
Centrality of the Scripture in the Home

2 Timothy 3:1–17

Russ Kennedy

What are the most influential secular books in marriage and the home today?

Authors:

Books:

What about religious books?

Authors:

Books:

What is the most powerful influence in your home?

TV?

Video and Video games?

Face Book, MySpace?

In one sense this text is plain and not hard to understand. In another sense, this text is startling and unsettling. It is my aim today to point the spotlight of this text at our comfortable, easy Christianity and illuminate its danger, corruption and failure. I want to do this, not merely for the satisfaction of seeing what is wrong, but to feed your faith in God and to call forth from you faithfulness in your home in these times.

So from one aging saint, Paul, to his protégé in the ministry, Timothy:

- Guard the good deposit of truth, the Scripture, which was entrusted to Paul and now to you (1:14);
- Preset yourself as an approved workman who rightly handles the Scriptures (2:15);
- Flee what is wrong, follow what is right in fellowship with others (2:22);
- Be God's kind of servant, faithfully, gently and patiently teaching the Scriptures depending on God to do His work (2:24-26).

So for the life and ministry of Timothy, he is to become a Scripture centered person. But this did not just begin in his relationship with Paul. It started long ago, early in his life. There is mother and grandmother understood the centrality of the Scripture in their home and thus cultivated its centrality in his life.

The Warning of Danger to God's People

(v.1-9)

The man of God ministering the Word with gentleness and able teaching and patient waiting on God to bring repentance does this in very difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Realities: The Conditions that Bring It

(v.1-5a)

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

Its Difficulties - Peril due to the time and the trouble

The New Testament sees the Last Days as beginning at the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. So what he is expecting to come in ever increasing ages or times has already begun to manifest itself in their day and continues to this day. What is going on here will have a dramatic effect on our homes, our families and our children.

Its Description – People sinfully living out of their heart

What is pictured here is the *overflow of sin from a self-loving heart*.

LOVERS OF SELF – most commentators agree, beginning with Calvin, that this is the root and source of what follows. It is significant how the list begins with love of self and ends with love of pleasure replacing love of God. In this day, it is appalling how self-esteem and self-love are now commended and required. What ought to have been clearly denounced in the church, now is baptized in Scriptural texts and theological argument. Self love and self esteem not only displace love for God and others, but also become manure fertilized soil in which many evils grow. So the root of self-love produces the fruit and overflow of many evils.

LOVERS OF MONEY – The word covetous could be used here. It refers to materialism and an ever-increasing craving for things. It is the love for self gaining satisfaction from material things and measuring life and blessing by what I have now while hungering for more.

PROUD (BOASTFUL) – This is self-love talking about the object of its love. Boasting is pride taking credit for my achievements, real or imagined. It is love for self-seeking acknowledgement from others. Let me point out that self-love may express itself in self-pity as well. Boasting is what love for self-does to be acknowledged by others. Self-pity is love for self nursing its hurt at not receiving the acknowledgement it thinks it deserves.

ARROGANT – This is self-love seeing its superiority to others. Self-love disdains the significance or the humility of others. It sees its own opinions and ideas as ultimate and rejects the wisdom and counsel of others. Arrogance and boasting are often found issuing from the same heart stream of self-loving pride.



ABUSIVE – This word could be translated blasphemers or slanderers. This is the tongue being guided by self-love. This is the mouth of self-love speaking against God (blasphemy) and against others (slander).

DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS – This is self-love rejecting the role and authority structures God has ordained. Disobedience to parents is self-love asserting its independence and freedom. It disregards God's authority as mediated by the family. This expression of self-love will eventually mature into disobedience and independence from all God-ordained authorities and the embracing God rejecting authorities.

UNGRATEFUL – This is self-love seeing itself as deserving of all good it receives. It is love for self becoming a sink hole for the good blessings God gives, even through others. Since gratitude is surface wave caused by the inward power of grace in the soul, being ungrateful is evidence of an ungraced life.

UNHOLY – This is self-love expressing itself in indecency. The word *anosias* indicates the kind of indecency of incest or failure to bury the dead. So love for self can not only behave sinfully, but erupts in unrestrained excesses of self-satisfaction in gross and vile sins. This is self-love wallowing in its own dung (excrement).

HEARTLESS (UNLOVING) – The word here is *astorgos* which refers to natural affection for parents, family and was also used to refer to a patriotic love for country. This is self-love refusing even to acknowledge the natural affection that God has placed in the world by common grace. This is self-love that sees a nursing child as a bother and an intrusion on its freedom and time.

UNAPPEASABLE – This is self-love asserting its perfection. It cannot see a need for change. It refuses to enter into the give-and-take necessary to make relationships work. Love for self will always call for the other person to make the changes and advances necessary for reconciliation.

SLANDEROUS – They are malicious gossips. This is self-love delighting in and passing on what it hears in order to destroy another. This is the diabolical form of self-love that aims words at lives and uses them like high-powered rifles to assassinate the character of others. Gossip is the weapon in the holster of self-love.

WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL – This is self-love becoming incontinent, unable to control itself even for its own good. It careens out of control, eventually being enslaved to its own passions and lusts. This is self-love eating and eating until it is grossly fat but sees a Snow-white in the mirror.

BRUTAL – This is self-love defense mechanism. It is the savage self-protection that disregards the needs and sensitivities of others.

HATERS OF GOOD – This is self-love leaving only hatred for all that is good. Self-love's primary object is sinful and wicked. Therefore, it must point its hatred at the opposite, that which is good and lovely. Thus self-love will embrace the discordant and evil and turn away with loathing from the good, beautiful and lovely.

TREACHEROUS – This is self-love being disloyal. It has no standard that prevents it from turning brutally with malicious gossip and irreconcilable hatred even on the closest of relationships. Expect treachery and disloyalty from a self-loving heart.

RECKLESS – This word could have been translated rash or careless. This is self-love losing its perspective on the very real dangers to itself. Love for self mistakes rash and careless actions for courage and daring. It will presume on the providence of God. Self-love sees bungee jumping as fun.

CONCEITED – This is the smoke and mirrors of self-love's imagined self-importance. It is love for self requiring all else and everyone else to be in its orbit. It is the way self-love's self-centeredness looks in the way it carries itself. It is the self-love that expects everyone to notice its entrance in a room.

LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD – You could almost place this as the name of the tree itself. If self-love is the root and all these evils are the fruit, then pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers is the tree and the trunk. It is love for self seeking satisfaction in pleasure instead of in God. As a result, it cannot love God and cannot love others. It is not that pleasure is loved more than God, but that pleasure is loved instead of God. It is not that we please ourselves, but rather we are too easily pleased. We are too easily satisfied with lesser things when just beyond our ken is the all-satisfying greatness and goodness of our God.

Parents, listen to how the NLT puts this and ask yourself two questions: do my sons or daughters or their friends sound like this?

¹ You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times.² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred.³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good.⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. (NLT)

Its Diagnosis – Great sinfulness clothed in religiosity

All the people described in verses 2-4 will have *an outward form of godliness without its inward reality*. The idea here may mean they have the contours of their theology correct, but they have rejected its spiritual power. So they have correct orthodoxy without genuine Biblical truth inwardly. In the context, it seems more correct that these people will have the outward shape of religion and Christianity, but have denied the power that makes genuine godliness possible. Having done so, they can have the inward root of self-love and its fruit.

J.C. Ryle, a great evangelical leader in England over a century ago said about this text and his own day;

Look in another direction at those hundreds of people whose whole religion seems to consist in talk and high profession. They know the theory of the gospel intellectually and profess to delight in evangelical doctrine. They can say much about the “soundness” of their own views, and the “darkness” of all who disagree with them, but they

never get any further! When you examine their inner lives, you find that they know nothing of practical godliness. They are neither truthful, nor charitable, nor humble, nor honest, nor kind-tempered, nor gentle, nor unselfish, nor honorable. What shall we say of these people? ...Their religion is an empty *form*.⁸ (italics added)⁶

Response: The Command that Prevents It (v.5b)

So, how are we to respond to this? The text says. "Avoid such people."

VERB – Avoid. This word means and is translated, "to shun, to turn away from, to have nothing to do with." We must turn ourselves away from *OBJECT* – people like this. Identify them so as to not be influenced by them. The word is in the middle voice and is an imperative. This indicates that we ourselves have to take the necessary steps to distance ourselves from people who appear religious but are manifesting the fruits of self-love.

In our day of political correctness, softness and tolerance, this sounds terribly harsh. I mean, aren't they just misguided souls? Aren't they just people who have not yet gotten control of themselves? Yet, here it is. To Timothy, a young elder and servant in the ministry – avoid people who look religious and live wickedly. Now, is this command for Timothy alone? Do we look at this and say at best it is only for the elders? But it is OK for the rest of the church. You as parents are fine having people like this in your homes, around your families, influencing your children. Certainly not.

Reason: The Characteristics that Identify It (v.6-8)

⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.

THEY PREY ON THE SPIRITUALLY VULNERABLE. Among these religious people are those who take advantage of women, particularly those whose sin makes them susceptible to error. The language here conveys men creeping in to spiritually capture these women with beguiling words.

THEY LEARN BUT ARE NOT ABLE KNOW THE TRUTH. These people are involved in studying and gaining more Bible data. They are constantly seeking the latest or newest ideas. They are quick to embrace whatever is the current theological fad. But their learning has not brought them to know the truth. Great learning does not guarantee a true knowledge. This is a difficulty we need to be aware of in our homes and our education: our children are ever learning what the Bible says, but not coming to know the truth.

THEY OPPOSE TRUTH BY OPPOSING GOD'S MEN. The reference here is to the two magicians who opposed Moses at Pharaoh's court. John Gill traces the writers of antiquity that Paul could have learned these men's names from. The point here is not to major on who they were, but on what they did. The false teachers and self-loving religious people of Ephesus were opposing the men of God and the truth of God just like the magicians who opposed Moses. Exodus 7 and 8 relate how Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They duplicated the authenticating miracles

of Moses. So there are people who are opposing truth by opposing God's men when they undermine the authority of the Word of God.

THEY HAVE DEPRAVED MINDS. God has given them over so that their thinking is irreversibly dominated by evil (Romans 1:28-32). Thus their self-loving hearts can sin with little restraint except that imposed by the need to appear religious.

THEY ARE REJECTED AS COUNTERFEIT. Their faith is tested for genuineness and they have failed. They are exposed as counterfeit Christians.

Results: The Consequences that Follow It (v.9)

⁹ But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

God intervenes in *THE RESTRAINT OF THEIR FORWARD MOVEMENT*. He prevents their strategies from succeeding over the long term. Their progress may appear to be present victories. But in the end, the eschatological realities will display the futility of opposing God.

God also intervenes in *THE EXPOSURE OF THEIR FOLLY*. Jannes and Jambres were unable to bring lice out of dust. They could not create life. So their failure became obvious. So too these false Christians. Even in their display of power and signs, there is no ability to bring life out of death, eternal life out of spiritual darkness.

So this is the situation Timothy found himself in at Ephesus. And it is often the situation Christians find themselves in now. It is in this environment that Paul encourages and exhorts us to faithfulness. What Timothy hears here in regards to himself he will teach and exhort to believing families in the church.

The Call for Faithfulness by God's People (v.10-15)

If this is our situation, how then ought we to respond?

¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Example: Pattern to Follow (v.10-11)

In Paul and all around us in history and life, God has given us men and women whose lives have modeled for us courage, strength and faithfulness in hardship and suffering in the midst of counterfeit Christians.

We are to follow the model *IN ITS SHAPING* – Paul lived a life and ministry by design and purpose. He left a superb example of a life very different from the self-loving counterfeits spoken of earlier. In all these areas he was fully authentic. His teaching was true, backed up by a life of passionate godliness and purity. He had a purpose statement that aimed his life at the glory of God. His faith in the midst of amazing difficulty brought him grace for patient endurance.

We are to follow the model *IN ITS SUFFERING* – Paul had a long history of persecution and pain. Some of it Timothy had shared in. Some of the kind of persecution and pain he suffered in these cities he lists may be what awaits Timothy at Ephe-

sus. And these same sufferings may await us if we surrender to the pattern of courage and faithfulness Paul left us.

We are to follow the model *IN ITS STEADFASTNESS* – Here is the outcome of faith's perseverance. Here is an example of enduring while being delivered. Out of all them God delivered. Out of the last of them God delivered through death. This language reflects Psalms 33:20. Paul's own life is dependent on and interpreted by the Scriptures.

Expectation: Persecutions to Share (v.12-13)

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

The persecution we expect is *ROOTED IN DESIRING GODLINESS*. A Christ centered hunger for holiness will cause our lives to be different. Sometimes that may bring acceptance and even admiration. But often it calls forth opposition. So that hungering for holiness *RESULTS IN SUFFERING PERSECUTION*. We are all assured of sharing in opposition. It is our common lot.

Notice *ITS DOWNWARD SPIRAL*. As the times and ages roll along, even the church comes under an increasing domination by sin, by evil men and imposters. Yes, God in His mercy has given us seasons of grace. But I am convinced that most of us are seeing a kind of apostasy today unparalleled since the cross. Look further at *ITS DECEPTIVE CYCLE*. The downward spiral of evil men becoming worse is a self-feeding cycle of deception. They are being deceived and then in turn deceive others, only in their turn to be deceived further.

So, what to do? What is Timothy to do? What are we to do as elders here? What are you to do in your home? Is this situation so desperate that we have no remedy?

Exhortation: Precept to Obey (v.14-15)

The call for faithfulness is a call to continue what he has already done.

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

It is the *REQUIREMENT IN THE PRESENT SITUATION* - Continue in what you have learned and been convinced of. Sometimes what is needed are new efforts that begin faithfulness. But mostly what is need is a return and a continuing that is it self faithfulness to the truth.

It argues with *REASONS FROM THE PERSONAL HISTORY* - Confidence in your teachers. Timothy has a confidence in what he has learned because he knows the character and qualities of those who taught him.

There is a wonderful commendation here which is the reason I took up this text today. Timothy has been taught the scriptures in his home. He had learned the truth from godly people. Paul had confidence that what his mother and grandmother had taught him was something that *he could continue to be steadfast in*. He had been taught the Old Testament in a way that laid a permanent foundation for life and ministry. Why is that so?

It is *ROOTED IN THE SCRIPTURE'S POWER* - Commitment to the Word's ability to impart wisdom, even saving wisdom. How important it is that we believe and stand strong and true to the Word. Timothy was taught the Scriptures in such a way that they would impart a New Covenant salvation. They did not just give more and more information so that Timothy was ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. The scriptures at the center of Timothy's upbringing gave him wisdom.

RESULTING IN A CHRIST-CENTERED SALVATION - Received through faith in Jesus Christ. The salvation you receive comes through faith. Not just faith as faith in faith, an amorphous religious feeling. Rather a genuine, authentic trust in Jesus that rests in Him alone for all your good and for all His glory.

Now, let's pause for a moment and reflect on this young man and the upbringing that he had. Because Paul highlights how the Scriptures were taught and learned in his home, we should reflect on this for the sake of our own homes, families and children.

We want to be people who teach and live the bible in our homes. We want our children to have confidence in what they are taught because they see our character and our conduct.

We want to be people whose teaching imparts Christ-centered salvation wisdom. In contrast to the dead, lifeless teaching of the imposters, we should pray and teach so that God will be pleased to grant life-giving grace to our families/

We want to be people whose teaching lays a foundation upon which our families and our children can build their lives and ministry. Our children should not have a great deal to un-learn. They will be given a foundation upon which to make great strides in our learning and living the Scriptures.

The Resource Sufficient for the Church

(v.16-17)

We as a church stand for the sufficiency of the Scripture. But enough of you are new here and I want to drive this truth powerfully home to your hearts. In dangerous and difficult days when we are surrounded by counterfeit Christians, false teachers and desperately need to stand, our sufficient resource is the Scripture. It is all we need for life and godliness. It is what we need for our church and our homes. We have seen what it did do for Timothy as he was reared under its instruction. So, why are we to pay attention to it in the midst of these great dangers?

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Principle: The Source of God's Word

The Scriptures are sufficient by virtue of the important *Doctrine of Inspiration*. That doctrine rests in two words. First, *ALL SCRIPTURE*. This is including the Old and New Testaments. What we have here is all the Word of God and all that God intends us to have. Second, it is *GOD BREATHED*. It is given by the will of God as

the very word of God. So it is without error, cannot fail and absolutely authoritative. In the Word and Spirit together is God's voice.

Profit: The Suitability of God's Word

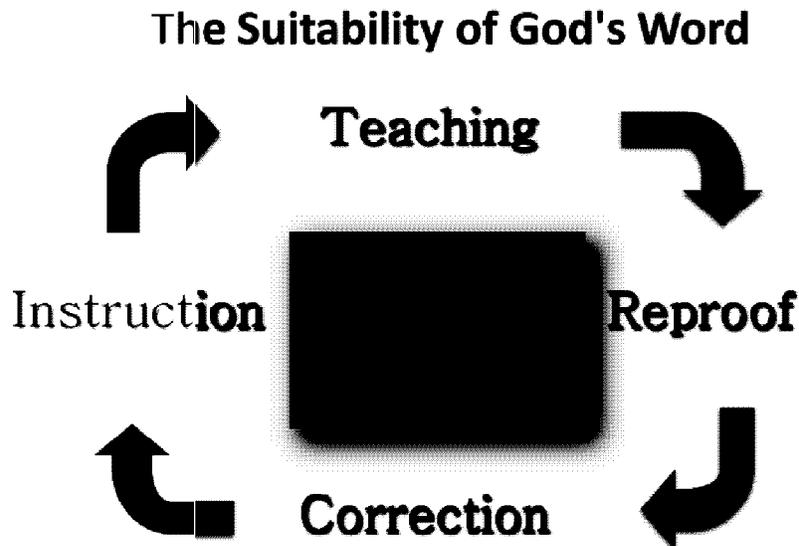
The Word of God is useful for...

TEACHING - The Scriptures are useful and profitable for doctrine and teaching. It tells us what we must know and believe.

REPROOF - The Scriptures are useful and profitable for reproof and confrontation. It shows us when we are wrong. It is the primary tool of our admonition and counsel.

CORRECTION - The Scriptures are useful and profitable for correcting what is wrong. It tells us how to recover from our sin and failures. It shows us how to rebuild and renew our lives.

INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS - The Scriptures are useful and profitable for "child training in righteous living". It is our pedagogue. It stands both at the end of the cycle and at the head of moving forward. As is often heard in NANC circles, the Scriptures are useful *to tell us what is right; show us when we are not right; tell us how to get right and finally what we must do to stay right.* (R. Patton)



Purpose: The Sufficiency of God's Word

Two purposes are given here in relation to Timothy. While he is the “man of God” in this text, it will do this for any person seeking to be pleasing to God in their life and ministry. If used in all of these areas, instruction, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, then:

To Complete Us

The man of God will be competent, complete or perfected. The Scriptures, when used this way, will grow a person in competency. The competent Christian will use the Scriptures this way. There is an interacting cycle that is at work here. But at the center of that cycle is the Word of God. Teaching, rebuking, correcting and instructing without the Word of God is a serious incompetency and deficiency. The elder/pastor, the servant of God in the church, the educator at home or school, the parent, the mentor, the counselor who is not using the Scripture in all of this simply is incompetent. They are incomplete. They are not perfected.

But this is a fatal flaw only if you will not begin to subject yourself to this maturing, perfecting, enabling process. It is not the Scriptures alone, but a life-long engagement with God’s people with the Scriptures that brings this kind of competency. You must enter into the cycle of teaching, rebuke, correction and instruction if you are to become competent in the Word. You will need this for the sake of your family, you children, your life, your service in the Kingdom.

To Equip Us

The man of God will be equipped, completely furnished with all he needs.. We understand what it means to be equipped. It means to have all the tools, resources and skills necessary for what we are being set to do. So the Word of God finishes and fully equips the man of God *for every good work*.

Paul has a deep confidence that the upbringing Timothy had in the Word has enabled and equipped him for the ministry he is engaged in. But he is also reminding Timothy, and through him each of us, how important it is to stay engaged. If you find yourself inadequately equipped for what you are given by God to do, then you must begin and you must continue to stay in the process whereby the Word’s great purposes are fulfilled.

One final observation. The power, profit and purpose highlighted here is in our engagement with and use of the Scriptures themselves. Do not hear me to be devaluing helpful books, commentaries, etc. These are part of the process. But I want to simply challenge you to reflect on how much you read the Bible itself. A number of years ago I became convinced over my own life that I was too much engaged with books about the Bible and too little engaged with the Bible itself. By God’s grace, I have reversed that. I try to spend the bulk of my time reading, meditating, reflecting on, outlining, diagramming and using the Word of God. I give this challenge to our leadership – are you as well read in the Bible as you are in your books? It is *the God-breathed Scriptures* which will profit us in their use to mature us and to equip us.

Reflect and Respond

Give heed to the danger all around us

Arising from the root of self-love

Arising from the false teachers

Have grace to be faithful in our world

Look to godly patterns in the Bible and in history

Endure the hardship and expect the suffering that comes with faithfulness

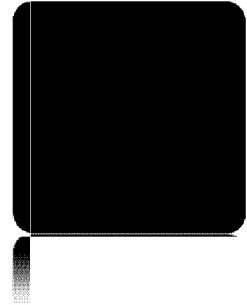
Be committed to what you have learned knowing from whom you have learned it

But think about a compass for a moment:

Points to magnetic north so that we can know the direction we are going or the direction we ought to go...

But what if there is a strong magnet in our pocket?

This is the function of the Scripture; to point us to our true north, God. This way we can know which way we are going and which way we ought to go. Unfortunately for many, as we have seen in this text, sin is a strong magnet pointing inward and selfward. Thus we don't know where we are going and aren't going the right way.



Trust the all-sufficient Scriptures

Use them in every facet of life and ministry

Expect to be thoroughly equipped by them

Do you believe in an obeying way that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God? Do you believe in an obeying way that Word of God is your food, your water, your life?

May God grant us grace to make the Scriptures central to our lives.

Notes

- ⁶ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus : To Guard the Deposit.*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 224.