

# The Decisive Influence of the Bible

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[ 0 : 01 ] Good, well done. Well, by the time we finish the book of Hebrews, I think we'll know that by heart. And there'll be a prize for who can give me the number of key words from Hebrews that I've managed to fit into that song.

They're all very, very important. Okay, it's not Hebrews tonight though. We're going to read now from Paul's second letter to Timothy. And Edward's going to be preaching to us from this passage. And speaking about the decisive influence of the Bible on our lives as Christians, on our life as a church, and how central it is to everything that we believe and everything that we do.

So we're going to read together this well-known chapter from Paul's second letter to Timothy, page 996 in the church Bibles. And I'm going to read the whole chapter. Paul says, But understand this, that in the last days, there will come times of difficulty.

The NIV is much starker there. There will come terrible times. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance even of godliness, but denying its power.

[ 1 : 48 ] Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

Just as Janice and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also opposed the truth. Men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, because their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those men.

You, however, you, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me in Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured.

Yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. While evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it. And I have from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[ 3 : 19 ] 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 competent, equipped for every good work.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, good evening, friends.

Let's turn in our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3, if we may, page 996 in our hardback Bibles, if you have that Bible. Second letter of Paul to Timothy, chapter 3.

Without the Bible, it is impossible to know God truly.

Without the Bible, it is impossible to live the Christian life. Without the Bible, we could know nothing about Christ, nothing about salvation, nothing about heaven and hell.

[ 4 : 34 ] Without the Bible, we cannot understand truly what it means to be a human being. Without the Bible, we cannot understand that by nature, we're rebels against God, sinners who need to be rescued from the consequences of our sin.

Without the Bible, we cannot understand the origin of the world or the future destiny of the world.

Without the Bible, we cannot understand what it means to be born again or what it means to belong to the church of Christ.

Without the Bible, our grasp on the nature of right and wrong will inevitably be skewed. Without the Bible, we shan't be able to understand what it means to live a happy life, a purposeful life. Without the Bible, we cannot understand what it means to be born again or the future of the world. Without the Bible, we cannot understand what it means to be born again or the future of the world. Without the Bible, we can have no anticipation of eternal joy, the joy of being with God and with the Lord Jesus forever. In short, without the Bible, we would be very much in the dark. Now, I want to speak this evening about the decisive influence of the Bible in the life of the Lord's church and in the life of the Christian individual. An authentic Christian church will always have the teaching of the Bible at its very heart and center because the Bible is the teaching that God has given to the world.

[ 5 : 59 ] It can be helpful to think of a Christian congregation as if it were a car. Now, just think of how a car is made. There are two seats in the front, two or three seats behind, and then in the back, the boot.

In every church, the Bible is somewhere in the car. In one church, it might be in the boot, buried under the luggage. A verse or two just makes itself heard occasionally, but it's not really paid much attention to.

Another church may have the Bible in the back seat. Passages are read out loud, but are hardly commented on because the center of interest in that church is in the life and experience of people, men and women, rather than in the God who made us and who loves us.

Then in a third type of church, the Bible is in the front of the car in the passenger seat. It's quite prominent. It gets noticed. It appears frequently in the songs and the teaching of the church, but it doesn't direct the church.

It's not the determining factor or the final court of appeal. But in the fourth type of church, the Bible is at the wheel of the car. It is driving the car forward.

[ 7 : 17 ] It's decisive. It sets the church's agenda and is recognized and revered as the very word of God himself. Now, the Tron Church is a Bible-believing church and therefore a Bible-teaching church.

In this church, we aim to make sure that the Bible is right at the wheel of the car driving the church forward. So I want to ask the question this evening, why is this so?

Why is it that the Bible drives the agenda of a church like ours, shaping our decisions, our plans, and our activities? Well, let's turn to this chapter, 2 Timothy chapter 3.

A little bit of historical context will help us to understand the force of what Paul the Apostle is saying. Now, Paul would have been about 60 years old when he wrote this letter.

He was in prison in Rome. The year was about 65 AD, and Paul was expecting to be executed in the near future. In fact, you'll see that he writes in chapter 4, verse 6, The time of my departure has come.

[ 8 : 21 ] Timothy was about 40 years old at this stage, and he was Paul's most trusted lieutenant. They'd been working very closely together for about 20 years.

And Timothy, at the time of writing this letter, was in Ephesus. He was overseeing the life of the Christian fellowships in that part of the world. And this second letter to him, this final letter of Paul, comes to Timothy as a spine stiffener.

Now, Paul is not really teaching Timothy anything new. He's reminding him, in pretty strong language, of the principles of Christian leadership. And the central task of Christian leadership, the task to which Timothy must devote himself, is the teaching of the scriptures.

Now, let's see how Paul insists on this. We'll pick it up at verse 13 initially. Chapter 3, verse 13. Evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Now, Paul is talking here about the atmosphere in which Timothy is working. He's talking about other forms of teaching and their deceptive influence. Other types of religion. Probably false pseudo-types of Christianity.

[ 9 : 38 ] That's the atmosphere in which Timothy has to work. And it is, of course, the atmosphere in which we have to work today. Deceptive influences are everywhere. And we need to see how the Bible counters them.

Now, look at those first four words of the next verse, verse 14. But as for you. Now, those words are designed to stiffen Timothy's spine.

And every Christian leader today needs to learn them by heart. But as for you. You must resist all this deception. You must teach the truth.

Well, how? How is that to happen? Let's read on. You, Timothy, verse 14. You must continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, those sacred writings are the books of the Old Testament. And what is their purpose and their power? Well, according to verse 15, they are able to make a person wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[10:54] Now, do you find that surprising? You might think that it was the New Testament which would make you able to put your faith in Christ Jesus. And indeed, of course, it does. But it's the Old Testament scriptures which prepare the way for the truth about Jesus.

One of the things that happens to you when you become a Christian is that you begin to see how all the great themes of the Old Testament, the history of the Old Testament, and the prophecy of the Old Testament, they all find their fulfillment and goal in the person and work of Jesus.

Jesus, his life, his identity, his character, and his achievements, they are all portrayed prophetically in the Old Testament. Now, notice Paul's command to Timothy there in verse 14.

Continue. Continue. Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. Deepen your acquaintance with these sacred writings because that's the way to hold yourself and the churches strong in the face of the deceptive teachings which are all around.

Don't go off in some different direction. Continue in the scriptures. And then Paul opens up his reasoning further in verses 16 and 17.

[12:08] All scripture, he says, 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 or competent, equipped for every good work.

Now, the man of God there is Timothy and those like him who have responsibility for leading and guiding the churches. So what is it that makes the man of God competent and equipped to do his work well?

The answer is the scriptures. The scriptures are the tool of his trade. The scriptures are his necessary equipment. Now, every trade has its own tools.

So, for example, think of the gardener or the horticulturalist. He has his own particular tools. Spade, fork, trowel, secateurs, pruning knife, slug pellets, and piles of well-rotted farmyard manure.

That's his equipment to do all the good work of gardening. The man of God has one tool in his hand. One tool which equips him for every good work, according to Paul.

[13:19] And that is his Bible. Now, of course, his work is made a bit easier by having one or two other things like a mobile phone and a computer and an office to work in and a study to study in.

But only one thing is essential, and that is his Bible. It's the Bible which teaches the church. It's the Bible that brings life to the church and brings strength, joy, wisdom, and understanding to the church.

It's the Bible that enables the church to live the Christian life. Now, let's drill down into these verses a bit further. Paul is teaching Timothy what the Bible does and what the Bible is.

What the Bible does is the power of the Bible. What the Bible is is the nature of the Bible. So let's start with the nature of the Bible. Paul tells us in verse 16, all scripture is breathed out by God.

Not so much inspired by God as expired by God, breathed out by God. In other words, the Bible is the speech of God.

[14:27] It's the words of God addressed to the human race. Now, one of the chief characteristics that distinguishes you and me from the lower orders of creation is our power of speech, our ability to communicate to each other with precision and clarity by using words.

Words are very much a human thing. Dogs growl and bark. Dolphins squeak. Bulls bellow. And all those noises mean something. They're a form of communication.

But it's only human beings who have the power of articulate speech, using words to express ourselves in a huge variety of ways. And why do we have this power while the dogs and cats don't have it?

The answer is because we, unlike the animals, are made in the image of God. And one of God's most distinctive characteristics is his power to speak and his willingness to speak.

We come across it right at the beginning of the Bible, in the first chapter of Genesis. And God spoke. God said, let there be light. And there was light. He speaks and his words have power. [15:35] Now, we are made in his image. We reflect his image. We reflect his characteristics. So we, too, have the ability to speak. And our words also have power.

Power to get things done. Power to change situations. Power to analyze, to clarify, to bring help or to bring harm. How, then, how, then, have the words of God found their way from the mouth of God onto the printed pages that we hold in our hands?

Well, the answer is that God has channeled his words to us through the minds and the pens of the men who wrote down the Old Testament and the New Testament. The apostle Peter, in his second letter, explains this to us.

He tells us that those who wrote down the scriptures were not speaking out of their own invention or out of their own imagination. Rather, he says, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, God, exercising his power by the Holy Spirit, caused the prophets and the evangelists and the apostles to write down his words.

[16:50] Now, they expressed God's words in their own language, in human language. But they were merely the instruments of God. What they have conveyed to the human race is exactly what God has to say to the human race.

That's why we can trust the Bible and rely on its absolute truthfulness. It's God's truth. You might say the Bible is God's sermon to the world, God teaching and preaching to the men and women that he has made.

And this is why the strong trend in modern society that rejects the Bible and disdains the Bible is such a defiance of God's loving authority. The words of scripture have been breathed out by God himself.

That's why they need to be the central and defining characteristic of an authentic Christian church. Breathed out by God, the very expression of the mind of heaven.

That's why the Bible is our supreme authority and we delight in it. Well, let's turn now from the nature of the Bible as breathed out by God to the power of the Bible.

[17:57] And Paul describes this vividly in verse 16. So look with me at that verse if you would. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

Now the Bible is profitable precisely because it is breathed out by God. God's words change things. God's words change us. So let's look at the four categories of profitability that Paul speaks about here in verse 16.

First of all, teaching. The Bible is profitable for teaching. So if Timothy has a Bible in his hand, he has God's full syllabus for the education of the human race.

What then does it teach? Well, not everything. Not everything. The Bible doesn't teach us French verbs or mathematics or science. People discover the facts of science by their own investigation, by their own hard work.

So for example, if you wanted to catalogue the flora and fauna of West Dumbartonshire, you could do that by hard investigative work. You don't need the Bible to reveal that to you.

[19:12] The Bible teaches us not what we can discover by hard work, but the truths that only God can reveal to us. And the overarching truth taught by the Bible is described in verse 15 here.

The Bible is able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The Bible unfolds to us God's great scheme of salvation.

Think of where it begins, back in the creation. It quickly moves on in Genesis chapter 3 to our sinful rebellion, which is the reason why we need salvation. We need to be salvaged from the consequences of our rebellion.

And then as the Old Testament develops, God teaches us how he is establishing a gracious covenant with his chosen people. And this whole gracious and loving plan comes to its culmination in the coming of Christ into the world, who died to bear the penalty of our sin, who was raised from death to demonstrate his invincibility and the defeat of death, who was then exalted to heaven from where he has poured out his Holy Spirit on his people, giving us new life and the progressive experience of living as God's forgiven children with the sure promise of eternal life with him in the new creation.

And that's what the Bible teaches, salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. We could never discover that simply by our own investigations. The Bible teaches us to understand salvation through faith in Christ and to rejoice in it.

[ 20 : 53 ] And it's God who reveals it to us. Then secondly, the Bible is profitable for reproof. What we all need when we're in the wrong is reproof.

Reproof is a bit like a sharp jab in the solar plexus. It brings us up short and it makes us very thoughtful. Let me give you an example of reproof. When I was 19 years old, I was a lazy and ill-disciplined university student.

I was not the first of that type nor the last, but I was definitely what the Bible would call a sluggard. Now one day, my tutor, my academic tutor who was a distinguished professor, said to me, Mr. Lobb, your attitude to your work is not even that of a dilettante.

I had to look up the word dilettante. And I found it meant a person who was not serious about his commitments, somebody who toys with his subject and treats everything as being thoroughly trivial. According to my tutor, my attitude to my work was not even that of a dilettante. Now that one sentence of reproof did the trick for me. It really stung me.

[ 22 : 08 ] I felt so ashamed of myself and I began to work at my studies from that day on. Now in the same way, there are times when a sentence or a passage from the Bible can have just that kind of effect on us.

It brings us up short. It jabs us in our mental solar plexus. Ouch! And it demands repentance and change. It's a sharp reproof from God himself.

And we all need reproof from scripture from time to time because we can so quickly decline into sinful attitudes and actions. Look on a few verses into the next chapter.

2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 10. Here's a verse which might act as a necessary reproof to you or me if we needed it. Chapter 4 verse 10.

For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me. In love with this present world. Just that one phrase could bring a Christian up short.

[ 23 : 07 ] Could make a Christian cry out, that's me. I'm like Demas. I'm too concerned with this present world. Too concerned with money and comfort and pleasure. I'm living just for this world, not for the world to come as the Bible teaches me to do.

Lord, help me. Help me to repent. Help me to love what you love and to live for what you value. Being reproofed is always painful.

But we need reproof. It can turn us right round. Think of the way Paul's own life as a Christian started with a most powerful reproof from the Lord Jesus.

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Well, let's thank God that the Bible is profitable for reproof. If there were no reproof in the Bible, we'd simply be left ambling around in complacency and sin and godlessness.

God reproofs us because he loves us and he covets our wholehearted devotion to him. Then thirdly, from chapter 3, verse 16, the Bible is profitable for correction.

[ 24 : 16 ] Now, this is a rather different thing. You could put it like this, that the Bible corrects our understanding of things by re-educating us. We are all being constantly educated by the world, by the influences of the world around us.

That's not to say that the world is wrong about everything. Not everything. For example, the world insists that a nation needs the rule of law. Now, that's a good thing.

It's right. The Bible teaches the same lesson. The world demands that its political leaders live with integrity. That also is right and is taught by the Bible.

But, at so many levels, the world's values are wrong and we need the Bible to correct our thinking. Let me give just a few examples of this.

First, the world teaches us that mankind, men and women, are the measure of all things, the center of everything that's going on and therefore should be the center and glory of all our efforts and all our thinking.

[ 25 : 20 ] But the Bible teaches that God is the center and that it's his glory that is to be lived for, not the glory of men and women. Secondly, the world would have us believe, and this comes across on the airwaves every day, the world would have us believe that our political leaders are in control of history.

But the Bible teaches us that God is entirely in control of history. When we know about God's control of human affairs, it gives us a very different perspective on the political conflicts that fill our news media.

We can be very thankful that Donald Trump and Boris Johnson are not ruling the world. We need political leadership, of course, and we must pray for our leaders.

But to know that God is in charge relieves us of a great weight of anxiety. It's the Bible that teaches us to think rightly about these things. Third, the world seems to be convinced that all religions, all types of faith, are really the same animal inside, which is wearing different clothes on the outside. But the Bible teaches us that Christianity alone is true because Christianity alone speaks of God graciously helping and rescuing sinners who need to be helped, who are unable to help themselves.

[ 26 : 44 ] Whereas every other type of faith or religion insists that people can save themselves by various works and efforts. All other faiths say, do.

Christianity alone says to us, done. Fourth, the world teaches, the world is teaching very powerfully these days all sorts of novel things about the nature of marriage.

And so many people are lapping up these novelties as if they've stumbled upon something precious and wonderful. perhaps in a few years' time you'll be able to marry your dog or your hamster or your ash tree.

Now the Bible re-educates us. The Bible corrects our thinking. The Bible shows us that marriage is the lifelong union between a man and a woman.

Now there are other examples that could be multiplied, lots of examples. But we don't come to the Bible with empty, blank minds. Our minds already have a great deal written into them and much of that information is wrong and deceptive.

[ 27 : 50 ] The world begins to educate us from the moment that we're born. When we come to the Bible, we submit ourselves to God's correction of our wrong thinking. And of course that can be painful.

It's humbling to admit that we've been wrong about something for a long time. But as the Bible re-educates us over time, our thinking becomes strong and solid.

Our emotional life also becomes much stronger and much more settled. The Bible brings our minds into line with God's mind and that leads to happiness and a clear understanding of what human life is for.

Then fourthly, back to chapter three, verse 16. The Bible says Paul, the scriptures are profitable for training in righteousness.

Now that's a very interesting phrase. By the word righteousness, Paul means how to live rightly, how to live in a way that pleases God. But the really striking word there is the word training, training in righteousness, training in how to live rightly in the sight of God.

[ 29 : 03 ] Now we're well aware of the need for training in all sorts of areas of human activity. Training in sport, training in playing a musical instrument, training in rock climbing, training in running a business.

Almost any human activity which is worth doing requires training. But training in righteousness.

Perhaps you just turn over a page, if you would, to the next letter, Titus, chapter 2, verse 11.

Titus 2, 11. Because here Paul tells Titus, another one of his trusted lieutenants, what training in righteousness means. Let me read verses 11 and 12. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Now look at verse 12 in particular there. Training in godliness involves learning to renounce ungodliness, learning to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled lives, lives where the self and selfish impulses are kept properly under control.

In fact, in Paul's thinking and teaching in his letters, learning self-control is always at the very heart of growing into Christian maturity, learning to control our bodily appetites for food and drink and sex, controlling our tendency to be angry or impatient with other people, or lazy or hard-hearted towards the sufferings of others.

[ 30 : 39 ] We need to be trained in all these areas. We don't naturally know how to do these things, and it's the Bible which is our training manual. That's what Paul is saying.

I remember having a discussion with our minister Willie Phillip a number of years ago about which Bible books the church needed to hear preaching from at that particular time. This was five or six years ago, I think.

And Willie was saying we must preach the wisdom books of the Old Testament, the books of Proverbs and Job and Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, because they are the books that instruct us in how to live.

They are the books that will train us in righteousness, because we don't naturally know how to live. If we're left to our own devices, we will naturally, all of us, make a mess of our lives.

There's another example, a simple example, of training going on here in Titus chapter 2 verses 3 and 4. Just look with me if you would, chapter 2 in Titus verses 3 and 4.

[ 31 : 37 ] It's about older Christian women in the church and younger Christian women in the church. Paul says there of the older women in verse 3, they are to teach what is good and so train the young women in the church to love their husbands and children.

Now, don't you find that massively surprising? Wouldn't you expect a young married woman to know instinctively how to love her husband and how to love her children?

Well, Paul says she doesn't. She needs to be trained. There's a lot she doesn't yet know. And the best person to train her is not her husband. He's as much of an ignoramus as she is.

He is an uncouth youth by definition. The person best equipped to train the young married woman in how to be happily married is the senior married woman.

She's the person who has navigated those choppy waters already. She knows where the rocks and shoals lie on which marital shipwreck can take place. So to turn back to 2 Timothy 3 16, training in righteousness.

[ 32 : 48 ] We need to be trained in how to live a life that honors and pleases the Lord. Now, there are certainly many good Christian books available on different aspects of how to live the Christian life.

But those books are only good insofar as they take the Bible's training in righteousness and unpack it and expound it. The Bible is the authority.

The Bible is the training manual. It's the indispensable volume. But let me point out an essential feature of these verses in 2 Timothy chapter 3.

I mentioned it a few minutes ago, but I want to return to it now. And that's the first four words of verse 14. But as for you, the first 13 verses of the chapter have been describing the stress and pressure, the difficulty of living the Christian life.

Look back to verse 1. But understand this, Timothy, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty, real difficulty. It will be very difficult to live the Christian life.

[ 33 : 53 ] And Paul goes straight on after verse 1 to describe the fierceness, the ferocity of life lived without God in the world, the horribleness of it. In verses 11 and 12, he describes the persecutions and sufferings that he has had to bear and that all Christians will be called on to endure to some degree.

But as for you, Timothy, despite these pressures to live differently, you've got to be different. Continue in the scriptures because they are your equipment.

They are the church's equipment. But it will require courage and determination to stick with the Bible and not to ditch it. This letter is intended to stiffen Timothy's spine.

What can happen to Christian people and Christian churches in this testing environment of pressure and difficulty? One of three things can happen to Christian churches, to congregations. First, a congregation can simply be swept from its moorings by the flood tide of sin and error. An individual Christian, a whole congregation, can get to the point of saying resistance to the world's ways is simply too difficult.

[ 35 : 08 ] We can't beat it, so let's join it. Let's go with the flow. And therefore, up and down the country, throughout Scotland and England, we see Christian churches today buying into the values of the world, values which the Bible counters.

So, for example, many churches these days are proclaiming with a rainbow symbol outside their front door. We are an inclusive church. We're warm and loving. What that means is we've abandoned the Bible's teaching on sexuality and gender and the uniqueness of Christ. You're welcome to come to us, whatever you believe and whatever is your lifestyle. We don't talk here about sin or about repentance. We simply affirm everybody. That's the first option, to go the

way of the world and to cease to be in any distinctive way Christian.

Churches of that kind may well read Bible passage out in their services. They may give the appearance of taking the Bible seriously, but it's a deception. They would never preach a sermon on the first four words of 2 Timothy 3, verse 14.

That kind of resistance is something which they have long since abandoned. The second option in the face of all this pressure is to go into hiding, to withdraw into a kind of ghetto, to put the shutters up at all the windows, to batten down the hatches in order to keep the world and its values at bay.

[ 36 : 38 ] But that's no truly Christian answer. Jesus sends his people into the world with the life-transforming gospel. He doesn't extract us from the world. He sends us out into it, into the lion's mouth, into the cobra's den.

But it's all right because he promises to go with us. But the third option is the one that Paul puts before Timothy. But as for you, stand firm, stick with the Bible, don't shift, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.

It's only these sacred writings that will enable you to teach others about salvation through faith in Christ. There's no other source of authority by which you and the church can live.

The scriptures are breathed out by God himself. They are the very words of love and mercy and truth that he has delivered to the human race. Stick with them, Timothy.

Learn them, live by them. Remember their power. They teach us when we're ignorant. They reprove us when we've gone wrong. They correct us when our thinking is skewed.

[ 37 : 45 ] And they train us in how to live purposeful, happy, and godly lives. If you have these scriptures branded into your heart and life, you will be competent and equipped for every good work to which God calls you.

That's why our church believes the Bible and works hard at teaching the Bible. The Bible is the voice of God to weak and helpless human beings. Thank God for it.

When the Bible is taught, God's voice is heard. And let me say this particularly to the young adults here and particularly perhaps to new students who've just arrived to start life at one of our universities.

If you will take serious steps to study the Bible, to be taught the Bible, to learn the Bible, to love the Bible, and to begin to learn how to pass on its message to other people, your life will become steady, strong, happy, and in the words of verse 17, competent, equipped for every good work. That will be a great blessing to you and an incomparable blessing to the people that your life will touch in the years to come. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray together.

[ 39 : 05 ] to use the words of King David, the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. More to be desired of the scriptures than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

We thank you, dear Heavenly Father, for the sweetness and delight and joy and truth of the Bible.

We thank you that this book has molded so much in human society, not least the society of England and Scotland and Wales and Ireland.

We thank you for the power and influence of the Bible. And we pray that you will give us, all of us, hearts that love it, that want to learn it more and more, to become deeply steeped in its truth.

And that you will help us, like Timothy, to decide and determine not to go the way of the world, but to stick to your teaching, which alone can make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus the King.

[ 40 : 26 ] And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.