We Teach the Bible Because God Uses Its Teachings to Guide Us.

The Bible is filled with fascinating facts. It spans over two thousand years of history. It portrays hundreds of compelling characters. It tells some of the most amazing stories in all of literature. History, biography, poetry, wisdom sayings, and prophecy fill its pages. Focusing on just the facts when teaching the Bible can be fascinating, and that is a temptation for many of us who teach the Bible. And the explanation of facts, can occupy and interest many who attend our Bible studies and classes.

While it’s important to know truths from the Bible, the Bible was not given to us so we would have facts for teachers to teach and for students to learn. We do the Bible a terrible injustice if we reduce our Bible teaching to the transfer of facts.

James’s advice was, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). Did you notice that James said those who merely listen to the Word deceive themselves? Think about that for a moment. How do we deceive ourselves by hearing God’s Word and not acting on it? What’s the deception? We are deceived when we think that hearing is the name of the game. We listen to a sermon and say, “Well, I did my duty. I learned something from the Bible.” James tells us that hearing is not an end in itself. Hearing is a means to the more important end of acting on what we hear.

In Lesson 1 we will discover what the Bible itself says about why it exists and what it can accomplish in our lives.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 Teaches Us That God’s Word Is Essential to Living an Abundant Life.
What Happens When We Teach the Bible?

Lesson 01 of 04

Scripture Is Inspired by God.

Our study begins with 2 Timothy 3:16–17 because this passage clearly presents what God intended His Word to do. This information is important to Bible teachers because it helps us know what to anticipate as outcomes of our Bible studies. It tells us what we should be praying for as we prepare to teach the Bible. In the passage Paul names five results the Bible is intended to produce in our lives.

But before naming what should happen when we teach, let’s pause a moment and consider why we should trust Scripture in the first place. The amazing claim verse 16 makes is that “all Scripture is God-breathed.” This means that the Bible’s content originated in God’s infinite wisdom. The Bible doesn’t contain ideas from the world’s greatest minds—it contains ideas from the One who created the world’s greatest minds. We are reading about life from the God who created life.

Peter made a similar claim in 2 Peter 1:20–21.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Since Scripture is the revelation of God’s own will and wisdom, it is perfectly logical that it would be profitable. But profitable for what? What should we expect to happen to people when they are exposed to such knowledge?

In 2 Timothy 3:17, Paul laid out a logical growth sequence when he explained what Scripture is profitable for. He clearly stated what should happen to those who read and live by it.

Scripture Is Profitable for Teaching.

Because Scripture is inspired by God, it is the most profitable source of teaching imaginable. God’s will and wisdom are clearly presented in the Bible’s sixty-six books. Moses commanded Israel to live by God’s commandments and to teach them diligently to their children to assure their success as a nation. The Old Testament prophets promised Israel they would thrive and
prosper if they followed God’s teaching. Jesus quoted Scripture over and over again as the authoritative foundation for His own teaching. And God inspired the apostles as they wrote letters of instruction to the fledgling New Testament churches to teach them how to live as God’s people.

When Paul said that God’s inspired Scripture is profitable for teaching, he reassured Timothy that the Bible is the only foundation to build a life on. When we wonder how life can be lived at its highest level, there is only one source of instruction that comes from the God who created life. God’s Word is profitable for teaching.

**Scripture Is Profitable for Rebuke.**

A second value of knowing God’s Word is that we become aware of God’s standards. Studying the Bible is like looking at a mirror under an intense light. The psalmist said he stored up God’s Word in his heart so that he wouldn’t sin against God (Psalm 119:11). By identifying how God wants us to live, we can become more aware of the things we do that please and displease Him. Romans 12:2 tells us to avoid being conformed to the standards of our age and to be transformed into the people God intends by renewing our minds. When we teach the Bible, people can assess their attitudes and actions by God’s standard and identify areas of their life that need attention.

**Scripture Is Profitable for Correction.**

The Bible doesn’t abandon us after it points out our failures. It clearly presents a standard, or teaching. It points out where we fall short of that teaching. But it also shows us what to do when we become aware of our failure to live by God’s standards. First it explains how we can be made completely righteous no matter how badly we have failed. Jesus explained His purpose for coming to Earth in these terms: “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17). The Bible teaches us that Jesus came to “correct” man’s sin problem by offering forgiveness to anyone who asks for it. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). As Bible teachers we have the potential to help bring people into personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and to help them deal with
issues that are preventing them from becoming the kind of people God intended them to be.

**Scripture Is Profitable for Instruction in Righteousness.**

The Bible goes beyond teaching us how to fix what’s wrong. Not being bad is a worthy pursuit, and God teaches us how to fix things when they are bad. But being “not bad” isn’t God’s intention for His people and shouldn’t be good enough for us either. The Bible is filled with instructions about how to become all it is possible to be. Jesus said He came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). Paul said that in spite of his past accomplishments, he wanted to forget what was behind and press on to become all that God could enable him to be (Philippians 3:7–16). Jesus’s Great Commission to His followers was that we should help people grow in an intimate relationship with Him by teaching them to observe all that He had taught us (Matthew 28:18–20). God’s intention is that we become conformed to Christ’s own image (Romans 8:29)!

So as people are taught God’s Word, they should be increasingly more sensitive about living lives that please Him because they model His standard of righteousness. As Bible teachers we can be God’s servants to mentor people as they learn God’s view of life, identify and correct their failings, and receive instructions in righteous living that pleases God.

**Scripture Is Profitable to Equip Us for Every Good Work.**

Paul wasn’t finished yet. Next he clearly stated the end purpose of Bible teaching: “so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). Jesus recognized the need for more people who are equipped for good work. He said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37–38). As we teach God’s Word to people, we are providing the tools they need to be effective workers in God’s harvest. When we take note of the amazing claim that Scripture is actually God’s own word, it is no wonder we should expect great things to happen when we teach the Bible.

**Other Biblical Writers Teach the Urgent Need of Knowing God’s Word Well.**
Second Timothy 3:16–17 summarizes why it is important to teach the Bible well. But Paul wasn’t the only biblical writer who urged us to know the Scriptures. Peter was concerned that some of his readers were not maturing in their faith. In 1 Peter 2:1 he named the destructive attitudes and actions that will destroy our lives. Then in verse 2 he gave the antidote to these destructive forces: “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

The author of Hebrews had a similar concern for his readers, and, like Peter, urged them to grow in their understanding of the Bible’s teachings. He wanted to write about important doctrinal truth they needed to understand, but instead he wrote:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (5:11–14).

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity.

Hebrew’s author was concerned about his readers’ (1) inability to grasp truth because they were dull of hearing; (2) inability to minister because they hadn’t grasped the elemental truths of the Christian faith; (3) estrangement from teachings about righteousness; and (4) immature or untrained ability to discern good and evil. These are concerns we can address by helping our students learn God’s Word.

In Psalm 19:7–8 the psalmist teaches us that following Scripture’s teachings makes life richer. Notice how, after each description of God’s Word, he shows how knowing it benefits the reader.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Psalm 19:7–8

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The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalm 119:11 claims that meditating on God’s Word protects us from sin: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

James 1:25 teaches us that, “whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”

These passages are only a small sample of claims that living by God’s teaching enriches our lives. But Jesus’s parable of the sower and the soils in Luke 8 emphasizes that hearing or reading the Bible doesn’t guarantee any of these benefits. Some hear the Bible and nothing happens at all (8:11–12). Others hear and respond, but because they have no depth they quickly abandon their response (v. 13). Still others hear, agree, and decide to follow. But when they get involved in life, other priorities choke out their decision to obey and they do not mature (v. 14). Jesus said that it is only “those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop” (v. 15).

Conclusion

Because we want to do all we can as teachers of the Bible to increase the probability that our students will produce a crop, this course will help us develop skill in interactive learning. This approach to teaching helps those in our Bible studies discover a passage’s meaning by personally interacting with the biblical text, the Holy Spirit, the teacher, and fellow learners. The goal of using an interactive Bible-study approach is to take learners beyond understanding to conviction and to help them realize the dangers of Bible truth falling into shallow or weedy soil and not producing fruit.

The Bible is filled with interesting and important facts. But what makes them important is that they help us fulfill God’s will for our lives. God gave us His Word to change our lives and not just to
fill our minds with facts. As you consider teaching the Bible, pray that God will use His inspired Word to help you and those you teach be doers of the Word and not just hearers.