

How to Align Our Life

2 Timothy 3:1-4, 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Slide 1

As we continue in our series, I'm reminded of a particular type of scenario found in many movies. It's where there's been a catastrophe and a group of people must find their way to safety.

In this group will be an individual who tends to dominate and insists they must follow a particular path, while another individual, perhaps a local or a quiet scientist, says the only way to safety is to go by a more dangerous route.

The majority choose to follow the domineering authority but a small few believe that the local is telling the truth and the more dangerous route is the direction they must go.

What follows is the tragic fate of the larger group, while the smaller group faces hardships but finally reaches safety.

This is similar to what Paul is writing to Timothy about and for all of us to hear today. Paul sees how lost and disoriented the world is.

2 Timothy 3:1-4, *"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."*

In the last days, between God's revealing His power to defeat death and providing a means for His love to win, this is what will flow from our human hearts apart from God.

Slide 2

2 Timothy 3:10-13, *“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”*

He begins, *“You, however, know.”* *“You,”* Paul is addressing Timothy personally. In other words, a choice must be made.

He’s telling Timothy, you know what’s true and good. So, choose well. Paul says, *“You know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings.”*

Paul instructs Timothy, and us, that we must follow those we know who reflect what God has said is true and good, not corrupted and vain.

People are influenced by the masses, but you, Timothy, know better. You know what’s right.

Paul and Timothy had met when Paul was on his second missionary journey. Later, Timothy became his successor in leading the church in Ephesus and joined him on his travels.

Paul’s reminding Timothy about his teaching, his way of life, his purpose, his faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings. Paul’s wants Timothy to continue to pass these on.

He reminds Timothy that this was how he lived, how he actually made decisions and related to people. Paul’s manner of living was so unlike the false teachers he warned Timothy about.

Paul didn't have a love of self or a love of money, as many of the false teachers had.

Instead, he showed he would live in whatever circumstances he faced. Paul's life spoke clearly of a man with one purpose: To make Christ known.

He was able to give himself to a greater purpose because he lived rooted in the eternal reality of things greater than this world held.

Paul didn't seek trouble. He wasn't trying to test God, but he would trust God when risk required it. Paul had compassion and grace and was not quick to be triggered by selfish anger.

Think about it, nowhere is our patience tested more than when we are wronged and Paul was wronged on many occasions.

Even though Paul was the bearer of Good News he was ridiculed, beaten, persecuted and now once again imprisoned, yet he endured with patience and was driven by love not hate.

Now, Timothy didn't just know about Paul, he knew Paul. We live in an age of pseudo relationships.

Mass media and social media have become a means of pseudo connections, of being influenced by those we don't actually know.

I say a "means" because the medium is not the problem; it can serve a purpose but sometimes it is easy to allow it to become more than it is.

Compare what Paul describes to the massive shift in the past 10 years in which we follow those we don't really know and who don't know us.

I was reading about Milla Sofia, a 19-year-old social media influencer from Finland who had gained over 130,000 followers on TikTok because people valued her travels and connections to various celebrities.

The twist is that she doesn't actually exist. She's a virtual influencer and fashion model generated by artificial intelligence.

You can find inspiration from a voice on the internet but don't lose sight of the value of knowing an actual life and being known by them.

I have several people who've really shaped my life, and many people within this church have sharpened my life as well because of what I have experienced in their life.

Paul says align with the life you know, even if they are imperfect, they are real. Our culture is shifting to the perfect that's not real.

We should get to know some people and get known by some people in whom we see Christ. Only in the context of a local community can we learn from each other through life-to-life experience.

What's true and good isn't found by looking only at experts or the perfect but by those who have grown through experience, sharing what they know. Even a beggar who has found some food has something to offer another, if the food is real.

It's important to recognize that this requires some discernment. Who do we follow? What do we look for?

Today we've become so used to having apps that help us drive to unfamiliar places, telling us exactly where and when to turn. Now, this helps with basic driving, but there's a problem. Our innate sense of direction has declined.

Take a step back, if we are in the midst of a wild terrain without any sense of direction, what do we need to guide us? We need a compass that shows us true north.

In navigating life, we've lost a sense of true north especially when we rely on whatever the current culture decides.

So, remember: Follow those you know who reflect what God has said is true and good.

Slide 3

2 Timothy 3:14-17, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

This is a foundational declaration regarding the Scriptures. The Scriptures bear God's authority. They are the source from which we should be guided.

As a community we embrace that authority. I believe that this verse speaks to the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, but I also believe that it speaks more dynamically than it is often used.

Yet it's important that we don't flatten this verse and flatten the process by which it is made.

In other words, don't let it read: *"All Scripture was dictated directly from God to provide a Book that provides a source of academic knowledge in which such knowledge provides righteousness in itself."*

When we flatten what Paul says in this way it allows a subtle but significant loss to what's said. When we do that, we begin to relate to the Bible as something God left for us as a substitute for Himself, as God becoming bound in language.

God, as the infinite creator of all, is able to communicate to finite and flawed human life through the limits of human culture, understanding, and language that which He deems essential for the redemption and restoration of all things.

The fundamental nature of what it means to “believe” or trust in the Bible, is to believe and trust in God’s ability to accommodate human understanding.

I believe in God and the power of God to communicate through the human mind and human language, and not only has He done so, He still chooses to do so. I’m not afraid to let God speak through the Scriptures.

The mind and heart of God speaks through these living testimonies, some historic, some poetic, some prophetic, and some apostolic. As Paul said, “*All Scripture is God-breathed.*”

What Paul’s saying is that the Scriptures bear what we need. What’s that? The Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Bible may share some things in common with other so called “holy scriptures” but step back and they’re just a revelation of something very different. They speak not of moral codes or spiritual practices, but of being lost and the potential to be saved.

The Scriptures are “*able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*” Rely on the Scriptures to lead you to the way of salvation.

Paul then expands on the purpose of the Scriptures, saying they're *"useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

He's describing how the Scriptures have the power to align our lives. The word used for *"correcting"* shares the same Greek root of "orthosis" which shows up in our English words orthopedic and orthodontist. These doctors straighten and heal.

The Word of God is useful for realigning our lives to the way they were meant to be and the ultimate goal of being *"thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

This Greek phrase *"thoroughly equipped"* is rich in meaning. It's basic meaning is that of becoming more complete in the nature we were created to have.

Therefore, being complete we're able to live the way we were meant to live and in this way we're equipped for every good work.

Slide 4

Conclusion

Eugene Peterson, in *The Message* paraphrased 2 Timothy 3:17 as saying, *"Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us."*

In church we often use the term "Bible Study." But we do well to realize that we are part of a modern western culture which has created a type of academic knowledge that can be entirely about information in itself.

In Jewish culture it was a sacred gift, the only thing that will last. Psalm 119:89, *"Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens."*

You can't say that of anything else that you can put in your hand. Of all things on earth, God's Word will last forever. In Jewish culture it's what saves from being fools.

As David said in, Psalm 19:7, *"The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."*

Nothing else on earth is able to give you the wisdom that the Word of God can do. It's able to change the soul. Psalm 19:7, *"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul."*

Nothing else on earth is able to change and heal a soul like the Word of God. It was all about the formation of life. To follow a rabbi was to follow how they lived out the knowledge of God.

"Don't be mere hearers of the Word but doers." There's no exam, no grading apart from the life you developed. This is why you should desire and choose to actually do good works.

So, we should ask ourselves, *"Am I allowing the Scriptures to be God's Word to form me to rebuke me and restore me?"* Am I aligning my life by what God is saying?

The point that Paul is making is that he wants Timothy to know that in a world that's disoriented, not only can we align our life but that we have what it takes.

Regardless if the world is in a disoriented, even devolving state, there is a true north and you can follow it. You have what it takes!