

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures.”

2 Tim. 3:15

Apostle Paul writes many instructions in his two letters to Timothy. These letters are written from an older believer to a younger brother. Paul's loving concern for Timothy is clearly expressed in his letters. Though he is apparently not related to Timothy, he refers to Timothy as “my own son in the faith” and “my dearly beloved son.” (1 Tim 1:2, 2 Tim 1:2)

Timothy had been called as a young man into the work of God's kingdom. Paul has instructions for Timothy that pertain to this work. But Paul's greater concern for Timothy is for his personal faith, about holding “faith and a good conscience.” (1 Tim 1:18-19)

“From a Child”

Paul expresses joy over his remembrance of the faith of Timothy's grandmother and mother, in which faith Timothy was also endeavoring. (2 Tim. 1:5) He makes special mention of the fact that Timothy from his childhood had been able to learn about matters of faith from God's word.

Why was this such an important matter to Paul? When he reminds Timothy how he had from childhood known the holy scriptures, Paul goes on to say of the scriptures that they “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The words of Jesus join with this when He said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39)

It is noticeable that Paul did not mention that Timothy had become a student of the scriptures when he was an adult or when he was called into the work of the kingdom. Rather he makes a point to remind Timothy that he had known the holy scriptures from his childhood.

God's Word is Living and Powerful

In God's kingdom it has been taught that the word of God is the highest authority. God's word, when it is made alive by the Holy Spirit, is the very fountain of life. It is a timeless, eternal word. As Peter has written, “the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (1 Peter 1:25) This gospel is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. 1:16)

God's word is the water and bread of life; it is the lamp that lights our pathway; it is the source of power to the weary believer. And it is all of these things to every child of God. It does not matter if we are young or old. The psalmist once asked, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” and answered his own question, “by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” (Ps. 119:9)

The elders and parents of today have the same loving concern for our youth and children as Paul had for Timothy. It is that the young believers could, above all else in their lives, “keep faith and a good conscience” and that already from their youth they would know and study God’s word.

Taking the Time to Read God’s Word

The study of the Bible is not something that is limited to the time that we spend in Sunday School, Bible Class, or services. Certainly our main purpose in being there is to hear and to study God’s word. But God’s word is readily available in our daily lives.

In Timothy’s time, the printed word was not so readily available. Scriptures were in the form of hand written scrolls that were limited in number and were found at the places of worship. To study the scriptures on a regular basis required diligent, faithful effort. Yet Timothy, in the care of a believing mother and grandmother, had been raised to know the holy scriptures from childhood. How much more so should we be able to do that today, when we have the Bible (and probably several Bibles) readily available in our homes.

Dear young believers, do not forget what a treasure you have in your home when you have the word of God there. Many of you have your own Bibles. Do not let them sit neglected on the bookshelf. When we examine how we spend our time, we find that we have the time to do those things that we really want to do and to read those books and other materials that we enjoy reading. Let’s find time to read and to study the word of God.

How Can Parents Help?

What can parents do to help our youth in the reading of God’s word? It is often said that children learn more from what their parents do than from what they say. As parents, we have reason to ask ourselves, “Are we showing a good example to our children in reading and studying the Bible?” Is it clear to our children that God’s word is precious to us.

In one of our hymns, we sing “I know a flower wondrous, fair. It gives me joy of heaven. Of flowers ‘tis the sweetest one, the fairest one. Its fragrance comes from heaven. This flower precious and so fair is God’s word pure and holy, and unto Christ it shows the way, salvation’s way. It still doth glow so brightly.” (Hymn of Zion 219) Is this reflected in our lives?

In many ways, we can help our children to take time to read and study the Bible. For example, there are appointed Bible texts for each Sunday on our church calendar. It would not take too much time nor effort to sit together and read these texts and even discuss them. Often, explanation of some of these texts can be found in the Voice of Zion or other Christian publications.

We can also turn to God’s word in observing the various church holidays at home. We are generally faithful in observing Christmas and Easter in our homes. Then many families pause together to read from the Christmas and Easter Bible texts. But we could also observe other church holidays, such as Advent, Epiphany, Ascension Day, Michaelmas, and so on. On the

church calendar, there are texts identified for many of these holidays. As we observe these special occasions in our homes, it would be good to pause to read from God's word.

The reading of God's word together with the family, or individually, is not limited to holidays. Sometimes we say that for a believer every day is a celebration of both Christmas and Easter. Faith is not a garment that we don for Sundays or special occasions and take off for our daily lives. The child of God lives by faith. After receiving the grace to believe, Apostle Paul wrote, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

Our thoughts and conversations and actions are interwoven with the faith that is in our hearts. In this way, our lives are closely connected with God's word, the "light unto our pathway." Isn't it fitting that we would often turn to the Bible to read, even if on some days it is only briefly.

By Faith Are Ye Saved

None of this is to suggest that we are saved because of our knowledge of the Bible or because of our understanding. When Jesus gave an example of the greatest in the kingdom of God, He chose a little child. The littlest children, who have never yet had the chance nor the ability to read the Bible, are still the examples of the greatest in the kingdom.

Nevertheless, we want to remember what a precious treasure the word of God is and, as Luther wrote, deem it holy and willingly hear and learn it. God's children are "built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone." In today's world, which is so enthralled with the knowledge and wisdom of man, true knowledge and wisdom is still found in the timeless, eternal word of God which is yet today able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Jim Frantti
Presentation for Youth Discussion
LLC Phoenix Winter Services
Feb. 27, 1999
and Campwork/Youth Presentation
March 1999

Discussion Questions / Topics

1. Examine Psalm 119 for what it teaches about God's word.
2. What can we do in our homes to foster the reading of the Bible?
3. What does it mean that the scripture is not of any private interpretation?
(2 Peter 1:20)
4. What are the dangers of analyzing matters of faith and Christian doctrine with reason and the mind of man rather than in the light of scriptures?
5. Read and discuss Luther's preface to the large catechism.

Note

Several of the Songs and Hymns of Zion teach about God's Word, for example hymns 219 and 242. These songs could be discussed or sung as opening or closing songs.