

SRM14052 Mother's Day 5/11/2014

“Pass It On: the Bible”
2 Timothy 3:14-17

Today is the beginning of a season when we honor special people that are close to us. It begins with Mother's Day, is continued with Children's Day, and ends with Father's Day.

I have often used this time to encourage you to think about your relationships in the natural and spiritual family.

This year I'd like to encourage you to think about what you believe, and how we can “pass it on” to others, whether they are our children, the children of others, or, in the spiritual family, spiritual children.

Now what is really worth passing on? Your personal opinions? Your music preferences? Your lifestyle choices?

While our parents and grandparents had fewer moral and Spiritual options, and so, fewer decisions to make, You and I today live in a world of “decide for yourself” that may not be as healthy as we think.

Now while there are many things that are subject to interpretation, there are others that are not: Fire can burn you, Water can drown you, you need air to breathe and food to eat.

We call these objective Truths, as opposed to subjective truths, like limburger cheese tastes good or Celine Dion is a good singer; these depend on your taste & point of view.

Because post-modern thinking is tending to call everything only relatively true, Francis Schaeffer coined the term, “true-truth.”

One of the reasons for all the options we have is the lack of an absolute standard for truth. When we are the ultimate decision-makers, we begins to act as if we were God, and this will never satisfy us.

So the first thing we need to pass on to our children and others is that the Bible is “true truth” about God, man, sin, Grace and Faith. The Bible gives us truth that is true regardless of people's opinions of it.

As we think of passing truth on, I'm reminded of the apostle Paul, who, though he was not married, had a spiritual son named Timothy. Near the end of Paul's life, he wrote these words to him: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

As our church's Affirmation of Faith (also of the BGC) says, "We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that it has supreme authority in all matters of Faith and conduct."

A few weeks ago, I recommended a book to you, by Kevin DeYoung, Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me. In it, he says, "As the people of God, we believe the word of God can be trusted in every way to speak what is true, command what is right, and provide us with what is good." (16)

He also talks about the fact that many Christians know about the attributes of God, His holiness, justice, omniscience, sovereignty, goodness, mercy and love, but could most Christians name, much less explain the attributes of Scripture?

"Traditionally, Protestant theologians have highlighted four essential characteristics of Scripture: sufficiency, clarity, authority and necessity. Each of the attributes - you can recall them by the handy acronym SCAN - is meant to protect an important truth about the Bible."

I'd like to compare these this morning to the attributes of a good parent. In so doing, I hope to both give you some goals to aim at, as well as give glory to God in the way He has given us a book that can "thoroughly equip [us] for every good work."

1. Pass It On that the Bible is Sufficient.

A good parent wants to give his/her child everything needed for a fulfilling life. We want them to feel no need to appeal to someone else because our efforts are insufficient.

But we know that we cannot be all that they need. We cannot be God to them. We cannot teach them all they need to know, correct their every error, remedy every bad decision of theirs, and train them so they are prepared for every future decision.

But the Bible is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

DeYoung: "The Scriptures contain everything we need for knowledge of salvation and godly living. We don't need any new revelation from heaven."

This is the attribute of scripture most often doubted by evangelical Christians. We may say all the right things about the Bible. But we are too quick to

look to new revelations or experiences to confirm our faith.

I don't know how to judge the authenticity of another believer's vision from God or life-after-death experience, but I do know that I have all the revelation from God that I need to live as a follower of Jesus Christ in nothing more than the Bible.

"The finality of Christ's redemption for us is intimately tied to the finality of his revelation to us. . . . If we say revelation is not complete, we must admit that somehow the work of redemption also remains unfinished. . . . Scripture is enough because the work of Christ is enough. They stand or fall together." (44, 48-49)

"We must not separate the revelation of God in the Scriptures from the revelation of God in Jesus. We would not know everything there is to know about [Jesus] without the [Bible], and even Jesus directs our attention to the Scriptures. If the Bible is God's speech, his voice, the opening of his most hallowed lips, then whatever we feel about the Word of God should mirror what we feel about God in the flesh."

"If we learn to read the Bible down (into our hearts), across (the plot line of Scripture), out (to the end of the story), and up (to the glory of God in the face of Christ), we will find that every bit of Scripture is profitable for us." (52)

Trans: Pass It On that the Bible is Sufficient – it meets all your needs.

2. Pass It On that the Bible is Clear.

A good parent seeks to make themselves abundantly clear to their child. She wants to be completely understood, and she strives to say things in a way that the child will have no doubt about what was said. But in fact, the joke books are full of stories where the parent who thought she was so clear, was completely misunderstood.

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture is that "The saving message of Jesus Christ is plainly taught in the Scriptures, and can be understood by all who have ears to hear it. We don't need an official magisterium to tell us what the Bible means."

The 1689 London Baptist Confession carefully defines it this way: "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. (1.7)
Also Westminster Confession of Faith (1646).

The Bible says, Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (NKJV) "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."

This is the problem of postmodern thinking, and it is growing increasingly common among evangelicals. DeYoung: "many evangelicals do not believe in Scripture's perspicuity. Once they see that some Christians view an issue differently, they pack it in and give up ever knowing what the Bible says. We've seen this recently on the issue of homosexuality with certain voices calling for a moratorium on debating the issue because there are obviously two good positions out there and who are we to try to settle things. But, of course, PhDs disagree on almost everything in almost every field of human investigation. Evangelicals can be too quick to say "that's just your interpretation" instead of actually making an argument from the Bible for their position.

"Nowhere do Jesus or the apostles ever treat the Old Testament as human reflections on the divine. It is instead the voice of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:25; Heb. 3:7) and God's own breath (2 Tim. 3:16)." (64)

Acts 4:25 (NKJV) [You] by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?

Hebrews 3:7 (NKJV) Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, "

The most important text on this subject is 2 Tim 3:16 "All Scripture is God-breathed ..."

It begins with the word, "All".

We not only believe that it should all be believed, but that it all should be preached and taught:

Acts 20:27 (HCSB) "for I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole plan of God."

To say that it is "inspired" does not mean that we find it "inspiring", but that it comes from God Himself.

Trans: Pass It On that the Bible is Sufficient – it meets all your needs, and that the Bible is Clear – it can be understood without a "translator". This

3. Pass It On that the Bible is Authoritative.

A good parent tries to be careful to be so correct in everything she says to her child that she never needs to be corrected by any other authority.

Sometimes answer their children's "why" questions with, "Because I said so!", implying that no confirmation is needed.

It is good for parents to seek to be authoritative, because children need someone to do this, but we also realize that they need to grow up to submit to a higher authority than us.

That higher authority is God, and he speaks to us by the authority of Scripture.

DeYoung: "The last word always goes to the Word of God. We must never allow the teachings of science, of human experience, or of church councils to take precedence over Scripture."

The great example of this at work is in Acts 17. Paul goes to preach in the synagogue at Thessalonica. His message is controversial, and in time, Paul is driven out of the city.

He then goes to preach to the Jews in Berea, but the response is different: Acts 17:11 (NKJV) "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

God's Word is final. It is given by God, authored by God through the use of chosen servants:

2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV) "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

"The Bible has a story with a beginning and an end, a story that unfolds within history, the meaning of which God supplies."

We say it is "without error in the original manuscripts"; We believe no mistakes can be found. Many have tried, but the Bible has been vindicated.

We believe in inerrancy on the basis of 3 things:

1. The Trustworthiness of God's character:

Romans 3:3-4 (ESV) What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

2. The Consistency of the Holy Spirit: Several places in the NT ascribe OT passages to the Holy Spirit. E.g. Mark 12:36 speaks of Psa. 110
Mark 12:36 (NKJV) For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

3. The teaching of Christ Himself: Matthew 5:18 (HCSB) For I assure you: Until heaven and earth

pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished.

DeYoung: “evangelicals are constantly being faced with the temptation to make special revelation subservient to general revelation. Rightly understood, the two do not contradict each other. As the truism goes, all truth is God's truth. But the Protestant confessions have always understood that special revelation is clearer than general revelation. Peer-reviewed science journals do not trump what God says in the Bible. Now, if we've misread the Bible, let's see our mistake and own up to it. But until we are convinced from Scripture, we should not trade the unchanging truth of Scripture for the changing winds of contemporary academia.”

Truth in all cases for all people, has been rejected by modern society in favor of an inward sense of God and personal intuitions about meaning.

David Wells, in No Place for Truth writes, "The early Christians did not preach their experience of Christ,.. rather, they preached the Christ of that experience. The fact that God's Truth was transmitted through events external to the individual meant that it was objective, and the fact that it was objective meant, further, that his Truth was public ... It could not be privatized.

He goes on to say, "The church through the ages has always assumed and respected the authority of scripture. It was never questioned until the modern period, and it has only become a problem because some have suggested that God did not interpret - perhaps could not interpret - the meaning of his acts or that the record of the acts themselves is awry. Both of these assertions, however, are typically made not on historical grounds but on philosophical grounds. It is not the narrative of God's acts that makes it hard for us to believe in the authority of their meaning; it is the modern world.”

ILL: Joseph Sittler, "Provocations on the Church and the Arts," *Christian Century*: “There is today a general religious bias toward a galloping subjectivity. But our first obligation to a text is to let it hang there in celestial objectivity--not to ask what it means "to us". A good sermon or a good teaching job must begin with angelic objectivity.

There's something in the mood of our culture that hates that. We want to hurry up and get to what something means to the individual. But this notion presents a serious danger for the true meaning of any important text--biblical, literary, or otherwise. The text had a particular meaning before I saw it, and it will continue to mean that after I have seen it. It expresses an intention that is meant to be heard by all, not interpreted according to any one individual's preferences or biases.”

Trans: Pass It On that the Bible is Sufficient – it meets all your needs, that the Bible is Clear – it can be understood without a “translator”, and that the Bible is Authoritative, God's Word is final.

4. Pass It On that the Bible is Necessary.

Something that is always true is that parents are necessary. Yes, a child can be brought up in an orphanage, but everyone knows that such children will have seriously unmet needs. One of the things that begins to threaten some parents is that one day they will not be necessary.

The fourth attribute of Scripture is its necessity. DeYoung: “General revelation is not enough to save us. We cannot know God savingly by means of personal experience and human reason. We need God's Word to tell us how to live, who Christ is, and how to be saved.”

This is the message of 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 (ESV) Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— these

things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

The 1689 London Baptist Confession: “although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation ... which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary.”

DeYoung: “Counselors can counsel meaningfully because Scripture is sufficient. Bible study leaders can lead confidently because Scripture is clear. Preachers can preach with boldness because their biblical text is authoritative. And evangelists can evangelize with urgency because Scripture is necessary.” (90)

Conc: How should a Christian view the Bible? As Jesus Christ did.

DeYoung: "In the Gospels we see Jesus reference Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac and Jacob, manna in the wilderness, the serpent in the wilderness, Moses as the lawgiver, David and Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, Elijah and Elisha, the widow of Zerephath, Naaman, Zechariah, and even Jonah, never questioning a single event, a single miracle, or a single historical claim. Jesus clearly believed in the historicity of biblical history." (102)

"Jesus may have seen himself as the focal point of Scripture, but never as a judge of it. The only Jesus who stands above Scripture is the Jesus of our own invention. . . . It is impossible to revere the Scriptures more deeply or affirm them more completely than Jesus did." (105)

And finally, the first verse of our text, 2 Timothy 3:14 (NKJV) "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,"

Timothy learned them from his mother, Eunice his grandmother, Lois, and his spiritual Father, Paul.

Paul tells him to consider his spiritual history. This is both an encouragement to believers and an exhortation to parents and mentors. Be an example worth following.

But ultimately, Timothy is called to stick with the Scriptures because of Jesus.

DeYoung: "In a world that prizes the new, the progressive, and the evolved, we need to be reminded that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). And since he remains the same, so does his truth. Which means sometimes consistency is the better part of valor." (120)

"Ultimately we believe the Bible because we believe in the power and wisdom and goodness and truthfulness of the God whose authority and veracity cannot be separated from the Bible. We trust the Bible because it is God's Bible. And God being God, we have every reason to take him at his word." (122)

Do you believe the Bible is God's Sufficient, Clear, Authoritative, Necessary Word?

Don't you think it deserves more attention from you this week?

Action: Make a specific commitment to devote more time to God's Word this week.

Write down what God brings to your attention.

Share what you learn with at least one person.