

12 Keys to Spiritual Maturity:

In Love with Scripture (#6)

By [Derek Thomas](#)

2 Timothy 3:10-17

There are few greater privileges than to have the Bible in one's own language. Over 450 years ago, Erasmus expressed a hope that some day the farmer as he followed the plough and the weaver as he sat at the loom would cheer themselves as they studied the message of Scripture. Equally, William Tyndale longed to give the English-speaking people the Bible in their own language. Arguing once with a man who disclaimed this hope he said, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plough to know of the Scripture than you do." In accomplishing that very thing he was to give his life—burnt at the stake! Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his book *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* describes how a prisoner, Ivan Denisovich, wakes in the morning to hear a fellow prisoner recite very softly a portion of Scripture which he is reading from a little book which he has managed to hide and be undetected, despite the many searches. 2 Timothy is a deeply significant letter. It prepares the church for the future without the direct guidance of apostles, the "generals" of the New Testament church. Where would the church find equipment for service once their leaders were gone? The answer that Paul gives is that the source of all knowledge and guidance, indeed, everything that we ever need to know about how to glorify God is to be found within the pages of Scripture. In this passage (2 Timothy 3:10-17), Paul He stresses the divine origin and character of Scripture. Scripture is *God-breathed*. It bears the quality of having been exhaled (expiration, rather than *inspiration*). The Scripture's authority and trustworthiness stem from this. But Paul is not content with merely alluding to Scripture's divine origin; he also expresses its four-fold usefulness. It is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

1. GOD'S WORD IS THE SCRIPTURES

The passage we are studying is possibly the most important testimony to the Scripture's divine origin anywhere in the Bible. It provides us with a testimony as what the Bible thinks of itself. In quick succession, it makes several significant statements:

i. *Scripture is inspired by God.*

Literally, it is God-breathed. It is God's exhalation (rather than *inhalation*—which is what *inspired* might convey). Think of the sight of water vapor as you exhale on a cold, frosty morning and you will get the right idea. Consequently, what Scripture says, God says. The Bible is God talking.

ii. *All Scripture is inspired.*

This is what we mean when we allude to the plenary nature of inspiration. All the books in the canon of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is equally inspired. Every detail, every “jot and tittle.” Pilgrim's Progress is a great book, but it is not inspired in this sense.

iii. *All Scripture is infallible/inerrant.*

Because the Bible is from God and God cannot lie, Scripture must be infallible. It is a necessary deduction. As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it: “The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God” (1:4).

Some find this objectionable, regarding it as bibliolatry. But this is misguided. If we worship Jesus, we have to ask, “What view of the Bible did Jesus have?” and conform our view to His. And the question has a simple answer. When He was tempted by a full frontal attack of the enemy on His person and mission, what did He do? He cited Deuteronomy, three times. Each time, saying, “It is written...” When folk are arguing about divorce, or about the right view of the Sabbath, He cites the Bible. He says to His opponents, “You err, not knowing the Scriptures”. On the road to Emmaus when those two disciples are forlorn and the bottom has dropped out of their lives, what does He do? He takes them through the Scriptures, “O fools and slow of heart to believe everything the Scriptures have spoken.” When He hung upon the cross, He is citing Psalms. He never appeals to anything else. There is no doubting it. Jesus believed the Scriptures to be the infallible word of God. And we have no choice but to believe the same. If you believe in Jesus as the Lord of your life, then you must believe what He believes. If you call yourself a Christian, you must love the Bible like He loved the Bible.

2. GOD'S SON IS MADE KNOWN BY GOD'S WORD v15

The 7-mile Emmaus Road journey teaches us many things. The despair as Cleopas and his companion (MARY — his wife?), trundle away from Jerusalem is evident on their faces. They hear footsteps and suddenly a stranger is asking them what appears to be a silly question as to the reason for the dejection.

Where had this man been the last few days? Certainly not in Jerusalem when Jesus had been arrested, tried and executed. The source of all their hopes had been eliminated and life held nothing but bitterness for them now. Hence their dejection. But the stranger persisted: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27). And their hearts burned as they listened! (v. 32).

We must never lose sight of this as we read Scriptures. Jesus is the focal point of Scripture. The message of redemptive history from Genesis to Revelation is the message of salvation through faith in God's Son. I don't mean that every verse specifically refers to Jesus in the most tangible fashion; but every verse tells of what God has been doing, or what God is doing, or what God will yet do in the accomplishment of His great purpose to save a people for Himself. The Bible is the story, one way or another, of what is pronounced in Genesis 3:15: the seed of the woman will crush the head of Satan.

If you are eager to know how you can be saved, go and read the Scriptures. If you want to know how to please Jesus, go and read the Scriptures. What makes us fruitful? Being like Christ. How do we become like Him? By knowing Him better. And Scripture is the chief instrument to do just that.

3. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE EQUIPPED BY GOD'S WORD

By reading and studying the Scriptures, the "the man of God" may be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Paul's isn't generalizing by using the expression, "man of God." It is an Old Testament designation for a prophet. Paul is thinking of Timothy *in particular*, suggesting that when he has left this world, the work of the prophets goes on through Timothy's ministry. This Bible (actually it is the Old Testament he has in mind!) is specifically designed to shape Timothy into a "man of God." Timothy may well have needed to hear that. He was probably far too doubting of his own abilities and usefulness. Of course, in himself, he had every reason to be. But armed with the Scriptures and the power of the Spirit, there is stopping what he may be able to accomplish.

The King James Version rendered the expression "thoroughly equipped" by the word "perfect." The Scriptures are able to make you complete. *Complete!* The Scriptures are sufficient to make the man of God perfect. How far can the Scriptures take you? They can take you to total maturity, that is to "be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). What lies before us? What duties, challenges and sacrifices will we be called upon to meet? The Bible will completely equip us for them. How may we grow and put away childish things? How can we become mature men and women? How will we become wise? How may we become conformed to the image of Christ? Through the Bible - that is the divine way. The Scripture sanctifies and perfects what is imperfect. It thoroughly enables us for the challenge of every good work in whatever God

asks us to do. Every mountain God asks us to climb, every burden God asks us to bear, every service God asks us to give, every pressure God asks us to endure, every sacrifice God asks us to make - the Scriptures can enable us to do it all by comprehensively preparing us for every single good work. They tell us how to do it, why we should do it, give us strength for the task, and they also warn us how not to do it. The Scriptures will complete that good work which God has begun in us. The Bible helps us to put away childish things. The Bible saves a man from being a wimp, and delivers him from being a nerd. It transforms him into being "the man of God ... thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). It is a supernatural blessing to have the Bible.

This completeness involves reshaping four facets of Timothy's life, all of which are reflected by the individual terms employed:

- i) Teaching, instructing — the mind and out thinking
- ii) Rebuking, convincing — educate the conscience and our willing
- iii) Correcting, healing the personality and our feeling
- iv) training — to transform the life-style and our living

The Bible molds us into the shape God wants us to be. Our prayer, as we study the Scriptures ought to be: "Teach me, rebuke me, correct and heal me; then send me forth as a trained disciple of Jesus Christ to his bidding."

Nothing can help us cope with our emotional problems like the Bible can. Don't ever put yourself down because you seem to be failing to overcome a painful shyness, or because of a depression that the doctors and pharmacists are helping, or because of a worrying disposition, irrational phobias and anxieties. Don't rubbish yourself. God bears with people like that. God has greatly used people like this. David Brainerd was an extraordinary evangelist, and William Cowper one of the greatest of all hymnists. Both suffered from melancholy. B.B. Warfield's wife was an invalid throughout their marriage, but her husband's care for her did not prevent his being an eminent defender of the Christian faith. It might even have enriched it.

The Word of God comes in all its rich divine authority and scrutinizes our lives, challenging them, encouraging and helping us to believe the truth and through this finding love, joy, peace, contentment and deliverance from despair. There is no secret to living the "Happy Christian Life." Know the Bible. Sit at the feet of this Wonderful Counselor and have Him speak to you, challenging you, and then doing what he has said.

4. GOD'S CHURCH IS SUSTAINED BY GOD'S WORD (3:10-15)

There is an intriguing context to this passage of Scripture. Paul tells us that the objective reality is subjectively confirmed by experimental proof: twice he says to Timothy, "you know!" (v.10, 14). Timothy had seen how the Scriptures had

changed the lives of his family, the congregation, and Paul! From his parents mixed marriage to the sufferings of the apostle Paul, Timothy witnessed at close quarters the effect of the Bible on the lives of God's people. He saw the word at work. He saw what it could do! He saw how the church is kept and nourished and revitalized by the Word, the Scriptures. From infancy he had noticed the way the Bible helped Christians grow. Timothy himself, to cite Calvin, "drank in godliness with his mother's milk"

Could it be true, that the reason you we at sea, is because we are not abiding in the Word of God? Thomas Watson, the English puritan, once put it this way: "Think in every line you read that God is speaking to you."

The greatest difficulty of all, is not the Word itself, but our own appetites—or lack of appetite! We read the opening psalm in the book of Psalms and we meet there the blessed man. We are told that, "His delight is in the law of the Lord and in that law does he meditate day and night". Here is a man who really loves the Bible. Now that is a searching test of the Christianity of any man, not only that we have the correct revealed doctrine of Scripture, and read it diligently every day, and sit under the best preaching that we can hear each Sunday, but more than all those things, that we actually to love it, that we have fallen in love with the Bible. Now, is that our relationship to Scripture? Is it not true that sometimes our preference is for other literature, that the delight has shifted from divine oracles to some devotional book or a biography.

One of the intriguing things is what some people say they do for relaxation. Now when a person relaxes he does something he loves doing. Do you say, "I study the Bible because I have to, because it is food for my faith, it is part of my discipline, but to relax I do something else"? Then that whole element of delight has passed away and we have ceased turning to God's Word for pleasure. When we want delight we go to something else; but we go to God's Word for duty, discipline and information. Before we know where we are, we have ceased to delight in the law of the Lord.

I think increasingly we make some distinction between our religion and our affections. There are people who would never think of coming to a Christian conference for a holiday, who would never consider the prayer meeting as a night out. We have lost this commitment to the delights of the Word of God, the joy of our devotion. But the blessed man who is described for us at the beginning of the book of Psalms delights in the law of the Lord. His pleasure is religion. There is no dichotomy between his faith and his enjoyment. His chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him. That is his preferred occupation. When he has time you will find him reading the Bible and meditating on it. He is reflecting on the law of God. He loves the Bible! Sometimes when he finishes reading it he will hug it to his chest as his greatest treasure. God's infallible word can take his breath away. He is intrigued by it day by day, never growing weary of it, but increasingly struck by the evidences of its inspiration, the marvelous accuracy of every word,

the complexity of so many of its statements, its stirring concepts, even its remarkable use of prepositions. He is moved by the details of its language and he is quite taken up by Scripture. Here is a man loving the Bible; he is enthused by Scripture. It is a miraculous book that we may yet handle and weigh. It is one of those tangible proofs that God exists, that God is. It is the great evidence for the reality of God. We worship the God who inspired this Book. So the Christian is in love with the Word of God.

There is nothing like the power of affection to strengthen desire. A youth may struggle to learn the language of a foreign country in school to little avail, but if he falls in love with a girl from that land how strong is his appetite for mastering its language. The love of Christ is the strongest constraint to knowing the Scriptures and if we have little desire for the Bible we should ask if we indeed know the Savior or if our first love has been left. Let us begin here, let us be sure that we are in love with the Word of God: 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day' (Psalm 119.97). Does not this create and maintain our desire to read the Bible?

O may these heav'nly pages be My ever dear delight; And still new beauties may I see, And still increasing light

Anne Steel

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