

LET'S HIT THE BOOK(S)

II Timothy 3.14-4.4

Good Morning.

Today I have the privilege and pleasure of talking about the Holy Habit of Bible Study.
I want to start this way.

In 1947 in the Judean Wilderness by the Dead Sea
a young Bedouin shepherd saw one of his goats climb up
on a mountain terrace and into a cave.
Instead of climbing up to the cave after the goat,
he threw rocks to try to chase the goat out.
After throwing a few rocks, he heard a crack.
He didn't know what he'd hit so he got scared.
He went home and got his uncle.

They came back, climbed up into the cave.
They found the shepherd boy had hit and cracked a pot with ancient scrolls.
They were manuscript fragments of the Bible.

Within a short time after this discovery historical, paleographic,
and linguistic evidence along with carbon-14 dating established that these scrolls
were the oldest surviving biblical manuscripts by almost 1000 years.

Then even more manuscripts were discovered in other nearby caves in the area.
These manuscripts are called the Dead Sea Scrolls.

They were copied by a group of people called the Essenes.
The Essenes lived in the Qumran community and were contemporaries of Jesus.
They copied the manuscripts and hid them to keep the Romans from destroying them.

Isn't it fascinating the way God preserves and delivers the sacred book to us?

Now it is up to us to find out what they say and what God wants to say to us.

It's up to us to spend time in the Bible?

We're to hit the books, crack the books, the books of the Bible.

Let me tell you why?

Actually Paul's letter to Timothy gives us some great reasons.

LET'S HIT THE BOOK(S) SO WE MAKE PROGRESS

(So we grow in our relationship to God.)

***14 "But as for you, continue in what you have learned (Isn't that God saying something to you/
and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,
15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures,
which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (II Timothy 3.14-15)***

Remember we're in process and want to grow spiritually.

Think about spiritual growth in terms of this story.
Michael had become a teenager
and would normally have moved on to a regular doctor
but he really liked his pediatrician that he continues to go to him.

So, one day Michael was sitting in the waiting room
and a little boy just learning to talk,

As he walked the circle of mothers and babies,
he touched each baby and said, "Bay-bee, Bay-bee, Bay-bee."

When he got to Michael he touched his knee and said, "Biggggg Bay-bee."
Needless to say Michael needed to move on and he did, he got another doctor.

We all need to keep growing; especially keep growing in our faith.
To get a bigger faith, we want to make God bigger in our lives.

Two years ago I had this great insight or revelation.
It came as a result of three things.

One was the membership class.
Those of you in the membership class might remember
Pastor Eldon setting up a triangle.

At the bottom of the triangle he makes a little stick figure representing you.
At one of the top points he puts a big "P" symbolizing a problem, issue, struggle, or person.
On the other top point he puts a circle with a cross representing God

If we are constantly looking at the problem, worrying about the problem,
or thinking about the problem and constantly reminds God to take care of the problem...
What usually happens?

The problem usually gets even bigger and less manageable and we worry more.

God could just zap the problem but again,

God is more concerned about our character than our comfort or what is convenient to us.

God wants us to mature and be made bigger in our lives.

God wants us seeking his will and his way,

trusting his promises and trusting his timing,

as well as putting the problem in his hands.

Doing that the problem usually gets smaller and more manageable and we'll worry less.

The second thing that happened,

I was reading a Max Lucado book called, Facing Your Giants.

In the book and in his life when the shepherd boy David made God bigger,

he overcame his Goliaths, his giants

but when he relied on himself and forgot about God, his giants got bigger.

Then the third thing was...well, I had this thought.

When people come to us for help,
we read the Bible, pray and praise God,
or offer words of comfort and counsel,
And in trying to do that,
we're trying to strengthen a person's relationship with God,
essentially, we're trying make God bigger.

Guess what, that is one thing the Holy Habit of Bible Study does; it makes God bigger to us.

Bible study is not just to know more, not just to amass knowledge.
Bible study is getting to know God personally.
We can **hear** God speaking to us.
We can see how God works in the lives of others,
how God works within us, and thus we can be transformed into Christ likeness.

Proverbs 4.4 tells us,
*"Then he taught me and said to me,
Let your heart **hold fast** my words;
Keep my commandments and live."* (God is speaking, God talking to you?)

The same root word "**hold fast**" is used for the word "**uphold**" in Isaiah 41.10,
Do not fear, for I am with you; (God is talking to you)
Do not anxiously look about, for I am your God. (God is talking to you)
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, (God is talking to you)
*Surely I will **uphold** you with My righteous right hand.* (God is talking to you?)

One of the ways God will uphold you is for God's word to get a hold of you.

Here is that riddle explained in Proverbs 6.20-22,
*"My son, observe the commandment of your father,
And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;
BIND them continually on your heart;
TIE them around your neck.
When you walk about, they will guide you; (God is talking to you)
When you sleep, they will watch over you; (God is talking to you)
And when you awake, they will talk to you."*(God is talking to you?)

So to continue to progress, to grow in faith,
to make God bigger, let's hit the books.
LET'S HIT THE BOOK(S) SO WE CAN BE PROFICIENT,
so we can better understand God's word itself.

16"*All Scripture is God-breathed*

(When you think about that...being God breathed, remember God is speaking.

You and I may not feel God...we may not see God, but we see how God words and hear God's voice)

***All Scripture is God-breathed
and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness,
17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for very good work.*** (II Timothy 3.16-17)

As a Christian you not only gain an identity in Christ but have responsibility as well.
We're to train and to ***"be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** (Is that not God talking to you?)

Over 10 years ago Bible sales amounted to more than ½ billion dollars in North America alone.
The average American household has at least 3.2 Bibles.
And 27% of those homes have at least five Bibles.

The Barna report a few years ago found that only 62% of Christians knew the four gospels.
Say them with me. "Matthew... Mark... Luke... and John."

Today the Bible may still be the most respected and revered books
but unfortunately the least read book in our culture.

Dennis Campbell, the dean at Duke's Divinity School, says that,
"in our day we no longer assume that even seminary students have any understanding of the Bible."

On the tower of the great Oxford University there is an etching of a person.

That person symbolizes the university.
And that person is kneeling to receive a copy of the Bible.
That would seem to say that the proper response to God's Word
would acceptance, humility, reverence, respect, and relationship.

It is interesting that the word "university" means, "one truth."

There can't be much relationship if we don't read the Word.
If we put the Bible on the shelf to collect dust, the church will be next.

It is estimated that over 1¼ million Bibles are sold each year in the Ukraine.
Dick Fisher was with a VIM team from the Dakotas in the Ukraine.
He was teaching a Bible Study in a small home in a small community.
The place was packed. There were wall-to-wall people.
After a 45-minute session he said he was hungry,
it was time to take a break, and get some refreshments.
A woman said, "No time for break, we are hungry for this." And she held up a Bible.

Nicki Gumble was on vacation in a former state of the USSR.
.He saw an elderly man leave a worship service.
Nicki approached him and handed him a Bible.
The man was totally surprised and so filled with joy.
He pulled out his well worn, tattered, pages-falling-apart copy of the New Testament.
Nicki and the man hugged.
Then the man ran down the street jumping for joy...he'd gotten a whole new Bible.

I love it when that kind of attitude is shared in our Bible Studies.
I thank God that this church has so many people involved
in Holy Habits of Bible Studies and Sunday School.

It is great to hear the ladies of Monday's women's group say it's good for the body and soul,
we understand more and we're challenged in our faith. (They can hear God speaking to them)
The men's groups are constantly challenging each other about their spiritual walks,
applying what they are learning in Bible Studies. (They are listening to God's voice)
It was a joy to hear Elinor say after class one Sunday,
"When we study the Bible like this it makes so much more sense." (She heard and understood God's voice)

I know it's tough for some of us to understand the Bible.
We can read, and read, and read and sometimes not much happens.

This is where a person needs to find a translation they can read,
the right tools to help understand, then pray and trust God.
Good stuff doesn't just happen. We've got to work at it.
And with God's help, we'll get it.

There's gold in them thar hills and if it's going to pay off,
if you're going to benefit from it, you have to mine it.
And that can be hard work

Proverbs 22.17-18 tries to give us that confidence telling us to trust this promise,
***"Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your mind to my knowledge;
For it will be pleasant, if (there is a condition) you keep them within you,
That they may be ready on your lips."*** (Isn't God talking to you?)

And Isaiah 55.10-11 adds that if we trust God's timing
the Word will produce,
***"For as the rain and snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return empty without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."*** (Isn't God talking to you?)

We hit the books to grow, to progress, to be prolific and
LETS HIT THE BOOK(S) SO WE CAN BE PREPARED and PERSERVERE
***1 "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead,
and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge;
2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season,
correct, rebuke, and encourage-with gentle patience and careful instruction."***

I think you'll appreciate that careful instruction here means to "keep it simple."

Why should we be prepared in and out of season?

Paul tells us,

3"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.

. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (Itching ears-do you like that?)

4They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

(Isn't God talking to you?)

Some people are **honestly searching** and just **struggle** with scripture.

Some when reading will have more questions than they started with.

Then there are others who will just **flow and go** with the latest philosophy, fashion, or fad.

And there are others who **can rationalize** anything and everything.

They just don't want to be corrected or reprov'd, or even helped with temptation, and so they'll go find people or something that tell them what they want to hear.

The Message says they have no stomach for solid food.

They'll fill up on junk food, catchy opinions to suit their fancy.

They'll turn their back on truth and chase mirages.

Remember the church that marries the church of this age will be a widow in the next.

General Omar Bradley says it this way,

"We must set our course not by the light of a passing ship but by the light of the stars."

Remember "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

So stay faithful, Paul continues to encourage Timothy,

in verse 5 (MSG) he says, "***But you, keep your eye on what you are doing; accept the hard times along with the good;***

keep the message alive, do a thorough job as God's servants."

So, **LET'S HIT THE BOOKS WITH A PLAN**

1-Get into a Bible Study.

Talk to Grace/ Paula, one of the Pastors or staff about the best Bible Study for you

2-Then begin a daily Bible Reading and devotional for yourself or with your spouse or children.

Begin readings with the Gospels and read just a chapter a day

Breathe deep and start your time with prayer

Then hit the books.

Give yourself a few minutes to think about what you've read

Breathe deep and end your time with prayer

Keep in mind throughout the day as best as possible what you've read

