

Kasama Youth Conference 1:

Keep the Word of God in your heart.

Introduction

Mwashibukeni mukwai (Guten Morgen),
Cungulopo mukwai (Guten Nachmittag!)
mwapoleni mukwai (Guten Tag)

My name is Michael Kozel, I am 25 years old. I became a Christian 1999 right before my final exams. I belong to a Brethren Church in Southern Germany. I am a student at University to become a teacher in computer science, Mathematics and Physics. Together with a few other Christians I am leading a youth group. The youth group has about 30-40 members.

Today I want to talk about a young man and a very special instruction that his former teacher had given him. I know that you all want to learn more about Jesus and how we can follow Him in the right way and the same is true for me.

I think you have already learned something about Timothy, the young man I want to talk about.

This young man learned to know the Lord when he was very young, because his grandmother and mother told him about God and the law of God written in the Old Testament. One day there came to his home-town a great teacher of scripture and talked about the fulfilling of the scripture in a man called Jesus Christ and he talked about this man as Master and Lord of everything. Indeed he told them that Jesus would be the expected Messiah and the holy son of God. Timothy learned more and more about and from this man called Paul. A few years later he went on mission trips with this man and grew up near this apostle. He started to work for and then with him and later Timothy was able to work without Paul.

Within the last letter of Paul, Timothy got many instructions of which I want to share one with you.

It is about keeping the word of God in our heart, for it is able to change us and people around us.

Body

First we want to read the text, so that we all know what I am talking about.
2 Timothy 3:10-11a + 14-17

I want to cut the text in 4 parts.

1. 10-11a: Look at those who already follow Jesus!
2. 14-15: Continue in what you have learned about God!
3. 15-16: God gives His word to change us!
4. 17: God gives His word to equip us!

1. Look at those who already follow Jesus!

Read 10-11a again.

Paul told Timothy that he would know everything about him. Timothy lived with Paul quite a long time. It is very usual to know someone you have worked with for months or even years. I don't know how it is here, but in Germany I have the chance to work within a youth leaders team. Some of the members I know very well, for we often work together, sit together and talk to each other about very private things and problems.

One time we were for instance on a mission trip called "Strandmission", "Beach Mission" in English. We told children the Gospel on campsites near the beach in Northern Germany. Or we talked to their parents or even to people on the streets. In Germany you are allowed to talk about Jesus, but sometimes I felt like suffering for Jesus if someone rebuked the message, the Gospel of the Lord.

We did not sleep a lot and you get to know someone very deeply if you are working near him and he has not slept enough.

Timothy was quite in the same situation or even in harder situations with Paul on the second and third mission journey through South-Western Asia and Southern Europe. Timothy listened to the teachings of Paul very carefully in order to teach others some times later. Timothy looked at the life of Paul and perhaps he wondered if Paul would truly live the high standards he was preaching. But Paul proved himself as a faithful worker of Christ Jesus.

Timothy learned from him how to live near Jesus. It was a life of prayer through the grace of God. If you would have asked Paul: "How often do you pray a day?" He would probably have said: "In the morning and in the evening and the whole time in between."

Paul was driven by the goal of telling the Gospel of the grace of Jesus the living Lord and son of God. I know that many of you have the same goal. Sometimes I miss this goal in my life for I am more like a teacher to the believers rather than telling the Gospel to unbelievers. Paul was driven by the goal to do both, telling the Gospel to unbelievers and to teach the believers.

Faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions and sufferings also took a big part within the life of Paul. Timothy learned all this when he worked near his teacher.

Timothy learned of someone who already followed the Lord Jesus with all of his heart.

This is the first point I want to tell you out of this short passage:

Learn from those who already live near the Lord.

Listen to their teachings.

Look how they live.

Try to find their goals and follow the same in your life.

Look at their faith and how they handle struggles within their faith;

look at their patience if something does not work the way it should work.

Do they show the love of Christ to their fellow Christians?

Do they persevere in hardships?

Are they persecuted because they follow Christ and how do they handle it?

Do they suffer for Christ?

Some of those things you won't see if you are not near to a person. But it is good and necessary to look at people who already follow Jesus with all of their heart. Ask them how they handle different things and how they live.

2. Continue in what you have learned about God!

But only looking at people is not good. Man can fail and fall. I sometimes do things I should not do, although I know that Jesus really wants me to do it another way. Jesus loves me and He is greater than any sin, but I sometimes do fall. I don't know how it is in your lives.

Do you always do the right things?

I do not, but I try with the help of my Lord Jesus.

Paul told Timothy that he was to keep what he had learned about God from other believers. Timothy was taught the Old Testament since his early childhood. He was convinced of every word and saying and he should follow it:

Read 14-15.

It is about the bible, the scripture-passages he had learned. Timothy went to such a thing like Sunday school at his home-town's synagogue. His mother was a Jude and his grandmother, too. His father was a Greek man and probably believed in many idols, but Timothy was taught everything written in the law of the Old Testament.

When Paul came the first time in the early 40s after Christ to his home-town Lystra, Timothy was a young boy, but well educated in scripture by the synagogue teachers and his mother and grandmother. He listened to the preaching of Paul and maybe he gave his life to the Lord Jesus this first time he met Paul.

About five or ten years later Paul went again to Lystra and Timothy had learned enough to help Paul. Now Timothy was a young man in the same age like you are. Later Timothy learned much more from Paul.

The point is that Timothy had learned already a lot and already lived in what he had learned. He was to continue.

You see, for me it was different. I got to know the Lord Jesus when I was 19 years old, in 1999. I never went to a Sunday school when I was a child. Because my parents did not go to church. I did not know much about God, the bible or even real Christians.

Only 6 years ago I started learning from the bible, church services, youth group, Christian books and older Christians. Later on I attended a short-term bible school for 3 months to learn more about Jesus and I still read the whole bible once a year.

It is the way I learn more about my Lord Jesus. And I now have to continue living in it like Timothy. Whether you start early or late in life to learn about God. God wants us to continue in living in what we have already learned.

But I think the next part of the sentence is even more interesting: "... and have become convinced of..." Timothy was convinced of these things he had learned.

I often ask myself if I am convinced of everything which I have been told. I am a student at University of Karlsruhe in Germany. All students are taught to ask themselves and the teachers if something said to us is true or not. We have to convince ourselves and later others of the things we found when we study and explore new things...

I know that God says what is true for He is the truth, but is it right what man says about God and His scripture?

But let's talk about God's word later. Now it is about what believers said to us. In chapter 2 Paul told Timothy to think over every teaching of Paul and to ask God and then God will show it to Timothy. I want to read 2 Timothy 2:7. We are to reflect everything what men are saying. We can do so if we live in a close relationship to God.

First of all it's God and not man is able to show us what is true or false.

On the other hand we also know of whom we learn. Timothy knew Paul and his mother and grandmother. He knew that they were teaching the right things and did not want to lie on him. Think about who told you these things. Reflect them when you are near to God in your prayers.

(About 1500 years earlier God told nearly the same thing to a man called Joshua. Joshua was to conquer Canaan and to fulfil the judgement of God on the people in this country. The opposite army was much stronger than his and better equipped. But the Lord told him what we can read in Joshua 1:8-9. Joshua was to meditate about the law God gave to Mose and to do what he had learned out of it. And God said to him: "I will give you more than you need if you do this. Be courageous and do what you learned from me..."
Back to Timothy,)

Timothy had learned from believers he knew and was convinced himself about everything he had learned. He was to continue what he learned from his early childhood.

3. God gives His word to change us!

But who is the real teacher?

Who has inspired the book of teaching and for what can we use it?

Let's read it in 15-16

All scripture is able to make you wise. Proverbs says the beginning of all wisdom is to fear God (Prov. 9:10). This wisdom will lead directly to the salvation through the faith in Jesus Christ. In the bible you find everything what is necessary to see the salvation only through faith and through Jesus and not of our works or anything else.

We talked about learning from the men who follow Jesus already. But it is even better to learn from the origin. God breathed wisdom in the scripture and helped the writers to lay down His ideas. It is really God's own word we have here in our hands. If there are any mistakes at all I am sure they are a matter of human failing when translating it.

All scripture, the whole holy bible is God-breathed and in this way it is alive.

In the beginning God formed man and he was just clay, but at the moment God breathed into the nose of the man, the man became a living soul. The bible is also God-breathed and so alive. God is breathing through His word and is talking to us, like we are talking to each other.

But this word is completely true and without any bad or godless chatter. This word is useful or able to change you and people around you.

God's word is the foundation of every teaching about how God and man are. If you want to know how God is, ask the bible and God will show it to you. If you want to know how you can come to God and how the relation to Him can grow, ask the bible and do what you read.

Thank God for what He has done and shown in the bible to us.

If someone, even a highly recognised teacher, is failing in living a Godly way, the bible will help us to rebuke him. We are even able to be rebuked by God Himself through His word.

In the bible it is not a man who rebukes us. It is God Himself showing His will to us, for He wants to give us the very best. Sometimes this means to be rebuked for us to come back to the right and good way of God.

The bible is very useful to correct and adjust our way of living the faith. I often pray that someone helps me to correct my way of living by telling me the words of God. I pray to God that He might show me in His word, what I am doing wrong to Him.

God gives His word to change me and you.
He gives us guidelines to follow.

I think all of you know banknotes. They often have some security features on them like a watermark or something else. You do not have to know what might be wrong, you only have to know what is right. Everything what is not like the original right banknote is probably a wrong banknote.
There is no need to know every wrong teaching.
If we know the bible we are able to correct our lives by adjusting it according to the words of God.

God also gives a training-programme of what righteousness is in His eyes. There is no possibility to earn righteousness by doing something. God has done everything and is granting us His righteousness through the cross, where Jesus died and so paid for us.

I am not able to read or even speak Greek the original language of this letter, but I have learned something about the Greek word for righteousness which is used here.

It really means:

Righteousness is a free gift granted by God on one hand and on the other hand it makes me live according to God's thoughts.

We have to train this.

It won't happen by accident.

God gives his word as a foundation of this training in living in His righteousness.

God's word is able and useful to change every part of my life, of your life and of every person around you, for it is the living word and He is talking directly through it.

4. God gives His word to equip us!

We are to use these possibilities in our lives.

I want to read the last verse of this chapter again 17.

God gave His word to us for we should be very well equipped to do what ever He wants us to do.

(In Ephesians 6 the word of God is compared with a sword, a weapon, as a part of the equipment of a soldier.

In chapter 2 Paul compared Timothy with a soldier for Jesus and he also was to wear the equipment. A soldier without a weapon cannot not really work as a soldier.)

God wants us to be well equipped to do His work.

An evangelist without knowledge about God from the word of God is a handicapped worker for the Lord.

A bible teacher without a bible is like a doctor without medicine or a craftsman without his tools.

They all know what they want to do, but they can not do it without their equipment;

they are not able to do it at all.

If we use the bible and know it, we are well equipped to do every good work of God.

We know who we serve;

we know for what we serve;

and in some things we learn how to serve and where to ask for help.

But we also have to train how to use the bible to do the work to change us and others.

This means:

We are to read in the bible or to listen to someone reading the bible aloud.

We have to think about it,

praying about things we learned or those we do not yet understand.

(If you want to beet a nail into a wall with a hammer, be careful or you might get injured or destroy the wall.

It's quite the same with the bible. Use it carefully and train on it by reading, listening and thinking about what you have learned and you will be equipped for every good work.)

Conclusion

I want to come to an end and conclude what I have said.

What Paul wrote to Timothy is as important for us, than it was for Timothy.

We are to look at those who already follow Jesus with all of their heart.

We should learn from them in every part of our lives.

They are perhaps a few steps ahead of us in following Jesus.

But we also have to continue in what we have learned about God from His believers!

It is not only looking at the lives of people its also listening to men and women of God.

We have to reflect every word and teaching of man.

We have to pray and think it over within a close relation to God.

We also have God's thoughts written down by man.

It's alive through the breathing of God:

God gives His word, the holy bible, to change you and people around you!

God made His word alive to teach and to correct us and to show us how to live.

God gives His word, for we should be equipped to do His work!

God wants us to serve Him and He gives everything what we need to do it.

So be well equipped and learn how to use the word of God by learning from your brothers and sisters in the Lord and by reading and listening to God through the bible.

Pray for wisdom to understand what God wants to tell you through His word and He will show it to you!

Thanks for listening.

I hope we all learn to love the word of God like Paul and Timothy did.

Keep the Word of God in your heart

AMEN.