

Scripture makes us wise for salvation

2 Timothy 3:10–17 • Lesson 1 in Knowing God through His Word

Estimated reading time: 13 minutes

Near the end of this letter, Paul asks Timothy to bring his cloak and scrolls, and to come before winter (2 Timothy 4:9, 13, 21). Alongside his teaching are these ordinary requests for things he needs and the company of someone he loves. Paul is in prison in Rome, and he knows that his death is approaching (1:4, 16–17; 4:6–8). Yet his concern reaches beyond his own circumstances to the work Timothy must carry on.

Where will Timothy find the courage and understanding to keep teaching when Paul can no longer stand beside him? In **2 Timothy 3:10–17**, Paul brings him back to the Scriptures he has known since childhood. Through them, God makes salvation known in Christ and prepares His people to serve Him. As we listen to this older teacher encouraging his younger co-worker, we too can consider what sustains our faith and shapes the way we teach.

God gave us Scripture to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ and equip us for good works, so we should keep learning it and live by it.

We want children to follow Paul's reasons and see why Scripture deserves their attention. Knowing Bible answers cannot earn forgiveness; God's Word directs us to Christ and teaches us how to live. Our prayer is that newcomers and experienced learners alike will listen with trust, honest questions and a willingness to respond.

Begin by reading 2 Timothy 3, then return slowly to verses 10–17. Notice what Timothy has seen, what he has learned and why he should continue. Keep your Bible open as the article follows those reasons. Supporting passages are linked where they help explain the argument.

Continue when following Christ is costly — verses 10–14

Timothy had learned in the company of someone whose life he could observe. Their shared ministry began when Paul invited him to travel from Lystra, where he was already a disciple well regarded by believers (Acts 16:1–3). Paul came to trust his tested character and sincere concern for others (Philippians 2:19–22). The affection of this letter belongs to a relationship formed through serving together.

Paul had entrusted Timothy with demanding work in Ephesus: confronting false teaching while seeking love flowing from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:3–7). People's trust in God and their life together were at stake. That concern remains urgent in this later letter. Teachers claiming that the resurrection has already happened are upsetting people's faith (2 Timothy 2:17–18). Timothy needs to discern what is true while caring for people who can be led astray.

So Paul reminds him of teaching supported by conduct: purpose, faith, patience, love and endurance. Timothy knows something of what faithfulness costs. Paul names suffering in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, and remembers the Lord's rescue. Yet he now expects to die. Rescue cannot mean that following Christ always brings escape from injury or death. In 4:16–18, Paul remembers the Lord standing with him when others abandoned him, and looks forward to being brought safely into His heavenly kingdom. God's faithfulness reaches beyond Paul's earthly life.

This gives Timothy reason to continue when obedience is costly. Trouble does not make the gospel false. Nor does a teacher's confidence make an error true: the deceivers in verse 13 mislead others and are themselves misled. We too can learn truth and pass it on, yet accept beliefs that need correction. Religious familiarity does not remove that danger.

Paul's example calls us to integrity. Our patience, honesty and love should agree with what we teach. But affection for a trusted teacher cannot make everything that person says true. Paul's reminder leads Timothy back to Scripture. The Word that governs our teaching must also examine our comfortable beliefs and excused habits. We stand beside the children as people who need to keep listening.

Salvation through faith in Christ — verse 15

Timothy's learning began before his travels with Paul. As verse 15 looks back to childhood, 2 Timothy 1:5 brings his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice into view. Paul remembers their sincere faith with gratitude. Others had been passing on what they knew of God long before Timothy's ministry became visible. There is encouragement here for the quiet, patient work of teaching a child.

The writings Timothy knew in childhood were what we call the Old Testament. How could writings given before Jesus' earthly life make him wise for salvation through Christ? They revealed human sin, God's righteous judgement and His purpose to rescue. They supplied the truth by which to understand the Saviour's coming.

Consider Isaiah 53:4–6. People have turned to their own ways, while the Lord's servant bears the punishment their wrongdoing deserves. We learn both our need and the kind of rescue God provides. In Acts 8:30–35, Philip begins with later lines of that same servant passage and explains the good news about Jesus. Scripture itself warrants the connection.

Our need is deeper than a shortage of information. Sin brings guilt before God, and we cannot supply our own rescue. The Son who came to save us is truly God and became truly human (John 1:1–3, 14, 18). He knows human weakness and temptation, yet is without sin (Hebrews 4:14–16). First Corinthians 15:1–8 announces His death for our sins, burial, bodily resurrection and appearances to witnesses. Christ bore the judgement sinners deserve. Forgiveness rests on His accomplished saving work.

That is why Paul's words "through faith in Christ Jesus" matter. Understanding the account and entrusting ourselves to Christ belong together. Faith relies on Him for forgiveness and life with God; repentance turns from sin towards God. In 2 Timothy 2:24–26, gentle teaching, God's work and repentance belong together. We can speak plainly about sin while patiently directing people to the Saviour.

This addresses us before it addresses the class. Knowing how to explain a passage is valuable, but our hope before God rests on Christ. We need His mercy as surely as those we teach. A child who knows many answers and a newcomer hearing the gospel for the first time need the same Saviour. Neither must accumulate years of Bible knowledge or become faultless before coming to Him.

Let God-given Scripture equip you for good works — verses 16–17

What gives these writings the right to guide Timothy and correct us? Verse 16 takes us to their source: Scripture is inspired by God. The CSB footnote gives the literal sense, breathed out by God. **Inspiration** describes God's giving of Scripture, rather than the creative feeling we might call an inspired idea. Its **authority** follows from its source: because God speaks, we receive His truthful Word and submit to what it teaches.

God gave this Word through real human authors. We can hear Paul's personal concern and follow his reasons; elsewhere we meet poetry, history and prophecy. Second Peter 1:20–21 holds divine action and human speech together: the prophets spoke from God as the Holy Spirit carried them along. Inspiration does not require every author to have written through the same process of dictation. Their words, circumstances and purposes help us understand what God communicated.

Timothy's childhood Scriptures were the Old Testament, but the apostolic witness to Christ also belongs to God's written Word. Second Peter 3:15–16 speaks of Paul's letters alongside the other Scriptures. That gives a biblical reason for receiving New Testament writings as Scripture too. Second Timothy 3 establishes Scripture's source and purpose; it does not itself list all the biblical books.

Paul names teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. We may open a passage to understand something unfamiliar and discover that it exposes wrong in our own conduct. God's Word then directs us towards what is right and teaches us to practise it. His authority and kindness work together: correction helps us return to faithful living.

Take truthfulness. Ephesians 4:25 calls believers to put away lying and speak truth because they belong to one another. A lie harms people with whom we are called to live honestly. The instruction exposes our deception, directs us to tell the truth and trains us to practise honesty. These uses overlap; they need not become four separate steps in every passage. The classroom guide offers a choice of brief illustrations to clarify the connection.

Verse 17 brings us back to Timothy's work. Scripture equips this servant to serve God and teach His people; he is to entrust the truth to faithful people who can teach others (2 Timothy 2:2). Through that ministry, the Word shapes the congregation's faith and conduct, including the girls and boys who hear it. Our teaching shares in this responsibility.

Sufficiency means that God has provided the saving truth and instruction needed for faithful service. Being equipped does not mean becoming instantly sinless or finding a Bible verse for every question about medicine, engineering or another practical skill. We still need to read carefully: a study note, illustration or teacher's explanation can be mistaken. Follow the author's meaning, the kind of writing and the surrounding passage.

And keep the order of verses 15–17 clear. Ephesians 2:8–10 explains that salvation is God's gift through faith, and those made new in Christ are created for good works. Good works grow from grace; they cannot purchase forgiveness. The Word that makes our Saviour known also teaches us how to live as His people.

Questions that may come up

“Must we obey every command in the same way?”

Understand whom a command addresses and where it belongs in God's saving purpose. Hebrews 10:1–14 explains that Israel's repeated sacrifices could not finally remove sin; Christ offered Himself once for all. Those commands still teach us about our need and His sufficient sacrifice. We honour their fulfilment in Him rather than offer the sacrifices again.

“What if I don't know many Bible answers?”

You can begin listening and learning now. Salvation is through faith in Christ, and the Bible helps you know Him. Someone who reads slowly can follow while another person reads aloud. Welcome explanations in the children's own words, with pointing or partner reading where useful.

“Does following Jesus mean accepting every adult’s criticism?”

No. Adults can misunderstand and misuse Scripture. Persecution means mistreatment because of faithfulness to Christ; it differs from deserved correction for wrongdoing. Children may ask for reasons, seek protection and tell a safe adult about harm. Perseverance never requires concealing abuse or remaining in danger. Follow the serving church’s safeguarding procedures; do not investigate a concern in the group or invite public accounts of mistreatment.

Receive the Word before you teach it

Second Timothy 2:7, 15 joins thoughtful attention with the Lord’s gift of understanding and our responsibility to handle His Word faithfully. Prayer belongs with study. The Spirit’s help does not authorise a private meaning that contradicts the text, and teaching skill cannot produce saving faith.

- What in Paul’s suffering and hope gives you reason to continue when faithfulness is costly?
- Where do you need Scripture to correct a comfortable belief or an excused habit?
- How does the distinction between knowing about Christ and trusting Him address your own life?
- How might receiving God’s patient correction shape your response to a child who struggles to understand?

Thank God for making His saving mercy known in Christ. Ask Him to deepen your understanding, expose what needs correction and help you receive His Word with faith. Pray for those facing opposition, for each child’s understanding and response, and for patience and integrity in your teaching.

Carry the truth into the classroom

Memory verse — 2 Timothy 3:16



SCRIPTURE

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:16, CSB

Learn the complete verse and reference. Explain *inspired* as coming from God and *profitable* as useful. The poster separately summarises verse 17’s purpose: equipping God’s servant for every good work.

Your preparation checklist

- **Check your understanding.** Close this article and explain the three movements from their verses. Explain inspiration without reducing it to a feeling, salvation without making it a reward, and good works without making them optional. Show how Isaiah's servant passage leads to Christ, and answer one likely question above. Revisit anything you cannot explain clearly.
- **Rehearse the classroom Lesson.** Plan 40 minutes: welcome 2; interactive Bible teaching 18; memory 3; reinforcement activity 15; closing prayer and tidy 2. Bible reading, reflection, prayer, rehearsal and materials preparation are additional to reading this article. Choose one of the teaching illustrations in the Lesson. Bring a ruler and a closed book if using the measuring demonstration; page 1 remains needed for the opening and final activity.
- **Prepare the five-page print pack.** Print single-sided A4 at actual size. Display pages 1 and 5. Give each pair page 2 (reason board), page 4 (passage sheet), the six cards from page 3 and a pencil. Cut the cards along their outer solid outlines before class; keep the board and passage sheet whole. Prepare one teacher set.
- **Try the task.** In *Build a reply from Paul's reasons*, pairs test six claims, arrange three sound reasons, explain a reply to a fictional newcomer and apply it to the pictures. Allow 2 minutes to model and distribute, 6 to investigate, 4 to explain and 3 to apply and check. The Lesson supplies the model and answers. Limit repeated reports before cutting essential explanation or the final check; continue later if necessary.
- **Keep the response free from pressure.** The picture sequence is fictional: hearing teaching, blaming someone else for a spill, admitting the wrong and helping clean up. Use it to consider truthfulness, without asking for personal confessions or inventing Timothy's childhood. Repairing harm cannot buy forgiveness. Bible knowledge, a prayer, public response or completed activity cannot establish conversion.

This lesson opens *Hearing and understanding God's word*; no earlier Sunday School or Home lesson is required. Supply newcomer orientation to the Old and New Testaments and Paul's letter. Next come Psalm 19's witness in creation and Scripture, Nehemiah 8's hearing with understanding, and Jesus explaining the Scriptures in Luke 24.

Next time, ask why Bible knowledge cannot replace trusting Christ and why good works still matter. Revisit a missing reason and recall the memory verse's meaning before opening Psalm 19. A completed board is an opportunity to hear the children's explanation, not proof that they have understood.

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