

Introduction

A little bit about me: I was born and raised in Kansas City, Kansas and spent most of my college and graduate school years in the Baltimore-Washington D.C. area. It was there that I met my husband Jerry (to whom I have been married for nearly 35 years). We moved to Texas 30 years ago and have lived most of the last 28 years in Elgin. I spent 25 of those 28 years as a home educator, teaching our 6 biological children and the 4 nieces and nephews who became part of our household in early 2003. One of the things I felt strongly about in our homeschooling journey was that I wanted my students to understand that, as our Creator, God is in everything we do. When we studied science or math, we could see the order of the created Universe. When we looked at literature or history, we could evaluate whether the beliefs and actions of the writers, characters, and historical figures involved reflected or contradicted scriptural values. As such, the study and memorization of scripture were very significant in our educational journey. All of the children are now adults, the youngest a University student. We have been an active part of Hope Chapel since 2005 and have served in various capacities over the years.

For me, a lot of that involvement has focused on the study, teaching, and memorization of scripture. As I look out today, I see a lot of teens and young adults with whom I worked in the Family Night program with an emphasis on not only memorizing passages of scripture, but also on understanding what we were memorizing.

I will freely profess that I am both an academic and a creative (I believe by God's design) and I love doing research and deep study. I absolutely understand that not everyone is "wired" the same way (try raising 10 children – or even just being married and you will see that this is true), but I do strongly believe that as followers of Jesus, we need to get to know Him through regular time spent in the Word. That will look different from person to person and will also vary and change for each individual as they go through different seasons of life. My "assignment" for today is to share with you some of my passion that we be people of the Word, to challenge all of you to be faithful in spending time with Jesus in the scriptures, and to perhaps introduce some basic "tools" or "equipment" that can help us overcome the things that might trip us up in our quest to "Live By The Book"

We'll be covering a lot of ground today. This is really just a brief introduction, and I have loads of resources that I could share, but just won't have time. If you see or hear something that interests you or if you'd like to have a deeper discussion or a "how to" session – please let me know. I would love to help you along your journey.

In this series we have been talking about following Jesus' commands or "Letting Jesus Disciple Us." Essentially we want to be learning from Jesus what He considers important.

Let's start by reading aloud together a well known passage from Deuteronomy 6 that is often referred to as the Shema. This would have been extremely familiar to Jesus and His contemporaries.

Read aloud together from regular formatting and then show reformatted version.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

NIV

Also formatted version - including bolding & underlining.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart
 and with all your soul
 and with all your strength

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Impress **them** on your children.

Talk about **them** when you sit at home
 and when you walk along the road,
 when you lie down
 and when you get up.

Tie **them** as symbols on your hands

and
bind **them** on your foreheads.

Write **them** on the doorframes of your houses
 and on your gates.

Look again at the screen and you'll notice that the formatting and colors are now different from when we read it and from what you typically see. This is intentional and helps us understand the passage. We'll return to this idea a little later.

As I mentioned, the Shema would have been extremely familiar to Jesus. We can observe throughout the gospels that Jesus clearly knew the Scriptures.

He referred to them repeatedly,
lived by them,
taught them,
and knew that He had come to fulfill them.

But you might ask, “When Jesus referred to ‘the Scriptures’ - what did He mean?”

Let’s look to Luke’s gospel to find the answer to that question. In Luke chapter 24, starting in verse 36 we see an account of Jesus appearing to some of His followers after His resurrection. In verses 44-45 we read this:

Luke 24:44-45 NASB please preserve red and italics

Now He said to them, “*These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.*” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,”

You notice, the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms are all mentioned.

Just a few verses earlier (13-35) we find the account of His encounter with Cleopas and another follower on the road to Emmaus. Specifically, verses 25-27 record the following:

Luke 24:25-27 NASB please preserve red

And He said to them, “*O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

When Jesus referred to “the Scriptures” He was talking about what is currently most often called the TaNaK or The Old Testament. {In some settings, whole classes are devoted to learning about the Old Testament. We obviously don’t have a huge amount of time to cover that this morning, so I want to share this.}

This is a helpful visual aid created by **The BibleProject**. [TaNaKOTovw_FNL.jpg](#) You can very easily find this “poster” and the associated video online and it is well worth watching.

Circle each as identified

TaNaK is a Hebrew acronym for Torah (instruction),
Nevi’im (prophets),
and Ketuvim (writings).

While many New Testament references will refer to “The Law” or “The Prophets”

-as we saw previously in Luke 24:44, Jesus refers to all three categories of writings.

His words reflect the organizational structure that was used during His human lifetime and show that ALL of those writings were important to Him.

The Old Testament that we find in our modern day bibles has the same content, it is just organized differently.

We also see earlier in Luke's gospel, at the beginning of His public ministry, how well acquainted Jesus was with Scripture.

In verses 1-13 of Chapter 4, (His temptation in the wilderness) we can observe that Jesus not only knew Scripture well enough to quote it, He also knew when Satan was twisting scripture and trying to use it incorrectly.

Later in the same chapter He begins teaching in the synagogues in Galilee. Verses 16-21 tell us:

Luke 4:16-21 NASB

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him.

And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus not only knew the scripture, He knew WHERE in the scroll of Isaiah to find it, and what portion He should read.

We could easily spend all morning just walking through the gospels and noting all the places where Jesus refers back to the TaNaK or speaks of fulfilling it (at least 25 times in the gospels). However, the big idea here is that Jesus placed a high priority on knowing and living out scripture. If we are allowing Him to disciple us (teach us how to live), we also need to be devoted to knowing and living out scripture. This isn't to "earn brownie points" - rather it is to participate cooperatively as citizens of the Kingdom of God (Wes spoke to us about this last week.).

Of course we also have the New Testament scriptures which include history (the gospels and Acts), the epistles (letters) written by early church leaders (like Paul, Peter, John, James, and very possibly others), and prophecy (Revelation). As with the Old Testament, we could spend a great deal of time discussing the structure of the New Testament and how it came to us, but once again this is not the appropriate time and place for that.

What is important to note is that even while the volumes that make up the New Testament were being written, at least some of the writers recognized certain other writings as divinely inspired scripture.

In particular, let's quickly look at 2nd Peter 3:14-16 (NIV):

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Notice that Peter specifically mentions Paul's letters and refers to them as Scriptures, speaking of how some false teachers are trying to distort them.

Let's return for just a moment to Luke chapter 24 and read just a little further than before, verses 45-47 Luke 24:45-47 (NASB-1995)

Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

At this point I'd also like to quickly remind you of a passage that Matt referred to 2 weeks ago with regards to the content of the gospel:

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul tells us that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that He was raised on the third day ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES. This is clearly the SAME CONTENT spoken of in Luke.

Now that we have the overview of what we mean by “The Scriptures,” let’s look specifically at some passages from one of the Apostle Paul’s letters to Timothy, a young man whom Paul mentored and then clearly trusted to be a leader in some of the early churches. We know and refer to this letter as 2nd Timothy.

I’d first like to quickly touch on 3 short passages from early in the letter. In the interest of time I am just going to give references and summaries at this point, but I encourage you to look these up later yourself.

Just give the references and summarize here

2 Timothy 1:5	Timothy learned faith from Grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice
2 Timothy 2:1-2 & 2 Timothy 2:14-15	Paul challenged Timothy to correctly handle the Word of Truth and to teach others

These 3 scriptures together emphasize the importance of sharing and teaching and stewarding our faith.

We now come to the Central passage I want to spend most time on: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Rather than just putting a block of text up on the screen however, I want to give you a brief example of one technique that has been very helpful to me in studying scripture. (You got a teaser of this technique at the beginning of this talk.) I learned how to use this method during my freshman year in college and have utilized it regularly ever since. Once again, for those of you watching the livestream, I apologize if you are not able to see this well. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 New English Translation

First I will show you the overview and then we’ll move on to look more closely.

You’ll see that there are lots of indentations, columns, and parallels.

While I have included the verse numbers here, I want to advise or remind you that the verse numbering was NOT part of the original writing. It was added later as an indexing tool (and frankly sometimes it seems very arbitrary or even unhelpful)

2 Timothy 3:14-17 New English Translation

14 You, however, must continue^[a] in the things you have learned and are confident about.

15 You know^[b] who taught you^[c] and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

16 Every scripture^[d] is inspired by God^[e] and useful for teaching, for reproof,^[f] for correction, and for training in righteousness,

17 that the person dedicated to God^[g] may be capable^[h] and equipped for every good work.

Now that we've seen the bigger picture, let's zoom in and go a little deeper.

Verses-14- 15 formatted together

"Must continue" is a command. And in what are we to continue? The things we have learned and are confident about.

Verse 15 goes on to say that Timothy knows who taught him FROM INFANCY or CHILDHOOD. (Remember how Paul said Timothy had learned his faith from his grandmother and mother.)

I want to insert a personal testimony here because this is part of why I am so passionate about "Living By the Book."

I stand before you today recognizing that I have something very special in common with Timothy. My paternal grandmother had a huge influence on my relationship with Jesus and on my passion for the Scriptures. Literally, my first memory (probably from when I was not yet 3 years old) is of being rocked by my grandmother as she sang "Jesus Loves Me" and of her reading stories to me from a children's bible. At a young age my grandmother challenged me to memorize The Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and the order of the books of the bible, all of which I did to make her happy. Many of the gifts I received from my grandparents over the years were specifically chosen to nurture my emerging and growing faith in Jesus. Breakfast in my grandparents' home always included a short reading from scripture and a daily devotional guide. The example they set of daily devotional reading as a family continued in my family growing up. (In addition to these clear memories, I discovered just this last week that I also have my maternal grandmother's bible in my possession, further evidence of a legacy of faith.)

I can also recall specific pastors from my childhood and youth who taught skills like how to use a concordance or gave me meaty books to read that helped me learn more about prayer. During my middle school years, one specific pastor challenged us in the area of being people of the Word during one Lenten season. When he was moved on (by our denomination) to another church in another town, we realized (as a family) that we were no longer being fed well spiritually and that we were HUNGRY for the Word. As a result, we moved on to a new church home where there was a much greater emphasis on teaching and learning the scriptures.

During my last 2 years of high school I was involved in a Bible quizzing program called Bible Bowl. We did intense study of certain portions of scripture and then game-show like quizzing in regional and national tournaments as well as individual testing on the portions of scripture that we studied. Now, I will freely admit that I was quite the competitor and I know that a big part of my motivation was to win or to perform well, and I did. During my senior year when we studied the books of Joshua, Judges, & Ruth, I learned all the geographic boundaries of the 12 tribes of Israel backwards and forwards! I certainly wouldn't remember all of that information today, but I DO remember a lot about the judges and about Ruth! I also still remember a tremendous amount from the 6 letters of Paul that we studied my junior year. My point in sharing that story is not to brag but rather to point out that ***even though my motives for study during those two years were not purely wanting to know God better through His Word, God used that time of study and learning to plant His Word deep in my mind and my heart, and He is still using it in my life today.***

Isaiah 55:10-11 (New International Version) says this:

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return to it without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
¹¹ **so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

When I went away from home to college and later graduate school, all that training and the examples that I had seen in my early years spurred me to look for fellowship that would help me continue to grow in walking with Jesus. And the Lord was very faithful to provide all that I needed. One of the statements that has stayed with me over the years is something an InterVarsity leader challenged us with: *“There are two things on this earth that are eternal: the Word of God and people’s souls. So where will you devote your time and effort?”* I am still in touch with that IV leader, and 40+ years later he and his wife are still helping bring the gospel to college campuses through relational ministry and are still helping alumni grow in faith. Many of the friendships that developed out of those college fellowships or local churches from those days are people to whom I’m still connected and who still encourage me in my walk with Jesus.

Another pastor who had a big impact on the early years of our marriage and parenting was one who continued to challenge us in studying and memorizing the Word. (He also introduced us to the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course.) Today, at 80+ years of age, he is still studying, memorizing, and teaching scripture (including traveling internationally).

Here at Hope in 2018 I had the privilege of participating in a class taught by Geno Hildebrandt on Interpreting and Teaching the Bible and was challenged in new ways once again.

What I want to point out as significant is that these people that I have mentioned learning from (and many others, too numerous to name) are people who do not JUST study the Bible, they LIVE according to it. They were or are human, they made or make mistakes, **and I can guarantee that they would not all see eye to eye on every issue in the world (or even in the Word).** But they are people who were or are devoted to Jesus and to learning to be more like Him by spending time with Him in His Word and also devoted to helping others do the same. I would absolutely describe them as “Living by the Book.” I sincerely hope that the same can be said of me.

After that rather long bit of personal testimony, let’s return for a moment to verse 15 of 2 Timothy 3: It describes the holy writings (scripture) as **“able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** That one description, in and of itself gives us perfect motivation for being people of the Word. But let’s continue and “unpack” some of the treasure found in verses 16-17.

First of all, we see “Every scripture^[d] is inspired by God^[e]”.

I’m going to get a little “geeky” on you here and have us look at the Greek word because it is both beautiful and important. The word we find here is theh-OP-nyoo-stos

g2315. θεόπνευστος theopneustos ;

It comes from two other Greek words g2316. θεός theos (meaning God) and g4154; πνέω pneō (meaning breath or blow)

– when we put them together, we get “God-breathed” or
“breathed out by God”, or
“inspired by God” or
“given by inspiration of God”

depending upon which translation you read. I absolutely love the poetic beauty of “God breathed.” I’d like to briefly make a point here.

Different translation teams have chosen the words and phrasing they have used for a variety of reasons. Some versions will even give you explanatory footnotes. One of the reasons is that languages change and evolve over time. A phrase that meant one thing to my grandparents or parents very possibly might mean something different to me or my children. This is especially true of figurative language – and figurative language is used extensively in scripture.

One of the easiest and most accessible ways to expand our knowledge of scripture is to read a passage in multiple translations. We do have to be careful with this and realize that there are differences between scholarly translations (usually done by groups of scholars) and paraphrases (often done by a single person or very small group).. That is not to say that paraphrases are unhelpful and should never be used. Sometimes a paraphrase will stimulate our thinking and give us motivation to go deeper.

You may have noticed that I have quoted from different translations throughout this message. I do have a couple of favorite translations that are my “go to” places to start when I am studying. They are both somewhat older translations (the NIV 1984 and the NASB 1995). Part of the reason I love those particular translations are that they were the “newer” scholarly translations that were most popularly in use when I really began to learn how to study scripture more deeply and so the wording is familiar. They often have links to study tools that were the ones I first learned how to use. The language of those translations also uses idioms and phraseology that make sense to my brain because they are what I grew up with.

But for serious study I almost always use multiple translations and Hebrew or Greek reference tools. I do sometimes read paraphrases, but always with the idea of using discernment as to whether the paraphrase accurately reflects the content agreed upon by scholarly translations. Learning more about the various translations can be beneficial and worthwhile.

But now let's move on and do a little more of the “deep dive” work that I so enjoy, and you will be able to see that it doesn’t have to be intimidating.

Next we see in **2 Tim 3:16** **Show formatted** that scripture – all scripture - is useful or **profitable** in four different areas: teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness – but what do those words actually mean? **Show empty chart?** If we look into each of those words and how it is used in different contexts, we see that there are some subtle differences.

Teaching – giving instruction, knowledge

Reproof – exposing or bringing to light what is wrong

Correction – restoration to a right or correct state

Training in Righteousness – nurture or discipline that produces good character (right actions and right understanding of God's grace)

Build the right column

To further clarify these differences, let's think about how they might apply to a teacher who is teaching a math or grammar lesson.

Teaching would be presenting material and saying "Let's learn about this subject," and then perhaps demonstrating something about it.

The teacher might then say, "Okay, you try the next part on your own so that we can see if you understand." If the student makes an error, the teacher might then say, "That's not quite right."

That would be reproof (pointing out an error).

Next, the teacher might say, "Here's how to fix that problem." That would be correction.

Once the teacher sees that the student has grasped the concept or procedure, the teacher might assign several "practice problems" or "homework"--this would be like training in righteousness – practical practice in doing something the right way.

teaching	Let's learn about this.
reproof	No, that's not right.
correction	Here's how to fix the problem.
training in righteousness	Practice how to do this the right way.

Build the right column

What you see built on the screen is a visual summary that I originally developed to use with elementary & preschool students, but it can be helpful to all of us in remembering how scripture is profitable to us.

Now let's go on to verse 17. What is the purpose of these applications of God's word?

We want to be fully equipped to do the good works to which God has called us.

As you have probably gathered by now, this is something about which I am passionate. It is my heartfelt desire to see others in the Body of Christ also eager to have the Holy Spirit working in their lives through Scripture. At the same time, I recognize that your life experiences may be very different from mine and your giftings may also be very different from mine. Growing up amongst people of faith in the way I did is NOT a requirement for walking with Jesus. Having a different background and different giftings means you bring something to the Kingdom of God that I can't. Jesus wants to meet all of us, right where we are and have the Holy Spirit guide us.

John 16:13a (NASB)

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth."

I understand that making time to read the Bible regularly can be challenging, especially if it is a new experience. I've walked through seasons where spending time with Jesus in the Word has been more of a challenge. When my oldest children were "littles" – that often meant choosing to spend part of their one common daytime nap doing my Bible study lesson. Later on, when I was raising a house full of children and I treasured my early morning quiet before the rush of the day began, I made a deliberate commitment for that season that I would spend time in the Word BEFORE I allowed myself to even glance at social media. In those days my scripture study was often connected with what we were doing as part of our homeschool. The point was that I had to CHOOSE to make spending time in the Word a priority. How that has worked itself out has looked different in different seasons of life. I'm not here to tell you that you need to use some specific program for a specified amount of time at a certain hour of the day. I'm here to encourage you that you CAN find a way. As time allows, I'm going to try to give you a few tools that may help you along the journey. And, as Matt sometimes mentions, further discussion over coffee is a viable option!

My overall encouragement for you in this area is to

**Use a combination of
devotional reading/meditation,
memorization,
and careful, systematic study,
both individually and in groups.**

If we were in a classroom or small group setting, we might spend time discussing each of these and how they interact. But for now, just recognize that they all have their places and uses and all are valuable. It is important to note that this mix will probably vary during different seasons of our lives. It is also highly likely that my experience and practice in this area will look different from yours. We certainly can and should learn from one another in this area, but we want to avoid the pitfall of formulaic legalism. No matter how you are engaging with scripture, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and then expect to grow & learn & be challenged and very likely change your way of thinking.

With regards to devotional reading, memorization, and careful study, it is important to have the “**Big Picture**” – to know how what I am reading fits into the larger context of scripture as a whole. But this can also be a challenge, especially if you are a newcomer to spending time in the Word and you don’t have a lot of “background knowledge” of the Bible. If you’d like some specific suggestions, please ask.

One of the important things to remember is that while today we can hold one bound book and call it “the Bible” – in reality it is a collection of writings – a whole library, if you will. As we have already mentioned, the TaNak includes the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings and the New Testament contains history, letters, and prophecy. So as we read and study, we need to pay attention to genre and context.

Poetry is read differently than prose. Parables are understood to be stories told for the purpose of making a point. Letters were written by certain people to certain other people or groups of people to address specific issues. Some prophecies were warnings about the results of continuing in wrong behavior while some foretold events in the distant future. Know what kind of literature you are reading and learn to recognize figurative language! Also be sure that you are reading contextually – not just pulling out a verse (or even a part of a verse) without paying attention to what is in the surrounding text. People very often misunderstand what they have read or incorrectly justify a position because of pulling a verse out of context. So ask yourself: How does what I am reading fit into the “Big Picture of the Bible?” -- This is context on a larger scale. The phrase that I used to often hear was “the whole counsel of scripture.”

While I absolutely believe that reading the whole Bible and then reading it again and again is a worthwhile goal, a “Read the Bible in a Year” plan may not be the best fit. You may not be in a season of life where that is feasible. Maybe you need a slower pace. What is important is to take a step, and then take another step, and then another.

Psalm 119:105 (NASB) says Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.
And Jesus told us that He was sending the Holy Spirit Who would guide us into truth.

So how might a step along the path appear?

- Maybe it looks like setting your phone or game controller aside or turning off the TV until you have spent even a small amount of time in the Word, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you.
- Maybe it looks like becoming part of a small group or attending a group Bible study, and then using that as a springboard to go deeper.
- Maybe it looks like choosing a reading plan and asking a friend to work through it alongside you, meeting periodically to discuss what the Lord is teaching you.
- Maybe it means finding an audio version of the Bible and listening to scripture on a regular basis, perhaps while you are driving or exercising.
- Maybe it means finding a portion of scripture that really grabs your attention and studying it in depth and in context, perhaps even committing it to memory.

Those are all different ways that I have encountered Jesus through the Scriptures over the years. I'm really enjoying and challenged by the reading plan I'm currently using and plan to use it in a slightly different way next year. This list of suggestions is by no means exhaustive and it will continue to grow throughout the lifespan the Lord grants me. Your encounters might be similar or look very different. What matters is that you are meeting with Jesus.

As we prepare to close, I also want to encourage you: Don't be afraid to look at things from a new perspective. God did not create us as static beings. We are expected to grow and change over time. The Word itself is living and active. The Holy Spirit may open your eyes or heart to a new way of thinking about or interpreting a passage.

As we prepare to close, **I want to give you one more example of the technique I began with.** If you'd like to learn more about how to do this, please ask.

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NIV1984)

For
the word of God is living
and active.
Sharper than any double-edged sword,
it penetrates
even to dividing soul and spirit,
it judges joints and marrow;
the thoughts
and attitudes of the heart.
Nothing is hidden from God's sight.
Everything is uncovered
and laid bare
before the eyes
of Him
to Whom
we must give account.

The key is to continually return to the Word – the whole counsel of Scripture.

In our own lifetimes, none of us is going to have “all the right answers” – no matter how much we study or learn.

We are not always going to see eye to eye with all other believers – and that is OK.

The challenge I put before you today is to be a lifelong learner – let Jesus, through the Holy Spirit and the scriptures, disciple you.

Live By the Book