

CHARACTER COUNTS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 TIMOTHY 3:1-17



The Scriptures are able to carry us through times of evil and trial.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

There will be terrible times in the last days. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy from prison in Rome believing that his execution was close at hand (see 4:6). Paul warned Timothy, who was in Ephesus, about the evil that he is sure to confront in his ministry. As Timothy continued caring for the young churches, Paul wanted him to be aware of the evil around him, that he might guard against it and protect the church.

God's word is an anchor in terrible times. After painting a pretty dark picture of sin, Paul contrasted the wickedness of the world with the righteousness that comes to God's people. Paul offered his own life as a testimony of God's grace and then encouraged Timothy. In the midst of great evil and persecution, God's grace would be available through Scripture which is God-breathed.

Although men wrote scripture, God spoke through men so that they wrote the words God wanted them to write. God breathed the scriptures by his Holy Spirit. Peter spoke of it this way: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit," 2 Peter 1:20-21.

As a result of God directing the process, scripture is not the mere words of men. It is the actual words of God to us. That is why reading the scriptures sustains us and serves as an anchor in terrible times.

The ministry of the Word sustains the church in terrible times. Paul finishes his exhortation to Timothy by charging him to preach the Word. Paul opened his letter to Timothy charging him to guard the good deposit of sound doctrine (2 Timothy 1:14) and that theme continues here. If we believe that the Bible is God's Word, able to sustain us in terrible times, then the only logical thing to do is to proclaim it!

Paul first encouraged Timothy personally and here instructs Timothy to care for the church and to do the work of an evangelist, preaching to unbelievers. Clearly Paul has in mind the time he spent proclaiming the word of God to combat false doctrines that threatened to corrupt the church.

GOD BREATHED THE SCRIPTURES

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

The scripture is God-breathed and is able to lead us into righteousness. It is able to "make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." The purpose of the scripture, all of the Old Testament and New Testament, is to point to the salvation available through Christ's death on the cross. Jesus told His disciples on the road to Emmaus how the Old Testament pointed to him (see Luke 24:27). The Bible is not first a book of rules, but a book of faith. Salvation does not come by works, but by faith. See Ephesians 2:9.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 59:20,21

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Paul refers to this passage in Romans 11:26-27. Jesus is the Redeemer who will come to Zion. The covenant spoken of is the New Covenant in Jesus blood that he introduced at the last supper. "In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20).

Notice also the promise God makes to sustain His Word. The words of Isaiah and the words of Christ have been written down for us to read and embrace. We are some of the descendants God is speaking about. His Word will carry on forever!

Questions for reflection:

- When will God's Word depart and no longer be needed? (God's Word is eternal and carries on forever.)
- Did you know the Bible talks about you? (Yes, we are included when the Bible mentions "the mouths of their descendants". Each time we proclaim God's word we are helping to keep God's word alive forever.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

MARKER ILLUSTRATION

Supplies:

White board and marker

This illustration is to help the children understand how God used men to write scripture as his instruments.

Write the words to 2 Timothy 3:16 on the board. Then ask the children the following questions:

- Who wrote these words, (point to them) on the board. (They will of course say that you wrote the words.)
- What did I use to write these words? (You used a marker.)
- So, is it accurate to say that this marker wrote these words? (They should agree.)
- Which is true? Did I write these words or did the marker write these words? (Dialogue over the answer to this question and get a lot of students involved.)
- Who wrote the Bible? (This is a similar question. Help them to see the similarities. Of course God used men to write the Bible just like you used the pen to write the words on the white board.)



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MEMORIZE 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

Tell the class that this is another one of those good to remember 3:16 verses. John 3:16, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 3:16

Look them all up and talk about why they are good verses to memorize. Then take time in class to memorized 2 Timothy 3:16.

Write the verse up on the board and one by one take out words. See who can be the first to recite the entire verse without the aid of any word

WHO FITS THE DESCRIPTION?

Have your class read through 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Ask the class if they know anyone like the person Paul is describing?

You of course, want to help them see we are all in some way included in this paragraph.

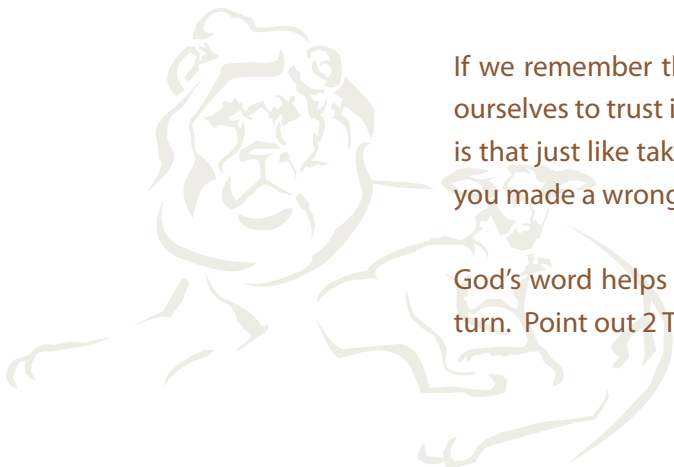
Once you help them identify with the man described in the paragraph, the bad news, tell them the gospel good news of 2 Timothy 3:14-15. Even though we are sinners like Paul is describing, we can be saved from our sin just as Timothy was.

Help the children to associate salvation with the Gospel and not with going to church or being born in a Christian family. The latter two are no guarantee that we will have faith in Christ.

Take them to 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Help them to see that just because a person hears the truth doesn't guarantee they will follow the truth. Some children who have been raised in a Christian home and have attended church regularly have turned away from the truth.

If we remember that we are capable of great sin and turning away, and commit ourselves to trust in Jesus and His Word. We will not turn away. The reason for this is that just like taking a wrong road when you are driving, the sooner you find out you made a wrong turn the easier it is to get back on track.

God's word helps to keep us on track and warn us when we have made a wrong turn. Point out 2 Timothy 3:16



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SCRIPTURE IS OUR ANCHOR

Supplies

Ten feet of rope

This illustration is designed to show us that if we are anchored in God's word we will not fall away from truth.

Tie the rope around the waist of your volunteer. Tell him (or her) to pretend that he is a boat on the seas. Go through some pantomime exercises. Tell him to act like a boat on a sea that is perfectly calm. Then do gentle rolling waves and then a very rough sea with large waves.

Ask him what would happen if a strong wind began to blow? (He would begin to drift.) Ask him how this rope could help? (The rope could be tied to an anchor to keep them from drifting.)

Go through two more pantomimes. First have the individual demonstrate a boat on a rough sea with a strong wind and no anchor. Then hold the rope for him and pretend that you are the anchor and have them demonstrate a boat on a rough sea with an anchor.

Explain to the children that Christ and His Word are our anchors. Then draw them out as to why an anchor is a good analogy and how it fits in today's Bible text.

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of a mom or dad reading the Bible to their children.



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

JUST READ THE PAPER

You will need to read through and preview a large city newspaper for this activity. Be sure to cover over immodest pictures with paper squares. Tape them in place but do not so cover the faces so the children don't understand that you are covering an immodest picture. Also be careful to screen the stories to make sure there are no stories of rape or other sexual crimes. You can cover over these stories if need be.

The object of this exercise is to help the children connect the evil of the last days in Paul's description to Timothy with our world today.

Break the class down into groups of three. Give each group a newspaper. Explain why you covered over stories and photos. Then ask them to read 2 Timothy 3:1-9. Explain that their task is to read through their paper and bring an evaluation of our world. What do they see?

Give them some time then have each team report what they found.

Help the children to see our times are similar to Paul's with the exception that we are not currently being arrested for our faith.

Use this as an exercise to help the students appreciate our need for God's Word.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

The Last Days – The last days are not just the few last days before Jesus returns again. Rather the last days refer to the time introduced by Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection and concluded by His second coming. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that the last days were marked by the time of Christ's ministry ("in these last days has spoken to us by his Son" Hebrews 1:2). When preaching to the multitude on the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel saying that the last days were marked by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:17). It is not important to determine just when the last days began. What matters is to understand that it represents the season from Jesus' life to His return. During this time, as Paul indicates to Timothy, the world will be very evil, but the gospel will prevail!