

Live the New Life (3): The Word

2 Timothy 3:16-17. New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.

Joshua 1:8 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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Introduction

- Story: One summer night, at a youth group retreat, the leader, in front of the youth, threw a Bible on the ground saying, **“This Bible is useless, unless you use it!”**
- Wow, really? None of us would throw the Bible to the ground; most of us would get offended with the way the youth leader treated the Bible even for the sake of illustrating his point, but it surely makes us think about the way we handle our Bible.
- What is the Bible to you? I am sure that all of us have a healthy dose of respect for the Bible: we readily acknowledge that it is God’s Word, therefore, it is more important than any other ordinary book. We also know that it is the best-selling book in human history. No book ever broke that record or will. Some of us are even proud to have family heirloom--antique bibles that dated 200 years back, printed in the 19th century, so and so on.
- However, when it comes down to using it, to many of us, it is a *useless* book since it is a closed book. I heard about some churches in the medieval times that literally locked the bible in chains so that no one would dare to steal or open it. Today, it seems not much different from those times: God’s Word is still rarely opened, although it is never kept in chains. The Word of God seldom gets our attention except on Sunday morning services; except on weddings and funerals; except at Sunday school. To be painfully honest with yourself, when was the last time that you opened God’s Word for the sheer joy of reading it, studying it, and finding God’s will for you in it?

- Someone told me this joke: a pastor once visited a family and asked them to bring a Bible. In no time, a child went in and brought out Sears-Roebuck catalogue! Some of us spend more time in watching TV, surfing the internet, reading newspapers, magazines, and shopping catalogs than spending time with God's word. Welcome to the spiritual reality in America!
- I am not merely interested in pointing out how poorly we the believers do in terms of getting into God's Word. However, if we believe that the church is the hope of the world, if we claim that we are God's kingdom agents for the transformation of the world, and if we preach that we can cure many of the societal maladies, then we must start with our own malady first. Before we dare to fix all the problems of our society, we need to get back to our basics so that we start with a right foot.
- As for Scripture as God's Word, there are three lies prevalent in the world today. All from the devil our enemy! Sadly, some believers in the Church fall into these lies. They are: 1) The Bible is too difficult to understand. 2) The Bible is a myth. 3) The Bible is not relevant in today's world. Do not believe in such lies even for a moment.
- It is sad that God's people don't get into the Word of God, even though Jesus declares that man cannot live by bread alone but by the Word of God (Matthew 4:4).
- It is equally tragic that most of us don't even try to open the Bible of our own volition. In my humble opinion, though, **the greatest tragedy of all is that we don't even know what we are missing out in our life journey.** We are holding the Bible in our hands, yet we don't even know its worth in our lives: the Bible, the greatest tool God has ever made available to us for our life journey. E.g. Like a beggar holding a \$100 bill in his hands not knowing what it is worth. Psalmist declares, "*The Law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces*" (Psalm 119:72).
- So, today, as part three of my series, "Live the New Life," I am going to focus on the importance of getting into God's Word. Anyone who takes his/her faith seriously also takes God's Word, the Bible, very seriously. Let's go to the first verse of today's lesson.

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¹⁶ *All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;* ¹⁷ *so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.*

- Let me unpack this verse sentence by sentence.

- **All scripture is inspired by God:** ‘All’ here means ‘everything’: every scroll of the Bible. Every verse. Every passage. Every chapter in the Bible. Every single book in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation. From cover to cover. Every single of them was inspired by God. The meaning of “Inspired by God” is “God-breathed.” (English word to ‘in-spire’ originated from Latin (*in-spirare*) and it means to ‘breathe in.’ Similarly, the word to ‘ex-pire’ means to ‘breathe out.’). E.g., God created Adam out of dirt [Hebrew word for dust is ‘adama’] and “breathed” into him “life”: “*Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and **breathed** into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living person.*” (Genesis 2:7).
- That is, the Scripture is God-inspired, God-initiated, God-planned and God-completed. It is not human-made or a myth. The Bible is the compilation of words that God has spoken to humanity through prophets over centuries. He is the author using human hands and minds to write down His words. For your information, there are 66 books altogether (39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament) and over 40 authors. It took centuries to complete, yet there’s one consistent theme underlying the Bible, that is, God’s covenantal relationship with humanity in Jesus (from Genesis 2:16-17 to Revelation 21:3). The Bible is not a science book nor that of history (although there are some elements and references to both of them), but it is a book about God’s salvation plan for humanity in Jesus. So, naturally, anyone who is serious about salvation and eternal life also needs to take it seriously. If you neglect the Bible, you neglect your own salvation matter. Let’s pay attention to the next phrase in the verse.
- **beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;**
- The Bible is good for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.
- My own translation: The Word of God is useful and profitable for teaching, conviction, improvement, and learning through discipline in righteousness.
- Who doesn’t need wisdom from God? Who doesn’t need assurance from God? Who doesn’t need improvement in character which God is specialized in? Who doesn’t need discipline? All these benefits in life, God has packed in One Book, we call the Bible. It is the best tool for teachers and parents, the best tool for repentance, the best tool for improvement, and the best tool for learning through discipline.
- **so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.** This explains why the believers need God’s Word. God has called us for good works (Matthew 5:16). He has called us to be the changing agents of the world. How

does He equip us for such good works? How does our heavenly Father help us to be proficient and be effective in every good work? By speaking to us through His written Word, the Bible. Out of so many things He could've given us for the preparation for our life, He has chosen the Bible. This leads us to the next verse.

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⁸ *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will achieve success.*

- Background information on this verse: Moses passed away after leading the congregation of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. Joshua was chosen to be the next leader. This verse is a part of God's command to Joshua. As God commanded him to lead Israel into the Promised Land, He commanded him to be strong and courageous –4 times in one chapter! (v. 6, 7, 9 and 18). Be strong (firm) and **be a man** (Greek translation). As God sent Joshua and Israel on the road, He promised that He would be with them (v. 9). He commanded Joshua not to be afraid of anything but rather be careful to act on God's Word. Then, He gave this verse to Him.
- Have you ever wondered what makes a person strong and courageous? It is not the muscles of Mr. Universe that make us strong (maybe physically but not spiritually). The world promotes the idea of being a mighty one in muscles, but God's Word differs: *"One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And one who rules his spirit, than one who captures a city"* (Proverbs 16:32). You don't have to be a man of steel (Superman) to be courageous. So, what makes a person strong and courageous? God's Word.
- Think again. For the great task of conquering the Promised Land, the LORD God gave Joshua two things: *assurance of divine presence, and the Word of God*: not a million soldiers, not an army of angels, but the Word of God.
- So, for your life tasks ahead of you, what would you ask God? More money, more education, more technology, more troops? Let me tell you what God would give you: the assurance that He is with you and His Word—the Bible.
- Once I read of a man who claimed that he had been to Heaven. One of the questions Jesus asked him in Heaven was: *Have you read my Book* (referring to the Bible)? I hope all of us would answer, "Yes, I have."

- It is always good to ask questions like “Why do I need the Word of God?” I thought about myself the reasons for getting into God’s Word. Here’s my answer: first, the Bible helps me to know God and His plan for me. God reveals Himself and His will for me through the Bible. Next, I want to have a life fulfilled (truthful, connected, balanced, and meaningful). God’s Word always leads me on level ground and also in truth. Psalm 119:160 says, *“The sum of Your word is truth,…”* It also makes me wise. Thirdly, God’s Word protects me from falling into temptations. Fourthly, God’s Word gives me the assurance that I am never alone. The LORD my God is with me through it all. Here’s one verse that keeps me strong: *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you”* (Isaiah 43:2).
- Let me tell you this. If I don’t get into God’s Word, I would miss out all those benefits: I would be lost in my life’s directions. I would be disconnected with God. My life would be meaningless. I would follow the world’s directions. I would easily fall into temptations. Folks, that’s why I need God’s Word. That’s why I want to get into the Bible. By getting into God’s Word, you are doing the greatest service to yourself.
- Challenge: Read the entire Bible from cover to cover in a year. Use the 365-Day Bible Reading Plan in your bulletin. Submit it to me once you completed the challenge. Then, we will celebrate together, and I will record your name in my book “The Book Club” (like your names are recorded in the Book of Life in heaven).
- The Book Club: at Embury (previous congregation that I served as pastor for 16 years), 28 people (aging from 92 to 8 years old) completed the challenge and their names were recorded in the Book Club (hall of fame). Manahawkin already beat that. Praise God for that! Let’s keep up the good work.
- Let us pray.