

Training for Righteousness

Discussion Guide

To begin our discussion, think about the way someone would prepare to run a fifty-yard sprint versus running a full 26.2-mile marathon?

- What are the differences in diet required?
- How many people could actually run 50 yards vs. a marathon?
- How long would a person have to train for each race?

2 Timothy 3:14-17 gives us some specific clues as to what the Bible accomplishes when we read it and how to get the most out of it.

Take time to read these verses in your group and see if you can draw these clues from the text.

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Notice the following keywords in the text:

- continue (v.14)
- firmly believed (v.14)
- from childhood (v.14)
- wise for salvation (v. 15)
- all (v.16)
- profitable for teaching (v.16)
- reproof (v.16)
- correction (v.16)
- training in righteousness (v.16)
- complete (v.17)
- equipped (v.17)
- every good work (v.17)

What do these words mean for the process of studying the Bible?

Every great coach (Lombardi, Krzyzewski, Smith, Bowerman, Wooden, Belichick, Saban, Summitt, La Russa) has a system into which he can place any player and they will become better. Walk-ons become scholarship-caliber players. Benchwarmers can become starters.

Starters become stars. Stars become national players-of-the-year.

This is why those coaches are able to win championships time after time with completely different teams. The main thing required from the players is a commitment to practice, discipline, obedience, and complete faith the coach's system will make them better.

Now apply the principles of great coaching to how we handle the Bible.

Because the Bible is God's Word, we know it is His system for transforming our lives. Even if we are new to the faith and don't necessarily know how to begin to grow, we can trust that our intake of God's Word is going to result in a process of life change.

The only requirement is a posture of commitment to read, discipline to persevere, and obedience to do what the Bible is telling us to do.

One of the most profound challenges I received as a teenager was from a mentor who told me that the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint.

- Does your current walk with Christ feel more like a marathon or a sprint?
- Are there times when we need to sprint?
- Is it possible to sustain growth over your entire life without marathon-style training?

One of the great deficits in American Christianity is the problem of what many people call "Bumper Sticker Theology." This is basically the instinct we have to only learn enough about the Bible to put on a T-shirt, a bumper sticker, or to quote to a friend in a sentence.

While there is certainly a place for short and pithy answers, this should not be the sum total of what we learn about God. The kind of Bible learning that creates a solid foundation and transforms lives requires a sustained, deep intake of Scripture over the entire scope of life.

- What are some of your favorite examples of "bumper sticker theology"?
- How has that helped you in difficult times?
- Is bumper sticker theology effective without a commitment to a sustained intake and study of the Bible?
- How have you practically started on a system with a steady diet of God's Word with a commitment to training in righteousness?

Some possible answers here can include reading a book of the Bible in one sitting on days off from work, reading a chapter of the Bible each day, listening to a podcast that explains the Scripture, coming to church, reading a commentary that goes along with the book of the Bible we are preaching through at church, joining a Bible study, memorizing Scripture with a friend, meeting with an accountability partner, etc.

- Do you have a process to learn all of the different parts of Scripture (law, prophets,



Psalms, OT writings, Gospels, letters)?

If this question generates a lot of discussion, feel free to have a conversation with Jonathan to ask for more practical suggestions on how to implement this.