

Core 52
Week 50 - Scripture

As kids we learn a lot of things from songs and sayings. We learned our ABCs. We learned that yes, Jesus loves me. There's now two generations of children who learned to pick up after themselves from Barney the Dinosaur.

Clean up, clean up. Everybody everywhere. Clean up, clean up, everybody do your share.

But some of the songs and nursery rhymes we were taught as children are downright creepy.

"Ring around the rosy, pocket full of posies. Ashes, ashes, we all fall down." One theory says that this song was originally about people dying in the black plague. Hey, everybody join hands. Let's sing.

How about this bedtime prayer? "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Sure, the last words you have with your child before they go to sleep should be about them dying in the middle of the night.

Or, how about this one. "It's raining; it's pouring. The old man is snoring. He bumped his head and went to bed, and couldn't get up in the morning." Old guy gives himself a concussion. He goes to bed, and he dies in his sleep. Okay, that's dark.

"Rockabye baby, in the treetop. When the wind blows the cradle will rock. If the bough breaks, the cradle will fall, and down will come baby, cradle and all." What kind of sick, twisted parent puts their baby in a tree top? This chick needs to be arrested.

"Rub-a-dub-dub. Three men in a tub." Alright, that is totally inappropriate.

"There was an old lady who swallowed a fly, I don't know why she swallowed a fly, perhaps she'll die." Why are we so intent on killing off the elderly in children's verses? This isn't to mention the adventures of Jack and Jill, the old woman who lived in a shoe, or bringing home baby bumblebees. No wonder we're all so messed up. Who knows the psychological damage these songs and sayings did to our young minds.

There is another song I learned early in life. If you ever went to Sunday School or VBS as a kid, you did too. "The B-I-B-L-E Yes that's the book for me. I stand alone on the word of God. The B-I-B-L-E. Bible!"

This song is true. The Bible is the word of God. The Bible is the most amazing book and it has great power to change your life at any age. The Bible is the inspired, perfect, and powerful word of God. Jesus says that God's word is as essential as food. Matthew 4:4, "*It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*"

The Psalmist declares in Psalm 119:105, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*"

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, our only offensive weapon in our arsenal for our struggle against the spiritual forces of darkness.

It is a scalpel that performs surgery on our very soul. Hebrews 4:12 says,

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

This reminds me of something the ever quotable late, great Christian singer, songwriter Rich Mullins once said,

“The Bible is not a book for the faint of heart -- it is a book full of all the greed and glory and violence and tenderness and sex and betrayal that benefits mankind. It is not the collection of pretty little anecdotes mouthed by pious little church mice -- it does not so much nibble at our shoe leather as it cuts to the heart and splits the marrow from the bone. It does not give us answers fitted to our small-minded questions, but truth that goes beyond what we even know to ask.”

What a perfect description, and what a perfect lead-in to this week’s Core Verse— 2 Timothy 3:16-17. In our Core 52 series we are looking at 52 of the most important passages in the Bible. It only makes sense that one of them is about the Bible. But I want to back up a couple of verses, to verses 14 and 15 so we can hear what Paul tells Timothy in context.

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 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. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

This is Paul’s call to Timothy to never stray and always stay in God’s Word. But this isn’t just for Timothy. It’s for you and it’s for me. These verses tell us what Scripture is, what Scripture does, and what Scripture requires of us.

I. What Scripture Is

A. It is Inspired by God

The first thing we learn is that Scripture is inspired by God. The phrase that Paul uses in verse 16 is God breathed. The Bible is not just the cobbling together of the thoughts and opinion of 40 or more different authors and editors. It is a mosaic of God speaking through these different human authors. Each book of the Bible is reflective of the perspective and personality of its human author, but through the Holy Spirit, each book still says exactly what God wants it to say.

The apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 1:21, “*For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*”

These aren’t just the words of Moses or David or Jeremiah or Luke or Paul. These are the words of God.

The pieces of the mosaic form a beautiful portrait of God’s plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Bible displays amazing unity. Accusations of contradiction and inconsistency quickly melt away with closer inspection.

We looked at one of these in Sunday School last week. Both Matthew and Luke in their accounts of the birth of Jesus contain genealogies of Jesus, but if you look at them, they are different. The skeptic points and says, “Ah, see the Bible is full of contradictions.” However, closer inspection reveals that Matthew gives us Jesus’ legal genealogy through his adoptive father, Joseph, however Luke gives us his biological genealogy through Mary. Jesus’ claim to the throne of David is both legal and biological.

There is not a single supposed contradiction that doesn’t have a plausible resolution.

In verse 15, Paul calls Scripture *sacred writing*. These are holy words. *Sacred* or *holy* means set apart, above and beyond. Special. Unique, not like all the rest. This book is not like any other book.

The Denzel Washington movie *The Book of Eli* is one of the few Sci-Fi, dystopian future flicks that does not make a mockery of faith. Denzel Washington portrays Eli, a devout blind man sent on a mission from God to save the last existing copy of the Bible in a post-apocalyptic future.

The movie’s primary villain believes that having the Bible will be a great tool in controlling the weak and desperate. Toward the end of the movie the antagonist finally gains control of the sacred book, only to discover that it is in braille and is useless to him. Meanwhile, Eli makes it to Alcatraz Island where a secret order is dedicated to preserving items and ideas essential to restoring civilization. Eli has spent so much time in God’s word that he has the entire Bible memorized, and he recites the entire thing to one of the guardians on the island to preserve a copy of the Bible.

If the movie had only ended there, it might be one of my all-time favorite movies. However, the movie’s closing shot shows the Bible being placed on a shelf alongside all the other so-called sacred book of human history. The Bible is seen as a sacred writing but no different than the Quran, the Book of Mormon or the Bhagavad Gita.

What Paul is telling Timothy and us this morning is that no, the Bible belongs on a shelf all by itself. It stands alone as the word of God.

B. It is Useful

So, Scripture is inspired by God, and secondly, it is useful. The ESV translates this as *profitable*, but this isn't profit in the sense of money or wealth. Paul doesn't mean the Bible is a means to get rich. The word used here means useful, beneficial, advantageous. It means to be good for something.

In my toolbox, I've got a number of tools and gadgets that aren't really useful. They look good. They promised a lot, but they didn't really deliver. For instance I have this multi-wrench. One wrench contains every wrench you could need, unless it's metric. But I never use this, because it's big, it's bulky, it gets in the way. It can't fit where I need it. It slips off the nut.

But I also have some other tools that are among my favorite, because they're useful. They get the job done, and they do it well.

- Automatic wire stripper
- Crescent wrench
- Leatherman

The Bible is your toolbox for life. It's full of useful tools for any scenario. Financial concerns, relationship problems, parenting issues, feelings of hopelessness, a lack of peace, worry, fear. It's all in here. And it all works.

Paul spells out four ways in which Scripture is profitable or useful.

1. Teaching

First, he says it's useful for teaching. He's not talking about being a good teacher. That's important, but this is about the things that you need to teach. This is the truth that Paul taught Timothy and Timothy was to teach others. These are the basic truths and doctrines of Christianity. These are the things you need to know to live the life God calls you to live.

Every discipline has its basic principles that guide everything. Geometry has its theorems. Science has its scientific laws. Law has its legal norms formed by rules and principles. Medicine is guided by the basic principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.

Scripture contains every truth you need to know to live a spiritually full life and to fulfill the purpose for which God made you.

2. Reproof

Next, Paul says Scripture is useful for reproof. This is pointing out something that is wrong. Whether it's in your own life or in something else. God's word exposes error. It shows you what's wrong. God's word is like a spiritual CAT scan or MRI. It can show you when something isn't right. Something is off. Something is there that shouldn't be there.

On the outside, it might look good. It might sound good, but the Holy Spirit can use Scripture to peel back that surface layer to expose the problem hidden inside.

There's a lot of teaching and there are a lot of ideas out there that sound good. They make reasonable sounding arguments. And People nod their heads and say, "Oh, yes, that's so true. I agree. I agree." And as Christians we feel the pressure to go along with the crowd and agree that something is good, when it isn't.

Here's the problem with the crowd. The majority of people can believe in absolute lies. Our culture holds up certain ideas as true when they're total BS— Baloney Sandwich. BS stands for Baloney Sandwich.

For example. Our culture says, follow your heart. Sounds good, right. But the Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things. Do you realize the damage and destruction that people have left in their wake by following their hearts without using their heads, or submitting to the truth.

Another example. It's okay, if it doesn't hurt anyone else. Sounds good, right. And in some cases it's true. There's nothing wrong with swinging a baseball bat around unless someone else or your mom's fine china is nearby. But how we define hurt, and how someone else defines hurt can be very different. A wife has a discreet affair believing she isn't hurting anyone else, but her husband would disagree.

We can't predict what the long term consequences of our actions might be. We end up hurting others in ways that we never foresaw. The other problem with this idea is that even if we are hurting no one else, we could be doing great damage and destruction to ourselves. That hurts those who love us, and ultimately, it hurts the heart of God.

Scripture gives us guardrails in life that keep us from careening over the edge. God's word is a baloney detector. It exposes well-polished lies for the baloney it really is. Satan tries to make it look like a porterhouse steak, when in reality it is cheap, store brand, thin-sliced, past expiration baloney.

3. For Correction

Thirdly Scripture is useful for Correction . This is the counterpart to the previous point. Scripture doesn't just expose what's wrong, but it tells you how to fix it. Can you imagine getting an MRI and the doctor shows you an image, and says, "See this spot right here? That's the problem. It's a malignant tumor, and it will kill you within a year."

Shocked, you say, "What are we going to do about it?" "Oh, we're not going to fix it. I just wanted to show you what the problem was."

God's word does more than show us our problem. It guides us to what is needed to fix it. It is that surgical scalpel that divides joints and marrow, to give us the soul surgery we need. It provides the truth to correct the world's lies.

4. For Training

Finally, Paul says Scripture is useful for training. This is a combination of instruction and discipline. This isn't training in the gym. This isn't job training for some certification. God's word trains you for righteousness. This is your personal trainer for doing what's right. It's a workout out for your heart. It's health food for you soul, and both need a regular regimen to stay healthy. Whether its daily devotions, a Bible reading schedule, a Bible app that gets you in the word consistently, an audio Bible that you listen to in your car on the way to work, or while you do workout at the gym, we all need regular and consistent training in the Word of God.

II. What Scripture Does

A. Scripture Makes You Wise for Salvation

That's what Scripture is. Paul also tells us what Scripture does, what it has the power to do in your life. The first thing he mentions in verse 15 is that Scriptures *"are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* The Bible doesn't just communicate to you knowledge, truth, or history. It reveals the way of salvation. Now the Bible itself doesn't save you, but it is your roadmap that guides you to the one who does save you. It saves you through faith in Christ Jesus.

When you read God's sacred word in the pages of Scripture, it enlightens you to know and love the Savior who loves your soul, who is passionate about your eternity, and who gave his life to have a relationship with you. The Scriptures tell you who He is and what He did for you. They tell you how to obtain the salvation he offered, and how to grow in that salvation.

B. Scripture Thoroughly Equips You

The second thing Scripture does comes in verse 17. The Bible Thoroughly Equips You for all that God has called you to do. Vs. 17 says the effect of Scripture in your life is *"the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* The NIV says it this way, *"the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

You ever bought a complete kit that wasn't complete? You buy a meal kit and it's missing a vital ingredient. There's a guy who's been building one of those big, wooden backyard playsets for his kids this Christmas. It was supposed to be a complete set—everything included. He's had to make a dozen trips back to Lowes to buy parts and pieces that weren't included.

The Bible is an everything included, complete spiritual survival kit for everything God has called you to do—*for every good work*. Not partially equipped. Not mostly equipped for some good work or for a lot of good works. Thoroughly equipped for every good work. There is nothing that God has called you to that he hasn't already supplied everything you need to do it.

III. What Scripture Requires of Me

So that's what Scriptures is and what Scripture does, but what does God's word require of you? What does Scripture require of me? This takes us back to verse 14, and the main verb, the primary command of this whole section of Scripture.

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and become convinced of..."

Paul says continue in God's word. Remain. Abide. Stay. Do move. Be steadfast. Persist. Timothy started off in God's word. It began with his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. It continued with Paul's teaching. Timothy was never to stray out of that lane.

What Scripture requires of us is that we stand firm in God's word. Remain firmly planted.

Back in junior high I played football for the first time after several years of playing soccer. I first got to play in a game on the kickoff return team. I was a part of the last line of defense. If their returner makes it through the 1st bunch of tacklers, it was my job to keep him from taking it all the way to the end zone.

So the coach taught me that I needed to maintain my position and if that return man breaks through, I am to firmly plant myself, bend my legs, get my center of gravity low and take him down. That's what I was supposed to do. You know what I did? I stood straight up and down, and the guy ran right through me.

We are to remain firmly planted in the Word. We don't need something new, something novel, something innovative, something extra. God's word is never outdated and antiquated. It will never be replicated or duplicated. It doesn't need amended, appended, or supplemented.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

In the late 1970s there were about 50 known waterfalls in Yellowstone National Park. Park historian and archivist Lee Whittlesey began a project to document every waterfall in the park. In the 90s a new guy came on board and they began a renewed effort to survey the most remote areas of the park as possible.

Over the next 7 years more than 240 new waterfalls were discovered, many of them spectacular in their beauty. God's word is like this. There are always amazing and beautiful discoveries to be made.

The Bible IS the book for me and...if it's the book for you, too