

## **“Use it in Becoming a Man/Woman of God”**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“I am a Christian because God says so, and I did what he told me to do, and I stand on God’s Word, and if the Book goes down, I’ll go with it.” (Evangelist Billy Sunday)

“The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.” Martin Luther (1483-1546).

“God has descended to become an author, and yet people will not read his writings. There are very few that ever gave this Book of God, the grand charter of salvation, one fair reading through.” (George Whitefield, greatest evangelist in the New England colonies, 1714-1770).

“Were you to ask me to recommend the most valuable book in the world, I should fix on the Bible as the most instructive, both to the wise and ignorant. Were you to ask me for one affording the most rational and pleasing entertainment to the inquiring mind, I should repeat, it is the Bible; and most interesting history, I should still urge you to look into your Bible. I would make it, in short, the Alpha and Omega of knowledge. (Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation*).

“Isn’t LOVE THY NEIGHBOR in the global village so inconvenient? God writes us these lines...we have to sing them...take them to the top of the charts, but it’s not what the radio is playing, is it?” (Bono, to the Harvard undergraduate class of 2001).

“When I was young, I was sure of everything. In a few years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not so sure of most things as I was before. At present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to man.” (John Wesley, founder of Methodism, theologian, 1703-1791...in response to a critical letter about him published in the *London Magazine*)

“We have never truly breathed air nor seen light until we have breathed in the God-inspired Bible and see the world in the Bible’s light.” (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Russian author, 1821-1881)

“I have a point of view. You have a point of view. God has view” (Madeleine L’Engle, American author, 1918-2007).

D.L. Moody: “The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.”

In the recent weeks leading up to the beginning of this new year, I’ve been trying to track down the reasons for why the Bible became so important to me as a teenager.

Ethnically—from what I know—I come from Swedish and Norwegian stock. As young people, my grandparents migrated from Scandinavia to Racine, Wisconsin. Both physically and spiritually, I owe my life to them. Carl and Amelia met the Lord in Racine, met each other, married and raised family of 2 sons and 4 daughters. And as young Christians, they helped start church that was originally named The Gospel Tabernacle, then Calvary Memorial Church, growing and eventually relocating to a new campus on Washington Avenue.

Carl and Amelia’s 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter, Mary Ellen, married Donald Chamberlain Staff in August of 1952 and within a few years, they were chasing down 3 children: David, Donna, and Carl. I cannot remember NOT

going to church—twice on Sunday and several times a week. But I also remember how sinful I could think and act, remember willfully not believing...until one August night in 1963, hounded by the Holy Spirit, I knelt by the orange couch on the green rug and asked Jesus Christ to forgive me, and to be my Savior.

Two months later, my parents gave me what would become not only my best birthday present, but a treasure – a Scofield Reference Bible. In the front were these simple words: “Our prayer is that you will always love and study this Word all your life through.”

I’m not sure it happened right away, but there came a day when I opened up this Bible by myself, gave it a chance, and a lifetime of discovery began. Perhaps it was because I often saw my aging Grandpa Carl leaning over his bible and tears falling on the pages. Perhaps it was because I had Sunday School teachers – men of professional accomplishment in SE Wisconsin – who opened their Bibles with a bunch of squirrely boys, sharing the life of the pages.

All I know is that when I gave it a serious chance, this book came alive. The life and powerful words of Jesus came thundering out of the chapters of *John’s Gospel*. I bought different colored pens to underline what I heard the Spirit saying, things I didn’t want to forget, truths I wanted to shape what I believed and thought. Everywhere I turned, God spoke. I learned from *Proverbs* how powerful my tongue could be, from *Philippians* that I was invited to personally KNOW Christ in my life...in every way. The letter to the *Hebrews* insisted that God’s forgiveness of my sinfulness was COMPLETE in Christ. With the Christians in *Thessalonica*, I was to daily expect the Lord’s return, and not despair when any fellow Christian that I knew or loved suddenly, unexpectedly died. Christians, Scripture shouted at me, had a hope missing in those who refuse to believe.

What I discovered time and time and time again was that the Bible – the Word of God – was useful. That it had perspectives about living that I needed and promises from the Lord that could change my entire life. Proverbs 3:5-6 was golden – ***Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In ALL your ways acknowledge HIM, and He will make your path’s straight.*** Early on in my life with Jesus, I knew this was a book I could not do without.

The writer of Psalm 119<sup>i</sup> put His passion for the what God has written in the Bible like this:

Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes  
and I will keep it to the end.  
Give me understanding, that I may keep Your law  
and observe it with my whole heart.  
Lead me in the path of Your commandments,  
for I delight in it

Incline my heart to your testimonies  
and not to selfish gain.  
Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;  
and give me life in Your ways.  
Behold I long for Your precepts;  
in Your righteousness give me life!

So, here's the lead question for the next 10 weeks together: **Do you own a Bible? If so, why not use it?** The profound uses of Scripture in your life are limitless. Use the Bible for MORE than you ever imagined. I mean...why not make it just as useful and essential to the rest of the days that God gives you to live...as your smartphone, or your computer, your car keys...or anything else you find essential in your life.

In the time we have left this morning, let's get started. I believe that

**To use it as it was intended, we must  
begin by understanding WHAT the Bible is!**  
Let's answer 4 Key Questions

Question #1 **How did we get the Bible?**

(1) The BIBLE is "progressive written revelation from God"

Hebrews 1:1-2 (p.1001 ESV) Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (p.1018 ESV) Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The important words from these passages are (Hebrews 1) "by the prophets at different times and in different ways." The Bible was not all written at once or within one generation. It is a collection of revelation from God's Spirit through men/women over 1,500 years (from ca. 1450 BC through 95 AD.) And Peter (2 Peter 1) reminds us that the revelation of God's Spirit was not driven by human will nor sourced in human intelligence. This progressive revelation came century after century as "men were carried along by (God's) Holy Spirit. The Bible is progressively given, written revelation from God.

(2) God's written revelation involved "*recognition, collection, transmission* by generations [ who were] guided in faith."

Before Jesus the Christ was born, there were 39 prophetic writings, or books, which Old Testament Israel recognized as Scripture. We call that collection of 39 books THE OLD TESTAMENT. After Jesus Christ was born, the Spirit of God provided an additional 27 books, which the church has called THE NEW TESTAMENT. Guided by faith to recognize what the Holy Spirit revealed, 66 total books have been recognized and collected into a volume we call THE BIBLE.

Question #2 **What's in the Bible?**

The answer to that question is that the BIBLE is “a very interesting **library**” ...in fact that is what the word BIBLE means, “a collection of books, or a library.”

The Ames Public Library is a great asset in our community.

- Each year the library gets over 300,000 visits
- Its resources are annually lent out well over a million times
- 561 volunteers devote over 12,000 hours per year to serve others
- There are at least 225,000 books (or related resources) in this library organized by groupings and shelved in all kinds of places



It's a wonderful place, and some of you work there and serve there, and it's a blessing.

The BIBLE, too, is a public library. And like a library, its books are not all the same. On the OLD TESTAMENT shelves of the Library, there are LAW books (5 of them); there are HISTORY books (at least 12), and within those books there are all kinds of biographies—all non-fiction!) There are 5 books of beautiful POETRY, and there are 17 books written by the Jewish prophets. On the NEW TESTAMENT shelves, there are 4 biographies (Gospels) of Jesus Christ. An EARLY CHURCH HISTORY book, at least 21 books which are APOSTOLIC LETTERS of instruction to new churches and to new Christians. And there is ONE AMAZING book of PROPHECY – the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

I say all that for this reason – just like you'd never wander into a library and just start reading any book on any shelf (especially if you're unfamiliar with how the library is organized), so it can be just as confusing to just start reading in any place in the Bible. It is better to understand the KIND of books available, and read the ones most helpful to your particular need. Here's...

Question #3 **What's the point of the Bible?**

There is a unity to all of the 66 books in God's revealed library. There is a central point, and all of the books contribute to the story of

The point of the Bible is **God's PLAN**  
**which is accomplished**  
**by God's PERSON** (or Messiah)

What's God's plan? Here is what the books of God's library present:

**THE ONLY TRUE GOD**  
**who CREATED all things, and**  
**who PERMITTED freely chosen rebellion,**  
**is RECLAIMING through Christ His Rule**

## and REDEEMING through Christ believing men/women

The Bible reveals that God has not given up on His rebellious creation. His plan is reclaiming and redeeming. His Person – the One who will accomplish God’s plan – is Jesus Christ.

[We will come back to this in the weeks to come] Finally...

### Question #4 Why has God given Jesus’ disciples (Christians) the Bible?

There are VARIOUS answers to this. For example, the OLD TESTAMENT books in the Bible’s library prove that Jesus IS God’s Messiah, born in keeping with over 300 promises and prophecies about God’s unique MESSIAH. Another reason is that the NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS provide clear direction to Jesus’ disciples for how to get the Gospel about Jesus out effectively to people in every culture and in every place. **God has many reasons** for giving us the Bible – including to explain His plan for History...and that He is going to WIN through Christ.

But, there is an important PERSONAL answer to this question. Please find/read with me 2 Timothy 3:10-17 (p.996 ESV) – a letter from the Holy Spirit through Paul to his spiritual son Timothy – a letter in the library that gives us the PERSONAL REASON why God gave us the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy 3:10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom<sup>[a]</sup> you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man/woman of God may be **complete, equipped for every good work.**

## CONCLUSION

Your heavenly Father wants His library in your hands...but not just in your hands. In your heart. He wants it imbedded in your thinking, and in your emotions, and in your choosing. He places it in your life along with the teaching presence of the Holy Spirit to make you a COMPLETE person, thoroughly outfitted from the inside out for EVERY good work. He calls on you to USE it to release in your life what you may have thought never possible.

When asked, *WHO SHOULD READ THE BIBLE*, some wise person put it like this

- The YOUNG – to learn how to live
- The OLD – to know how to die
- The IGNORANT – for wisdom
- The LEARNED – for humility
- The RICH – for compassion
- The POOR – for comfort
- The DREAMER – for true hope
- The PRACTICAL – for counsel
- The WEAK – for strength
- The STRONG – for direction
- The HAUGHTY – for warning
- The HUMBLE – for exaltation
- The TROUBLED – for peace
- The WEARY – for rest
- The SINNER – for forgiveness and salvation
- The DOUBTING – for assurance
- ALL CHRISTIANS – for completeness in Christ

### Three steps to take

#1 If you don't have a BIBLE – get a good one (some are available today)

#2 Take your Bible and do the CONNECT GROUP STUDY for this week (on-line). If you follow the study, and read the passages, and answer the questions...I am very confident you will hear the Spirit of God in your ear, and in your heart.

#3 Come to church during this series – let's learn together to use the Bible well.

Copyright 2018 © David A. Staff  
All Rights reserved

---

<sup>ii</sup> Psalm 119:33-37, 40 (ESV)