

Women's Bible Study Spring 2011
A Spiritual Legacy: Passing On What You Know
April 13, 2011
Know The Word ...2 Timothy 3:14-17
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As I'm an unfamiliar face for many of you, I'm going to take a couple of minutes to tell you a bit about myself. First of all, I need to tell you: I'm completely inexperienced at this and have never done anything like this before. Although, I cannot relate to Timothy in what some may say was his timidity, I can certainly relate to him in the fact that he was "in training" – a student of the Word – being mentored by those who are stronger spiritually and have been Christians longer than he was.... which is why I really enjoy Women's Bible Study. We are an inter-generational group of women from various backgrounds – all desiring to know God more and become more like Jesus.

I have been married for over 14 years to my college sweetheart, Tom. I'm a mom to Lydia, Eva, Anna and Danny. Our family moved to Rochester 8 years ago in January. My husband, Tom, got a job at Mayo Clinic and I was in my mid 20's with a 2 year old and an infant. Our first time at (what was then) First Baptist Church, we realized we enjoyed the teaching so much that we would make this our new church home.

As we were leaving church that first Sunday here, I noticed there was a table in the foyer about Women's Bible Studies. I was a stay-at-home mom and getting out of the house once a week was sounding very appealing. Although, I was happy to study the Bible more, it was really the free childcare and hot coffee that truly drew me in – no offense to the Teaching Team. I got assigned to a very intense study group and I must tell you I had the time of my life studying the Bible with those 7 ladies every Wednesday morning. It was the first of many mentoring relationships I'd enjoy here, as I was the youngest and most likely, the least mature spiritually in that group. In fact, I still feel like I have this special bond whenever I see Tara, Diane, Jamie, Janet, Karen, Tamara and Gretchen. It is my heart's desire that your time together here and in your small groups will be just as sweet and that you will enjoy studying the Word together and gleaning from each other's experience and wisdom.

That leads me to our first point today - to really grow in the knowledge of God's Word we must first realize it is a life long process and study it continually. The passage we read for today starts out with...

But as for you, Timothy, CONTINUE in what you have learned and become convinced of...

Considering you all are here when you could be out running errands or enjoying one of your favorite pastimes, talking with you about this point is like “preaching to the choir.” You know that none of us “have arrived” and have learned all that there is to know about the Bible. We should all be life-long students. We should all have passages of Scripture that challenge us.

I realized my need for a Savior at a very young age and asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins. I knew I was forgiven and that Jesus’ death on the cross took care of the punishment I should have endured. As much as a 7 year old could understand, I knew something was different. I was a new creation. Although I could not see or feel Jesus, part of Him lived inside of me. I was promised eternity in heaven.

That was the beginning of my spiritual journey. Yours may have started a decade ago, a year ago or even a month ago. Maybe, like Paul on the Damascus Road, when you started trusting in Jesus as your Savior, it was a day you remember because the life you had led prior to that was drastically different from the life you live today. But maybe your actions and behaviors didn’t change much but you just knew there was a drawing by the Heavenly Father in your heart. It wasn’t about a drastic change in life style but rather just a realization that God wanted a closer walk with you. You were his child and He was your Lord, Savior and Friend. I don’t know the details but whatever they may be... they mark the beginning of a relationship between you and the Creator of the Universe. That relationship only has a beginning but promises to never have an ending. So that is why the word “continue” is so important. We continue in what we have learned and *become convinced of...*

So Paul doesn’t just tell Timothy to continue in what he has learned but also what he has become convinced of. It’s been described to me since I was little that the difference between understanding and conviction is the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. If we know the Bible says that it is wrong to steal or lie then that is head knowledge but if we know in our hearts that God detests lying lips and that lying to a hotel attendant that you have a family of four (instead of truthfully stating you’re a family of 6) so that you can all illegally cram into one hotel room instead of two (just for example) is an abomination against the Lord, I strive to live differently and be repentant of the times I have broken these commands. So I’m glad to tell you that tomorrow our family is heading to the Dells and will be staying in two hotel rooms. Yes, it is more expensive but my husband and I both agree it’s well worth it to know that we are obeying God. I love how David talks of his understanding and conviction of the Lord’s ways in this following passage:

How can a young man (or woman) keep his (or her) way pure? By keeping it according to your Word. With all my heart I have sought you; Do not let me wander from your commands. Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against you. Psalm 119:9-11

We have all fallen short and will never be sinless here on earth but the more we strive to know the Lord through studying the Bible, we will grow and become more like Christ daily. So the second way we grow in the knowledge of God's Word is to not just read it but to act on it from our convictions.

Let's keep reading what Paul has to say to Timothy:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it...

The third way we grow in our knowledge of God's Word is to watch and learn from other Christians around us. This is pivotal to our theme this quarter in Bible study: A Spiritual Legacy Passing on What You Know. Of course, we need to be cautious that those we are watching are genuine Christians who truly love and seek after the Lord. Gretchen addressed this a few weeks ago as she talked about counterfeit Christians and gave lists of ways we might be able to decipher a genuine Christian from a counterfeit Christian.

In a little over a year, our oldest daughter, Lydia, will be entering middle school. There's just something about those words that bring up a lot of fear and dismay in many of my Christian friends. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that the middle school years are just the worst years no matter where you go or what you do with your kids. At this time in our lives, we actually feel the Lord is directing us to have our kids attend public school. Again those words – public middle school – bring up even more fear if not a sense of hopelessness in some of my friends who act as if sending kids to public middle school is like sending them out to be raised by wolves. So I've become aware that during this time in my life, I need Christian women around me who rather than discourage me in this "calling" will encourage and equip me as I recognize my need to be involved, pray often and do my best to Bible "Home school" our kids during their hours at home. So I've been asking questions of moms who have "been there and done that" - moms who have already gone through this season of their lives and finished well. I'm not looking for those who claim to have done it perfectly but rather those who have learned from their mistakes, given glory to God for their successes and can just mentor me during this season of my life.

The challenge here is that not only do we need to seek out godly mentors in our lives, we need to remember that others wanting that same example of a godly life to follow may be watching us. You may consider yourself a "Timothy," young in the faith and naive to some of the ways of the world, however, to some you may be a "Paul," a living example of how to live out faith, patience, love and endurance. Let me encourage you to have both a "Timothy" and a "Paul" in your life. There may be nothing sweeter than being mentored by someone who has walked where you've walked and can help you by advising you of the snares, valleys and mountaintops on your journey. In the same way, you also need to

find someone behind you on your journey that you can give guidance and encouragement through the same highs and lows.

Paul modeled to us that the greatest success to any mentoring relationship was honesty. So when you are mentoring someone, be honest about your challenges – they make us feel like we're not alone. Be honest about your failures – they give us hope. Be honest about your successes – if you give God the glory, we know that with God's help we might succeed as well. Be honest when you need to confront – if you don't confront areas of our life that may be off the path God wants us on, we may be unaware of the way it leads to destruction.

And to those of you who are “younger” and would like to pursue a mentoring relationship, I have some advice for you as well. It would be ideal if a more “seasoned” friend of yours would initiate a closer friendship with you and reach out to you first but you will most likely need to take the first step in setting up a formal mentoring relationship. You see for your older friend to ask you if you would like to be mentored, is like someone asking you if you would like a breath mint or the name of a new hair stylist in town. A statement like that could too easily offend and make you assume that something is wrong in your life. So if you want to be mentored, you need to pursue it and take the first step by asking your seasoned friend if she would consider mentoring you. Secondly, ask the tough questions and be ready to receive the tough answers. You're there to learn and your mentor is there to teach. Don't fill all of your time together with shallow conversation. Thirdly, don't make it formal. Go to her home and just hang out. Invite her to yours and just “do life together.” Some of the best mentoring moments in my life have unfortunately not happened at a coffee shop but rather by going to my friend's house, watching her interact with her children, seeing how she communicates with her husband, and learning how she weaves the Lord into what sometimes may be ordinary and mundane activities.

If one of the many hats you wear state the word “Mom” on it, then you are already in a mentoring relationship. If one of your hats also has the word “Grandmother” on it than you are in two mentoring relationships. Your mentorees may not be listening to your advice or instruction but your life is still being watched by those who are following behind you. In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul mentions the Christian heritage that Timothy comes from:

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.” 2 Timothy 1:5

I find this passage so encouraging not only by what is stated here but also by what is not mentioned here. There is no mention of Timothy's father's sincere faith. Acts 16:1 tells us that Timothy's father was a Greek; therefore he was not a Jew. Timothy was not circumcised as an infant and his father, most likely, did not teach him in the ways of the Torah. However, it's clear that both his

grandmother and mother had a sincere faith. As we read further along in this passage we've been studying, it's certain that it was the passing down of faith from Eunice, his grandmother, and Lois, his mother, that made Timothy wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

I don't ever want to underestimate the role a dad can play in the spiritual development of his child. However, please don't ever assume that because your children may not have a strong godly role model in their father that their eternal destiny is hopeless. We are reminded here in this passage the incredible influence a godly mother and grandmother can be in a child's life even beginning in his early years.

It's important for you to know that your child can begin their journey of knowing God's Word already in infancy. So when you sing Jesus loves me to your baby, it's more than just a lullaby – it's the beginning of you teaching them one of the greatest truths there ever is. When you wake up early on Sunday morning after what has already been too short of a night and bring them to church, you are showing them God is worthy of our worship. When you read them stories out of the Bible about God parting seas, healing the sick and being raised from the dead, you are already teaching them about an almighty God who is powerful enough to save them from their bad choices. When you pray with them at night, you are teaching them that although you are talking to the Creator of the Universe, He delights in hearing from his children.

Don't wait until your kids can communicate with you on a spiritual level before you communicate with them about their Heavenly Father. Make an effort to add the Lord into the everyday conversation with your family. We all studied the 10 Commandments here last fall. Right after those are listed in Deuteronomy, we were given this instruction –

**“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.”
Deut 6:6-7**

If you, like Paul, have no children, then follow his example and find someone who may not be as “seasoned” as you and mentor them in their walk with Christ. Paul talked often about Timothy being his dear son (2 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17). It means so much to Tom and me when others around us encourage our kids to walk with the Lord. Of course, it starts at an early age when they care for our babies as their own so that we can enjoy listening to a church sermon without

their distractions. After Bible study today, I'll pick up Anna and Danny and I know Miss Laura and Miss Dolores will have taught them a new truth about God and to live a life pleasing to him. Recently it was a Christian teacher at my daughters' public school who encouraged Lydia and Eva to start reading through the Bible. Never under estimate the influence you may have in a child's life when you teach them in the ways of God's Word.

So now we have answered the two questions of How to Grow in the Word and When We Can Begin to Grow in the Word, let's answer Why It's Important to Grow in the Word. As we read further on in the text it states:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Some of your versions might state the word "inspired" instead of God-breathed. The word "inspired" (theopneustos) in the original Greek language literally means "God-breathed." William Hendricksen explains:

The word God-breathed, occurring only here indicates that all Scripture owes its origin and contents to the divine breath, the Spirit of God. The human authors were powerfully guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. As a result, what they wrote is not only without error but also of supreme value for man. It is all that God wanted it to be. It constitutes the infallible rule of faith and practice for mankind. (A Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, p. 302)

The Bible is without error. God used many men's background, personalities and insight to pen His Words but every word is the authoritative, infallible Word of God. Science, archaeology, history and the testimony of changed lives have all given much evidence to the fact that the Bible is one of the most reliable written books. We can trust it to be truth everlasting. This is key for you to believe for the future of your Bible study... this is not just any ordinary book club!

God's Word is useful for teaching. If I tell my kids that they can be anything they want to be as long as they put their minds to it, they might believe me for a few years. However it won't be long before they discover that a statement like that is really a lie. I have always wanted the ability to sing and worked hard at it when I was young but the reality is that no matter how hard I practice and "put my mind to it," I will never be an opera singer and will never be worthy of leading music up here with Myrna or Lindy. That's just not how God created me and I don't want my kids to think that the only thing between them and achieving their dreams is just a little "mind over matter." However, if I tell my kids that they are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus – with specific talents and gifts so that they may do good works which God prepared in advance for them to do as Ephesians 2:10 tells us... then I am teaching them truth built upon the Word of God which we all agree is without error.

God's Word is also useful for rebuking. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible states that this means God's Word is useful to convince men of the truth and confound those who deny it. If you are ever going to try to convince someone why a certain sin is wrong, it's vital that you humbly use the Word of God as your authority. Commentary on the Bible, by Adam Clarke, [1831], Text Courtesy of Internet Sacred Texts Archive.

God's Word is useful for correction. It seems in our day in age there are so many 3 step plans to a transformed life. God's Word already addresses so many issues we deal with today that it needs to be our primary source for dealing with addictions, stress, unhappy marriages, disrespectful children, poor body images and even that compulsion to buy unnecessary items at the latest sale at Macy's.

God's Word is useful in training in righteousness. Therefore, if you have a child who is having a hard time with laziness don't just nag on them to get busy but find Scripture that shows God's good rewards for those who work heartily unto Him. When we use Scripture to reproof, correct, or in training for righteousness, it reminds us that we are only the messengers of God's Word and not the ones sitting on the "throne of judgment."

Back when I first became a stay-at-home mom, we were on a really tight budget and so I used to do some free-lance writing during naptime to help supplement the new diaper expense. I somehow got into writing Christian greeting cards. At first, I really enjoyed my job. When my kiddos were napping I would scour the Bible for those feel good verses that would make for the perfect ending of a greeting card between friends. So needless to say, I often used such verses as:

...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (or sister) Proverbs 18:24

or

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Those made for a nice ending to a "Thanks for being a great friend" or "Happy Anniversary" card. However it soon became challenging because I realized that much of God's Word is not full of "feel good" verses that make for a quality greeting card between friends. Of course, friends should want to share the truth of God's Word with each other but in reality, what really sells is a nice card with a little ditty followed by a Bible verse that makes you feel warm and cozy all over. For example, how would you like to receive a greeting card from a friend including one of these passages?

It is better to live alone in the desert than with a crabby, complaining wife. Proverbs 21:19 (Happy Anniversary)

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. Proverbs 12:1 (Happy Mother's Day)

Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife. Proverbs 21:9 (Congratulations on your engagement!)

Ok. So maybe I had some fun with these but needless to say I eventually found other ways to supplement our new diaper budget. I love God's sense of humor and still must admit, it would be fun to someday have my own greeting card biz that uses verses from the Word of God that people may not always want to hear but it may be what we all need to hear. However, I still don't think they'd sell much. It's so easy for us all to only want to hear those parts of the Word of God that are pleasing and sweet to our ears rather than those that stir our hearts toward conviction and change.

So, like Paul challenged Timothy, I challenge you today to be different and to study continually as a life-long student of God's Word – even those verses that may not be easy and pleasing to read. Then act on it from the conviction of your heart. Watch and learn from those genuine Christians around you. Teach those who are younger – Timothy taught us you can never be too young to learn. Finally, never forget that God's Word is inspired, infallible and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that you, my friends, may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

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