

Main Idea: There are three basic reasons we need to stay in the Book according to 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

- I. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in salvation (14-15).
 - A. God uses people to teach us the Scriptures.
 - B. God uses the Scriptures to make us wise unto salvation.
 - C. God gives salvation to those who place their faith in Christ.
 - II. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in sanctification (16).
 - A. Consider what the Bible alone is.
 - B. Consider what the Bible alone does.
 1. It shows us what is right.
 2. It shows us what is not right.
 3. It shows us how to get right.
 4. It shows us how to stay right.
 - III. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in service (17).
 - A. God intends for us to do good works.
 - B. God equips us for good works with the Bible.
- Take Inventory: What place does the Bible have in my life?
1. Get in it every day.
 2. Get under it every time the church gathers.
 3. Give it to others the rest of your life.

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Stay in the Book! That title of today’s message comes from the main verb in our text, 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Paul tells Timothy in verse 14, “But as for you, *continue* in what you have learned... From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures.”

Timothy, in these last days, there will be terrible times (1), for people will be lovers of themselves (2), and have a form of godliness (5). But as for you, *continue*. That is, *stay in the Book*.

It’s not enough merely to have the Book, nor even to have learned the Book. We must *stay in it*. Continue in what you have learned.

Why? Because it’s *useful*, so says verse 16.

That’s this morning’s message. This text is going to challenge us to *stay in the Book* by giving us three compelling reasons we should do so.

But the truth is, people often settle for substitute uses when it comes to the Bible. I read about a unique example last week when I googled “Bible thumper” and found two things.

First, I found that a “Bible thumper (also "bible basher") (mainly US) someone perceived as aggressively imposing their Christian beliefs upon others. The term derives from preachers thumping their hands down on the Bible, or thumping the Bible itself, to emphasize a point during a sermon.”

Second, I found a link from Bible-thumper to “a ganglion cyst.” Huh? It’s true. According to Wikipedia: “A ganglion cyst, a synovial cyst, [1] or a myxoid cyst,[2] also known as Gideon's Disease, a Bible Cyst, or a Bible Bump,[3] is a non-neoplastic soft tissue lump that may occur in any joint, but most often occurs on, around, or near joints and tendons in the hands or feet.[4] These cysts are caused by leakage of fluid from the joint into the surrounding tissue.”¹

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganglion_cyst

“One common method of treatment for a ganglion cyst is to strike the lump with a large heavy book, causing the cyst to rupture and drain into the surrounding tissues. Historically, a Bible was the largest or only book in any given household and commonly was used for this treatment. This led to the nickname of "Bible bumps" or "[Gideon's](#) disease" for these cysts.”

That’s NOT what Paul had in mind when he said in our text that the Bible is *useful*. Here’s what we’re going to see. There are three basic reasons we need to stay in the Book according to 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

Let’s set the context for our study.

2 Timothy sounds like a military book. Think of the author as General Paul. Its recipient was Paul’s first officer, Timothy. Paul had been captured in battle, trying to rescue lost people from the snare of the Evil One by the power of the gospel.

And why was Paul in the battle? Because of a commission he had received from the King of kings. The Lord Jesus ordered Paul to take the good news of the gospel to the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire. And he’d done so for thirty years.

But now the general’s days are numbered. His execution is imminent.

But that’s not what troubled Paul most. What caused Paul great grief was what he heard about Timothy. Timothy had served by Paul’s side in the ministry for 15 years. Yet something had happened to Timothy. The sudden surge of hostility against the church, and the arrest of Paul, had sort of sent Timothy into his shell. Timothy had become intimidated and hesitant. Though he had the task of leading the church in Ephesus, he apparently had begun to hold back, perhaps out of fear.

So Paul exhorted him...

1:8 “ Do not be ashamed...”

2:3 “Endure hardship like a soldier...”

Notice carefully. Paul didn’t say, "It’s not so bad Timothy. Suffering for Jesus doesn’t hurt!" Nonsense! Paul didn’t pull any punches. The circumstances *were* tough, and getting tougher.

And here’s why. Paul tells Timothy in 3:1, “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.”

So what did Paul want Timothy to do, and us? He gives two basic charges in chapter three. One, stay in the battle (that’s verses 1-13). And two, stay in the Book (that’s today’s text, verses 14-17).

For our past two studies, we’ve listened to Paul’s vivid description of the "last days." These are certainly "perilous, stressful times (1)." The problem is people. And the problem with people is a misdirected love. Instead of loving God, we live in a society surrounded by people who love themselves (2), who love money (2), who love pleasures (4). And to top it off, they throw in a little religion to cover up their spiritual adultery (5).

And the danger is not just out there in the world. It also creeps subtly into the church. Satan’s cohorts disguise themselves as ministers of the gospel and seduce gullible Christians (6). They also resist the genuine servants of Christ, and seek to impede the progress of the gospel (8).

How should the soldier of Christ respond to all this? The main verb is in verse 5, “Have nothing to do with them.” Don’t go with the flow. Stay in the battle!

Are you in the battle? Are you fighting to be like Christ in a godless world and to make Christ known to a world that desperately needs to know Him?

You say, “But I need strength!” Indeed, and so does every soldier of Christ. And here’s where the strength comes from. *Stay in the Book.*

But why? Why should we make this Book central to our lives? For three reasons.

I. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in salvation (14-15).

Verse 14, “But as for you.” There’s a strong contrast here. “But as for you Timothy!” What was Timothy to do?

Verses 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.”

Again, notice the key verb of this section. CONTINUE. It’s a present tense command. That means it was something Paul expected Timothy to do always. Continue. Abide. Remain.

Remain in what? In what you learned and became convinced of, in a process that started when you were a baby, Timothy.

And from what source did you learn this truth that gripped your soul? You learned it from people, but they didn’t share their opinions with you, but from people who taught you *the holy Scriptures*.

And why did they share the Scriptures with you, Timothy? It’s the same reason you must do all you can to put the Scriptures into the minds of others. Because of the God-given role the Scriptures have in salvation.

Please notice Paul’s line of reasoning here. He makes three points.

A. God uses people to teach us the Scriptures.

B. God uses the Scriptures to make us wise unto salvation.

C. God gives salvation to those who place their faith in Christ.

This is what happened to Timothy, as it did in my life, and yours, if you’ve experienced the miracle of salvation.

First, *God uses people to teach us the Scriptures*. Timothy knew this firsthand. We don’t know a lot about Timothy’s childhood. We do know:

1. He had an unsaved, pagan Greek father (Acts 16:1).
2. He had a Jewish mother Eunice and grandmother Lois.
3. Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the Scriptures from early childhood.

“From a child,” says the AV, a word used of a newborn, even pre-born child elsewhere. Hence, the NIV, “from infancy.”

Let’s be honest. Timothy had a big strike against him, and some of you can identify. He grew up in a divided home spiritually speaking. His dad didn’t know and love Jesus.

But his mother did! And she started very early, with the help of grandma, in teaching her son the Scriptures (“the HOLY Scriptures”= the sacred writings, NASB, referring to what we call “the Old Testament”).

And why would she do that? I mean seriously. Why teach *an infant* the Bible? Why read the Scriptures, quote the Scriptures, sing the Scriptures, call for obedience to the Scriptures, to a one-year old, a two-year-old, a three-year old?

They can’t even understand those big words. *Yahweh. Transgression. Sacrifice. Atonement. Forgiveness.*

No, not at first. But Timothy's mother knew something every parent here must know. In time, by the grace of God, salvation can occur. And here's why.

God uses the Scriptures to make us wise unto salvation. Notice carefully. The Bible doesn't save us. That's why a child can grow up in church, memorize fifty verses word perfect, and live like the world. Just hearing and learning the Bible doesn't save anyone.

But the Bible does, says Paul, make a person *wise unto salvation* (in the AV), or *wise for salvation* (in the NIV).

What does that mean? It's like your garden. You didn't take seed out and just throw it on a patch of ground. First, you cultivated the soil, and prepared a place to put the precious seed that has the inherent power to produce a harvest.

Teaching a child the Scriptures (or an unsaved adult for that matter) is like cultivating the soil. There are words a person needs to know to be saved, concepts, realities, like who God is, who we are, what sin is, what sin caused, and how God works to rescue a sinner, through faith in the redemption provided by His Son.

So if you walk up to a person who has never heard about those realities, and say the words, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," what will happen? Probably you'll get a blank stare. That person doesn't know what you're talking about. The soil hasn't be cultivated yet.

The lost person needs wisdom, for the preaching of the cross is *foolishness* to him (1 Cor 1:18). He needs what Timothy needed, and you and I needed, to be taught the Scriptures, which God uses to make a person *wise unto salvation*.

That's why the best thing you can do the unsaved person in your life, whether it's your child, or neighbor, or your best friend, is get them into the Scriptures. Do a Bible study, or give them something to read that explains biblical truth, or ask them to listen online to sermon from this church, and discuss it together.

Paul explains in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (AV)." I'm convinced it is important to read the Bible to our children. At an early age. Even infants. Even pre-born children. Why? First, it reminds you as a parent what your authority is in raising this child. But secondly, it begins to make this child *wise unto salvation*.

Children are so impressionable when they're young! They'll take in everything you give them. They'll listen to Bible story after Bible story. They'll memorize verses. And all the while, you're whetting their appetite, and creating habits.

But if you wait, if you neglect the opportunity, you may lose their interest.

"I'm too tired to go to Sunday School this morning."

"It's too late to read the Scriptures this evening, honey. Just let daddy tuck you in and go to sleep."

Timothy's mother didn't waste the window of opportunity. She taught her boy to love the OT Scriptures, and she started when he was just a baby. She made sure he was *wise unto salvation*. And then one day when he was in his late teens, when Paul came preaching Jesus in his home-town of Lystra, Timothy was ready. And when Paul announced that Jesus was the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures, the Savior, the Lord, Timothy's heart was convicted, and then made alive by the Holy Spirit.

And Timothy experienced the miracle of salvation!

Now, don't miss how it happened. How does God a person? By hearing the Bible? No. God uses the Scriptures to make us wise unto salvation, but *God gives salvation to those who place their faith in Christ.*

Notice the final words of verse 15, "wise for salvation *through faith in Christ Jesus.*" What's the means God uses to save a sinner? Salvation occurs *through faith.* Not works. Not Bible reading. Not church attendance. Through *faith.* But not just generic faith. Not just faith in a church creed, or even faith in "God" in general. But faith *in Christ Jesus*, faith in the person God sent into the world, Jesus the Christ, and what this person accomplished when He died as a substitute for sinners on a cross, and then defeated death by walking out of His tomb alive.

God gives salvation to that person, the man or woman, boy or girl, who places his or her faith *in Christ Jesus.*

So stay in the Book, my Christian friend. Why? It's what God used to save you, and will use to save others, starting with your kids and grandkids, as you share it with them.

And stay in the Book, my non-Christian friend. Why? Because it is what the Sovereign Lord has chosen to use to make a person wise unto salvation. If you care for your soul, stay in the Book!

"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul..." Ps 19:7

But there's a second reason...

II. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in sanctification (16).

Sanctification is the biblical term that describes how a saved person grows up into the likeness of Christ. You won't see the word in verse 16, but you will see the process. And the process is vitally linked to what a person does with the Scriptures.

Verse 16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."

This is a water-shed verse, and it beckons us to consider two things.

A. Consider what the Bible alone is. Verse 16 begins, "All Scripture (lit. "every Scripture") is God-breathed." The AV says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Literally, "God-breathed"--not so much "inspired" as "expired"; breathed out by God. The Scriptures were brought into existence by the very breath of God. Granted, He used a variety of men, and did not destroy the individuality of the human writers in the process.

But the Spirit of God superintended. So we can be sure that the Bible is indeed God's Word, God's speech, God's inerrant and infallible message to the world.

Now, we are not supposed to worship the Book. That would be bibliolatry. Nor do we worship a particular translation, for God delivered His Word in Hebrew (and some Aramaic) in the OT and Greek in the NT, and then purposed it to be translated into other languages (for example, Paul often quoted the LXX, which was the common Greek translation of the Hebrew OT).

So, we don't worship the Book, or a particular version of the Book. But we do treat it with reverence. They're called the *holy* Scriptures in verse 15. *Sacred.* So no, the Bible is not a good luck charm, but it is sacred because of its source. It came from God. It's God's Word.

I agree with Warren Wiersbe who said, "The way we treat the Bible shows others how much or how little we respect it. While I don't want to become a crank in this matter, I must confess I hate to see a Bible on the floor. When we are carrying a Bible and other books, the Bible should be on top. There is a difference between properly marking a Bible as we study and defacing it by careless marking. I have seen people put a cup of coffee on a Bible!"²

It's not just what the Bible alone *is* that we should consider, however.

B. Consider what the Bible alone does. Verse 16, "All Scripture is God-breathed *and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*"

Sanctification comes from the root meaning, "to set apart, to make holy." The Bible speaks of sanctification in three critical senses.

a. There is **past sanctification**--We have been sanctified if we are in Christ.³ All the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us by God. Once for all, past tense. That's positional sanctification, past sanctification.

b. There is **future sanctification**--We will be sanctified. We will not reach perfection in this life, but we will when we see Christ (1 John 3:2).

c. There is **present sanctification**--We are being sanctified. This is present, practical sanctification, and it's a lifelong process. We are being transformed into the image of Christ.⁴

Who is the agent of this transformation process? The Holy Spirit is (Gal 5:22). And what does the Holy Spirit use to accomplish this process? He uses the Scriptures. Jesus said in John 17:17, 19 "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

So God uses His Holy Word to sanctify us, to chisel away the flaws in our lives, and then transform us into the image and likeness of Christ.

Take a close look at verse 16 and consider what the Bible alone does. All Scriptures is "*useful for.*" The AV says, "profitable for." The Bible is not, contrary to popular opinion, a list of do's and don'ts. It's useful for something, four things involved in our sanctification.

-For teaching (AV 'doctrine')—it answers the question, what should I believe?

-For rebuking (AV, 'reproof')—it answers, what should I change?

-For correcting—it answer, how should I change?

-For training in righteousness (AV, 'instruction) —it answers, how should I live?

So the Bible is God's training manual for living to please God. Do you want to know how to live life the way God intended it to be lived? You'll find the blueprint in Scripture.

On August 20, 1997, in a Wednesday evening Bible study at this church, we asked one of our young college students to open the Scriptures (I wrote the date and the name in the margin of my Bible). So Chris Spradlin took us to this text and gave an

² Wiersbe, p. 252.

³ I Cor 1:2 "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (also I Pt 1:1-2; Jude 1)

⁴ I Thes 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord..." We have a responsibility in this process of sanctification. II Tim 2:21 "If a man purge himself...he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified..."

outline I've used ever since (I'm not sure where he got it). The Bible is useful for four things.

1. *It shows us what is right.*
2. *It shows us what is not right.*
3. *It shows us how to get right.*
4. *It shows us how to stay right.*

To put it plainly, if you want to experience a God-pleasing, growing in Christ life, you must *stay in the Book*. I mentioned earlier that a person can memorize fifty Bible verses and not be saved, but here's another reality. If a person isn't in the Book, and meditating on the Book, and applying the Book to daily life, that person will not grow up in Christ, even though they have the potential to do so as one who is in Christ.

We need to stay in the Book because of its role in salvation, first, then sanctification. There's one more reason.

III. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in service (17).

Please notice that salvation and sanctification are not ends, but a means to something. Look at the first two words of verse 17.

“So that.” Yes, stay in the Book because it makes you wise for salvation. And yes, stay in the Book because it's indispensable for the process of sanctification. But this all leads to something.

Service. We need to stay in the Book because of its role in service.

Verse 17 says, “So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

It boils down to this.

A. God intends for us to do good works. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”

You say, “I don't feel like God is using me.” Please know that if you've been born in to His family, you have good works He intends to accomplish through you, for His glory. That's true for everyone of His children.

He has given you His Spirit, and His power, and He's orchestrating situations in which to use you. He's given you a background, and aptitudes, and experiences, and purposes to put it all together in good works.

But if we are not in the Book, this potential is not reached. Paul makes this clear that...

B. God equips us for good works with the Bible. That's what the “so that” indicates. The Scriptures are useful *so that* the man of God can be equipped for every good work.

So God's Word is sufficient to take ordinary people like us, and refashion us to we can serve the Living God! Just think of that! We can serve God meaningfully and joyfully.

But if we neglect the Book, we won't be equipped for the opportunities.

We've gone back to the basics today. 2Timothy 3 makes two things perfectly clear for us. One, society will continue to deteriorate (1-13). Two, Scripture will always be dependable (14-17).

So that means two things. Stay in the battle. And stay in the Book.

Stay in the Book because of its vital role in salvation, and its vital role in sanctification, and its vital role in service.

Let this sink in. God uses His Word in these three ways.

One, to enable us to experience salvation.

1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptable, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Some have been coming to this church for months now, maybe longer. You've heard the Word. And God has been working in your heart. You need to be saved. The Scriptures have made you wise unto salvation. So repent and put your faith in Jesus Christ, and God will grant you salvation!

But there's more. God uses His Word...

Two, to enable us to experience sanctification.

God's plan for each Christian here is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you've been resisting that plan. You have pet sins you are hiding, wrong attitudes you are harboring. The Scriptures are tugging at your heart today. You can experience the freedom of God's forgiveness, if you will repent of the sin, and submit your life to the authority of His Word.

And then God uses His Word...

Three, to enable us to enjoy His service.

We don't have what it takes in ourselves to serve Him, but with His Word, we have all we need. But we must stay in the Book.

Take Inventory: What place does the Bible have in my life?

1. Get in it every day.

I want to come back to this next week, the Lord willing, and look at a text that helps us know what to do with the Bible, how to study it and take it in. But we must not complicate this. It boils down to a very basic decision. I'm going to get in the Book every day. I'm going to read it, and study it, and meditate on what I've learned, then pray in light of it, and then, by God's grace, believe it and do what it says.

2. Get under it every time the church gathers.

We are so blessed to be part of a church where the Book is opened at a variety of times and in a variety of places. We have Sunday School teachers who prepare weekly to teach our children the Scriptures, and adults too. And there are small group studies, and one on one Bible studies to help us deal with problems (that's what our biblical counseling ministry is all about). And of course, there is the Wednesday evening Bible study (currently we're looking at Jesus' miracles in Mark's gospel), and the Sunday evening Bible series (currently we're learning about how to do evangelism, and of course, the Sunday morning sermon.

It's all there for you, and those you love. But to benefit from you, you must determine, by God's grace, to get *under* the Book every time the church gathers.

I have never heard anyone say, at the end of their life, "I wish I had spent less time in my life studying God's Word." Never.

Get it in. Get under it. And then...

3. Give it to others the rest of your life. Forbid that we should hoard the good things we're enjoying. Let's share it with others. Let's invite them to open it with us. Teach them to love the Book, and most of all, to love the Giver of the Book.