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2 Timothy 3:14-17

People of the Bible: Why the Word Still Matters

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Good morning. My name is Pastor David Pranga. I am the Executive Pastor, here at Brewster Baptist Church. It is my great pleasure to welcome you, whether you are watching online or if you are here with us in our beautiful Sanctuary. Thank you for joining with us today.

In today's world, we live in one of the noisiest ages in human history. Voices compete for our attention, from the moment we wake up until the moment we fall asleep. We are bombarded with messages, throughout our day, from TV, radio, newspapers, and, of course, the cell phone.

This small device overwhelms us with hundreds and hundreds of messages daily. They constantly appear on the front of our phones, updating us with the latest news stories, weather alerts, sports scores, emails, and text messages. If that was not enough, we can click on our favorite apps (Facebook, Instagram, ESPN, Google, or your favorite place for news). In no time at all, we are flooded with more stories and reels. These little devices shoot out so much information every day, every hour, and every minute – it can feel very overwhelming. It seems like everyone has something to say about what is important, what we should value, what we should care about, and how we should live.

Yet, through all this noise, every day, one voice is increasingly neglected in our world and society. Do you know what that voice is? It is the voice of God.

Last week, we learned that God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us in our walk with him. God has given us another tool. God has given us his Word. God speaks to us through the Bible. God did not leave us all alone on earth, not knowing what to believe. By reading the Bible, we can learn more about God's character, the teaching of Jesus, and how we are to live as Christians in this world. For hundreds of years, Christians have turned to the Word of God to grow in their faith.

What worries me, today, is that many of us are missing God's voice in our lives. Today, we are in the third week of a six-week series called "The Whole Life of Christ in Us." This series helps us to focus on the historical, spiritual practices that have shaped

faithful Christians for centuries. Today, we are looking at The Word-Centered Life, which is focused on the importance of the Word of God. The Bible is God's primary way that God can speak to us, and we can learn more about Him.

Let me ask you a question this morning. How many of you own a Bible? How many of you own four or five Bibles? It is amazing to see how many hands went up. If you do not have a Bible, there is a free one at the Information Desk in the lobby.

Let me ask you a second question. When was the last time you truly read God's Word and spent time with Him? If we say that we are Christians, we need to spend time in the Word with Him.

Here is the most challenging question: Is your life centered on the noise of social media and the world, or is your life centered on God's Word? Amid all this noise, it's easy to miss God's voice. But God has given us a clear way to hear Him, which is his Word. Today, we'll see why the Bible is not just another book, but a living guide that shapes our lives. To help us understand this, let's turn to *2 Timothy 3:14-17*, where Paul reminds a young pastor, Timothy – and reminds us – about the power of the Scriptures.

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

1. The Word of God Matters Because It Comes from God.

A question that I often get asked, as a Pastor, is this: *What makes the Bible different from other self-help books?* I would tell them that there is a huge difference between the Bible and other self-help books. A self-help book aims to help you achieve a specific outcome. It could be losing weight, happiness, confidence in speaking, or even building wealth. They assume that the main problem is with the person – that the person lacks knowledge, discipline, or confidence. It is written from a person's human experience, psychology, or research. The authority comes from the author's expertise or results they see.

The Bible is the foundational element of how God speaks to his people. Approximately 40 different authors wrote the 66 books. The writers wrote in their own ways, and the words they put down were an extension of themselves – their personalities, skills, backgrounds, and training. Yet, the Holy Spirit inspired those words that the authors spoke. They were exactly the words God wanted them to write down. *2 Peter 1:21* says, “**Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**”

Going back to the Scripture, Paul begins by reminding Timothy, and us, that the Bible matters – first and foremost – because it comes from God, Himself. The very words of the Bible, God claims as his own.

2 Timothy 3:16a says, “**All scripture is God-Breathed.**” This includes the Old Testament and the New Testament. Yet, sometimes people will say to me, “I follow only Jesus’ teaching. I am not sure about the Apostle Paul or the other letters. I do not like the Old Testament God.” In *2 Peter 3:16*, Peter refers to all of Paul’s letters as part of God’s Scripture. The early church looked at all the books as from God. The entire Old and New Testaments were written and inspired by God. And Jesus believed the Old Testament to be inspired by God (see *Matthew 5:17*).

The Bible is not a book of stories or human opinions. The story of the Bible is a redemption story – how much God loves us and provides a way for us to have a relationship with Him once again.

As Christians, we believe the Bible to be divinely inspired by God, authoritative, reliable, true, timeless, and trustworthy. That is why Christians, for hundreds and thousands of years, have always insisted on the centrality of Scripture. The Bible is central to our faith. It allows us to know God and know how we are to live to honor Him. Knowing that the Bible comes from God gives it unmatched authority – but knowing it comes from God is just the beginning. God did not give his Word just to admire it or study it. He gave it to guide and transform us. This leads to the next point.

2. The Word of God Matters Because It Shapes our Lives.

When you buy a home, one of the things you want to do is get a home inspection. When the home inspector comes, he does not just admire the house; he examines it closely. It may take two or three hours for the full inspection. The report they write points out what is working, what is unsafe, and what needs immediate attention. No

homeowner enjoys reading that report. I remember reading a report once, and my stomach sank. It can feel uncomfortable – exposing problems you did not see or know were there. You hope it will not be too serious.

But a wise homeowner does not argue with the report, or ignore it. They act on it, because the purpose is not condemnation – it is protection and restoration. It shows the buyer what needs to be done to make your home safe. That is what God’s Word does for our lives. God’s Word matters because it lovingly inspects our lives and has the power to shape us. *2 Timothy 3:16b* says, “**Scripture...is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.**”

Paul shares that God’s Word shapes our lives in four ways – teaching, rebuking, correcting and training. God does this all in love. He cares so much for us. He wants to help us in our daily life. He wants us to know Him better.

Anybody here use GPS on their cell phone? Good. I want to think that God’s Word works like our GPS on our cell phones. When you enter a destination, the GPS **teaches** you the best route to get to your destination. It shows you step-by-step directions. It even communicates to you when the turn is about to happen, and which turn you should take. Sometimes you even see a picture.

What happens when you miss a turn? What does the GPS do? Does the GPS get on your case for missing the directions? No. The GPS does not shame you. It simply lets you know you are off course. That is a simple **rebuke** – letting you know you made a mistake.

What happens when you continue going off course and you decide that you know better than the GPS? What does the GPS say? It immediately **corrects** you by saying, “Make a U-turn” or “Take the next right turn.” It will continue using these voice commands until you get back on track.

Eventually, over time, as you drive that same route again and again, you don’t even need the GPS anymore. You have been **trained** to know the way. That’s exactly what Paul is talking about, in *2 Timothy 3:16*, when he says, “All Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

First, **Scripture teaches us** what is true. Just like the GPS showed me the route before I even started driving, God’s Word shows us how life is meant to be lived. It gives us truth, direction, and clarity, before we take our first step.

But sometimes we think we know better. That's when **Scripture rebukes us**. When I ignored the GPS, it immediately let me know I was off route. In the same way, God's Word speaks into our lives, and lovingly points out when our choices don't line up with His will.

Then comes the mercy. **Scripture corrects us**. I didn't have to pull over and start all over again. The GPS recalculated and guided me back. God's Word does the same thing. When we repent, it doesn't shame us; it restores us and shows us the way back to Him.

And, over time, **Scripture trains us in righteousness**. The more I use GPS, the more I learn how to navigate new places with confidence. As we spend time in God's Word, it trains our hearts and minds, so that following God becomes a way of life. We know what is expected of us, and we just do it. It becomes second nature.

Paul reminds us that all Scripture is God-breathed. This guidance comes straight from God, Himself. The Bible isn't just information; it's personal direction from a loving Father. Here's the simple truth: the GPS only helped when I listened to it. And God's Word only transforms us when we choose to listen and obey Him. God has given us His Word, so we don't have to stay lost. We just need to follow His voice. When we follow his directions, our lives will be transformed to be more Christ-like.

But God's Word does not stop at shaping us, inwardly. It equips us outwardly, preparing us to live faithfully and serve others. This brings us to our third point.

3. The Word of God Matters Because It Prepares Us for Good Works.

Paul concludes *2 Timothy 3:17*, "***So that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***" Paul closes this verse by reminding us that we are equipped for every good work. The ultimate goal of reading Scripture is not head knowledge or being able to remember certain facts. The goal is preparation, readiness, and equipping the believer to be ready to live out their faith, serve people, and know God. "**The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives**" (D.L. Moody).

Many of us, in school, practiced fire drills. I want you to think about emergency preparation. We all prepared, ahead of time, before the crisis happened. We did not just wait until a fire broke out before we learned where the exits are. We did not just read the instructions once we heard the alarm go off. Good preparation happened before the

crisis. We may feel that fire drills are repetitive and unnecessary, but when the emergency comes, we are ready. We are glad for the training we have received. God's Word is the same. We don't read the Bible only during peaceful moments. We read the Bible so we are prepared when life gets hard, struggles come our way, as well as when there is an opportunity to help someone else. We read the Bible, and the Word penetrates our hearts. It changes us. We are ready for real life issues that can happen to us because we are prepared for it.

When someone hurts us, we are prepared to forgive them, as Jesus has forgiven us. When temptation comes our way, we are prepared to resist it. When fear and anxiety overwhelm us, we are prepared to trust God and have faith that His ways are better. When a friend loses their job, or a marriage is struggling, we are prepared to show empathy and compassion. These are some examples of how reading God's Word prepares us for the good works that God has for us.

The Bible prepares us to live faithfully in a broken world, to make wise decisions, to serve God effectively, to love one another, and to stand firm in the truth. Remember, the Bible does not just shape what we believe; it also equips us in how we are to live our life for God.

There have been moments, in my own life, when I did not have time to stop and figure out what God wanted me to do. The response had to be immediate. And it was during those moments that I had to rely on what had already been stored up, or invested in me, by reading God's Word. See, when we read God's Word, Scripture is preparing us to handle those unexpected times in our lives.

As I reflect on my own life, I can say that reading God's Word has changed my life in so many ways. As I read the Bible, I learn more about God and the teachings of Jesus. I learn what it means to receive grace and mercy. I learn about forgiveness that God has given me and how to offer forgiveness to others. When I read God's Word, it helps me to take the focus off myself and put the focus on God. I become smaller, and God, once again, becomes bigger. When I read God's Word, my anxiety level lowers, my stress level lessens. The more I read and meditate on God, the better I feel about myself. I can see that God loves me. This is something that I have experienced personally. I have personally experienced how God's Word guides me and strengthens me in everyday life. If it can change me, imagine what it can do in your life, as well.

This week, I want to challenge you to take intentional steps to make God's Word a living part of your daily life. Here is my challenge for you this week:

- 1) Find your Bible and get it off your shelf.
- 2) Start reading God's Word. Start in the New Testament (Gospels/Letters). Read one chapter – or ten minutes – per day. You can do this.
- 3) Mediate on one thing you learned from the reading. (What have you learned about God? What have you learned about yourself or others? How can you apply it to your life?)
- 4) Tell someone what you learned.

In conclusion, let's remember this today. God's Word is more than a book on a shelf. It is God's voice for our lives. The Bible is God speaking to us, and it comes from Him. The Bible shapes us into the people He created us to be. The Bible equips us for every good work that God calls us to do. In the midst of life's noise, let us choose to listen, follow, and be transformed by God's Word.

Remember the challenge this week. It's a simple practice. We need to intentionally spend time in the Bible (ten minutes per day). Read it, reflect on it, and let it guide your actions. The Bible still matters today. The world is loud and noisy, but God's Word is louder and more powerful!

Let us pray.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. What is the best advice you have ever received? Who gave it to you, and did you follow it?