

## Sermon Study Questions - Leaders Guide: Giving Thanks for the Word

13 October 2024

Read 2 Timothy 3:12-17

1. In the beginning of the sermon James described the “utterly unbridled joy” of the Jewish festival Simchat Torah - the Joy of the Torah. He then went on to suggest a few reasons why we Christians may be less joyful when we think about the gift of the Bible. Can you remember what some of those reasons were?
  - a. one of which is the sheer number of Bibles around us, often in several translations. *And it isn't always easy to treasure something that is so common.*
  - b. It is possible to be a member of the church, attend regularly, and have very little exposure to the Bible apart from the passages read on a Sunday. And for many it remains a relatively unknown commodity.
  - c. There is the cultural attitude toward the Bible that it's just a collection of ancient texts, full of odd, sometimes outrageous stories and commands and expectations, incredibly unlikely to have anything relevant or useful to say to us in our day and age.
  - d. Reading the Bible is work, it takes discipline, and there are so many other ways to pass the time that require neither work nor discipline...
2. Most of the sermon was a close look at verse 16 of our reading from 2 Timothy. What was the word added in the translation of the phrase “All Scripture is breathed out by God?” How does the addition of that word impact our understanding of Divine revelation?
  - a. The literal translation of the word would just be “God breathed.” Adding the word “out” gives us the image of God breathing out the words of the Bible, the implication being that they come directly from God and are sealed with God's authority.
3. Because the literal translation of the Greek is “all Scripture is God-breathed” James asked the question: “is out the only direction God could be breathing when we talk about the Scriptures?” What happens to our understanding of the Bible if we think of God not just breathing **out** the words of Scripture but also breathing His life-giving breath **into** the words of Scripture?
  - a. “Could God also be breathing life into what otherwise would be a lifeless written word? In the creation story we see God breathing life into the human body formed from the dust of the earth: Genesis 2: “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 creature.” Could something like that be what Paul is hinting at with his unique word, God-breathed?”

4. Our Gospel reading from Luke 24, the story of the encounter on the road to Emmaus, suggested that it was more than something, but a someone who could be found in the words of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. Who is that someone? And how well do **we** find him in the Old Testament?
  - a. In the story we have Jesus explaining to the disciples on their walk where and how **He** was to be found in the Old Testament and how that story, correctly understood, foretold all that had just happened with his death and resurrection.
  - b. The second part of the question is an open-ended one inviting self-reflection.
5. Paul used quite a utilitarian word, profitable” to describe the effect of the Scriptures on the life of the one who reads and studies them. How are the Scriptures profitable? How do you instinctively respond to these words?
  - a. “for teaching.” “Teaching we’re fond of. That has been a big thing at Little T, perhaps for our entire history. But over the last number of years I’ve been noticing a growing shift away from the temptation to be sermon connoisseurs toward a deepening hunger for the teaching of the Word. That has the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit all over it.”
  - b. “for reproof.” “Here is another uncommon word. The noun is only used twice in the NT. But it occurs often enough in contemporary Greek literature that a key theme of meaning that we can tease out of its uses is that of evidence provided for proof of wrongdoing, like in a court of law. It’s a weighty word, a serious word, used to address serious wrongdoing.”
  - c. “for correction.” “And we have another Greek word that occurs only once in the NT. This word, however, is relatively straightforward in its meaning and the translation is very sound. One of the images in the word’s meaning is that of straightening back up something that has fallen over.”
    - i. “These two words, reproof and correction are meant to go together to highlight how Scripture is “profitable” for identifying and correcting our errors. Are we mature enough in our faith to accept reproof and correction?”
  - d. “for training in righteousness.” “The word training here is the same word used for raising children. There is a clear concept of formation, development and growing up. This is the Christian discipleship to which we are all called. It involves the practice of the spiritual disciplines - like reading the Bible - and hints at the hard work that goes into growth and development. It does not happen accidentally. It will only occur when there is clear collective purpose, will and work applied to this Godly goal.”

6. Verse 17 describes the end result of these profitable words of Scripture on the life of the reader: “that everyone who belongs to God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” How did James suggest this transformational work was accomplished? And what is our part to play in this process?
  - a. “This is a work of the Spirit, applying the Biblical rule of life to our lives. It’s not something we can bring about by sheer force of will, it’s a work only the Spirit can do. Our task is to continue to invite the Spirit into all the nooks and crannies of our lives, to have jurisdiction in each of those areas, and then be willing to cooperate - to work in the same direction - with that transforming work.”
7. A final question for general reflection, either with the group or individually: have you been seeing a change in your life as a result of your exposure to the Bible? And if you have, has that resulted in you being more grateful for the gift of the Bible?