

**Jesus is Worth It**  
**Part #11 - "The Nature and Purpose of Scripture"**  
**Text | 2 Timothy 3:14-17**

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on Sunday, July 21, 2019 by Pastor Kevin Thiessen

**(SHOW SLIDE 1)** I heard this story through Ravi Zacharias. A fellow was doing his PhD dissertation, but he was dissatisfied with how dissertations were judged so he would make profound statements and say something like “as told to me by the waiter of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue’s restaurant, then another statement “as told to me by the elevator boy at such and such a place” ... all verbal references to somebody he had talked to.

The overseeing professor looked at him and said, “You can’t make statements like this in a dissertation, you must have written references or footnotes.” The student replied, “Aha, why? Why do you have to have “it is written?” Why is it more important that it is written rather than saying it was the waiter who told me this or the elevator boy informing me?” So, the professor responded, “Ok, that’s all right, I was just trying to understand where you were coming from?”

On the day the student was graduating, the professor said, “We have passed you and given you your PhD. But, we’re not going to give it to you in writing. Just take my word for it.”<sup>1</sup>

What is written matters. And when you look at the Bible it is a very distinctive book. The sacred texts of other religions are often through an individual, for example Buddhism offer utterances or discourses of Buddha and the Qur’an is a compilation of revelations believed to have been orally revealed by God to Muhammad. These revelations were recorded by his contemporaries over some 23 years and then put together after his death. Unlike those texts, Christians recognize the Jewish scriptures – Torah, Prophets, and Writings as Scripture, along with the four Gospels about Jesus, the 21 Epistles (letters to the early church), the Book of Acts and the Revelation. This collection of sacred books is what we have as the Holy Bible – our sacred text. The Bible is 66 books compiled between the Mid-1400s before Christ to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. You have 39 books in the Old and 27 in the New and **a single overarching thread going throughout it all.**

For example, you go back to the writing of the prophets such as Isaiah, written 700 years before Christ to talk about the virgin birth (Is 7:14), or Micah (Micah 5:2) talking about the city where the Messiah would be born, or Zechariah (Zech 12:10) talking about how the Messiah would ultimately be crucified. Many of the Biblical writers were *not* contemporaries of Christ, and yet when you take all the converging lines of evidence, the hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah and bring them into the person of Jesus Christ, it would have taken an extraordinary stroke of genius to retroactively bring all of that together into the single person of Jesus.

**(SHOW SLIDE 2)** G.K. Chesterton said, “I had always felt life first as a story; and if there is a story there is a story-teller.” A book we have recommended to you in the past is the Jesus Storybook Bible written by Sally Lloyd-Jones.

In her introduction she says, “Now some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn’t do. The Bible certainly has some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn’t mainly about you and what you should be doing. It’s about God and what He has done.

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<sup>1</sup> Ravi Zacharias, Q&A “How do we know the Bible is true?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fngw6Br65BI>

Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you'll find out) most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose). They get afraid and run away. At times they are downright mean.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne – everything – to rescue the one he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!

You see, the best thing about this Story is – it's true!

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the centre of the Story, there is a baby. Every Story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle – the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture.

And this is no ordinary baby. This is the Child upon whom everything would depend. This is the Child who would one day get God's children back – he would rescue them.”<sup>2</sup>

Our study over these past few weeks has been under the subtitle “Jesus is Worth It”, as we've been working through Paul's final letter – 2 Timothy. Though our passage is brief today, it critically identifies the author of the Story – God. He breathed this story – he inspired it. And at the heart of his Story – is Jesus. Our passage today is tied to the preceding verses where Paul reminds Timothy how he has been acquainted with the *sacred writings*, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul is urging Timothy to **continue** in what he has *learned* and *believed*. Remain, don't depart from what you have learned and believed. And *know* who you learned it from - namely his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice as we saw in 2 Timothy 1. From *childhood* they taught Timothy the *sacred writings* which are **able** to make him *wise* for *salvation* through *faith in Christ Jesus*.

Faith for Paul is both *trusting in God and Jesus Christ* as well as *obedience – the entire way of life including belief and practices* that characterize a Christian community. Paul maintained that believing and doing are inseparable; what we believe impacts how we live, and what we do reveals what we believe. Right thinking or doctrine (orthodoxy) should lead to right living (orthopraxy).

As Tim Keller addressed the topic of the Bible's reliability at the Veritas Forum with interviewer Martin Bashir, he stated that the Gospels provide us with the most accessible and reliable information that they accurately portray for us the life and words of Jesus. There is a lot of evidence that these were indeed eye-witness accounts. In comparison, it is far more difficult to do this with the patriarchs – the likes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – to know exactly what they did and said. Yet with the evidence we have, if you decide that Jesus is who he says he is, Jesus himself looks at the rest of the Bible with the greatest respect. Almost every book of the Old Testament is quoted at some point by Jesus authoritatively (the oft used phrase, “As it is written.”) Therefore, if Jesus *is* who he said he is then we have to deal with the whole Bible and take what it says seriously, because Jesus took it himself as authoritative.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sally Lloyd-Jones, *the Jesus Storybook Bible*, p. 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *Why is the Bible reliable?* Interview with Martin Bashir [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZAPFKXMy\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZAPFKXMy_Y)

Historically, Christians view the Bible as a **unified story** that leads to and is fulfilled by Jesus and that has wisdom to offer the whole world. For our passage today, we're going to break it down by looking at the *nature* and *purpose* of this unified story - Scripture.

## The Nature of Scripture

So first, let's flesh out the nature of Scripture as seen in verse 16. "All Scripture is breathed out by God." More literally, "All Scripture is breathed *into* by God." This is referencing the Holy Spirit's role in guiding the authors so that what they wrote is the story God wants people to hear and know. The Bible is both a divine book and a human book. It is divinely inspired, but you have a variety of tones and textures due to the various human authors through whom it was compiled. Like a musician, if you give him a variety of different instruments they blow with the same breath but the trumpet will produce a sharp tone, while the clarinet will produce a more breathy, earthy tone, while a kazoo will produce a nasally tone. The same breath of the author, but very different tones and textures through the instruments.

**(SHOW SLIDE 3)** The term "God breathed" does not occur in any other Greek text (biblical or otherwise) prior to this letter. Some scholars therefore suggest that Paul coined this term from words *Theo* meaning "God" and *pneustos* meaning "breathed", which is certainly possible. The term stresses the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Paul does not point to the human authors of Scripture as inspired people but says that the writings themselves (Scripture) *are* the words spoken by God (breathed). Paul affirms God's active involvement in the writing of Scripture, an involvement so powerful and pervasive that what is written is believed to be the infallible and authoritative word of God. The early church believed exactly the same thing. As Peter declared in his second letter chapter 1 verses 20 and 21, "...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, **but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**" (2 Peter 1:20, 21)

Whereas Paul and Timothy's opponents stressed certain aspects or portions of Scripture (e.g., 1 Tim 1:3-4 "...charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith", Paul stresses the authoritativeness of all of Scripture. His primary reference is to the Old Testament, since some of the New Testament books had not even been written at the time of this letter. Yet, we can look to 2 Peter 3:15-16 for an affirmation that some of the New Testament material was already considered equal in authority to the Old Testament Scriptures.

**(SHOW SLIDE 4)** <sup>15</sup>And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

## The Purpose of Scripture

Having defined the nature of Scripture, Paul goes on to describe the purpose of Scripture. First, Scripture is **USEFUL** ... Paul uses the word *profitable*.

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Researching R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell guided me through this part of our passage. They identify that Paul uses two pairs of words in verse 16 to begin to flesh out why it is profitable, that it is for “... teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (v. 16b). The first pairing – *teaching* and *reproof* – have to do with **doctrine**. Positively, all Scripture is “profitable for teaching.” That is why the whole of both the Old and New Testament *must* be studied – not just the Gospels, not just Romans, nor just the Old Testament. Preaching scholar Bryan Chapell urges teachers that “All the didactic, poetic, narrative, apocalyptic, proverbial, and epical sections together are to make up the tapestry of our teaching.”<sup>4</sup>

**(SHOW SLIDE 5)** Along with the positive education of teaching is the negative correction of reproof. Reproof is when we’re going the wrong direction, and as has been noted often over the past few weeks Paul is relentless at confronting teachers of false doctrine. Another word for reproof would be challenge, specifically when God through His Spirit and Word gets up in our face about the areas in our lives where we say we believe but we don’t act like it. **Together teaching and reproof produce the benefit of sound doctrine.**

**(SHOW SLIDE 6)** The second pairing is *correction* and *training in righteousness* – which address our **conduct** – how we should live as God intended. “Correction” comes from the Greek word for “straight,” which the New Living Translation helpfully renders, “It straightens us out.” God’s Word is practical – it exposes our messed-up ways of thinking and behaving. Those who accept the correction and repent, turn to walk the right path as God intended will begin to find their lives straightening out. As we recognize the need to turn around and go the other way we can then be able to receive the training that helps us to actually walk the right way. The righteousness that has come to the believer by faith is worked out by living out the training of Scripture.

Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another – showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, and training us to live God’s way. Through Scripture we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

Second, the purpose of Scripture is to **EQUIP**.

“that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (v. 17). Here we see that a “complete” man of God is a man of the Bible. In a broad sense this includes everything that God calls a believer to do. But, in a specific sense, this is a key passage that is foundational to the doctrine of the “sufficiency of Scripture,” that is, the idea that the truth contained in Scripture *is sufficient* in all matters pertaining to life and godliness.<sup>5</sup> (2 Peter 1:3)

**(SHOW SLIDE 7)** The testimony of God’s Scripture is that it is God’s breath and that it is everything to believers. The book of Deuteronomy records that when Moses had finished writing the words of the law and had given it to the Levites to place beside the ark, he said, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, *but your very life.*” (Deuteronomy 32:46, 47)

This set the standard for the right attitude and respect for the Scriptures. This is why the psalmist devoted the 176 verses of Psalm 119 to the celebration of the Scripture, using the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet as a structure. In effect, he said God’s Word is everything from A to Z. The Scriptures are *life!*

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<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *3 Lessons about Scripture from 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *3 Lessons about Scripture from 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

**(SHOW SLIDE 8)** Looking to the Gospels, when Jesus began his ministry he was tempted by Satan. Read the story in Luke 4 and see how Jesus used Scripture to defeat the tempter (see Luke 4:1–13; cf. Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13, 16). So, Jesus Christ, *God incarnate*, **relied** on the sufficiency of Scripture in his hour of need. Hughes and Chapell state that Jesus’s summary response to the tempter was like a bookend to Moses’ declaration that the Scriptures are “your life,” for Jesus insisted that they are the soul’s essential food, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4; cf. Luke 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). ***The Scriptures were life to Moses and food to Jesus. They cannot and must not be anything less to us. They are the very breath of God.***<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, if the Scriptures are our very life and food, we need to learn how to read and understand our Bibles. It is critical *not* to read, especially the Old Testament, superficially. There are many troubling themes throughout the Old Testament, such as polygamy, murder, warfare, etc. Yet these are not in the Bible as prescriptive of Christianity or for how the world should be, but rather as signs of a broken and fallen world that needs to be redeemed and rescued.

New Testament scholar Dr. Ben Witherington III said, “The text without a context is just a pretext for whatever you want it to mean. So, stop sound-biting the Bible!”<sup>7</sup>

Knowing the historical context is vital or you’re going to commit the sin of anachronism – taking something belonging or appropriate to a specific period of time other than that which it exists. You’re going to read all this modern stuff into these ancient texts. It just doesn’t work. It doesn’t make sense of the texts.

Jesus’ world was far more rural and agrarian (i.e. hunter / gatherer type) and basically an illiterate society. It’s estimated that only 10-15% of people could read and write. But basic human need and solutions for basic human need have not changed over twenty centuries. Jesus was not addressing superficial surface cultural phenomena, he’s speaking at a deeper level that deals with basic human issues, like sin and salvation, and “do you have a relationship with God or not?”. These concepts are just as appropriate to our culture as to any culture.

Witherington goes on to say that, “One of the most exciting things about New Testament studies of the past 150 years is that we are closer now today to the original Greek New Testament than at any time in human history since about the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. We now have over 5000 whole or partial manuscripts of the Greek New Testament; we even have some bits of manuscripts from the second Century papyri. We are getting closer and closer to the original text and we are becoming more and more certain about what it actually said.

**(SLIDES 9 & 10)** Increasingly I have realized the truthfulness and poignancy and helpfulness to human life of these texts. My study of the text has not made me more and more skeptical – it’s made me trust it more and more. I have a much higher view of the authority and inspiration and character of the Scriptures than I did when I began this process 37 years ago. The Bible has stood the scrutiny of the finest minds of over twenty centuries and is still standing. It is not only a classic piece of literature but also the source of the inspiration and the renovation of human lives for millions and millions of people. And I see no reason why that shouldn’t continue.”<sup>8</sup>

Jesus’s birth, life, death and resurrection were all prophesied and all came to pass in the three short years of Jesus’s earthly public ministry and prior to that in his birth. In John 10:35, Jesus said the Scriptures cannot be broken . . . in this passage he’s addressing religious leaders who are accusing him of blasphemy because he said “I am the Son of

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<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *3 Lessons about Scripture from 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

<sup>7</sup> *Public Christianity: Talking about faith in a post-Christian world*, (Dr. Ben Witherington III on “The Accuracy of the New Testament”), p. 199.

<sup>8</sup> *Public Christianity: Talking about faith in a post-Christian world*, (Dr. Ben Witherington III on “The Accuracy of the New Testament”), p. 201.

God”. But he affirms his authority in reference to doing the works of His Father. He continues in verses 37 and 38, “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

When people take the course Christianity Explored, one of the key sections early on is getting Jesus’s IDENTITY correct. So, we systematically walk through one of the eye witness accounts, the Gospel of Mark. We review five evidences of Jesus’s authority, to teach, over sickness, over nature, over death, and to forgive sins.

Jesus *is* the Hero of the Story that God has given us in the Scriptures. He *is* worth it. So, it is wise for us to continue, and remain, and abide in them. They are God’s very words to and for us. They are useful and necessary to our daily living. They are for our training, equipping, correction, rebuke, encouragement and guidance. Like Paul challenged Timothy, let us be slow to walk away from God’s word and from what we have learned and believed. Let us continue to ground ourselves in sound doctrine that will lead to right living.

As a final reminder – 2 Timothy is Paul’s final letter, and in it we see the legacy of his ministry and teaching. Paul is a vital link in the chain of the church’s tradition. He transmits to the next generation the hymns, confessions, and faithful sayings in use in all the churches. He sets in motion the selection and development of leadership to carry the churches into their post-Pauline phase. He places before the less mature believers examples for them to imitate. He continues his assault – a lifelong enterprise - on false teaching and improper religiosity. He encourages the Christ-believers to walk worthy of the gospel they have received in faith by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. He orders their life together through the wisdom found in the household and generational codes, knowing to some extent that the future of the church depends on how families pass the faith along. Finally, as Paul moves toward his certain end, he comes to grip with the universal and cosmic implications of Jesus’s gospel. The message of salvation is for the Jew first and then for the Greek and does not end until “all things” are summed up under the headship of Jesus Christ. One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Benediction:**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16-17)

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<sup>9</sup> David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology*, p. 255.