



## 2 Tim 3:14-4:5

### THE MAKERS INSTRUCTIONS

We recently got ourselves a new dishwasher to replace the old one which died a while back. To get the best deal I tried the web and bought a Zanussi from a shop in Birmingham. It was at a discount because it had been a display model and had a couple of dents in it but it was otherwise a brand new dishwasher. When it arrived it looked pretty good – the dents were almost invisible and the machine started and ran quite happily. The only other thing about it was that the instruction manual was missing and the shop sent a photocopied one.

All seemed OK until one evening I couldn't get it to work. So I turned up the manual to page 18 which is the troubleshooting guide and I found this. Not very helpful. BLURRED PAGE. I think the shop needs to get its copier fixed! Fortunately I found one on the internet and here's what the page actually looked like. CLEAR PAGE. Good. Except the instruction I needed wasn't on that page. I looked no further and just poked the buttons on the front of the dishwasher until something worked. I don't quite know what I did, but it burst into life and off it went.

Instructions can be very confusing. I've always found DIY furniture a problem. You know, the item that comes in a box marked "Easy to assemble" and then you find a degree in engineering to put it together. CARTOON The manufacturer of course sends instructions but sometimes they are a bit cryptic – here are assembly instructions for an IKEA bookcase. Apparently IKEA have a reputation for difficult instructions – COUNSELLOR CARTOON

There are some people who just find them confusing DUMMIES. I don't know whether this is a real book or not. BOTHERED But there are other people who just can't be bothered with instructions. I must admit, for many things we have at home, I don't think I've ever read the maker's instructions – which can be a silly thing to do as I often don't get the best out of stuff because I haven't read the manual.

But it gets much worse if people try to do it themselves and they never seem to have read any kind of manual at all. Here's a sequence from You've been Framed. YBF. Familiar? It's like when I try DIY!

I guess you won't find it any surprise that god has provided an instruction book for life. 2 TIM 3:16-17 You know what I'm talking about: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (NIV) We looked at this verse last time – well, actually we looked at the first three words. I'm going to look at the rest of the verse today.

We found out last time that Scripture – the Bible, the word of God – is God-breathed. I don't like translations that say inspired because it only tells half the story because when we breathe, we breathe in and breathe out – we inspire and expire to use old words. The Holy Spirit moved men to write these words – He inspired them. The Holy Spirit takes these words as He speaks to us (we speak by breathing out) and He also breathes those words also into us (rather like CPR) and makes them alive in us.

And what is the purpose of these words – they are His message to us, the maker's instructions. Here's an acrostic for you BIBLE – Basic Instructions before leaving Earth. But the Bible is more than just basic and this verse tells us what it is. Here's verse 17 again VERSE as we had it read from the Good News Bible: *17 so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.* Are you a Christian? Do you follow Jesus? Then you serve God. How do you know the right way to serve Him? What's right? What's wrong? What does God say about this or that?

We know because God left us the Instruction Manual for the Christian life, and here it is. And through it God the Holy Spirit is able to instruct us and equip us for what God wants to do in our lives.

How does that happen. Let's read the words again - *it's useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living*. VERSE 15 Actually, if we go back to verse 15 we find something else – that the scriptures also make us wise to salvation too.

VERSE 16 In the past I've heard sermons on this verse that have looked at what the Bible is profitable for with the intention of how we should use it as a church – teaching, rebuking error, correcting faults and instruction. But if you think about its context, these are words aimed at Timothy individually and this is confirmed in verse 17 where it says that the person who serves God may be qualified and equipped to do every good deed. However, when we look at the beginning of chapter 4 we see that Paul charges Timothy directly to do all these things as a Bible teacher – 4:1-2 *I solemnly urge you 2 to preach the message, to insist upon proclaiming it (whether the time is right or not), to convince, reproach, and encourage, as you teach with all patience.* .

What seems to be referring to in verse 16 is the profitability to the individual of engaging with a God-breathed book. As we engage with the Scriptures we find that God breathes into our lives through its words all the qualifying and equipping we need to do every good deed. God is using it to speak into our lives in other words. His words, His way – His instruction book. So this isn't a passage about how useful this book is to the church – even though it is and chapter 4 tells us that – it's how profitable it is personally as we serve God when we read His word in expectation that He will speak to us through it! The Message paraphrases it well by putting it this way:

MESSAGE *Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.*

VERSES I've now said quite a few times that God's instruction book is useful. Paul tells us that it is useful in four ways and here they are VERSES WITH HIGHLIGHTS You'll find that Paul gives us these in two pairs. *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, 17 so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.* TWO PEARLS

The two pairs give opposites about the nature of GOD'S INSTRUCTION BOOK

The first pair tell us that the Bible teaches us about God, the second pair tell us that the Bible teaches us about ourselves. Lets have a closer look at them.

#### TEACHES US ABOUT GOD

You'll remember many months ago that I said that we live in a world where no such thing as absolute truth – so if people believe something then that's OK, that's cool. That's not so about God. Truth about God is what God tells us about Himself. If you want to know about God, read the makers instructions. As we read and study God's word, we find out about God – it's what God has given us so that we'll know everything we need to know and will ever need to know whilst we live here.

But on the negative side, the Bible is there to highlight our errors. God uses it to tell us where our ideas are just that; ours. Now you see where God breathes scripture. The Spirit uses God's word to help us spot and understand truth and untruth. That's the issue for Timothy. He preached the word of God and had to respond to people who Paul said had itchy ears – ready to listen to the next fascinating idea about God, but in the end there is only one version of the truth and that's God's and it's only by knowing and understanding God's word that we can truly know the difference between truth and error.

#### TEACHES US ABOUT OURSELVES

The Bible also teaches us about ourselves. Paul starts with the negative this time by saying how God uses scripture to expose our sins. It's surprising how many Christians don't know that certain things are wrong and unacceptable to God. Whatever they may do may sound OK to them, even reasonable but to God they are just wrong. If you know God's word, then you'll understand where things are right and wrong. That brings us to the second aspect – that the makers instructions tell us about right living.

Now you may be thinking, well that's all very well but you can make the Bible say almost anything you want it to – how do we know what's truth? Indeed I was brought up in a generation where many people used the

Bible legalistically – as a set of rules and we concluded that people who did not live in a certain way or did different things than us could not be Christians. How arrogant! One of the things we must realise is that we will go through life with an incomplete knowledge of a profound and infinite God. We will struggle to understand what truth is and we'll learn new things all the time about God as we read and study the maker's instruction book. The first is that our God is patient with us!!

That being said, we'll never know the truth between truth and lies either about ourselves or God if we're not like Timothy and spend time in our lives "*studying the scriptures that make us wise to salvation*". The less time we spend with God's word, the more our lives are at risk to be spiritual DIY disasters – and there will be no-one from You've been Framed to put that to music!

How do we know we are getting it right. Now that's a hard one to answer – or is it? Have you ever read Psalm 119? It's long, really long. It's a song of worship. It has one theme – it's on how wonderful God's revealed word is – his laws, his statutes, His ways, His words. Ps 119:97 *How I love your law!*  
*I think about it all day long.*

Anyone who is a legalist, who looks for what you can't do, must gulp when they see Psalm 119. But it's a test of how much you understand the word of God. To people who see the Bible as a set of rules, it becomes very dull because it tells you all you can't do. And they depress themselves. Did you ever hear about the family that were so legalistic about Sundays that they even removed their budgie's swing so he wouldn't enjoy himself.

If you can rave that much about how great God's word is – and make up a song with as many stanza as there are letters in the alphabet and make sure that every line in that stanza starts with the same letter of the alphabet as you go along then that's dedication. Try writing a poem of eight lines each starting with A, then one with B and so on to Z and all on the same subject. Now you have the task. What do you do with X? Luckily the psalmist only had 22 letters in his alphabet! Is God's law that good? You bet it is because in Christ we have the freedom to realise that as we read His word, that His law tells us so much about what we can do through Christ and how much He wants to bless us. Now if we aren't raving about that – then maybe we should be because God is truly fantastic!

Let me finish. What have we learnt over our two sessions on one verse. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

3 ITEMS

**- that it is God-breathed**

Firstly to remind us what we already know that God has given us scripture because the Holy Spirit uses it to speak to us.

**- that it is our instruction book**

Secondly – that if we desire to follow Jesus, then this is our instruction book – it tells us what we need to know about God and about ourselves so that we are equipped for every good work as we serve Him.

**- that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through it**

Finally – that if God speaks to us through His word then we should:

- use it regularly
- meditate on it and ask God what He is asking to teach us through it.

THE MAKER'S INSTRUCTIONS

Prayer

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Scripture quotes as indicated*