

Is the Truth Important?

Most people think that religious truth is relative and determined by what _____ think. Surveys say that only _____ percent believe in absolute truth. Is the truth important? The Lord Jesus in a prayer to the Father said, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your _____ is truth” (John 17:17). Those who are _____ to God must be sanctified or set apart for the truth. God wants His people to be _____ and to know the truth, to love the truth, to practice the truth, and to proclaim the truth everywhere. The Scriptures describe the priest and scribe Ezra, “For Ezra had set his heart to _____ the law of the LORD and to _____ it, and to _____ His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). That’s what we _____ to do with our faith in Jesus Christ. Today, we’re asking the question, “Is the truth important?” Courts convene with a jury _____ to determine the truth about a person’s guilt or innocence. Doctors give blood tests, take X-rays and MRIs, and examine patients to figure out what is truly causing the physical _____. Officials photograph the finish line and time athletes to a thousandth of a second to see who truly _____ the race. Is truth important to courts, doctors, or athletes? Of course.

When some, however, turn to religious matters, they _____ whether truth is important or even knowable? They hear so many voices, they become _____. Frankly, some find being confused or even deceived is _____ than knowing the truth. It seems people feel comfortable ignoring the _____ important truths. One day the only truth that will matter is the truth God has spoken; it will affect the _____ destiny of our souls. We must know what the will of the Lord is, if we are to _____ Him and to live with Him forever.

Our scripture reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 18:33-38.

The book of Proverbs was written by a father to his young adult son, teaching him the _____ necessary to find “favor in the sight of God and man.” He wanted his son to have a safe _____ that would keep him out of trouble. Solomon said, “My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart _____ my commandments; For length of days and years of life, And peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth _____ you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. So that you will find _____ and good repute, In the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your _____, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be _____ in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from _____. It will be healing to your body, And refreshment to your bones” (Proverbs 3:1-8).

For Solomon, truth was very important. He said, “Do not let kindness and truth leave you—bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3). Solomon _____ the “truth,” whether it was truth about morals or truth about God Himself. He knew there were some things that you _____ understand about life and about God. Trust in God and in the truth are inseparably _____. When people leave the truth, they _____ disbelief in what God says. Moses reminds us, that “God is not a man, that He should _____, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not _____ it? Or has He _____, and will He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19). God doesn’t lie; it’s against His very _____ to ever utter a false statement. This explains why Psalm 119:160 says, “The _____ of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.”

Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.

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PO Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 1-800-321-8633

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We can _____ the Word of God to give us what is true, that is, what is consistent with reality and what is actually the case. Solomon advised us, “Buy truth, and do not _____ it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23). Truth is worth our every effort; we should _____ it until we find it. David said, “the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring _____; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant _____; and in keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:9-11).

The mindset of our time is to _____ truth as subjective and disposable. We often _____, “What’s true for you is true for you, and what’s true for me is true for me.” Such a _____ of truth makes it confusing and even worthless. Some are _____ the truth behind altogether. It’s startling that the one who speaks the truth about morals is made into a villain today, while an evildoer is made into some kind of _____. Only the devil and his followers would do that.

The devil wants to _____ everything upside down, making evil into good and good into evil. Paul warned the young preacher Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not endure sound _____, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their _____ passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Timothy 4:1-4). We’re seeing Paul’s prophecy fulfilled today. Religious beliefs are more _____ today than at any time in history. “Designer” churches are popping up everywhere, so people can _____ whatever appeals to them. Such churches are created more after the _____ will than the will of God. They’ve lost sight of putting God’s will at the very _____ of all that they do.

When people leave God’s Word for their own philosophies and desires, they leave the _____. They leave the wisdom and goodness of God behind. God’s Word is _____, yes, because God knows everything and is good. He doesn’t lie, and He means what He _____.

Paul said, “But we have _____ disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to _____ with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2). Paul wasn’t interested in hiding anything or twisting his words around to _____ anyone. He wasn’t underhanded but told things like they were. You can count on what he says, and you can count on God.

To tamper with the Word of God is to distort it in order to make it say what people _____ it to say rather than to listen to what it actually does say. When someone changes God’s Word to fit their own desires, they show that they don’t believe or respect God. Some falsely _____ the Word to their agenda, and others get fooled by their deception. Such cunning to advance a distortion to God’s Word is in Paul’s eyes disgraceful and underhanded. Paul said that we must _____ be ignorant of the devices that Satan uses (2 Corinthians 2:11).

One of Satan’s devices follows a common _____. Satan, first, loves to create _____ in the Word of God. You’ll remember He asked Eve, “Did God _____ say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:2) Satan knew what God had said; and he didn’t want information but he wanted to _____ Eve to doubt what God had said. Doubt is always the first _____ to apostasy. The devil knows that if he can get you to _____ God’s love, wisdom, and truth, that he can get you to follow him to destruction.

Satan, second, _____ what God says. Eve admitted they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that they would die if they did so. But Satan said, "You shall surely ____ die" (Genesis 3:4). Satan wants people to _____ he knows better than we do and even better than God. He wants us to think that he has the _____ track to what is really true, so he contradicts God. The desire to know His secrets, to be one of the elite, to buy into his arrogance, has led many unfortunate souls down the _____ to perdition. Jesus said, "He [that is, the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not _____ in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own _____, for he's a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). You can expect the devil to challenge God at every point.

Adolf Hitler's propaganda minister said, "If you tell a _____ long enough, loud enough, and often enough, the people will believe it. The secret to get someone to _____ a lie is constant repetition. Just tell it over, and over, and over again." The devil has told the same lies for thousands of years, and _____ are still gullible enough to believe them. Satan will tell you what he thinks you want to _____. Eve was deceived by this lie; and Adam was not. Adam knew that eating the fruit was _____, but he followed his wife in rebellion to God. For this reason, Adam actually committed the _____ sin.

Satan, third, produces an _____ version of "truth." He said to Eve, "God knows that when you eat of it that your _____ will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The devil's alternate always _____ truth with error. There's enough truth to _____ persuasive, but his message is full of misrepresentations and distortions. Knowing good and evil meant _____ against God and suffering the consequences of the evil. The devil didn't _____ that. He acted like it was desirable, but Adam and Eve ended up _____ forever from the garden of Eden. They ended up in sin.

Satan often pretends to be _____, yes. Paul described him as he does some _____ teachers he talks about, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an _____ of light. So it's no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as _____ of righteousness. And their end will correspond to their _____" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The devil wants everyone to believe that he's got some better way and God is trying to _____ them. He wants them to think that God is somehow _____ them. His strategy is to get people to _____ upon him [that is, Satan] for real "progress." He says he has a better way than Christ or the church. Remember, he's a liar.

There's nothing _____ than New Testament Christianity. The entertainment religions don't have anything better than congregational _____ in worship. The church growth experts don't have a plan better than _____ the truth in love. You can't _____ on God's way or God's will. The devil will always ask questions to create _____, he'll always contradict the Bible, and he'll always provide some kind of alternative; but the devil delivers a counterfeit religion. Don't fall for it.

Paul warned the elders at Ephesus, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to _____ for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking _____ things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). Through the centuries men have taught _____ doctrines that contradict God's Word and lead people into error and to be lost.

What can we do about it? Paul told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be _____, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Check your preacher out. Ask if he is preaching what God says in the Scriptures or if he's just giving his _____ opinions.

A sweet lady—not a member of the church of Christ—recently told me how much she _____ the program *In Search of the Lord's Way* and how she watched it every Sunday. I thanked her. She explained, "Well, the preacher where I go to church doesn't use the Bible much; he tells lots of _____. I like it when you preach the _____." My friends, as long as there is breath in my body, I intend to _____ God's Word out of the scriptures and not the opinions or stories of men. I'm not interested in alternative religions and their experiences; I want God and His Word to be the _____ of truth for my life. I can count on that. The apostle John, "For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you're _____ in the truth. I have no greater _____ than to hear my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 3-4). There is no greater joy, no greater blessing than having _____ in and following God's word. Truth is important, because it assures us that our _____ are truly forgiven, that Jesus truly will come again and raise us from the dead, and that we have a home in heaven. That is the most important thing of all!

How we _____ the truth of God's Word matters. True disciples make their home in the words of Jesus. The Lord Jesus said to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you _____" (John 8:31-32). When you have _____ than the truth, you have too much; when you have _____ than the truth, you have too little. You need _____ the truth and nothing but the truth. When people won't _____ to God, they'll believe anything that makes them feel good. Solomon's advice to his son is valuable for us too: "Don't let kindness and truth leave you—bind them around your neck, and write them on the tablet of your heart."

Truth is precious. Nothing will set you free but the truth found in God's word! Peter said, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:22-23). It's not enough to simplify, or to simply know the truth, we must obey it as well. We obey the gospel of truth by placing our faith in Christ Jesus, repenting of our sins, by confessing the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and by being baptized (that is, immersed) in water for the forgiveness of our sins. It's in the faithful response of baptism that God causes us to be born again. God at that time gives us newness of life (Romans 6:4). My friend, have you obeyed the truth? Have you been born again?