

TRUSTING THE BIBLE

A story was told of a man who loved old books. He met an acquaintance who had just thrown away an old Bible that had been stored in the attic of his ancestral home for generations. "I couldn't read it," the friend explained. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it." "Not Gutenberg!" the book lover exclaimed in horror. "That Bible was one of the first books ever printed. Why, a copy just sold for over two million dollars!" His friend was unimpressed. "Mine wouldn't have brought a dollar. Some guy named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in German."

Today we are joining Fellowship Baptist Churches all across Canada in a three week series entitled "The Greatest Book." It is a celebration of the Protestant Reformation which started 500 years ago this week on Oct 31, 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg Germany. At the heart of the Protestant Reformation was the idea of Sola Scriptura – which means the bible alone. It means that the bible is our sole infallible rule for faith and practice. Over the next 3 weeks we want to talk about the importance of the bible.

2 Timothy 3:14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul starts this chapter in verse 1 by telling Timothy "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days." He then goes on to describe what those days will be like. I think they very much describe the world we are living in today. I believe that we are living in the last days, so these words are especially relevant for us.

In times like these we need God's truth like never before. The purpose of Paul's letter to Timothy (and also the purpose of this message today) is to remind us again of the importance and authority of the Bible in the life of every believer. It is also to give some practical advice on how to study and meditate on the bible so that you can apply its truth in your life.

1. The Truth of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:14-15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The bible is true. Paul here tells Timothy to live his life according to the truths which the bible teaches. These are the same truths that he had heard from his childhood. He had learned these truths from his mother and grandmother.

I am so grateful for my own Christian upbringing. I am grateful that I grew up in a home where both my mother and father went to church and taught me about Jesus. I was given a strong foundation as a child. Likewise, we as a church recognize the great responsibility we have for parents to teach their children. That teaching must start in the home and seek to support it through our children's ministry here at the church. I want to remind you today to pray faithfully for our all our teachers and Interns and for Pastor Bev. Teaching children is a truly a high and holy calling!

The greatest truth we will ever know is a simple message we learned as children – Jesus loves me this I know, for the bible tells me so.

Timothy had been taught the Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation. He learned the good news that God had sent Jesus into the world to die on a cross for our sins. This is the greatest truth we can give our children.

That is the central message of this Book ... it tells us how to be saved. No other book communicates this message except the bible. In this Book we have the Good News (the Gospel) that salvation is found in Christ alone. He loves us, He died for us, He took God's judgment for our sins upon Himself and He rose again from the dead proving He alone has the power to forgive every one of our sins. That message is true for a child and it is absolutely true for every adult here this morning.

A little boy opened the big family Bible at home. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly something fell out of the Bible. It was a big old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages. "Mamma, look what I found," the boy called out. "What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked. With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered: "I think it's Adam's underwear."

Within the bible we find truth, but not just that...

2. The Trustworthiness of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed ...

Paul goes on to say that the bible is not only true, it is also trustworthy. That means that we can trust the message it communicates. Why is this statement so important for us? It means that God is the source of the Scripture ... all of the Scripture, and because of that the foundation of our faith is absolutely trustworthy.

What does God-breathed mean? In the original Greek the word is THEOPNEUSTOS from THEOS (God) and PNEO (breath). It means that its source is God. It was not the author that came up with the content but God. Unlike Shakespeare or any other author, it does not have a human source...it comes from God! We see this in 2 Peter as well;

2 Peter 1:20-21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

How did God bring the scriptures to us? In some cases God dictated His Word directly to the human writers. In other instances He worked through their personalities and guided and guarded their thoughts and eye-witness testimony to give us His inspired Word.

The bottom line is that we know that the bible we have is divinely-inspired and is absolutely trustworthy...and not only can you trust its contents completely, but God calls us to trust the One personally who is at the very heart of that message...the Lord, Jesus Christ!

The bible is a firm foundation. We can trust what it says.

When George Gibson Polley was a boy in Richmond, he hit a baseball onto the roof of a six-story building. Since with most sandlot games, it was the only ball the boys had, George promptly climbed up the outside of the building and retrieved it. This was the start of scaling buildings that eventually earned for Polley the title “Human Fly.” Over his career he scaled the outside of more than 2,000 buildings. In 1920 he climbed up the side of the Woolworth Building in NY and made it to the 30th floor before he was arrested for not having the proper permits. He could earn \$200 a climb — more than many men were earning in over a month during those depression days.

Polley’s financial success launched a number of other “human fly” careers in those bitter depression days. One of the exciting dare-devils had been announced to climb a large department store building in downtown Los Angeles. A great crowd assembled to watch and the man, slowly and carefully, climbed floor after floor up the outside of the building. When he reached a point very near the top, the crowd watched him feel above his head, both to the right and to the left, for something he could use to raise himself higher. Eventually he spotted what seemed to be a jutting brick or a piece of stone. Since it was inches beyond his reach, he risked everything on a cat-like spring, wrapping his fingers around the object.

While the crowd below watched in horror, the human fly fell with a scream to the sidewalk and was killed. When medical attendants pried back his fingers to see what he had clutched, they found a spider’s web. He had risked everything on what proved to be nothing. So many people today base their lives on illusion. They trust in a worldview created by public opinion. They build their lives on the sand and not the solid rock of God’s word.

The bible is truth and the bible is trustworthy, but not just that ...

3. The Teaching of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16 ... and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

The bible is not only true and trustworthy, it is useful! It gives answers to the questions of life that we all ask. It is helpful. It is relevant. It brings joy.

Psalms 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Through the bible God shows us how to live. He provides a roadmap to peace and joy and ultimately the pathway to eternal life. The bible is useful. Paul says here that the bible is useful in many different ways. It is like a GPS;

First, he says the bible is useful for teaching. Through it we learn truth. Like a GPS it shows us our destination and what it will take to get there.

Second, he says the bible is useful for rebuking. That means it directs us and tells us where we have gone wrong, where we have deviated from the correct path. Like a GPS it tells us when we have made a wrong turn.

Third, the bible is useful for correction. A good GPS not only tells you when you have made a wrong turn, but it tells you how to get back on track. Likewise the bible tells us how to get back on the path when we have blown it.

Fourth, the bible is useful for training in righteousness. It tells us how to avoid things that would hurt us or slow or progress. Like a good GPS, it tells us if there are problems with the road ahead and then finds the fastest and easiest way to our destination.

That's the guiding power of the Word of God in our lives! So how should I then approach the bible?

Joshua 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

How do you meditate in His Word?

- a. You must begin by being committed to read it every day. I'm not talking about casual, superficial reading. I'm talking about reading it so that you remember what you have read. Reading the bible is not like treasure hunting, but strip mining. You don't just look for a little gem for the day, you read it systematically, moving book by book.
- b. For me the next step is take time to think about what I have read. I make a mental outline in my mind of what I've read. That really helps me because I have a very short memory! I have found the best way to read the bible is as if you were going to teach it. I have done this since long before I was called to teach it. It means you have to break the chapters down verse by verse, word by word.
- c. The final step in this vital process is to bring the Scripture (of the day) before God in prayer and ask the Lord, "What do you want me to learn from this passage? Is there some truth that will help me to live for You today? Is there a sin You want me to avoid? Is there a situation in my life that You want to speak into?"

That's Biblical meditation! It is allowing God's word to roll around within you until you truly understand it. There was a study done recently about how pastors prepare their sermons. Most write their sermons the week they preach it. I always try to know what I will be preaching on 6 months ahead and write my sermon at least a month before so that it can then roll around inside me for a few weeks and ferment.

The bible is useful. A traveler was preparing for a long trip. A friend asked if he was all packed and he said, "Yup, just about. I've got my guidebook, a lamp, a mirror, a microscope, a volume of fine poetry, a package of old letters, a song book, a sword, a hammer and a set of books." "But," the friend said, "you can't get all of that in one suitcase." "Sure I can," replied the traveler. It doesn't take much room." Then he placed his Bible in the suitcase and closed the lid.

The bible is truth, trustworthy and it's teaching is useful, but not just that ...

4. The Transforming Power of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The bible transforms us. It changes us. It equips us for life and service.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The bible is a living Book because the Holy Spirit is over it. When we read the bible the Holy Spirit can use it to speak directly to us. Have you ever been reading the bible, and you read a passage that you have read many time before, but suddenly it hits you in a different way? That is the Holy Spirit. It takes the truth of the bible and makes it real to us.

It reminds us of what we should be doing or not doing. Remember in Nehemiah chapter 8 when the people of Jerusalem had finally finished rebuilding the wall. Ezra brought out the bible (which they had not done in a very long time) and began to read it and the people were captivated by it's message. They began to weep, recognizing all the ways that they had not been following what God wanted for them. Their lives were transformed.

Maybe like those people in Jerusalem it has been a while since you spent any time in the bible. Maybe you need to go home this afternoon and dust your bible off and spend some time in it.

This morning I want to call you to a fresh commitment to reading the bible. You say that you believe it; you say that you trust it; you say that you love it...but do you live in it day by day? Are you faithful in God's Word every day...or is the Word of God sitting up on a shelf somewhere in your home gathering dust? Let me call you to respond today;

First, the central message of the bible is that Jesus gave his life to pay for our sin. If you have never done so you need to receive Jesus Christ into your life as Lord and saviour.

Second, you need to live in obedience with what Jesus has said. A first step to doing this is baptism. If you have never been baptized before you need to take this step of obedience and do so.

Third, you need to be a student of the bible. You need to take time every day to study it and allow it to get into your mind and heart.

The bible changes lives. St. Augustine is a good example of this. For most of his life he was a famed academic in the Roman Empire. He was very successful in public speaking. But he lived a thoroughly sinful, self-indulgent, immoral life. The time came when he began to consider the claims of Christianity. He was alone in a garden one day when he heard a child singing out a line from a game: "Pick it up and read, pick it up and read." He turned to his copy of the bible, which was opened to Roman. 13. His eyes were drawn to the following words: "Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Rom. 13:13-14)

Deeply convicted, he surrendered to Christ, and the Roman speaker went on to become the Christian bishop of Hippo, the greatest theologian after Paul, and one of the most formidable intellects of Western civilization.

The bible has changed lives in the past, and it changing lives today. I have seen this so often. How important is the bible to you? When Naomi and I were on the Doulos we had the opportunity to visit the Ukraine. We were in the Crimean Peninsula in the city of Yalta. The ship had been there for a few weeks and we had seen God doing amazing things, especially in terms of literature distribution. People were so hungry for the bible. As the ship was leaving port, the gangplank had been pulled up. They were just getting ready to release the mooring ropes when a lady came running along the quayside. She was yelling out to us in Russian.

Through a translator we learned she was saying that she had just heard that the ship was there and she had come from a great distance to get a bible. Someone ran down into the book storage and got her a Russian bible. They were able to drop it into her hands just as the ship was pulling away. She fell to her knees and kissed the bible over and over and over again overjoyed that she finally had a copy of the bible for herself.