit. I think it probably troubles most people's spirits, but in the blur of holiday festivity and busyness, it becomes harder and harder to listen to spiritual nudging. And keep everything from becoming *hollow*.

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I think *busyness* is one of the most dangerous aspects of living in modern times. When we're busy, it is easy to take our focus off God. It is easy to always be focusing on the next thing. It is easy to allow the *urgent* to take precedent over the *important*. It makes it that much more paramount to cling to Jesus fiercely. To set boundaries to protect your faith and your family. Every woman must set her own boundaries, or, if she is married, set them with her husband for their family.

One of the boundaries I choose to set is to keep Christmas finite. If I allowed Christmas to 'start' in October by decorating my entire house and let it linger till the end of January, the season would not be nearly so precious to me. In turn, once the Christmas season is upon us, I saturate myself in it. I listen to or play the music almost constantly. I fill our home with festive decor. I relish giving gifts to family and friends to express my love for them. I seek out Christmas-oriented devotions and reflect on scriptures pointing to Christ's coming. I eagerly look forward to the candlelit service at church on Christmas Eve. Our family has an Advent tradition that involves a daily reading, lighting of candles, and prayer, which I jealousy guard. The *busyness* of basketball season, work schedules, dance classes, homework, and evening television watching would *love* to steal this one away, so I guard it carefully.

Another benefit of keeping Christmas "in a box" is the level of excitement I reach in anticipation of the season. God is at work in my spirit leading up to Christmastime. Luke 2:19 tells us that 'Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.' I do that. The magnitude of the LORD of the universe, the Almighty God leaving His throne in heaven to be born a tiny baby, the son of a carpenter and his fiancé, to walk this earth as mortal man in order to save my soul from eternal damnation is simply amazing to me. I treasure it. I ponder it. I am awed by it.

My prayer this Christmas season is for the eyes of mortal man to be open to the love of God, to love Jesus with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and to love one another. To have the spirit of forgiveness and kindness. To be unified and see each other as human beings, created and loved by the Maker of the universe. And, though I will pack my Christmas trees away at the beginning of January, I pray for the spirit of Christmas and the wonder of Christ's love to live in our hearts all year long.

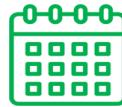


## Bible Studies

Wednesdays at 9:30 AM - Joan Little's House  
(26675 P Road) - Topic Varies

- 12/3 No Meeting
- 12/10 Cookie Exchange at Carol Totten's
- 12/17 Joan's House
- 12/24 & 12/31 No Meeting
- January - back at Joan's

Winter Bible Study starts February 2nd at FBC - watch for time and details to be announced!



## Upcoming Events

2nd Tuesday of each month - Jhett's lunch at 11:30

Monday January 26th - Girl's Night Out - 6:15pm, location TBD

Saturday February 21 - Teaching/Fellowship event at FBC. Time and Details to come!

**\*\*These dates are subject to change\*\***

***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.***  
**Isaiah 9:6-7**

## First Baptist Church Women's Ministry Team

Team Leader: Melanie Woltje

Brooke Black, Christi Boyden, Donna Jewell, Erin Lassey,

Caitlin Murrow, Vanessa Wisdom

## *Special Revelation and the Bible*

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He rebuked the devil with the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Historically, the church has echoed the teaching of Jesus by affirming that the Bible is the *vox Dei*, the "voice of God" or the *verbum Dei*, the "Word of God". To call the Bible the Word of God is not to suggest that it was written by God's own divine hand or that it fell from heaven in a parachute. The Bible itself clearly calls attention to its many human authors. In a careful study of Scripture, we notice that each human author has his own peculiar literary style, vocabulary, special emphasis, perspective, and the like. Since the production of the Bible involved human effort, how can it be regarded as the Word of God?

The Bible is called the Word of God because of its claim, believed by the church, that the human writers did not merely write their own opinions, but that their words were inspired by God. The apostle Paul writes: "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16). We say that the Bible is inspired by God, which is a translation from the Greek word meaning "God-breathed." God breathed out the Bible. Just as we must expel breath from our mouths when we speak, so ultimately Scripture is God speaking.

Although Scripture came to us from the pens of human authors, the *ultimate* source of Scripture is God. That is why the prophets could preface their words by saying, "Thus says the Lord." This is also why Jesus could say, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17), and "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

The word *inspiration* also calls attention to the process by which the Holy Spirit *superintended* the production of Scripture. The Holy Spirit guided the human authors so that their words would be nothing less than the word of God. How God superintended the original writings of the Bible is not known. But inspiration does not mean that God dictated His messages to those who wrote the Bible. Rather, the Holy Spirit communicated through the human writers the very words of God.

Christians affirm the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible because God is ultimately the author of the Bible. And because God is incapable of inspiring falsehood, His Word is altogether true and trustworthy. Any normally prepared human literary product is liable to error. But the Bible is not a normal human project. If the Bible is inspired and superintended by God, then it cannot err.

This does not mean that the Bible translations we have today are without error, but that the original manuscripts were absolutely correct. Nor does it mean that every statement in the Bible is true. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, for instance, declares that "there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going" (Eccl. 9:10). The writer was speaking from the standpoint of human despair, and we know his statement to be untrue from other parts of Scripture. Even in revealing the false reasonings of a despairing man, the Bible speaks truth.

(ESV Reformation Study Bible; Theological Notes)



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## *Spiritual Disciplines: Perseverance*

The Christian life is a happy life, but it does not come without work. Growing in godliness does not passively happen in the lives of believers. Though we are given the righteousness of Christ in and through our union with Him, this is only the beginning of our experience of our new birth. Throughout the New Testament, we see this call for believers to live in a way that is consistent with their new identities as children of God. In Eph. 4:1-3, Paul urges fellow believers "to live worthy of the calling [they] have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Paul gives this exhortation to the church in Colossae as well (Col. 1:10-12). Paul reminds believers that their endurance is a result of God's glorious might which strengthens them with all power. Although engaging in the spiritual disciplines both personally and corporately takes intentional effort and vigilance, we are not left without God's help. He enables us to remain faithful. He promises to finish the good work He started in us (Phi. 1:6).

But we have work to do, too. While we do not earn our salvation by good works, we are called to "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phi. 2:12). This is the call to be in active pursuit of obedience to God and His Word. This is our part in our sanctification. This is the pursuit of godliness and the why behind the spiritual disciplines. This work is not always glamorous. For the most part, the work is unseen, and the fruit is not always evident right away. But there is value in the ordinary, everyday faithfulness. Persevering to the end is necessary.

Perseverance in the lifelong pursuit of growing in godliness requires daily decisions to discipline ourselves. Growing in holiness does not involve a one-time commitment to follow Christ. It requires a daily commitment to follow Him. This is exactly what Jesus says in Luke 9:23— "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." Our cross to bear is not a life merely of self-denial, completely void of joy. It is the opposite. Our cross to pick up daily is the willingness to obey His commands, love and serve others, and do all things for His glory. It is a life of emptying ourselves and being filled with Christ. This kind of

life leads to inexpressible joy.

We can hold two truths in tension. Jesus said that narrow way is difficult (Matt. 7:14), but He also said, "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). Turning away from our sins in repentance, submitting our lives to the lordship of Christ, and obeying His Word only happens when the gospel transforms our hearts, minds, and wills. We cannot do it apart from Christ. We are invited to take His yoke and learn from Him who is gentle and lowly in heart. And as we work, we will find rest for our souls.

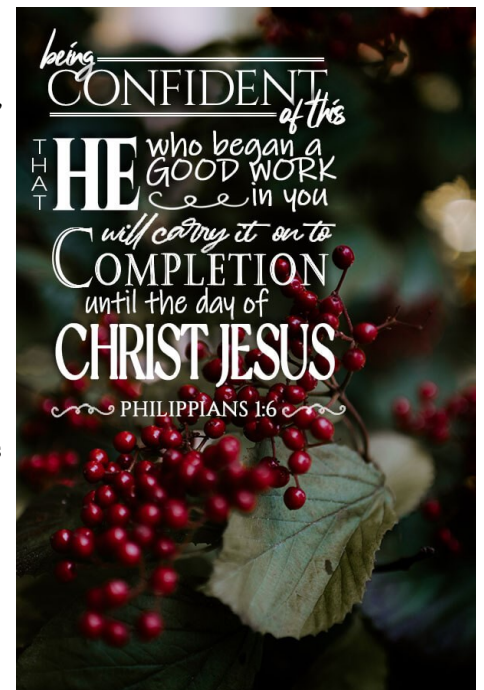
It is through this steadfast connection that we bear fruit or do anything good. Genuine union with Christ begets spiritual growth, and this is true of the pastor to the seminary student, the stay-at-home mom to the teenager, and beyond.

So how do we endure? We abide in Him. We live out of our identities as children of God. We keep our eyes fixed on Christ who is the "source and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Like Him, we endure with the joy of our future glorification set before us. We keep an eternal perspective. We refuse to grow weary or give up.

We do all of this with the indwelling Spirit, and through the Spirit, we experience His fruit. We experience and exhibit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). We remain steadfast with the hope that the glory and fruit will last for all eternity.

Additional reading...  
Philippians 2:12-18; 2  
Peter 1:3-11; Hebrews  
2:1-13

(Growing in Grace:  
Knowing and Loving  
God Through  
Spiritual Disciplines)



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