

(Education for Exultation) Building Our Lives on the Bible

by John Piper

The Bible is the inspired word of God and should be the guiding principle in our lives, providing wisdom and salvation.

Duration: 37:21

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:33, John 17:17, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of the Bible in our lives and its role in bringing about exaltation in God. He emphasizes that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The Bible equips believers for every good work, which ultimately brings glory to God. The speaker encourages listeners to stand firm in the word of God and not be swayed by worldly advancements, emphasizing the need to conserve and preserve the relevance and radical nature of the Bible in our lives.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.DesiringGod.org This morning's sermon text is found in the book of 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verses 10 through 17. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 10.

But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra. What persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me. And indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned, and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Father, as we bow now over your holy word, we are conscious that the same spirit who inspired it is necessary to illuminate and apply it. And so we would not rush forward without pausing to declare our dependence upon him. Would you send him in fresh measure now? Would you pour out your Holy Spirit upon this congregation to give them ears to hear, and upon me with an anointing to preach this text and to be faithful to it in the words that I say and the demeanor with which I speak them.

I pray, Lord, that you would draw people to yourself, and if any among us is not saved, not believing, not united to Christ and benefiting from his righteousness, would you master them and overcome all rebellion and all resignation and all resistance and make them your own in great mercy. Please help me now to be faithful to this word. In Jesus' name and for his glory, I pray.

Amen. In this series on education for exaltation, we have moved from exaltation in God to exaltation in Christ, to exaltation in the cross, to exaltation by the Spirit through the word. And now it's fitting that we pause and focus on that word.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word. We talked about the hearing of faith last week, and now we talk about the word. And I wrote a paragraph in the Three Ring Binder on education for exaltation to explain to you why this would be a sermon in this series and to try to capture the spirit of our church.

And let me read that to you. We are a people of the book. We know God through the book.

We meet Christ in the book. We see the cross in the book. Our faith and love are kindled by the glorious truths of the book.

We have tasted the divine majesty of the word and are persuaded that the book is God's inspired infallible written revelation. Therefore, what the book teaches matters. Doctrine is important for worship and life and mission.

Education for exaltation is education saturated by the Bible. And I choose that phrase very self-consciously. I don't say merely built on the Bible.

I have seen so many schemes that claim Bible basis that go way far from the Bible. We want to say that what we are and what we do and how we live is permeated by the Bible, saturated by the Bible, not just built on the Bible and then doing our own thing as though you could get a start there and then think out a thousand other thoughts that may not conform to the Bible. So that language is not an emotional throwaway language, saturated by, permeated by.

Those words are thought over and they have a meaning for the way we want to do things, albeit falling short so many times. So here we are now with the Bible in this message. And I want to show you the text from which these convictions have come.

There are others, but this is the most central probably. So let's follow Paul in his thought from verse 10 to verse 17 in verses 10 and 11. Paul tells us about his own sufferings and persecutions.

Let's read that verse 11. You have followed my persecutions, Timothy. You followed them.

Sufferings such as happened to me in Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. What persecutions I endured. And out of them all, the Lord rescued me.

He didn't rescue me from them, notice. He got stoned. They took him up for dead in one of those towns.

But out of them all and at the last one, God will rescue us into heaven. So don't interpret this rescue out of as some, oh, we don't ever have to be persecuted. We don't ever have to be suffering.

The next verses will put that out of your mind completely. Verse 12, he generalizes out of the specific Paul situation to everybody's situation. He says, indeed, all who desire to be godly, live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Now, he says that not only for our sake, but in particular for Timothy's sake, who had a timid streak in him. And he says, now, Timothy, I am calling you to godliness to follow my example. But I have just told you about my sufferings.

Let me tell you the point. The point is, if it's true for me, it's going to be true for you. Everybody who desires with a passion to live a radical, godly life in this kind of culture.

And that one is going to be persecuted in one form or another. So I think he's warning Timothy now to be careful that he not buy into quickly to Christianity in its fullness. And now he's going to warn him in verse 13 not to buy out.

Look what verse 13 says. But evil men and imposters. Now, that's the opposite of being godly, right? He says in verse 12, if you want to be godly, you're going to be persecuted.

Now he takes the opposite group and he says, but evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. So he holds up these options for Timothy. And I think he would want Timothy to hear this.

Timothy, don't go that route in verse 13. Go the route of verse 12. Better to be persecuted in allegiance to Jesus, who will one day bring you out into everlasting glory, than to be having a little fun for 40 or 60 years duped by the devil.

You see that word dupe in there? No. Well, it's there. This is my translation of the word deceived.

That's a fair translation, isn't it? Duped. You want to be duped all your life? Rah, rah, I have a good time. Duped.

No, you don't want that, Timothy. You want to give your life over to that which is not a life of deceit, neither being deceived nor deceiving, but a life of godwardness and godliness that will result in almighty King Jesus bringing you out for his purposes over and over again. Well, there's more here.

There's a contrast that I want you to see between 13 and the verse following. But let's make sure we see how he counsels Timothy here not to go that route of being deceived. He says, you, however, were 14.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of. Now stop right there. And I want to show you a contrast between 14 and 13.

It's much more clear in the original, but you can see it if you just meditate on the English here. The word in verse 13 for proceed. You see that word? They are proceeding from bad to worse.

That's a word that means advance, go forward, proceed, advance, move forward. And in this case, from bad to worse. Now contrast the word in verse 14.

What's the opposite of proceed? Advance, go forward. And the opposite is more clearly in Greek, but clear here. Continue in this right here.

Don't go forward from this. The word continue almost gets it wrong in English. The word is remain, abide, stay.

So there's a contrast here. These evil folks, they're moving forward. They're advancing.

And I turn to you, Timothy, and I say, stand your ground and don't move forward. Don't move, stand, stay, continue, abide right there. Where? Where? In the word, the things you have learned and heard.

Let me pause here to just make a general comment. In Christianity, there is a conservative impulse. Meaning there is a strong word, conserve something.

Stay with something. Abide in something. Continue here.

Don't go there. Don't move forward. Stand still.

That's what's in verse 14. Continue, abide, remain, stay. That's a conserving word.

Don't leave it. Conserve it, preserve it, hold it. Do not treat the Bible as first grade from which you graduate.

Perhaps into the graduate school of philosophy or science or technology. Those are fine. They're not graduate school.

After the Bible. The word of Paul to Timothy is stay with the Bible. You'll never exhaust the Bible.

But be careful here. There's a liberal impulse in Christianity too. Is there not? An impulse to free God's people from every human tradition that doesn't conform to this Bible.

And therefore there's a dangerous, insidious, incendiary, liberal impulse in Christianity that causes people to break out from things human over and over again. Because there's one King Jesus and no other authority that holds sway ultimately over the sons of God. There's a real liberating, liberal impulse in Christianity.

And there's this conserving impulse. Oh, what a waste. When young people get it wrong.

Indeed, when adults get it wrong. The relationship between the conserving impulse to stay with the Bible and the liberating, empowering, risk-taking, radical impulse to let nothing be your God but God. How sad it is when young people and older people try to stay up to date in Kansas City.

The fastest way to be out of date is to devote yourself to being up to date. Because in the 21st century, fashions are changing way faster than you can catch on to them. And you will become one glib, trifling, superficial, ever-changing chameleon if you try consistently to be in sync with the times.

But if you root yourself in the Creator of all times and the triumphant victor over all times, you will always bring to bear on all times a message that will be perpetually relevant and radically up to date. In fact, it will be so far ahead of the lagging behind fashion makers that they won't be able to see it except by the power of God working in their hearts. I was having devotions this morning all by myself before I went down with the family.

And the appointed text for the day in our reading through the discipleship plan, I believe, unless I'm behind, was Matthew 22 where Jesus silences all the questions in the last week of his life. There are no more questions after this by asking, Messiah, whose son is he? He asked the Pharisees. Whose son is he? And they say, David's son.

And he says, why then does David, speaking by the spirit, say the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put all your enemies under your feet. No more questions. Now, I stopped right there in my readings.

And instead of going on to numbers, I'm supposed to read two chapters in numbers. I didn't read them this morning. I hope I can before I fall asleep this afternoon.

I just stayed there and worshipped because I wanted to get really clear in my mind and in my heart this picture. The Lord God Almighty said to my Lord Messiah. Sit triumphant, risen from the dead at my right hand until I, God Almighty, put everybody that opposes you under your feet.

I love these pictures because I'm very tempted to be worldly. And nothing breaks the power of the temptation to get in sync with the times and be up to date and do all the stuff and get all the right language and wear all the right clothes and drive all the right stuff and buy all the right toys. Then to think it's all going to be under his feet.

And one thing matters, allegiance to this king, being in sync with this king, not in sync with this world. This world is coming down so fast that once we die and get to heaven and look on it, we'll wonder how these shadows ever attracted us so powerfully. And so if God, by his word, would give me a glimpse of heaven that would give me that glimpse now of earth, I will pause and worship over that so that I will be free.

Continue in the things you've heard. Continue with this word, the Bible, the sacred writings. Now, are we really supposed to continue in everything we've learned? You ever learned a wrong thing that you shouldn't continue in? Of course you have.

We all have. So no, he's not sanctifying everything you've ever learned when he says, verse 14, continue in the things you have learned. He goes on and makes explicit what he means.

So let's keep going. Middle of verse 14, knowing from whom you have learned them and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings. That's what he's talking about.

Not just any old thing you've ever learned, but the content of God's sacred writings, in this case, the scriptures of the Old Testament. So don't advance beyond these. Don't leave these.

Don't graduate out of the school of these into some graduate school of other kind of thinking. And surely that's a word to us in education for exaltation. Bethlehem, continue in the word of God.

Don't advance. Don't go forward. Stay right there.

Make this the foundation, the permeation of all that you do. So God's word is rock solid bottom where we stay and it's what we continue in. It's what we have absolute allegiance to under God as his word.

Build your children's ministries on it, God says. Build your youth ministry on it. Build your adult ministry on it.

Build your families on it. Build the way you do elder council meetings on it. Oh, how I wish you could have been there Monday a week ago when you were praying and fasting and we were meeting.

And the first, what, hour and a half or so, we were covering every whiteboard and going to other rooms and bringing in whiteboards with texts that God was speaking from his word about how we should be guided as a council of elders. It was a glorious meeting with the living God through his revealed written word. That's the way to do eldership.

And so let it be heard. Bethlehem education for exaltation is education permeated with the word of God. Now, question.

Why does Paul say to Timothy that he should stay with this word? And he gives two kind of answers. Why should we stay with the scriptures? Why should we stay with the Bible? Why shouldn't we advance beyond the Bible? Start there, maybe find learn a few good things. It's a good religious book.

There are other good religious books. But let's advance on. Why does he say no, stay, continue, remain, abide, don't leave this.

And he gives two reasons, two kinds of reasons. One has to do with the quality of the people that taught Timothy the Bible. And one has to do with the good effect that the scriptures will have on Timothy's life.

So let's take those one at a time, briefly. Look at verse 14 in the middle again. Knowing from whom you have learned them and that from childhood you have known the sacred writing.

So get the argument now. Get the whole thing before you. Timothy, continue in these knowing from whom you've learned them.

You see the argument? You see the flow? What this is saying is one of the grounds of credibility for the Bible is the quality of the people that taught them to us. That's what it says. Don't leave the Bible knowing who taught it to you.

Wow. Wow. Implications are all over the place here for Sunday school teachers, parents, preachers, friends, aunts, uncles.

Who taught Timothy the Bible? It wasn't his father, which is a great sadness. And I have wondered, this could offend. I wonder if it was the lack of his father's involvement that made him as timid as he was.

Timothy struggled with timidity. It's all over the pastoral epistles. This man has a streak in him of fear.

He learned everything he knew from his mother and his grandmother. And we should stand in awe that he did. And I say this not to discourage.

This is what I meant that it may offend. Not to discourage you single moms or you moms who have unbelieving husbands like Timothy did. That is, Timothy's mother did.

But you should rather take heart. So let me continue and show you why. Why do I think it was his mother and his grandmother? Well, verse 15 clearly gives a pointer.

From your childhood you have known them. But Acts chapter 16 verse 1 says, He was the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer. But his father was a Greek.

So there's a situation of a godly, believing mother and a dad who will have none of it. Now, the reason I know it was his mother and his father who taught him, I mean his mother and his grandmother who taught him these things, is because of chapter 1 verse 5 of 2 Timothy. Chapter 1 verse 5, it says, For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother, Lois, and your mother, Eunice, and I am sure that it is now dwelling in you as well.

So continue in these things. Now, this elevates Lois and Eunice unbelievably high. Because the argument goes like this.

Don't leave it, Timothy. Continue in it, Timothy. Remain with it, Timothy.

Don't abandon it and graduate out of it, Timothy, knowing the quality of your mother and your grandmother. Don't let your dad have the last say here. You hear the force of that? I hope that hits you with encouragement, moms, and not discouragement if your husband is either an unbeliever or has left you.

Or is maybe just a slacker. Come on, dads. Come on, dads.

This is a word to us. It didn't happen with Timothy. It should have.

And it ought to happen with our kids. If there's a dad in the home, pick up your Bible and read it to your children. Or if you can't read, and that may be the case, don't worry about it.

I've dealt with couples like that. Don't worry about it. You say, how can I lead my own? My wife's a genius.

She reads perfectly. I can't read worth a toot. I sound like a bloke, and she's just perfect.

How can I be the leader? They're easy. Just say, kids, come on, let's get together now. We're going to have devotions.

Where are we, mom? John? Okay. What chapter? Eight. Good, eight.

Okay. Noel? Read. That's all there is to it.

And you've led. Of course your wife is more competent than you are. Almost all wives are more competent than their husbands.

That's got nothing to do with leadership. And you know I mean that with all my 500-page heart. I believe that men are called to take responsibility, and wives love it when they do.

Wives who don't have husbands will take that initiative grown that they have to constantly be saying, Honey, you want to pray at the table this time, please? Or other such sad affairs. Okay, the first argument why Timothy should believe the Word and stay with it is the quality of those who taught it to him. Oh, the Word for Bethlehem.

I'm tempted to just stay here and preach on Sunday school teachers and preach on parents and preach on all that. But in three weeks we got a sermon entirely devoted to that. So I leave that behind and I close with this last argument.

There's one other kind of argument for why Timothy should not move off the Scriptures. And that is the kind of effect it's going to have in his life. So let's read that.

Verse 15. Remember, Timothy, that from childhood you have known the sacred writings, and here it is, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Oh, Timothy, don't leave the Word of life.

Don't leave the Word of salvation. Don't think it's old-fashioned. Don't think it's small.

Don't think it's insignificant. It's life. It's eternity.

It's salvation. It's so important. Don't leave it, Timothy.

It will make you wise unto eternal life, unto everlasting joy with God. Don't leave it, Timothy. Don't think something else is more exciting or something else is more up-to-date.

Stay here, Timothy. Get strength. Get life.

Get power. Get hope. Get joy.

And live forever here. And then, in verse 17, he gets real practical. Real practical.

So if any of you is responding to that little flourish of what I said there, Oh, yeah, I hear you Christians are always talking about life out there somewhere. No blue bye-bye. No.

No. Our confidence in that glorious future is what transforms the here and now into what? Verse 16 and 17. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable now for teaching and reproof and correction and training and righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate and equipped for every good work now.

Now, there's enough in those two verses for a long sermon series. And I'm going to finish in about three minutes. And the one thing I'm going to say out of the dozens of things that could be said from those glorious two verses is this.

We are moving into education for exaltation. What's this got to do with our goal to bring about exaltation in God? What's this verse 17 got to do with Bethlehem's spreading a passion for the supremacy of all of God in all things? That's exaltation. This.

Jesus said. Matthew 516. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good what? Works.

Sounds familiar. Mm. The Bible equips for every good work.

Let's go back. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and do what? Tell me. Everybody recite it.

It's OK. Lots of different versions. No problem.

Glorify your father in heaven or give glory to your father in heaven. It's all about the glory of God. It's all about the exaltation in God.

That's what good works are all about. Good works that terminate on man as their final justification are philanthropic idolatry. But good works that aim at getting glory to God bring both joy to the human heart and healing.

And glory to God. And the question, then, is if we want to be a church that brings people to exalt in God and we know that good works are an essential component of getting people to see and love God. And we know that the Bible is what equips people to be sufficient to do every good work.

What should we do? Answer, permeate our education with the Bible. Be a Bible people. And so my closing exhortation is don't leave it.

Don't graduate out of it. Don't walk away from it in quest for relevance. It is permanently relevant and radical.

It will put you out of sync with the world, into sync with God, bring you back into the world with a radically loving, good works oriented lifestyle that will cause people to wonder, where is your treasure if it's not money and praise of men and nice big toys? It must be something else. Let's pray. Father.

My heart's desire. Is to. Live.

This way. So that people give glory to you. And I know that's what hundreds of people in this room have is their heart cry right now.

Let me. Do my homemaking. Let me do my computer programming.

Let me do my. Singing. Let me do my.

Lawyering. Doctoring nursing. Teaching carpentry.

Masonry. Work. So that people glorify my father.

So Lord make us a Bible people. Help us to love the Bible. Not because the book is our God.

But as Russ prayed so powerfully. The book points us over and over relentlessly to our God. To your very heart and mind.

So receive our praise and be glorified through us. As we become a church saturated with the Bible. Would you stand with me for a closing benediction.

Now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you.

And by his word. Give you peace. And all the people said.

Amen. You're dismissed. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper.

Pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others. But please do not charge for those copies.

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