Preach The Word — Delivery Transcript

2 Timothy 3:14–4:4 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, May 22, 2016 · *Entrusted*

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Good morning. Good to see everybody. That video talking about the Bible: there was a research firm called Gallup Research, you're probably familiar with it, who did a survey last year and they surveyed how familiar Americans were with the Bible and their general thoughts on the Bible and you may think that in a post-Christian culture everyone kind of hates the Bible. That's actually not the case. They researched everybody, but what they found about Christians was that Christians obviously love the Bible, but they really don't ever read the Bible. They said of the research that under half of— no, right over half of people can't name all four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; that the majority of people can only name one to three of the disciples of Jesus, that 58% of people can only name five of the Ten Commandments.

And this is the kicker, that 82% of people thought that the phrase "God helps those who help themselves," they thought that was actually in the Bible. Which, by the way, that's not in the Bible. That's actually the opposite of the gospel. God helps those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. So they said of their research, Americans highly revere the Bible but they don't read it, and as a result, we have become a nation of biblical illiterates, which is pretty harsh if you think about it.

And it's kind of a sad reality. Now I know that's true of everyone out there, none of the folks in here, right? All of you could get all ten of the Ten Commandments, I'm sure. And let's be honest, some of those questions were a little bit trivial, but the fact remains that the majority of us, if we're probably honest with ourselves, we revere the Bible, we think it's true, it's God's word, but when it comes to actually interacting with it, engaging with it on a consistent basis, and a real thorough basis, we're probably not exactly where we need to be.

My favorite definition of discipleship is the Spirit of God using the Word of God to help the people of God love and follow Jesus. I think that's the essence of discipleship. If you want to

be a disciple maker then have the Spirit of God use the Word of God through you to help transform people so that they love and follow Jesus. But if that is what disciple making is, if that is discipleship, then that means that the Word of God is absolutely central to the disciple-making process, and we will fundamentally fail if we don't have a firm grasp of God's word.

So my goal this morning is to try to persuade you. If you're not engaging with the Word of God, if you don't love it, that you will walk away today, having fallen in love with it and have committed to engage with it on a regular basis, especially in light of our Senior Sunday, in light of what you're going to be encountering in the world when the world gets tough. That's when people usually jettison their faith and being firmly rooted in the Word of God is going to be absolutely central to you persevering in the faith in the way that God desires.

This idea is put in the context of this series that we've been in, 2 Timothy, in which we've been looking at how do you successfully take the Christian faith and entrust it to the next generation. And the book of 2 Timothy is what we've been looking at and it has given instruction to all different kinds of people. We've looked at the responsibility that an older generation has; we've looked at the responsibility that young people have. We've looked at the responsibility that pastors have, that church staff have. We looked last week that when it comes to entrusting the faith, that one of the reasons that it's difficult to pass your faith along to your kids and grandkids and friends and neighbors is because we're living in a day and age in which Christianity is not so popular, it's not so influential, it doesn't have a lot of cultural currency.

It was true then; it's true again now. And in light of that kind of cultural reality, what's necessary isn't just a commitment to pass it along. It's not just discipline and diligence to do the work that's necessary. It's having a lifestyle that embodies the truths of the Christian faith. We closed out last week, Paul telling Timothy avoid the negative examples. Avoid those men in your church who are creeping into households, manipulating women, they have empty religion, their motives are evil, they're just basically scumbags. Those are people who look godly, talk godly, talk a godly game, but they're really corrupt to the core.

Those people are out there, Timothy. They're not just out there in the scary world, you know, New York City. They're in your church. They're people posing as believers. So what you need to do is follow the right example. You yourself, Timothy, be a good example of godliness. But just following the right example isn't enough. You've also got to have the example given to us by the word firmly planted into your heart. Because the truth is, people, even the most godly people, are going to fail you. Timothy, that's what Paul would say to him, and I'd say it to you.

Your heroes of the faith, the people you thought would never disappoint you, will disappoint you because we're human beings and we're flawed and we're weak. But there's one thing that

will never disappoint one perfect thing and that's the word of God. So if you'll take your Bible and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3, we're going to do a little bit in chapter 3 and then spend some time in chapter 4. And my goal is to have you leave really firmly committed to the word. We closed last week with this idea.

Paul gave two fundamental truths that if you try to live for Christ in this culture, in this world that you're living in today, then you're going to be persecuted. It's not going to be easy, you're going to get flak for it. And reality number two, evil people and evil times, the difficult situations that you're dealing with on a regular basis, those are not going to go away. They're not going to get easier. It's just going to be the way it's going to be. So in light of the times, in light of the people around you, follow the right example and follow the example of the word.

In chapter 3 verse 14, which is where we're going to start this morning. He kind of has a both-and. He talks about the godly examples and then he transitions to God's word. He says in chapter 3 verse 14, "But as for you," Timothy, "continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it"—talking about his mom and grandmother and the apostle Paul—"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."

So the first thing is follow godly people. He's again showing the power of example. Your mom was a great example of Christian living. Your grandmother was a great example of Christian living. Me as your spiritual father set an example of godly Christian living. It would be amazing if every single one of us in this church would be able to say to our sons and our grandsons or daughters or whoever you have influence over to be able to say to them, you know me, you watched me live my Christian life. I did it right.

I loved her well. I was faithful. I did what was necessary. I made the right call even when it was difficult. You watched me, so I'm telling you to continue in what you've seen in me. You've seen your pastor, you know, Pastor Wes, a little bit quirky, got some, you know, some weaknesses and sins in his life, but for the most part he set an example. You know, your Sunday school teacher, he set an example. Was he perfect? No, but he set an example. It would be great if all of us in this church would be able to say what Paul told Timothy.

You know what you know, you know from whom you've learned it, you know the power of example; continue in that, but also continue in the Word of God. You've been acquainted with the sacred scripture since you were a little bitty kid. Your mom gave you family devotionals. She read the little Jesus Storybook Bible to you. Just kidding, they didn't have that back then. But they did something to acquaint Timothy with the scripture, the Old Testament, and as a result, Paul says it's making you wise for salvation. So if we were going to ask the question, why should you read the Bible?

What profit does it bring into my life? Profit number one, the first reason why you should love the Bible is because if you want to ever become a Christian, if you want to stay a Christian, if you want to persevere in difficult times as a Christian, then you will only do so by your familiarity with the word of God. That's what Paul tells you. It makes you wise for salvation. Not just salvation in the past, how you become a Christian, but how you endure. There's something about the word of God that God uses it as a form of grace in your life.

That as you interact with it, as you hear it preached, as you respond to it. That it equips you to be saved, to stay saved, to finally that glorious day where you will be finally saved. You've got to love the Word of God because it is profitable in that way. And the sacred writings that Paul's talking about when he says that in verse 15 or verse 14 is the Old Testament which is kind of instructive, isn't it? Because when a lot of us think Bible reading and we think Old Testament, we almost get a little bit uncomfortable because it's so chronologically far away, you know, it was a long, long time ago.

Culturally, you know, we're not in ancient Near Eastern times. We're Westerners, and a lot of that stuff seems kind of awkward to us. But the role of the Old Testament, according to Scripture, is to point to Jesus, to show us Jesus. It predicted Jesus, and the New Testament explains Jesus and applies Jesus. And so there's really no reason why we should be afraid of the Old Testament. If you find yourself struggling there, you know you don't like the Old Testament, one of the things I'd recommend is a study Bible. I just started reading it a couple of years ago.

It's called the Gospel Transformation Bible. English Standard Version puts it out, Crossway Publishers. And they've got notes down on the bottom that really help unpack how to see Jesus and all the scripture because that's the purpose of the Old Testament. The Old Testament should not be read as a book of moral platitudes and superheroes. You know, like sometimes we read it to our kids like, oh, David's so brave and Samson's so strong and Goliath so scary and God always comes through. Those are true lessons, but the purpose of David and Goliath, the point of the story with Samson and all of those great superheroes of the faith was not to point to themselves; it was to point to Jesus.

So read the Old Testament looking for Jesus. Read it with New Testament goggles, read it with Christo-centric goggles. That's how the Old Testament is meant to be read. And use a tool like the Gospel Transformation Bible. There's a book I read just the other day called Jesus on Every Page by David Murray. Scottish guy. I love listening to Scottish people talk. They sound like Shrek, and I guess I do. Anyway, that's beside the point. It's a really good book to help you see how the Old Testament characters, they point to Jesus.

The Old Testament prophets, they point to Jesus. The Old Testament covenants, they point to the New Testament covenant in Jesus. Abraham points to Jesus. The poems, the Psalms, that all of the things in the Old Testament they point to Jesus and a lot of the reasons why

you get bogged down in the Old Testament is because you're getting lost in the weeds. If you kind of pull up a little bit and see the grand theme of Scripture, which is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Then the Old Testament all of a sudden takes on new meaning.

It'll make you wise for salvation. So read the Bible, even in the Old Testament, because it's profitable, making you wise for salvation. Read the Bible also because it's inspired by God. Look at chapter 3, verse 16. The scripture is profitable. First, because it makes you wise for salvation, but it's also profitable because it is uniquely inspired by God. Verse 16 says, all scripture is breathed out by God. The Greek word is literally God breathed. It's God-breathed graphē, writings. Your translation may say inspired by God. All scripture is inspired by God.

"And profitable." What that means is that God, the creator of the universe, perfect in all of his ways, somehow used sinful free human beings to perfectly record in writing exactly what he wanted you and me to have, and them, all Christians. And that's a matter of faith in some ways. You've got to believe that. The Bible says that about itself. Jesus says that about the scriptures. That's one of the reasons that I believe scripture is inspired by God because Jesus said it was, and Jesus rose from the dead. So I just kind of take what he says as true but here Paul is saying the same thing.

All scripture is breathed out by God. It's unique; it's special in a way that no other literature is special. You could say that the Constitution is inspired in some ways, I guess. It's a pretty inspired document, but not inspired in the same way that Scripture is inspired because God didn't superintend the Constitution the same way that he superintended the Scripture. And notice he says it's all scripture, so it's not just Old Testament. Some people think it's just the Old Testament because Paul only had the Old Testament, but we know historically that the New Testament as we have it today was already being circulated all around the churches in the ancient Near Eastern world.

All Christian churches were being helped by the documents of the New Testament, whether they were the Gospels or the letters that were written by Paul or the other apostles. There's a passage in 2 Peter, it's 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 20 and 21.[1] I'm not going to read it to you, but basically there Peter says to the church that Paul's writings are just as inspired and authoritative as are Old Testament writings. He says of Paul's writings that some people take Paul's words and they twist them to pervert the truth as they do the other scriptures.

So they're basically saying Paul's just as inspired as the Old Testament. I know that didn't distract anyone. Didn't distract me. We're going to jump right back into the sermon. He says the same thing when Paul writes about his own writing in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 37. He seems to think that he himself is inspired by the Holy Spirit: sinful, yes, but God is using me uniquely to help the church, to give the church God's words. Paul quotes Deuteronomy

chapter 25, verse 4, and he quotes Luke chapter 10, verse 7, back to back, basically insinuating they're equal in authority.

So for those reasons, I would say Old Testament and New Testament are all inspired by God. We know for a, I mean, overwhelming historical fact that the early church used the New Testament documents as we have them today. They read them aloud in their churches, right next to the Old Testament documents. One of the reasons that we have overwhelming certainty that what we have in the New Testament is what was written down by the New Testament authors almost perfectly is because you could fill 25,000 Bibles with the quotations of the early church fathers with the New Testament documents.

They were familiar with them, they read them, they treated them just as authoritative as the rest of the Old Testament. The New Testament and the Old Testament is inspired by God in a special way, and for that reason we should love it. And when you believe that, it changes the way you think about the Bible. When I read the Scripture in the morning during devotional times or when I'm preaching or when I'm studying to preach during the week and I'm coming to the text. I'm not coming to the text in the same way that I come to a commentary, for example, or the newspaper, because I have this conviction because of what Jesus has said and what the Bible says about itself that these are the very words of God here.

That God has inspired them in a special way. And if I want to know what God wants to say to me today, if I want to know what God says about this situation or this decision, then I have it here in the scripture because it's a uniquely inspired document. So love it because it makes you wise for salvation. Love it because it's inspired by God. And then chapter three verse sixteen also says that we should love it because it's practical for daily life. He says in chapter 3 verse 16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable."

There's our word. Profitable for what? "For teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." And then the purpose clause of that statement: "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Which means that the scripture is the primary vehicle that God uses to turn you and me into a man of God or a woman of God. It's practical. It's life-changing. It's not just for your head. It's not just for trivial knowledge of the Ten Commandments and the four Gospels. It is how do I love my wife today?

How do I how do I discipline my child in this situation? What do I do in this difficult decision that I have to make in the workplace? All Scripture is inspired by God for serving as a practical help on those kinds of problems. It gives you the solutions to the problems that you face. It does things for you that you could have never done for yourself because God designed it that way. He uses those four words for teaching, for reproof, and for correcting, and for training. If I could paraphrase that for you so that it makes sense.

When you think of teaching, what the Bible's doing is it's giving you positive truths that you need to know. So think of it as positive deposits of true truths about God, about yourself, about the world that you didn't have before you read it; then you read it, and it gave it to you. Teaching. And then you have reproof, which is exposing false beliefs. So teaching is depositing true beliefs that you should embrace. Reproving is exposing false beliefs that you should reject. So all of us have beliefs about God that are incorrect.

You know, some of you think, you know, God's a Star Wars Force, you know, or something like that. That's not true. And the Scripture can expose that false belief in you, and then you reject it. So teaching, reproof. Correction is when the scripture takes a lifestyle behavior or something that you're doing on a regular basis that is not honoring to God. It's a sin in your life, it could be anything, financial, relational, whatever it is. And he corrects it. He uses the word of God to say, that's wrong. It's going to destroy you.

It's going to destroy them. It's going to destroy the church. Stop doing it, quick. And then it's useful for training, which means just strengthening what needs to be strengthened so that you can overcome what needs to be overcome. And good preaching and good interaction with the Bible does that. It doesn't just give you true truth. It doesn't just expose false beliefs. It doesn't just correct wrong behavior, but it encourages you, empowers you to think that I can stop living this way. I can do what God's called me to do. I am an overcomer.

I can have victory in Jesus Christ. And that's what happens when you interact with the scripture. And I really believe one of the reasons why people don't read the Bible isn't because they don't believe it's God's Word. And that survey clearly showed that Americans believe it's God's Word. The reason they don't believe the Bible, or they don't read the Bible, is because they don't believe it's practical for their everyday life. And I get that to some degree. I know that when you read the Bible, some of it's hard to understand.

So get a good study Bible, like the Gospel Transformation Bible or the Life Application Bible. It's in almost every translation. Life Application Bible gives you little notes down at the bottom to show you how to apply the text to your everyday life and it will help you address the problems that you face and do for you what you can't do for yourself. So love the Bible. Practice it for profit because it's helpful. Then the next statement he makes is don't just practice the Bible, but preach it. And this is a word to preachers.

So you can listen to me preach to myself for just a second. Chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, he says, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season"—and here's our words again—"reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." And obviously this is a favorite text of mine. If I was going to summarize it, it would be: Timothy, you preach the word.

And be accountable to God, be available when it's convenient or inconvenient, and make it applicable. I mean apply it to your people. Preach faithfully, preach consistently, preach pastorally, preach in a way that's going to help your people. First, you're accountable. He says, preach the word. He says, I charge you to preach the word before God and Jesus Christ, who's coming again. So preach in light of that holy accountability, Timothy. When you come to the text to study, when you deliver the text on Sunday morning, you are first and foremost accountable not to your friends, not to your fans or your competition or the people who like you, don't like you.

You're not even accountable to your church. You are first and foremost accountable to your God for how you handle the text. And so when I preach, I'm not asking questions like, well, did they like me, or was it entertaining, did I have a good joke? I ask those questions, but those aren't the questions I should be asking. The questions that I should be asking and do ask are, is God pleased with how I treated the text? Was I faithful to what he said? Did I tell them what he told me?

What God put in the Word, is that what I shared with them, or did I share something different? Did I give my own opinion? Is he pleased with my motivation? Is he pleased with my love for the church? Do I care that they benefit from the Word of God? Because I'm accountable first and foremost to him. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 4[2] says that your leaders, your church leaders, your pastors are accountable to God for you. So I'm giving an account for every single one of you peeps, you beautiful people. And I don't know half of you.

I mean the church is getting bigger and bigger and I don't know people like I used to know people. That's really frustrating. And so we're trying to find ways to help me be accountable to God in a faithful way. But at the end of the day, I give an account to you for how I handle the word. So be accountable. Be faithful in how you proclaim the text. It's important. Be faithful, also be consistent. He says be ready in season and out of season. And that doesn't mean what a lot of people think it means.

Some people say, well that means you need to have a I mean a on fire sermon in your hopper every day of the week. So if someone says, hey Pastor Wes, can you preach a sermon? You're just going to get up and like BAM drop an amazing sermon. That's not what that means. What it means is to be willing to preach the gospel, whether it's convenient or inconvenient, whether it's a friendly crowd or a not so friendly crowd. When the culture likes Christians and when the culture doesn't like Christians, are you going to be willing to preach biblical truth as it's presented, even when it's not convenient.

And there's this idea of urgency behind it. You're preaching on matters of life and death here, Timothy. These things are weighty realities. It's more important than the next promotion someone's going to get at work. This is their soul. This is their relationship with a living God who will judge them at the end of the day. Do you feel that urgency? Are you

available to preach it and teach it even when it maybe makes you uncomfortable, but that's what's necessary in the time in which you're able to preach. So be faithful, be consistent, and then thirdly be pastoral, make it applicable.

Preachers, good preachers, work hard to apply the text skillfully to whatever context that they're in. So right now I'm in the 9:40 service. A lot of you are young Christians, some of you are young people you're not like the people in the 8:25 service. In the 8:25 service, those people know the Bible better than I do. And so for some of you, what's going to be more applicable from today's message is what's a good study Bible I can read? Or what's a good place for me to start if I want to start reading the Bible every day?

Where should I begin? Genesis? No. 2 Timothy? That'd be good. Go all the way from 2 Timothy to Revelation, but stop before you go in there. And then talk to me. But that's a good start. But see, the dynamic's different. This dynamic is different than the 8:25, and this dynamic's different than eleven o'clock, and this dynamic is certainly different than what I was doing on Friday night, preaching at a men's conference in Eastland with a bunch of good ol' boys. So you preach it differently there than you would here because your work as a preacher is to apply the text skillfully, helpfully, depending on the context that you're in.

And he gives him these words. He says you got to do it through reproving and rebuking and exhorting. The way that I summarize that is good preaching afflicts the comfortable, and it comforts the afflicted. So some of you are in here, you are comfortable, complacent in your Christianity. You think you're doing just fine, but God is displeased with you. And your lifestyle and so my job is to make your life stink. I afflict the comfortable, not just by saying stuff, but through the word of God. And some of you are discouraged.

You feel like giving up. You think you'll never win. And my job is to comfort the afflicted. And good preaching does both. He says reprove. That just means expose false beliefs. That's something you do for everyone. So this is a community project. If you believe false things about God, what I'm trying to do is expose that. If you believe false things about the Bible. I'm trying to expose that. That's reproving. Rebuking is not community-based. Rebuking is individual. It's personal. It's if you see someone sinning against the Lord, and you have authority over that person to speak into their life, then use the word of God to do that.

You have got to confront them and say, this is wrong. What you're doing is going to hurt you, it's going to hurt them, it's going to hurt the church. Stop. That's one of the roles that a preacher plays in the church. Reprove, rebuke, that means afflict the comfortable, and then exhort and encourage, comfort the afflicted. Show people that yes, we're sinners separated from a holy God, but that God in his love has sent his son to die on the cross for our sins, forgive us of our sins, fill us with his Holy Spirit.

Give us the power that we need to live a godly life, that you have in you the Spirit of God, that He's not against you, that He's for you, that He's on your side, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Give them those gospel truths so that they can live the life that God's called them to live. Good sermons have both. They have a little bit of a deconstruction phase and then a little reconstruction phase. And that's what Paul's telling Timothy to do. Quick. So preach pastorally.

Preach faithfully. Let the text speak. This is, by the way, why I preach expository sermons. I don't just get up here and give my opinion because you don't need my opinion. I'm not very creative. So the reason that our diet, our preaching diet in this church is fundamentally for the most part it's just going through books of the Bible is because of this conviction that I have based on the word of God that what God put in the scripture is relevant for us. And if I can just show you what God showed them then God will give you what you need, and that'll address the problems in your life.

So preach it faithfully, consistently, pastorally, and then he tells him, preach it patiently. He adds there in chapter 4, verse 2, with all patience, with all the patience that it requires, with all of the teaching that it requires. The reason that he tells him to preach with patience is because a lot of preachers get discouraged when they put tons of time into someone. You know, you preached a sermon on, I don't know, raising your children well. And I mean you preached a 10-week series on it and you thought I'll never have to address this problem again.

People are going to be parenting their children better than ever. And then you're in the restaurant and you see someone just you know, beating on their kid and you're like, ah, they didn't quite get it, and you get discouraged. That's an extreme example, but you know what I mean. When you're counseling with someone and you're helping them overcome something, maybe they've got some struggle or some addiction that they're trying to overcome and they're taking your advice and they're going strong, they're doing well, and all of a sudden it's just like they quit: I'm done.

I can't do it. I just give up. And that's discouraging. And so Paul's telling Timothy, that's going to happen. Growth in godliness is a slow process. It's not something that happens overnight. People don't become saints right after their conversion; you've got to be patient. So preach and teach and give them the word of God week in and week out, every weekend, and be patient because it's a process. There's a guy named Charles Simeon who preached to his church back in the day. You got your own church seat; you paid for it.

Basically, that's how the church stayed open, the people paid for their seats. And they hated this guy so much that they locked their church seat so that no one else could come into the church. And Charles Simeon preached to an empty church for 10 years. I don't know that I could do that. But he did it because of this text, because he wanted to be patient. And God

used his ministry in an incredible way because he was patient, even in the valley low, even when it didn't feel like he was making a difference.

Be patient and then be thorough with all the patience that it requires and all the teaching that it requires. And teaching, that's really where my gift is. My gift isn't preaching, my gift is more teaching. Preaching is heralding. This is true. This is who God is. This is what God is like. God did raise Jesus from the dead. Teaching isn't just saying that it is so. Teaching is explaining why it is so. It's apologetics. In our culture where Christianity is looked upon with some degree of skepticism, then teaching involves, okay, this is God saying that it is true.

Let me show you why the faith is true. Let me show you why you should do it this way. And a good sermon should do both. It should exhort and declare God's glory, but also teach and explain. So be consistent, be available, be accountable to God, be thorough, and be patient. Preach the word. And the reason, Timothy, you should preach the word in this way is because the days in which we're living are difficult days. We're in the last times. Look at what he says in chapter 4, verse 3. He says, for a time is coming.

And I'd say the time is here. "A time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions." And those people are going to turn away from listening to the truth and they're going to wander off into myths. Paul's talking about Christians here. He'd be talking about you. He would say, Timothy, you have got to preach the word, and he'd say to you, you've got to listen to the word with prejudice. You've got to prioritize the word with prejudice.

Because when you encounter teachers who take the centrality of the Word of God and they say, well this is really not that important. Let's talk about our experience or let's talk about our emotion or let's talk about this cool story that I had. And the word becomes less valuable and human opinion becomes more valuable, then you should get suspect real quick. When I'm in environments, even Christian environments surrounded by brothers that I think are true believers, but they begin preaching and teaching and talking in a way that devalues the word.

I get skeptical real fast. And you should too. Because what's needed isn't their opinion or their experience. What's needed in your life for your diet for your growth in godliness is the word. So let the word become valuable, let it become central. And in those environments in which it is central, then listen. But in those environments in which it isn't, then be suspect, be prejudiced. You know, most people think prejudice is a bad thing, but in some ways it's a good thing. You're protecting yourself from being led astray. Because all of us have passions, all of us have desires, we have temptations that we want to justify.

We want God to tell us that our way of doing this is right. And what the Bible, what we think the Bible says isn't what it actually says. It actually says something totally different. And so

what people are led to do is let's find a teacher, an influential person, maybe he's on TV who justifies my sinful behavior so that I don't feel so bad about it. So they devalue the word, they elevate their own expertise, and people have itching ears, they have passions that they want to justify, and boom, you're done.

And I'm telling you, there are tons of people out there who will take your money and deliver the goods for you to feel good about your sin and your selfishness and your ego and your greed. Be careful. It can lead you astray. You'll turn from the truth. You'll wander off into myths. You don't even know you're going there. And before you know it, it's too late. So get in the word. That's all I want to encourage you to do. Read it. Let today be the day where you commit yourself to being a person of the book.

And listen, if you're here today and you feel like man, Wes just destroyed my life, I feel like I stink, you know. Look. The band can go ahead and come up. Look, this word, the message of this word isn't trivia. It's not what are the Ten Commandments? It's not who are the three, four, twelve disciples? Those are good questions to have an answer to. But the basic message of this word is we're going to stink. We're not going to read the Bible like we should read the Bible. We're not going to love our wife like we should love our wife.

We're going to sin financially. We're going to sin sexually. We're going to sin because we're sinners by nature. But God in His love and grace has sent His one and only Son to pay the penalty for our sin so that even though we're not worthy, even though we'll never be good enough, we can be accepted in love because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. That's this book. So your motivation for reading this book doesn't need to be, I got to do better because Wes made me feel guilty.

Your motivation for reading this book is God has loved me even when I was unlovely. He has put in me his Holy Spirit, which gives me what I need to hunger for this and love this and listen if you'll just discipline yourself to just read it five minutes a day, five days a week. Just a little bit that you'll taste it, the taste will become good to you, and you'll hunger for it a little bit more. And just be disciplined and consistent. And over a long period of time, those times with the Lord are cumulative, and you will begin to experience the sweetness of abiding with Christ and knowing communion with him because he is speaking to you through his word and you're responding to him in prayer.

And I want that for you more than anything else. I want you to know the Lord. I want you to love him. I want you to experience the sweetness of intimacy with him. But it comes by being a person of the book, not just believing it's true. But eating it. Jesus says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." So the band's going to play. I'll be here to pray with you if you want to pray. Maybe you just want to pray for our church that we're this kind of place people of the book, people who love the word.

Pray for yourself; I can pray for you if you want, but let's stand and respond to the Lord.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "2 Peter chapter 1, verses 20 and 21"; the passage where Peter warns that some twist Paul's letters "as they do the other Scriptures" is 2 Peter 3:15–16 (2 Peter 1:20–21 speaks of prophecy coming from men carried along by the Holy Spirit). Source: 2 Peter 1:20–21; 3:15–16 (ESV). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Hebrews chapter 13 verse 4"; the verse saying church leaders "will have to give an account" for those in their care is Hebrews 13:17. Source: Hebrews 13:17 (ESV). ↩