

Timothy Method

“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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

All Scripture (every word) is inspired—spoken by God, and written by men (2 Peter 1:21). Timothy had been taught the Word of God since his childhood.

Paul affirms that Scripture is profitable—it has a purpose (a specific intention). The Bible is greater than any self-help book we read. It is useful to us and is applicable to our daily lives. The Bible is a flawless standard of right and wrong. It makes the man of God. Through obedience to the Word of God, we can become perfect and equipped for all aspects of ministry.

Consider a different translation of this passage:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right”
(2 Timothy 3:16, *NLT*).

That sounds like four key reasons for Bible study:

- To teach us what is true.
- To make us realize what is wrong in our lives.
- To straighten us out.
- To teach us to do what is right.

These reveal four of the purposes of Scripture. Kevin Green in *Discipleship Journal's Best Bible Study Methods* says we can uncover a passage's intent with what he calls the “Timothy Method.” He asserts that, “asking questions about the four purposes of Scripture can effectively guide us as we evaluate and apply Scripture.”

The Psalmist said, “The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight to life” (Psalms 19:8, *NLT*).

Doctrine

The first purpose of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16 is teaching. Paul often emphasizes doctrine in his writings. In the three small books to his helpers, Timothy and Titus, he mentions doctrine fifteen times. Doctrine refers to teaching what is true. What do you do with false doctrine? Reject, correct, or replace it with the accurate teaching from God's Word.

As you read the Bible, ask:

- What does this passage teach?
- What did I learn?
- What is right?

Kevin Green believes everything in God’s Word relates to the following simple questions (based on Matthew 22:34-40):

What does the passage teach us about...

- God?
- People?
- My relationship with God and others?

The Bible is a great teacher for humanity.

“Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name”
(Psalms 86:11).

Reproof

The Bible searches deep into our lives—uncovers sins, shortcomings, and improper desires.

“For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are” (Hebrews 4:12, *NLT*).

The Word of God rebukes us when we go astray. It exposes errors and convicts us of sin. God does not leave us in our sin. He does not stop with convicting us. He is looking for more than improvement, or trying to set things right on our own. His goal is transformation.

“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is” (Romans 12:2, *NLT*).

As you read the Bible, ask:

- Where do I fall short?
- What is not right?

Correction

The Word of God corrects us. He disciplines us, rebukes, and restores us to an upright status. He corrects false ideas and misguided views. He sets us straight.

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14).

God loves us so much that He uses discipline to cause us to leave the crooked way for a straight path.

“And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said, ‘My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.’ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined? No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way” (Hebrews 12:5-7, 11, *NLT*).

As you read the Bible, ask:

- What should I do about it?
- How do I get right?

Instruction

“How can a young man stay pure? By reading your Word and following its rules. I have tried my best to find you—don't let me wander off from your instructions” (Psalms 119:9-10, *TLB*).

God's Word trains us in righteousness. What is righteousness? It is right living. God longs to bring about change in our lives. He nurtures us as a loving Father so that we will be fully equipped. Thank God for this Father-son relationship. He wants what is best for His children.

“...Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, *NIV*).

As you read the Bible, ask:

- How can I make this become a consistent part of my life?
- How do I stay right?

The Bible shows us how to apply God's Word to our everyday lives. It teaches us how to live victoriously.

"If we be ignorant," said the translators of 1611, "the Scriptures will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us, if cold, inflame us."
(Taken from the *Biblical Illustrator*)

Study Questions

1. How much of God's Word is inspired? How do you know? _____

2. What are four key reasons for Bible study according to this lesson? _____

3. How many times is "doctrine" mentioned in the books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus?

4. Kevin Green believes everything in God's Word relates to what questions?

5. Define "righteousness"? _____

6. According to Psalms 119:9-10, how can a young man stay pure? _____

7. What did the translators of 1611 say? _____

