

For three short weeks, we've been thinking about a new—and right—priority for each and every Christian, and that being what brings us the greatest joy in life. It's not dinner out or long-distance travel. It's not a new car, a new job or a new house. What brings us the greatest joy has nothing to do with money and the things that money can buy, nor does it have anything to do with what this world has to offer.

(3 John 4) "I have no greater joy than to know my children are walking in the truth."

John, the Apostle, found the greatest joy, fulfillment, satisfaction in life knowing that he had *spiritual children* (i.e., people he had brought to Christ) and that they were walking faithfully with Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Everything in life is secondary to this reality.

While on earth, Jesus asked a provocative question:

"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul?" (Mark 8:36)

With that single question, Jesus put everything into perspective. We can invest time and resources building a home, expanding a business, pursuing a hobby, earning a degree, climbing a corporate ladder, and more; but if we do all of that and more while ignoring our spiritual relationships with Jesus Christ, we lose in the end. If husbands and wives, moms and dads, sons and daughters, grandmas and grandpas are not saved, all is lost.

Eternity with God and one another must be our preferred destination, and to help us arrive there we are depending on God's GPS; not global positioning systems, but grace, prayer and Scripture. These three essentials can bring not only health and healing to a marriage and family, but they can also help each of us IN a family to be saved and heaven bound.

G for Grace.

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows to cause trouble and defile many" (Heb 12:15). Too often, marriages and families are destroyed by unforgiving attitudes. Mercy, forgiveness, grace from God and for one another makes a marriage healthier and happier in the here-and-now, and for the here-after.

P for Prayer.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). Jesus made prayer a priority in our lives, and if we do the same, life will change and for the better. A life full of prayer is full of power – power that can move marriages and families into relationships with Jesus in this life and in the next.

S for Scripture.

GPS. This third and final message in this brief three-part series has a laser-like focus on the Word of God. Each week, we noted the impact of these three essentials in the lives of real people. When it came to grace, Joseph in Genesis intentionally forgave people, while Ahithophel did not. Joseph's life was a triumph, whereas Ahithophel's life was a tragedy. When

it came to prayer, Jesus, the Son of God, modeled a life of prayer that spoke in six unique ways to each of us. And today, we will see how Paul and Timothy—father and son—experienced the impact of Scripture in their lives.

To help us see and understand that impact, we're going to use a structure for digging into the Word and that structure has something to do with circles – three, to be specific. Simon Sinek, author of a best-selling book called ***Start with Why***, appeared on TED.com and shared his theory that most companies or organizations start from the outside and move towards the inside, knowing WHAT products they make or services they provide. Some of the people in those organizations and/or companies can tell you HOW they do what they do, but only a mere few can tell you the WHY of their existence. To the contrary, companies and organizations that start with WHY and move outwardly are dynamic and have enormous impact in their spheres' of influence. So, today we will start with WHY Scripture has much to do our families walking in the truth, HOW that can happen, and WHAT must matter in each of our lives and homes.

We are going to take a look at the Apostle Paul and Timothy, and the role of Scripture in their lives. Many of those insights are found in the NT book of 2 Timothy, written by Paul to Timothy. Here's some context of the book before we get into the book's content.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”

Paul wrote this letter from behind bars. He was on death row in a Roman prison. As a Roman citizen, Paul would not have been crucified, but would have been beheaded. This letter is often referred to as Paul's last will and testament. Think with me, if the doctor gave you or me three months to live, we would write some final letters to our family and friends, and the contents would be profoundly personal. That's the sound of Paul's last letter to Timothy. Every sentence in every chapter is compelling. Paul didn't rant or rave, he didn't wallow in self-pity or bitterness. Imagine him writing this last letter with his own hands, then rolling it up and pressing it into the hands of Dr. Luke to get it to Timothy. When Timothy took it into his hands and unrolled it, did he recognize the handwriting of the man who was closer to him than his own father? Did tears well up and roll down his face? When he read, “to Timothy, my beloved son,” did Timothy's heart break with grief? Let's discover WHY Scripture is essential to families becoming saved.

WHY

2 Timothy 3:14-15

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

WHY are the Scriptures essential to helping us—as family—to reach our preferred destination of heaven? “...the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation...” Paul called Timothy to remain faithful to what he had learned biblically, to remain steadfast in his convictions, knowing fully well that those who had taught him all those years were trustworthy teachers. For Timothy, it wasn’t only hearing the Word, it was becoming convinced of what he heard that he put his faith in Christ. The word “convinced” in Greek means to be firmly persuaded, firmly established, being non-negotiable, where there is no compromise. The Scriptures did not save Timothy; the death of Jesus saved Timothy. It was Scripture that taught Timothy that the Messiah would come and save him. The Scriptures were trustworthy.

As well, his teachers were trustworthy! And some of Timothy’s teachers began teaching him “from infancy.” In a few moments, we’re going to see who those individuals were who began teaching him Scripture in his infancy (i.e., *brephos* newborn, infant). From the time that Timothy was learning to crawl, waddle and walk, he was being taught the Word of God “that made him wise to salvation.” Scripture itself did not save Timothy, but scripture showed him the way to being saved through faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul had written earlier that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom 10:17). How do we get saved? How do we come to put our faith in Jesus Christ? We must HEAR the good news about Jesus Christ. Someone must teach us – and that teaching begins in the home. After all, God wants everyone saved.

(1 Timothy 2:4) “God wants all people saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

(2 Peter 3:9) “God does not want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.”

No matter where we live on planet earth, God reveals Himself through nature (i.e., general revelation). When we look at the mountains, the oceans, a sunrise, a star-filled night sky, a newborn baby, the budding of a rose, etc., we cannot help but realize that God exists! This revealing of God is called general revelation in that it is readily available to everyone--everywhere. This revelation of God is general in content. Yet, looking at a mountain range does not tell us that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

There’s also special revelation in that God reveals Himself in a unique way; such as in a burning bush to Moses (Exodus 3:2-6) and in a blinding light to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19).

But what we hold in our hands is known as Word revelation, wherein God reveals Himself to us in written form, as God explains to all humankind how all people can be saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Bible is complete in its present form as "new revelation" is no longer taking place. If new Scripture was being added to the Bible, people would place greater importance on the "act of revealing" rather than on the "act of redeeming" through Jesus Christ. The most important act and moment in history was the

redemption of humankind through the death of Jesus. Maybe that's why Jesus did not write any Scripture, as His work was to redeem us and not the writing of Scripture.

Ohio State University has an interesting set of sidewalks on campus. The spiderweb-like sidewalks were not created on an architect's drawing board. They were designed by where students walked in the mud and grass, making paths! Psalm 119:105 declares, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." We have in our hands a path that leads us to salvation in faith in Christ. The Scriptures do not only inform us about salvation, but they also inspire us to be saved. Watch what happened in Timothy's life.

HOW

2 Timothy 1:5

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."

Think *reach* and *teach*. Timothy's mom and grandma *reached* young Timothy with the gospel of Jesus, with the good news of Christ, and Timothy got saved!

From Timothy's infancy, who taught him the Scriptures that were able to make him wise to salvation through faith in Jesus? Specifically, his mom and grandma. Timothy was in an integral line of believers in a family. Timothy's mom was Jewish, which infers that her mom, Timothy's grandma, was Jewish. Now, in Acts 14:8-20, Paul and Barnabas showed up in Lystra on Paul's first missionary journey. It was on that journey, that more than likely, Lois and Eunice heard the good news of Jesus and became believers in Jesus as their Messiah. Then, sometime after that, Timothy became a disciple of Jesus (i.e., *mathetes*), as well. Paul's statement makes us realize that mom and grandma were the likely Bible teachers of that little boy. Not only did they reach Timothy spiritually, but they taught him biblically. *Reach* and *teach*. It certainly wasn't Timothy's dad.

Acts 16:1

"He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek."

Timothy's biological father was a Greek. Being that Timothy was not circumcised (Acts 16:3), we assume that Timothy's dad was not a God-follower. At the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul was back in Lystra and his path crossed with Timothy, who may have been in his late teen years, and he had come to salvation in Jesus by learning the Scriptures—and it all began from when he was an infant learning to walk! Way to go, mom and grandma!

Children and teens do not just naturally and automatically grow spiritually. From the opening pages of Scripture, God told us to intentionally teach our children about Him while they are growing up from the earliest of ages, like Timothy learning the Scriptures from infancy.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on their foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

The Israelites were to teach their children the Scriptures every day and in every way possible. Moreover, dads did not—and still do not—get a pass on teaching the kids.

Ephesians 6:4

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Paul commanded dads to be spiritual teachers and mentors in the home right alongside mom. As a matter of fact, God made covenants with husbands, with dads, specifically with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Men have a post, a position of responsibility to their sons and daughters about Jesus.

Paul met Timothy when Timothy was probably in his late teen years, or perhaps early twenties. And when their paths crossed, Paul became Timothy’s the spiritual father he never had. Repeatedly, Paul referred to Timothy as his son (i.e., Paul was not married and did not marry).

1 Timothy 1:2, 18

“To Timothy, my true son in the faith... Timothy, my son...”

2 Timothy 1:2, 2:1

“To Timothy, my dear son... You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 2:19-22

“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.”

Also, think *care* and *share*. Did you notice the “older” element in this passage? Timothy’s Grandma Lois and mom Eunice were mentioned, and Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father. There were older people who *cared* about the spiritual future of young Timothy, and they shared their lives with him. They invested relationally and spiritually in Timothy – and they had an incredible “return on investment” that was eternal in nature. It’s logical that Grandma and Mom were involved with Timothy’s getting saved and growing spiritually. But, Paul didn’t have to do so. All three of them *cared* and *shared* about young Timothy.

Nothing has changed. We who are older must invest in those who are younger, all in hopes that there will be an eternal return on our investment with successive generations in our families coming to be saved. However, something is broken in our country. There are six living generations in the US – and even in our congregation. From oldest to youngest: Builders, Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z and Generation Alpha. It's one thing for our congregation to be multi-generational; it's entirely different to be intergenerational. And here's what's broken.

This year—2024—we've begun to experience what is called the "silver tsunami." And what's the silver tsunami? Eleven thousand people turn 65 years-old each day in America—that's over 4 million this year, and it will continue through 2027! Moreover, the youngest baby-boomer will turn 65 years-old (Medicare eligible) in five years. There are a tsunami of silver-haired, white-haired people retiring. And what are they doing? That's a good question. A new angle to the American Dream is to earn as much money as you can, as quickly as you can so that you can retire as early as you can. I don't find that teaching anywhere in the Bible. What I do find in the Bible is just the opposite. [CBS News Money Watch "America is hitting Peak 65 in 2024 as record number of boomers reach retirement age." Anne Marie Lee Jan 29, 2024]

Romans 12:1-2

"Brothers and sisters, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be confirmed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

We, who are a part of this tsunami, are an army who can *share* our lives with the younger generation—spiritually and relationally—if we *care* about them. We who are older have fewer days ahead of us than we do behind us. Every day draws us closer to meeting our Creator face-to-face, and we can finish well, finish strong by investing in those who are coming behind us.

Young people are not the future of the church, they are the church. We must teach our children to grow up and become independent from us, but we must *reach* and *teach* them to be independently dependent on Jesus! We will do that if we sincerely *care* and *share* about their eternal, desired destination.

Have you ever been seated in the exit row on a flight? If so, you know that the flight attendant will stop and ask you if you are willing to help in the "unlikely event of an emergency" to open the emergency exit to quickly evacuate the plane. One time, I was in the exit row and the flight attendant was very serious and urgent about our responsibility! We were asked, "Did you read these instructions for opening the emergency exit?" I had to say, "Sorry, but no," to which there was a quick comeback, "Others are counting on you to know what to do to exit the plane!" I quickly did some speed reading!

That's it! Others are counting on you—and on me. My wife, my sons and daughters-in-law, my grandchildren, my extended family, my friends—others are counting on me to have read THESE instructions (i.e., the Bible) so that I can obey these instructions when it is time for our family to exit this world, and to exit well.

WHAT

For our families to reach our desired destination of heaven with one another, the Scriptures make us wise to salvation by faith in Jesus. And because “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” we must speak the Scriptures to our families. We will share the Word with them if we honestly care about their eternal destiny. And for the HOW to pursue the WHY, here's WHAT must happen in us. It boils down to these two things: a HUNGER for and a HIGH VIEW of the Word.

HUNGER FOR

2 Timothy 4:9, 13

“Do your best to come to me quickly... When you come, bring the cloak I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.”

We don't know if Timothy made it to Paul's side “before winter came.” But notice that Paul wanted Timothy to bring him his well-worn cloak. Imagine the smell of the briny water of the Mediterranean on that cloak (i.e., no dry cleaning) and imagine the blood stains on it from Lystra where Paul was stoned and left for dead. But even in the face of his soon to be death by execution, Paul wanted his scrolls, especially the parchments. There he was on death row, and he wanted the Word of God. Even while facing death head on, Paul had an insatiable hunger for the “bread of life.”

Can we say the same? We become what we eat, and I'm not just referring to physical food. Paul's rich diet in the Word transformed him, and we can see that from what he wrote in his letters. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul referred to himself as being “the least of the apostles.” Then roughly five years later, in Ephesians 3:8, Paul called himself the “least of God's people.” And then roughly five years after that, Paul said this in 1 Timothy 1:15, “Here's a trustworthy saying that demands full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.” Paul continued to see and think of himself with deeper and deeper humility when compared to all others. Paul continued to grow and mature spiritually into the likeness of Jesus Christ, year by year. The more he read of and meditated upon the scrolls, “especially the parchments,” Paul changed.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have heart by-pass surgery in America every year, and heart patients are told by their physicians that the surgery is only a temporary fix. The real healing happens when the patient no longer smokes or drinks and begins to exercise and eat a healthier diet. Yet, significant numbers of patients do not change their ways following surgery, though their surgeons are in essence saying, “Change or die.” One would think that a near death experience would forever grab our attention and we would change our ways. Paul was in the

midst of a near death experience, and the Word of God *still* grabbed his attention. His hunger for the Word was real. Can we say the same? A hunger for the Word will move us to share it with those in our families and beyond.

HIGH VIEW

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Paul declared to Timothy, his son in the faith, that “all Scripture” (i.e., *pas* meaning “the whole, the collective entirety,” *graphe* meaning “written”) is from God and is about God. Being that God is the source (i.e., God-breathed) of all written Scripture, it is inerrant, meaning without error and infallible, meaning incapable of error. Paul had a high view of Scripture, and that’s what moved him to pass along to Timothy the Scriptures that were able to make him wise to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Moreover, God’s Word was—and still is—“useful” meaning beneficial and productive. In other words, the supernatural and living Word of God will have a literal impact on our lives, forever changing us. We do not change the Word, the Word changes us. We cannot say that we follow Jesus and then NOT follow His Word, for they are one and the same (i.e., John 1:1, 14).

Our Challenge

Jon Krakauer's book *Into Thin Air* (Villard Books, 1996) describes the dangers that plagued the climbers in their climb of Mount Everest during the spring of 1996. That year, there was a great loss of life among climbers attempting to summit the world’s highest peak. One of the individuals who died was Andy Harris, a leader of the expedition. Harris had stayed too long at the peak, and on his descent, he became oxygen deprived. Harris radioed his plight to the base camp, telling them of his need. Yet, he found a supply of oxygen canisters left by other climbers, but they were all empty. Still, many climbers who passed by the canisters during their descent knew they were not empty, but full. People in the base camp begged Harris to pick them up and use them, but their begging made no difference. Harris kept insisting that they were empty. He held in his hands the very thing that could save his life, but his mind was completely closed to that possibility. Harris collapsed and died on Mt. Everest.

What we need is what we already have – it’s in our very hands. What we need to save our marriages and families—is in our hands. What we need to rescue us from addictions to porn, drugs of choice, and more—is in our hands. What we need to rescue us from rage, revenge, slander, gossip, pride and hate – is in our hands. When will we come to our senses, opening it and using it to guide our families to faith in Christ Jesus?

GPS – Grace. Prayer. Scripture. All three work together to lead your family and mine to our desired destination of being home with the Lord someday. And that gives us *no greater joy!*