

Big Idea: Scripture is more than just a book.

Primary Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Supporting Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Hebrews 4:12

CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)

- I want to tell you about two people who took two **very** different approaches to the Bible.
- The first was a teenager named Mary Jones who lived in a small village in Wales in the late 1700s.
- Mary wanted a Bible, which no one else in her village had.
- The closest Bible Mary could find was **two miles** away from her home.
- That Bible didn't belong to her, so she couldn't get it and bring it home.
- She walked two miles just to read it and did this over and over again.
- Mary wanted **her own** Bible, so she started saving—just a few coins at a time—for **six years**.
- Finally, in the year 1800, at 16 years old, she had enough money.
- The closest place to buy a Bible was **26 miles away**, over mountains, without shoes, and there was no actual guarantee they'd even have a Bible left to sell her.
- Barefoot and alone, she made the twenty-six-mile trip which is basically a marathon!
- When she got there, all the Bibles the store had in stock had already been sold.
- Mary's passion moved the shop owner so much that he sold one to her anyway.
- Now more than 200 years later, Mary's Bible still exists and can be seen today at the Cambridge University Library in England.
- You've probably heard of the second person, he was the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson.
- President Jefferson took a different approach to the Bible.
- Jefferson started with a normal Bible and decided to literally cut out everything that he disagreed with.
- If Jefferson found a passage that he didn't like or didn't think belonged in the Bible, he literally took scissors and cut it out.

- Jefferson had removed all references to miracles, most of Jesus' teachings about His divinity, and basically anything supernatural.
- What he ended up with was more like a collection of moral teachings than the actual Bible.
- The book that Jefferson created is sometimes called "The Jefferson Bible," and you can actually see it today at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.
- What Jefferson created wasn't really the Bible at all, it was just his opinions with a few Bible verses mixed in.
- Mary Jones and Thomas Jefferson took two completely different approaches to the exact same book.
- We're in week two of our series, called ***Into the Deep End***, where we're exploring what it looks like to have a faith that doesn't just keep us in the shallow end.
- Last week we talked about prayer and how it's not just something **we say**, it's a connection **we build**.
- Is the Bible *just a book*, or is it something more that can help us have that deeper kind of faith that we're talking about?

SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)

- A man named Saul lived 2,000 years ago and devoted his entire life to studying Scripture.
- He was a member of a group of people called the Pharisees, who would literally memorize the first five books of the Bible (also known as the Torah) word for word.
- Saul did everything he could to get other people into trouble when they broke any of the hundreds of rules found in Scripture.
- When large groups of people started worshiping Jesus (after His death and resurrection), Saul went out of his way to make sure as many of these people as possible were arrested and even killed for breaking God's law of "you must not have any other god but me" (Exodus 20:3 – NLT).
- The Bible even details a story of a time that Saul offered to hold everyone's coats so they could more easily throw rocks at a young Christian named Stephen.
- Saul eventually became a **completely** different person who was no longer persecuting Christians, but he actually became one.

- Saul started planting new churches all over the place and ended up writing **over half** of what we now know as the Bible's New Testament.
- Saul the Pharisee would ultimately become known as the Apostle Paul, and one day, in a letter to his younger protégé, Timothy, he would write these words about the impact that Scripture can have on your life:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 – NLT)

- Paul ultimately learned firsthand that Scripture isn't just information to be memorized—it's a transformation waiting to happen!
- Because of Jesus, his faith went from **shallow** rule-following to the **deep-end** kind of faith we've been talking about.

INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)

1. The Bible guides us toward truth.

- Mary Jones walked 26 miles because she knew the Bible contained something she couldn't find anywhere else—truth about God, truth about life, and truth about herself.
- Jefferson basically said, "I'll decide what's true and what's not," and started cutting.
- When we decide what parts of the Bible we'll accept and what parts we'll ignore, we're not really following God's truth anymore, but instead, we're following our opinions with a few Bible verses sprinkled in.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 – NLT)

- The Bible isn't supposed to just confirm what we already think; it reveals truth we might not have discovered on our own.
- Sometimes that means it will challenge our assumptions, correct our thinking, or point us in directions we weren't expecting.

2. The Bible transforms us.

- Paul wrote in 2 Timothy that Scripture "corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."
- It doesn't just give us information; it gives us transformation, but only when we let it.
- Jefferson tried to transform Scripture to fit his life, but Paul let Scripture transform his life to fit God's purposes.
- When Scripture shows us areas where we need to grow, we can edit out the uncomfortable parts, or we can let God use those moments to make us more like Jesus.
- Real change happens when we allow the words of Scripture to transform our thoughts and actions (instead of the other way around).

3. The Bible prepares us.

- Paul wrote that "God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."
- It prepares us by acting like both a **mirror** and a **window**.

¹² For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. (Hebrews 4:12 – NLT)

- Like a **mirror**, Scripture has a way of showing us who we really are. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires—our true motivations, our areas of strength, and the places where we still need to grow.
- But Scripture also acts like a **window**, giving us a clear view of who God is—His character, His love, and His purposes for our lives.
- When we understand both who we are and who God is, we're prepared to step into the good works He has planned for us.

ACTION (How could we live this out?)

1. Read the Bible for five minutes each day.

- Don't worry about reading entire chapters or having some massive spiritual breakthrough every day, just spend five minutes consistently in God's Word.

- You could use a Bible app on your phone, pick up a physical Bible, or even listen to an audio version while you're getting ready in the morning.
- The goal isn't to become a Bible scholar overnight; it's to develop the habit of letting Scripture speak into your life regularly.
- Don't underestimate what God can do with your faithful five minutes.
- Once you start reading regularly, there's a really good chance you'll eventually run into passages that don't make you feel warm and fuzzy inside.

2. Let Scripture challenge you.

- When you're reading and you come across something that makes you uncomfortable, confused, or even a little angry—**don't skip it**.
- Instead of editing out the difficult parts, try asking questions:
 - Why does this bother me?
 - What might God be trying to show me?
 - How could this change the way I think or act?"
- Don't run from the discomfort; instead, challenge yourself to keep digging deeper.
- Ask your small group leader or a trusted friend what they think because you might find that other people could have a lot of the same questions you do.
- The goal is to stay curious and keep wrestling with God's Word instead of walking away from the parts that are challenging or difficult to understand.

3. Share what you're learning with at least one person.

- You weren't meant to do this alone, so when God shows you something through His Word, share it with someone else!
- The point is to let what you're learning overflow into your relationships.
- When you start sharing what God is teaching you through Scripture, you'll often find that it becomes even more real in your own life.
- It also might be exactly what someone else needs to hear that day.