Plug Into The Word — Delivery Transcript

2 Timothy 3:14–17; Matthew 4:2–4 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 10, 2021 · *Off The Grid*

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All right, well if you have your Bible you can open them up to 2 Timothy chapter 3 and put your thumb in there and then Matthew chapter 4 will be our secondary text. Today we're kicking off an important season in the life of our church. In that, we're starting a spiritual growth campaign that's by the name of, as you can see on the wall here, Off the Grid. Now we're not preppers, we're not getting off of electricity and all that stuff So when we say off the grid, we don't mean off the grid in that sense, but we mean it in two ways.

Number one, unplugging from the noise and the distractions in our life that often have a way of pulling us away from intimacy and time spent with the Lord Jesus Christ on a daily basis. So that's the first tier, unplugging from the noise, and then the second tier is plugging into the word. And by that I mean the Scriptures, the Holy Bible, 66 books of the Bible that maybe you hopefully own a copy of. If not, there's access to it online and all those sorts of things. We've been as a church going through the book of Revelation and we took a break so that we could examine those two pillars.

Last week we looked at what it looks like to pull the plug, to unplug from the noise that is different for each of us. Every person kind of has different distractions in their life, but it seems like today, because the public square has become social media that the vast majority are on those kinds of platforms and that those platforms have not been the best for us in terms of our mental health, social health, and certainly our spiritual health. And so the challenge was to unplug from that social media and we looked at a passage of Scripture about a lady who was not on social media necessarily because back in the first century they

did not have that, but she was worried and upset about many things and had been distracted by those things that were worrying her and upsetting her.

And because of those distractions, it pulled her away from the most important thing in that moment in her life. And that of course was intimacy and time with the Lord Jesus. If you are not familiar with it, it's the story of Mary and Martha and Jesus in Luke chapter 10. Mary, the younger sister, is at the feet of Jesus as we just sang about in the song we just sang. Whereas Martha was busy, busy, busy doing things for Jesus and Jesus essentially says to Martha, who was upset and telling Jesus, Tell my sister to get in here and help me, he essentially rebukes her and says, no, Mary has figured something out that you actually need to learn from her.

And that is, unplug from these distractions. These distractions, even though they're good things, they're ministry, they're trying to further something important and good in your life as it relates to serving me. But doing things for me is less important in my kingdom than being with me. And doing things for me, if it's not coming from a place of being with me, if there's no intimacy and communion, then you're just spinning your wheels and wasting your time and ultimately doing more damage than you are good. And it's a powerful story. Every time I study that story it exposes things in my heart that are probably hindering rather than helping my walk with the Lord and I hope the Lord ministered to you in a similar way.

And so having looked at what it looks like to unplug from the noise and for you maybe it's not social media— I'm challenging the whole church to do that— for you, maybe it's something else. But today we're looking at the second pillar, and that is plugging into the Word. And Americans, by and large, revere the Bible. We're not a Christian nation in the sense that a nation can be Christian, but we were founded on Judeo-Christian principles and as a result of Christianity's influence on the founding fathers and the you know the kind of the first or second generation building the nation in which we live, you see still lingering a general respect by many in our culture towards the Bible, a base-level reverence.

Now that's quickly eroding and in certain places in America it's not present at all. Some of the bigger metropolitan areas. And I'm sure even in Abilene, Texas, the middle of the Bible Belt, one of these days we won't have general reverence for the Bible here either. But even though there's a general reverence for the Bible in our culture, there is a growing number of people who never actually read the Bible. So there's some respect. They would say, I like it. I believe that it's important that we should know about it, but nobody actually reads it.

There was a study done by Gallup in 2016 that looked at some of the numbers on this issue and it's really fascinating some of the things that they discovered in that Gallup survey. They said that fewer than half of all adults can name the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. That many cannot identify more than two of the three disciples— or two or three

disciples. There's actually twelve. I do know that much. Many cannot identify more than two or three disciples. Sixty percent of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments.

In fact, I bet if I was to do a pop quiz right now and ask you to come up here and recite all Ten Commandments, many of you would be squirming in your seats because maybe you don't quite have them on the tip of your tongue. You don't know what all ten are. So only five out of ten on the Ten Commandments. Twelve percent of Americans think Joan of Arc is Noah's wife, which I thought was hilarious. Joan of Arc is not Noah's wife, for those of you who are wondering.

Fifty percent of high schoolers thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife, so that's a pretty powerful indictment on our young people. According to eighty-two percent of Americans, the phrase God helps those who help themselves is actually in the Bible, which of course it is not in the Bible. God does not help those who help themselves. That's the antithesis of the gospel. And so how could that be in the Bible? God helps those who are humble and poor in spirit and recognize they cannot help themselves. But even so eighty-two percent assume that it is in the Bible.

That's of course all Americans. They did that same question on born-again Christians. Born-agains are, you might think of them as, the super-serious Christians, the Christians who believe they need to be saved by grace, that they cannot save themselves, not just a cultural religion, but of an evangelical faith. But even then they only did one percent better on that question of does the Bible actually say God helps those who help themselves? And then here's one of my favorites. A considerable number of respondents said that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham, which of course it was not preached by Billy Graham.

Now it's one thing for secular Americans who, you know, they're not Christians, they don't profess to follow Jesus. They don't necessarily have any commitments to belief in a Bible that is true and inspired and reveals the God of the universe. So you can almost let them off the hook. But what about people who do believe in God? People who do believe that Jesus is the Messiah, he's the Christ, that he is the way of salvation. What excuse do we have for not knowing our Bibles? And how would you answer some of those questions?

And if the questions were just a little bit more difficult, how would you fare? How well do you know the Scriptures? How often do you read the Scriptures? Do you have a professed love for the Bible, a professed general respect for the Bible? Probably all of us would say yes, but do you actually read it? I wonder how many of us would say, no, not on a regular basis. The same thing's happening in pulpits across America. There are churches where the Bible is kind of taking a second seat to human creativity and ingenuity.

You have fancy-schmancy sermon series like how to have a flatter stomach in three easy steps or how to have better relationships. And I'm all for flatter stomachs and better relationships, but those things are not actually what a church ought to be built on. A church should not be built out of that kind of gimmicky type of things. The church is built on the Scriptures. The Scriptures are given to us by God. And so may it not be said of us as people at Broadview Baptist Church. May it never be said of our church that we do not just have a reverence for the Bible, but that we actually also read it.

And so what I want to try to do today, if you don't read the Bible right now on a daily basis, is that you leave this place with compelling reasons for why you should and will read the Bible on a regular basis and that you will, if you're not having a daily time with the Lord, that you will commit to a six-week challenge of reading the Bible every single day for six weeks. And so the passages we're going to read are Matthew chapter 4 and 2 Timothy chapter 3. There are actually passages in the Bible that talk about the Bible.

My central thesis is that the Bible is the Word of God. When we say the Bible is the Word of God, all I mean by that is that when the Bible speaks, God speaks. It's not just a generally interesting book. It's not just a book like any other books; there's something special about the Bible. That God has inspired it in a way that he did not inspire other things, that he has chosen to use it in a way that he does not use other books. That it is the word of God.

It is a compilation of 66 books written by 40 different authors across three different continents over 1600 years. But it tells one singular story, and it's a glorious, amazing story of redemption. It's kind of like— I've heard the illustration used of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Anybody ever get into the Avengers movies? Anybody out there Marvel fans? A couple of you. Some of you, you know, you're DC all the way only, and that's fine. I like DC too. But Marvel Cinematic Universe, those twenty-one— was it twenty-one or twenty-two movies in the cinematic universe before they finally ended it with Endgame?

It was an amazing feat of creativity and cinematic power. But you know how those individual movies they had their individual plot lines, their individual characters, their individual worlds. But there was a thread that was kind of pulling them all together, the Infinity Stones and the big bad Thanos and the ultimate triumph over evil. Well, just like you had twenty different movies with one basic theme, a similar kind of dynamic is true in the Scriptures. You've got 66 different books written by different authors, different plot lines, different characters, but they're all communicating one basic singular story and it is a story of redemption.

It's a story about God and it's a story about his good news or his gospel to save and reconcile the world. The basic message of the gospel or the basic message of the Bible is that there is a God who created everything good that he created us, but that we with our freedom chose to rebel against God, that brought sin into the world, that sin made a mess out of the world,

and so God in his great love for us sent a Redeemer or a Messiah to come and fix the mess, reconcile us back to God, and that Messiah is Jesus.

He is the Christ. He is God's Son. He has reconciled us back to God through his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. And then one day he will come and finish the job of reconciling the whole creation back to its Creator, bringing heaven to earth. That's the message of the gospel. That's the message of the Bible. It's not a book about me and you. Sometimes we kind of think about the Bible as a self-help book, a kind of inspiring therapeutic encyclopedia. Well if I have anxiety X, Y, or Z, I'll do a little Google search, Bible verses on anxiety, and it pops up all these Bible verses on anxiety and I read them and I get a little bit of therapeutic help out of it.

And it makes me feel better about my life. Or I have this big decision I've got to make. And I need wisdom for this decision that I'm about to make. And so I type in my question, what would Jesus do about X, Y, or Z, and then a couple of proverbs pop up on your screen, and so you read those proverbs and you get a little bit of wisdom. But that's not really what the Bible is about. I'm not saying you shouldn't do those things. Read the promises of God, but that's not the main point of the Bible.

The main point of the Bible was to reveal to us who God is, what he's like, who we are and what we're like, the enmity between God and man, the separation that needed to be reconciled. And the avenue that God has chosen to bring about that reconciliation. It's not about us, it's about God, and it's about his gospel. So with that in view, let's look at Matthew chapter 4. There's an interesting phrase that Jesus makes when he's in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. He makes a statement about the Bible that I think is informative for us in the way that we think about reading the Scripture.

Sometimes it's easy to think about reading the Bible as like it's a spiritual chore, or it's something you got to do so that God won't be mad at you, or it's something you got to do to be a normal Christian and you don't want to be out of sorts or out of place with the other Christians in the world. I want to try to give you Jesus' attitude about the Bible because he did not see the Bible through that lens or in that way. So Matthew chapter 4, starting in verses 2 and 3.

Jesus has been led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted. He has been fasting for 40 days and 40 nights. It says in verse 2, after he had fasted for 40 days and forty nights, that he was hungry. I think of that as the understatement of the century. Fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. I'd be hangry, if you know what I'm saying, hungry, angry, all that. He, of course, being in his hungry state, he's prone to temptation, and so the tempter, the devil, comes up to Jesus approached him and said, if you are the Son of God, then tell these stones to become bread.

In other words, if you are who you say you are, satisfy this physical hunger that you have in your life. Just turn these stones into bread. And Jesus' response is a quotation from Deuteronomy chapter 8, an Old Testament passage, about the Word of God. And he says to Satan, Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. In Deuteronomy the Lord is reminding Israel during their forty-year wilderness wanderings that they needed to trust him more than they trusted physical gold and material possessions and the things of this world.

They had, of course, done some major idolatry when Moses was up getting the Ten Commandments. He comes down, they're worshiping the golden calf and all that. So God punishes them. He sends them into the wilderness[1] and they starve. They don't have any food. You know, many of them died. And Deuteronomy chapter 8 basically says the Lord did this on purpose, and he did this to make a powerful point. And the point is that you do not live on bread alone, you shouldn't be relying on this world and the things of this world to meet that longing in your life, but you should instead lean and feast and have your longings satisfied by the word of God.

Look at Deuteronomy chapter 8 or it'll be up on the screen if you just want to put a little thing in your notes. Man was not made for bread. We were made for God. And here's what Deuteronomy says. He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat, which you and your ancestors had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. And so this is Jesus in his weakened moment, in his tempted state, to want to probably satisfy his physical appetites, but he's essentially saying to the tempter, I have more sustenance in God than I have in bread.

I have more of an appetite for God than I have an appetite for bread because at the end of the day these longings in my heart, these longings in my stomach were made to drive me to an even deeper longing, and that is for God Himself. And so I'm not going to cave in to this pressure and feast on this bread because I'm doing this fast to ultimately feast on the Lord. And I'd rather have God and satisfy my appetites in him than in anything that this world has to offer me.

And it's a powerful reminder for us that we don't read the Bible just because it's a chore or because we want to fit in the Christian crowd or even because we just want to know academic knowledge. We read the Scriptures because the Scriptures are the vehicle in which we feast on God himself, that we come to know who he is, what he's like, and have our longings satisfied in him. Because in every human longing, every single one, not just the physical longings for thirst and for bread or for ice cream or Dr.

Pepper, depending on your personality, those things are ultimately at root a craving for God Himself. Yes, we're created mortal, we're created with hunger and thirst to remind us of our

dependency and our need, but God did that intentionally, he did it strategically so that we might discover that we can't depend on ourselves, we can't depend on this world or the things of this world. We can ultimately only depend on the Lord and His Word. And so man doesn't live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

That's Jesus' worldview for how to think about the Scriptures. That's the way I want to challenge you to think about the Scriptures. It's not just something I do because I have to or even because I want to, it's something I do because I need to. It is how I satisfy the deepest longings of my heart, because in the word I feast on the Lord. So with that in mind, let's go to 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 3. It's a book that Paul wrote to Timothy. Paul was an old man at this point.

He's actually about to die. Timothy was one of his proteges, a disciple that he had been pouring into. Timothy at this point is a pastor of a pretty large church in Ephesus. He's a young pastor, so Paul's writing to Timothy to tell him what to do and how to do it. It's basically spiritual coaching. And the book of 2 Timothy has some amazing things to say about the local church and about discipleship and about how to apply the truth of the gospel to your life individually in your home and in the church.

And when we get to 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul has just warned Timothy about the growing secularization of his culture. That as we get closer and closer to the end, there are going to be people who live godless lives, who attract for themselves teachers who are going to justify their godless lifestyles and it's not going to get better, it's probably only going to get worse. And then he encourages Timothy to hold fast to the Scriptures, to keep continuing in the word because if you make the word supreme in your life and in your heart then you will endure, you will make it through, you will become who God intended you to be.

So in verse 14, 2 Timothy chapter 3, he says, as for you, Timothy, I want you to continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, talking about his mother and his grandmother, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures. Now look at this. You've known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. You might circle that phrase. It gives you wisdom for salvation. And then he makes this very poetic statement about Scripture.

In verse 16, he says, all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. So I love that passage of Scripture because it's a scripture about the Scriptures. It's God's word telling us how we ought to think about God's word. And it is a powerful reminder of why the Scriptures ought to be supreme in your life, in our church, and in your home. The Scripture must be supreme because in feasting on the word our souls become satisfied in God.

Just like Jesus said earlier, man does not live on bread alone. He lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And so as Jesus said to his disciples, Paul is saying to Timothy, make the word supreme in your life, make the word supreme in your home, because in it you're going to feast on God. You're going to become who God has intended you to be. Why is the Scripture supreme? Why should we make it a priority in our life? According to Paul and according to Scripture, it's because the Scriptures are uniquely inspired by God.

I don't mean inspiring, like a compelling piece of artwork or an amazing piece of music that you listen to that's pleasing to the ears. We've all seen things that are inspiring to us, that make us feel warm and fuzzy inside, that maybe call us to something higher. That's not what the Scripture is saying about the Scripture. The Scripture's not saying that God's word is inspiring. It's a little Greek, it's actually not a little Greek word. It's a big Greek word. I'm trying to think how to pronounce it. Theopneustos or something like that.

But it literally means God breathed, that God breathed into the Scriptures. And that's kind of a weird thing to think about because what does God look like? And does he have a mouth? And how does he breathe? So don't do that. I don't think that's the purpose of the word. He's basically saying when the Scripture speaks, God speaks. They are breathed out by God; God chose to inspire the words of Scripture in a way that he did not inspire anything else in this world. Just like in Genesis, you remember in Genesis that God made man in his own image.

And he made woman out of man, and you had this pinnacle of creation. But it wasn't until God breathed the breath of God into them that they became a living creature. And so God did something special and unique when he breathed into Adam there in the garden and made him something that the rest of the creation was not. The rest of the creation is not created in the image of God. The rest of the creation does not reflect God the way other things in the creation do. Sure, they declare the glory of God.

They do all that, but they are not uniquely created in God's image like mankind is. Well, in a similar dynamic, that's true of the Scripture. The Scripture is uniquely inspired by God in ways that other books, other words are not. They are God-breathed. There's a theological term for this. It's called verbal plenary inspiration. And I think it's an important way to think about this issue. It's verbal in that it's not just concepts. There's a movement in Christianity, you might think of it as progressive Christianity, that says, well, yes, the Scriptures are inspired, but the concepts are inspired.

The concepts of being loving and being compassionate and kind and all that stuff. That's the inspired part. But in terms of the actual words themselves, the grammatical historical context, these seeming contradictions and this backwards thinking that is culturally insensitive and homophobic or whatever the case may be. That part's not inspired, that part's not from God. It's just the concepts themselves. But that's not the way the Scripture talks about the inspiration of Scripture. It's not just the concepts. It's the words that when

the Bible speaks, God is actually speaking. And so it's verbal and it's plenary, which means not just the words you like, not just the books you like, not just the New Testament, not just the red letters, but that all of the Scripture is inspired by God.

Every jot and tittle. Jesus said, not every jot and tittle— no, not a jot, not a tittle will pass away from the law before it is fulfilled, before he does what he's going to do. And in a similar way, every sentence, every comma, every period— of course they didn't have commas and periods in the original manuscripts, but you get my drift. Every single thing in the Scripture is inspired by God. The syntax, down to the placement of the words, all of it is intentional by God, by design, to communicate what he wants to communicate to us.

Now in this particular verse, I think he's only talking about the Old Testament because Timothy's Scriptures would have been Old Testament Scriptures, because the New Testament Scriptures were in the process of being written. You notice he says the Scriptures you've been acquainted with from childhood, from infancy. But even though this particular passage is only referencing the Old Testament, I think the truth of this passage applies to both Old and New Testaments. And I don't have time to get into all the reasons for that, but essentially you have evidences in the New Testament wherein Peter, a disciple of Jesus, equates Paul's letters with Scriptures.

He says that there's some yahoos out there, some fools out there who are twisting Paul's letters as they do the other Scriptures. So they thought of Paul's letters as Scripture. They thought of the Gospels as Scripture because there's quotations of the Gospels in, like, 1 Timothy:[2] A workman is worthy of his hire. Do not muzzle an ox while he's treading the grain. A workman is worthy of his hire. That is a quotation from Jesus in the Gospels. There's no quotation like that in the Old Testament. So in the New Testament mind and the original audience of the New Testament Scriptures, they thought of the New Testament as just as inspired and authoritative as the Old Testament, so it doesn't just apply to the Old, it applies to the new.

So why should we make it supreme in our life? Because it is uniquely inspired by God in ways that other things are not. The Spirit of God, if you're taking notes, inspired the Word of God so that we might become the people of God we were originally designed to be. Now what I want to do to close is to show you some reasons why you should make the Word of God supreme. It is inspired. That's the overarching umbrella. But because it's inspired, God uses the Scripture to help us start the Christian life, to stay in the Christian life, and to finish the Christian life.

I think in this passage, Paul's actually showing us every season of the life of a Christian and why the Scripture ought to be supreme no matter where you find yourself at that point in the journey. Some of you are maybe not Christians, and the Scripture is relevant for you because the Word of God helps you get started in the Christian life. Some of you have been Christians

for a couple of years, or a couple of decades even, and you need to know the Scripture is how God keeps you in the game.

It's how he keeps you from shipwrecking in your faith. It's how he matures you and makes you who you're meant to be. And then some of you are old. And you're getting closer to the finish line and maybe you feel like I don't need to read the Bible. I've read the Bible a hundred different times or ten or three different times. And I know what it says, and so I'm just going to kind of coast and do my own thing. But that's not true because the Bible helps you finish the Christian life.

It gets you started, keeps you in the game, and helps you finish. So I want to show you this in the text. The first thing is it helps you get started in the Christian life. And this goes back to what Paul said to Timothy, that you continue in what you've learned. Having learned it from your mom and your grandma, how you have been acquainted with the Holy Scriptures since infancy, or from childbirth. And then he makes this statement, they are able to make you wise for salvation. They are able to give you wisdom for salvation.

And so the Scripture gets us started in the Christian life because the Scripture shows us how to be saved. If you want to be real provocative, you could say we are saved by Scripture. But that's not super theologically accurate because the Scripture itself does not save you. It's God who saves you. We're saved by grace through faith, not of works, so that nobody could boast. But God saves you through the revelation that's in the Scripture. Paul says in Romans 10:17 that faith comes by what? It comes by hearing. But hearing comes by what?

Do we have that up there? Romans 10:17? Hearing comes by the message of Christ. In other words, hearing comes because of the word. Because you have the Scriptures, you're able to hear the message, and because you're able to hear the message, you can exercise faith, and it's through that faith that God saves you. You're saved by grace. But the vehicle for that grace to become active in your life, to save you from your sin, that happens by faith. But you can't put faith in something that you do not hear, and you cannot hear something that doesn't have words.

And so the Bible really does save us. Now that doesn't mean you should worship the Bible or that the Bible is greater than Jesus or anything like that. I had a professor who said you should never think about the written word without the living word. The living word and the written word always go together; you cannot separate the two. We cannot know Jesus who is the living word without the written word of the Scripture. And we should never think of the Scripture, the written word, without attaching that to the living word, which is Jesus Christ.

And so the word gets us started. This should have dramatic implications on the way you think about raising your children. And the way I think about raising my children. It is super common in my generation especially for us to get super obsessed with what extracurricular

activities your kids are involved in. Right? Make them a great baseball player, a great football player, a great, you know, do parkour. And we want to get them active and want them to be well-rounded, good citizens of society. I don't want my child to be some kind of, you know, weirdo who hides in the corner every time he's out in public and I get all that.

I understand why extracurricular activities are good and wonderful. But woe to you, woe to me, if your child becomes an amazing football player or an amazing parkour person, but he has no idea what the Scriptures say. He has no way of wielding the word of God. He has no understanding of what God has revealed in the Scripture. Because at the end of the day, becoming an amazing— there's a 1% chance your child becomes an NFL football star. Maybe he plays for the Aggies and has a really important win like last night, but that's a super small chance.

There's a hundred percent chance one day he's going to stand before God in judgment and give an account. And how will he know how to be reconciled to God? How will she know how to be reconciled to God if she's not familiar with that message in the Scripture? The Scripture is what tells us how to be saved. It gives us the good news of the gospel. And so careful, careful. However much you expose your kids to outside of your normal course of doing things, expose them to all that you're going to expose them to, but don't not expose them to the word of God.

Don't not bring them to church. Don't not get them involved in extracurricular activities that are going to promote this word in their life because they need this word more than they need anything else. It gets us started, it keeps us going. It keeps us going. Paul says in verse 16, all Scripture is inspired by God, and it is profitable. Profitable for four things: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. I want you to think of those four things as like spiritual coaching. Think of the Scripture as a spiritual coach. When he says it's useful for teaching, that's the content.

That's the what's what. Let's think, if you were a weightlifter and you were going to learn how to lift weights before you throw a bunch of weights on the bench press, you want your trainer to tell you what is the proper form for a bench press. Otherwise, you're going to do damage to your back and do damage to your body. So we have to have teaching because it tells us what's what. This is a reminder, by the way, that from a Christian perspective, truth is objective. It's not subjective. It's not some ever-changing subjective internal reality that we can make whatever we want it to be.

But rather truth is an objective, external, God-made reality that is true whether we like it or not. So there's no such thing as my truth and your truth. And their truth. There's the truth, right? There's the truth, and you can have an opinion about it, and you can like it or not like it, but it's the truth, and it's true whether you like it or not. As one person says, the facts don't care about your feelings. Certainly you have feelings about the facts and you feel things

about the facts, but at the end of the day truth is objective and we've got to know what's what if we're going to progress in the Christian life.

But the second, third, and fourth things are where the coaching really plays out. You've got to know what's what, but the Scriptures are not just instructive. You think of Scripture as teaching you what's what, but it's not just that. It's a living, breathing, active word. And so when you engage God in the Scriptures, one of the things that the Spirit of God does is it rebukes you. Think of it as pulling you back, correcting your behavior. It says, no, don't do it that way. No, that's going to make a mess.

No, that's going to bring about misery in your life. So it rebukes you, but it doesn't just get on to you, shame you, make you feel guilty. The Scriptures also correct you, which means, no, don't do this, but do this. Don't go that way, go this way. It's not just getting on to you, it's helping you out. That's what any good coach will do. It doesn't just tell you what's what. It says, in the application of living your daily life, as you take what's what and you try to put it into practice, you're going to make mistakes, and when you do, I'm going to pull you back from that and I'm going to set you up on something better.

No, that form's all wrong. Do it this way. The third thing is this word, training in righteousness. So think of rebuking as pulling you back, think of correcting as pushing you forward, and then think of training as making you stronger. I'll stick with the weight room analogy, but when you're lifting weights, you're doing squats or bench press, if you're not a leg day guy. When you do those lifts, it tears the muscles in your body. You go, I know, that's why I don't work out. But it tears your muscles, it rips them to shreds.

It's incredibly painful, which is why after your workout, you're incredibly sore because your muscles are torn to shreds. But it's a good thing, because as the muscles heal and put themselves back together, guess what happens? They get stronger, they get tougher, greater endurance. Well, that's why you train. You train to tear your body apart so that it builds itself back together and makes it stronger. Well, that's not just true physically. That's true spiritually. When you are living the Christian life and you're engaging God in the Scripture—I don't know about you, but there's times where you'll read a passage of Scripture, the Spirit of God will tell you exactly what you need to do with what you just read.

And you think to yourself, well, if I do that, that's going to create pain in my life. If I forgive them, if I have that conversation, if I don't continue in this way, it's going to bring about pain and suffering into my life. And it is essentially the Spirit of God saying, as your spiritual coach, I know, do it anyway. It's good for you. It's going to hurt, it's going to tear you down, it's going to rip things apart, but I'm going to use it to build you back stronger. And I'm going to give you more endurance, I'm going to make you a bigger, better person, I'm going to make you who God intended you to be.

You're going to be equipped and perfect for every good work. Does this make sense? So it's not that with Scripture, you don't just read the Scripture to learn academically. It's a living and breathing word. It's sharper than any double-edged sword, Hebrews says. So it cuts between bone and marrow. It exposes your sin, it exposes your hidden motives, it tears you down, makes you feel guilty. It rebukes you, but it doesn't leave you there. It builds you up. It builds you up. It sets you on a right course. And then it does that over and over and over and over again until you get torn down, you come back together, you get stronger.

You get torn down, you come back together, you get stronger. I had a mentor who said good preaching afflicts the comfortable and comforts the afflicted. Amen. That's the Scripture, because good preaching is just taking what the Scripture says and making it understandable. So my job is to afflict the comfortable, comfort the afflicted, because the Scripture wants to rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness so that you become who God made you to be. It gets you started, it keeps you in the game, and then finally it helps you finish. And that's that last phrase, verse 17, that every person will become equipped or complete.

It's the Greek word artios.[3] It means to be perfect or to have arrived where you need to be. You're equipped for every good work, so you have all the things you need to do what you've been called to do. So if you're taking notes, I just say that the word of God helps you finish the Christian life by promoting faithfulness to the very end. Faithfulness to the very end. Paul tells Timothy, continue in what you've learned, because they're able to make you wise through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul actually closes this letter in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 7.

He says, I have fought the good fight of faith, I have kept the faith— or, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. And so scripture gets you across the finish line. It maintains and promotes faithfulness till the very end. And so you never outgrow your need for the Scripture. You never get too old for the Scripture. I don't care how many times you've read it through, it's a living, breathing word. It is always relevant. It never gets irrelevant. And so read the Scripture.

Read the Scripture. If you do not read the Scripture, you've got to read the Scripture. I think every single one of us would say, I love God. I want to love God. I love Jesus. But the heart cannot love what the mind does not know. And if you do not know who God is, if you do not know what Christ is like or who he's like, how can you love him? How can you do what you profess you want to do if you're not growing in knowledge by engaging God in the Scripture?

Now I know some of you don't love to read, and I'm not saying you got to read an hour a day, every day. You can listen to it. There are songs that are set to Scriptures, you can have it read to you. You can listen to sermons. There's different ways of getting the truth of the Scripture into your mind, but get it into your mind you must, if you're going to love God the way you say you want to. And so here's my application. If you're here and you're not a Christian, commit to this six-week plan.

Scripture will help you get started in the Christian life. It may be the vehicle God uses to bring you to a place of salvation. If you are a Christian and you're in the middle of your Christian life and you are not reading the Bible on a daily basis, then commit to this six-week plan. Go get you a bookmark, download the app, say I'm going to do this. It's five days a week. It's one chapter a day for six weeks. That's 30 chapters. It's not a big ask, but it can have an amazing impact in your life if you do not right now have a daily time with the Lord.

And then if you've been a Christian for a long time and you're nearing the end of your life and you're thinking this is the eighth sermon I've heard on 2 Timothy chapter 3, commit to the six-week plan. Read the Bible. Because through reading the Scripture, you're going to come to better understand God in this season of your life. And the way he is to you in this season of your life, you could not have known in the season before, in the season before that. And so commit to reading the Bible.

Read it, love it, submit to it, crave it, need it like you need your daily bread because at root, all of those other desires that you're trying to satisfy through all of these other means are at root a desire for God Himself, and He's given you a . . .

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1. Transcript note: as spoken, this ties the forty years in the wilderness to the golden calf (Exodus 32); Scripture ties the forty years of wandering to Israel's refusal to enter the land after the spies' report (Numbers 14:26–35), and Deuteronomy 8:2–3 describes the hunger as God humbling and testing them before he fed them with manna. Source: Numbers 14:26–35; Deuteronomy 8:2–3 (CSB). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "2 1 Corinthians"; the verse that quotes "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain" together with "The worker is worthy of his wages" (Jesus' words in Luke 10:7) and calls both "Scripture" is 1 Timothy 5:18 (1 Corinthians 9:9 quotes only the ox line). Source: 1 Timothy 5:18; Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:9 (CSB). ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "telos"; the words in 2 Timothy 3:17 are artios ("complete"), with exērtismenos ("equipped"), not telos; artios means fit or fully ready for the task. Source: 2 Timothy 3:17 (NA28 Greek text); BDAG, "artios." ↩