**Reflections 19 Oct to 25 Oct – A toolbox for faith**

**Bible study on 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Wanting to know you more,
**we gather as God’s people.**
As broken and sinful people,
**we gather as God’s people.**
Looking for healing and hope,
**we gather as God’s people.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**

Timothy’s faith is grounded in the Jews’ ‘sacred writings’ (v.15; cf 2 Timothy 1:5) – not ‘the Old Testament’ or ‘the Bible’ as a whole, because these definitive collections have not yet been created. ‘Scripture’ (v.16) probably refers to Jewish writings translated from Hebrew into Greek during the second century BC for the benefit of Greek speaking Jews like Timothy’s family, who belonged to the large Jewish diaspora living around the Mediterranean. Other writings composed in Greek were also included in this ‘Septuagint’ (so-called because 70 translators were involved): some of them (e.g. Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus) are found in our ‘Apocrypha’. The earliest Christians used these Greek writings as their Scriptures and regarded them as ‘inspired’ (v.16). This word translates theopneustos (‘God-breathed’), which could refer to the origins of Scripture, or to the work of the Spirit when Scriptures are read and heard. Either way, Timothy should treasure these Scriptures as a gift of the Spirit.

Timothy’s task is to ‘proclaim the message’ of Scripture-based faith in Jesus Christ, however inconvenient this might be for his audience. Mostly they will need encouragement, but correction is called for when they ‘wander away to myths’ (4:4). In the Pastoral Epistles these are false beliefs, rather than stories with profound spiritual or psychological meaning. (They developed even further a century after Paul in what we now call ‘Gnosticism’ and often undermined belief in God as Creator.) Myths like these have serious implications for spirituality that respects the goodness of the material world, which if anything is even more important in our day in the face of environmental abuse and climate destruction. The Scriptures are an important toolbox for faith in every generation.

 **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Every workman needs to have the right tools for the job. The Bible can be seen as a toolbox, full of items for our spiritual life. What might be in it?

* Like a saw, the Bible teaches persistence – you just need to keep going.
* Like a spanner, it teaches humility – sometimes we need to change our fixed view and make an adjustment.
* A spirit level reminds us to hold steady and onto God’s Word in the ups-and-downs of life.
* A tape measure: how do our attitudes and actions measure up against the Bible’s teaching?
* A hammer may remind us to be persistent (like the widow in our Gospel reading) and not give up in our Christian life when things are difficult.

Which one do you need today?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* How often do you read (or listen to) the Bible?
* What are your go-to or favourite Bible verses? How do these help you?
* What’s in your toolbox of faith?

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

Almighty heavenly Father,
you are always faithful to us.
Help us to stay connected to you
through our prayer and reading of your Scriptures.
Help us, O Lord, to set aside times in our busy lives
to devote ourselves fully to you.
**Amen.**