

STUDY 2 CONFIDENT IN THE FACE OF HARD QUESTIONS

HOW THIS STUDY SUPPORTS THE DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

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Share Christ

When we know what we believe—and why—we stand with assurance in the truth of Christ. Consequently, we speak with confidence as we have opportunities to talk to others about Christ. Questions—even objections—about our faith can arise, but our witness for Christ is not hindered because we know how to respond.

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A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT STANDING ON THE TRUTHS OF GOD

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Most Christians have a sense of what they believe. All that is necessary is to read the Bible and learn what it says. However, we live in a day that is increasingly post-Christian. Christians find themselves in a position of becoming a smaller portion of the population.

For much of our history, America has been a place where biblical principles were acknowledged. Culture has been steadily changing, and biblical teaching or Judeo-Christian ethics are no longer assumed or embraced. These changes are clearly visible throughout our culture where various platforms are projected through an open and pervasive media. These platforms cause people, including believers, to question the validity of some if not all of the truths of the Bible.

Therefore as Christians, we find ourselves in a position where simply knowing what we believe is not sufficient. We must now also know why we

believe and why what we believe is the truth. God has called each of us to represent Him and His truths as ambassadors. An ambassador is one who represents one country to another. We are called to represent God and His kingdom to a world that does not know Him.

That's a tall order that can only be realized through the power of the Holy Spirit and through a study of God's truths. This study looks at six of those truths. Each session answers a prominent question individuals in secular society use to attack the Christian faith. Additionally, this study gives believers a way of understanding why biblical beliefs are true, along with an apologetic for standing strong against the untruths hurled against them. What the Bible teaches is true, and every Christian should be equipped to express that truth through their words and through their daily lives.

SESSION 1

DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHICH "TRUTH" I BELIEVE?

Leader pages on pp. 130-133

THE POINT:
KNOWING THE TRUTH OF CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN EXPERIENCE FREEDOM.

JOHN 3:19-21; 8:31-36

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^{3:19} "This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed.

²¹ But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God."

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^{8:31} Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples.

MEMORY VERSE

³² **You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

³³ "We are descendants of Abraham," they answered him, "and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free'?"

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³⁴ Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

³⁵ A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever.

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free."

KEYWORDS

Light (v. 19)—Jesus as the light of the world develops the prologue that Jesus is "the light of men" and that "that light shines in the darkness" (1:4-5). On this basis, Jesus exhorted His hearers to put their trust in the light while they had Him with them, so they might become "children of light" (12:35-36).

Continue (v. 31)—Jesus used this word to call forth those who believed in Him. The believer who is committed to continue in Jesus and His Word is in this Gospel to be designated as an authentic disciple (cf. 6:64-66; contrast 5:38).

Know the truth (v. 32)—To know the truth is to know Jesus.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHICH TRUTH TO BELIEVE?

Today's YOLO (You Only Live Once), YDU (You Do You) "Living My Truth" world defines postmodernism, which means that people make up their own versions of what is true. This self-focused way of thinking dominates many aspects of our modern society. Daily we hear of people walking away from the faith or traditional religion, choosing to identify as deconstructionist, agnostics, and even atheists, or simply not choosing to be bound by "old-timey" thinking.

We live in a day when people believe they're allowed and have the right to make up their own truth. Social media has empowered users to boldly cancel others by blocking or unfollowing those whose perspectives they disagree with. At any moment, 24 hours a day, we can view content on social platforms that are constantly exposing viewers to truth that changes daily.

But God! Fortunately, the Bible provides us with unchanging truth. In the Gospel of John, we see that truth is not a matter of human imagination or definition. Instead, truth is based on divine revelation from an unchanging, all-knowing, real, and present God who has spoken to us in history, so those who choose to believe would know HIStory.

Does It Illuminate? // John 3:19-21

Postmodernism grows out of a worldview called naturalism, which assumes that the natural universe, operating by natural laws, is all that exists. This leads to postmodernists believing there is no God, and because of there being no supreme authority over nature, there is no possible source for unprejudiced moral beliefs. And since they don't recognize God, they have no choice but to make up standards of living using their own personal preferences, which is why people can say "It's my truth." There is nothing factual to back up their assumptions about right principles and what is good, but they honestly believe their point of view represents the truth.

In John 3, we meet a Pharisee named Nicodemus who came to Jesus one night to talk with Him. Nicodemus seemed to be very sincere about his faith, but he was quite confused because of Jesus's ministry and teachings, which were countercultural to mainstream Jewish religious leaders and practices of that day.

Jesus gave Nicodemus the facts about spiritual truths, revealing how the Messiah would bring eternal life for those who would believe in Him.



THE POINT:

KNOWING THE TRUTH OF CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN EXPERIENCE FREEDOM.

To prove His point, Jesus shared this truth using the story of Moses lifting the bronze snake in the wilderness to save the dying Israelites (John 3:14-18, see also Num. 21:4-6).

Even with this explanation, though, Nicodemus was not getting Jesus's meaning. So, since Nicodemus was struggling to understand, Jesus went on to explain a little more deeply. He told Nicodemus that, "The light has come into the world." To most Christians, we understand that this "light" is referring to Christ Himself, but Nicodemus wasn't understanding what Jesus was explaining to him. When a person's understanding of truth is based on a different worldview foundation, as was Nicodemus's, it just doesn't make sense. We often describe this as being on a different page than others.

Jesus's teaching wouldn't make sense to anyone who was not open to the light God had revealed. Most people prefer to continue in the "darkness" of their traditional beliefs. Jesus explained to Nicodemus why people are not open to the light. The reason is because, by opening themselves up to the light, the sin in their lives would be exposed, instead of remaining hidden in the dark.

When people think strictly following religious laws or being a do-gooder allows them to work for their salvation as the Jewish people did, they are not dealing with the state of their sin nature and self. They can avoid looking at the foulness of their inner motives and only have to consider their outward actions. But when people allow the true light of God to shine on their lives, not only are their dirty deeds exposed, but the ugly selfish motives of their hearts are revealed as well.

HOW DOES THE LOSS OF TRUTH IN A CULTURE CAUSE MORE DARKNESS?

The truth is that we, with our limited understanding in a culture that twists truth and who we are, cannot understand real truth—God's truth—as long as we're in the dark. But when we are honest with ourselves and our faults, step into and live in the light of Jesus, His light reveals our sin and opens our eyes to the life we can have in Christ. When we submit and say yes to the light of Christ, we live! Also, the lives we live in the light puts the work of God in our lives on display for others to see.

Does It Sanctify? // John 8:31-32

So many people in our society consider truth to be based on what people hold as their truth. That is, truth is not absolute, but is subjective, meaning changeable based on a person's personal views, experience, or background. Unfortunately, this flawed belief is creeping into the church. The need for Christians to



DIGGING DEEPER OH FREEDOM

Jesus's references to freedom in these verses go beyond a surface definition of freedom. We live in a country that considers itself free and a nation under God because of its founding fathers. Likewise, the Pharisees believed they were free because of their ancestry through Abraham, but Jesus made it clear they were not because they didn't live as Abraham did in faith and obedience to God. It's important that we don't confuse what was done in the past by others as a way to justify our actions as we live today in a false sense of freedom. Today people believe freedom means they can choose to do and be whatever they want. Just because we believe in Jesus doesn't mean we are in obedience to Him. Often, we are good with Jesus Christ being our Savior, but we struggle with Him being our Master, and living surrendered to Him. Understand that Jesus's promise of freedom is for those who live in Him as obedient disciples. It is only those who live as He did.

Why has freedom been an element of conflict in our country? How do you think this will change?

firmly understand Scripture as an objectively real revelation from an objectively real God is more important than ever.

In Jesus's day, the problem believers faced was slightly different from modern society's belief that morality is changeable based on current circumstances, but they did have to deal with a problem that created the same result. The Jews in that day believed that the Bible was an objectively real revelation from an objectively real God, but they interpreted it wrongly.

John 8 began with the account of a group of Pharisees bringing to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. At this point in Jesus's ministry, the Pharisees were totally committed to destroying Him because they believed Jesus was teaching heresy. They were using the woman caught in infidelity to trap Him.

Jesus outsmarted them, though, and the attackers who had accused the woman left. Then, Jesus turned his attention to the crowd and told them, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). This bold statement gave the Pharisees another opportunity to challenge Him, and this started another argument. This argument was based on the accusation that what Jesus was teaching, particularly about Himself, was not true. But in challenging the Pharisees, Jesus's defense was so convincing that, of those who heard His words, "many believed in him" (v. 30).

Jesus took the opportunity to teach these new converts a deep truth about Himself. What Jesus was stating about Himself was that He is the Messiah who had been prophesied of in Scripture, and the things He was teaching represented the truth. He wanted these new believers to know they could trust what He was saying, and that if they followed it, they would discover a kind of freedom that was not possible any other way.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TRUTH BRINGS FREEDOM IN OUR LIVES?

By using the word "truth" in verse 32, Jesus expressed an idea that is much more extreme than most people ever get a hold of. To many, truth seems to be a rather vague concept, especially in our modern society that believes everyone

is able to have their own truth. But a biblical understanding of truth is not subjective or self-defined at all. In fact, we can go so far as to firmly testify that biblical truth equals reality.

Jesus was offering an entirely different form of reality. His teaching voiced a view that the purpose of God was not to set up an earthly kingdom with the Messiah as its king, but to provide a way for righteousness to reign in the hearts of individuals so they could experience an eternal, personal relationship with Him. It is only within that personal relationship structure that people are able to know truth—real truth—and experience freedom.



Does It Set Us Free? // John 8:33-36

Up until this point, Jesus had been getting the best of the Pharisees with each confrontation, which made them even more desperate to knock down His teaching. So when Jesus said, in verse 32, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," the Pharisees saw one more opportunity to attack. They twisted Jesus's words to make them mean something totally different from what He actually meant. They claimed that, as Abraham's descendants, they were already free because they had never been slaves to anyone.

Although they based their argument on a spiritual understanding of freedom, they still didn't realize the weight of Jesus's words. The Pharisees' beliefs had them focusing mainly on the physical circumstances of their here and now. They were looking for an earthly deliverer to free them from political oppression, like many today think a political party will take care of our concerns.

THE POINT:

KNOWING THE TRUTH OF CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN EXPERIENCE FREEDOM.

In reality, Jesus's messiahship was only about a spiritual purpose: to bring people into a personal relationship with God. By believing in Him, they would experience spiritual freedom from sin and freedom to live with God. So as in today, instead of us expecting the elephant or the donkey to provide deliverance, we should know only the Lamb of God, Jesus can.

Beyond a doubt, the clear teaching of Scripture is that God's reason for creating mankind was for Him to enjoy a personal relationship with human beings. But with the fall of Adam and Eve, sin became a wall that prevented that relationship from happening. God was not, in any way, about to let that stop His purpose, so He created a perfect and final solution for the sin problem.

The way God created His solution to the sin problem was for Christ to come to earth in the man Jesus, live a life without sin qualifying Him to become a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, die on the cross as that sacrifice, then be raised from the dead as proof that He was, truly, God, and had the power to forgive man's sin. That is how God planned for mankind to exist in relationship with Him.

**HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER
CONTINUE IN THE TRUTH THAT LEADS TO
FREEDOM AND VICTORY OVER SIN?**

DID YOU KNOW?

Paul highlights man's struggle through the ages in John 3:18-20; trusting God as the only reliable source of truth. Genesis 3:1 first revealed man's issues with trusting God when the serpent asked, "Did God really say. . .?" The serpent's question implied God couldn't be trusted and introduced doubt. Merriam-Webster defines "doubt" as calling into question the truth of or a lack of confidence in. This definition shows our trust in God is directly related to our confidence in God. The more we doubt His truth, the more we rebel against Him. In Isaiah 30:8-11, the prophet describes rebellious people not wanting to hear the truth about God and refers to them as "lying children, unwilling to hear . . ." Mankind is the only member of God's creation made in His image and given the gift of free will, choice. God created mankind to be in intimate relationship with Him to bring Him glory. He sent Jesus to show and tell us the way (John 14:6).

How can you reveal God's truth through your life to a questioning world?

LIVE IT

How can we continually embrace and live according to God's truth?

According to culture, truth can change daily. It's common to shift beliefs to avoid offending others or defining good by what is politically correct and socially acceptable. Today's wavering mindsets are like the deceived emperor who thought he was wearing new clothes but was naked. The Bible is the only dependable source of truth because it's God's unchanging words that can be relied on. Check yourself!

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- **Identify doubts.** Admit any doubts you may have about Christ's gospel. Many people doubt the fixed truth of the gospel, and modern society can increase doubts. Admit where you struggle.
- **Seek truth.** Christian faith is the truth, so we need to make decisions about our personal doubts. Find people or resources that help you think through doubts and find answers.
- **Help others.** Talk to your friends about the doubts they may have about the truth of the gospel of Christ and help them settle their doubts.

DAILY READINGS

1. WE NEED LIGHT TO SEE IN THE DARK // JOHN 8:31-32

God does not want us to live in darkness and be a slave to sin. God knows we will sin and expects us to repent. Instead, God wants us to live in the light by His truth. We will learn in this study that when we live by God's truth we live in the light so God may receive the glory. What is truth? Today's world would have you turn to how you feel, the news, social media, friends, or other informational means to determine the truth. Making you believe truth is relative to what you see and hear. However, John 8:31-32 teaches us that by following Jesus's Word we will know the truth and experience the freedom in the light as God intended.

By aligning our lives with Jesus, He sets us free to live in the light and not in darkness.

2. SEEKING GOD AND FINDING FREEDOM // JOHN 8:36

Have you ever done research on a particular subject? Maybe you were told some information that you didn't quite believe, or you read something interesting, and you wanted to find out more. Seeking facts to verify what you have been given or wanting to learn more is the same way God wants us to seek Him, with willingness, interest, and action. There is freedom in finding the information that we are seeking. As Jesus told the Jews while preparing for His departure, in John 8:32, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. When we seek truth in the Word on our life journey with Jesus, we will find freedom.

For Jesus said, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.

3. TRUTH OR DARE // JOHN 3:21

In the game of "Truth or Dare" you can choose "truth" or choose "dare." If you choose "truth," you must answer a question about yourself, a subject, or someone else truthfully. If you choose "dare," you are asked to do something potentially embarrassing or perform an act that you may not normally do. By choosing "dare," you avoid telling

the truth but you put yourself at risk of harming yourself or someone else. Believe it or not, some would rather choose dare than to respond in the truth. The Gospel of John states, "But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God."

"Dare" may be an option, but with God only the truth shall set you free.

4. RELYING ON GOD THROUGH FAITH // ROMANS 10:9-10

The world may ask you to establish your core values by examining what you believe. Consider the people you admire, remember your experiences, and identify a theme of your life. As followers of Christ, we are asked to believe with our hearts in the Savior, repent of our sins, and confess that He is Lord. Our core values should extend from that. We may not admire the same people over our lifetime, and we may think negatively about our life experiences. Core values are grounded in what we have seen, while our belief in Jesus is grounded in a true dependence on who we know Him to be. Faith is trusting in the One on whom we are dependent, even in the darkness. This is faith.

Faith grows our relationship with Jesus, and He will continue to shine His light in our lives.

5. BELIEVE IN THE WAY // JOHN 14:6

Not knowing which way to go can cause fear and vulnerability that we may try to avoid. However, Jesus makes a way for us and teaches us what to believe through His Word. In John 14:6, Jesus assures us that He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus provides that certainty in life to know He will provide answers to questions we have about the life we live. When we believe Christ as the way, God will honor our faith. Our love relationship with Him is the condition that can result in miracles. As we continue to lean on God's truth, the Bible tells us that God can do above and beyond all that we think or can ever imagine.

We serve a God who can do the impossible.