

Today is Bible Sunday when we especially think about the importance of Scripture in our lives and the ways it helps us. Today access to the Bible is only a click away on a smart phone and most of our homes have several copies of the Bible in printed form and in multiple translations. In the western world we have easy-to-read, easy-to-access versions of the Bible at our fingertips. But because it is so easily available, is it possible that we undervalue it?

Perhaps Timothy was in danger of taking the Bible for granted. Since his childhood, Scripture had always been part of his life. Paul reminds Timothy of his rich and privileged heritage, because he wants to leave a legacy in the life of Timothy and the life of the church that will carry on into the future. Paul spells out to Timothy that the sacred writings faithfully passed on to him by his mother and grandmother were vital to his faith.

Those of us who are parents or grandparents need to hear the challenge here – just like Timothy’s mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois, we have a part to play in helping our children or grandchildren to know and love Jesus through the scriptures. In fact we all have a responsibility to help those we love to hear and be inspired by the Word of God. We need to excite and inspire people to hear or read the scriptures so that their minds and hearts might be opened to the beauty and wonder of the gospel. Paul in Romans 10 verse 17 makes it very clear: ‘So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.’

Scripture brings us intimacy with God. Knowing that all Scripture is God breathed means we should cherish it, value it, hunger for it, devour it. Loving God is the first and greatest commandment and Scripture is an irreplaceable part of loving God, because the more we know God, the more we will love him. Without regularly listening to God through his word, we will not grow in our love and intimacy with him. God has breathed his spirit of love into the words that have been faithfully preserved, translated and printed for us. Scripture is God’s message of love to us that we might know him intensely and intimately.

Scripture is God’s means of our development and growth as Christians. If we are honest, many of us struggle to see the usefulness of much of scripture. Although Paul tells us that ‘All Scripture is useful’, we get by perfectly well without really utilising the story of Esther, the Old Testament food laws or the book of Jude for our spiritual development. But I want to encourage us that the God who collected, superintended and breathed his Spirit into scripture understands us better than we know ourselves, loves us enough that Jesus would die for us and so when he tells us that ‘All Scripture is breathed out by

God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness', he can be trusted.

Scripture equips us for every good deed. Paul wants us to know that scripture is not just useful for our coming to faith, or even just for our growing in faith – he also sees scripture as essential equipment when it comes to serving God in the world. God expects us to do good, and Christians are supposed to make a positive impact in our world demonstrating the mercy, grace and compassion of God to those in need. We will be empowered and equipped to do this through the God-breathed scriptures. Reading the Bible should inspire us to serve God more wholeheartedly but it should also equip us to serve with wisdom and humility. The more you serve in the world, the more you realise the wisdom of scripture. The more you read scripture the more you are motivated to serve in the world. It is a virtuous circle.

Scripture keeps us on God's path. Paul is spending so much energy commending the importance of scripture to Timothy because he realises that a time is coming when it will be very difficult for the church to stay faithful to God's path. He predicts a time when instead of seeking the truth, Christians will let their own desires be the filter for what they hear, distracted by false teaching. Paul imagines a time 'when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths'.

It is easy to understand why it may be tempting to evaluate teaching based on whether we like the way it sounds, or whether it meets our expectations, entertains us or exonerates us. In our media-saturated society we are exposed to so many messages, marketing interventions and the bombardment of how so many people want us to think about life through the continual broadcasting of social media. Yet in the fog of information overload we experience on a daily basis, scripture functions like the lines on a motorway, it keeps us on the path of following God.

What are the ways that we can weave the reading and meditation of scripture into our daily routine so that we are constantly able to check our life direction is staying faithful to God and not being diverted off course by the information overload we live in? In Jesus' name. Amen.