

Grow Up: Scripture Equips us to Serve

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2 Timothy 3:10-17

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One of the biggest disappointments for Christians in the western world is the lack of mission and godly ambition. We naturally gravitate toward this secular worldview: “*What’s in it for me? What do I get out of it?*” This is how infants and children think. No wonder Paul said, “*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.*” (1 Corinthians 13:11)

Salvation is both personal and missional. Salvation is from the Lord, but we have to receive it. Paul talks about salvation in personal terms in Ephesians 2:1-9, but he emphasizes that our salvation must result in “good works.” We must sequence this properly. We do not work for our salvation, but we do work it out. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. He expects all His disciples to do ministry. His followers are on mission. Our gifts and blessings are not merely for us—we are sent to others.

We do not have to understand all scripture before we start applying it. Be proactive. Do what you can do with what you have.

APPLICATION: How are you serving the Lord? Where in your church are you serving? How are you serving others? What do you think the Lord is calling you to do? What is keeping you from getting started? Are you using your “talents” (Matthew 25:14-30) in a God-pleasing way?

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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.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.¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it¹⁵ 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.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.

Review: **All scripture** (OT) **is breathed out by God** (theopneustos) and **profitable** for: **teaching**, Everything we’ve learned, someone has taught us **reproof, correction**, (part of teaching = “No, do it this way instead of that”) In her book, “being wrong,” Kathryn Schulz describes a psychologist who remembered where he was as a kid when Pearl Harbor was bombed: he was listening to a baseball game on the radio. For years, he shared his memory with others. However, in the 1960s it dawned on him – Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7. Major league baseball is not played in December. He was convinced he knew something but he had been wrong. As a psychologist, he asked some

students to write down where they were when the Challenger Space shuttle exploded. Ten years later, he asked them the same question. The results showed their memories were completely different than they were a decade before. Usually, we love to correct others but hate being corrected ourselves. The truth is WE are often WRONG.

training in righteousness (“training” seems like a military term)

that we may be (this points to the bottom line) Can have all info in world, but may not apply it. Knowledge/practice R 2 different things.

competent To be competent means we are proficient. We’re good at it. We want competent doctors, lawyers, and pilots. An incompetent one can make a mess out of things. **2**

Corinthians 3:4-6 *Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant.* We need competent Christians.

equipped (the only other time “equipped” is found in the New Testament) Ephesians 4:15-16 *Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* The human body is equipped for life. Paul compares the human body to the body of Christ – the church.

for every good work. This is **the bottom line. Our ultimate purpose.** Doctors, lawyers, and pilots better need to be equipped – to have the right equipment and the right knowledge. But if a doctor, lawyer, or pilot says, “I’ve got my license to practice” but doesn’t have clients or patients and actually practice has a useless license/equipment.

Good Work (the term is found only once in the Old Testament – in discussing the “good work” of building the wall)

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* Begin and end with God’s grace.

Titus 3:1-3 *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*

“Good Works” (the term is not found in the Old Testament at all)

Matthew 5:16 *Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

Acts 9:36 *Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.* Someone sent this note to me this week about my mom. (Yvonne Partney) Mom loved the Lord and loved people. It’s why she did what she did.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* One of our “shrunk stories” is that we save ourselves. We are saved exclusively by faith in Jesus Christ. He is our savior – not us. We trust in Him. However, from that, we engage in Helping Others Follow Jesus. How do we do that? Good works.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

Titus 2:7 *Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works*

Titus 3:8 *I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Our battle is we are self-absorbed. A reading this week was about James and John’s mother who asked Jesus if her sons could sit at Jesus’ right/left hand. When the other disciples learned of it, they were indignant. His punch line (maybe He wanted to punch them) was: *the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (Matthew 20:28) God’s Word inspires us not be self-absorbed but to be aware of the needs of others.

A businessman known for his ruthlessness, arrogance and religiosity once told Mark Twain he intended to visit the Holy Land before he died, in order to climb Mt. Sinai and read the 10 C’s aloud. MT said, ***“I have a better idea. Why don’t you stay here in Boston and keep them.”*** We often prefer to talk about what we do not know rather than actually do things we know we should do.

We must learn to see things differently. Macular degeneration is a disease that greatly reduces a person’s ability to see. A surgical procedure was developed in NYC and improved in Tel Aviv that can help a person struggling with this problem regain a measure of sight. The procedure only takes a couple of hours, but the patient must learn an entirely new way of seeing. They must look though the tiny, implanted telescope with one eye while looking at the same time to scan the periphery with the other. One eye looks straight ahead magnifying things up to three times their usual size, while the other searches sideways. The brain must learn to process two entirely different sets of visual information into a complete picture. It may take months or years for a patient to retrain their vision, but the effort is certainly worth it.

As 1 Corinthians 13 says, *“When I was a child, I thought like a child. When I grew up, I gave up childish ways.”* We can all learn new ways to see life.

In his book, *“The Magnificent Story,”* Jim Smith tells how he read bedtime stories to his little daughter, Hope. He read the hits like *“Goodnight Moon”* and *“Winnie the Pooh.”* One night, he didn’t have time to read a story, but Hope insisted on one. Jim made up this one. *“Once upon a time there was a giant who lived all alone in a beanstalk in the sky.”* He mentioned the giant had a goose that laid golden eggs. Then Jim said, *“Then one day a little girl named Hope...”* Hope gasped. She was thrilled to be in the story. He finished the jack in the beanstalk story but his quick bedtime fix backfired. Hope did not fall asleep. She was energized. She wanted him to tell the story again. When Hope was a teenager, she told her dad that the stories he made up were her favorites because she was in the story.

It grabs our interest when we are part of the story. Finding stories that are good, beautiful, and true can bring us to life. As God breathed life into us to make us human beings and God breathed life into His Word to help us follow Jesus, so we are to breathe the life of God into others through encouragement, love, and good works.