



September 23, 2012  
Hebrews 5:7-6:12  
Pastor Larry Adams

## **A Disciple is Trained in God's Word**

Hey, if you have your Bibles today, I'd like you to turn with me if you would to Hebrews Chapter 5. We're gonna be looking today in Chapters 5 and 6 continuing on in our study of discipleship - what it really means to be a reproducing follower of Jesus. I just want to give a special greeting this morning to all the folks down at the Antioch campus. Thank you for your faithfulness there. I want you to know that we are one church together in two locations. We are very grateful for your ministry and hoping you're having a blessed day today as you worship with us.

In this process of discipleship, we've been talking a lot about our purpose which is to glorify God by making disciples who will impact every area of the world for Christ. In order for that to happen, we have a process - a process by which disciples are made. We believe disciples are best made when they worship, grow, and serve in the context of Christian community.

We been hearing a lot about that, but there is no way that we could overstress the importance of disciples who are trained in the word of God. I've seen it happen so many times, people have been deacons or even elders, people have been Sunday School teachers and vibrantly involved in the church, over time begin to stop practicing the disciplines of learning and knowing God's word every day. It's a subtle erosion, and I've seen a number of these people fall away, fall away from the church, fall away from their families, fall away from following God. It's a process that can be prevented, and that was one of the warnings that was given here in the book of Hebrews.

The book of Hebrews was written primarily to Hebrew Christians who were going through terrible persecution for their faith, and many of them were being tempted to fall away, to pull away from the things that made them strong, from the very salvation and maturity in Christ they had been called to pursue.

In Hebrews Chapter 5 we find this in verse 7 as the writer writes this warning and encouragement to stay strong being trained in the word of God. This is what he writes. Hebrews 5 verse 7:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered<sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him<sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

<sup>11</sup> We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.<sup>12</sup> In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!<sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not

acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

**6** Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, <sup>2</sup> instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. <sup>3</sup> And God permitting, we will do so.

<sup>4</sup> It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, <sup>6</sup> if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

<sup>7</sup> Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. <sup>8</sup> But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

<sup>9</sup> Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. <sup>10</sup> God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. <sup>11</sup> We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. <sup>12</sup> We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Let's pray for a moment.

*Lord, these words are steeped in a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament, warnings from Israel's past so that Hebrew and Gentile believers in the Lord Jesus alike could be warned to be careful that we don't fall away from this truth that we've been given, but instead we are to train ourselves through the continual use of the word of God.*

*Lord, I don't know how many of us today would actually say we're in a biblical training program, but we need to be every day as we read and learn and absorb and obey this word. So, speak to us today, God. This is so important - important for every disciple to be trained in God's word. And we'll thank you for all that you'll show us today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

It takes a lot of training to be good at whatever you do. So many times we see people who excel at a certain skill, and we would like to be like them. But so often we forget all the work and hard training that has gone into getting them where they are. I saw that up front when I lived with a running back in the NFL who I watched every day play out his skills but also the training he had to go through. I can assure you that the worst player in the NFL that takes that field is a phenomenal football player. They don't get to that level about being really good at what they do. It isn't just their physical training, it's what they do behind the scenes that nobody sees like bringing home that playbook every night and studying it so that when that quarterback calls a number or a sequence of numbers you know exactly what you are supposed to do on the field at any moment; seeing them

coming home and studying the opposing defenses so that they can be trained and almost anticipating what the defense is going to do in any play that they might call and his role in; and then the relentless pursuit of that on the field as they would practice day after day going over it again and again and again and again and again. Then when they're done with that they go into the weight room and they work to build their bodies up so they can take the grueling physical punishment that is doled out on the field. It's mental, it's physical, it's emotional training so that you can be the best when you play in the NFL.

You know, if it takes that much training to be good at playing football, imagine the kind of training it must take if we're gonna be reproducing followers of Jesus Christ to be disciples who are gonna glorify God and impact the world for him.

We've been learning in this series that a disciple is not just a follower of Jesus, they are a reproducing follower. They are people seeking to have the life of Christ produced in them, and they will be content with nothing less. His mind, his heart, his character living in them, and then, in fulfillment of the great commission, being used by God in the context of a local church to be able to produce other disciples, leading people to Jesus, and training them to become reproducing followers of Christ as well.

We've been learning that disciples are worshipers of God. They live knowing and demonstrating that God is of ultimate worth to them. We saw last time that disciples are connected in Christian community, that they recognize their part, their need, and their responsibility to be connected as part of the body of Christ. Today we're gonna see the importance of disciples being trained in God's word.

You see, the book of Hebrews, as I mentioned, is an exhortation. It's a series of warnings, admonitions to stay strong and to keep living for Jesus. Today's text in Chapter 5 and 6 is the third of five specific warnings in the book of Hebrews given to a group of primarily Hebrew Christians who were in danger of falling away, not seeing the life of Christ produced in them, becoming marginal Christians who were of no use to God in the making of disciples and fulfilling a commission.

The first warning in the book of Hebrews is in Chapter 2. It's called "Pay attention that you don't drift away. Pay more careful attention to the things that have been said. We cannot afford to get lax in our understanding."

The second warning is in Hebrews 3 beginning in verse 7, "Believe and obey. Don't fall to disobedience and unbelief as they did in the desert wanderings of Israel's past."

The third warning is here, "Don't fall away." In fact in Hebrews 6 verse 4 it says:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit,<sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age,<sup>6</sup> if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

I believe this is talking about believers. It's not talking about loss of salvation. It's saying that if you're a Christian you've tasted of the heavenly gift and of the Holy Spirit and then you fall away from that commitment. You don't stay strong, and God is not working in and through you for his glory. You can't be brought back to an original repentance.

You can only be saved once and you cannot lose it. But through our disobedience it's like we're crucifying the son of God all over again. We're going back to the very sin we once asked him to save us from. We're subjecting them through our disobedience to public disgrace. People, it's not unbelievers that defame the name of Jesus, it's believers who don't live for God that defame the name of Jesus and the world sees that. So, the writer tells us the key to paying attention, believing, obeying, and staying strong so we don't fall away is being trained in God's word, knowing it and putting it to constant use over and over and over again in every situation. That's why he said in verse 14:

Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Jesus calls his disciples to be people continually trained in the word of God. Why is this continual training so essential? Well, the writer tells us here that it's the word of God that the key to salvation or the assurance of it, and that the word of God is the key to growing in maturity. Disciples are trained in the word because it is the key to the assurance of their salvation. Here's the way they put it in Hebrews 5 verse 7:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered<sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him<sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

I was reading once in a book by Chuck Swindoll about a guy who had ordered a barometer from Abercrombie and Fitch. He lived on Long Island. When the shipment arrived at his home, he was disappointed to discover that this very expensive instrument had a needle stuck pointing to the sector marked "Hurricane." After shaking the barometer vigorously several times and never getting the point to move, the new owner wrote a scathing letter to the store. On the following morning on his way to his office in New York City, he mailed it. That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing, but his house as well. The needle of the instrument had been pointed correctly. The month was September. The year was 1938, the day of the terrible hurricane that almost leveled Long Island.

Some people perish because they never get the message. Some people perish because they don't believe it. Other people fall away because they don't hold on to it. So many times we can be found treating the word of God like that man treated that barometer. We don't like what it says so we want to change it, or we want to explain it away, or we don't want to pay attention to it, or we want to complain to the author that we don't think it works like it should.

One of the reasons we at times get our lives in such a mess, sometimes circumstances like these Hebrews can cause us to feel like maybe not following Jesus was such a good idea or not a good idea, is because we do not have our lives rooted in a barometer, the word of God, that is always 100% accurate. Disciples know that their lives, their salvation, is totally tied to the word of God. That's why they hear it, and they obey it.

The writer tells these Hebrew believers that Jesus is the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. It says in Chapter 5 verse 8:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered<sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

People say, “Once made perfect,’ I thought Jesus was perfect.”

Well, he is. The “Once made perfect” means once he had fulfilled God's purpose and lived and died as perfect humanity, he became qualified as the perfect sacrifice. He learned obedience in what he suffered. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He learned obedience as a human being the same way you and I do it. His life was blessed because in reverent submission he heard the word of God and he obeyed it. He laid down an example for every human being that's following him. He didn't live that obedience essentially out of his deity. He lived it out of his humanity. He lived his life by the word of God. It's the same model for you and me.

You see, there can be no salvation without the word of God. I can't make anybody believe the gospel, and neither can you. Only God can do that. It's not my words that save anybody or yours. It's God's word that saves people. There can be no salvation without the word of God, because there can be no salvation without faith in Jesus. Faith comes from hearing the word. It's the word of God that reveals Christ in whom salvation comes. That's why when Jesus was speaking to the crowds in John 5 he said in verse 24:

**I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. <sup>25</sup> I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.**

It was the word of God that my friend, Ken Hutcherson, used to call me to salvation and make me realize my sinfulness. He could have argued till the morning came, and I would not have believed him, but he use God's word. God spoke it to my heart. It made me realize I either need to obey Christ or continually be lost in my disobedience.

That's why disciples are called to preach and teach and obey and be trained in the word. It's the word of God that we are to bring to the nations so that they can be saved and become disciples. You remember in the Great Commission after the resurrection when Jesus met the disciples in Galilee in Matthew 28? He tells them in verse 18:

**Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them --**

Training them.

**to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

Missions need to be centered around proliferating the word of God into people's hearts and teaching them to obey it. The word of God is central to this. Why so many Christians get led astray is because they don't train themselves in the word. It's why Satan tries so hard to keep people from hearing, believing, and obeying God's word. It's why Howard Hendricks once said, “The fact that we can read a newspaper, read a magazine, find time for the television and everything else, but we don't find time for this

is not a product of an accident - it's a product of cultivation." There's not going to be any spiritual resistance you reading the newspaper, a magazine, or watching television, or even reading a good book or a novel. There's not even a lot of resistance to you reading a book about God. But, boy, when you come and say, "I want to find Jesus in this word," watch out because every kind of distraction, every kind of excuse, every kind of means for you not to do it will be made available. That's why so few people actually train themselves in this word every single day.

Do you remember in Luke Chapter 8 beginning in verse 4, Jesus was telling the crowds of people the parable of the sower, or the parable of the soils? Verse 5:

**"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up.<sup>6</sup> Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.<sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants.<sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."**

When he said this, he called out, **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

His disciples asked him, "What's this parable mean? Verse 11:

**"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God.<sup>12</sup> Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved."**

I have to believe that's happening to some people in this room.

**<sup>13</sup> Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.**

You see, there it is.

**<sup>14</sup> The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.<sup>15</sup> But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.**

You see what Satan does? He tries to snatch away, don't let it take root, keep people tested so that they fall away from it, distract them with all kinds of worries and get them pulled off their priorities so they don't make hearing from God the priority of their day, because if you just get them into the day they'll be distracted by so many things they'll rarely have time to come to this.

It's why Jesus said that those who are really part of his family, those who really belong to him are those who believe and obey him. Luke 8 verse 19:

Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd.<sup>20</sup> Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

<sup>21</sup> He replied, **“My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”**

You remember in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 Jesus said:

**Not everyone who calls me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven.**

Verse 24:

**Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.**

**“The wind and the storms and rain come,”** he said, **“and it doesn’t move because it’s built on the rock.”** There’s assurance there. I’m obeying God, and his word is trustworthy. There’s assurance in that. I don’t question God’s goodness, because now I know who God is and I know that these things are gonna happen. I’m trusting the barometer:

<sup>26</sup> **But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.**

A house built on sand doesn't take much to collapse. A life that says it's a Christian but isn't built solidly on the rock of Christ and his word, is very easy to shake loose. I'm not talking about loss of salvation, just to get you moved away so we become useless to God and his kingdom.

The word of God is essential to building and experiencing a life that's truly life. In fact, to know God is to have life itself. Jesus prayed on the night before he went to the cross in the upper room in John 17 verse 3, **“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”** You cannot know life unless you know God, and you cannot know God apart from his word. You cannot know God’s salvation and its assurance unless you believe and obey and build your life on God's word continually, a life that will not be shaken. Satan’s strategy is to get you to fall away from an abundance of circumstances that cause you to doubt God and to doubt his word. Those who stand strong in the assurance of their salvation and lead others to do the same are disciples who are continually trained in the use of God's word.

Not only is it the key to salvation and its assurance, but disciples need to be trained in the word because it's the key to maturity. In Chapter 5 verse 11, the author wrote:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. <sup>12</sup> In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! <sup>13</sup> Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

You know, breastfeeding is absolutely amazing. Not that I've ever personally experienced it myself, but I saw it up close as a dad. Now I'm getting to relive those moments one step removed as we watch our kids raising their kids. I'm fascinated by the fact when I saw our own daughter Kelsey with the birth of her little boy how there's an innate ability there for a mom to have the desire and a child to have the desire, and

they come together. There's a little learning involved, but it's a pretty natural thing. It's pretty amazing to watch. A baby who has never eaten and a mom who has never nursed somehow figure that thing out with God's help. It's like it was designed that way because it is.

The other thing that's amazing about it is because one of our grandsons lives in Bakersfield. We don't see him a lot. So when we do see him you see measurable growth differences. Little boy is growing up, getting heavier, getting stronger, getting thicker. You know how he's doing that? On mama's milk. There's a lot of wallop in that stuff. You know, you can breastfeed for quite a while and the kid can grow and become very strong. It's what he was designed to eat, but at some point they gotta switch over to solid food.

Milk is great for infants, but a teen or an adult will actually start going backwards if he tries to live on that. There's not enough in it for him. The child needs to move to peas and carrots, mashed meat in a jar. The plums are my personal favorite. From that they move on to bacon double cheeseburgers, pizza, steak, and to keep their moms happy you occasionally toss them a chunk of broccoli, which they have to learn how to hide like we did when we were kids. Because if a little boy or a little girl doesn't switch off milk at some point and get the solid food they will remain sick. They won't get strong, and they won't mature physically.

You know the same thing is true for our spiritual lives? If we don't move over to solid food at some point in our life we are gonna remain spiritually sick, and we won't mature. It's why the writer of Hebrews called these Christians to a deeper diet of the solid meat of God's word. Chapter 5, he said in verse 13:

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

The word "mature" means "reaching its end, finished, complete, perfect." King James calls it "full of age." If we don't move from the basics to the deeper things of the word we'll remain spiritual infants. The problem was that the people were falling away because they weren't maturing. In fact in verses 11 and 12 it said:

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.

The word is "sluggish, slothful or lazy." It takes work to train. It's intentional. There has to be a plan. You have to work it. It has to be made a priority. You see, the writer was troubled by their lack of spiritual growth. Apparently they had been believers for some time, and yet their faith had not matured because they hadn't been training in the word. They were trying to live off yesterday's grace, trying to live off Sunday's sermons. They should have been teaching others by this point in their life, but instead they had to keep being reminded of all the elementary things all over again. They were spiritual infants. It was written in the perfect tense in the Greek which means "your abiding result of being in danger of falling away is a result of a past act." In other words, "You are where you are spiritually because you haven't trained yourself to eat solid food." That's why he said in verse 13:

Anyone who lives on milk being still an infant is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.

“Not acquainted” meaning “not skilled.” “You haven't trained yourself.” There's usually two reasons for that. In Chapter 6 verse 11 you find one of them:

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.

In other words, we don't stay diligent at doing the things that we know we need to do to grow. It's like a baby that stops eating. We just don't do it. We start strong. We don't finish strong. We don't keep doing the things that help us grow. The other is in verse 12:

We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

We become lazy. “I don't want to get up in the morning and do my jog. I don't want to eat disciplined. I don't want to get up every day and read the word of God and sow it into my heart.” One of the reasons is that many times we see this as a history book, we see it as a duty, we see it as something where we are required to learn certain facts. How would our approach to this word change if we said, “Lord, I'm in a love relationship with you. This is your word. I love to hear your voice. I don't want to go a single day without hearing you speak to me.” It changes the way you approach this. That's why the writer said in verse 14 we need to train ourselves by constant use.

The word “train” is literally the word for “exercise naked.” You watch the Olympics? Did you watch the swimmers swim? They're not jumping in the pool with anything extra on their bodies. They got the bare minimum they can wear, and it's skintight to avoid all resistance. Even the guys who have hair wear a cap so they won't create any drag. If it were socially acceptable, they'd tell you they'd probably prefer to swim nearly naked so that nothing would stand in the way of slowing them down. You see the bikers ride? Skintight outfits on. Aerodynamic helmets. They wear the minimum and always skintight to keep anything from slowing them down.

Disciples train themselves in the word in such a way that it becomes a serious pursuit, and they let nothing get in the way of hearing and obeying and applying the word to their lives. They trim it down to the essence that “This is my priority, and I'm pursuing Christ and his word.” That's what the writers describe. Chapter 6 verse 1:

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.

“The elementary things.” We've got to get beyond the ABCs. We can't spend all of our time and mature if we are only talking about, “I needed to be saved” or “I need to overcome sin.” We can't do it if we're just talking about faith in God - that's a basic - or instruction about baptisms and why it's important; or the laying on of hands, how we bless one another; and how we use our spiritual gifts; the resurrection of the dead; the eternal judgment. The writer considered some of these things as basic elementary elements that we need to move beyond and, God permitting, we will do so. “We need to move on to be training in righteousness,” he said. “Train ourselves in what it really means to be like Jesus.” The elementary things may lead us to salvation, but they will

never be enough to help us to mature and to become like Christ. Not to go on to maturity and train and obey may indicate we really don't belong to Christ at all. That's the danger. It says in verse 7 of Hebrews 6:

Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. <sup>8</sup> But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

You cannot lose salvation. But if you claim to be a Christian and you're not growing and maturing, it may be evidence that you're not really saved, so disciples train themselves continually. They meet God every day in his word, and they avail themselves of opportunity where they can hear it, and be trained in it, and use it, and apply it in everyday situations so that they grow strong and mature because there is power in the word of God to transform.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with the story of Mutiny on the Bounty. It's been made into a number of movies, but very few people have actually understood how the Bible played a very significant role in that story. The Bounty was a British ship that set sail from England in 1787 bound for the South Seas. In a book I was reading by Chuck Swindoll, he mapped out this story getting some of the details. Listen to it:

The idea was that those on board would spend some time among the islands transplanting fruit bearing and food bearing trees and doing other things to make some of the islands more habitable. After ten months of voyage, the Bounty arrives safely at its destination, and for six months the officer and the crew gave themselves to the duties placed on them by their government.

When the special task was completed however, and the order came to embark again, the sailors rebelled. They had formed strong attachments to the native girls and the climate, and the ease of the South Sea island life was much to their liking. The result was mutiny on the Bounty. The sailors placed Captain Blythe and a few loyal men adrift in an open boat. Captain Blythe, in an almost miraculous fashion, survived the ordeal, was rescued, and eventually arrived in London to tell his story.

An expedition was launched to punish the mutineers, and in due time 14 of them were captured and paid the ultimate penalty for mutiny under British law. But nine of the men had gone to another distant island. There they formed a colony. "Perhaps there has never been," he said, "a more degraded and debauched social life than in that colony."

They learned to distill whiskey from a native plant. The whiskey, as usual along with other habits, led to their ruin. Disease and murder took the lives of all of the native men and all but one of the white men named Alexander Smith. He found himself the only man on an island surrounded by a crowd of women and half breed children. Alexander Smith found a Bible among the possessions of a dead sailor. The book was new to him. He had never read it before. He sat down and read through it, and he believed it. He began to appropriate the principles inside to his own life.

It so transformed him that he wanted others to share in the benefits of this book, so he taught Bible classes on the island to the women and the children. He read to them, and he taught them the Scriptures. It was 20 years before a ship ever found that island. When they did, a miniature utopia was discovered. The people were living in decency, prosperity, harmony, and peace. There was nothing of crime. No disease. No immorality. No insanity. No illiteracy.

How is it all accomplished? By reading, believing, and being trained in the word of God. It's that transforming power of the word of God that has changed every culture, every church, every society that's believed it and actually put it into practice.

That's why Paul wrote to Timothy near the end of his life in 2 Timothy 2 verse 15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

A disciple is a reproducing follower of Jesus. We cannot expect to see his life produced in us and see that life reproduced in others if the word of God is not primary and central to our lives. A disciple is trained in God's word, a word that gives assurance of our salvation that we really belong to God, a salvation that is rock solid and cannot be shaken by trials and circumstance, and the word that helps us to grow and mature so that we really do become like Jesus. Trained in the word. It's the key to being a disciple.

*Father, I thank you today for the power of this word and for this warning. A more apt or appropriate warning for our day could not be given. We too, each of us are in danger of falling away or failing to mature. Help us to be a people that trains ourselves to distinguish good from evil, who trains ourselves in the word so that this word can train and transform us.*

*Thank you, God, that it's this word that points us to you, and it's through this word that we become more like you when we believe it and obey it. Help us, God, to do the training it takes to be the people you've called us to be. Work through this word to produce in us the likeness of Jesus and we'll thank you. In his precious name, Amen.*