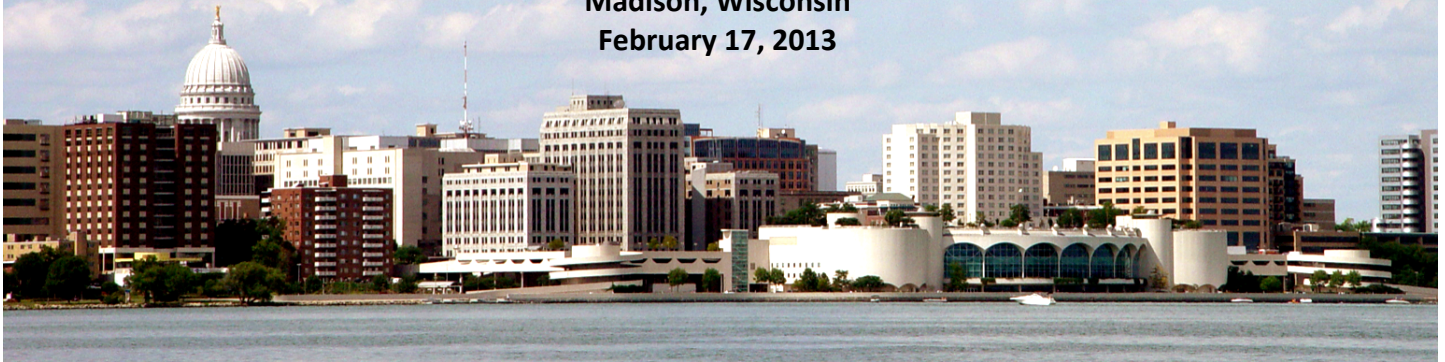


# ***“What Does the Bible Mean to You?”***

**2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17**

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Several weeks ago, two of the fine young men of this congregation came up to me after the worship service and gave me a sermon request that they had apparently been working on together. They seemed pretty proud of this one, they had both signed their names to it, they asked it in person and also wrote it down, and the question was this, “What does the Bible mean to you?” You two know who you are, and you might remember we had a brief conversation about this. Off the top of my mind at that time, I suggested a little acronym that many of us have used in the past: Sometimes we refer to the BIBLE as “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.” And that is certainly one way of thinking about the Bible. But as I thought about that question more and more over the past several weeks, one passage kept coming to mind – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – and I would invite all of you to turn with me to that passage as we consider this question from two of the young men of this congregation (p. 1864) – 2 Timothy 3:16-17. And I will admit that when I began to look into this passage, I was shocked by what I found. I discovered that we have not looked at this passage in depth, at all, here at the Four Lakes congregation. I am very thankful, therefore, that two of our young men have asked for a lesson on “What the Bible Means to Me.” When I think about what the Bible means to me, there is no better summary of my thoughts on this question than 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The Bible, of course, is an amazing book. The Bible was written by roughly 40 different authors over a period of more than 1500 years. It was written on three continents – Asia, Africa, and Europe. It was written in three different languages – in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The word “Bible” comes from Latin and simply means “book.” It was originally copied by hand and preserved on scrolls. It was divided into chapters in 1228. The Old Testament was divided into verses in 1488. The New Testament was divided into verses in 1551. It was first translated into English by John Wycliffe in 1380. The Bible was the first book ever printed in 1454. It was first printed in English by William Tyndale in 1526. The Bible continues to be the best-selling book of all time. The Bible, therefore, is an amazing book, and this morning I would like for us to take just a few moments to look at what the Bible says about itself. Again, let us please look together at the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – Paul says, “***All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.***” As we look very carefully at these two verses and as we consider the question from two of the young men of this congregation, I would like for us to consider three questions this morning: 1.) What is the Bible? 2.) What is the relevance of the Bible? And 3.) What does the Bible really do for us?

I. **But first of all, let us think about the question: WHAT IS THE BIBLE? WHAT DOES THE BIBLE CLAIM TO BE?**

And of course (at the beginning of verse 16), Paul says that, ***“All Scripture is inspired by God.” “Inspired by God”*** comes from one word, a compound word meaning literally ***“God-breathed.”*** The Bible, therefore, is inspired by God. Paul is saying, here, that God’s breath is the source of the Bible. What makes Scripture Scripture is that God breathed it out. The Scriptures originated with God. The Bible, then, is not a random collection of myths and stories or even human ideas about God, but the Bible itself was breathed out by God. Just as I breathe out the words that I speak, God breathed out the words that we find in the Bible. God breathed, God exhaled, and now we have the Scriptures.

Of course, the actual words were written by human hands with pen and ink, but the words themselves originated with the mind of God. God used the process of inspiration to communicate through human authors who wrote with their own distinct personalities. Perhaps we could compare it to playing an instrument. Just as a musician blows into an instrument and creates a particular sound, so also God breathed through men like Moses and Peter and Paul and communicated the message that He intended to communicate.

We have other passages that give us a little more insight into the process. You might want to keep a finger here in 2 Timothy 3, but just turn over briefly to 2 Peter 1:19-21 (p. 1901). In that passage, Peter was referring to the fact that Jesus was the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies, and as he explained that those prophecies were not just made up, notice what he says – 2 Peter 1:19-21,

***<sup>19</sup> So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.***

***<sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.***

I would just emphasize here that last phrase, ***“...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*** As I understand it, people from that time would use the same wording to refer to a ship being ***“moved along”*** by the wind. Just as the wind moved those ships, so also God moved the inspired prophets to communicate the message that He wanted to communicate. Those prophets were ***“inspired.”*** Their message was ***“God-breathed.”*** And that is what Paul is saying back in 2 Timothy 3, ***“All Scripture is inspired by God.”***

We get back to the question, then, “What does the Bible mean to me?” And more specifically, “What is the Bible?” To me, the Bible is the inspired word of God. It does not just contain the word of God here and there, but it is the word of God. Every single word in this book is here because God wants it to be here. And for us, then, the only proper response is to accept it as God’s word. We think of those people in the Greek city of Thessalonica. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul said, ***“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”*** Paul, then, was thankful that a certain group of people in that ancient city had received his message and had accepted it as the inspired word of God. Today, we have that message written down for us. It has been preserved for us over the past 2,000 years, and we now have it translated into our own language. What an amazing blessing! The Bible is the inspired word of God.

II. **But now, let us consider another question: WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE? OR MAYBE WE COULD ASK IN MORE PRACTICAL TERMS: WHAT IS THE BIBLE REALLY GOOD FOR?**

In verse 16, Paul says that the Scripture is *“profitable.”* The word refers to something that is *“useful”* or *“helpful”* or *“beneficial.”* The word of God, then, is good for something. It does no good if it sits on a shelf somewhere, but if we use it, if we study it, Paul says that it has a practical value, it does something for us. What does the word of God do?

A. First of all, Paul says that the word of God is useful for *“teaching.”*

The word *“teaching”* is sometimes translated in some of the older translations as *“doctrine,”* so *“doctrine”* is just an old-fashioned word for *“teaching.”* We are talking, here, then, about teaching or instruction that comes from God – the difference between right and wrong, what it means to live for God, what it means to love others, what we must do to be pleasing to God, what God has done for us, how God wants us to handle our finances, how God wants us to behave as parents, as husbands and wives, as children, as brothers, as sisters. The talking heads on television might not always have the best advice on raising children, the politicians might not really know the best definition of a family, but God’s word is always true. Scripture, then, is our standard for living, and scripture is our standard for testing everything that claims to be true. The Bible is full of information and is meant to teach us that information.

Now, if we realize that the Bible is profitable and useful for teaching, then that means that we need to approach the Bible as learners. “Disciple,” by the way, is just an old-fashioned word for “student.” As Christians, we are disciples; literally, we are students of Christ. We are students of the Bible. We are to read the Bible with the idea that we are about to learn something very important. God is teaching us through the inspired Scriptures. The Scriptures, then, are to be studied – as individuals, as families, in small groups, in classes, and together (as we are right now) in the assembly of God’s people. The Bible is profitable for teaching.

B. As we look again at verse 16, we also find that the Scriptures are profitable for *“reproof.”*

The word *“reproof”* comes from a word meaning, “to expose,” and so the idea is, the Scriptures have a way of exposing our behavior for what it really is. The Bible shows us what we’re doing wrong and makes it obvious. We read a passage, and we think, “Wow! I’m doing that, and I shouldn’t be doing it!” Our sin has been reproofed. The Bible has a way of opening our minds to understand certain areas where we might not be living as we should. We think of King David in the Old Testament. King David took another man’s wife and had that man killed, but David never truly understood that what he did was wrong until Nathan the prophet brought the word of God into the situation, told the parable and said, *“You are the man!”* At that point, David’s sin had been exposed. The king had been reproofed. The light had been shined on his situation. It is the idea of bringing something to someone’s attention. The Bible is impartial and does not discriminate. It speaks to the rich and poor from all nations and all ethnic backgrounds – no matter who we are, the Bible exposes our behavior and tells us what to do about it. We cannot fix a problem until we know it’s a problem, and that is what Paul is talking about here – the Bible shows us the problem.

Last week in the Sunday morning adult Bible class, we briefly looked at John 16:8, a reference to the Holy Spirit. The Lord was referring to how the Spirit would come after He went back to heaven, and the Lord (referring to the Spirit) said, *“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”* This happens through the inspired word of God. Remember: The apostles

spoke and wrote their books at the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, then, through the word of God, ***“convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness.”*** The Scriptures shine God’s light on sin. The Scriptures are profitable for reproof.

- C. Notice: There is a third way the Scriptures are profitable – the Scriptures are also useful for ***“correction.”***

The word Paul uses here is interesting. The Greek word has the word “ortho” in it, and the word “ortho” refers to something that is straight. Perhaps you have been to an orthodontist. An orthodontist straightens teeth. Or maybe you have been to an orthopedic surgeon. An orthopedic surgeon straightens bones or puts bones back together again so that they are straight, as they should be. In the ancient Greek world, this word was used to refer to setting something upright that had fallen down. For example, if I’m out on a walk and see my neighbor’s trash can blown over in the street, I might stop to pick it up and set it upright. That is the way this word was used in the ancient world. And so the idea here is that the word of God has a way of straightening us out. The word of God has a way of picking us up and setting us back on the right path. It seems that my mom had a way of saying, “Straighten up young man!” She wasn’t talking about posture, but she was talking about behavior. The word of God has a way of straightening our behavior. The Bible has a way of getting us back on track. We tend to wander off of the straight and narrow path, but the Bible brings us back. We might say that the Bible rehabilitates us. Going to a Bible class is like going to rehab. The Bible not only provides the initial rebuke, but the Bible also teaches us how to live. The Bible not only tells us not to steal, but it tells us to work hard. It tells us to provide for our families. So, I would say: This is the more positive half of reproof. We have REPROOF: This is what you’re doing wrong, and then we have CORRECTION: This is what you do to make things right. We think about our close friends. I know it’s true for me, and I hope it is true for you as well: Those who are close to me not only tell me what I’m doing wrong, but they also help me with some kind of a plan. In a similar way, the Scriptures have a way of 1.) Reminding us what is right and wrong and then, 2.) Helping us bring our behavior back in line with the way God would want us to live – almost like a cast on a broken bone or like braces on our teeth. Literally, the Bible makes us straight. The Scriptures are profitable for correction.

- D. There is another benefit of God’s word in verse 16, and that is: The Scriptures are profitable for ***“training in righteousness.”***

My understanding of the word Paul uses here is that it is in some way tied to the training we might do in raising children. In other words, as parents, we don’t just sit our kids down in a classroom type setting and lecture them on how they need to live, but it’s more of a lifetime process, a lifetime of teaching by example. Teaching is so incredibly important, but we don’t just teach, we train, we model, we coach our children. And that is what the word of God does for us. It is profitable for ***“training in righteousness.”*** The plan is that we grow from spiritual infants into mature Christians, and the Bible helps us with that. The Bible is a training manual. We think of soldiers or athletes who train in such a way that when they face a stressful situation, they don’t even need to think about it, they just act. That is what the Bible can do for us as Christians. The Bible can train us in righteousness so that doing good becomes a natural response.

So, we have discovered here that the Bible really is good for something. The Bible is useful. The Scriptures are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

III. Before we close our study of this little passage, there is another aspect I would like for us to examine, and that is: **WHAT DOES THIS REALLY MEAN FOR ME? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE IN MY LIFE? THIS IS WHAT THE BIBLE DOES, BUT WHY? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ME?**

Notice, please, the answer Paul gives in verse 17 – all of these things are true, “*...so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” Just a note here at the beginning: In the Bible, sometimes the word “man” refers to a male, but sometimes it refers to mankind in general, and it is this second word that is used here. In other words, Paul is not talking about males, here, but he uses the generic word for mankind, for people – he uses the basis of our English word “anthropology” (not the study of males, but the study of mankind, the study of people, the study of humanity). So, all of these things about the Bible are true, so that the “*person belonging to God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” The idea here is that the Bible prepares us for life. Think about those things that are truly important – our families, our relationship with God, our relationships with coworkers and friends – the Bible prepares us and gets us equipped for all of these things. The Bible makes us “*adequate.*” The Bible gives us the tools that we need. Literally, the Bible makes us functional, competent, efficient, and complete. It makes us “*adequate.*”

The word “*equipped*” refers to being furnished or properly supplied. In the ancient world, this word was used to refer to a boat that was fully supplied before a long journey. I think of this trip we took to Tennessee two weeks ago. In the days leading up to the trip, I filled up the windshield washer fluid, I checked the oil, I went out and got snacks, I got drinks for the cooler, I made sure we had the latest insurance card in the glove compartment, and the night before we left, I went out and filled it up with gas – our van was fully equipped for that trip. In a similar way, God’s word equips us for living this life. The Bible prepares us for dealing with the struggles of life.

But notice, the point of being adequate and fully equipped is so that we may be ready “*for every good work.*” In other words, we don’t go stock the cooler and fill up the van just so we can park it in the driveway, but the point is: We actually need to go somewhere! And the same is true of the Christian life: We don’t just study the Bible so that we know stuff, but we study so that we can do things, so that we are ready “*for every good work.*” God’s word gets us ready to actually do the things we need to do.

**Conclusion:**

As we close our thoughts on this passage, I would like to thank the two young men who asked for today’s lesson. And as we close, I would like to ask that each one of us take a Bible right now and that we hold it in our hands for just a moment – your Bible might be on your phone or on your i-pad, and that’s okay – take that out and hold it for just a moment. Your Bible might be leather bound and really old. If you don’t have one of your own, I would invite you to take out a pew Bible and hold it for just a moment. But as we close, I would like for every single one of us to be holding a copy of the Bible, and I would like to ask: What does the Bible mean to me? What does the Bible mean to you?

<sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;* <sup>17</sup> *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

In our hands, we are holding an ancient, priceless treasure. This book means everything to us, and it is an amazing honor to be able to be able to hold it in our hands. To the young men who asked this question, I would encourage you to value this book more than anything. To these young men, and to all of the young people here this morning especially, I know that kids today have a lot of screen time. I would encourage you to

use some of that screen time studying God's word. Take some time each day to read at least a chapter at a time. I would encourage all of us to love and read the Bible with enthusiasm. This book was caused by the breath of God.

Thankfully, because we have this book, we don't need to just guess as to what God wants us to do. We don't need to just wander around aimlessly. What we need to do is to read it. In John 13:17, the Lord Jesus said, ***"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*** The Bible tells us that to be saved, we must accept the Lord's sacrifice by repenting of our sins and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism. If you have any questions, if you have a prayer request, if you would like to study together, please let us know. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)