

The Wonderful Word
2 Timothy 3:14-4:5
January 10, 2016

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. 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 competent, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Most everyone has some sort of tools in their house or garage. Different people treat their tools differently. Some people have tools, but don't know how to use them. Some have tools and choose not to use them. Others use their tools in the wrong way. Have you ever used a pair of pliers for a hammer or a screwdriver for a chisel? And then there are those who use their tools to make life better.

The Bible is a tool, and it receives much the same treatment as any other tool. Some people have a Bible, but they don't know how to use it. Some people have a Bible and choose not to use it. Others have a Bible and use it the wrong way; they use it as a weapon against themselves and against others. And then there are those who use their Bible to make life better.

In today's epistle reading from Paul's second letter to a young pastor named Timothy, Paul presents God's Word, the Bible, as a tool. He gives young Timothy some detailed instructions on what God's Word is intended for and how to use it.

Paul warns Timothy about the opposition he will face when he announces God's Word to the world. Paul knows, in advance, that there will be opposition because God's Word goes against the grain of human nature. It's politically incorrect. The Bible tells people what we already know about them, because we know it about ourselves. All people are sinners. All people need to depend on Jesus Christ and not on themselves.

Paul also gives Timothy some advice on how to decide what's right when he hears arguments opposing God's Word. Paul says: *Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus* (2 Ti 3:14-15 NIV).

Timothy's teachers were his mother and grandmother; two people he trusted. What he

was taught came from Scripture. There was no issue about which teaching was right and which teaching was wrong. Timothy didn't examine all the things he had been taught and then come up with what he thought was right. Instead, Timothy learned to only trust God to be right, and to believe in the righteousness that came to us through Jesus.

Paul tells Timothy to keep studying God's Word. He tells him to make his preaching centered in God's Word. He also tells Timothy to use God's Word as God intends for it to be used.

God's Word is used to impart wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to look at the facts and make the right decision. It's through Scripture that we learn what God has to say to us. It's through Scripture that we learn what God has done for us. We don't teach what God should have done or what God should have said. We teach what God truly says and what God actually has done and still does.

The wisdom we receive from God's Word leads us to salvation. Of course, we aren't saved by what we know. The wisdom of the Bible points us to the only way of salvation. We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. We come to that faith because the Holy Spirit works through the wisdom of Scripture to lead us to Jesus.

Paul says Scripture works because it was inspired, literally breathed, by God. Inspiration is a very simple concept. God inspired the writers of the Bible to write what they wrote. That doesn't mean God gave them a general idea of what to write and they put it in their own words. The Bible is God's Word. It is exactly what God wanted said, put in a form of human communication.

Paul also gave Timothy a detailed list of the things God intends his Word to be used for. Remember, Paul is writing under inspiration from God. That means that what God wanted Timothy to do with his Word, he also wants us to do with it.

Scripture is to be used to teach the truth. We live in a culture that does its best to avoid the concept of truth. Truth brings with it the requirement of complying or being in the wrong. Truth established things like fairness, equality, humility, honesty, and trustworthiness. In our sinful nature, we know nothing of these things and we don't want to know about them. It's only in God's Word that we come to know the truth.

Scripture is to be used for correction. Of course, we must be careful not to impose our ideas on God's Word when we use it to correct. The rule is: "Let God do the correcting."

The problem here is that people don't like being corrected. No one wants to admit that they are wrong. However, through Scripture God performs a miracle. God changes the human heart to help us to accept and appreciate correction.

Scripture is to be used to teach us the right way to live. How often have you made the same mistake over and over? Every time you make that same mistake you suffer

the consequences, but you just can't seem to stop. God's Word teaches us about true repentance – the ability to stop doing what is wrong and start doing what is right. Studying the Bible will help you out of the ruts you've gotten yourself into and show you how to live the life God intends for us.

God's Word is to be used to convince people. The hardest part about evangelism is convincing an unbeliever that he or she is a sinner in need of salvation. The only dependable way to bring an unbeliever to this knowledge is to let Scripture do the convincing. If I convince someone of their sinfulness, their conviction depends on my being right. If Scripture convinces someone of their sinfulness, their conviction depends on the rightness, the correctness of God's Word.

Scripture is to be used to rebuke. The dictionary defines rebuke as "a sharp reprimand or scolding." How often do we need to be scolded? Apparently, God thinks we need to be scolded quite often. Two times God had Paul tell Timothy to use the Bible to bring people back to the straight and narrow.

Scripture is to be used to encourage people. The Greek word we translate as encourage comes from the same root word used in the Gospel of John to describe the Holy Spirit, and in 1 John to describe Jesus. Both the Holy Spirit and Jesus are encouragers.

The Greek word means to stand beside or to come along side. Jesus and the Holy Spirit don't offer help from a distance, they bring the presence of God into our lives. When we use Scripture, we become the encouragers. We can bring the Holy Spirit's power to people by teaching the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul tells Timothy that we are to use God's Word in the ways that he listed so we might be qualified and equipped to do God's work. God uses his Word to call us to faith, and then he gives us that same Word as a tool to use as we pass along the call of faith to others.

Paul doesn't separate Jesus from Scripture, or Scripture from Jesus. It is because of our faith in Jesus that we study God's Word. It is because of our faith that we pass along what we have learned from Scripture so others might believe and be saved.

Today, just like in Paul's day, there are many people who don't want to hear the pure truth of God's Word. They want a Gospel message that says what they want to hear. Some hire people to preach a corrupted version of what God's Word truly says. But we must never do that.

God's Word is exactly that – God's Word. We can neither add to it nor take from it. If we add to God's Word, we dilute it. If we subtract from God's Word, it becomes less than what God intended it to be. The Bible is what God has said and it will never change.

Some people want a God that protects, but not a God that directs. Today, I leave you

with some food for thought. Some people keep a box of tools in their house for emergency use only. Other people take those same tools and use them to make a life better. What are you doing with the tool of God's Word? Is it for emergency use only, or is it the tool you use to improve your life and the lives of those around you?