

SERMON – Sunday, October 16, 2022

From Pastor Sue Nevile

Can you identify the product or company by its famous catchphrase? (Read each phrase and see if they can guess the product):

Just Do It (Nike)

I'm Lovin' It (McDonalds)

The Happiest Place on Earth (Disneyland)

There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's (Mastercard).

You're in good hands. (Allstate)

Snap! Crackle! Pop! (Rice Krispies)

Finger-lickin' good. (KFC)

Can you hear me now? Good. (Verizon)

That was easy! (Staples)

Betcha can't eat just one (Lays)

Gimme a Break, gimme a break, break me off a piece of that — (Kit Kat)

Now, can you identify the book of the Bible by its famous quotation? (Read each quote and see who can identify what book it is from):

For everything there is a season . . . (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth . . . (Genesis 1:1)

I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future filled with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11 NRSV)

Love is patient, love is kind (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16).

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

I can do all everything through him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

The Bible is much more than a collection of catchphrases or a book of wise sayings. Christians believe the Bible to be unique among all written works, a dynamic dialogue between its authors, editors, and readers, all of whom are guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit. We, as readers of the Bible, can be inspired as much by the Holy Spirit as by those who wrote the words we read! That's what Paul was talking about in his letter to Timothy.

Before Paul talks about scripture, he first notes the methods by which Timothy came to "learn" and "firmly believe" in it. Others mentored him and helped him grow to learn and know. Who helped you first hear Bible stories? Parents? Sunday School Teachers? Camp Counsellors? Who has helped you understand the Bible? Pastor? Confirmation teacher? Camp Counsellor? How did increasing your understanding of scripture influence what you believe?

Is the experience of hearing scripture different from reading it?

Paul says, "All scripture is inspired by God" ("God-breathed," in some translations)?

Maybe the "inspiration" or "breath" of scripture has to do with how it affects us and breathes new life into our faith. What does Paul tell

Timothy scripture is “useful” for? Teaching, rebuking, correcting, training and ultimately equipping. That is, how can it affect us. (See verses 15, 16, 17.)

Paul suggests that people might ignore “sound teaching” because their “itching ears” drive them to seek out teachings that agree with what they already believe or think. What do you think of Paul’s warning? Have you ever seen that happen? (There is amazing research out there right now about social media algorithms creating “echo chambers” – places that only show us news and stories to reinforce what we already believe or engage us with what we’re already interested in.)

Do you think you ever find yourself in an echo chamber, either on social media or in real life? What might you do to break out and engage with new or different ideas?

What might be new ways to be an “evangelist,” to share the good news of Jesus and the Bible with new people? Where do you even start with sharing your faith? Is this different with people who are not Christian or have never heard what the Christian life is all about? Have you ever gotten comfortable talking about faith with your friends outside of church? For some the same question can be asked about Your children? Your grandchildren?

Scripture is unique in that we are as inspired by the Holy Spirit in our reading as the authors were in writing. We can meditate on scripture and perhaps hear God’s word to us. This week I Invite you to choose one passage from the Bible. Spend five minutes quietly reading, re-reading, and really listening to what the passage says to you. Focus on a thought or a word. Write down any questions or ideas that come to you as you reflect on the scripture passage. And do this more than once for the same piece of scripture.

Hold on to what you were taught, not just the content but also the spirit, the mentorship, the passing on of wisdom and call to living. But also be open to spot something new or different than what you already know. Embrace the totality of the scriptures, even the parts you wrestle with, the parts that confuse you. Don't just hold on to that which agrees with your current preference and inclination. Keep reading, be challenged, be stretched, be troubled by this word. And keep asking this question: how does this text help me know Jesus better?

But this text isn't just for you and I. It is for all of us, any of us. All of us are charged with sharing our most precious relationship. All of us are called to reveal that which defines us, the one who shapes us. All of us are called to tell our story in ways that issue invitations and gather up those who have been left out. And it isn't always going to work. There aren't always going to be responses that let us know we're on the right track.

God has breathed life into all Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, the servant of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing. So be persistent. Keep reading, questioning and equipping to help yourself and others be prepared and equipped as a servants of God. Amen