

The Word of God Matures Us II Timothy 3:16-17

I hope that what I am about to say doesn't generate a lot of hate mail or that men feel I have sold out the brotherhood by my admission. It has not necessarily gotten me into trouble, but it has, at times, caused significant delays in something I am doing.

Let me illustrate. Maybe you can identify as a man or maybe you women will nod your head and confirm that your man has done something similar.

A number of years ago, we decided to purchase a CD rack to hold our collection. It's about 18" wide and around 3 ½' tall. It's a simple construction with a top and bottom, two sides, a back and several moveable shelves. After getting it home, I set about the task of assembling it. I needed a screwdriver and some glue. All the contents were removed from the box and laid out on the floor. I took the base and a side, added a dab of glue and screwed the two together. I reached for the second side and did the same thing. The top was added and to that point I felt a sense of accomplishment, that is, until I realized that without checking, I had inadvertently assembled it so the holes for the shelves were on the outside instead of the inside. Only then did I go back and refer to the short instruction manual that came with the kit.

The problem is, that's not the only time I have put something together only to have to take it apart because I didn't follow the manual. It was only when I got stuck that I went to the very source that would have saved me a lot of time and frustration if I had only taken the time to refer to it before beginning the project.

In similar fashion, how many times have I attempted to wade through the problems of life without first looking at the manual that would have helped me avoid the troubles I ended up in? The Bible is that manual.

Tony Evans writes "If we would simply return to the source of truth and then do what it says, we could solve the issues creating the chaos around us and within us."

I think it would be safe to say that on at least one occasion we have all plowed our way through some life situation, some problem we are facing without looking at the owner's manual. The Bible is our manual to guide us in life. I hope you have somewhere close to the front of your noodle **Psalm 119:105 "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to path."** It will guide our steps and guard our hearts if we would refer to it and do what it says before we launch into some issue that we are facing.

I just finished a book by Charles Spurgeon titled *The Power in Prayer*. The last chapter is on what he calls exclamatory prayers. He refers to it as hurling darts speaking of short, quick prayers that we send up to God in any given moment. He writes "you will always find that the man who has prayed much is the man to pray more." What he suggests in his closing chapter is the direct correlation between prayer and knowing God's Word, for it is in those short prayers that we use should use Scripture in those instances where we call out to God. For example: When we face temptation, we can quickly pray **Psalm 27:11 "Lead me in a plain path."** When we are anxious pray **Psalm 143:5 "Lord, don't hide your face from me"** or **Psalm 22:11 "God, don't be far from me."** If facing an illness pray **Proverbs 3:5 "Lord, I trust you with all my heart."** or **Philippians 4:6-7 "God, settle my anxious thoughts with your peace."**

Such prayers presuppose that we are spending time in God's Word regularly. How important it is then to grow in knowledge of God's Word. **Colossians 3:16 "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."** God's Word must live in us abundantly to allow it to mature us, which brings us to our passage today found in **II Timothy 3:16-17**. How important it is to have the manual for godly living close by so we can reference it regularly. **"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

Consider these different translations.

Phillips translation: **“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re-setting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God and fit him fully for all branches of his work.”**

NLT: **“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. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work.”**

The Message: **“Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.”**

The Amplified Bible: **“All Scripture is God-breathed [given by divine inspiration] and is profitable for instruction, for conviction [of sin], for correction [of error and restoration to obedience], for training in righteousness [learning to live in conformity to God's will, both publicly and privately—behaving honorably with personal integrity and moral courage]; so that the man of God may be complete *and* proficient, outfitted *and* thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

These translations nicely lay out the transforming work of God's Word in the life of the person who will pick up the Bible, humbly admit that it is the source for guiding us on the right path of life, challenge us when we get off that path, correct us when we need to get back on the right path, and keep us going in the right direction. There is no ambiguity in what God's Word does for the person who will be a doer of it and not just a hearer of it. Scripture unmistakably lays out the right course for our life leaving the choice to follow it clearly up to us. We choose to live right by it or in rebellion to it.

I have but two points to the message today.

From **verse 16**, the Scriptures are profitable.

From **verse 17**, the Scriptures are practical.

I. THE SCRIPTURES ARE PROFITABLE – v. 16

Since we have already spoken to the first part of this verse that **“all Scripture is inspired or God-breathed”** let me just stress again that the Bible is the very Word of God spoken to us. Because it is His Word given through the direction of the Holy Spirit who superintended over the authors to say what He wanted said, but using each man's unique personality, it not only has power, it has authority. Its words are binding and will bring reward for obedience and judgment for disobedience. God's Word is not only inspired, it is also inspiring.

All is an all-inclusive word. While they only had the Old Testament when he wrote this, Paul has in mind the entirety of Scripture, including what would become the New Testament. All of it is breathed out by God. Because all of Scripture is true and dependable as we learned from **John 17:17** that God's Word is truth, all of Scripture is therefore profitable. It has value, it is useful, or is beneficial. **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.”**

What Paul will say in these two verses is that because the Word of God is profitable, it is sufficient for all we need to live a godly life. Take some time this week to read **Psalms 119** and you will see that Scripture has the ability to meet all your spiritual needs.

Warren Wiersbe writes: “A Christian who studies the Bible and applies what he learns will grow in holiness and avoid many pitfalls in this world.”

For a few moments, let's turn to **Psalms 19:7-14**. In these verses we notice six titles for God's Word, six characteristics for God's Word and six blessings that come from God's Word. Notice the titles: It is called the Law of God

The statutes or testimony of the Lord
 The precepts of the Lord
 The commands of the Lord
 The fear of the Lord
 The ordinances of the Lord

The characteristics of God's Word are that it is
 perfect, flawless, holy
 It is sure or trustworthy, without error,
 unchangeable
 It is right
 It is radiant/pure
 It is pure/clean
 It is true/righteous

The blessings of God's Word are that it restores the
 soul
 It makes the simple wise
 It makes the heart rejoice
 It enlightens the eyes
 It endures forever
 It produces complete righteousness

When you are weary, it gives you strength. When
 you are lonely or have experienced a loss, it gives
 you comfort. When you are sad, it gives joy. When
 you are at your end, it gives you hope. When you
 are discouraged, it gives you encouragement.
 God's Word changes people when it is obeyed.
 It can take a person who is childlike in their faith to
 maturity. It is designed to cause believers to obey
 God and lead to righteous or godly living.

In **verse 10** we read that it is more precious than
 gold – it is invaluable. It is sweeter than honey for
 those who obey it. Like honey, God's Word is
 desirable. And for those who willingly submit to
 and obey it, find that its commands are not
 burdensome. Conversely, it is bitter to the person
 who abandons or rejects it.

In **verses 11-13** we find that as believers, the Word
 of God is like our master and we its servant,
 implying a willingness to obey finding great reward
 in doing so. It convicts us and protects us from sin
(Psalm 119:9, 11).

When we let God's Word richly bless us, our desire

is to pray that the words of our mouth and the
 meditations of our heart be acceptable to God.

The inspired Word of God is profitable and our text
 in **II Timothy 3:16** gives us four ways in which it is
 beneficial.

A. It's Profitable for Teaching/Doctrine

Paul says the entire Bible is profitable for teaching.
 Not just some of it. All of it. Some people might
 wonder what can be learned from the genealogies or
 the division of the land or why we need to know
 how many people were in each tribe. All of God's
 Word has value to teach us important truths and we
 should never get to the place where we think we
 know everything there is about the Bible. Uncle
 Johnnie who started Barakel used to go down to the
 garage where my Dad worked to share something
 new he had just learned even after years of study.

Henry Ironside writes "We shall never reach the
 place where we can be independent of the Word of
 God. Sometimes just one verse will change one's
 whole viewpoint. We need to read and ponder every
 word in dependence on the Holy Spirit, that He may
 open our understanding to the truth."

When Martin Luther read **Habakkuk 2:4** "**the just
 shall live by faith**" he became convicted by it and
 brought into question the whole doctrine of
 salvation taught by the Roman Catholic Church
 bringing about the Protestant Reformation.

The function of the Bible is to teach what is right
 and true. Doctrine has to do with the content not to
 the method. Peter urges us in **I Peter 2:2** "**As
 newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so
 that by it you may grow up in your salvation.**"

Job 23:11-12 "**My feet have closely followed His
 steps; I have kept to His way without turning
 aside. I have not departed from the commands of
 His lips; I have treasured the words of His
 mouth more than my daily (necessary) bread.**"

Jeremiah 15:16 "**When Your words came, I ate
 them; they were my joy and my heart's delight,
 O Lord God Almighty.**"

We live in an unprecedented time where great teaching is readily available whether on the television or the radio or in books. Immerse yourself in a love for sound teaching of the Bible. Doctrine isn't just learning facts about the Bible but includes meditating on it to help faith mature.

Biblical meditation is different than what other religions like Hinduism or Buddhism teach about it. It's different than transcendental meditation. That kind of meditation seeks to have you clear or empty your mind of everything. They may tell you to focus on a single word or phrase. Biblical meditation on the other hand, seeks to fill your mind with Scripture, to ponder its truths. It literally means to chew the cud. Take Scripture you have been taught and begin to mull it over in your mind and glean the rich nourishment it offers. Biblical meditation focuses solely on God's Word and what it reveals about Him and in so doing, how we need to change.

To have godly success, Joshua was commanded to meditate on God's law day and night (**Joshua 1:8**). To ensure deep, godly roots, David says that the person who is blessed meditates on God's law day and night (**Psalms 1:2-3**). In **Psalms 119:97** he speaks of his love for meditating on the law of God. The Bible speaks of meditating on God's works (**Psalms 143:5**), His deeds (**Psalms 119:27**), His promises (**Psalms 119:148**), and His unfailing love (**Psalms 48:9**).

Biblical meditation involves taking what you are being taught and pondering it as you reflect on its truth. Joshua's instructions to meditate on the law were for the purpose of making him careful to obey all that was written in it. When we think about God's Word and His character, it should result in our obedience. It will help us walk with God, love God, and live for God.

Being taught God's Word isn't just for the purpose of gaining knowledge but for the goal of growing in character to be like Christ and in so doing bring God glory.

If we love the truth, we will live the truth.

Let me suggest a good book on the subject by Robert Morgan: *Reclaiming the Lost Art of Biblical*

Meditation. In it he writes that “**Biblical meditation is the powerful practice of pondering, personalizing, and practicing Scripture...Biblical meditation is not just reading Scripture or studying Scripture or even thinking about Scripture; instead, it is thinking Scripture – contemplating, visualizing, and personifying the precious truths God has given us.**” **I Timothy 4:15 “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.”**

The Bible gives us what we need for life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3-4**). Teaching or doctrine is profitable. **II Timothy 2:15**

Second, notice that the inspired Word is profitable for reproof.

B. It's Profitable for Reproof

Where the first is positive, this is negative. The dictionary says that to reprove someone is to speak disapproval of something done or said. For the Christian it is disapproving of something that contrasts with how a Christian should live. Rebuke stings. It calls attention to something someone is doing that is wrong. I was at David's chapel one day and the speaker rebuked some students for talking during the devotional. It points out what is wrong. Notice that it comes after reading, studying, being taught what is right through doctrine.

Reproof is the conviction that comes from God's Word when we read or hear it and God's Spirit points out that we have sinned. If we are convicted by what we read or hear, then God's Spirit is at work. All too often though, the person who has or continues to sin avoids reading or hearing God's Word for fear of the conviction it will bring. When we are rebuked or convicted we now have a choice to continue in that sin or confess, repent and change.

When the prophet Nathan confronted and rebuked David for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, David was left with a choice.

When Cain was rebuked by God for harboring ill feelings of hatred toward his brother Abel, he was

left with a choice.

When Paul rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy around how he was treating the Gentile believers when Jews were around, he had a choice.

When Paul rebuked the Corinthian believers for their lack of unity, lack of love, allowing incest, abusing spiritual gifts, dishonoring communion, they had a choice.

When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, they had a choice.

When He rebuked the churches in **Revelation 2-3** for erring from the truth, they had a choice.

Reproof isn't just to show us where we are wrong, where we have sinned. It is to bring conviction for the purpose of repentance and change.

Nineteenth century theologian Richard Trench adds that reproof "refers to rebuking another with such effectual wielding of the victorious arm of the Truth, as to bring him not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction of his sin."

But let's remember what Jesus said that we should remove the beam in our own eye before we remove the spec of dust in the eye of someone else. Make sure your own sins are dealt with before talking to someone about their own (**Matthew 7:3-5**).

Paul says we should reprove with gentleness (**Galatians 6:1**), which implies humility so that we are not tempted by the same sin.

The Bible says quite a bit about rebuking others. **Proverbs 9:8-9 "Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning."**

Proverbs 10:17 "He who heeds discipline (rebuke) shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray."

Proverbs 12:1 "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction (rebuke) is stupid."

Proverbs 15:12 "A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise."

Proverbs 15:31 "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise."

Proverbs 19:25 "...rebuke a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge."

No, it's not pleasant in the moment, but in the long run, if you heed the rebuke brought through the Word of God, it is profitable.

Third, Scripture is profitable for correction.

C. It's Profitable for Correction

The Bible doesn't just show us where we have gone wrong, it shows us how to get back on the right path

If you have used a GPS device, you know that when you make a wrong turn, it will tell you how to get back onto the right road.

That's what the Bible does for us. The word correction refers to restoration of something to its original and proper condition. Classical Greek writers used the word to describe setting something up that had fallen over. The vase falls over and you set it up. You put it back in its original position. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up."**

God's Word comes along and puts us back in a right position with God. After we are convicted by a rebuke that brings confession of sin (**I John 1:9**) our position with God is set back up, restored to what it was. God's Word helps correct us, get us back in fellowship with God.

The last thing Paul notes about what Scripture is profitable for is instruction in righteousness.

D. Its Profitable for Instruction in Righteousness

Instruction here literally means child-rearing.

In **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**, Moses instructs parents to teach their children the law of God wherever they go, whatever they are doing. Use those times as teachable moments to instill God's law in their hearts all day long, teaching them to think and act according to God's Word and His will, to obey it, to govern their lives by it. They weren't to deviate from it but let it guide their steps. It's taking the opportunity to develop the heart and mind of the believer in godly character. Paul says the aim of instruction is in righteous living.

In writing to the Ephesians, Paul says that one of the tasks of the pastor is to prepare God's people to become mature in faith, to attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ so that you aren't infants tossed around by every wind of doctrine. Pastors should teach so that you don't waiver in your faith, but instead to stand on the truth of God's Word, growing up in Christ by giving evidence of His character in how you live (**Ephesians 4:11-16**).

Scripture is profitable for doctrine or teaching, rebuking, correcting and instructing in righteousness. Warren Wiersbe gives us a simple way to remember how profitable the Bible is. He says that Scripture teaches us "what is right, what is not right, how to get right, and how to stay right." John Phillips tells us that Scripture "commands, convicts, corrects, and counsels us."

Let's close by looking at **verse 17** where we see that the Scriptures are practical.

II. THE SCRIPTURES ARE PRACTICAL – v. 17

What we see in this verse is that if Scripture is profitable, it is also practical.

A. It Perfects Us Toward Good Works

KJV – "that the man of God may be perfect...for good works."

The word perfect doesn't mean sinless but refers to completeness in every detail, reaching a goal, or achieving a purpose. The idea is attaining spiritual maturity manifested in good works. Paul said he couldn't write to the believers in Corinth because

they were spiritually immature (**I Corinthians 3:1-4**) and gave some examples. Paul tells Timothy that when we are taught the Word of God and live it out in obedience, it makes us complete in everything we are called to do and in how we live it out.

This is not positional perfection, which is something accomplished at salvation, and neither is it ultimate perfection, which is realized at the coming of Christ (**I John 3:2-3**). This is progressive perfection, something we looked at last week related to the sanctification where we are becoming more like Christ in character as we grow in faith. The more we mature in godliness, the better able we are to do the good works God has ordained for us to do.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that we are to live in such a way that men see our good works and are drawn to give God glory. The more we grow the more we will want to serve.

Scripture is practical in that it perfects us toward good works.
Scripture is practical in that it prepares us for good works.

B. It Prepares Us For Good Works

"that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished or equipped for every good work."

The word "furnish" means to fit out, prepare or be complete for a special purpose. You might rent an apartment or house that is fully furnished. God will fully furnish what we need through the Scriptures for doing the good works we are called to do. We will be fully equipped for ministry.

John Phillips writes "The Holy Scriptures provide us with a complete outfit, with all the equipment we need to live lives that are characterized by good works...The living Word of God enlightens us and enables us. It directs our path and energizes us to do the will and work of God in an alien world."

That is the sufficiency of Scripture. It gives all we need to mature in Christ as we live for Him and as we serve Him. The Word of God equips us to obey the will of God and to do the work of God. So let's read the manual – it is profitable and practical.