

“THE BIBLE AND DISCIPLE-MAKING”

(II Timothy 3:10-17)

“But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (NASV)

When Bible students mention Paul and Timothy, everyone recognizes that Timothy is Paul’s disciple. This text and other passages in First and Second Timothy tell us what this means. These two letters are replete with lessons about disciple-making (as indeed, are all of Paul’s letters). I would like to draw a one-line diagram that pictures a succession which shows how this process worked with Paul and Timothy.

PAUL → II Timothy 3:14 and II Timothy 1:13 → TIMOTHY

You will note that at the extremes of this line are the names of a discipler, Paul, and his disciple, Timothy. These two form one of the most dynamic duos of disciple-making to be found in the Bible. But what did disciple-making involve for the two of them? This is the topic of this study.

Let me explore the above one-line diagram more fully. Paul came into Timothy’s life in Timothy’s home town of Lystra (Acts 16:1). Because of their common interest in the Old Testament, Paul and Timothy’s family came into instant rapport. “The jury is still out” with regard to the question of whether Paul led Timothy to Christ or not. Regardless of our conclusion, a discipler-disciple relationship was quickly established between them. This relationship is a great tribute to the Apostle Paul in showing how flexible he was in bridging an age gap and a personality gap between himself and Timothy. It is also a tribute to Timothy in that he consumed the butterflies in his stomach when Paul invited him on a mission trip and became one of the revered names of the New Testament’s heroes of faith.

The one-line diagram shows the essential connection that must take place between discipler and disciple if Jesus’ command to “turn people into disciples” (Matthew 28:19) is to be obeyed. Let me repeat that in a personal way: *In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded every believer to “turn people into disciples.”* Look carefully at the two verses that are installed between Paul and Timothy in the diagram. II Timothy 3:14, a

part of our text, says, “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.” Several commanding grammatical features in this verse will enable us to understand it more fully. The word “you” near the head of the sentence bears major emphasis in the original (Greek) text. Actually, the text says, *su de*, which is “you but,” which shows that the word “you” bears major emphasis. Paul has just been describing the corrupt climate, the evil environment that prevailed in the world at that time. Then he abruptly says, “But *you*.” Timothy, in the very nature of your relationship with Jesus, I am expecting a distinctive difference between you and others. Why? What made Timothy different? Jesus, to be sure, but not Jesus in a vacuum. Jesus manifested through relationships.

“*You*, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of.” The word translated “continue” is the same word Jesus used in the great “vine and branch” passage (John 15:1-8), where it is translated “abide.” In our verse, it is a present active imperative, which means that it is an activity Timothy is to participate in by choice and commitment, and *it is a command*. Then note the word “learned,” a word which occurs twice in the verse, and strategically, dominates the verse. The original word is *emathes*. An informed New Testament student should know that this is a form of the word *mathetes*, which is the Greek word which means “disciple.” In our text the verb is an aorist active indicative, and it could be translated “you actively participated in the disciple-making process in a decisive way” and thus “became convinced of” the truths that were communicated to you. The same word occurs again at the end of the verse. Paul also mentions the disciplers who engaged Timothy in the process—“knowing from whom you have received your discipling.” The word “knowing” is a form of *oida*, which means to “know by seeing,” indicating that the discipling Timothy had received had been close-up and personal. Indeed, it was done by Lois his grandmother, Eunice his mother (see II Timothy 1:5 and 3:15a) and the Apostle Paul, and in each case, many congenial hours had been spent by each of them in personally discipling Timothy. Read II Timothy 3:14 again, and then we will go to the second verse listed in the one-line diagram.

The second verse installed between Paul and Timothy is II Timothy 1:13, which says, “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” The word translated “retain,” or “hold fast” is a present imperative, which in effect means “take hold of and never let go.” It pictures the tenacity in seeking and mastering truth in the life of every true disciple. “If ye continue in My words, then are ye My disciples indeed.” Note also the word “standard” in this verse. It is the Greek word *hupotuposin*, a compound Greek word made up of a preposition (*hupo*) which means “underneath” and the word *tupos*, which means “type” or “pattern.” The word “tupos” means “an exact impress,” or a “form” or a “pattern.” One Greek lexicon says that it means “a sketch for imitation.” So *Paul the disciple-maker has communicated to Timothy his disciple an “exact form of sound words,” and he expects him to master and grasp it in the same form in which he communicated it*. I have emphasized these words because this is the precise formula for making disciples. Paul reminds Timothy that he had “heard these sound words from me (Paul).” In this sentence, three terms are given stress in the text. One is the word “standard,” which bears *major* emphasis. Then the preposition term, “of sound words,” bears *minor*

emphasis. Later in the verse, the prepositional phrase, “from me,” also bears *major* emphasis. These are gigantic ideas, and the study of the verse is not yet complete. The word “from” (“from me”) is the word *para*, from which we get such words as “parallel” and “parable.” It invariably refers to something nearby, expressing a relationship of immediate vicinity or proximity. It literally means, “by the side of,” or “alongside.” Could anything be clearer? *Paul’s discipling of Timothy did not take place essentially in a crowd or through platform communication* (from a pulpit or teacher’s podium). *It took place “along the way” as Paul and Timothy lived and moved near each other.* On those occasions, Paul often took Timothy alongside and “explained the way and the truth of the Lord more fully” to him. *This is disciple-making.* The verse closes with another prepositional phrase, “in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus,” indicating the sphere in which all of this discipling took place. What a model for me as a disciple-maker! It is incumbent upon me by the command of Jesus to “turn people into disciples.” I must linger in such Scriptural scenery as this until I am captured by the counsel it gives. *If I were to place my name at the beginning of the one-line diagram, could I add at the other end the name of a disciple whom God has used me to build? Can I see the same results in my disciple as Paul saw in Timothy? Did the process I followed include the things clearly indicated in the two verses in the middle of the diagram?* “Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things” (II Timothy 2:7).

These introductory ideas form an excellent background for Paul’s great statement at the end of the chapter concerning the inspiration and intended function of the Word of God. We have already seen that *it is not possible to make New Testament disciples without a deliberate, steady personal transfer of Biblical truth from the discipler to the disciple (cf. JESUS!!!).* Now, let’s investigate more fully the role of the Bible in this process.

The Perfect ORIGIN of Scripture, 16a

First, Paul makes a classic statement about the *perfect origin* of Scripture. In II Timothy 3:16a, he says that “all Scripture is inspired by God.” The phrase “inspired by God” is the translation of *just one word* in the Greek language. The word is *theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.” “All (every) Scripture is God-breathed.” Nothing could be of greater importance than this claim. If it is not true, Christianity collapses at the point of authority. If it is true, Christianity stands in its total body of Biblical truth and is thus the determinant of each man’s eternal destiny.

The Scriptures (the writings of the Bible) were *breathed out by God Himself.* That is, the Bible is the product of the breath of God. It is the claim of the Bible itself that the breath of God produced each Scripture, just as my breath produces my words, making them the vehicle of my thought.

Let me make three quick points about the origin of Scripture. First, the Scriptures were produced with the cooperation of the human writer. The Holy Spirit did not override the personality of any Biblical writer, though he might have *overruled* the writer on any number of occasions. When John writes, he sounds like John; when Peter writes,

he sounds like Peter, etc. Second, the words of Scripture were chosen without consultation with the human writer. God chose, supervised, and guarded the very words of the text in order to insure that *His Word* was the product, not the words of a mere man. Third, the Scriptures were produced by a process that often left the human writer without full comprehension of the content of the text. If this is a question, I suggest that you study I Peter 1:10-12 with great care.

If you wish to pursue this truth further, let me encourage you to write for our other study on this theme entitled, “The Closer the Look, the Greater the Book.” Meantime, we will hurry to our next point in this study.

I. The Plain OBJECTIVES of Scripture, 15, 17

Second, Paul indicates the *plain objectives* of Scripture. That is, he tells us the purposes for which God gave us the Bible. Let me mention the three purposes that are either stated or suggested in our text.

First, God gave us the Bible *for the evangelizing of sinners to bring them to salvation*. In his great letter to the Romans, Paul said, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). In this text, he makes a great statement about the place of the Bible in the Christian life of his disciple, Timothy. In verse 15, he said, “From childhood (the word for infancy) you have known (again, ‘known by seeing,’ which suggests that someone modeled the Scripture and mouthed the Scripture to him close-up from his earliest life on earth) the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Note that Paul does not say that the Bible saves anyone, but that it makes sinners wise *unto* salvation by their exposure to its truth.

There is a great example of this use of the Bible in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch recorded in Acts 8:26-39. When Philip joined the eunuch on his chariot in Gaza, south of Jerusalem, as he traveled back toward his home in Ethiopia, he found the African man reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah (we know the text today as Isaiah 53, perhaps the greatest single prophecy of the coming Cross and Death of Christ in the entire Old Testament). Philip asked the eunuch, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The eunuch answered candidly, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” Then the eunuch added, “I ask you, of whom is the prophet speaking? Of himself, or of some other man?” Then the text strategically says, “Then Philip opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus.” The word translated preached comes from the same root word that gives us our word “Gospel.” So it says that Philip opened his mouth and “good-newsed” this man to Jesus, or “good-newsed” Jesus to this man. “The rest of the story” informs us that the eunuch received and trusted Christ, was baptized in His Name, and “went on his way rejoicing.” Here is an example of man’s use of the Bible according to the Divine intention—to evangelize sinners to bring them to salvation.

Second, the Bible is *effective in the edifying of saints to advance their sanctification*. The four specified uses of the Bible mentioned in verse 16 all advance the

sanctification of the saints of God. It is the Bible that challenges the disciple with a Divine standard of life and then the Holy Spirit (the author and interpreter and implementer of the Bible) changes him progressively so that his lifestyle is conformed to the Biblical standard. If the disciple has regular exposure to the content of Scripture, he is given opportunity to be more and more like Christ. When the Bible is known and believed, the believing Christian is progressively “set apart” for God’s purpose to be fulfilled in his life. He will learn in first-hand relationship the meaning of the words, “beholding as in the mirror of the Word of God the glory of the Lord Jesus, you will go on being transformed into the image of Christ from one stage of glory to another, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Corinthians 3:18).

Third, the Bible is to be used for *the equipping of the saints to bring them to service*. Paul says that by the proper use of Scripture, “the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (verse 17). Note the progression of the three key words. *Salvation* must lead to *sanctification*, and the saved/sanctified saint should be involved in a *service* that is clearly defined by Scripture (majoring on the making of disciples). I will discuss verse 17 at the end of this study, so I will only mention it here.

Salvation—sanctification—service. These three words cover the Divine intention for the entire life on earth of every human being. It is God’s clearly declared and defined will that sinners be saved, and that the saved be sanctified, and that the saved/sanctified believers be mightily productive in their service for Jesus Christ. None of these crucial things can occur in the life of a human being independently of the Bible. No wonder Paul was so firm in insisting that there be a solid transfer of Biblical truth from himself to his disciple, and equally insisted that the disciple further transfer the received truth into the lives of many other disciples.

II. The Practical OPERATION of Scripture, 16b

Third, Paul reveals the *practical operation* of Scripture in the lives of God’s people. He says that “all Scripture is profitable (valuable, beneficial, worthwhile) for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” Of course, he is referring to God’s intention for the use of the Bible in the lives of His children on earth. He mentions four practical purposes.

One, the Bible is profitable for *revelation*. “Profitable for teaching”—these are his exact words. Here again, we will see the “profit” of the Bible by engaging in a careful word study. Remember that Jesus said, “We live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” I want to give you several exact quotes taken from a lexicon of Biblical words. The word translated “teaching” points us to four closely related words, and each of them is a gold mine as we think of disciple-making. The Greek word for teaching is the word *didache*. The lexicon says, “when this word is used in an active sense it means the art of teaching, instructing, tutoring. When used in a passive sense, it refers to the teaching which is presented, that which anyone teaches.” A second closely related word is the Greek word *didasko*, which is the verb form meaning “I teach.” Give careful attention to this exact quote from the lexicon: “*Didasko* has inherent in it the goal

of the increase in understanding of the pupil and the adaptation of his character and conduct to what is being taught. Its counterparts are *akouo*, to hear for the purpose of understanding, and *manthano*, to learn, from which *mathetes*, learner, pupil, disciple, is derived. The one teaches and the other learns and assimilates the truth as part of himself. *Kerusso*, to preach, proclaim, does not inherently have the same expectation of learning and assimilation as *didasko* does. The thing aimed at when teaching is the shaping of the will, the life and the conduct of the pupil.” *Dear Christian, read and study this long paragraph carefully.* It is loaded with echoes and implications of the Biblical concept of disciple-making.

Let me continue in exploring the several Greek words that derive from the Greek word *didache*. Again, I am presenting literal quotes from a Greek lexicon. The third related word to consider is the word used in our text when Paul says that Scripture is “profitable for teaching.” The word translated “teaching” in our text is the Greek word *didaskalia*. The lexicon defines this word as “that which belongs to a teacher; that which is taught, the teaching, the instruction. This is the word for doctrine. *Didaskalia* occurs fifteen times in Paul’s three Pastoral Epistles—First and Second Timothy and Titus.” When a believer understands the Biblical mandate to “make disciples,” he will also understand why this word was so prominently used by the Apostle Paul. *Teaching for the transfer of Divine truth is mandatory in disciple-making.* Paul says in our text that Scripture is profitable to give the discipler the body of doctrine, the teaching material, that he is to teach to a disciple. The discipler is not to “invent” new things to teach; he is simply to carefully and faithfully teach the revealed truths, the “doctrines,” of the Bible.

Two, the Bible is profitable for *refutation*, or *reproof*, or *rebuke*. Christians often fail, they (far too) often sin, often become careless, often drift, often lose their focus on Jesus and His purpose, and when they do, they need reproof. To be exposed to the truth of the Bible is like placing a perfect plumb line beside a crooked wall. The crookedness is a good picture of the distortions that so easily occur in a believer’s life. The plumb line is the perfect truth of the Word of God. When the Christian is so measured, the Word of God rebukes his iniquity. The usual course followed then is conviction, followed by confession, which leads in turn to cleansing and correction of the sin. Thus, the Word of God is profitable to correct him and advance his sanctification. “Correction” is the third profitable use of the Bible which Paul indicates.

Three, the Bible is profitable for *restoration*, or “correction.” The Greek word used here is another loaded word. It is the word *epanorphosis*, which is a triple compound made up of the word *epi*, which means “to,” the word, *ana*, which means “up,” and the word *ortho*, which means “right” or “straight.” So the word means “to restore to an upright state.” This is the profit of the Bible when its truth is presented to an errant Christian and he accepts and believes it. He is set back on his feet in an upright state and it is now possible for him to move forward again in the purpose of Christ.

Finally, the Bible is profitable for *regulation*, or for “instruction in righteousness.” Again, the word that is used is gigantic in its meaning. The word translated “instruction” is *paideian*. The root of this word is the Greek word for “child,” and the word means

“child-training.” This is the same word that is used in the classic passage in Hebrews 12 about the chastisement or chastening of God’s children. Most of our interpretations have done a terrible disservice to the doctrine of chastisement. We have presented it as a punitive practice on God’s part, that is, as a punishment administered by God upon his sinning children. However, Biblically, chastisement is not for the purpose of punishment. The Christian’s punishment for sin was totally absorbed by Jesus in his death on the Cross. God fully “settled up” with our sins when His Son died for them. So the discipline which God administers to each of His children is not for the purpose of punishment, but is remedial and corrective when they have sinned, and is for sanctification when administered otherwise. “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens.” The word itself means “child-training.” Because the word is based on the Greek word for a “child,” and yet is often used as well for the same process in an adult believer’s life, this word entails *lifetime education, lifetime training*. This is a very significant ingredient in the life of a disciple and a disciple-maker. You see, training is a big part of God’s daily activity in our lives, and is to be a big part of our agenda with our disciples. The Bible is profitable as a training tool.

These are the Biblically stated purposes for the practical operation of the Bible in a disciple’s life.

III. The Person OUTCOME of the Proper Use of Scripture, 17

Finally, Paul points out the *personal outcome* that may be expected from the proper use of Scripture in a believer’s life. The proper use of Scripture in a disciple’s life has a purpose. Verse 17 is a long purpose statement. “In order that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Again, the grammar of the verse is very important. The term “the man of God” may either refer to the ordained pastor, preacher or evangelist, or it may generically refer to every Christian. I hold the conviction that it refers to every Christian. Every rule suggested here applies to every believer, not merely to officially ordained Christians. What happens when the principles of verses 15 and 16 are implemented in a believer’s life?

First, there is an individual outcome, a result in the believer’s *person*. When the Bible is properly used in his life, the believer is made “perfect” (KJV) or “adequate” (NASV). The Greek word is *artios*, which means “complete.” It pictures a person or a thing that by its construction is able to meet all demands that are placed upon it. Note the word “construction.” This is an excellent definitive word for disciple-making. Disciple-making should build believers, using the Bible and every other appointed means, to make the believer “complete.” He should be made capable of performing any expected service, and this capability should be instilled primarily by the teaching and proper use of Scripture.

Then there is a vocational outcome, a result in the believer’s *performance*. That the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Again, there are two terms of major emphasis in this closing verse. One is the word “adequate” or “complete.” Dear Christian, God wants you to tackle every project He desires for you,

fulfill every mandate He gives, assume every assignment He places upon you—and be *adequate* in accomplishing it. This is one reason why the regular intake of the Word of God and the intelligent implementation and teaching of it are mandatory in your life.

The other emphatic term (in this case, minor emphasis) is the term, “every good work.” Note the comprehensiveness of God’s expectation. And note, too, that this is an active assignment, involving “good works,” not merely an institutional faithfulness. Each of us must honestly examine ourselves to see if God’s expectation is being honored and fulfilled in our lives.