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Using your Forehead as a Hammer
2 Tim 3:14-16
July 31, 2016, Adrian Moskal

Today, we get to talk about scripture. We are not just going to read scripture but discuss why and what scripture is for. Trust me it is totally amazing and captivating. Now before we begin, think of the best novel you have ever read (or seen) as some don't necessarily like to read. Think of the best story you have encountered. Can you visualize it? Can you recount the emotions that you went through as you were introduced to the main character or characters. And then as they encountered some kind of problem. And as any good story, the tension and drama rises as we go and get close to the climax. And then there is a final scene and some kind of resolution.

As you read, I can put myself into the story and wonder how I would respond in certain circumstances.

Now the bible is no different except it is the best of all stories and the most captivating that you can read. It has an opening scene where there is this most serene and beautiful place created with 2 people who are living in peace love and harmony. You might think they are the main characters and yet Adam and Eve are not the main characters. God is the main character in every scene. You then have your inciting incident where the problem happens. Sin enters the world when Adam and Eve eat the apple and mankind is separated from a perfect but holy God who abhors sin. The story continues through all 66 books to answer that question of how can a sinful people be reconciled to a holy God. There is love, battles, hurt, joy, intrigue. And the tension builds as Jesus is the answer, he (being God) pays the ultimate price for all sin and goes to the cross for our sins.

Now this is a great story, and if that all it was, it would be the most amazing story. It is much more than an amazing story.

Let's go to our passage.

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The apostle Paul wrote first and second Timothy, to Timothy, his disciple, mentee, and protege. The section before this Paul is talking about the evil that will happen in the last days and those who oppose God's people and God's mission.

Then Paul says,

2 Tim 3:14-16 NLT

14 But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you.

Paul says you can remain faithful to scripture because it is true and because you can trust who taught you. Paul was very trustworthy. You would not go through what Paul went through for a pipe dream.

In the section before this Paul says:

[3]

2 Tim 3:10-11 NLT

¹⁰ But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance.

¹¹ You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it.

Paul is saying you can trust scripture for it is true and you can trust it also because you KNOW me and I taught you. You have seen what I have been through. You have seen the hard times and the miracles.

Jesus when he was praying on the night when he would be betrayed:

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John 17:17 NLT

¹⁷ Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.

There are many reasons other than scripture itself that point to the fact that it is true. There is manuscript evidence, archaeological evidence, eyewitness accounts (many people martyred who would not change their story - would you die for saying you saw something that you didn't?), corroborating accounts - many non biblical sources back up the accounts in the bible, global influence - can you think of anything that has had a greater effect on art, culture, laws, history, etc, and finally, changed lives - massive amount of people throughout the ages have had their lives changed by it.

If the truth of the bible is something you struggle with, there is so much evidence to look at but I have to move on.

So, my first point is that

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1. The bible is an amazing story AND IT IS TRUTH.

By truth I don't mean something you read on the front page of the newspaper. Something that might get recanted on the back pages of the same paper 5 days later. God's word can be counted on. He always does what he says. It is part of his nature.

Let's come back to our text. Paul continues on.

[6]

2 Tim 3:14-15 NLT

¹⁴ But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. ¹⁵ **You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.**

Because the scriptures are true and because you have been taught them by trustworthy teachers, you have the wisdom to trust Christ for your salvation. Not scripture alone. It is through a relationship with Christ that salvation is possible.

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John 5:39 NLT

³⁹ **“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.**

Bam!! Not only is it true, it can lead to eternal life.

Jesus says it as well

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John 17:19

¹⁹ **And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.**

This is again in Jesus prayer on the night we was to be betrayed. Jesus is prophesying his sacrifice for our sins. That we would be made holy by God's truth.

2nd point is

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2. Scripture's truth can lead to Christ and thus to eternal life.

Now this is great. Fantastic story that turns out is true. When you find out a story is actually true, it all the more riveting. To top it off it can lead to salvation. That is a great story, let's stop here and go home.

Except, it isn't done. We can sometimes leave it here but we can't. Baptists sometimes want to leave it here.

We are people of the word. And the word is true. And we need to tell people about the truth. Sometimes, no matter the consequences. We will shout from the rooftops what we are against. We will picket against things we disagree with. We will say things bluntly because we have truth on our side.

Let's look in John 1 and see how it describes Jesus:

[9]

John 1:1-2 NLT

¹ In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He existed in the beginning with God.

Jesus is the Word and he is God and he has always been. There was never a time that he wasn't because he existed in the beginning with God. This is important. but it continues.

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John 1:14 NLT

¹⁴ So the Word became human* and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.* And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

The Word (Jesus) became human and lived among us. This is the Christmas story and the gospels lay out how Jesus lived among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.

I think the The ESV captures it better than the NLT:

John 1:14 ESV

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus (the Word) came full of grace and truth. Not just truth. He could have come just in truth. But he didn't. He came full of grace (unfailing love).

[11]

In the book "Changes that Heal", Dr. Henry Cloud says this about Truth without Grace:

Truth without Grace is judgment. It sends you to hell, literally and experientially.

When we look at what the Scripture says about the law, about truth without grace, we see that the law silences us, brings anger, increases sin, arouses sinful passions, brings death, puts us under a curse, holds us prisoner, alienates us from Christ, and judges us harshly.

The law without grace destroys us. No one ever grows when they are under the law, for the law put us into a strictly legal relationship with God: "I'll love you only if you do what

is true or right.” Getting truth before grace, or truth before relationship, brings guilt, anxiety, anger and a host of other painful emotions, as this story of Ruth shows.

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3. Scripture is not truth alone but full of grace and truth. It is a love story. A heroic love story.

Let me save you some sleepless nights and really focus on this. Because when I first came to know Christ, I was full of something but it wasn't grace. I learned a lot of truth and not as much grace and had some difficult conversations. Jesus has a perfect balance and does them both perfectly. I had not learned this. It hurt relationships and did not advance the cause of Christ.

So how do we get this balance of grace and truth? Let's finish off our passage.

[13]

2 Tim 3:16 NLT

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

All scripture is inspired by God. He used man to write it but totally and completely inspired by God. It is useful to teach us what is true and to show how we have made a mess of our lives. It points to what is wrong and what is the right way.

It does not stop at our salvation. Scripture is also there to show how we fall short of the glory of God and what following Jesus looks like. This means change for us.

If we do not see that scripture is there to change us then we are using it for something that it wasn't designed for. **It is like using our forehead as a hammer.** Can you? yes. Should you - no. Was it designed for that - no. **Scripture is a means for Jesus to change me to be more like him.**

[14]

4. All Scripture points to Christ and how we can grow to be more like him. This means Christ loves us even with our shortcomings and he loves us enough to not want us to stay there. If we are walking with Christ, our reading, will change us.

We will grow in the fruit of the Spirit.

Gal 5:22 NLT

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Let me share a story with you that happened this week. I think it illuminates this passage.

Someone from our church just came and dropped off a tin. It was a hexagon tin taped shut with a couple of verses written on the top.

[14]

Luke 6:19-21 NLT

¹⁹ Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone. ²⁰ Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said, “God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. ²¹ God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied. God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh.

[15]

John 12:3 NLT

³ Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar* of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

She said it was her alabaster jar. She would not let me put her name on it even for the bookkeeper. I asked about a tax receipt, but she said she got lots back from their regular tithing. This is over and above her regular giving and she wanted to invest where moth and rust will not destroy. Then she told me there was \$10,000 inside the tin. Is that not amazing. God is so good!!

Who can do that other than Jesus. The Pharisees would give a tenth of everything they had.

In this case, the word of God changed her heart. Only Jesus can do this through scripture. No tax receipt, no applause, above her regular tithing. The messages of this world cry out to spend that money on ourselves. To get what is ours. Jesus life and message softly points to investing our time, treasure and talents in the lives of others. Invest them in the kingdom.

This action is so countercultural, that is against what everything we see says is right. Except what Jesus says is right and good.

God’s timing is amazing. Not just that the giving is needed but that it landed on this week to illuminate this passage for us today.

Now how can we encourage one another to grow. Let me spend a little time talking about how we put this “process into practice”. How can we encourage one another as we read scripture to engage it and allow it to change us?

Let me spend a few minutes talking about our growth groups. Each week (during the school year) our groups (young adults to seniors) meet and discuss the sermon and underlying scripture that goes with it.

At the top of the sermon curriculum you will see something like this:

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Objective of this study: To follow Jesus example of living lives filled with grace and truth.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

This came from the sermon on May 17 and I thought it was appropriate today.

Each week when we meet, we are reminded we have a specific objective of the study (it changes from week to week). The red reminder is the same each week. It reminds us that our goal is to allow God's word to penetrate our heart and to change it. Each week we want to be changed by God's Word through his Spirit as we walk with Christ. This sets us up to engage in the discussion because that is what it is.

We have 3 parts to the study:

a. Worship- 5-10 minutes can be song, silence, prayer or all of the above. To prepare our hearts for God to change us by his Word.

b. Word- what is the passage, what is the context

c. Work- what does it mean for me. This is where we answer with I, not we or they. We need to engage it for ourselves. Not to point out others faults. What does Jesus want to change in me through this passage?

If you were not in a growth group last year, we want to give you an opportunity. Next Sunday, we will have a table set up. We will leave up our growth group display/sign up until end of September but sign up early if you want to join. They fill up quickly.

Remember, change is not easy. We need the support of people who want to change as well. Who will encourage us and not judge us, and pray with us.

This is about realizing that scripture is not a reference. The bible is not a self help guide or a list of do's and don'ts. Otherwise you are using it for something it was not given to us for. It's like using our forehead for a hammer.

