

Scripture Driven Style- Applying the Grace of God
2 Tim 3:14-17, Ps 119:65-72

Brothers and sisters, as we continue to pursue spiritual growth at the start of this new year and this new decade by looking at Nine ways to Grow Spiritually – it is no surprise that for today’s message on the Scripture-Driven style that we would find the inspiration to motivate us and emphasize the importance of growing spiritually, from a scripture passage.

Therefore, brothers and sisters I exhort us this morning from Hebrews 6:1 where Paul writes – *“let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity...”*

Maturity... think back for a moment and remember when you were of an age where you wished you could be older and more mature – because then you would be able to do things like get a real job, or get your drivers licence, or stay at home by yourself, or go to a PG13 or AA14 movie by yourself, or go out on a date or go to high-school or go to college, or be able to vote, or order a glass of wine with your meal...

And then finally – after you’ve become mature enough to do all these other things – finally at age 25 you are mature enough to - rent a car.

But do we look forward to spiritual maturity the same way?

Are there things that we looked forward to being able to do when we were spiritually mature enough? Did we desire to become spiritually mature so that we could finally go out and do street evangelism, or lead a bible study, or lead the prayer time in the service, or become an elder in the church.

Brothers and sisters, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we anticipated spiritually maturity in the same way as we did regular developmental maturity? *“Oh man I can’t wait until I’m spiritually mature enough to lead Club 1014! Can’t wait until I’m spiritually mature enough to join the Prayer Team or be a worship leader!!”*

Personally, I do remember that when I was a young adult I wanted to be like the bible teachers I heard at youth

conferences. I remember thinking *“wow I’m learning so much from this teaching, I hope that some day I can do the same thing for somebody else!”*

Or I would notice how some Christians seemed to be able to know what God wanted to do in a specific situation – it was like they actually communicated with God and God answered back, and I wanted to know what that was like.

Or how some Christians could read the bible and they could understand it and it made sense to them and those passages and verses would just speak to their daily life and direct it – I wondered if some day it might be that way for me also.

Maybe you have memories like this as well – of a time when you were just starting to mature spiritually, and because of that you admired and anticipated becoming more spiritually mature – and being able to know and experience God in these kinds of ways more and more.

And if you don’t have memories like that my prayer is brothers and sisters that as you have heard me talk about it – the Holy Spirit would give you the desire to want to mature spiritually and know and experience God more.

Because that’s what I want to stir up in us – a desire to want to pursue spiritual maturity.

Now when it comes to our developmental maturity – we have a whole social and cultural network that combines with our biological growth to help us grow and mature so that for the most part it seems that we just let the time go by and we grow up and gain life experience and we mature – more or less.

And if the Christian faith and the Church was more central to our social and cultural experience then the passing of time and life experience would also contribute to our spiritual maturity - but it doesn’t work like that anymore.

Instead we need to be intentional about our spiritual maturing and take responsibility for becoming mature and pursue

specific actions and engage in specific disciplines – regularly and consistently in order to grow towards spiritual maturity.

So, this series is about giving you a very effective and proven tool so you can be intentional about becoming mature spiritually.

And as we endeavor to mature spiritually brothers and sisters, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 gives us good news about an invaluable resource. It says *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Now I don’t know about you but I think that being taught, being able to be rebuked and corrected and trained so that we are equipped to do good works sounds like a lot of help for our spiritual maturity – and this is all available to us in the bible, which is why we are learning about the Scripture-Driven style today.

Now brothers and sisters – it goes without saying that the scriptures are central to our relationship with God, they are the most reliable and accurate and authoritative means of how God reveals himself to us – that is why we call them “specific revelation.”

This is why -regardless of what your natural spiritual style might be – you need to read the scriptures and know and believe what they say to us about God – they have spiritual authority.

But as you read scripture, your natural spiritual style is going to spin how you read and apply the scriptures. As I mentioned last week, for growing in the Doctrinal Style and to experience God by thinking correctly about Him you need to read large chunks of scripture and pay attention to the big picture and what it reveals God.

But if your natural style is Enthusiastic you will probably prefer to read all about the miracles and signs and wonders the Holy Spirit was doing through the early church in the book of Acts...

If your natural style is Ascetic you will be more sensitive to the boundaries and limitations and prohibitions that we find set out for us in scripture...

If your natural style is Sensory, you'll gravitate more towards the poetry and emotion and the beauty that we find in the Psalms, or you might draw out specific biblical theme like Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation and use them for your artistic pursuits...

So every spiritual style engages with scripture but they each do so in accordance to how they naturally experience God according to our preferred person of the Trinity.

Now I have to share that when I first learned this it was a huge relief to me, because I've always struggled with doing my daily devotionals – taking that time first thing in the morning or at night before bed to read a few verses and meditate on them. I found it so difficult to be consistent, and I wasn't getting the profound insights or life application that I was expecting from

it, which made me feel even more guilty about this because I'm a pastor!

But when I realized what my natural spiritual style was – I was like “oh – I'm more of a spiritual carnivore, I go all in for a big kill – a big passage of scripture, or reading a book on doctrine about scripture - and I fill up on it and it feeds my doctrinal style and my growth.

But I don't need to do this every day – just like a carnivore doesn't go take down a moose or eat a whole elk or a zebra every day. Now – don't misuse this knowledge for an excuse not to read the scriptures – it just helps to understand why you might not do well with the stereotypical daily devotions.

It's the spiritual herbivores that graze each day – reading little bits and pieces of scripture, chewing it over and over before they swallow it and then moving on to find some new place to gaze. They take to daily devotions like sheep grazing in green pastures.

So, if you can relate to being a spiritual herbivore when it comes to your daily bible reading – then chances are that you are very comfortable with the Scripture-Driven style and it may even be your natural style.

So, lets take a closer look at the characteristics of the Scripture-Driven style and how we can engage with scripture so that we are experiencing God through applying His Word.

Now normally when we think about applying scripture, we think about how the scripture can be made relevant to our everyday lives and concerns. Most people are well aware that the scriptures were written thousands of years ago and things were drastically different back then. So how does the bible relate to our progressive society and reconcile with all our modern technology and scientific knowledge and speak to what is current and important to us?

And that's what we usually think applying scripture is all about; what does it say to us about improving our relationships, about our time management, what financial and

business advice does it contain, can it teach us how to be a better leader, reduce my stress, improve my grades or help me get that promotion?

And I don't want to make it sound like scripture and thus God is uncaring and indifferent about what goes on in our daily lives – but I can't help notice that when we think about applying scripture... it looks an awful lot like consumers looking to see how a product or service can enhance our lives.

And if that's what it takes for God to get our attention – well then, I guess He's going to use it that way... but brothers and sisters continuing to apply the scriptures in this way alone... does not lead to spiritual maturity any more than shopping can somehow build up a savings account.

Applying scripture in the Scripture-Driven style for the goal of spiritual maturity is about shifting away from making the scripture relevant to our lives and instead allowing it's ancient, irrelevant, out-of-date focus and perspective to actually teach, rebuke, correct and train us so that we are transformed and

we are no longer shaped by our modern culture and society but shaped by the scripture instead, so that we are *“in the world, but not of the world”* (John 17:16)

In the Scripture-Driven style we have an encounter with God when we are engaging with the scriptures in this way and if this is your natural style right now you are going *“duh, that’s obvious... doesn’t everybody?!”*

No – they don’t, because not everyone has the Scripture-Driven style as their ***natural*** style.

Now that doesn’t mean we don’t view the scripture as God’s word, or that we don’t think we need to obey what it says to us, or that we don’t believe it comes from God or that we shouldn’t read or study and know it – its just that we don’t naturally experience God like you do in our reading of scripture.

If you are Scripture-Driven style you need to remember that when you read and studying the bible and encounter the living

God and the Lord Jesus Christ in it – this is Level A growth for you.

It’s easy, its natural, its not hard – it just seems to happen without much effort and you desire it and you want it. So please go easy on those of us who need to work a bit harder to sit down and read and engage in Level B growth with the scriptures because it is not our natural style.

And just to remind us – Level B growth take extra effort and discipline to pursue, it might not feel very comfortable or natural – it can even be painful but its so necessary for us because if we only stick to Level A growth in our natural style – the strengths of our style will become our weakness.

Now you might be wondering *“how can focusing on experiencing God in the scripture become a weakness?! All-scripture is God-breathed and useful right?!”*

Well brothers and sisters, let’s let the scriptures themselves answer that question for us. Turn to John 5:39-40 where Jesus

says to the Pharisees (master Level A scripture-driven style people) *“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”*

That’s why Paul, who was a former Pharisee himself, emphasizes to Timothy in the passage we read this morning that the *“Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* (vs.15)

So – according the scriptures – it is possible to misuse the scriptures and miss what God wants for us to experience through the scriptures and how they are to point us to salvation Jesus Christ. (such is the deviousness of sin)

Furthermore – to draw on what we learned in our Three Colors of Christmas series, the scripture clearly reveals to us that God is a Triune God and He wants us to know Him as such, so we can’t limit ourselves to only Level-A growth in the

Scripture-Driven Style because then we are only Red Spirituality and limiting ourselves to one person of the Trinity.

And Red Spirituality which minimizes the need for Blue and Green ends up becoming Fundamentalism, and Red Spirituality that completely excludes Blue and Green... ends up becoming a Cult. God becomes reduced to a book and a particular interpretation of that book.

So, I hope that if your natural style is Scripture-Driven this will convince you of the need to pursue Level B growth with your opposite style of Sacramental.

Now its all good to encourage us to pursue both Level A and Level B growth in the Scripture-Driven style, but I want to give you some actual tools that you can use to do that with.

So, if you are just starting to grow in your Level A Scripture-Driven style or you need an entry point to start engaging the Scripture-Driven style for your Level B growth – the **Read**

Scripture App is a great tool for getting starting or getting back into reading scripture.

You can install it on your smart phone, it will ping to remind you to read your daily passage, there are additional video resources built in to help explain things, and it helps you keep track of how you are doing in accomplishing a reading plan. It's a great resource and you can get it from the App store or check it out online at www.readscripture.org

Of course nothing beats actually picking up a hard copy of the bible and learning how to find references and look them up and read them and you can buy bibles that are organized into daily reading sections for the 365 days of the year and each section will have an Old Testament Reading, something from the Psalms, a Proverb and a passage from the New Testament and you will read your way through the entire bible in a year. Another excellent resource.

But – brothers and sisters – to go deeper in your Level A growth, and to find support and encouragement if this is Level

B growth for you – and because God is communal in His Three is one nature – we must read and study the scriptures together with each other.

Reading by yourself is good – but you can't stop there. That's why in our Christ Care group ministry at Valleyview, and in our other small groups, we encourage and train our leaders to lead Biblical Equipping.

This is an approach to reading, studying and applying and meditating on scripture that helps us to become disciplined, trained by the scripture and helps us share with fellow Christians how we are responding to that in our everyday life.

If you are familiar with Biblical Equipping you'll remember there are eight steps in it.

It starts with Step 2 Hearing the scripture – as a group you pause for silence, clear your minds and hearts and hear the scripture being read, and then you read it out loud again, and give a bit of pause so as not to rush right away into Step 3

Step 3 is where you ask Explore questions of the scripture. The who, what, why, where, how to approach the text on its own terms and establish what it is saying for itself. Once this is recognized by the group - then application can begin.

So, Step 4 is where you Connect what the scripture is saying to your lives and issues.

Step 5 is about Preparing to take what the scripture is saying with you into the rest of the week and your time apart from each other. You get specific and tell the others in the group when you will set aside time to meditate on this scripture, specific actions you will undertake in obedience to this scripture, and when you will reflect and evaluate on how this went.

So, steps 6, 7 and 8 are exactly that – being obedient to the scripture, meditating on it, and reflecting on how that went during the week in preparation for when you gathered together again.

So, at the start of your next meeting you begin with Step 1 and share with the group what came out of your application, obedience engagement with that verse of scripture.

And that brothers and sisters is how Biblical Equipping works.

And when our small groups are running this program and making sure we're being intentional about all 8 steps – we have definitely experienced God at work, speaking to us through His scriptures.

And we have discovered – whether as a Level A or B growth track - that the Scripture-Driven style is an amazing way to experience God and... help us to grow together into spiritual maturity as the Body of Christ.

So, let me close off this message about the Scripture-Driven style this morning by reminding us that this series is about stirring up our desires to grow towards spiritual maturity.

And that when we think about and anticipate that spiritual maturity – especially from the Scripture-Driven perspective – that we would look forward to and desire becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

Because the maturity we are looking for – is not mastery of bible knowledge and facts and being able to quote verses left right and center – as good as those things can be.

The goal for our maturity is to have Christ in us and our lives in Christ and since the scripture is meant to point us to Jesus - pursuing growth in the Scripture-Driven style is all about becoming more and more Christ-like so that all who know us can see Christ in us and see us in Christ – the Word made Flesh.

So, brothers and sisters may we all be encouraged to grow in experiencing God through His Word.

Amen.