

Tools for Ministry

*Equipped for the Work of
Building Up the Body of Christ*

Spiritbuilding

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Matthew Allen

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By Matthew Allen
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Preface

It has been my privilege to prepare this material for our study together. It is my prayer that each of us will come to see more clearly the vision Christ has for His church: a body where every member is equipped and every Christian is engaged in the work of ministry. The New Testament makes clear that ministry is not reserved for a few select leaders but is the shared responsibility of the entire body of Christ. By inspiration of the Spirit, the apostle Paul affirmed that Christ “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–12). Each member has been given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good, and the health of the church depends on the faithful use of these gifts.

This workbook, *Tools for Ministry*, reflects a conviction that has shaped my own life and ministry: the strength of the church does not rest on the work of a few, but on the faithful service of the many. Each of us has been entrusted with gifts, opportunities, and responsibilities to use for the good of others and for the glory of God. When we embrace that calling, the body of Christ grows strong, healthy, and effective in its mission.

Throughout this study, we will explore both the foundations and the practices of ministry. We will learn how Scripture and prayer shape us, how encouragement and service sustain us, how relationships and hospitality bind us together, and how endurance equips us to persevere. Lessons are designed to move beyond theory into practice, rooted in biblical teaching and strengthened through active participation. Discussions and guided conversations will highlight diverse experiences of ministry, demonstrating how the principles of God’s Word take shape in real life. You will be invited to consider your own strengths and opportunities for service and to commit yourself to specific actions that build up the body of Christ.

It is my hope that these lessons will not remain on the page but will take root in your life, producing fruit in your home, in this congregation, and in every place God sends you. By the end of this quarter, may each of us have a clearer understanding of our personal role in God’s mission and

a stronger resolve to carry it out. As Paul wrote, “the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part” (Ephesians 4:16).

In Christ,

Matthew Allen

October 2025

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Introduction

The mission of Christ calls every disciple into active service. From the earliest days of the church, Christians were not only taught but also equipped to live out their faith in practical ways. The New Testament consistently emphasizes that ministry is shared among all members of the local church, with each person contributing according to the gifts and opportunities God has provided.

This class series, *Tools for Ministry*, is built upon the conviction that every follower of Jesus has a place in His work. Ministry is not defined by a title, position, or program; it is expressed through daily obedience, sacrificial service, and the use of God-given abilities for the good of others. When members of the body of Christ devote themselves to these practices, the church is strengthened, and the gospel is advanced.

Over the course of twelve weeks, we will explore how God equips His people for service. First, we will establish the foundation tools of ministry by learning how to handle Scripture, develop a prayer life shaped by mission, encourage one another in faith, and share the gospel in daily conversation. Next, we will turn to relational tools, considering how spiritual gifts, mentoring, burden-bearing, and hospitality provide practical avenues for service. Finally, we will look at the endurance tools that sustain ministry over the long haul—perseverance, truth joined with grace, unity, and the call to put everything together in active service.

Taken together, these lessons are intended to provide a comprehensive picture of what it means to be equipped for ministry. They move beyond theory to practice, beyond mere knowledge to application, so that by the end of the quarter each participant can identify concrete ways to serve. Our prayer is that this study will clarify the role every Christian has in God's mission and inspire deeper devotion to the work of building up the body of Christ.

How to Use This Book

This workbook is intended to help you engage with Scripture, participate meaningfully in class, and put what you learn into practice. The following suggestions will help you make the most of your study:

1. Read the Lesson in Advance

Each lesson includes a theme passage, key points, and guiding questions. Take a few minutes before class to read the Scripture text(s) and think about the lesson's focus. Note initial observations, questions, or applications that come to mind.

2. Participate in Class Discussion

The class format is designed to be interactive. Your teacher(s) will share insights, but the strength of this study lies in the contributions of the whole group. Be prepared to share what you've learned, ask questions, and encourage others.

3. Take Notes Actively

Use the space provided to write down key ideas, Scriptures, or personal applications. Writing as you listen helps you retain what you are learning and provides a record to revisit later.

4. Apply What You Learn

Each lesson concludes with practical challenges for personal ministry. Choose at least one specific step to put into practice each week. The goal of this study is not simply to gain knowledge but to cultivate habits of service that strengthen the body of Christ.

5. Reflect and Pray

Spend time after each class reflecting on how God is calling you to serve. Ask Him for wisdom, courage, and perseverance as you put these tools into use. Prayer is essential for turning lessons into lasting transformation.

6. Review the Quarter as a Whole

At the end of the study, review your notes and applications. Identify

patterns of growth, areas where God has stretched you, and new opportunities for ministry. Consider sharing what you have learned with others, so that the equipping you have received can multiply further.

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PART ONE

Foundation Tools

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Every lasting work of ministry begins with strong foundations. In this section, we will examine the essential tools God has given to anchor and equip His people: Scripture, prayer, encouragement, and the sharing of faith. Scripture provides the wisdom and direction needed for every good work; prayer connects us to God's power and aligns us with His purposes; encouragement strengthens and sustains both the individual and the body; and the sharing of faith ensures that the message of Christ continues to reach the lost. Together, these practices form the core disciplines through which every Christian is equipped to serve effectively in God's kingdom.

LESSON 1

How to Read and Apply Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16–17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work, 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

Class Overview: This opening lesson reminds us that the Bible is the essential tool God has placed in our hands for ministry. From 2 Timothy 3:16–17 we learn that Scripture is *God-breathed*, carrying His authority and life, and that it serves a vital purpose: to teach, rebuke, correct, and train us in righteousness so that we are fully equipped for every good work. Our goal is not just to read the Word but to live it—approaching it regularly, carefully, prayerfully, for application, and with others. As we begin this quarter on *Tools for Ministry*, we start with the foundation: learning to use God’s Word well, so that it shapes us into servants ready to build up the body of Christ.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Understand the nature of Scripture.
2. Recognize the purposes of Scripture.
3. See the goal of Scripture.
4. Develop practical habits for Bible engagement.
5. Apply the Word personally and in ministry.

Introduction

EARLIER THIS YEAR, I bought a laser engraver for my business. It had everything I needed to get started—a heavy-duty table to hold the items I would engrave, a blower to get all the fumes out of my garage, and various tools that would allow me to engrave in the round. For the first few weeks, I kept everything neatly tucked away in the large crate it came trucked in with. I liked knowing I had it. But when my wife began

to pressure me to get busy and learn how to use it, I realized something: owning the machine and knowing how to use it are two very different things. After I opened the crate, I stood there with everything spread out, but I didn't know what to do with half of it.

That moment has stuck with me, because it reminds me of how many of us treat the Bible. We have multiple copies sitting on our shelves. We've got apps on our phones that can access the text in dozens of translations. We may even carry it with us to church every Sunday. But having the tool is not the same as knowing how to use it. God's Word isn't meant to just sit there looking important; it's meant to equip us, to be opened, studied, and applied in real life.

Every meaningful ministry begins with a foundation in God's Word. Before we can encourage, serve, or teach others, we must first allow Scripture to shape us. Paul reminded Timothy that *all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16–17). In other words, God has placed in our hands a tool that equips us not only to know Him but also to carry out the mission He has given us. spiritbuilding.com

Think about it: a carpenter depends on his hammer and saw. A teacher depends on her books and lesson plans. A doctor depends on his instruments. Without the right tools, their work would be impossible. The same is true for ministry: if we want to be effective servants of Christ, we must learn how to use the tool God has given us: His Word.

This class is about moving from theory to practice. We will not just talk about the value of Scripture; we will explore how to open it, study it, and live it out. Ministry is not reserved for "professionals." Every Christian has a role to play in God's mission, and every Christian needs to be equipped. Scripture is God's equipping tool. When we learn how to read it with care, humility, and expectation, it becomes *a lamp to our feet and a light to our path* (Psalm 119:105).

So, let's begin by asking a simple but powerful question: *What role does Scripture play in your daily life?* Is it simply something you read to check off a box, or is it the guide that shapes your decisions, your relationships,

and your service in Christ’s kingdom? This quarter is about being equipped for ministry. And today, we start with the most essential tool of all: God’s Word.

The Nature of Scripture (What It Is)

Imagine you receive two letters in the mail. One is from a stranger: maybe an advertisement or a political flyer. You glance at it, maybe toss it aside without much thought. The other is handwritten by your father or mother, or perhaps a close friend. You open it carefully, reading every line with attention, because you know the voice behind it. The difference isn’t in the paper or the ink; the difference is in the author. That’s exactly how we should think about the Bible. It is not junk mail from the past, nor is it a collection of random religious writings. It is the voice of our Father, the words of the living God given to us.

Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16, *all Scripture is inspired by God*. The word “inspired” here comes from the Greek *theopneustos*, literally “God-breathed.” That means the Scriptures carry the breath of God Himself. Just as God breathed life into Adam and he became a living being (Genesis 2:7), so God has breathed His life into the words of Scripture. They are alive, infused with His Spirit, and they have the power to give life and light to us.

At the same time, the Bible has a dual nature. On one level, it is clearly a human book. Moses, David, Isaiah, Luke, Paul, and others wrote with their own vocabulary, culture, and style. Yet on another level, it is fully divine. Peter explains this when he writes, *no prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:20–21). The human authors put pen to paper, but God’s Spirit directed the outcome. This makes the Bible unlike any other book in existence: fully rooted in human history, yet carrying divine authority that transcends all cultures and ages.

Because God is the source, the Scriptures are not only inspired, but they are also authoritative and trustworthy. Jesus Himself believed this. When Satan tempted him in the wilderness, His defense was not human reasoning but the Word of God: *it is written... (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)*. If

the Son of God relied on Scripture to confront temptation and define truth, how much more must we? To dismiss or neglect Scripture is ultimately to ignore or neglect the God who gave it.

This is why the writer of Hebrews says, *for the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is not a dusty relic or an outdated manual. It is alive, relevant, and piercing. It cuts through our excuses, exposes our sin, comforts our fears, and guides our steps. It is living and active because the God who breathed it out is living and active.

So, when we open the pages of Scripture, we are not merely studying history or gathering information. We are encountering the living God. His voice speaks through these words. His Spirit works through them to convict, to encourage, and to transform. That is the nature of Scripture: God-breathed, reliable, authoritative, and life-giving.

The Purpose of Scripture (What It Does)

If the nature of Scripture is that it is God-breathed, then its purpose flows directly from that truth. God did not give us His Word simply to inform us, but to transform us. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16 that Scripture is *profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness*. These four functions describe the way the Word shapes us into the people God wants us to be.

1. Scripture teaches us.

It reveals truth about God, about the world, and about us that we could not discover on our own. The psalmist wrote, *the instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise* (Psalm 19:7). Teaching here is not just about information; it's about direction. Scripture gives us the wisdom to know what is right, what pleases God, and how to walk in His ways.

2. Scripture rebukes us.

This is not always comfortable, but it is essential. God's Word exposes the lies we believe and the sins we commit. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us

that the Word judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. When we read the Bible honestly, it holds up a mirror to our lives, confronting the places where we fall short of God's will. Sometimes that sting of rebuke is exactly what keeps us from drifting further into sin.

3. Scripture corrects us.

Rebuke shows us where we are wrong, but correction puts us back on the right path. It's like a GPS that not only tells you when you've made a wrong turn but reroutes you toward your destination. God doesn't just expose sin to condemn us; He shows us the better way to live. David prayed, *show me the way I should go, because I appeal to you* (Psalm 143:8). Scripture provides that guidance, helping us realign with God's will.

4. Scripture trains us in righteousness.

This is more than a quick fix; it's about long-term training. Training implies discipline, repetition, and practice. Just as an athlete trains daily to grow stronger, Christians immerse themselves in the Word so that over time their character, attitudes, and actions are shaped into Christlikeness. Paul urged Timothy, *train yourself in godliness. For the training of the body has limited benefit, but godliness is beneficial in every way* (1 Timothy 4:7–8). Training through the Word builds habits of holiness and equips us to live faithfully in every situation.

Taken together, these purposes of Scripture show us that the Bible is not passive. It is very active. It is God's instrument for growth. It instructs, convicts, redirects, and forms us. And just as a skilled craftsman uses his tools to shape wood or metal into something beautiful and useful, so God uses His Word to shape us into the likeness of His Son.

The Goal of Scripture (What it Produces)

If Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training, then what is the ultimate goal? Paul answers in 2 Timothy 3:17: *"So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* God's Word is not just about information or even transformation on a personal level; its ultimate purpose is equipping us for ministry.

1. It leads to maturity.

The word “complete” means mature, whole, or fully developed. God’s desire is not that we remain spiritual infants, dependent on others for every answer, but that we grow up into Christ (Ephesians 4:13–15). The Scriptures provide everything we need for that growth. They give us a foundation of truth, a guide for living, and a training ground for discernment, so that we can be strong and steady in our faith.

2. It inspires good works.

But Paul does not stop at maturity. He adds that Scripture equips us for *every good work*. In other words, the Bible is not just meant to make us better Bible students; it is meant to make us better servants. The Word prepares us to live out our calling in real and practical ways: to encourage the discouraged, to stand firm in trials, to serve others with love, to share the gospel with boldness. It equips us not simply to know about ministry, but to do ministry.

James reminds us, “*Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*” (James 1:22). It is possible to know the Bible well, to memorize verses, even to teach others, and yet fail to apply it. But the true goal of Scripture is not just knowledge; it is obedience. It produces people who act on what they believe. The evidence that God’s Word has taken root in us is seen not only in what we can recite but in how we live.

For example, a soldier does not spend months in training to say he has been trained; he does it to be ready for the mission. In the same way, Scripture equips us to be prepared for the work God puts before us, big or small, public or private, visible or unseen. When we let the Word do its work, we are prepared, mature, and able to serve in ways that bring glory to Christ.

How Do We use it Well?

We’ve seen what Scripture is and what it does, but the next question is: how do we use it well? Many Christians struggle not because they don’t believe the Bible, but because they don’t know how to bridge the gap between reading and living. Here are five practical steps to help us do just that:

1. **Read Regularly**

Just as our bodies need daily bread, our souls need daily Scripture (Matthew 4:4). Sporadic reading leads to shallow growth. Make Bible intake a rhythm; whether first thing in the morning, during a lunch break, or before bed. Consistency matters more than quantity. Start small if needed, but start often.

2. **Read Carefully**

Context matters. Ask: Who is speaking? Who is addressed? What is the situation? Misunderstanding often comes when we lift verses out of their setting. Careful reading helps us see not just words but meaning. Like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, we should examine the Scriptures daily, thoughtfully testing what we hear and read.

3. **Read Prayerfully**

The Bible is not just a book to study; it is a conversation with the living God. Before opening the Word, ask Him: *Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction* (Psalm 119:18). Invite the Spirit to give clarity, conviction, and comfort. Reading prayerfully reminds us that Scripture is living and personal, not abstract.

4. **Read for Application**

Every passage raises questions we must answer: What does this teach me about God? What does this reveal about myself? What does God want me to do in light of this truth? Application moves us from theory to practice. James 1:25 describes the blessed person as the one who looks intently into the Word, perseveres in it, and *does it*.

5. **Read and Study with Others**

We were never meant to journey through Scripture alone. Studying together sharpens our understanding and holds us accountable. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us, *Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another*. Share insights with family, friends, or your church group. Hearing how others apply the Word can inspire and challenge us to do the same.

Challenge

This week, pick one passage of Scripture and walk through these five steps. Read it regularly for several days, pay attention to the context, pray for understanding, write down at least one personal application, and share it with someone else.

Conclusion

The Bible is not just another book on our shelves. It is the very breath of God, living and active, given to equip us for every good work. We've seen today that its nature is divine, its purpose is to teach, rebuke, correct, and train, and its goal is to make us complete and ready to serve. Scripture is not about filling our heads with knowledge but about shaping our hearts and hands for ministry.

But here's the critical question: What will we do with it? Owning a Bible is not enough. Quoting verses is not enough. Even admiring the wisdom of Scripture is not enough. God calls us to read it, to believe it, and most importantly, to live it. James warns us not to be hearers only, deceiving ourselves, but to be doers of the Word (James 1:22). Real equipping happens when the truth of Scripture moves off the page and into our daily lives.

So, as we begin this quarter on *Tools for Ministry*, remember that every other tool we will study, prayer, encouragement, discipleship, hospitality, perseverance, depends on this one. The Word of God is the foundation of all ministry. If we use it well, it will shape us, strengthen us, and send us into the world ready to serve.

This week, take one passage and put it into practice. Let the Word correct you where you need correction, encourage you where you need hope, and equip you where you need strength. And as you do, remember that every time you open your Bible, you are hearing the voice of your Father, who has breathed His very life into these words for your good and His glory.

For Discussion

1. Think about the story of my unused laser engraver. In what ways do we sometimes treat the Bible, owning it but not using it?

2. What difference does it make to you personally that Scripture is “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16)? How does that truth shape the way we should approach reading it?

3. Of the four functions Paul lists, teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, which one do you find the easiest to accept? Which one is the hardest? Why?

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4. Can you share a time when Scripture corrected you, encouraged you, or equipped you for something specific in life or ministry?

5. We talked about reading regularly, carefully, prayerfully, for application, and together with others. Which of these practices do you already do well? Which do you need to grow in?

6. If the goal of Scripture is to equip us for ministry, what is one “good work” you feel more prepared to do because of your time in the Word?
