

"Is the Truth Important?"

Most people think that religious truth is relative and determined by what people think. Surveys say that only 22 percent believe in absolute truth. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Is the truth important?

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Lord Jesus in a prayer to the Father said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." Those who are faithful to God must be sanctified or set apart for the truth. God wants His people to be saved 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 in Ezra 7:10, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel." Well, that's what we seek to do with our faith in Jesus Christ. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Today we're asking the question, "Is the truth important?" Courts convene with a jury trial 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 problem. Officials photograph the finish line and time athletes to a thousandth of a second to see who truly won the race. Is truth important to courts, doctors, or athletes? Of course.

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

We offer this study free on the importance of the truth. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study 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 have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

We'll now worship in song, read from John 18:33 to 38, and explore the importance of God's truth.

Our scripture reading today comes from the gospel according to John, chapter 18, verses 33 to 38. And it talks about Jesus before Pontius Pilate, just before His crucifixion. "Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?' Pilate answered, 'I'm not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.' Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?' And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, 'I find no guilt in Him.'" That's the story before the death of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. "Father, we're grateful for your love and we're grateful for the promises that You give to us. And that You have given us the truth that we might know right from wrong, that we

might know truth from error. And Father help us to be devoted to the truth and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.”

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

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, verse 3). Solomon valued the “truth,” whether it was truth about morals or truth about God Himself. He knew there were some things that you must understand about life and about God. Trust in God and in the truth are inseparably linked. When people leave the truth, they show disbelief in what God says. Moses reminds us in Numbers 23:19, that “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” God doesn’t lie; it’s against His very nature to ever utter a false statement. This explains why Psalm 119:160 says, “The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.”

Now we can trust the word of God to give us what is true, that is, what is consistent with reality and what is actually the case. Solomon in Proverbs 23:23 advised us, “Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.” Truth is worth our every effort; we should pursue it until we find it. David said in Psalm 19:9 to 11, that “the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; 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 warned; and in keeping them there is great reward.”

The mindset of our time is to treat truth as subjective and disposable. We often hear, “What’s true for you is true for you, and what’s true for me is true for me.” Well such a view of truth makes it confusing and even worthless. Some are leaving the truth behind altogether. And 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 hero. Only the devil and his followers would do that.

The devil wants to turn everything upside down, making evil into good and good into evil. Paul warned the young preacher Timothy in 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verses 1 to 4, “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 teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.” Well we’re seeing Paul’s prophecy fulfilled today. Religious beliefs are more divided today than at any time in history. “Designer” churches are popping up everywhere, so people can choose whatever appeals to them. Well such churches are created more after the human will than the will of God. They’ve lost sight of putting God’s will at the very center of all that they do.

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

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 2, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper 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." Paul wasn't interested in hiding anything or twisting his words around to deceive 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 want 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 interpret 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 not be ignorant of the devices that Satan uses (2 Corinthians 2 and verse 11).

One of Satan's devices follows a common pattern. Satan, first, loves to create doubt in the Word of God. You'll remember he asked Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3, verse 2) You see, Satan knew what God had said; and he didn't want information but he wanted to cause Eve to doubt what God had said. Doubt is always the first step to apostasy. Now the devil knows that if he can get you to question God's love, wisdom, and truth, that he can get you to follow him to destruction.

Satan, second, contradicts 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 not die" (Genesis 3, verse 4). Satan wants people to think he knows better than we do and even better than God. He wants us to think that he has the inside tract 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 path to perdition. Jesus said in John 8:44, that "He [that is the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he's a liar and the father of lies." Now you can expect the devil to challenge God at every point.

Adolf Hitler's propaganda minister said, "If you tell a lie long enough, loud enough, and often enough, the people will believe it. The secret to get someone to believe 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 people are still gullible enough to believe them. Satan will tell you what he thinks you want to hear. Now Eve was deceived by this lie; and Adam was not. Adam knew that eating the fruit was wrong, but he followed his wife in rebellion to God. And for this reason, Adam actually committed the greater sin.

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

And Satan often pretends to be holy, yes. And Paul described him as he does some false teachers in 2 Corinthians 11:13 to 15, 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 angel of light. So it's no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. And their end will correspond to their deeds." The devil wants everyone to believe that he's got some better way and God is trying to fool them. He wants them to think that God is somehow cheating them. And his strategy is to get people to rely upon him [that is Satan] for real "progress." And he says he has a better way than Christ or the church. And remember, he's a liar.

There's nothing better than New Testament Christianity. The entertainment religions don't have anything better than congregational singing in worship. The church growth experts don't have a plan better than preaching the truth in love. And you can't improve on God's way or God's will. The devil will always ask questions to create doubt, 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 in Acts 20:28 to 30, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. [Paul said] 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 twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." Through the centuries men have taught strange doctrines that contradict God's word and lead people into error and to be lost.

What can we do about it? Well Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Check your preacher out. Ask if he is preaching what God says in the Scriptures or if he's just giving his own opinions.

A sweet lady—not a member of the church of Christ—recently told me how much she enjoyed the program In Search of the Lord's Way and how she watched it every Sunday. And I thanked her. She explained, "Well the preacher where I go to church doesn't use the Bible much; he tells lots of stories. I like it when you preach the Bible." My friends, as long as there is breath in my body, I intend to preach God's word out of the scriptures and not the opinions or stories of men. I'm not interested in alternative religious and their experiences; I want God and His Word to be the source of truth for my life. I can count on that. The apostle John said in 3 John 3 and 4, "For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you're walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear my children are walking in the truth." There is no greater joy, no greater blessing than having faith in and following God's word. You see, truth is important, because it assures us that our sins 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!

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, we're thankful that You have given us Your word that teaches us the truth and that the sum of Your word is the truth. Help us to be diligent students, to study with all our heart and soul, to know the things that You're teaching. And bless us and be with us. In Jesus name, Amen."

How we view 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 in John 8:31 to 32, that "If you continue [that is] in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." When you have more than the truth, you have too much; when you have less than the truth, you have too little. You need all the truth and nothing but the truth. When people won't listen 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. And nothing will set you free but the truth found in God's word! Peter said in 1 Peter 1:22 to 23, "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." 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, verse 4). My friend, have you obeyed the truth? Have you been born again?

We hope that today's study about the importance of truth is a blessing. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, 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 www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Be sure to like the programs that you watch; and 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.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. There's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.