

From the Feed to the Word

CONNECTED #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 19, 2026 - 2 Timothy 3:14-17

INTRO: Good morning church! Today we are starting a new 4-week series entitled: “**CONNECTED: Finding Real Community in a Digital World.**” Church, we’re more connected than ever and yet lonelier than ever. Though technology can draw us together it often pushes us apart. But the answer isn’t just ditching our devices; it’s rediscovering the kind of connection we were actually made for: with God and with each other.

And to those of you here for the first time, who brought your kids to KidzFest this week, we are so glad you’re here. Your children have been in this building all week, learning and singing at the top of their lungs. Thank you for trusting us with them.

- We had _____ (Wilson) and _____ (RM) attend KidzFest this week. That’s _____ kids!
- We had _____ (Wilson) and _____ (RM) respond to the Good News about Jesus this week!
- We had _____ (Wilson) and _____ (RM) volunteers serving at KidzFest this week! Thank you!
- And thank you to those who are giving generously to our **It’s Time** initiative, which funded our community engagement for this event!

We go all out for kids because we love them and want them to know and follow Jesus! Which makes this a good morning to talk about something every parent in this room is probably already thinking about. And that’s how much time we and our kids spend staring at screens (hold up phone).

NEED: This past May, a warning was issued titled the: “Surgeon General’s Warning on the Harms of Screen Use.”

“Children today spend more time on screens than sleeping, exercising, or engaging face-to-face with family and friends — and we are seeing the consequences in rising rates of anxiety, depression, obesity, and developmental challenges.” — Surgeon General (<https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/secretary-kennedy-announces-hhs-action-reduce-harmful-screen-use-protect-children-online.html>)

The advisory puts adolescents at 7 to 9 hours a day on entertainment screens, and says most of them are on their devices right before bed. In 2015, it was 6 hours and 40 minutes. It’s increased over 2 hours a day since.

Now, some of you are doing the math on yourself right now, and I’ll go first: my own number is not where I’d like it to be. This isn’t a sermon only about kids. Kids are just where it is most concerning because they are still developing.

Here’s what the advisory tells parents to watch for. And notice: it isn’t just the hours. - It’s irritability when the device is taken away. - Secrecy about what’s happening online. - Withdrawal from everything offline. And repeated attempts to cut back that don’t work. Parents, that’s not only a screen-time problem. That’s a bondage problem. Those are the marks of something that owns you.

There’s even a word for it now: Nomophobia. “No mobile phone phobia.” The anxiety you feel at the thought of being without your phone. Dead battery, no signal, left it at home. Psychologists describe real symptoms: agitation, racing heart, panic. We have invented a device our bodies now grieve the absence of.

Jonathan Haidt (pronounced “Height”) is a social psychologist at NYU. Not a Christian, a scientist reading the data:

“My central claim in this book is that these two trends—overprotection in the real world and underprotection in the virtual world—are the major reasons why children born after 1995 became the anxious generation.”
— Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*

We live in a world where a 12 year-old can’t walk to the park alone, but can carry the entire internet into his bedroom at midnight. We locked the front door and left the back door standing wide open! Because a feed is not neutral. A feed is not a window you look through — it’s a hand that reaches back. Every one of those hours, something on the other side of that glass is learning your child. Learning what makes her stop scrolling, what makes her anxious, what makes her compare herself to someone she’s never met. And then it gives her more of it. Not because it hates her. Because it wants her to linger and... stay.

You cannot give anything eight hours a day and remain unchanged by it. Your children are being formed. Right now. By something that does not know them and has never once wanted anything good for them.

From the Feed to the Word

CONNECTED #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 19, 2026 - 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Trans: But this is not a new problem. It's an old ache in new clothes. Listen to the apostle John, an old man, the last living apostle, finishing a letter:

2 John 12 (ESV) Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

John put his finger on something 2000 years ago: some things only travel face to face.

So the answer isn't to throw your phone in a lake, or smash it in the driveway. The answer is to know what you were made for, and go after it. For that, we go back to the very first church, on the very first day:

Series Theme: Acts 2:42 (ESV) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Four weeks and four devotions. That's our series. And what we'll find is real connection, the kind you were created for, the kind your kids are aching for... And it was never something we invented, or something we can download. It was given. So let's start where they started: they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, which is God's Word.

BODY: In the apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, he urged Timothy to remain devoted to the Scriptures he had learned and firmly believed since childhood. As believers, we are called to be devoted to God's Word. Why are we to devote ourselves to God's Word? The text gives three reasons we are to devote ourselves to God's Word.

Today's text: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (ESV) ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

WHY BE DEVOTED TO GOD'S WORD:

1. Because it leads us to Christ.

EXP: (14-15) Paul began with, "But as for you." This distinguished Timothy from the false teachers and deceivers described in the preceding verses. Others might wander from truth, but Timothy was to "continue" in it.

"Continue in" (3:14) (μένω, *menō*) (**Imperative**) - to remain, abide; not to depart, to continue to be present. Timothy is not being told to discover something new but to remain faithful to what he already knows.

"Learned" (14) (μανθάνω, *manthanō*) - to increase one's knowledge. Timothy's knowledge was not merely intellectual; it was the result of years of faithful instruction in God's truth.

"Firmly believed" (14) (πιστόω, *pistōō*) - to make faithful, render trustworthy, to make firm, establish.

"Knowing from whom" (14) - Paul reminds Timothy that the Word came to him through faithful people.

"Childhood" (15) (βρέφος, *brephos*) - a child, an infant. Timothy learned Scripture from the cradle:

2 Timothy 1:5 (ESV) I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

"Sacred writings" (15) (ἱερός, *hieros*) - sacred, consecrated writings, the Scriptures.

"Wise for salvation" (15) (σωτηρία, *sōtēria*) - deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation

"Faith in Christ Jesus" (15) (πίστις, *pistis*) - same word from v.14. Faith, belief. Trust.

ARG: Your feed can entertain you, but it cannot save you! Only the Word reveals our salvation in Christ!

John 5:39-40 (ESV) You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

ILL: Google Maps can lead you to a place, but only God's Word can lead you to a Person! The Word makes you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

APP: Ask yourself: Which receives my first attention each day, the feed or the Word? Is God's Word regularly leading me back to Jesus? Am I reading the Bible merely for information, or to know Christ?

From the Feed to the Word

CONNECTED #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 19, 2026 - 2 Timothy 3:14-17

2. Because it speaks with God's authority.

EXP: (16) The phrase “breathed out by God” describes Scripture’s divine origin. Scripture came through human writers, yet its ultimate source and authority is God Himself.

“**All Scripture**” (16) (γραφή, *graphē*) - a writing, thing written; the Scripture.

“**Breathed out by God**” (16) (θεόπνευστος, *theopneustos*) - literally God’s breath; inspiration of God. A *hapax legomenon*. “Thus, God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life Genesis 2:7, and thus the Saviour breathed on his disciples, and said, ‘receive ye the Holy Ghost,’ John 20:22.” — *Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*

“**Profitable**” (16) (ὠφέλιμος, *ōphelimos*) - helpful or serviceable, advantageous; profit(-able).

“**Teaching**” (16) (διδασκαλία, *didaskalia*) - instruction; doctrine, **Teaching** tells us what is right.

“**Reproof**” (16) (ἐλεγχος, *elegchos*) - proof, conviction, evidence, **Reproof** shows us what is wrong.

“**Correction**” (16) (ἐπανόρθωσις, *epanorthōsis*) - **Correction** restores us back on the right path.

“**Training**” (16) (παιδεία, *paideia*) - tutorage. **Training** teaches us how to remain on that path.

“**Righteousness**” (16) (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaiosynē*) - righteousness, the condition acceptable to God.

ARG: God's Word is more powerful than any algorithm!

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV) For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

ILL: - I spent years in retail before God called me into ministry, and let me tell you what every retailer on earth knows: the customer is always right. That's not a moral principle. It's a business model. It means: agree with them. Find out what they want and give it to them, because if you don't, they'll leave. The feed runs on that model. Keep them happy. Keep them here. Because the exit is one thumb-swipe away.

- Now think about your doctor. If you go to a doctor and he looks at your chart and says, "Everything you're doing is fine, keep it up, that'll be \$200." You feel great walking out of there. You feel terrible 18 months later, in a hospital bed, wondering why nobody told you. A good doctor tells you the thing you did not want to hear. He tells you the number you were hoping he wouldn't say.

Your feed is a salesman. God's Word is a physician. Only one of them is telling you the truth.

APP: So here's the diagnostic. When was the last time your Bible told you something you didn't want to hear? Let's not merely read the Word. Let's allow the Word to read us. We must let it: Teach our minds, Expose our sins, Correct our paths, and Train our lives. The goal is not to have Scripture agree with us. The goal is to bring our lives into agreement with God's Word.

3. Because it equips us for God's work.

EXP: (17) Here's the purpose clause. Everything in v.16 was aiming at this. “In order that you may be complete.”

“**Complete**” (17) (ἄριστος, *artios*) - fitted; complete, perfect, finished.

“**Equipped for every good work**” (17) (ἐξαρτίζω, *exartizō*) - thoroughly furnish, fully equipped. The image is that of a worker whose toolbox contains everything needed for the job or a soldier fully outfitted for battle. Scripture supplies everything necessary for faithful living and ministry.

ARG: The goal of Scripture is not merely information, but transformation that leads to participation in God's mission.

James 1:22 (ESV) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

From the Feed to the Word

CONNECTED #6 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 19, 2026 - 2 Timothy 3:14-17

ILL: Think of a fire station. Everything in that building is preparation. The gear on the hooks. The drills. The maintenance on the truck. The training hours. Every bit of it exists for a moment that hasn't happened yet. Now imagine a fire department that never left the station. Best-equipped crew in the state. Gear immaculate. Every certification current. They just... never go. The bell rings, but no one moves out the door. You'd say that's not a fire department. That's a very expensive club. But the gear and training is not the point. The gear is beautiful and necessary and you'd better have it, but the gear exists for the door. Verse 17 is the door: Complete, equipped for every good work.

Some of us have been in the station for years. Best-equipped Christians in America. And the bell has been ringing the whole time.

APP: When we are devoted to God's Word, not only hearing it, reading it, and studying it, but also doing it... we will be "complete, equipped for every good work." We'll be able and willing to answer the bell! So who is the Spirit's bell ringing for you to notice? To go talk to? To comfort and be a friend?

CONCLUSION: Our feeds promise connection, but they often leave us distracted, divided, and spiritually hungry. God's Word offers something deeper:

1. The Word leads us to Christ.
2. The Word speaks with God's authority.
3. The Word equips us for God's work.

So the invitation today is not necessarily to throw away your phone. It is to examine what or who has your devotion? Your feed is constantly being refreshed, but it can never refresh your soul. Only Jesus can do that.

Go back to v.15, because Paul put something there that guards this whole passage from becoming a burden.

"...able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

The Scriptures don't save you. Your devotion to the Scriptures doesn't save you. Your reading plan doesn't save you. Christ saves you, and the Scriptures are how you come to faith in him.

And I need you to hear this, because some of you are thinking about the 7-9 hours a day you spend scrolling. You're thinking about the Bible on the nightstand with dust on the cover. You're thinking, I'm the one he's talking about. And the enemy would love for you to walk out of here today with nothing but a resolution to try harder.

But try harder is not the gospel. Try harder has never made anybody complete. Here's the gospel. There is a Word that was breathed out, and there is a Word that took on flesh.

John 1:1-2, 14 (ESV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Do you see it? God had been speaking for 2000 years. Through Moses, the prophets, the law, the psalms, breathing out his Word, page after page. And it was true, all of it, every word. But it was still ink. It was still paper. And then one day God came in Person. The Word became flesh.

That Word is Jesus Christ. And He not only came, He went to the cross and bled and died for our sins, was buried and raised to life on the third day for our salvation.

So we don't come to this Book to earn anything. We come the way you come to a table someone else set. We come hungry and He fills us. We come lost and He finds us. We come surrendering and He saves us!

Why be devoted to God's Word? Because He spoke. Because the God who made the galaxies decided that you specifically should hear his voice, and he breathed out words so you could. Because every page of it is aimed at a Person, and that Person is Jesus. Do you know Him today? Let's pray.