

Monday

All Scripture is breathed out by God and 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.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Bible comes from God, and we can learn truth from His Word. But God did not give us the Bible simply to increase our knowledge. God's Word should be changing our hearts and changing the way that we live. As we saw on Sunday, God wants to change us in two ways. He wants us to be turning from sin, but He also wants us to be doing what is right and good. Verse 16 shows how God's Word can change us in helping us turn from sin. Reproof shows us what is wrong in our lives, and correction teaches us how to make it right. So God's Word points out our sin and how to deal with our sin. But verse 17 emphasizes that God's Word equips us for every good work. Not only does Scripture point out sin, but it also teaches what is right and good that God wants us to do. How does God's Word equip us for good works? It does so by training in righteousness. Scripture does not simply point out error; it also teaches what is right and good that we should be living out.

King Josiah gives us a good example of both of these ideas. 2 Kings 22 records the finding of the Book of the Law while the temple was being repaired. 2 Kings 23 records the reforms in Judah during the reign of Josiah. Josiah destroyed the places of idolatrous worship; he followed Scripture in turning away from sin. But Josiah also commanded the people to celebrate the Passover, he followed Scripture in doing what God said is good and right. As we read and study Scripture, God uses His Word to reprove and correct sin in our lives. But He also teaches us the good things that he *does* want us to live out. These good works do not earn our salvation, but they are a result of the salvation that God gives to us.

1. As I look back over the last several weeks, how have I used this unique time to spend more time in God's Word and walking with Him? How can I use the upcoming weeks to develop or strengthen the habit of consistently studying God's Word?

2. We should study Scripture to learn truth and to learn what is good, but Scripture also teaches us about God and His character. As we learn what is right and wrong, we also should be growing in our personal relationship with God. How is my relationship with God right now? How can it be strengthened by spending time in His Word?

3. In the Old Testament, the celebration of the Passover reminded Israel of the deliverance that God gave them from slavery in Egypt. In the New Testament, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the sign of the New Covenant that reminds us of what Christ has done for us in salvation. What are some other good Biblical things that I can be living out in my life that remind me of God's character and strengthen my relationship with Him?

Tuesday

“And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said these things, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” . . . “As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.”

Luke 8:8, 15

In the parable of the sower and the seed, Christ described four different types of soil. The seed is the Word of God, and the soil describes different hearts that may hear the Word of God. The Word of God is the same in all four scenarios; the difference is the type of soil on which the seed lands. The soil that grows crops and bears fruit is described as “good” soil. As we hear the Word of God, we should be receptive to it. We should submit to the truths that God has said, even when we may not like what it says.

Sometimes it is easy for us to hold on to the parts of God’s Word that sound good and appealing to us while neglecting the parts that are more difficult. In 2 Kings 14, Jonah had taken a good message to King Jeroboam II regarding the growth and strength of the nation of Israel. That was a message Jonah was probably excited to take. But when God called Jonah to preach to Nineveh, Jonah tried to run away. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and eventually God used Assyria to conquer Israel and take them into captivity. From a national standpoint, we can understand why Jonah did not want Nineveh to receive mercy. But from a spiritual standpoint, God was showing mercy and grace to many people in Nineveh, and Jonah needed to obey God’s Word. We may not literally run away from God’s Word, but we can sometimes neglect the parts of Scripture that are not as appealing to us. We can try to justify in our own minds why it is ok for us to do something that God has said is wrong, and we can make excuses for why we don’t have to obey what God says is good and right to do. But God’s will is good, and as we study His Word, our minds need to be transformed to follow His truth. Instead of rejecting or neglecting what God has said, we need to be willing to submit to His truth.

1. Good soil produces much fruit. God’s Word can change my life, and it can also equip me to serve and disciple others. Trusting God to ultimately produce the fruit (1 Corinthians 3:6-7), what opportunities has God given me to bear fruit for Him? How can I depend on Him and take those opportunities to serve Him?

2. The truth of God’s Word confronts our thinking, and sometimes it reveals when we are not thinking correctly. Am I willing to change my thinking to be in line with God’s Word? Am I willing to submit to the truth of God’s Word, even if it means giving up things that I want to hold on to?

3. We live in a time where information is readily available from many sources, but not all information is true. We must filter the information that we hear through the lens of Scripture. How can I evaluate all things that I hear according to the truth and wisdom of Scripture?

Wednesday

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:11

In Matthew 7, Christ used the illustration of parents providing for their children to teach about God's character. We are sinners and don't always do right, but we still provide good things for our children. Since that is true, God, who is always good, will always provide good things for His children.

But we can struggle with this truth in two ways. For one, we sometimes believe that we know what is best for us, so we assume that if God is going to give us something good, then He *must* give us the thing that we want. So we can be disappointed when we don't receive what we thought God should give us. But the problem here is that our understanding is limited, and we don't always know what is best for us. We may *think* something is good for us, but in God's perfect knowledge and wisdom He knows that it is not good.

We can also struggle with this truth when difficult times come into our lives. We may look at a hardship that we are facing and wonder how this terrible thing can be good. But God promised to work all things together for good in the lives of believers (Romans 8:28). In our limited understanding, we may think that things would work out best if this hardship is removed. But God is more interested in changing us than in changing our circumstances. So He could be allowing that hardship into our lives in order to change our way of thinking and our character, and that is how He is using that hardship for our good. Whether we think we should receive something good, or whether we struggle to see how a hardship can be used for good, we must always trust God's wisdom and trust that God is working for our good, even when we do not fully understand what He is doing.

1. The situation our nation is facing is certainly difficult. But God promises to work all things for good. Since His promise is true, He will work this situation out for our good. Am I willing to accept that promise of God as I see the difficulties in the world? How should that promise affect my outlook on life right now?

2. When I see something that I think is good, but God does not give that thing to me, do I struggle to believe that God is good? How can I rest in His goodness even when things do not turn out the way that I want?

3. We often trust our own wisdom and judgment, but our wisdom is not perfect. Am I willing to submit my mind and way of thinking to the wisdom of God? When something in life does not make sense to me, am I willing to trust God's wisdom even though I don't understand what is happening?

Thursday

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:9-10

Galatians 6 teaches the principle of sowing and reaping and emphasizes the truth that we will reap what we sow. Since this is true, we should not get tired of doing what is right, since God promises that we will reap a good harvest if we have sown good seed and do not give up. Because of this reality, we should faithfully seek opportunities to do good for others. As God works His fruit of goodness in our lives, it should show itself in action by doing good for others. We have many opportunities to do good things for others, whether in helping with a spiritual need or a physical need. We must be taking those opportunities that God gives to us and do good for others.

The end of verse 10 emphasizes doing good for fellow believers. When a fellow believer is struggling or has a need, we should be quick to help them. Christ taught that people would recognize believers as followers of Him by the love that they show to one another (John 13:35). Our love and care for fellow believers not only helps them in their need, but it also reflects God's character to a watching world.

But this does not mean that we *only* do good for our fellow believers. The emphasis is on believers, but we are still commanded to do good to *everyone*. Everyone includes unbelievers. Everyone includes our enemies. Everyone includes those who annoy us or who don't like us. No matter what kind of relationship we have with someone else, God has called us to do good to them. As we have opportunity, we must seek to do good to everyone.

1. The Christian life is a marathon, and sometimes we go through difficult times of life where we can be tempted to give up. How can the principle of sowing and reaping encourage me to stay faithful and continue doing what God says is right even in the midst of the hard times of life?

2. Christ said that our love for fellow believers identifies us as His disciples. How well do I represent Christ in the love that I show to fellow believers? Am I accurately reflecting God's character and love to those around me in the way that I love and do good for other Christians?

3. What is something good that I can do for a fellow believer this week? What is something good that I can do for an unbeliever this week?

Friday

Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?

Matthew 20:15

In Matthew 20, Christ told the parable of a man who hired workers to work in his vineyard. The first group he hired started work early in the morning, and they agreed to be paid a denarius for their work, which was the normal pay rate for a day's work. Throughout the day, the man hired more and more workers to come and work in the vineyard. At the end of the day, he paid the workers. He started by paying the last group who started working. Even though they had only worked for the last hour of the day, he still paid them a denarius, a full day's wages. The last group to be paid was the group of workers who had been hired early in the morning and worked all day. When they saw others who worked less receiving a denarius, they expected to be paid more. So they grumbled when they each received a denarius for their work just like everyone else had been paid. They thought they would be paid more since they had worked longer. But the man who hired them reminded them that they had agreed to work for a denarius, and he had paid them a fair wage.

The man asked the workers if they were envious of others because of his generosity. The word for "generosity" is the word that is commonly translated as "good." God shows His goodness and generosity in salvation, and all who believe in Christ receive the same salvation from sin. The thief on the cross received the same salvation as the person who lives faithfully as a Christian for many years, because salvation is based on what Christ has done for us. The fruit of goodness in Galatians 5:22 is a broad term for many different kinds of goodness. But one kind of goodness that it includes is generosity. God shows us His goodness and generosity both in salvation and in His provision for our lives, and we should be thankful for what He has done for us. But we should also show that same generosity to others.

1. God is generous to provide salvation, and He is also generous in His provision for our everyday lives. But some Christians do have more than others. Am I jealous of those fellow believers who have more than me? Do I trust God's promises to provide, or do I jealously wish that I had more than God has given to me?

2. One way that God shows His goodness is in His generosity toward us. As God is working His fruit of goodness in my life, how can I show that goodness by being generous toward others?

3. Sometimes we may not be generous toward others because we are afraid that we will not have enough left for ourselves. Do I trust God to provide for my needs even when I am generous, or do I hold on to the things that I have, fearing that I will not have enough if I show generosity to others? How can I trust Him to provide for me even as I seek to be generous?

Saturday

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

1 Peter 2:12

Peter wrote to believers living under the Roman Empire, and those believers faced opposition and abuse from unbelievers around them. Throughout much of 1 Peter 2-3, Peter advocated living rightly before an unbelieving world. 1 Peter 2:12 is part of the heading for this section that teaches how to live when facing opposition from unbelievers. These early Christians were often accused of being evildoers. The Romans often thought of Christians as atheists, because Christians rejected the Roman pantheon of gods. The teaching of the Lord's Supper was sometimes twisted to accuse Christians of cannibalism. Christians were sometimes accused of immorality and incest because they referred to each other as "brother" and "sister." So even faithful Christians who were striving to live rightly before God were often accused of being "evildoers."

But consider Peter's response to those who accused Christians of doing evil. He said that Christians should live in such an honorable way that even their enemies would need to acknowledge their good deeds and glorify God. In other words, the false accusations should be proven wrong by the lifestyle of believers. Daniel 6 provides a good example of what this kind of lifestyle looks like. King Darius appointed Daniel to a high position in the kingdom, but others in similar positions were jealous of Daniel and wanted to accuse him of wrong so they could get rid of him. So they watched him to find something in his life that they could take to King Darius and accuse Daniel of wrongdoing. Daniel 6:5 says, "Then these men said, 'We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.'" These men wanted to accuse Daniel of wrongdoing, but the only thing they could accuse him of was following God faithfully. That is the kind of testimony that Peter advised his readers to live out before others.

1. What is my response when someone falsely accuses me of doing wrong or falsely attacks my character? Do I get angry and defensive? According to 1 Peter 2:12 and 1 Peter 3:13-17, what should my response look like?

2. Sometimes we as Christians can be quick to defend our freedoms and rights, especially when we face opposition or feel that our freedoms are threatened. But our response (whether what we say or how we say it) can reflect a poor testimony before unbelievers, and unbelievers can use our words or actions as an excuse for rejecting God and His Word. Even when I face this kind of difficulty, how can I represent God well and live in a way that is right and honorable before both God and others?

3. Christ said that others should see our good works and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). As I live my life, who am I trying to make look good? Am I trying to get others to look up to me, or am I trying to point them to God?
