

Checking Up  
June 21, 2015

A boy walked into a drug store, pulled out a dollar bill, and asked the pharmacist for change. He went to a pay phone, put in some money, and made his call.

"Mrs. Jones, do you have a yard boy?" he asked. "I see. And is he doing a good job for you?... So you're not looking to make a change anytime soon?... OK. Have a good day."

The pharmacist came out from behind the counter, put his arm around the boy, and said, "I'm sorry you didn't get that job son."

"Oh, I've got that job sir," the boy replied. "I was just calling to check up on myself."

How often do you check up on yourself as a follower of Jesus? How often do you ask Jesus to show you where you are falling short in your obedience to Him?

This morning I want to encourage you to make it a habit to check up on yourself. Jesus knows what kind of job you are doing. Jesus knows if you've been bad or good. Jesus knows if you have been serving out of love or just duty. Jesus knows if your heart is really into your service or if you just want to do enough to get by. Jesus knows if your obedience has been lacking in either execution or motivation. So check up on yourself.

We check up on ourselves by asking Jesus to show us where we fall short, as we read the Bible. One reason to get into the Bible is to check up on ourselves. God wants to transform our character to match the character of Jesus. So as you read Jesus in the Bible, you can see where you fall short.

In the Bible you learn what Jesus was like. You learn His character. You learn His values. You learn how He treats people. As you read Jesus in the Bible you can compare yourself to Him and see where you fall short.

For example, as you read the Bible you see how patient Jesus was with people and maybe realize that you are too impatient with people. Or you learn how Jesus' life was focused on the Kingdom of God and know that you are not.

So one reason to get into the Bible is to check up on ourselves. Paul writes about this in a letter to his pastoral intern, Timothy,...

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

I want to work our way through this passage this morning and see what God wants to do with His book. First we read that "All scripture is God breathed." The word scripture simply means "a writing, a document". (**scripture = Gr. *graphé* = a writing, document**) It is the Greek word *graphé*, from which we get our word graph.

**We use the word "scriptures" to refer to the Bible.** In the Biblical context the word scripture refers to the writings about God. But **We also call the Bible God's Word, since these writings are God-breathed.** Some translations use the word "inspired" instead of God-breathed. But the literal translation is "God-breathed".

I believe that the Bible contains no errors, even though it was written by men. I believe those men were inspired by God to write these words. They wrote in their own words, within their own culture, their own vocabulary, their own experience of God. Yet, they wrote what God wanted written, even though they were not usually aware that they were doing so.

So we have some documents that we attribute to God. Coming from God makes these words useful. Let's see what these words are useful for.

First of all these God-breathed words are useful for teaching. What they teach is truth. **In the Bible we learn truth.** Turn to your neighbor and tell them, "In the Bible we learn truth." Every person on the planet has an opinion about what God is like. There are 7 billion different opinions today about what God is like. The only person who can reveal the truth about God is God Himself. So we can go to His words and learn the truth about God.

I can also learn truth about me in the Bible. The truth about people is revealed in this book. The truth about sin is revealed in this book. God's plans for the world and for history are revealed in this book. In the Bible we learn the truth about God, about people, about sin, about salvation, about the world, about Jesus, and much more. In the Bible we learn truth.

Secondly, the Bible is useful for rebuking. To rebuke someone is to scold them, reprimand them, or tell them they are doing something wrong. As I said a moment ago, the Bible reveals the truth about sin. **In the Bible we learn what kinds of actions, thoughts, desires, etc., are sins.** So as we read the Bible it shows us what is wrong in our lives, what is wrong with us.

Paul writes to the church in Rome and says that he didn't know that coveting was a sin until he read in God's word the commandment not to covet. He was already aware that he coveted what other people had. He was envious of what others possessed. He was discontent with what God had provided him. What he did not know was that coveting was a sin. Then he read in God's word that coveting was a sin and realized that he was a sinner. And sinners need a savior. Turn to your neighbor and tell them that sinners need a savior.

So one reason to read the Bible is to check up on ourselves. As you read the Bible the Holy Spirit of God convicts you of your sins. You find out what sins you are guilty of. You find out that you are a sinner. The scriptures are useful for rebuking.

Third, the scriptures are useful for correction. This is an interesting Greek word. It means to straighten something up again. (**correction = "straighten up again"**) It is the picture of something that was straight, became crooked or fallen down, and now you are straightening it up again. Figuratively it means to rectify or reform. You are familiar with this. How many of you heard from your parents, or said to your kids, "You'd better straighten up?" You know what that means!

The Bible is useful for straightening things that are crooked or fallen down into sin. So we could say, **"In the Bible we learn how to straighten up.**

Think about a parent who says to a child. "What you did was wrong", then walks away, not explaining to the child the right thing to do. Is the child going to do the right thing? Of course not. The child has to be taught the right thing to do.

We come to the Bible to learn the right things to do. You correct the wrong behavior by pointing out that wrong behavior and then teaching the correct behavior, the correct attitude, the correct words, the correct desires. In the Bible we learn how to straighten up.

And then the fourth way the Bible is useful is for "training in righteousness". **Righteousness means having a right relationship with God, fulfilling your obligations, responsibilities, and commitments to Him.** The Bible reveals what God expects of us. And it reveals the help God has provided us in meeting those expectations. **In the Bible we learn how to live right with God.**

In short, Paul is saying to take the Bible seriously. It is not like every other book in the world. It is a special book. It is God's word to us. As such we would expect Jesus to take the Bible very seriously. And indeed we find that He does.

**Mark 11:15-17 (NIV)** On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

Imagine walking into a church one day and finding someone selling Bibles and music CDs by the front door. Then you see a sign advertising a bake sale in one of the rooms down the hall. As you the service starts there are people chatting, children running around the room playing tag, people eating, listening to music on headphones or chatting on their cell phones. When Jesus walked into the temple in Jerusalem He saw a picture similar to the one I just described. The scene resembled a public market place instead of a place of prayer and worship.

The temple area refers to the whole thing, about 30 acres in size. Our church property, extending behind the trees, is six acres, so that may help you get an idea of how large the temple area was. **(picture of temple)**

Around the outside edge of this area was a covered porch known as Solomon's porch. The open area in front of this was the Court of the Gentiles. The temple proper consisted of between 8 and 18 acres and was surrounded by a low wall. It was in the center of this huge courtyard.

What Jesus encountered was a marketplace atmosphere in the temple. Jewish worship could only take place in the temple in Jerusalem. As a part of your worship you were to bring an animal to sacrifice. Any animal you brought had to pass inspection by the priests. Only unblemished animals could be sacrificed. The priests of Jesus' day figured out how they could use this system to their economic advantage. They would fail the animals brought from out of town and then sell the worshipper an animal the priests had provided, at tourist rates of course.

The other money making scheme involved the temple tax that each worshiper was to bring. People were coming from all over the Roman empire, with lots of different coins. But only Jewish money could be used to pay the temple tax. So the worshipper would have to exchange his money for Jewish money, again at a great cost.

So Jesus enters this place which is supposed to be a place of prayer and worship and religious instruction and sees instead a street scene similar to the local market place. Zeal for the Holiness of God and His temple burns within Jesus and is given vent by overturning the tables and driving the animals out and refusing to allow people to use the court as a common street.

Jesus quotes from God's word about what the temple was to be, even the court of the Gentiles. God loves all people, not just the Jews. God even made provision for all people in His holy temple.

Jesus calls the temple a den of robbers. This was a strong word. Even today there is a difference between a thief and a robber. A thief may break into your house and steal things. You come home and find a broken window, things missing. You feel violated, angry and such. But you were not personally threatened as you would have been by a mugger. The same is communicated with two Greek words in the Bible. One word means thief. The other means a robber, someone who steals openly and with violence.

A robber is one who accosts you and threatens you with harm if you do not give him what he wants. We consider robbery a more serious crime than thievery. Jesus calls the priests robbers. They are extorting money from the poor worshipers who have no choice but to pay whatever the priests demand. And Jesus did something about it because He took the word of God seriously.

Do you take God's word seriously? Do you read it as a religious exercise? Or do you read it to be changed? Do you use the information it reveals to change the way you live for Jesus? Do you read it to check up on yourself?

Since the Bible is God-breathed, since it is the words of God, reading the Bible calls for a response. We respond to everything we read, watch, hear, feel. To some things we smile, some frown, to some we laugh, and others, we cry. Someone told me this week that she cried when she heard about the shooting at the church in South Carolina. To some things we respond with a "YES!", and to other things we respond with a "NO!". To some we say, "I want that" and to others "I don't want that." You respond to everything, with "I will" or "I won't," "I agree" or "I disagree."

Well we respond to the Bible too. And to respond to the Bible is to respond to God.

Today what is your response to God? What will your response be to Him about His word and the importance of His word?

Today God is inviting you to believe truth about heaven and hell, life and death, sin and salvation. This truth is revealed in the Bible. This truth is that we are all sinners in need of a savior and that Jesus is the savior we need, the savior God sent for us.

Today, won't you respond to this truth with, "Yes, I believe?" Won't you respond with, "Yes, I receive Jesus as my Savior and turn my life over to Him as my Lord?"

Have you, as a Christian, been avoiding the reading of God's Word because it IS convicting? Or maybe you have been reading it, but resisting what God is saying to you. How would you respond to God today?