

“Bible Reflection” (2 Timothy 3:14-17)
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Many years ago, I took up running and ran a few 5Ks, 10Ks, marathons, and Hood to Coast with my Sunrise friends. But my best season of running was when I took up trail running in Forest Park, in the hills west of Portland. I love trail running because there is nothing like running dirt trails lined by trees deep in the middle of a forest.

Forest Park has one trail in particular that I ended up running end to end, and it’s called the Wildwood Trail. If you take a look at the map, it’s the pink trail that begins at the Portland Zoo that winds its way through the entire length of the park, and 30-plus trail miles later, you exit at Newberry Road.

But the problem with running in Forest Park is that if you’re not careful, you’ll quickly lose your way. I had a map that I carried in my pocket, but it was a small map, with smaller markers! Sure, there are signs at most trail junctions, but after a while, the signs are gone. As I began to get to the end of the trail (around mile 25), it became more challenging to ensure I was on the right road, heading in the right direction. It was only a few fellow runners who helped me know the right path. The map and other runners were essential to me finishing on the right path!

I ran that trail in 2009 before my iPhone days, and I wasn’t able to rely on GPS. These days we have GPS devices right in our pockets, and all we have to do is put in the desired location, and it will create a map to get there. I love that in my car because when I visit pastors and churches, my GPS knows what roads to *take*, what roads are *closed*, what roads *charge a toll*, what roads are *safest*, and what roads to *avoid*. It shows me the quickest way to get from point A to point B.

I am so thankful that we no longer live in the day of folding maps you keep in your glove box or the Thomas Guide you’d pick up every year at Costco that would require you to move from section to section when your road extended off the map. But most of all, I love the blue dot that always tells me where I am in relation to the road!

As a pastor, it’s very common for me to sit with people who pour out their *life*, their *pain*, their *troubles*, their *questions*, their *fears*, and their *doubts*, and they look to me for advice. I love to point people to God’s wisdom from His Word and friends; the best advice I can ever give anyone is to **read your Bible!** In it, you will find everything you need for life and godliness. It will speak to you.

What are your biggest questions in life today? *Does God really there? Does He love me? Does He have a plan for my life? Is my life actually worth living? Can God hear me when I pray to Him? Will He provide for me? Does He truly care for me? Can I trust Him?*

One of the things I love about the Bible is that you and I carry around a map for our very lives. When life twists and turns, when we wonder if we’re on the right path, when we need to know just where we are at any given moment, God’s Word is our guide. **BIG IDEA: *The Word of God is our map for life, and this map guides us to truth and freedom.*** Friends, true freedom is not the ability to do whatever we want but the willingness and strength of character to do what is true, noble, and right.

Today, I want us to look at a very familiar passage of Scripture that gives us a much clearer understanding of how God’s Word actually does provide a map for our lives and how this map guides us to truth and freedom.

I’ve been reading and studying the Bible for forty-five years, and I’ve read it from cover to cover each year over the past thirty-seven years. Most importantly, I’ve been working on putting it into practice. I don’t just want to *know* what it says; I want to *do* what it says. ***I want to live a life that reflects the truths of the Bible.***

Our passage today begins with a bit of background: *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* 2 Timothy 3:14-15 (ESV) Even though he shows up a number of places in the New Testament, we really don’t know much about Timothy, but what we do know is this: *he had genuine faith.*

Timothy’s father was Greek and probably not a believer in Jesus, but Timothy’s mother and grandmother had a godly heritage with their Jewish faith. Most Bible scholars believe that Paul introduced Timothy to faith in Jesus on Paul’s first missionary journey. Then, on his second missionary journey, he enlisted Timothy to join him, and for the rest of Paul’s life, he counted Timothy as his son in the faith and relied on him to his very end.

The word *“childhood”* there literally means *“a baby who is nursing.”* Who taught Timothy the Holy

Scriptures from a baby? His grandmother and mother. Timothy had family members who invested in his life for a spiritual foundation and growth. I thank the Lord for *my* godly heritage. In much the same way, my grandmother and mother were instrumental in my coming to faith in Jesus. What I learned at an early age carried with me until it blossomed into my own faith. The same was true of Timothy.

Now, we get to our passage for today: “*All Scripture is **breathed out** by God and **profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.***” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV) I am sure you have read this or at least heard these two verses, but for our time today, I want to break it down, word for word, so we can get to the depths of what Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith.

It begins with these words, “*All Scripture is **breathed out** by God.*” We often translate it using the word “*inspired,*” but it literally means “*by the breath of God.*” Paul is clear that the Bible, God’s Scripture, is “*God-breathed*” and this tells us that the words of the Bible came originated from God and were written down by men. The Apostle Peter said something similar when he wrote: this when he said that “*men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21). Peter’s words use the image of a ship being carried along by the wind. That wind, that breath, **was God himself breathing out His words for us!**

Just stop and consider that for a moment! I love *books*, songs, poetry, and *reading in general*, but nothing compares to reading God’s very words to us!

Not only is the Bible inspired, “*God-breathed,*” it has a purpose for our lives. Paul continues his thought by saying the Word of God is “*profitable,*” which focuses on the sufficiency of God’s word in our lives. The word means “*beneficial, productive, and sufficient.*” In the rest of this verse, Paul went on to explain exactly how the Scripture is profitable for you and me. He highlights four important ways (2+, 2-):

#1. Paul says the Bible is profitable for us in “teaching” us. Teaching is a vital element of growth toward becoming like Jesus. *Teaching* is instructing believers in God’s truths. If a person is never taught to read, they will never reach their full potential. In the same way, when people never read the Bible, they will never fully develop their Christlikeness.

#2. Paul says the Bible is profitable for “reproof.” Reproof is when God’s Word *rebukes us, convicts us, and shows us the errors of our ways.* God’s Spirit uses God’s Words to reveal the truth of our sin and foolish behavior. The Bible tells us when we stray.

#3. Paul says the Bible is profitable for “correction.” Reproof is when our wrong is pointed out, but *correction* builds upon reproof and *restores or reforms* us. Reproof *reveals our sinfulness or foolishness*, but *correction shows us how to straighten out what we’re doing wrong.*

#4. Paul says the Bible is profitable for “training in righteousness.”

The word “*training*” had the original meaning of *bringing up and training a child*, but it came to be used for any training. Here, it refers to *the ideas and instruction that build us up to maturity.* Until the Lord takes us to be with Himself, His Word is to continue training us in righteousness.

BIG IDEA: *The Word of God is our map for life, and this map guides us to truth and freedom.* God’s Word teaches us to align our behavior to match our new, righteous identity in Christ. Make no mistake; the Bible is not a good luck charm we put under our pillows at night to transform us! Only when we *read it and apply it* are we transformed.

What is God’s goal in our reading of the Scriptures? “*that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*” *Complete* refers to people who are *complete, capable, and proficient in everything they are called to be or do.* God intends for us to be supernaturally equipped to accomplish every kind of good work he puts in our path! According to Scripture, he has set apart good works for us to do, so it is impossible to *believe, understand, and follow* what you do not even know. How will you be able to do all that God intends for you without the equipping of the Word of God? How much time do you spend in God’s Word?

Friends, it is entirely *futile* and *foolish* to expect to live a *spiritual life* without knowing and experiencing *spiritual truth!*

John Piper recently said, “*I have never met a mature, fruitful, strong, spiritually discerning Christian who is not full of Scripture, devoted to regular meditation on Scripture, and given to storing it in the heart through Bible memorization.*” – John Piper

There is much more to the Christian life than simply reading the Bible—but not less! Daily reading and reflecting on God’s Word is a commitment to sit under the gaze of God and allow Him to *shape your affections, convict you of sin, spur you to other believers, and strengthen you to be the man or woman of God He intends.*

So, friends, my question to you this morning is this: Are you equipped? You have God’s inspired Word available to you—right in your *hands*—but is it in your *heart*?

Let me close with two conversations I’ve had recently with friends:

1) Randy May: Last month, I had coffee with Randy, and we talked about how we must learn to *read the Bible with our heads*—in order to understand what has been said. Then, we must learn to *read the Bible with our hearts*—in order to experience God’s voice through His Words. When we carefully study the Bible, we can understand what its writers were saying to their original audience. Then, by reflecting on it, we learn to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to us *now*.

2) Dean Halley: This past week I was having coffee with Dean and we talked about the challenges people have in actually putting the Word of God into action in their lives. The problem is that we’ve packed our minds with so much garbage, and we’ve had so many traumatic experiences that so many times, God’s Word just goes in and then out!

Honestly, putting God’s Word into practice can be very difficult. The trauma you have experienced in life has hard-wired your brain into resisting God’s Word when it requires you to think and act differently. This resistance comes from the coping mechanisms, like addictions, that your brain developed to protect your wounded heart. Ironically, resisting God’s Word can be a coping mechanism, too, when it threatens to undo what has worked for you for so long.

That’s why the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” Our minds must be renewed by the power of the *Word of God* and the power of the *Spirit of God*.

You and I need one another to be healed from this subconscious resistance to God’s Word. Don’t try to live the Christian life alone, but have a trusted friend who will help you unpack your past. God’s *Word*, with God’s *People*, led by God’s *Spirit*, is a discipleship rhythm that rewards you for the present life and the future!

So...what is stopping you? Last week, Pastor Paul encouraged us to pursue the rhythm of daily Bible reading. If you only read one chapter of the Bible each day, you can get through the entire New Testament in one year! Then, out of that one chapter, pick one verse or one idea, write that verse down, and consider how that teaching could affect your life. Then, meditate on it for the rest of the day. **BIG IDEA: *The Word of God is our map for life, and this map guides us to truth and freedom.***

Life Level Application

- 1) Head:** Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. How have you seen God’s Word teach you (show you the path), rebuke you (tell you when you’re off the path), correct you (get you back on the path), and then train you (build you strong on the path once again)?
- 2) Heart:** Read Romans 12:2. Paul tells us to be transformed and not conformed, but this happens as you “renew your mind” with God’s truth. What hinders you from having your mind renewed?
- 3) Hands:** Take 15 minutes each day this week, open your Bible, read a chapter, and invite God to speak to you throughout the day. Then, meditate on that truth throughout the day. When the day is over, and your head hits the pillow, consider what you have learned and experienced from God’s Word.
- 4) Habits:** It’s never too late to pick a Bible reading plan! If you need help pursuing a plan that fits your time, just try reading one chapter in Proverbs each day and see how powerful God’s wisdom is for your life!