

**2 Timothy 3:14-4:5** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. <sup>4</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Center your life in God's Word

1. God's Word is inspired
2. God's Word is useful
3. God's Word is the focus of our ministry

One of the things we put a great deal of importance on in our American culture is education. We want our children to stay in school and to do well in school. There was a time when most people did not go to college; now, almost everyone does. A high school education is no longer enough to get a good job. If not college, trade school or technical college will be needed to get the kind of job you want. So, we place a high priority on education.

If you ask your child what 2 + 2 is, and they tell you 5, well, you have some teaching to do. We take for granted that children need to learn how to read, write and do math, if they are going to be able to function in the world today. Because we live in a sinful, evil world, it is much more necessary for us and our children to have a Christian education, to center our lives in God's Word.

In the verses before our text, Paul described what we face in the world: "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:1-4) Living in this kind of world, we need a foundation in the truth. We need to center our lives in God's Word.

Why? Because the Bible is inspired by God. Paul wrote, *All Scripture is God-breathed*. The Apostle Peter explained what that means. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:20-21) Peter said they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Like the wind filling the sails of a ship, the writers of the Bible were moved by the Spirit what to write. We call it "Verbal Inspiration" meaning that every word of the original text was given by God. Martin Luther said, "The single whole Christ is in every word, and he is wholly in all single words. When, therefore, one denies in one word Him who is in every/all words, one denies him in his totality." (Quoted in The History of the Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 12)

So, Paul writes here in our text: *All Scripture is God-breathed*. All, he said. We can be tempted to pick and choose what parts of the Bible we want to listen to or follow, but this reminds us that all of it is God's Word and it has one central message: Jesus Christ, the Savior.

When one examines the life and ministry of our Lord, he is immediately impressed with the fact that he lived and breathed Scripture. For him Scriptures was the final authority in matters of history, doctrine and ethics. As Clark Pinnock observed, "We can say that Jesus everywhere and always regards Scripture as an authoritative document whose ultimate author is God himself. The importance of the phrase 'Scripture cannot be broken' does not lie in an isolated proof-text for Jesus' view of inspiration, but in the fact that it is entirely representative of his constant approach to the Bible. This document is for him God's written Word to man." (Quoted in The History of the Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 4)

Because it is God's Word to us, it is useful for life and salvation. *From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* Scripture makes us wise for salvation by teaching us the wisdom that we are sinful from

birth. Look at a little baby. So cute and cuddly. So adorable. We would not conclude by looking at that child that we are sinful from birth. We can only know that from Scripture.

Likewise, we can only know Jesus from Scripture. Martin Luther called Scripture the cradle in which we find the baby Jesus. And it is only through Scripture that we can gain a relationship with Jesus through faith. Scripture makes us wise for salvation. It is useful for faith and life.

The Bible is useful for teaching. What does God say about the things that are going on in society today? What does he think about abortion or assisted suicide? What are his feelings about homosexuality? All we have to do is look in the book. The Bible is useful for teaching.

And for rebuking. The Bible makes clear our sin, that we have fallen short of God's demands and calls on us to repent. Then the Bible corrects us. A better translation is "restore." After the law of the Bible has confronted our sin and led us to repent, the gospel of the Bible leads us to the cross of Jesus where there is restoration, forgiveness and life.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.* If that is the case, how much time do you spend in Scripture? Or have you ever thought about what legacy you are leaving your family? People debate the legacies of presidents, coaches and athletes. For what will these people be remembered? What will you be remembered for? Will you be remembered as a diehard Packer fan or a hardworking husband? Will you be remembered as a kind or nice person? But what eternal impact will you leave behind? Are we leaving a legacy that prepares your children and grandchildren to have a relationship with Jesus and eternal life? Center your lives on God's Word. Leave a legacy of Bible knowledge to your children and grandchildren.

That's why the whole focus of ministry has to be on God's Word. *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:<sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.* Paul is giving Timothy – and us – a solemn command. He is emphatically saying that we need to make God's Word the highest priority in life. It's hard to imagine that Paul could have said this more emphatically. It's as if he reached out and grabbed Timothy by his shirt, pulled him up to his face and yelled, "Make God's Word your priority!"

Why? *For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.<sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.* False teaching is like ice cream. It tastes good but has no nutritional value. Sound teaching though must be endured. It makes us spiritually healthy but it doesn't always taste good. The sinful human heart has a tendency to turn away from God's truth and embrace what feels good at the moment. We need to be aware of that. We need to preach the Word.

Preach, that is, to herald. The herald was the king's messenger. He wasn't a politician, diplomat or spin-doctor. His job was to proclaim faithfully the king's message.

Preach the Word, not our own ideas or self-help messages that make you feel good about yourself. Preach the Word. The reason we have a rather large pulpit – which used to be a lot higher – is to emphasize what you hear from this pulpit is God's Word, not mine. As pastors, we stand in the pulpit to emphasize what we proclaim is God's Word, not mine. We don't tell stories to make you feel good about yourself or to make you think what a swell guy I am. We do what the Apostle Paul says here: Preach the Word.

And he adds: *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.* "Keep your head in all situation" can be translated, "Be sober." When people get intoxicated with the latest winds of false teaching, you're the designated driver. Keep your head by centering your life in God's Word. Then you will know what to believe and what to say.

Of course, the question often is, "How do you do that?" Our church provides many ways in which you can center your life in God's Word. First and foremost is to be in worship regularly. Second, make use of the Bible Class options that are available here. Third, make use of the new hymnal which has a daily lectionary – two Bible readings for every day of the year. Get a Psalter and make use of that for reading the psalms. Or read a portion of your Bible every day. At the very least, open your phone and read the WELS daily devotions. These are just some suggestions for how we can center our lives in God's Word.

Education is important for life. Education in God's Word is not just important, it is vital. It helps us face life and deal with it. But more importantly, it brings us to Jesus, our Savior, who speaks to us in this book because he wants us to spend eternity with him. That's why he was born. That's why he died in our place. That's why he rose again and that's why he has inspired Scripture. He wants us to be in heaven with him so center your life in God's Word.