

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church – Center, WI

Pastor Mark Gartner

Sermon for Christian Education Sunday – September 26th and 27th, 2021

2 Timothy 3:14-17

As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them ¹⁵ and that from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.

Dear children of God. Amen

Do you know who Ken Jennings is? Ken Jennings is the contestant from the game show Jeopardy that has won 74 games in row without a losing. He earned more than 2.5 million dollars. Both of these are Jeopardy records. Week in and week out, he answered the most trivia questions every show for 74 straight shows. Imagine the knowledge that he must have. Where would you get this kind of knowledge? As we go through life on this earth, there is a pretty good chance that none of us will accomplish what Ken Jennings has accomplished on the game show Jeopardy. While we may be smart and know many things, what he has accomplished is truly amazing.

But being smart and having the ability to answer lots of trivia questions isn't necessarily the kind of education that God says is most important. As we look at our verses from 2 Timothy we will soon realize that there is something far greater than book smarts and an education that you get from schools. Today on this Christian Education Sunday we will focus our thoughts on the theme:

Sermon Theme: The True Education of Our Children

- 1. The Textbook**
- 2. The Message**
- 3. The Teachers**

St. Paul writes: **“and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** Paul spoke these words to Timothy. But who was Timothy? At the time of this writing he was pastor of a church at Ephesus. Timothy was the son of an unbelieving father; his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were Jewish women who had been led to believe in Jesus as their Savior. His mother and grandmother, both being Christians, instructed Timothy in the Christian religion. And by God's blessing this seed of life bore rich fruit in the heart of little Timothy. Paul writes that from a child he knew the Holy Scriptures. What did he learn? Briefly he learned this. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and that the gift the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. He learned about sin and grace. He learned about God's Law and God's Gospel. He was considered wise, because he was led to believe what the Bible said. He was wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. This is true Christian Education. So let's use Timothy as our model and find out a wonderful example of true Christian Education.

1. The Textbook

As we all know, all good education needs a good textbook. Let's hear what is said about Timothy's textbook? **“As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them and that 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, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.”**

Timothy's textbook was the Holy Scriptures. The textbook was God's thoughts and words for us as sinful human beings recorded for us in the Bible. It is the best textbook in all the world. It is the textbook that communicates to us God's plan to save us and keep us safe until he returns on Judgment Day. It is **“God-breathed”** and is useful for every part of our spiritual life on this earth. It is God's inspired and perfect word for us. There are no mistakes in this textbook and every part of it is useful for our faith.

What is the purpose of this textbook? Paul tells us the purpose is **“to make you wise for salvation.”** This is the highest wisdom we can ever find. Those who do not believe are not wise, but are fools. A person may speak five different languages and be an encyclopedia of all human knowledge, but if he doesn't know of God's wisdom; he is foolish. As we look at the Bible, we can only be amazed at its power and love. This book not only teaches true wisdom, but it also has the power within itself, to make us spiritually wise. The book being God-breathed, has the power to implant this wisdom into our hearts. This wisdom is the faith that we have in Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior.. Is there any other textbook that can do this? No!

But, we might ask, do you mean to say that the Bible is the only textbook to be used by our children? Obviously God has also given us schools to teach us the many things about this great world that he created, but the one book that matters is the Bible. We will not get to heaven because of what we learned in Math, English or Science. But we can get to heaven from God's textbook – the Bible. The message in God's book is completely different. So let's talk for a minute about the message or subject matter that is found in the textbook of the Bible.

2. The Message

Timothy, the child, was a Christian; Timothy, the boy, remained a Christian; Timothy, the young man, became active in Christian work in leading others to Christ. Timothy we know from the Bible was a man respected by others. He eventually traveled with the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys and finally we know that he was appointed pastor of the growing church at Ephesus. Timothy, **“the man of God,”** was the product of early Christian training.

The key to all of this was that fact as Paul points out that Timothy **“from infancy”** had known the Holy Scriptures. Paul makes it very clear that children should know the Scriptures, that children should know the way of salvation, that children should know Jesus as their Savior. This is exactly what he means when he writes this about our children in Ephesians 6:4. **“bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”** This was not a new command. This was the same thing that God had commanded of Old Testament believers. God wants all people to help in the instruction of God's Word to our children.

But why is this instruction **“from infancy”** so necessary? Many answers could be given; but we will look specifically at what Paul wrote to Timothy, the young pastor. Paul was very clear when he wrote to

Timothy. There will always be evil people whose goal in life is to try and lead us away from God and away from our salvation. That is why God wants us to start when our children are young and continue to the day we die. Our faith is always going to be tested, but God tells Timothy and us that our faith will remain firm in him as long as we continue looking to God and his Word for help. As Paul says, **“continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them.”** Paul writes **“from infancy”** you have learned the Holy Scriptures from your mother and your grandmother. He tells us. **“Continue!”** Remain in the Scriptures you have learned from the time that you were a child.

Why do our children need daily instruction in the Bible-truths? Because the times in which we live are also very spiritually dangerous for young children and for us. False teachers are everywhere. The Devil is right there with us. Our “Timothys”, our children, need daily instruction in God’s Word, so that by his grace they will not be swayed to follow the evil that is all around them. We want them to be armed for the many temptations that will be coming their way.. Our “Timothys”, our children, need thorough instruction in God’s truths so that they will grow up to be men and women well founded in the truth -- people who are “educated” students of our Lord and Savior.

Now I ask you, moms and dads, who know the devil’s tricks and the many temptations he uses to trap and trick the souls of our children. Do you make every effort to make sure that your children are using every tool of Christian education that is being offered? Are your children being brought up in the **“training and instruction of the Lord”**? Do you lead your children to the well of the water of life as often as possible – meaning you are bringing them to our many Lutheran Elementary Schools in the Fox Valley and Fox Valley Lutheran High School and to our Sunday School? Are you using daily home devotions and sending them to Confirmation Class? Do your children see that Christ is first in importance in your lives – that going to church is not a chore but a joy. That Sunday School is not a burden, but a delight. That Bible Study is just as important for you as you go to Bible Class while your kids are in Sunday School? Are your children being led to see the true wisdom and education that God is offering through its "textbook" the Bible. Or are you skimming by – doing as little as possible, because it is not all that important to you? Let us never forget the message of God’s Word

3. The Teachers

Timothy had two teachers, his mother and his grandmother. What was their main qualification? We read from 2 Timothy 1:5, **“I remember your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced that it also lives in you.”** This sincere faith of Timothy’s mother and grandmother was their principal qualification as teachers of Timothy. They had come to a knowledge of their sins and to a knowledge of their Savior from sin. God had worked saving faith in their hearts. And in this faith, they were happy. You could see their love. A love for their Savior, a love for Timothy’s immortal soul, and it was this love that filled them with a desire to teach him this wisdom that would lead him to eternal life in heaven. And their work was well done. Paul testifies to this, **“from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

Such are the qualifications we are looking for in the teachers to whom we entrust the religious education of our children. Besides being competent instructors in the basics of education, like Math and

Science and English, they must be filled with God's love and must know the teachings from God's Word. They must be filled with a sincere faith that is concerned for the souls of their students. Then their heart and soul will be wrapped up in their work. Feelings similar to those of Lois and Eunice towards Timothy will rule their souls: Our "Timothys" — the children under their spiritual care must first and foremost be led to Christ. Our teachers must be men and women who are led to love these children as God has loved them. We pray that God has filled our Day School teachers, our Sunday School teachers and all those who teach the "True Education" of our children with a desire to "Feed My lambs." Where there is this sincere faith, we will find teachers whose instruction will be thorough, God-fearing, and the hours in which both teacher and students daily sit at Jesus' feet will be full of God's wisdom.

But here an objection or two may be raised. Timothy's religious education was given by his mother and grandmother. This is true. The passages of Scripture that talk about the religious instruction of our children are directed mainly to parents; and nothing is said about Day-schools or Sunday Schools or Bible Classes. True, if parents today can do the same thing that Lois and Eunice once did, if children do and can receive a thorough religious education within the family circle, this is great. But you know as well as I do that if the religious instruction were left entirely to the family, the children of many would not receive the instruction that they need. I pray that our wonderful Christian teachers and classes do not turn into a "crutch" that we as parents use so that we do not have to take the time to teach our children the true education. May we always remember what a blessing our Christian Education is, but let us never forget that God has asked us as parents to be the primary teachers of our children.

Timothy is a wonderful example to us as we thank the Lord for the Christian education that we have here at St. John and throughout our Synod. May our hearts be filled with the desire to thank and praise God for the many teachers and parents who help assist our children as they study and learn from the one "textbook" that counts – God's holy Word. May we also take the time to support the Christian education that abounds in St. John and throughout our Synod with our time, prayers and our offerings. God has certainly blessed us with so many wonderful tools. To God be glory and praise. Amen.