

"Whatever"

Many people say there is a God, but they're not sure about the truth. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Someone has called this the "whatever" generation because people accept whatever morals or ideas they hear. Is this wise?

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. I love the Bible, because it reveals God's eternal, unchangeable teaching. God's Word is never fickle. And since God's Word doesn't change, we can count on His promises to remain true. When God promises to forgive sins, we can be forgiven. When God promises the obedient a home in heaven, we can freely choose to be obedient and enjoy that promise. Thanks so much for joining us today; we want to hear from you and be part of your life each week.

The Academy at West Point has a simple but rigorous honor code. It simply says, "A Cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do." Honesty and integrity have always been vital to our nation's military. I wonder how important it is to the rest of us. Sometimes gullible and often deceived, people today seem ready to believe whatever they like, whether it's true or not. Many have stopped distinguishing between truth and falsehoods. Many have stopped distinguishing between what is morally right and wrong. They are content to believe "whatever" and are undisturbed when "whatever" is absurd, shameful, or harmful.

In a pluralistic society, where people feel pressured to believe everything is okay, many believe all religions are the same and they end up believing in nothing with any conviction. Many have ceased to search for the truth and to love it. If every belief is true, then no belief can be counted on as right. Nothing matters. People who say all religions are okay have bought into religious confusion. And what has happened to loving the truth enough to search what God says? What's happened? If we believe everything we hear, we cannot be faithful to the teaching of the Lord Jesus?

Now if you'd like to dig deeper into this topic, we offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream our programs on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 2:6-8, and search for truth rather than settle for "whatever."

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the church at Colossae chapter 2 Colossians chapter 2 verses 6-8. Colossae was a small town on the road to somewhere else and people would come through and speak about all kinds of strange things and Paul was calling them back to the Bible.

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." We need to take that warning seriously and stay with Christ. Let's pray together.

"Heavenly Father, we're thankful that your Word gives us the truth that we need, to know what you'd have from us and to be able to distinguish truth from error. Help us to stand firm in the things you have taught and to do your will always. In Jesus' name, amen."

Colossae was a small town in the Lycus River valley on the main route from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Now other nearby cities were larger and more important. Colossae had lost much of its importance. Romans and Greeks had transplanted there, and Jews lived there, and the frequent visitors made it a place susceptible to every new idea that came along. Paul wrote the Colossian letter to deal with a strange doctrine arising among some members of the church. He warned them of the false teaching and a worldly philosophy that was deceiving them.

God's Word says in Colossians 2:1-8: "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Smooth talking strangers can easily fool a naïve person with false promises and worldly traditions that sound promising. Paul warned them not to be fooled by empty human traditions that are false. Instead, Paul pointed them to the truth found in Jesus Christ.

Learning to distinguish what is true from what is false is one of the most important achievements of life. Some traditions are true, while others are false. A tradition is merely a belief or a practice that has been passed down from one generation to the next. When a belief is false in one generation, it will be false in the next; but if the second generation has never heard anything but this falsehood, it will assume what it heard was true. Once a deceptive tradition becomes accepted and passed down from generation to generation that idea becomes rooted in people's hearts. So, people are convinced of a lie, think it's the truth, and remain in error. This even happens among religious people. And I think, how sad!

Disbelief is the rejection and refusal to accept a belief. To disbelieve in Jesus is to reject him as the Son of God. Well, this might come in the form of denying His miracles or refusing to believe in His resurrection. It also might come in the form of refusing to believe what He teaches. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:48 that, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." Failure to believe Jesus' teaching is a serious matter. Many people will find themselves rejected on the last day because they failed to believe what Jesus teaches.

People misbelieve when they are convinced that something untrue is nonetheless correct. To deceive is to cause someone to believe a lie and then be in error and they not know it. The Lord Jesus condemns those who teach falsehoods and errors. Paul was shocked when some false teachers were misleading the churches of Galatia. And in strong language, the apostle of the Lord said in Galatians 1:6-9, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I

say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

Why did Paul say teaching a false gospel leads one to be accursed? Because changing what God teaches leads people to believe a lie. When people follow something other than God’s teaching, they believe a lie and they separate themselves from God. Satan separates people from God by deceiving them with a counterfeit religion. The Lord Jesus said this about the devil in John 8:44 that, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” The devil lied to Eve, led her to sin against God, and to die spiritually and physically. Lies still lead people into sin and spiritual death. You see it matters what you believe and whether you listen to the Lord.

People are deceived by all kinds of falsehoods and half-truths. A half-truth is when someone tells you a truthful fact that leaves out other relevant information. For instance, it was true Sarah was Abraham’s half-sister. Sarah was also Abraham’s wife. So, when Abraham was afraid and told Pharaoh Sarah was his sister, he was only half right. Abraham’s lie caused lots of trouble. Half-truths are dangerous lies. There is enough truth to fool people into accepting them, but there is enough falsehood to lead to destruction. A Christian must be very careful to examine everything he hears.

Some false prophets in the days of Jeremiah began fabricating prophecies. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 23:16, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD.’” False prophets in every age have led countless souls away from the will of God. We, we don’t want to be led into error and lose our souls. And this is why we must examine everything carefully. Acts 17:11 says, “Now these [speaking of the Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” And we, too, should test every belief by God’s Holy Word to see what is true and what is false.

And we hurt ourselves greatly when we lie to ourselves. God said in Jeremiah 17:9-10, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” and then the Lord says, “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.” Some human traditions convince our hearts to accept what we want to hear rather than what God says. If we listen to our hearts and desires rather than to the Lord, we can easily do the wrong thing spiritually, morally, or practically. Solomon said in Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

When people wish something to be acceptable to believe or practice, they can justify it in their own minds. Their desires can lead them to deceive themselves. They set their minds to follow this error and don’t want to repent. They must discover their errors the hard way. The prodigal son was like that. He had to have his inheritance and live life the way he wanted. So, when his father gave in, he took his money to a far country, he wasted it in a sinful lifestyle. And he had to ruin himself before he’d admit how foolish and sinful he had been. I hope, my friend, you haven’t allowed your heart to deceive you into making foolish choices. The prodigal son lied to himself until he couldn’t believe his lies anymore. Then he came to his senses, repented, and went home.

Many people are ready to believe a lie if they think the lie will benefit them. In a politically correct world people turn a blind eye to the truth and focus on what is convenient and popular. They’d rather give in to a lie than face embarrassment by taking an unpopular position. Some think it shows wisdom or love to take a position of neutrality on every controversial issue.

Others think we can never determine what is true, so that every view is as good as every other. Now this view is miles away from the heart and the teaching of Jesus. It may appear to accommodate others in love, but this view shows no love to the will of God. You see, God didn't create every religion; and not every religion teaches His will. God wants His people to love Him and love the truth found in His Scriptures!

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

You see being religious doesn't guarantee that one is righteous. Some people say they're saved by faith alone, but the Lord Jesus said one must also do God's will to enter heaven. These people who lived lawless lives deceived themselves into thinking they were still right with God. Jesus, however, told them to depart. He never knew them or had a relationship with them. They could not enter the kingdom of heaven.

You see, it matters what we believe and whether we obey the will of God. For years I've heard people embrace the doctrine of salvation by "faith only." They suggest all one must do to be saved is believe, and once saved always saved and that they cannot be lost. But this doctrine didn't come from Jesus. People who believe in the "faith only" doctrine always have to take it back. They have to admit you can't be saved without loving God, without repenting, or without obeying the Lord Jesus. Faith, yes, is essential, but you have to do more than simply believe in order to please God and be saved.

People say one religion is as good as another and all religions are the same; but the Lord Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The only way to the Father is through Jesus Christ. Again, Acts 4:12 says about Jesus: "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Oh, it's popular to say all religions are the same, but the Scriptures teach otherwise. I choose Jesus.

Why should we confess Jesus as Lord? Why should we serve Him? We serve because we love Him; He died for our sins. We serve Him because Jesus tells the eternal Truth we need to hear. Why would we hold beliefs that change with the wind? William Inge said, "He who marries the spirit of an age soon finds himself to be a widow." We need the eternal truth that doesn't compromise. And you find eternal truth in the words of Jesus. Jesus is our Savior. We want and we need Jesus. Let's pray together.

"Heavenly Father, we're thankful for the words that are found in Scripture. Help us to devote ourselves to the things that we have learned there and to do your will. In Jesus' name, amen."

David wrote in Psalm 103 verses 15 and 16, "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." Life on earth is temporary; we won't live here forever. The devil loves to disturb you about your soul. He'd love to keep you confused about life, about the church, and about the truth. He'd love for you to put off deciding what is true.

When you want to do what is right, the devil will tell you, "later," to get your mind off spiritual things. He doesn't want you thinking about the cross, the church, your salvation, or heaven and hell. He wants you to live for the present and ignore your soul. He wants you to remain confused and apathetic.

Today is the only day you possess to make your soul right with God. Yesterday has passed, and tomorrow is not assured. If you love the Lord and want to be right with Him, put your faith in Him. Repent of sin and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you obey the Lord by repenting and being baptized, God washes away every sin, adds you to His church. You become a child of God and you have the hope of an eternal life. There are no good reasons to think about it "later."

Why not attend one the churches of Christ near you. Tell them that you want to obey the gospel and be right with God. Study with them. Get involved in the church, serve the Lord, and make your faith a priority. Won't you do this today?

We hope today's study has stirred your heart. If you want a free printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Be sure to like the programs you watch; this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. I realize some of you for health reasons cannot attend worship; but, I'm speaking to those who can attend and haven't been there. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So, keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.