

Getting Inspired

- Paul has been trying to inspire Timothy throughout this letter, much like a coach who has called a time-out in an important game.
- He has given two clear motivators up to this point, his own example and that of Timothy's personal heritage.
- Finally, Paul turns to the Holy Scriptures, God's great story that culminates in Jesus.

The big, breathed story (v16)

- The Bible is often misunderstood and treated like a cookbook or a car manual.
- This leads to people picking and choosing verses for moral advice—following the rule to expect a result.
- However, due to the difficulty of individual passages this approach inadvertently leads many write off the Bible.
- Scripture is not a cookbook or car manual, it is *the story* of God.
- The open-ended five act play: Creation, Fall, Israel, Jesus, Church...
- It is the "all scripture," the whole story that is useful for Timothy's task in Ephesus and our individual tasks.
- Not to say that picking individual scriptures and applying them is wrong, it's just that this must be done with the whole story in mind.
- The center of this story, and of all stories, is Jesus (Col. 1:15-20)

What's the use (v16-17)

- Bible as the big story of God is not about contracts, which imply we are bound to God by "doing our part."
- It is about covenant, how God has promised to be faithful to us—not what we can do for God but what God has done for us.
- Coloring inside the lines is part of this, as we are in danger of losing our way.
- The gospel brings us into a more abundant life, right living is more than the avoidance of wrong living.
- When we remember the Bible is a story instead of a manual, we see that God is not out to get us, he is out to give us. He sends us as Jesus was sent to work as he worked (John 20:21-22)..
- We are prepared for "every good work."
- There is good work for us to do, specific work, the game is before you and this moment is a time-out. You're in God's starting line-up.

The Urge (4:1-5)

- After all the inspirational and fiery talk, Paul sets Timothy in the grand story he has been told to pay attention to.
- It's as if the camera pans out and Timothy sees Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Esther, David, Jesus and Paul, the whole story, only to realize he is not behind the camera. He is now in the scene himself.

- Paul lets him know the scene will be difficult, attempting to keep the flock together and going the right way, must be done with patience (4.2)
- The work may not be glamorous or make headlines.
- It is regular, everyday faithfulness in reflecting God's character in the places he has put you.
- Most people in the great story did not do glamorous things.
- We need to remember the often unglamorous, but very good, work of Jesus in touching the untouchable, championing equality, being godly when it was unpopular, and speaking truth to power.
- "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done..." means just this, that the kingdom comes and is done in and through you and me—after all we are little bits of earth ourselves (N.T. Wright)

Discussion Questions

- What were the metaphors and ways of reading the Bible you inherited? Are they different now?
- What parts of the "big story" do you find yourself resonating with most? What characters?
- In what ways is heaven being brought to earth through your life? In what ways is it being prohibited?
- How does it help you to know that "God is not out to get you, he is out to give you"?