

# “God's Word: Changes You” 2 Timothy 3:16, Holy Trinity Frogmore, 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009, David Heath-Whyte

## 1. Intro

*Suppose a long-lost relative died, and you had to sort through their things, and you found in the attic a nice little painting. You liked the painting, and thought it would look nice on your wall. And because of the will and all that, you had to get it valued. You didn't really mind what it was worth – it was such a nice little painting.*

*Anyway – when the art expert saw the painting, his jaw hit the floor, and he declared that it was a long lost work by Leonardo da Vinci!*

*Wow! Your nice little painting is by the same guy who did the Mona Lisa!*

*It's no longer just a nice little painting, is it? It is now it is an amazing nice little painting.*

*What made the difference? The fact that Leonardo Da Vinci created it.*

*With a painting, the identity of the artist is very important.*

And the same is true of the Bible. Who is it's creator? It's vitally important.

The Apostle Paul says this: (2 Timothy 3:16-17) “**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...**”

“**All Scripture is God-breathed**” - that is, with its 66 books, and all its human authors, the Bible actually comes from God.

And that is our conviction here at Holy Trinity – and it is the authentic position of the Christian Church throughout the ages, that the Bible is God's handiwork, the work of God the Holy Spirit – brought about through human authors at different times and places.

But how does that work, and what does it mean to us, as we seek to follow Christ?

That's going to be the theme of our sermons over the next three weeks: we're going to take a closer look at what the Bible is, and the place it has in our lives, based on Paul's words here.

It's 'back to basics' kind-of stuff, but so much is at stake today when it comes to our understanding of what the Bible is, and so much is under attack.

It's coming up to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Darwin's “Origin of the Species” - evolution is going to be rammed down our throats in the media in the next few weeks. But the Bible teaches that God is the creator, with design and purpose; that clashes with evolution. We need to be sure that we can stand with intellectual integrity and hold on to the truth of the Bible.

And evolution is not the only issue. So we're going to spend some time thinking about what the Bible is, and what difference that makes to us.

This week, we're going to see how God's word changes us.

In 2 Tim 3:16, Paul tells us two very important things about the Bible: it's God-breathed, and it's useful.

So what does that mean? and what shall we do because of it?

## 2. Explain

### ***God-breathed***

First of all, what does it mean: “**All Scripture is God breathed, and useful**”?

Paul was writing to Timothy, his protegee, encouraging Timothy to have the right of kind of ministry as he led the church in Ephesus.

“Scripture” means sacred writings – and we know Paul certainly meant the OT, he probably also meant the writing that he and other Christians had done by that time. The apostle Peter speaks of Paul's writings as “Scripture” in 2 Peter 3:16 – and eventually the whole Christian church came to a common mind on what was and what wasn't Scripture

So now we consider this verse to apply to the whole Bible: it is all “**God-breathed, and useful**”

But What does “**God-breathed**” mean, “breathed out by God”?

In the OT, the spirit of God is described as the breath of God. So the Bible is God's creation, by his Spirit.

The Apostle Peter says: “**men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**” (2 Peter 1:21)

God used human authors, with all their circumstances, and personalities, and skills – he used them creatively to produce writings of all different types – historical, poetry, wisdom, prophetic, letters, songs and so on. And he used his church to bring it all together: It is God's work,

And that's why we call it God's Word: because God has spoken it, by the Holy Spirit at work in these people.

But it's not all past-tense, an old book that just gets older. No, as God's Word, it is, as Paul says elsewhere: “**The Sword of the Spirit**” (Eph 6:17) - it's how the Spirit speaks to us today, and works in us today.

The writer of the book Hebrews says: “**... the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**” (Hebrews 4:12)

Now of course, there are all sorts of questions we need to ask about this – especially if the idea is new to you: and there are good answers to every question. You don't have to bin your mind to accept God as the overall author of the Bible.

If you're looking for fairy tales and myths, then read something else – like the Da Vinci Code!

You know my background – science and Maths a-levels, a Maths degree at university. If you want “intellectual”, I can do that: and my conviction, based on rational evidence, is that the Bible is God-breathed, that it is God's Word.

So do ask the questions – ask me, ask Nigel, ask someone in your Growth Group – ask someone over coffee this morning. Ask away – and you will find, that this is a claim that stands up to scrutiny: The Bible is from God, the work of God the Holy Spirit: it is God's Word – all of it – God-breathed.

## **Useful**

And – Paul continues: it's useful: look at v.16 again: “**useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**”

God has given us his Word for a reason: he's got a purpose in mind: he wants change us, by making known to us his truth.

Just look back at v.15 for a moment: Paul has already said here that it's bible that can “**make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**” - this is the most important change that the Bible can bring about – we'll look at it some more in two weeks time – it's the Bible that can tell us what we need, so that we can turn to Jesus, and receive the forgiveness we need for our sins.

Think of all the things we've heard over Christmas. The great messages about who Jesus: the Son of God, the Saviour for all people.

Jesus came to earth because we need him. You need him, I need him. Each of us needs Jesus to put us right with God.

But we'd never know about that without the Bible.

*Have you ever walked around a museum, and wondered what on earth you're supposed to be looking at, and what's so special or important about the things that are there? So you go back to the desk at the entrance, and get one of those clever audio-guides. And now, providing you can push the right buttons and get the volume right – now, it all makes sense!*

That's what the bible does for us – with Jesus: it makes sense of something we'd never understand otherwise.

And then, when we put our trust in Jesus, how do we know how to live for him? v.16 tells us: The Bible is “**useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**”

God's purpose is to change us.

There are two pairs of words here. One pair to do with what we believe, the other to do with how we behave. And each pair has a positive and a negative.

What we believe: the Bible **teaches** (positive), and **rebukes** us (negative). It **teaches** us what the truth is about God and his world, and it **rebukes** us – it tells us what is wrong in human thinking about God and his world.

And: how we behave: it **corrects** us (negative) – it shows us where our behaviour is wrong in God's eyes, and it **trains us in righteousness**: (positive) – it helps us to do what God wants, time and time again.

*It's like a good driving instructor.*

*When you're learning to drive a car, today you need someone who will help you both with the highway code, the theory, and with the actual driving, the practice. And you want someone who will tell you how to do it right, and who will pick you up and correct you when you're doing it wrong.*

And God the Holy Spirit wants to work with us in our lives like that – with the theory, and the practice: and so his Word is useful, like that: “**useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**”

So we believe that the Bible is God-breathed, and useful.

### 3. Apply

What difference does that make to us?

Let me pick out just three things.

#### ***Cherish***

First, let's Cherish the Bible.

*Suppose you did find that nice little painting in Gt Aunt Doris's attic, and the expert said: “yes, it's da Vinci,” - what would you say?*

*It would probably be something along the lines of: “Wow!!!”*

*And as you held the painting, you just wouldn't be able to believe what you'd got: a painting by Leonardo da Vinci, in your hands – Wow!!*

And we're so used to having the Bible, so defensive about it, maybe so full of doubts, that we've lost that reaction.

As you hold the Bible, you have in your hands God's creation, God's Word, God's communication, for you, his useful provision so that you can know him and live for him and be changed by him – Wow!!

Let's Cherish the Bible.

How do we do that? By dressing it up in Gold and bowing down to it?

No: let's Cherish the Bible by being hungry for it. Being hungry for God's word.

Do you remember how Jesus fought temptation in the desert? He was tempted to make food for himself by turning stones into bread. Now that was something Jesus could do - it was a serious temptation. How did he fight it? He knew a verse from Deuteronomy (8:3) **Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** (Matthew 4:4)

God's word is like food: it feeds us. And here it is: from God, for us: let's Cherish it, by being hungry for it.

#### ***Submit***

And secondly, let's Submit to it.

Where do we see ourselves, and our opinions and ideas, in relation to what the Bible says?

Which is more trustworthy, reliable and authoritative: your mind, or the Bible?

Well, let's think: the Bible is God-breathed and useful. My mind is human, and corrupted by sin. Hmm – which shall I trust?

The Bible is from God, isn't it? And we want to submit to God, don't we? So let's submit ourselves to the Bible's teaching.

Instead of putting ourselves **over** the Bible – and judging and criticising it, let's put ourselves **under** it, letting it influence us and change us.

Let's have the Bible's teaching at the centre of who we are, and what we do – as individuals, and as a church.

*The story is told of an American navy ship off the coast of Newfoundland, on a foggy day, that detected an unidentified vessel on its radar screen that was in its way, so the captain got on the radio.*

*"Please divert your course 15 degrees due North to avoid a collision."*

*The reply came back: "Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision."*

*The captain tried again: "This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course."*

*The other voice said: "No. I say again, you divert YOUR course."*

*The captain got stroppy: "THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH; THAT'S ONE FIVE DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER-MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP."*

*The voice came back: "This is a lighthouse. Your call."*

*In the end, it was the captain of the USS Lincoln who had to alter course.*

Now, if what I think is different from what the Bible says, who is it who should alter course?

It's me, isn't it? It's me who needs to change direction, not the Bible.

It's not going to be easy: our society and culture are miles away from the bible. There are many ways that people think and behave today that are in straight contradiction to God's will, and God's Word. And that makes it difficult for us – especially if we've been brought up to think one thing, and then we find that the Bible says another.

In March this year we're going to take this up further with a sermon series looking at various issues today where the Bible says something different to what the World says.

It's going to be tricky. We're going to find ourselves challenged. The Bible is like a sharp, double-edged sword: it will rebuke us and correct us.

But isn't that a good thing? Don't you want God to be changing you, and shaping you, to be more like-minded with him? I do.

Let's submit to God's Word.

## **Use**

So let's Cherish it (and be hungry for it), let's submit to it.

and finally, let's use it.

Since the Bible is God-breathed, and useful, let's use it.

Do we want God to be changing us, and shaping us, to be more like-minded with him? Well let's read the Bible!

Do we want God's help to fight the sin that we know is in our lives?

Perhaps you're struggling with sin? You know there's something wrong in what you do, but you're finding it hard to stop. In the Bible God speaks to us as it were, God the Holy Spirit uses what we read there, to work within us to transform and renew us.

Do we want to see the world with God's eyes, so that we actually hate evil, instead of secretly longing for it? So that we long to do good, instead of keeping on being selfish? Then we need to be reading the Bible more.

*This is where the Nice little painting illustration doesn't work. You see, if you've found a Da Vinci painting in Gt Aunt Doris' attic, then the last thing you want to do is handle it. And You'd never stick it in your bag, or get it out on the Tube, or take it on holiday with you!*

But here's the great thing about the Bible: it's more valuable than the Mona Lisa, but you can handle it. You can read it, every day. You can stick it in your bag, you can get it out and read it on the Tube, you can take it on holiday with you! You can wear your Bible out, and then go and get another one, and wear that one out – and it doesn't matter – in fact, it's a good thing to wear out your Bible!

So where do you start?

Get some Bible reading notes: “Start” - these are good if you're new to reading the Bible; “EXPLORE” - have a passage to read each day, and some notes on the passage to help you think about it. This magazine, the Briefing, has notes at the back of it – one for each day, in a different style to Explore. Give them a go.

Why not join a growth group – they're great: they're friendly, relaxed, helpful, they look at the Bible together, and you'll never look back.

Let's use the Bible, as God intended it to be used. Read it.

## 4. Conclusion

**“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”**

It is God-breathed, and useful.

God changes us through his Word. That's the whole purpose of the Bible – it's why God caused it to be written – why he breathed it out through his people.

So: as individuals, and as a church, will we:

cherish it (and be hungry for God's word)?

submit to it (putting ourselves under the Bible, not over it, so that it's me who changes course)?

and use it (read it, study it, learn it, so that God can be at work in us, changing us to be more like him)?