



# Teaching God's Word to Train Disciples

## *Fellowship* BIBLE CHURCH

Audio of Pastor Don Griffin's sermons is available at  
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It is hard to turn on the news these days without hearing something about the president's approval ratings. We are able to see what percentage of Americans approve of how the president is handling the economy or the war in Iraq or something else. Our world is filled with ratings, reviews and inspections. When I was in Bible college, I lived for a while in the dormitory, and we were required to keep our rooms clean. The beds must be made up. All books had to be put in their place. Not only was

there to be nothing on the floor—there was to be nothing in the trash can. Room checkers would come by every day to inspect your room, and if those things were not done according to the

truth.” Doing your best implies being at the top of your game. It says that I am giving it all, that I am disciplined and committed to this thing. Receiving God's approval for our lives doesn't just accidentally happen. We must commit ourselves to doing our best to please Him.

*Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:9, “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.”*

How, then, do we please God? What are some of the things we must do to gain his approval?

### 1. WE MUST KNOW THE SCRIPTURES

## The Last Words of the Apostle Paul

### 2 Timothy

### Part 4: God's Approval

school's standards, you got a slip of paper showing you had failed the inspection.

Most of us are acquainted with some kind of approval rating in our lives. You might periodically go through some kind of performance review on your job. When our children are young, we inspect their rooms to see if they are keeping them clean. The problem is that their idea of what clean is and our idea of clean are sometimes 2 different things.

Do you know that God inspects our lives? He does. In fact, sometimes He brings us through times of testing for the purpose of seeing if we will be faithful to him during that test. In his last words before execution, Paul said to Timothy,” in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of

*2 Timothy 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

Your success in life and our success as a nation depends on our knowledge of and our obedience to the Bible.

Andrew Jackson said, “That book, sir, [the Bible] is the rock on which our republic rests.”

George Washington put it this way: “It is impossible to righteously govern the world without God and the Bible....”

Charles Dickens stated, “The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world.”

Horace Greeley asserted, “It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible-reading people.”

Finally President Woodrow Wilson urged, “I ask every man and woman in this audience that from this day on we realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this Book [the Bible].”

The bible is foundational and fundamental to the Christian life. If you remove the bible, you have just taken away Christianity. No Christian will ever be a strong believer who does not emphasize the importance of scripture in his life. Strong Christians and churches are built on the truth that is found in the scripture.

## A) We must understand what the Scripture is

What is the scripture? What is this book that we carry around with us to bible studies and to church?

*2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

### 1) It is Divinely inspired

What do we mean when we say we believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible? We believe that what the writers of Scripture wrote came from God. The writers of the Scripture claim God was speaking through them. Sentences like, "The word of the Lord came;" "the Lord spoke;" "God said;" and "the Lord commanded" are used in the Scriptures no less than three thousand times.

*2 Samuel 23:2, "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue."*

When Hosea, David or Paul wrote, they wrote using their minds and their own thoughts. But God was working in them and through them so that what they wrote was exactly what he wanted written.

### 2) It is inerrant

It has no mistakes.

### 3) It is verbally inspired

The term verbal has to do with words that you speak. Verbal inspiration means that the very words that the authors of the Bible used, not just the concepts were

inspired. Verbal inspiration means word-for-word inspiration.

### 4) It is totally inspired

The word "plenary" means extending to all the parts.

In other words, the Book Of Leviticus was just as much inspired as John 3:16. We say the same thing for II Kings, for Ezra and Zechariah. God inspired every part of scripture. We will never be effective in God's work unless we understand that the holy bible is in fact his word and that in that word there is power.

*Hebrews 4:12, "For 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."*

The scripture is able to penetrate the deepest parts of our being. It brings conviction to our hearts and shows us the way to go.

## 2. WE MUST UNDERSTAND WHAT THE SCRIPTURE SAYS

*2 Timothy 2:15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."*

The words, "correctly handles," literally means to "cut it straight." Paul was a tentmaker, and he knew how to cut straight through camel hair cloth." If you didn't cut the line straight, the tent wouldn't work right. So it is when we read the Bible. We must make sure that we are cutting it straight when we interpret it. If you don't understand what the bible teaches, it doesn't matter if you have one in every room because it is not going to do you any good. The value that comes from having a bible is that you understand its message and apply it to your life.

George Barna says the Christian church in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy." Through his studies, Barna found out that only one-third of those interviewed knew the order of Abraham, the Old Testament prophets, the death of

Christ.

One-third did not know Matthew was an apostle. When asked if they could quote a Bible verse the most common thing quoted was “God helps those who help themselves” which is not in the Bible at all.

Only two of 10 people participating in a recent Gallup survey knew who preached the Sermon on the Mount.

There is no way that we can bring the power of the word of God into people’s lives if we don’t understand what it is saying. How about your knowledge of the bible? Do you know more scripture today than you did one year ago?

### 3. WE MUST NOT GET HUNG UP ON DISPUTABLE ISSUES

*2 Timothy 2:14-18, “Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid Godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more un-Godly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene.”*

When Paul told Timothy to warn people about quarreling about the words, he was referring to something that has continued to this very day. To this very day, people take minor issues and make them into major issues. Instead of working together in harmony, they quarrel over these minor issues that should be left up to the individual believer. For example, when will Christ return? Will he return before the tribulation? Will he return during the tribulation, or will he return after the tribulation? Are we to worship God with our eyes open or with our eyes closed? Should we have our heads bowed, or should we be looking up? Should we stand with hands up raised, or should we kneel? Should we sing only hymns, or should we sing contemporary Christian music? Should we put our children in public school, private school or should we home school? The bible tells us to make up our own minds and do what God is leading us to do and allow others to do the same.

If the Christians of our country would unite on the major issues and move forward as a mighty army to do God’s work, we would be living in a much different society. All of the minor issues that divide us are only decoys to keep us out of the real battle.

### 4. WE MUST BE CONFIDENT IN GOD’S ABILITY

We live in days of enormous moral and spiritual confusion. Moral standards which have always been beyond question have been thrown in the trash can. On top of that, we have unprecedented problems in our nation. It would be easy to be afraid and discouraged. But in the very worst of times, we can say with

*2 Timothy 2:19 “Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his....’”*

This verse tells us that the church is built on God’s foundation, and it will not fail. In addition to that, the lord knows his own. It’s not like we’re just a bunch of people all grouped together. He knows you individually, and he knows all of your individual problems. So whatever the problem may be, we always can say, “nevertheless.

Do false teachers seem to abound? The Lord says, “Nevertheless.”

Are dangerous times upon us? The Lord says, “Nevertheless.”

Do we see some falling away from the faith? The Lord says, “Nevertheless.”

Could persecution come to us? The Lord says, “Nevertheless.”

Do evildoers rise to power? The Lord says, “Nevertheless.”

God is still in control, and the church will not fail because it rests on the eternal promises of God. We don’t have to give in to despair because God is still on the throne, and He does not forget his children.

## 5. WE MUST LIVE THE SCRIPTURE

I asked you the question, “Do you know more Scripture than you did one year ago.” Another question that is equally important is, “if you do know more than you did a year ago, have you made that new scripture knowledge a part of your lifestyle so that you’re being changed by it?” Now that you know the scripture, what are you willing to do with it? Paul helps us to answer that question by giving us an example of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer.

### a) To live out the scripture, you must be like a soldier

*2 Timothy 2:3, “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.”*

Soldiers are disciplined people whose lives depend upon their doing their very best, and with their effort there comes “hardship.” There may be times when they are physically fatigued and yet must keep on going. They need rest, water and food, but they keep pressing ahead. They may be in freezing cold weather or in the scorching desert, but they keep moving. I think about U.S. Air Force Captain Scott O’Grady, who’s F-16 fighter jet was shot down in Bosnia a few years ago. Captain O’Grady evaded Bosnian Serb soldiers for six days until his rescue by a Marine Corps search and rescue team. During that time he lived by eating bugs and licking the dew from plants. Being a soldier is demanding. The soldier must be willing to die any day in order to win the battle for his country. The same kind of dedication is required for soldiers in the army of the Lord.

*Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

In those days, the cross and something far different than it is today. Today we see crosses on churches. We even have jewelry, like necklaces, made in the form of crosses. In the lord’s time, the cross was not a piece of jewelry. It was an instrument of execution. For someone to take up his cross, meant he was on his way to be crucified. Jesus is telling us that each day we live, we need to live crucified lives so that it is not us but Christ living through us.

A.W. Tozer says that people who are crucified with Christ have three distinct marks:

1. They are facing only one direction,
2. They can never turn back, and
3. They no longer have plans of their own.

### b) To live out the scripture you must be like an athlete

*2 Timothy 2:5, “Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.”*

Doing your best as an athlete requires a lot of self discipline. It is typical for the athlete to be up earlier than others so that he can train and for him to stay later than the others so that he can do more training.

There was an article in Scientific American that goes in depth about the kinds of training Olympic athletes go through. According to this article, 1,000 hours of intense training will only achieve an improvement of a single percentage point in an athlete’s performance.

There is a lot of hard work in being an athlete, and it is all his choice. Athletes are self motivated. In the same way, you must be self motivated in your Christian life. If you have to have someone motivating you all of the time to do what you need to do, you’ll never be a successful disciple of Jesus Christ.

### c) To live out the scripture, you must be like a farmer

*2 Timothy 2:6, “The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.”*

One of the most difficult things for a truly dedicated Christian is having to wait on the lord. The farmer is an example of patience.

*James 5:7, “Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.”*

When an athlete competes, he knows pretty soon whether he has won or lost. When a soldier when he goes into battle, he soon knows whether his army has been defeated or has been victorious. It’s not like that with the farmer. The farmer must wait months. Even after the crops are growing, anything can hap-

pen to destroy them and take away his profit. The farmer must have patience to wait. And so it is with us. We must often wait on God's timing. Many times the thing that we are praying for and working for does not happen as quickly as we thought they would. That's because God has more in mind than we do. We are looking for the answer to our prayer and hard work. God is not only wanting to work through us. God is wanting to work in us, and the waiting we go through is a part of the process. It is during those long days and weeks that we are tempted to doubt the Lord and give up that He stretches our faith and develops Christ-like qualities in our lives. Many times we would be well satisfied with the one or two things we are praying for, but God wants much more. He is developing in us the qualities that will enable us to do more for Him in the future. So, we wait.

*Galatians 6:9, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

### **1. NEVER NEGLECT GOD'S WORD**

Reading and meditating on the word each day is like having a spiritual blood transfusion that is badly needed.

### **2. LIVE FOR AN AUDIENCE OF ONE**

People live their lives trying to please other people. Some do what they do in order to fit in with a certain group of people. Others live to please employers. The truth is there is only one Person that you should ultimately live to please, and that is the One who has the power to bless or to bring judgment.

### **3. CONDUCT DAILY AUDITS**

Changes in life often come in small increments that are barely noticeable unless you purposely watch for them. One of the best things you can do is to moni-

tor your life throughout every day. Be conscious of how you're doing. Are your attitudes and actions pleasing to God? If they are, praise God for his grace. If they're not, determine by God's help to do better.