

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Jon Green
Series: Life Together
March 13, 2022

Biblical

Passage: Timothy 3:14-17

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Alright, good morning everybody. How's the 11 a.m. daylight savings crew? Feeling pretty good? Well, when it comes to vacation there are two buckets of people. Like I like to put people in buckets. I think it's helpful. There's two kinds of people when it comes to vacation. Some of you in this room, you feel like kind of a modern day Lewis and Clark. Like there's a big world out there and it's your job to see every corner of it. Show of hands? Anybody approach vacation like that? World travelers? Okay. And then some of you, you're like I already found it and you like to go to the same place year in, year out. Like you have your place. Show of hands? Okay, fewer of you, but y'all are my people.

So, we found our place like six years ago. Our family, little pocket of Southern California, I don't know if you guys have heard of it. The weather is perfect there. There's beaches. There's cliffs. We love it. We fell in love with it six years ago. We go every chance we get. And fourteen days ago, our family was about to go. We were ready to go. Like I can't explain to you how ready to go we were. Mickey ears packed, suitcases on the floor. Like ready to go the next morning. So, I woke up at 5:10, just enough time. We built in enough time, enough of a buffer for something to go wrong, but we needed to be on the road by 6:00. At 5:15 I let the dogs out. Which answered the Baha Men's question from so long ago - I did it. I let the dogs out. See there's an age range on that joke. Some of you got it. Some of you didn't and it's okay. If you're 32ish, you got it. You loved it. So, let the dogs out. And then at 5:25 my wife heard a crash. She came in. She found me. I had collapsed on the bathroom floor. It was every bit as traumatic for her as you would expect it to be. She called 911. Paramedics came. Ambulance came. They loaded me up, took me to the hospital. That's where I regained consciousness. Woke up very confused, and very much not in California, with lots of questions about how I ended up there. Turns out I had a seizure. I'd never - that had never happened before. Praise God it hasn't happened since. Let's keep praying that it doesn't. But I got five stitches across my tongue, which was every bit as terrible as you would expect and makes saying things like "seizure" and "stitches" difficult at times. So, if you see me drinking extra water this morning, my tongue got super dry in the 9 o'clock. But I had this thought while I was in the hospital, because you have a lot of time to kill just like sitting there in that bed waiting on answers. I was what they see every

day. Like day in, day out, all throughout the day, 24 hours a day, they're bringing problems before experts and looking for a solution. And I was no different. There's no telling how many people they saw just like me that day, who came in with an emergency. Doctors get together. Nurses get together. Specialists get together. Generalists consult with specialists. Neurologists come in. The ER doctor comes in. All of these people are constantly consulting with each other, one at a time, trying to come up with the solution to the problem in front of them. And that's who I was in that moment. And at times it's almost like these people are speaking a different language, right. Like if you've ever been hospitalized yourself, if you've ever been there with somebody else, they use acronyms. They use really big words. It's almost like they're speaking a language that you've never heard before. And you're just doing your best to keep up. But these are brilliant people, who are experts in their field, collaboratively trying to solve problems. And in that moment, as I'm lying there in the hospital bed in the major medical wing of the ER, I just had to trust that these doctors knew what they were doing. Like I entrusted myself, my wife entrusted me, to the care of these people that we didn't know. We knew their credentials and we were just hoping for the best. But like we didn't have time to make sure they graduated top of their class. Like we just had to hope, you know. Like Amanda didn't have time to check their LinkedIn profile to make sure everything was all good. Like we just had to entrust ourselves into the care of these people and hope that they were experts. And really that's the same vision that we have for our church and that we have for our life groups in particular.

Each week when you go to your life group, and you sit down in a living room with these people that maybe you've known for six months, maybe you've known for six years, however long you've been together, the goal is that you are entrusting yourself into the spiritual care of these people. And the goal we have is that your entire life group would be the experts. That you would be trained and equipped via this book. That you would know your Bible inside and out, so that you guys can collectively solve problems together based on what the Bible says. And just to be abundantly clear, to make sure the illustration doesn't break down anywhere along the way, I'm not saying our staff are the experts by any means. Our goal is that your entire group, your life group, would be a collective of experts together. That everybody in the group is. And two things are true at the same time. This is a lofty goal. And it's one that I believe that we are capable of as a church body collectively. Everybody in this room. I believe that this is something that we are collectively capable of accomplishing with all my heart. And so how ever many hundreds of us are in this room right now, how ever many of you are watching online, how ever many of you are watching this a month from now, you are capable. Hear me say, you are capable of knowing this book inside and out and knowing how to read it, understand it, and apply it to your life. Like we have more resources at our disposal today, more resources with a click of a button in our pockets at all times. We have more resources at our disposal today than a seminary trained PHD would have had a few decades ago. So, we are capable. We can do this. I believe in you. I believe that we can do this together. Everyone is capable, but it's going to take some work.

So today we're going to talk about the importance of biblical community. Because here's the deal, there's no shortage of options vying to be your community. Like think about all of the options you have. Like there are things you can do like affinity-based things. You can find a group, you can find a group of people that if you like to ride your bike, you can ride your bike before work. You can ride your bike after work. You can find a group of people who like to ride their bike in the middle of the day. You can find a group of people who want to ride their bike when it rains. Like you can find that anywhere, right. Starbucks tried this a couple of decades

ago, right. They were like “hey we want to be your third place”. You go home, you go to work, then you come and hang out at Starbucks. That’s what we want to be. Your fraternity wants to be your community. Your sorority wants to be your community. Right now, companies are dumping millions and billions of dollars into trying to figure out what the metaverse is going to look like and how they can be your online community. Like everybody is trying to figure out how to be your community. But what we’re saying at Harris Creek is that we want the common denominator - so for all of those organizations, it’s always something right. If it’s your kid’s baseball team or Starbucks or riding your bike, there’s always a common denominator that brings you together. There’s always one unifying thing. And what we’re saying at Harris Creek is that we want your community to be centered around the Bible. Like the unifying factor, the thing that’s going to collectively bring your group together, we want it to be the Bible. So, if you’re going to have one thing in common, if you’re going to center your group, which we believe is an extension of church, an extension of what we do here, is what happens in these living rooms all throughout McLennan County and beyond. We want that to be centered around God’s word.

So, we’re in this series right now called Life Together, where we’re talking about these building blocks of community. There’s an A and a B and a C. If you were here last week, we talked about what it means to be authentic. Today is biblical. Next week we’re going to talk about what it means to be committed. But we came up with these, this all came out of the conversation that we’ve had time and time again. We have 300+ life groups here at Harris Creek, between youth and college and adults, there are all these different groups. And we wanted to be able to answer the question “How do we know if our group is doing well?” We boiled it down to these three things. Is your group authentic? Is your group biblical? And is your group committed?

So, if you were here last week, my friend Scott talked about the importance of an authentic community. And that’s one where you’re all able to be transparent with one another, you are able to be vulnerable with one another. If you missed it, go back and watch it. Scott’s the best. He’s the best person to have that conversation with our church family. Go back and watch that one. But Scott made the point last week that the goal isn’t simply that you would be authentic, but that your whole group would be. But often this starts with you going first.

And so, as we talk today about what it means to be biblical, like our hope absolutely, 100% don’t miss this, our hope is that you as an individual would be biblical. That you would know the Bible inside and out. But that’s not the end goal. The end goal is that your whole group would be. But it does start with you. So today we’re going to be looking at a well-known passage of scripture from 2 Timothy. And we are going to see that all scripture is God-breathed, that all scripture is useful, and that all scripture prepares us for the road ahead. And so, each week at Harris Creek we’re going to teach you the Bible. We’re going to open up the Bible and see what it says. And today is going to be a little extra meta, because we’re going to be looking at the Bible to learn why we read the Bible. But that’s what we’re going to do today.

And here’s my disclaimer: there’s a part of me that feels like this sermon could feel like a parent telling a child to clean their room. If you track with me at all on that, like the pastor is up on stage and tells you to read the Bible, and that just feels kind of predictable. Like that’s exactly what you would expect to hear when you come to church, that you should read your Bible. And here’s why I’m cool with that: I’m cool with that because like that’s the conviction that I feel like

God has given me for this place. I've been on staff here for just shy of nine years. I've seen us through lots of different seasons. And what I believe, and you can put me at the front of this line, I believe that we as a body collectively need to grow in this area. Our biblical literacy, our mastery of the Bible, our understanding of what it means, what we should do with it, all of that. I believe that we have massive steps that we can take forward. I believe we've taken steps, and I think that we need to keep going. But the conviction that I feel, like the primary calling that I feel on my life in this season, is to help the people of Harris Creek know, understand, and read and apply their Bibles. Because if we do so, like if we can do this, as we walk out of here in an hour, less than an hour, if we can do this together it's going to transform our lives, our life groups, our church and our community. Because that's what God's word does.

And so just to set the scene a little bit before we dive in, a few years after he wrote the book of 1 Timothy, Paul wrote 2 Timothy. It's a very cleverly titled sequel. In between he wrote a book called Titus to another friend of his. But Timothy was Paul's closest friend, his closest partner in ministry. He was Paul's apprentice. They'd lived life together. They'd served together. They'd done ministry together. And Paul at this time, he wrote this around 67 AD. This is our last letter that we have from Paul. And as Paul is writing this, he's on death row. He's awaiting execution. Death is literally around the corner. Like that is what's coming next for Paul, and he knows it. And so, he has one final opportunity to communicate everything he wants his friend, mentee, apprentice, whatever you want to call him, he's got one last crack to tell Timothy everything he wants him to know. And so, this letter, if you read 1 Timothy, if you read Titus, those feel more theological. Those feel more philosophical. That's more like hey make sure you do church like this. 2 Timothy, on the other hand, is a lot more personal. And so, what we see in this letter is Paul telling Timothy what he wants him to cling to, what he wants him to remember, and that's to stand strong in his faith and to remain dependent on the word of God. So those are kind of the two themes that this letter takes on. And as the world around them is spiraling towards ungodliness - which should make scripture feel very relatable - there's ungodliness all around them, these are the things that Paul wants him to know.

And so that's where we are going to pick up in chapter 3, verse 14. He says this: **14 But as for you, remember these are his instructions to his friend Timothy, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** So what Paul is saying here, to eliminate any confusion, he is saying Timothy you've known these things from a young age. You had taught them as a child. You've come to find that they're true. You've grown up. You've matured. You've tested these things and found that they're true. Keep going. And then he says this: **16 All Scripture is God-breathed.** And we are going to stop right there in the middle of a sentence, because that is our first point this morning is that all scripture is God-breathed.

1. All Scripture is God-Breathed

And here's my hunch this morning, is that if you've grown up in church for any duration of time, even if you've been in this church, like we've taught this passage. You might've read this passage. You might've heard it taught from this stage. If you've heard this passage before, it's very easy for us to read it, see it, nod our heads, and then just move on. But I think we need to stop and really think about this statement that all scripture is God-breathed, because this is a

really important theological statement that Paul is making here. Like when you hear the word “theology”, the most basic definition of theology is what you believe about God. And so this is a really important theological statement that tells us a lot about what we believe about God, if we believe this sentence is true. So, my question to you is, “Do you?” Do you believe that all scripture is God-breathed? Now full disclosure, we have to understand everything that Paul is talking about right here. When he is saying all scripture, what he’s talking about is specifically the Old Testament, because it was already done. The New Testament was in the process of being written. There were a couple of books of the New Testament that hadn’t been written yet, but principally we can trust that this applies to the whole thing. To all 37 books of the Old Testament, or 39 books of the Old Testament, 27 books in the New Testament. All 66 books in the Bible, they point to one inspiration - God breathed these words into existence through human authors and they all tell the same story of God redeeming humanity through the person of Jesus. Forty authors, same story. Regardless of their background, their upbringing, how smart they were, how educated they were, what they’d seen, what they hadn’t seen, all of it. God used all of these different peoples, through their different personalities, through their different writing styles, and their backgrounds. But ultimately, we believe that God inspired each one of these words. Now that’s a really big deal! And that’s a really big thing that we need to be on the same page on. We say here, at Harris Creek, that we believe that God’s word is our authority, our conscience, and our guide in everything. Now there are some people who would say maybe. Some of it, like they would say, it’s partially inspired. Or maybe it’s sort of authoritative, partially authoritative. But what happens is that it becomes a slippery slope really fast. Because how do you know which are the good parts and which are the bad parts? Like we have to go all in on this idea that God’s word, all of it, every verse, every chapter, every book, is inspired by God. And like, are there parts of scripture that are confusing? Yes. Are there parts that are hard to understand? Absolutely. Are there parts where reasonable, smart, intelligent, well-read human beings can disagree on what a word means? Absolutely. But, at the end of the day we need to come to the same conclusion that God inspired each one of these words. So how does this play out in the life group? That’s a question we have to ask. Does your group all elevate scripture in the same way? Do you all hold this book up and say, “Yes, it is our authority, our conscience and our guide.” Because if it is, great! You’re off to the races. If you’re on different pages there, that’s going to be frustrating for everybody. This also means that we believe that God is still breathing and speaking to us through his word even today. And like, maybe it’s just me, maybe you’ve found this to be true too, I feel like this is the most common, most frequent way that I hear from God is by opening His word. Sometimes you have those days where it’s like a word, a phrase, a verse, a chapter, something jumps off the page at you and it’s everything you needed to read in that moment. And you close your Bible and it’s like something supernatural happened. That’s happened to me, I hope that’s happened to you. That’s what I mean when I say that this is how God speaks to us today. I think this is how God works very frequently, very often.

And this is a conversation that we’re having in our house a lot right now. So, we have a 3 ½ year old named Micah, an almost 2-year-old named Elsie, and then we’re having another little boy in June. And Micah, as we knew that we’re going to have another baby, we started kind of prepping the kids and we started talking to Micah about it. He was like “I’m going to pray about it. I’m going to pray that it’s a girl.” And we were like alright, go for it. And spoilers, it turns out it’s not. It’s going to be a boy. And we decided to break the news to him as easily as we could, like

over a cupcake. He bit into it and found out it was blue, and he was like “Alright, it’s a boy.” And I’m trying to prevent a crisis of faith in my 3 ½ year old, and so I go into like pastor/dad mode and we’re trying to coach him through this, right. But then he dropped another bomb on me that I wasn’t quite ready for. So, we worked through the whole prayer thing, and then he said, “I don’t really hear God’s voice.” And I was like alright, we’re doing this. And then he said, “Why? Why don’t I hear God’s voice?” And I thought that was a really big question from a really small person. And so, we start talking about that. And every night we start working through, I said “Buddy (just what I told you) I think most often we hear from God through reading His word.” And so at the end of each night, when we read the Jesus storybook Bible (which I highly recommend if you have small kids) we start working through that. And I ask him the question “Hey what do you think God wants us to learn from that story?” And some nights his answers are dead on. It’s like he gets it. Then there’s other nights where his answers are a little unorthodox, at best, like heretical at worst. And it’s okay. Those are all shepherding opportunities, right. On Friday, we were talking about the Holy Spirit. And he was like wait you’re telling me God lives inside of everybody? It’s like everybody that loves Jesus. Yeah, Holy Spirit, that’s how it works. And he was like “Wow, there’s a lot of gods.” And I was like “Nope. Just one! Just the one!” But you’re close.

But I think these are helpful questions for us to ask ourselves. Whether we just finished reading Ruth, or Hosea, or Job, or Revelation, or Matthew, whatever book you just finished reading, as you are reading each day. What is God trying to teach us through these stories? Why thousands of years later are these preserved in this book? What are we supposed to learn from these? A very helpful study method (we are going to put it up on the screen), I think it’s helpful if you’re not sure where to begin. There are three questions you can ask every day that will help illuminate what God might be trying to teach you. The first one is Observation - What does it say? What does the text say? Are there words that stick out? Are there words that are repeated? What’s the context? What’s going on? Is it a statement? Is it a command? Is the author trying to describe something? This is where you put on your journalist hat and you’re just trying to figure out what are the facts that are going on right here in this passage.

The second question is Interpretation - What does it mean? What questions do you have? As you read it, and you are like man I understand like 20% of this. Write down all the questions that you have and then look for answers. Find a commentary that you trust. Seek to find the answers that you have.

And the third question is simply Application - What should I do with this? Like now that you’ve read it, how does this passage apply to me? How did it apply to them, and how does it apply to me? How will this passage impact my life and the lives of the people around me? We want to be people who allow God’s word, and invite God’s word, to change us and transform us so that we look more and more like Jesus. And these questions might help you do so.

Now let’s keep reading in verse 16. And so, we know that all Scripture is God-breathed, and the next thing he says is that it **16 is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.** And so, our second point this morning is that all scripture is useful.

2. All Scripture is Useful

If our first point this morning was more theological in nature, this one I think is more practical. Paul tells us that scripture is useful for these four reasons - and this list is not exhaustive. This is not the only reason scripture is helpful, but Paul gives us four things to work with right here. The first one is teaching - that's helping others understand God's truth. Like how do we, how does scripture help us understand God's character, God's nature, what God does, God's tendencies? What does it teach us about humanity and our own tendencies? Teaching, what does it look like to use scripture as a tool to teach about God's nature? So how does this play out in life group? One way is through devotionals, through people in the group sharing what they're reading and what they're learning in God's word. Another way is Scott talked about the three questions last week - input, output, confession. The question of how are you feeding your soul. What are you learning in God's word? Like yes, it might be a podcast. Yes, there might be a great book that you just read. But what trumps those two are what are you learning in God's word. What are you reading in scripture and how is that shaping you?

The second and third things that Paul says here kind of go hand-in-hand. He says rebuking and correcting. So rebuking is the idea of pointing out sin or exposing sin. So, there is a sin. There's a problem. Rebuking is pointing out the problem. Correcting is offering a solution to the sin. So, the easiest way to explain this, think about the sermon series, if you were here, that we just finished up - The Seven Deadly Sins of Suburbia. If you were here, I don't know about you, it was a super convicting series. I feel like I learned a ton. But with each one of those seven deadly sins, there was an accompanying solution, right. So, if the sin we talked about was entitlement, then gratitude was the solution. If anger was the sin, forgiveness was the solution. If comparison was the sin, humility is the solution. So, when we talk about correcting and rebuking, those things have to go hand-in-hand. You point out the sin and you offer up the solution to it. And so how this plays out in your life group is using the Bible as a mirror into your own life, or into the lives of others, to point out areas of our lives that don't line up with what scripture says. But here's the kicker - this only works if you know what scripture says. That's why we need to know. Because if we're living in ways that are inconsistent with what God's word says, but we don't even realize it, that's a problem.

The fourth thing he says is training in righteousness. And this is similar to teaching, but training in righteousness focuses more like on the practical application. So instead of the ideas, we've got the hands on. So, in your life group, we talk a lot about counseling biblically. That's a phrase that you are going to hear from this stage over and over and over. When we say counseling biblically that means using the Bible as your starting point and your end point when you're trying to solve a problem. Be it a fight you got in in your marriage, or what feels like a moral gray area and you're not quite sure what to do, maybe you just need to Google "what does scripture say about money". Like don't be afraid to do that. Whatever it is that you're trying to counsel one another on, use this as the starting point and the end point. Another way is when we process decisions together, there is a big difference between processing and updating. Like there's two ways a conversation can play out, right. If you're looking for a new job and you're like "Hey guys I have this opportunity, help me pray through it. Here are the pros. Here are the cons. What do you think God's word has to say about that?" That's one way to have that conversation within the context of your life group. Another way is to be like "Hey I put in my two weeks' notice. I got another job." Very different conversations - same end result. But if you bring in your group

early, they will be able to counsel you in a biblical manner that might help you reach the most God-honoring conclusion that you can reach. Because here's a thing that I have found to be true - you can get very well-intentioned, horrific advice. Like it doesn't matter how much people love you, how much people are for you, how much people care about you. If what they say, if the advice that they give you, if the counsel they offer up, doesn't line up with the word of God, it's bad advice. And we need to believe that that's true. Because I think we flippantly say things. We say things off-hand like "follow your heart", or like the newer version of that is "live your truth", or we say things like "Hey, it's your money. God gave you that money. Get that fifth bedroom". But like maybe the fifth bedroom is not the best idea. If the advice that we are giving doesn't line up the word of God, it's bad advice. I've heard J.P. say this time and time again, you should trust yourself the least when you really want something. And when you really want something you should go really really slowly into those turns. And Proverbs 11:14 says that **14 in an abundance of counselors there is safety**. And I think the only thing I would add onto that is an abundance of counselors who know God's word there is safety. Because if they're ignorant in the ways of God, they're going to lead you astray.

There's a pastor in North Carolina named Tony Merida, and he wrote this. It was actually in a commentary on Ruth, but Scott sent it to me this week and I thought it was so perfectly worded that I wanted to read it to you. He says:

"The longer I have pastored, the more I have observed how many professing Christians do not really believe that the Bible is enough. They do not believe it is sufficient for life and godliness. For example, some pragmatic Christians live by whatever makes the most practical sense. Sometimes this is good, but often what is deemed "practical" may not be biblical or God-honoring. So, whenever the Bible says one thing and their own reason says another, the former is quietly ignored or explained away, and the latter wins out. Others base major decisions on their feelings and their experiences. They may use the phrase "God told me" to justify a decision, sometimes when that decision clearly violates the clear teaching of Scripture (like marrying an unbeliever)! But God is not going to tell anyone to do something that violates His word."

So the reason we want your group to be experts, the reason we want you to know this book inside and out, is so that as you're making decisions you have a room full of people in your corner who have your back, who have your best interest at heart, and they are all using the same biblical worldview as their filter.

Let's read the last thing that Paul says to Timothy here in chapter 3 verse 17. We've talked about it being God-breathed. We've talked about it being useful. And then he says 17 **so that the servant of God** (that means me, that means you) **may be thoroughly equipped for every good work**. And so, our last point this morning is that all scripture prepares us.

3. All Scripture Prepares Us

So, if our first point was more theological, and our next point was more practical, I think what Paul is doing here is he is casting this 50-year vision statement for Timothy's life. I think he's saying, "Hey this is what I want it to look like for you moving forward." And it's the same one

that I believe is true for us today. If we devote ourselves to growing in our understanding of God's word, we'll be prepared for each season, each assignment, each task, and each obstacle that comes our way.

Eugene Peterson says it like this. He says, "Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son."

When we know scripture, when we have assimilated scripture into our lives, what flows out of us are the things of God. When we have absorbed these things, what comes out of us are things that look like Jesus. We look like Jesus to the world around us. These aren't simply facts to learn, or a religious box to check, or just a neat story to file away for a rainy day. These are stories and principles and values and truths and verses and chapters and books that are meant for us to internalize and Psalm 1:19 says hide deep within our hearts. It says **19 I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.** We hide these words deep within our hearts. But I think too often what we do, and like put me again at the front of the list, this is a conviction I've felt over the last two years. I think we reference scripture the same way we do like an old episode of Friends. We'd be like, you know Paul says that thing about humility. Maybe it's Jesus though. Or maybe it was Peter. Peter said it. Peter said it. Yeah, Peter said it. Like, we do this, but I think we need to commit these things to memory, chapter and verse. We should be able to reference it and point back to it and say this is what God's word says. Build our case. Like, as we are counseling one another, build the case with scripture. Commit these things to memory. Some of you know scripture, but what comes out of you aren't the things of God. And we've missed the point completely if we think this is for us. Like if we think the whole point of this is that we learn scripture so that we're a better Christian, so that God is more proud of us than He is the other person in our life group, we've missed it. But the point is that we take these things that we're learning and then we use it to build up the people around us. In this case, most specifically what we are talking about today, your life group. That you would take the things that you are learning in your time alone with God, as you open up the Bible and you ask God to speak to you through these words, that you take those things and you use those to build up the people around you. Absolutely you should want to grow as an individual. But absolutely you should also want to equip, and develop, and pour into the people around you. Like our approach to life groups, we've even tried to stay away - especially with adults - from words like "leader", like "life group leader", because we want everybody to lead everybody. Because ideally there are going to be days where you're on the mat and you need someone to help carry you. But then there are going to be other days where you're learning and growing and thriving, and you need to be ready to carry somebody else on the map. It's a shared discipleship model, which means I'm just as responsible for your spiritual growth as I am my own. That's a lofty goal, but I think it's right, and I think it's biblical. And the beautiful thing about this is that it means that we get to share in other people's growth.

My friend Will, in my group, is on the greatest Bible reading hot streak of his life. In 2022 he hasn't missed a day yet. Now, I'm proud of my friend Will. I'm excited for Will. I'm excited for his wife. I'm excited for their family. But let me tell you something else. Selfishly, I'm excited for me. Because I'm going to be a better believer, I'm going to be a better follower of Jesus, 30

days from now, 6 months from now, 6 years from now, because of Will's commitment to read scripture every single day. That's the thing that we have to understand, is that this isn't just for us. It's not just for you, or for your spouse, or for your kids. It's for your group. It's for our church. The things that you're learning, the things that God's teaching you, those are to build up all of us, every single person in this room. So, as we each experience different seasons, or we have different hurts or experiences or decisions to make or obstacles that we come across, we will benefit greatly from everybody around us spending time in scripture.

Our staff wrote a book this past summer. And one of the things it talked about was the idea of preparing the child for the road versus preparing the road for the child. And, like, I'm going to give it the most simple explanation I possibly can. The idea of the helicopter parent, if you're familiar with that term, that idea is a little bit dead. The helicopter parent was the parent that kind of hovered over and made sure everything was okay. There's a new terminology. There's new terminology, and it's kind of interchangeable, but it's all the same idea. One is a snowplow parent, or sometimes it's called a bulldozer parent, sometimes it's called a lawn mower parent. Same principle. The idea is just to clear every obstacle out of the way, so that your kids can just walk through a clean, neat, tidy path, right. But here's the thing, let me let you in on a little secret as believers, we don't have that luxury. As believers in Jesus, as followers of Jesus, we don't have the opportunity, we are not afforded the luxury of being able to move ahead and clear every obstacle potentially, that we might encounter, every hardship, every hurdle, every obstacle in the road. We don't get to clear those out of the way. But we can prepare ourselves, and we can prepare one another for the road that we're going to walk together. We can link arms and walk down that road together arm in arm, with our life groups, with the people that God has called us to do community with. We can walk that road together.

In summary this morning, all scripture is God-breathed, all scripture is useful, and all scripture prepares us for the road ahead.

And I mentioned earlier, when I was in the ER like it really did feel like everybody was speaking a different language at times, and I couldn't keep up. And that didn't happen overnight, though. That's what's interesting. It took so much study, and practice, and time spent on task, and people interacting day in and day out, speaking that same language. It took time, effort and intentionality for them to get to that point. And it's the same thing when we talk about what it means to speak the language of the Bible. It takes time. It takes effort and intentionality on your part. And are we calling you to a high bar? Absolutely. Absolutely we are. And the only way that your group is going to get there is by you, individually, committing to reading God's word every single day. Scott said it last week, and I'm going to say it again today because it holds true for this sermon as well, if your group needs to grow in this area, if you're sitting there and you like we're not very good at this, you go first. You go first. Let it start with you. You lead the charge. Be the first to ask what you're learning, or what others are learning. Be the first to share what you're learning. Don't be afraid to ask people, when people give you advice or counsel, don't be afraid to ask them to back it up with scripture. When you give people counsel or advice, and they ask you where that came from in scripture, don't be offended. Just have a good answer.

I told you earlier that I like to put people in buckets, because I think it's helpful to self-identify. If you're in a group, I think you could fall into one of three buckets, as you sit here today, and

you hear this sermon. Some of you, you feel like you're the expert in your group, and you're like I just wish that people would ask for my opinion more. Here's what I would tell you. You might know your Bible. You might know it inside and out, but if you are the expert, walk humbly. That's my caution to you today. Some of you, you're doing it. You're growing, maybe for the first time in your life, you're in a season where you feel like you're learning and growing and God's teaching you things. What I want you to do is next time your group meets; I want you to have the boldness and the confidence to speak up and share. Tell people what God's teaching you. Let them learn from you. If you're trying to figure out who those people are in your group, look at the people in your group and see who is living out the fruit of the Spirit. See who has love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and kindness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and gentleness and self-control. Find that person and follow them as they follow Jesus.

And some of you, you're like I don't even know where to begin. And maybe that's embarrassing, because you are like I've been in church for years and I don't even know where to begin. This is really hard for me. I don't even know where to start. If you don't know where to begin, J.P. has said this several times and I've found it to be extremely helpful in my own life, you need a time, a place, and a plan. A time, a place, and a plan. So, a time, listen if you're a morning person, do it in the morning. If you're not a morning person, don't try to do it in the morning. You're going to fall asleep. If you're a night person, do it at night. If you have a lunch break, do it on your lunch break. Find the time that works best for you and do it then.

A place. Find a place. Again, if you're like I'm going to do it first thing when I wake up. I'm going to do it from my bed. Maybe not a good idea. You're probably going to fall asleep. Find another place. Every morning my alarm clock goes off. I go and I pour a cup of coffee and I go sit on the edge of our couch and I read. That's what I do. That's what works for me. But move locations. Drive somewhere. Go sit at a coffee shop. Wherever you place needs to be, find your place.

And if you need a plan, might I suggest to you www.biblereadingplan.org. Two years ago, we started this. We had the same meeting that every other church in the country was having. Our doors were temporarily closed, and we were like what do we do? How do we keep people engaged with what God's doing here? And so, it came out of a meeting. And another meeting, and another meeting, and another meeting, and another meeting. But it came out of several meetings. And do you know why I said earlier that I think all of you can be experts? The Bible Reading Plan is the reason why I believe that. Because here's why. Just playing the odds, playing the numbers, you're probably right now sitting within fifteen or twenty feet of somebody who's on our team who writes for the Bible Reading Plan. We have a team of fifty something writers. We have a team of, I think, twelve editors who make sure we don't miss commas and periods, and all kinds of things like that. And that team works together. Every single day people take a text, they sit with it, they study it, and they write about it in a way that we can all learn, and all grow together. Like this is not a staff project. This is written by our body, for our body, so that we can all grow and be equipped for every single good work that God might have for us. So why do I think you can be an expert? Because I'm watching our people become experts. Every single day I get to see this unfold. And the people that write for us, like they don't have PhDs in Greek or Hebrew. They're willing. They're capable. They're willing to take a text, and sit with it, and study it, and ask God what it might be that He would have us learn from that chapter. I've

benefited from this tremendously. Like, I was a guy on staff at a church for a long time and it was hard for me to read scripture. It was a chore. I, like a lot of you probably, I had great intentions every January 1st. And by January 5th it's like I've missed a day, and I can't catch up. I can't catch up. And so, then I would find myself reading the same chapters and the same books and the same stories over, and over and over. I dodged the hard ones, the tough ones, and I stuck with what I felt like I could easily pull something from every single day. But this is predictable. I know what I read yesterday. Yesterday I read Ruth 4. Tomorrow I'm going to read Titus 1. It's a chapter a day. That's extremely manageable, and I can grow every single day. And you can too. So, if you don't know where to begin, start there. Go to the website. You can sign up. We can send it to you via email. You can have it come to your inbox every single day. You can go through the app. You can get there however you want to get there, but it's a great way for you to start learning and commit to spending time in scripture every single day. This is how our body can be equipped for every good work. Bonus points if your group does it together. You'll be amazed at how much better your conversation gets as a group when you all read the same thing. Now if you are already off and rolling on something, if you've already got a plan, if you're like I'm a Bible Recap person, great keep going. If you have a Bible in a year plan, do it great keep going. If your group started doing something, great keep going. But if you're like hey I don't know where to begin, I highly recommend that you start there. But let's be people who commit ourselves to knowing, understanding, and applying God's word to our lives. I'm going to pray that we will.

God, we love you and we are thankful for today. We are thankful that we can gather in this place. It's not lost on us that two years ago we couldn't. We are thankful for the opportunity to be here in this place and to spend time opening up your word, singing songs to you, seeing what your word says about our lives, how we can apply it. God, I pray for the people in this room who don't even know where to begin and they're embarrassed by that. God, I pray that they have the courage tomorrow to start something new, to start a new plan. God, for the people in this room who are growing and learning and absorbing your word in a way that they never have before, God I pray that they keep going. For people in life groups, God, I pray that we will just be healthier than ever because we're centered around God's word. Help that be the thing that binds us together. We love you. We are thankful for the opportunity to come and sing, hear your word, take communion, and respond to you today. It's in your name we pray. Amen.