

MONDAY, 5/22

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

So, we're taking a different approach to the WayPoints this week. Rather than working through a section of scripture, we're going to spend seven days on two verses. Six of those days will be on verse 16. There is a lot to unpack and it's worth our time to sit in what Paul reveals to us about God's Word.

Today, we're going to focus on the opening part of verse 16. Before introducing the usefulness of the Word, Paul specifies, "All scripture..." What does he mean by "all scripture"?

Paul is talking about the Old Testament. We have to remember; they didn't have the New Testament yet. Paul emphasizes the importance of the law and prophets as a resource for both revealing who God is and in forming the character of Jesus' followers.

This is worth bringing up because it is all too common to hear people in the church be rather dismissive of the Old Testament. The reasoning is that since we have Jesus and the New Testament, the Old Testament is no longer relevant. I assure you that the Apostle Paul does not share that sentiment.

The early church did not discount the Old Testament after Jesus entered the scene, instead they saw the Old Testament in a whole new light because of Him. It was precisely Jesus' life, death and resurrection that helped them see what God had done to bring salvation to the world. Jesus brought the story together. Acts tells us that the early church continued to hold the Word as a central part of their life, and when they read it, they did so with Jesus at the forefront of their minds. They looked for Him in every story.

This is how we are to read the Old Testament today. Even though Jesus had not entered the story yet, the Old Testament spells out humanity's need for Jesus and how He alone is able to meet humanity's great need. Every story point to these realities. We see our need for His grace and His capacity to meet our immense need.

John Calvin, in his preface to Pierre-Robert Olivétan's 1535 translation of the New Testament, captured so well how we meet Jesus in the Old Testament. He said, "He [Christ] is Isaac, the beloved Son of the Father who was offered as a sacrifice, but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob the watchful shepherd, who has such great care for the sheep which he guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph, who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers, however lowly and abject their condition. He is the great sacrificer and bishop Melchizedek, who has offered an eternal sacrifice once for all. He is the sovereign lawgiver Moses, writing his law on the tables of our hearts by his Spirit. He is the faithful captain and guide Joshua, to lead us to the Promised Land. He is the victorious and noble king David, bringing by his hand all rebellious power to subjection. He is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon, governing his kingdom in peace and prosperity.

He is the strong and powerful Samson, who by his death has overwhelmed all his enemies. This is what we should in short seek in the whole of Scripture: truly to know Jesus Christ, and the infinite riches that are comprised in him and are offered to us by him from God the Father. If one were to sift thoroughly the Law and the Prophets, he would not find a single word which would not draw and bring us to him. Therefore, rightly does Saint Paul say in another passage that he would know nothing except Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Praying Together:

"God, I am grateful that You have made Yourself known to us in Your Word. I receive it and seek to be obedient to You through it. Continue to give me a mind and heart to understand. Amen.

TUESDAY, 5/23

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

Now that we understand that Paul is addressing the importance of the whole scripture narrative, he helps us understand something significant about the nature of scripture.

"All scripture is God-breathed..." he said. God-breathed means literally God-spirited. Many translations use the word inspired, which is accurate and perhaps easier to understand than "God-breathed". However, I want us to flush out the image of what it means to be God-breathed.

In the Hebrew language, *ruah* means both spirit and breath. In the creation story, God fashions the first man from the dust of the earth. At this point, Adam was just a mere body. It's evident that he isn't alive. He is just a shell. It isn't until God breathes into him, His very own spirit, that Adam becomes a living being. There is a clear statement in this story. Without God's spirited-breath, there is no life, yet when God breathes into something it comes alive.

The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrew 4:12 says, "For the Word of God is alive and active." It is filled with His Spirit and vitality. It is more than words on a page. It is teeming with God's life and in the hands of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, can be used to shape and transform our lives.

This must influence how we read the bible. When we sit down with the Word, we aren't reading *The Wall Street Journal* or *Sports Illustrated*. In light of scripture being inspired and filled with God's Spirit, we must read it with an awareness that God wants to meet us in it. That God is eager to speak into our hearts and lives through His Word. That God wants to make Himself known to us in and through the scriptures. That God can teach us and empower us through the Word. Like Adam, God can awaken us to a new life through the witness and power of the bible.

When you read the Word, you aren't sitting down with a static, lifeless book. You are before a dynamic story that gives witness to the God of the universe, who fills every page. And if we're open and the Spirit moves through our reading and hearing, we may never be the same. Such is the power and the beauty of the scriptures that God has breathed into.

Praying Together:

"Lord, Your Word is a gift. It is filled with Your life and You long to fill me with that life. Help me to experience Your power when I look at Your Word. I say yes to You as I read it. Show me the joy of knowing and growing in You through Your Word. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 5/24

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

In verse 16, Paul goes on to spell out how scripture is useful for the disciple of Jesus.

I'm being intentional with the word disciple here. Disciple means "learner", as in we are learning the teachings, character and ways of Jesus. Like the Twelve, we too are Jesus' disciples. We are learning from Him how to live. We have received the same commission He gave to them when He ascended to His Father.

The common response to this is that, unlike the Twelve, Jesus is not physically with us. So how can we learn from Him? Well, Jesus is sitting at the right hand of His Father in heaven. He is continuing to guide His mission in the world, which includes building, equipping, and teaching His followers. In other words, Jesus is still making disciples today.

One way He continues to teach us is through the Word. The bible reveals Jesus' teachings. Through it, we are given a vision of Jesus' life, which is a vision for our life. Jesus shows us how we are to live. His life is an example of how we should love God and love others around us. While the day-to-day makeup of our lives will look different than what Jesus did, our character should be a reflection of how He lived. He teaches us through the stories of His life in the Word.

We also learn from His teachings. The gospels are filled with Jesus' teachings. Matthew's Sermon on the Mount is a collection of what Jesus taught His disciples and the crowds. For us modern-day disciples, we must be diligent about sitting at Jesus' feet like they did. We have the opportunity to learn directly from Jesus through His teachings. When we come before His teachings, we need to allow them to speak into our lives. This means that when we hear Him say, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." We must think about who we consider our enemy. Perhaps, it is someone in our workplace or community. Maybe it's a group of people whose ideas differ greatly from your own. Our response is to be obedient to Jesus' teachings. We begin to pray for them, right then and there. We learn from Jesus' teachings by being obedient to them.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, I echo the words of Mary when she saw You at the empty tomb, Rabboni, My Teacher. You are my authority. You are the One I give the right to teach me and inform my thoughts, beliefs, and character. I trust You to lead me and shape me. Amen."

THURSDAY, 5/25

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

Oh boy. Here's one aspect of scripture many of us would prefer to do without. Paul says, "All scripture is God-breathed and useful for...rebuking."

Rebuking a person is to offer reproof. Scripture often does just that. Sometimes the bible gets into our business, so to speak. It speaks directly into some aspect of our lives that is a departure from God's idea for our lives. Often, the bible doesn't mince words either. It is clear and direct. It leaves us very little room, if any, to wiggle or justify our way out from being guilty.

While we often view this as a negative thing, it is actually a blessing. While no one likes being called out, we need to from time to time. Look, no one is perfect. We're all "in process", growing into Jesus' character and way of being. We need to know when we have stepped out of our new identity in Christ. We need to know when we cross the line or fall short. Fortunately, God loves us too much to not speak into our lives.

Jesus used rebuke to call out His disciple's sin in order to convict of their shortcomings. The aim wasn't to shame them, but to call them to a greater vision for their lives. In Matthew 8 when the disciples were fearful of the storm, Jesus rebuked them along with the wind. He said, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Jesus' intent isn't to beat them down, but to call them to a greater trust. It worked too. In a similar storm in Matthew 14, Peter has enough faith to get out of the boat and walk to Jesus. Sure, Peter sinks when he takes his eyes off Jesus, but he got out

of the boat. Jesus offers him another rebuke, "You of little faith, why did you hesitate?" If you read closely, you can see there is growth in Peter from one to the next, which is Jesus' goal.

Look, as Jesus' followers, we will all fall short. This side of glory, we are all still prone to stumble. We need the Lord's discipline. We need the Lord to call us out so that we can be realigned with Him through repentance. This is why being convicted of our sin is so important. Conviction of sin is a motivation to turn from it and unto God. When we sin, we are moving away from the fullness of life in Christ. Repentance sets us back on course and into the glorious freedom of our life under Jesus' care.

Hebrews 12 reminds us that the Lord's discipline is a sign of His love for us as His own children. Hebrews 12:5-6 says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as sons." Discipline is part of the privilege of being God's children. It means He loves us too much to allow us to wander from Him and His vision for our lives.

Verse 10 tells us that God disciplines us for our own good. The next verse acknowledges something we feel when rebuked. It says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." No one likes to be called out by God, but God does so in order to lead us to a more fruitful life. Sometimes we settle for a vision for our lives that is far too small. God has a glorious vision for us and what we can become under His guidance. His discipline is a sign of His love for us and commitment to see us to such a vision.

Praying Together:

"Father, You discipline us because You love us. Remind me of that when I hear Your rebuke. Help me consider the great vision You have for me. You know what I can become if I surrender to Your care. You often want more for me than I want for myself. I know that and so I trust whatever You may say to me. Amen."

FRIDAY, 5/26

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

God's Word is also useful for "correcting". If rebuking is God calling us out when we wander from the path He has called us to, then correcting is Him setting our feet back on the right path.

Correcting is often seen as a more positive thing than rebuking, but actually, they work together with the same goal in mind. Let's use an example. Imagine that we are harboring unforgiveness to someone who said something against us. We encounter Jesus' command to forgive or repeat the Lord's Prayer, which leads us to ask for God's forgiveness as much as we are willing to forgive others. We become aware that we are holding on to unforgiveness. We know it. We feel it in our heart. This is a sign of rebuke. We ask for God's forgiveness, and the good news is that we will be forgiven. This is where correction comes in. Now that our hearts have been aligned with God's priorities, we now seek reconciliation. We extend forgiveness. Perhaps, the first action is to pray for the strength to do so, but we start moving towards actually forgiving the person. That is correction. The right thing to do is now evident and so we begin to move out with that new direction.

A great example of this comes from John 21, when Jesus reinstates Peter following his infamous denial. Peter felt conviction in that he had sinned against Jesus. It was clear Peter wanted to make up for it and move forward in faithfulness.

Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love You." Jesus responded saying, "Feed My sheep." Peter denied Jesus because he wanted to preserve his life. You could say in that moment, that he loved his own life more than he loved Jesus. By asking Peter the question, "Do you love Me?", Jesus is giving Peter the chance to get back on course. Peter loved Jesus, but there was times Peter didn't love Jesus well. Jesus then gives Peter a positive command, "Feed My sheep." This was an opportunity for Peter to be made right again. If Peter wanted to express love for Jesus, he now had the chance and it would be through caring for those Jesus cared for.

Peter would go on to love Jesus' sheep, which is exactly what Jesus wanted for him. For Peter to get there, he had to be called out and corrected, so that he could be freed for a new life of faithful service. Jesus can do the same for us when we discover His correction through the Word. He will graciously lead us to new opportunities to grow in Him and serve Him. This is why we should never fear His rebuke or His correction. They work together to lead us into a full life in Him.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, thank You for correcting me. I know there are times I wander from Your vision for my life. I know You have greater plans for me than I have for myself. I need You to set my feet back on the right path. I need You to show me what the next step in faithfulness looks like. I need Your guidance and Your help. Be my help. I am Yours. Amen."

SATURDAY, 5/27

Read 2 Timothy 3:16.

Here we are at day 6 of reading 2 Timothy 3:16. We'll finish it off with the idea that God's Word is useful in "training in righteousness." The meaning of this phrase is not immediately clear, so let's take a deeper dive into it.

Training was a word used both of athletes preparing for the games and of bringing up children. The idea was that there is intentional investment that moves you towards a specific aim. For the athlete, it is to be in peak physical form for a competition. For a parent, it is the vision they have for what they want their child to become. For each to reach their goal, they must be challenged. They will need to develop strength in both body and character. They will need to learn skills they do not yet have mastered.

We can begin to see where this fits within the context of our life with God. For us to grow to become people like Jesus, we must be intentional about growing in Christ. Like a child, we receive His teaching and learn to put it to use in our life.

Paul flushes the idea of an intentional life out in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. It reads, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

Righteousness also implies a specific direction. It doesn't imply that we are or will be perfect. It states that we are moving towards righteousness. This requires great intention. No one stumbles their way towards righteousness. While we know that we will stumble as we move towards

growing in righteousness, we are moving that way nonetheless. We have our sights fixed on who we hope to become like, with God's help.

God's Word is instrumental in encouraging us towards this life. When we come before the Word, it gives us the vision of a righteous life. We see in the Word often what a life of righteousness looks like. Sometimes we see examples of what it isn't to be like. All of it works together to give us a vision of what righteousness looks like, as well as instruction on how to live it out. As we pour over the Word in prayer, God will reshape our minds and hearts to reflect that of Christ. When we are changed on the inside, the outside, what we do, will change with it.

Praying Together:

"Father, I know that You are eager to teach me, Your child. You love me and have a wonderful vision for my life. As my Father, You know what I can be. I trust that You will use the Word to move me towards a life of righteousness. I know I cannot be righteous apart from Your help. I need You to set my eyes on the goal and I need Your grace to empower me to grow towards that end. Amen."

SUNDAY, 5/28

Read 2 Timothy 3:17.

All of verse 16 comes together in verse 17. Here, Paul tells us what God through His Word wants to do in the life of His children. He wants His servants to be equipped for any and every good work.

With this verse, we can see that the Word is one of God's primary means for preparing us for faithful and fruitful service to Him. What I appreciate about this is that the Word serves a greater purpose than to simply lift our spirits. It's good that the Word encourages us, but its purpose goes much farther than that. God wants to work through you to bless others. He wants to touch other's lives through you! How amazing is that? And God uses His Word to ready us for service.

This is why the Word speaks into our hearts and addresses our character. It's why it exposes where our love is bankrupt and calls us to ask the Holy Spirit to pour out Christ's love on our hearts. It challenges how we see others, beckoning us to adopt the eyes of Christ. It defines what love is, something much more than a feeling, but self-sacrificing service. God does all of this through the Word because He is preparing us to serve the world as Jesus did.

So, when you read the Word, I want to challenge you to look beyond your own needs. Consider how God might use the message to shape you into a more faithful and fruitful servant.

Praying Together:

"Spirit, I pray that You use the Word to shape me into a faithful and fruitful servant. I need Your direction and Your wisdom. I know there are works I am ready for and some I am not ready to do. Prepare me for any and every opportunity. Change my mind. Change my heart, where necessary. I am Yours and I want my life to bring You glory. Amen."