

The Ultimate Value and Supreme Wisdom of the Bible

A Bible Study on 2 Timothy 3:10–4:5

By [Simon Vibert](#)

Let me begin with two questions:

If you came back home and saw your house on fire and could dash in and save just one thing, what would it be? A photo? A laptop? Your wallet? But what if your child was sleeping upstairs? There would be no contest would there? Questions of value are of a whole different order that scenario is contemplated.

Where do you go for wisdom on life?

To chat-show hosts? To daily newspapers? To TV news? To mates in the pub? Of course, you could just pop into a black cab or have your hair cut and you'll have all the unsolicited advice you could ever ask for! Someone has said: how come all the people who really know how to run the world are driving taxis and cutting hair!

I ask those two questions to lead into two more significant follow-up questions. These are questions which are particularly pertinent to those of us who preach. Do you see the Bible as of supreme value to you? Do you look to the Bible for wisdom, strength and discernment for living? Whilst we know what the answer is supposed to be, I wonder whether our ministry and teaching reflect our values and confidence in ministry.

It seems to me that 2 Timothy 3 will help keep us on track.

1) Value the Bible, 3:16-17

a) Because of where it comes from. The Bible is God-breathed v16a

Paul uses a highly unusual word combining *theos* & *pneustos* (God & Spirit/Breath). The Bible is breathed out from God, God-spirited.

Yes, it is true to say that the Bible is “inspired”. But the problem with that word is that we tend to say the same thing about the compositions of Mozart, the paintings of Van Gogh or the singing of Pavarotti. This Bible is not inspired in the sense of merely being “inspiring”.

The word picture of 2 Tim 3:16 is more that of “exhaled from the heart of God”. Perhaps there is a parallel in Genesis 2:7 and the forming and filling work of creation. The Bible is God breathed in the same sense that God breathed life into the body of Adam which he had formed. Yes, the Bible is *that* valuable!

Just in passing, too, let’s notice how the Word of God and Spirit of God belong together. Surely it is no mistake that Paul can write in Ephesians 5:18 “be filled with the spirit”, and in a parallel in Colossians 3:16 “let the word of God dwell in you richly”. In order to be filled with one you need to be filled with the other!

b) Because it is ministry-equipping and all-encompassing. The Bible is useful for teaching, rebuke, correction, training, equipping v16b

We know that we should value the Bible, but how does that manifest itself? The value of the Bible is found, not by binding it in leather and with gold leafed pages, or locking it away and keeping it safe.

The picture is not of a wealthy man who finds a precious jewel and adds it to his vault and takes out extra insurance. Rather, it is of a food hamper being dropped to feed a starving man on in the midst of a famine.

Or to use a different image: There is a world of difference between the ardent train-spotter who spends his time fascinated by different kinds of trains, always in search of new discoveries; and the person who every day gets on board and train and lets it carry him to his destination. The value I am asking you to put on the Bible is much more like the faith of the commuter than the enthusiasm of the train-spotter.

The Bible is designed by God to do the job of equipping you for Christian life and ministry. It needs to be used, read, studying, enjoyed, memorised, celebrated, sung and preached! If I value the Bible then it will affect my outlook on life, my attitude towards people, my personal and corporate ethics, the kind of relationships which I have with other people, not least, my desire to see others won for Jesus...

I learn to put on the spectacles of scripture and see the world through different eyes; to think differently, Christianly, about the environment in which I live. I begin to have a Christian set of standards and values and outlook which shape the way I view everything - so, when I hear the news each day; or chat with my friends; or counsel my kids; or make my finance or work decisions there is a world-view shaped by the bible that enables me to evaluate and commend Christianity.

This outlook on life will show up how much I value the Bible.

2) Value those from whom you have learned the Bible, 4:14-15

John Wesley wisely commented “The Bible will keep you from sin; or sin will keep you from the Bible”

The danger to the Church of false teaching is that taking believers back; backwards in their faith. Verse 13 speaks of deceiving and being deceived. Error is dangerous. Popular paper backs, magazine chat shows, gullible and liberal pulpiteers all lead people astray, sowing doubts in people’s minds, and taking them back to their days of former ignorance.

Verse 14 indicates that the only way to prevent backward slippage is to “continue in what you have learnt”. What a great lineage you have had Timothy! (see 1:5) first your grandmother then your mother. But remember, Timothy, you can’t inherit it, you must go on with it, and it will make you wise for salvation and thoroughly equipped for ministry.

3) Value the preacher

Notice the parallelism in 3:16 and 4:2

3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

Preaching is a regular butt of joking. There a plenty of good ones and I tell them myself. Bad and boring preaching deserves to be mocked. But let’s be careful. Let’s not encourage a flippant attitude towards preaching. Amos mourned the famine of God’s word... and he recognised that the absence of godly preachers was a sign of God’s judgment on the land. And we live in a day and age where the Bible is not the prime focus of either the sermon, or the business of the Church – local or national.

And we should be concerned because preaching is the principle means whereby God’s voice is heard.

Did you notice, that the preacher is called to do exactly what the Bible does? Through his preaching he corrects, rebukes and encourages with the Word that corrects, rebukes and trains in righteousness. He is to do it in season out of season (when popular or unpopular, palatable or unpalatable).

From this I think we are right to deduce that the word of God comes to the Christian – not primarily as they read the Bible at home in their Quiet Time, although that is obviously important – but as they sit humbly under God’s word preached. Sometimes we hear a passage of Scripture expounded and quietly say “Surely the Lord was in this place”. That word of God which is living and active, according to Hebrews 4, cuts us open, penetrating to the heart of our being, opening us up before the presence of God, revealing everything before Him, judging our attitudes and actions. That is the power of God’s word at work.

The warning of this passage must not be missed. The sting in the tale of this passage is that the church ends up with the preacher they want. Itching ears gather around the preacher who will say what they want to hear; something smooth and placating. The popular preacher who is trendy and “with it” and who reflects culture, will gain an audience for he really scratches where people are itching. But if the preaching does not do 4:2, because it believes 3:16, then the result is that people will wander off into myths. Half truths and untruth do not change lives, indeed they are damnably dangerous.

Conclusion

We preachers should preach the word first to ourselves, so that it may dwell richly among our congregations (Colossians 3:16). The one thing we should value above everything is the Word of God because it is useful and profitable. It does the job God designed it for. It doesn’t belong in a glass cabinet or a museum. Rather it should be cherished, read, reread and heeded. In God’s word – written and preached – we meet *God*. Here is a challenge about our priorities in ministry, our diligence in preparation for preaching, and prayerful obedience as we preach “the whole counsel of God”.

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