

# THE BIBLE TEACHES +++

PASTOR ZACH ZEHNDER

---

Well, Happy New Year. Can you believe it? We made it to 2026. In fact, all campuses, give yourselves a round of applause. You made it to another year. That's amazing. And I'm so pumped to begin this year as we do at King of Kings, an annual tradition to start with a concerted effort of prayer, 21 days of prayer. It's an awesome, awesome experience.

A couple of weeks ago, I got an email that stopped me in my tracks because it was from somebody that, let's just say, was completely out of my league. To give you a little bit of context, I was reaching out for future podcast guest interviews on my podcast, and I sent them out to some normal people. And then I had a group of like, ah, these guys will never say yes, but I'm just going to try it anyway. The kind of names that would like really make my podcast recognized and maybe, you know, would level up a little bit.

And one of the guys emailed back. And so all of a sudden I saw an email come back and I was like, okay, breathe, calm yourself. And here's how it started. It said, hey, Zach, wow, you are doing noble work and it is an honor to be asked to be on your podcast. And I will get back with you shortly. I believe in what you are doing. And I was like, wait, hang on. This guy knows who I am. I felt valued. I felt like maybe I'll make it in this world and started thinking about what the podcast, how the conversation would go.

I started imagining what the picture and the thumbnail and the title would be. And I started imagining someone outside of my mom actually listening to my podcast for once. Breathe. It's a big moment. Then I read the next line. This is an automated response. My team will review your quest and be in touch if it's a good fit. And just like that, I was brought back to earth. I mean, think about it. These words, they were the same words, but in one moment I was feeling affirmed and validated and seen. And in the next line, in the next moment, I was reminded exactly where I sit on the food chain.

But words matter and who says it matters. And here's the key today. The voice behind the words determines their value. The voice behind the words determine their value. Ran across a story from 1992. She describes herself as a dumpster diving granny. Her name is Terry Horton, and she went to a thrift store and she negotiated painting all the way down from eight bucks to five bucks. She was going to use it as a gag gift or a white elephant exchange until she showed the painting to an art teacher. And he said, Terry, I think this is an original Jackson Pollock world famous painter painting. And all of a sudden she didn't feel like giving it away at a white elephant gift exchange. Because if this was a Jackson Pollock, it was worth millions.

And so she went on a journey to prove its authenticity. She had a fingerprinting analyst actually match a print to Jackson Pollock on this painting. In light of that, she received a \$9 million offer for something she paid five bucks for, and she refused it. Because if this was a real Jackson Pollock, it wasn't 9 million, it was worth \$50 million. What a find. Except for the fact that nobody ever truly authenticated it and she died. And some believed her and some didn't believe her and the controversy was never resolved. But the whole value rested on the one question of who painted this.

In a similar way, I want to look at who wrote the Bible. Who wrote the Bible? Because the voice behind the words determines their value. Not long ago, Allison shared an article with me of somebody that tried to stay in the church and in the faith. They prayed, they read, they wrestled with scripture, they had a history of being Christian, but in the end they walked away because they were convinced that the Bible, according to them, quote, was hopelessly human.

I was kind of struck by it because this person didn't leave because they were angry with God or because they'd experienced church hurt. They left because they just kind of felt like the Bible wasn't God's voice anymore, that it was people's voices and those people were flawed and contradictory and disconnected and they started to wonder, is this divine or is it just ancient? Who wrote the Bible? If this is just human words, it probably does belong next to Greek mythology and thrift stores.

Man, if this is God's word, breathed out by the creator to the created, it can change your life. What's amazing is the Bible's having a bit of a comeback right now. Did you know that? Bible sales are up 41% in the last five years. I was in November tuning in live to YouVersion Bible app celebration of their one billionth download, which means that one in like seven people in the world have digital access to the Bible on their phones or tablets.

Bible translators believe, Bible translating companies believe, this is really neat, that the Bible will be translated in every language by the year 2033. Now just seven years away, now that we're in 2026. All this is great and I want to celebrate sales and downloads and translations, but here's the question I want to wrestle with. There's a lot of people and I think it describes a lot of us who may be listening right now that have plenty of access to this, but are not engaging with it.

And so we have a 21 days of prayer challenge, but alongside of the invitation to pray is an invitation for you to get in God's word each and every day, to get into a rhythm of praying and talking with God, but also hearing from God through His word. So I have two other invitations for you in this series. If you want to go deeper, number one would be to get in our King of Kings app and there are daily readings that we have there for you that you can read together with the rest of your church family.

And number two, there is a set of videos that I made for this series and they are on Right Now Media's platform, which is an online library of like 25,000 Bible studies. And we give you free access to that, by the way, that you can use for yourself or in your connect groups. And you can find that information in the app as well. It was a really fun series on the video side to produce.

The first video took me to one of the most unique places, the world's smallest city. And do you know, we're not far from it? It's in Monowi, Nebraska, population one. And there really is just one person living there. Her name is Elsie Eiler and she's 93 years old. She is the town's mayor. She is the town's, she runs the tavern where she is the bartender and the head chef. She is the librarian and the city planner.

Last year, she filed her own liquor license to herself. It got approved, by the way. After filming, we sat down for lunch in the tavern and I said, what food are you known for? And she said, honestly, it's just food. Order what you like. If you like a burger, order a burger. I mean, she's snarky. She's ornery. You would be too, by the way, if you were 93 living in a town by yourself. She made some pretty good burgers, actually.

And I remember after she slapped the burgers on the table, she also slapped her sheriff's badge on the table and said, if you boys get out of hand, I'll have you know, I'm the town's sheriff. And I said, well, Elsie, when's the last time you've arrested somebody? And she said, never, because then I'd have to be the town's warden too.

What stood out more than the jokes and the burgers and the badge, though, was right next to the tavern in a city of one, there's a library. In honor of her late husband, Rudy, it's a library unlike a library you would go to. It's not neatly organized. There's no staff. There's no online checkout system. It's an honors system there. But amongst 5,000 books, she believes that words still matter.

And one book, one set of words stands apart. And it was in the smallest town in the world that I was reminded of, even here, God's word still stands. Even here, God's word speaks loud. And if it can speak in Monowi, Nebraska, population one, it can speak to you wherever you are today. And so will you let it speak to you?

You know, there's a lot of people that come into a new year that set goals and resolutions or new habits. There's also a lot of people that come into a new year that are anti-goals and resolutions and habits. I think actually setting these things is wise. I think it's helpful. I think it comes from the right place because many times the goals or resolutions or habits that you might set come from a place of recognizing that this is not where it ought to be in my life or this thing can be better and I want it to be this year. And I think that's beautiful.

But here's what I want to contend with you today is there may be no better resolution, no better goal, and no better habit for you to introduce into your life than to daily get into this word to hear God speak to you. And that's what this series is all about. Second Timothy 3, 16 and 17 is going to be our anchor verse for the series. And when you see words in different color, please read them loudly along with me all campuses.

Paul says that all scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God would be thoroughly equipped for every good work. This is our anchor verse for this series.

Paul talks about four uses of the Bible. Today we're going to look at how is the Bible useful for teaching. Next week, not a word we toss around a lot, rebuking, third week correcting, fourth week training. But notice that each of them has the same. So that in other words, the Bible doesn't just want to teach, rebuke, correct, and train. It wants to do those things in you. So that out of you come every good work that God's called you and I too. So that's where we're going to be this month.

So today we're going to answer these three questions. What does it mean that scripture is God breathed? What does the Bible teach us? And how does it equip us for every good work?

So first, what does it mean that the Bible is scriptures God breathed? Some translations say God inspired. What does that look like? How would you describe that? Today, many people are struggling with their identity, kind of knowing who they are. And when you struggle with your identity, you struggle with purpose. You don't have clarity in life on what God may be calling, what good works that

you might be thoroughly equipped for, but you're not even sure if that's what you're supposed to be doing. Because when you disconnect from the creator, you lose sight of what you were created for.

And that's what is so powerful about this being God breathed is it reconnects us to the one who created us. And the more we learn about who he is, we learn about who we are in light of that. And our purpose gets more and more revealed, but what does God breathe or God inspired actually mean?

Well, let's let it, the book speak for itself to Jeremiah. God said this, write all the words that I have spoken to you in a book to David. It says the spirit of the Lord spoke by me and his word was in my tongue to the disciple Peter. It says the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the holy spirit and to the apostle Paul, the things that he taught were expressed in words, which the holy spirit teaches.

In other words, somehow this book is both divine and human. What it means is that God breathed, God inspired that God spoke to ordinary people, his words, but said through their unique vocabulary and style. And that's why some books look so different than other books, because in here you have Kings writing next to fishermen, scholars writing next to shepherds and poets writing next to peasants.

The Bible gives this as the explanation for how inspiration or God breathed works God's words through a human in their own unique style and authority given to us so we can have confidence that God is speaking to us. So many people, even in 21 days of prayer, maybe even especially in 21 days of prayers, like this is really great, but I feel like I'm doing all the talking. When's God going to talk to me? And here's what I've said over and over and over again.

If you want to be clear on what God's voice sounds like, you have an opportunity each and every day to open this thing up and you can hear from God right here, right now, today, tomorrow, Thursday, Saturday, whatever time, after you win a football game, after you lose a football game, it doesn't matter. He'll speak to you anytime you want.

And so secondly, what does the Bible teach us? Again, this is what the apostle Paul is speaking to his protege is that it's useful for teaching. The purpose of teaching is obviously for the ones that are listening to learn. That's not new to you, by the way, you know that. And here's what the apostle Paul wants you to learn. All scripture, all scripture, not a verse or a part of a verse or a chapter in one book that some people can take out of context at times, but he wants you to know all scripture from front to back.

And so what if I were to start in Genesis 1.1 and read it aloud to you, would you stay if I just read the whole thing right now? Take about 75 ish hours, anybody? There's no hunger for the word of God at King of Kings. Wow. All right. All right. That was the plan. I'm going to have to rethink what I do next.

All right. How about I go this way? I can't read to you the whole Bible right now, but what I would like to do, and this may be review for some, but at the beginning of the year, it's great to review. It's great to have it as an anchor. I want to review for you what I believe are kind of the five movements, if you will, in all scripture so that you have a greater understanding.

If you haven't heard this, this is an awesome way to understand like what this book is, the greatest love story ever written from God to us. And so, so let me go through those five.

Number one is creation, that God made everything good, that in the beginning out of nothing, he created it with beauty, order, and purpose. And humanity was made special in his image, it says, to reflect his glory and to be in perfect relationship with him. The very first verse of the Bible says this, that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and everything he created at the end of the day, he would say, and it was good. And it was good. And it was good.

But for the day that he created humankind, he said it was very good. Pastor Seth told me that you can actually translate the Hebrew there to be good, good, which is good because I follow a YouTube channel golfers named good, good, good, good. The Hebrew is good. Good. And in Greek, when you turn to the new Testament, God calls you his poema, which of course we get the word poem or masterpiece that you are, you are like a Jackson Pollock work of art. Do you know?

So from front to back, you are created good, good. You're a masterpiece. You are the apple of his eye, but movement number two fall. We broke what God made good. When humanity chose rebellion over relationship, when the fruit was eaten, sin entered the world and it fractured our relationship and how we connect to God, to each other and to the world.

And that's why King of Kings is so passionate about transforming lives so that we would greater connect to God and to each other and to the world because we broke what God made good. Isaiah 53 says it this way, that we all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way. We abandoned him and we turned our backs toward him through our sin and our love for what this world can offer.

And a beautiful new movement. Number three happens redemption where Jesus came to rescue us, that God wouldn't leave us in our mess, that he would not give up on us, but rather he would get up off of his throne room seat in heaven to rescue Jesus. Somehow becoming fully man was also somehow fully God. And he lived a sinless life and he took on a humble, obedient life, servant posture, willing to die a humiliating and excruciating death on the cross. Not by the way, after we had already turned back to him, but rather I love what Romans five, eight says, it says, but God demonstrated his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

But we know that this movement number three of redemption doesn't just stop at the cross because it was on the third day that Jesus rose from the dead and defeated sin, death, and the enemy. Amen. Which brings us to the fourth movement.

The one I think that we miss the most restoration that we now partner with God to bring his kingdom right here and now that the truth is that Jesus didn't just save us from our sin from something, but he saved us to or for something. Second Corinthians five 20 says it this way that you and I, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us, that there's something here for us to do.

We're thoroughly equipped for every good work in this world.

And I remember preaching one of my very first sermons at seminary and it's the most nerve wrecking time to preach because your professor and the students are there to literally critique you and tell you what you did wrong so that you can get better. And I remember preaching and I thought it was a

winner. And at the end of it, my professor gave me a B minus. I was like, I'll take that. That's fine. But he wrote on there, Zach, you did a really great job of helping the people hear and see what they are saved from, but you didn't talk at all about what they are saved to.

And that was a key critical moment in my life to form a life mission that doesn't just help people become believers, but to see that you are saved to be an ambassador, to be a disciple. And I think a lot of the struggles we have in this world are like a lot of us believe in Jesus and got that confidence for our security in our eternity. But we're not living those full and abundant lives because we haven't stepped into the thing that you are saved to.

You are saved from your sin, but you are saved to be an ambassador, be a disciple to good works that your light would shine so much that others would see the good works and glorify God, the father in heaven, that you get to participate in bringing the restoration of God's kingdom here and now. And we can get glimpses of it. But the final movement, the one we haven't seen fully is eternity where God will dwell with his people forever and everything will be perfect.

So you really didn't want to go on a journey of reading through the whole Bible with me today. But there was one time 11 years ago where I had a lot of new people come into the church that we planted in Florida, and I really wanted them to have kind of a full understanding of the Bible. And so I planned this really long sermon. I told them about it ahead of time, by the way, planned this really long sermon and said, we're going to do this as a fundraiser for a nonprofit, but we're also just going to work from Genesis to Revelation.

And in it, we ended up breaking a world record for the longest speech, 53 hours and 18 minutes. And so I thought I would share that whole sermon with you beginning in minute one. Are you ready? Man, I'm not going to do that, but I do want to invite you just to watch the last two minutes of that sermon, because I think there's something powerful and it's the only time in my life where I've really sat with all scripture for that amount of time and to see a beautiful truth come out that otherwise I don't think I would have seen as clearly.

Now we're going to play that in just a second, but a few disclaimers. This is 31 year old Zach speaking about Revelation, which is confusing enough at hour 53 with canker sores in my mouth. Now roll it.

One thing that I've seen preaching the Bible from start to finish in one setting longer than anyone else in the world has ever done before, which is cool, is God's ridiculous pursuit of you and me. Even when we fail, even when we sin, and we all have, he never gives up on us. He never gives up on us, and we thank him for that. This is the future that we have.

In this world we get glimpses, I believe this might be a glimpse, of the beauty and majesty that he is. And I want to end with a quote from my grandpa Zender of a revelation. His last sermon that he ever preached, where he was dying and he knew he wouldn't be around much longer, my grandpa Zender, a preacher, said, I can imagine not being sick anymore. I can imagine not being hungry anymore, but I can't imagine not having sin. I can't imagine being sinless, and what that's going to be like.

And he said, but I'm soon going to find out. And we will find out, and we'll end there. Amen. There's something so powerful about all scripture, and what I saw in that time, I'll never forget, it was this clear to me, that it's a story where at the beginning we messed up, and God came and made it right. And we



messed up, and God came and made it right, and we messed up, and God came and made it right, and we messed up, and God came and made it right, and we messed up, and God came and made it right, and we messed up, and God came and made it right, and we messed up, and God came and made it right, and we messed up, and God came and made it right, and that's beautiful news for you because you mess up, and God will come and make it right.

Some of us need to hear that. This is what all Scripture teaches, is you can be like a dog and continue to return to your vomit, like an addict continuing to turn to what you are addicted to. And there's not a number of times that God will not come back and meet you where you are to make it right for you. And some of you, for whatever reason, need a calendar flip to be reminded of that and to say, I gotta do better. And the beautiful news is that God is here to meet with you here and now.

And so finally, how does the Bible equip you and I for good works? The truth is that everybody's being disciplined by something. Whether you realize it or not, you are learning something every single day, and so it's, again, not a matter of if you're learning, but what are you learning and who are you learning from? And is what you're learning equipping you to do good work?

I remember growing up in school and when I was going through basic math, I was like, I'm going to use this later in life. And I do. I'd use basic math in financing, when I'm going through fantasy football projections, all the really important stuff, right? But when I got to calculus and trigonometry, I'm like, I don't think I'm ever going to use this. And spoiler alert, I'm right. And neither of you, unless you teach it, which again, is like the only way you'll ever use it.

But anyway, what are you learning? Some of it's useful. Some of it's not so useful. We're all being disciplined by something or someone. Where are you spending your time? Who are you listening to? Social media can be a great blessing, but it also can be a pretty awful teacher if, if you're spending more time being taught by it than being taught by God's word.

Because when you spend more time being taught by social media, you learn how to compare yourself to others and feel like you're less than rather than what the word teaches you is that you are enough in Christ and we are to celebrate others' uniqueness. Social media will teach you how to argue fast and gain a following where the word of God will teach you how to be slow to speak and quick to listen.

Social media will teach you how to follow your heart and you do you and, and scripture will teach you that you are called to follow under Jesus Christ. Social media will teach you how to hashtag YOLO, whereas God will teach you that heaven is your home and you're here for just a couple of nights.

So why is the Bible useful for teaching and equipping you and I for good works? Because as we open it, we learn from the one who created us and we connect to him. We who were made in his image get reconnected. He meets us here again and these things happen. Our past gets redeemed. Our present gains purpose and our future shines with hope and we all need that on the inside because what happens on the inside so that will get expressed on the outside.

The more you learn about who you are and who God made you to be will well up into good works that get done on the outside that show others who God is and that's what you're here for and we all need our past redeemed. We all need more clarity in our present and how we live out our vocations in life

and we all need to be reminded of a future that shines bright. I need this message as much today as you do.

I need to be challenged to get back to hear the words of God. There's been seasons and days, weeks and months of my life where I do it well and there've been other seasons where I don't do it well and the enemy is quick to accuse and make me feel like an imposter and scream loudly to me that Zach, you're better at teaching other people to get in the Bible than even you know how to get in it yourself and I wish I could say that that was a lie. It's the truth but no matter how long I've been away, when I open this word, I made a mess of it and God came to make it right.

I messed up and God came to make it right. I made a fool of myself. God came to make me right and his word still works. I think as you embark on a new year, awesome. Try to lose 15 pounds. Try to increase your net worth by 15% this year. Plan the greatest 15-day vacation your family's ever seen. I don't know what your goals are. There's not a greater goal that you could have in 2026 and beyond to say, I'm going to open this up every day and I'm going to hear from God because God's word works. God speaks.

And if you need one more reminder of that, I'll let the word speak for itself. Isaiah 55, 11, so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve for the purpose for which I sent it. Whether you're in a city of one person or surrounded by others, God's word works, speaks to you.

And so let 2026 be the year of the Bible for you. No more playing around. Let's get back to who we are, who we were made to be. Let's hear the voice of God. And I wonder when we do, how much God will do in your life and in our life collectively. I wonder how many, how many dreams and visions and opportunities and how much reconciliation and redemption and forgiveness will happen this year as you, amen, as you and as we open God's word together.

Let me pray for you. God, we thank you for speaking. We thank you that you meet us in our failure. I thank you for your forgiveness and redemption in my story. I thank you for the forgiveness and redemption of everyone under the sound of my voice right now. You are a good God that will meet us, speak with us.

As we hear from you, God, embolden us and fill us so powerfully with your Holy spirit that we can't help but do every good work you made for us in this year and beyond. It's in your name we pray and together the church says, amen.