

THE WALK 3

Some practical questions ...

Do I delight in the Bible ... honestly?
If not, can I work out why not?
If 'yes', then can I articulate what it is that I value about reading my Bible?

How do I meditate on God's law day and night (cf Psalm 1:2)?
What practical things do I do (*eg personal Bible reading, Bible learning, listening to sermons, more in-depth Bible study {alone or with others}*)?
Are there other ways where I could fill my life more with God's word?
Are there ways in which I could be more disciplined about this?
Are there ways in which others could help me with this?

What is the basis for my ongoing walk as a Christian?
If I didn't have a Bible, what difference would it make? why?

Am I in danger of the sin of 'the Jews' in John 5:39-40?
How can I make my reading of the Bible more personal (ie about coming to the person of Jesus himself to receive all spiritual life from him)?

With whom am I sharing my delight in God's word?
To whom am I looking to help me in understanding and applying God's word?
Do I need to make myself accountable to another Christian?

What is my biggest problem with the Bible: reading it, understanding it or obeying it?

What do I most urgently need to change in my Bible habits?
What is the danger if I don't do that?

THE WALK 3

Delighting in the Bible 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

The theme of this study

Wayne Grudem explains that the doctrine of 'the sufficiency of Scripture' means that Scripture contains *everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly*.

Here is a reason why Christians delight in God's word ... because it is complete and it completely works! So many of our words simply disappear into thin air, but not so with God's words which always accomplish what he intends (Isaiah 55:8-11). It is our experience as Christians that the Bible achieves what (in literary studies) is termed 'a word act'; it does do things! Through the Bible, God has changed us. God's word makes us Christian and keeps us Christian.

In practise of course, we can easily lose this confidence in the words of the Bible, and the result is that 'delight' deteriorates into 'duty'. It is a short step to then turn from the Bible to something else as the basis for our ongoing walk as Christians ... for some, it's the security of listening to the church and its pronouncements ... for others, it's chasing after some elusive experience of feeling closer to God ... for others, it's the intellectual challenge of new insights. Paul writes to Timothy to increase his confidence in the Bible.

2 Timothy

Paul has left Timothy in Ephesus to 'charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine' (1T1:3*). But this has proved to be far from easy. Faced with opposition and difficulty, the young protégé is tempted to 'be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, and of Paul his prisoner' (2T1:8).

In contrast, Paul 'is not ashamed' (2T1:11-12). At the end of his life, his testimony is that he has indeed fought to the very end, finished the race and kept the faith (2T4:7). Paul had done it. Demas had not (instead, wanting something more comfortable, he'd given up on Christian service 2T4:10). Timothy is being urged that he should be more like Paul than Demas (2T4:5).

'Continue' is the big command of our passage (3:14). And this is because the time is coming (and which presumably had actually arrived) where many in the Ephesian congregation are preferring the lively show down the road: the message 'that the resurrection has already happened' (2T2:18) (... however that message was being packaged) scratches where they were itching (2T4:3-4). Timothy needs his nerves steadied so that, rather than giving up because it's tough, he persists with an authentic, Biblical ministry.

* In these notes, the abbreviation 1T1:3 means 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 3.

Group study outline

Introduction

A young Christian tells you that they're finding it hard work to read their Bible. They're wondering why they need to. What would you say?

We're going to think about why the Bible is so valuable to us as Christians, and what we can expect it to be doing in our lives.

READ 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

What is Timothy to 'continue' in?

Why is he to 'continue' in it?

What would it mean for Timothy to 'continue in what you have learned'?

What does verse 15 tell us that 'the sacred writings' do?

What does that mean? how does that work?

What does verse 16 tell us 'Scripture' does?

What does that mean? how does that work?

Verse 16 also refers to the origin of Scripture: what is the connection between where Scripture comes from, and what Scriptures does?

What thoroughly equips 'the man of God' *? why?

How does the Bible equip me for every good work?

So why is Timothy told to 'preach the word' in 4:2?

Why is Paul saying this to Timothy? *Hint: look at context described in 4:3-4*

If I want to grow in my Christian life (ie if I want to be reproved, rebuked and exhorted) what do I need?

OPTIONAL EXTRA:

Read Psalm 19:7-11

Why does David think God's word is so good?

How is the logic of this the same as in 2 Tim 3:14-4:5?

Why will this passage help me to delight in the Bible more?

What are the challenges to our 'delighting in the Bible'?

What practical things help us to value the Bible more?

If I don't feel like reading the Bible (but still do so), am I delighting in the Bible?

Conclusion

What would you now say to the Christian at the start about why they should read their Bible?

* Although 'the man of God' in 3:17 is referring (almost certainly) to the Christian minister (whom the Bible thoroughly equips for their work of Christian ministry), it's also justifiable to apply this verse more broadly to every Christian for whom the Word is just as effective (in the ways 3:16-17 describe). We might say that the Christian, with the Bible in their hand, similarly has everything they need ... for living the Christian life.

Theme Sentence

Continue with God's powerful word which makes us and keeps us Christian.

Continue ...

In seeking to arm Timothy to persist as a Christian minister when there is lots of pressure on him, Paul's instruction is that he should continue with the scriptures he's been taught by Paul (10 cf 1T1:13-14), and by his believing mother and grandmother (cf 1T1:5). He already knows that Scripture:

15 *makes a person wise for salvation*

(cf 'making wise the simple' in Psalm 19:7). How can a person know the way of salvation? how would we ever work out that Jesus' died for our sins? You simply wouldn't guess it, even standing in front of the cross. No, we need God to explain it to us. And in his word, he has.

16 *teaches, rebukes, corrects, trains*

and so grows the Christian in his/her Christian life. 'Profitable/useful for' means that it is 'to be used for' ... and it is to be used for these things since its origin is God himself (who teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains his people).

Preach the word!

Paul's application is that 'the man of God' is fully equipped. In the OT, this phrase describes God's spokesman (cf Moses [Dt 33:1], David [2 Chron 8:14], Elijah [1 Kgs 17:18]), and so it's an appropriate name for Timothy not as any Christian, but as minister (cf 1T6:11). So Paul's point is that a Christian minister with the Bible in his hand is totally equipped for his work of ministry.

The obvious application is: preach it (4:2)! For if he preaches it, then Timothy can expect to see his congregation being reproved, rebuked and exhorted (2) for that is exactly what Scripture does (3:16). What else would a Christian minister want to see than exactly these things that he knows Scripture does?

Application

• **have confidence in the Bible**

Like Timothy, we may be tempted to think Scripture is great, but 'a bit of an effort'! These verses are written to increase confidence in God's work, in his world, through his word. The Bible is far more dynamic and personal than just being an encyclopaedic textbook of knowledge; it is effective!

• **delight in the Bible**

If these things are true of the Bible, then what a treasure it is! Some of the many OT descriptions of God's word (eg Psalm 19:7-11; 119 etc) use this logic: I delight in the Bible because of what I've seen it effect in my life. If we are Christian then we've seen it work in our lives too ... so let's share the Psalmist's delight!