

Your Word is Truth

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning everyone, great to be in church with you this morning. Let me pose you with a bunch of questions as we kick off this series. Is the Bible true? I'm not asking if there is truth in it, say the way that there is truth in Moby Dick or Plato's Republic or the Lord of the Rings.

Aspects of truth can be found virtually everywhere. What I'm asking is this, is the Bible completely true? All of it. Is it so trustworthy then all that it teaches that it can function as the test of all other claims to truth?

That's a quote from John Piper's book, A Peculiar Glory. A phenomenal book if you want to investigate further these particular issues, which Dan and I are currently reading through at the moment.

It's a fantastic book. Those are great questions that all of us sit somewhere with the answers to that question. All of us sit somewhere to those questions, even if we're not aware that we're sitting somewhere with those questions.

In the same way, all of us sit somewhere in reality to gravity, even if we've never thought about it. All of us sit somewhere in response to those questions.

[1 : 24] Some of us, no, of course not. Some of us, well, it sort of contains some truth and some other things which are a little bit confusing or a bit things for a bit, for, you know, a day once upon a time.

And some of us say, well, it's entirely true. It's completely the word of God because that's what we're being brought up to hear and believe. And yet, rarely pick it up.

That is, functionally, we might agree that it's true and yet operationally in our day-to-day existence, it's clearly not true, has no relevance to our lives. And I make that point carefully, but also intentionally.

I've been a pastor now for more than 25 years in churches that will be characterised as what you would call Bible-believing churches.

And in every single Bible-believing church that I've been in, including this one for 15 years, I have always struggled to get people to pick up their Bibles. When I say, open your Bibles now, this is what happens.

[2 : 41] No one reaches for one. And it happens again and again and again and again and again. Or when we're arguing about a particular point, when I say arguing, I mean in discussing a particular point, very few people will reference the Scriptures in their life to make their point.

So we might declare that the Bible is true, but how really true is it to us in day-to-day in our actual relationship with God?

Now, the thrust of this particular series on the Bible is that yes, it is. The Bible is completely true in its entirety.

I'm going to get there in a moment. But that has not always been my view. Last Tuesday, that is less than a week ago, was the 31st anniversary of me becoming a Christian.

I was 23 years old. I grew up in a God-fearing family with a long heritage in Christian things.

[3 : 54] Some of my earliest memories were associated with doing things like the kids are out there doing now in kids' church. The Bible, if you like, was an ever-present reality.

There were Bible verses, you know, you know, on walls, you know, like in frames and things, you know, things like that.

The Bible was an ever-present reality. I was encouraged to read it and to know it. And I, before I became a Christian, I had read through it several times.

On the most part, I found it confusing. On the most part, I couldn't reconcile what I would perceive as being inconsistencies.

But I feared the consequences of not reading it and not doing my best to try to obey it. And so it was one of those duties, arduous duties to read the Bible and to skim through it, you know, like with the mentality, a chapter a day keeps the devil away kind of thing.

[5 : 12] This led to a very frustrating life of uncertainty and a lack of clarity. And that frustration for me boiled over in my early 20s, where I recall specifically praying to God, if you exist at all and this Bible is true, as I've been told, then I need you to show me.

I need you to reveal yourself to me because frankly, I'm fed up. If you exist, make it clear. Otherwise, I'm entirely changing tact in my life and going somewhere else.

That was in my very early 20s. Then it eventually happened to me one Friday night, Friday evening, sitting in a shed in Katoomba, 31st of April, 31 years ago, 1993.

I can't describe to you what happened. I wasn't looking for it. Didn't think I even needed it in many ways. But I knew it happened when it happened.

It changed the whole course of my life. And here I am, 31 years later, looking back on that event, not being able to understand it in the time, but over time, I've come to realise what's happened, what happened to me.

[6 : 47] What I didn't know at that time was that prior to 31 years ago, I had a bunch of details and facts about God, about Jesus.

I could even argue some of those facts and details. What I did not have was sight.

I couldn't see the glory, the beauty, the majesty, the wonder of those facts and details. I knew that Jesus was significant. I knew that he was a key factor.

In fact, I would argue at that point that he was the son of God. But I never saw the beauty or the majesty of that and what it meant for me.

And so increasingly so over the past three decades, I've been gifted by God to see more and more glory and majesty in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 56] What happened to me on that first night 31 years ago is that up until that point, I'd been looking at the Bible as if it was a picture hanging on a wall of a great landscape.

Marvelling at this thing occasionally, walking past it, having a gasp, you know, it's a good picture. And then God, by his spirit, 31 years ago, opened up the landscape and helped me to see that it's actually a window that I'm looking through to see real, live glory.

I'm not looking at a masterpiece. I'm looking through a window. God wants me to see majesty and glory. That's what he wants me to see. So one of the aims that I want us to do through this series is to awaken us to a passion for the sheer existence of truth.

And particularly so in a day and age where everything you read and see will tell you that truth does not exist. truth is what you make it to be.

Truth is true for you. All that is doing is preparing future generations of this country and our society and our world for prison cells.

[9 : 32] As we, more and more people, individually declare that they can live life any way they choose to be. chaos and anarchy is the only thing and we're starting to see in our society already.

And so to awaken us for the sheer existence of truth and to embrace that truth for our joy. So my hope in this series is that we would know and we would see and that we would experience that the God who defines all things, the God who has created all things, the God who rules all things, the God who has worked to save all things, that this God throughout all of history has spoken.

And he has spoken loud and he has spoken clearly and with more authority than any other voice in this world. and he has spoken clearly and loudly and with authority about every single thing that we face in this world.

And what he has spoken has been recorded for us in the scriptures. So my three points today is God speaks the truth, Jesus is the truth, and the truth is what sets you free.

So let's take a moment there. I want to see the connection between God's word and the authority over our lives. So Psalm 119, grab your Bibles, don't do it out of guilt but I do encourage you to grab your Bibles.

[11 : 13] Turn to Psalm 119, James read this out for us. Don't feel guilty if you have not got your Bible in front of you. Maybe feel somewhat guilty that you didn't actually bring it with you to church.

Salvation is far from the wicked for they do not seek your degrees. Your compassion is great, O Lord.

Preserve my life according to your laws. Many are the foes who persecute me but I have not turned from your statutes. I look on the faithless with loathing for they do not obey your word.

See how I love your precepts. Preserve my life, O Lord. According to your love, all your words are true, all your righteous laws are eternal.

I'm just saying earlier to the team that we get together to pray, Psalm 119, the entire Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the entire Bible is all about the word of God and all of it except for three verses of 170 something verses, all but three make specific reference to God's word.

[12 : 32] Now notice that these verses are therefore are talking about God communicating decrees, laws, statutes, word, precepts. Then it says in verse 160 that what God speaks is true.

What he speaks is righteous. What he speaks is eternal. The word at the very beginning of verse 160, the word all there in its original language which is Hebrew means head.

The word we got all there in its original language means head. It means the head of a body or the head of a river or the head of a tribe or the head of a family or head of a nation.

Two other places it's used in the Old Testament Exodus 30 and Numbers chapter 1 and both Exodus 30 and Numbers 1 translate that word their head as census.

What this verse is saying is that if you took a census a survey of the word of God if you investigate the facts then the conclusion would be that the sum total of the word of God is truth.

[13 : 53] The totality of the Bible is truth. Not a truth the truth. But notice the second half of verse 160 all same word all your righteous laws are eternal.

That is it's not just the total of it that is truth it's all the individual parts of it that are truth.

The census would reveal that the whole and the parts are all truth. That is when God speaks truth. And what we have here in his word what we have is truth.

He speaks truth. Truth is what God communicates. He can only ever communicate that which is true which is right which is eternal.

And the reason why God's word is ultimate truth is that the overruling and final authority in all things his word is so is such because that God himself is ultimate reality.

[15 : 11] So what he communicates is ultimate reality. That is God is absolute. There is nothing higher than God. There is no one no thing equal with God.

It's not his opinion against another opinion. there was no reality before God. It was all void.

It was all formless. God we are told is from everlasting to everlasting. No beginning no end. He stands outside of all things created.

Never beginning never ending never becoming never improving simply and absolutely there to be dealt with on his terms or not at all.

The one who never had a beginning but always was and is and will be he's the one who creates all things. He's the one who defines all things. When God speaks the Bible when God speaks through the word he's not interpreting history for us.

[16 : 18] He is creating history when he speaks. therefore what matters above all things in life is this God.

I cannot escape the simple and obvious truth that God must be the main thing in life because he defines all things.

That means that this gathering right now has to do with God because life has to do with God and the life has to do with God because all of the universe has to do with God because every atom and every emotion and every soul of every angelic and demonic and human being belongs to God the one who absolutely is.

You and I are defined by our experiences and by our connection to things. I have a mom and a dad.

I have a wife. I have children. I have a job. I wear particular clothes. I live in a particular area. God exists beyond all other definitions.

[17 : 43] He stands outside of everything that's created. as Romans 11 36 says from him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory forever.

Reality is created, it is determined, it is defined by God and truth is the communication of that reality, the display of that reality.

reality. It is the way things actually are. For something to be true, it must represent reality.

If it doesn't represent reality, what we call that nowadays is a myth or we call it a lie. When God speaks, he reveals reality because he is reality.

Left to our own devices, we would have no ability to discover reality and truth. But God is the one who has revealed the way things simply are. The one who is inapproachable, exists outside of us, not defined by us, has come to us and revealed himself to us.

[19 : 12] And that's my second point. The place where reality and the communication of reality or the representation of reality come together in the most profound way is in the person of Jesus Christ.

Firstly, because Jesus himself speaks truth. Jesus says this in John 18 verse 37, for this I came into the world to testify to the truth.

Everyone on the side of truth listens to me. Jesus is saying there that he speaks truth. He came to testify to truth. If you want to know truth, what he says there is you must listen to me.

You want to know reality, you want to know the way things are, you must listen to me. But what he says a little bit later in John 14 verse 6 is even more profound.

He says not that he just speaks what is true, but that he is what is true.

[20 : 21] He is the truth, he is reality, he is the way things actually are. The most ultimate reason why he could say that he was truth is that he himself is God.

And that's what John 1 affirms for those who were here on Thursday night when I preached on John 1. In the beginning was the word, that is he existed before anything was made. The word here is Jesus Christ.

And the word was with God and the word was God. He was with Now, for those who are here on Thursday night, I'm going to say something I said on Thursday night.

John when he writes this referring to Jesus saying something incredibly profound. He refers to Jesus as the word. In the Greek language it's the word logos.

And the word logos in Greek philosophy and Greek life was massive. It was a massive word. It's a word that means that the Greeks believed, the Greek philosophers believed, the Greek cultures believed, which Western civilization is built on, and Eastern civilizations have the same concept, that behind the order of the universe is a divine, a being, a logic of the universe, a structure, a design, of the universe that makes the universe work.

[22 : 00] What John says here is that that logos, that logic of the universe, that structure, design, that purpose, that reason for the universe, is a person. And it's Jesus Christ.

And down in verse 14, we see something startling. That the word, the logos, became flesh and made his dwelling amongst us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. So, who is this word? Who is God? Who is full of grace and truth?

Verse 15, John testifies concerning him. He cries out saying, this was he of whom I said, he who comes after me has surpassed me, because he was before me.

From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another, for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[23 : 03] Jesus doesn't just, he's not just a prophet who speaks God's word with more clarity than other religious leaders and prophets. He doesn't just, he hasn't just got more things right than other prophets and religious leaders.

others. He is the truth in itself. And only Jesus made that claim of all other major world religions, only Jesus made the claim that I am God and I am the truth.

All others just said, believe me and I'll point you in the direction of it. Jesus is the God of the burning bush in Exodus 3.

who when asked by Moses, you know, God, you know, when I get off down to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let my, it'd be great if I've got a name, a reference here, you know, give me a reference.

Who do I tell Pharaoh has sent me? And God says to him, I am.

[24 : 15] How's that helpful? You know, I would never imagine saying that to someone. I just simply am. And so the place where ultimate reality and the representation of ultimate reality come together most profoundly is in the person of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus himself endorsed the message of Psalm 119, where all of your words are true and all of your righteous laws are eternal, when he says in Matthew 5, do not think that I've come to abolish the law or the prophets, that is the Old Testament.

I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

accomplished. And in Luke 24, Jesus is walking the road to Emmaus, and he showed the disciples in that moment how the entire Old Testament pointed to him.

The Bible, as the word of God, is where we have God revealing the way things are. The 66 books of the Bible, with Jesus at the center, is truth.

[25 : 38] And therefore, the authority by which all things are measured. The Bible is where God speaks what is real and absolute, and so it is true. The Bible is the way God, the ultimate and all important reality, reveals himself to us with clarity and authority today.

The Bible, with his spirit, is how he mediates his presence in his world today. And so, if God is more important than anything as the great reality of all things, then the Bible is more important than anything but God.

What we need to embrace, particularly in a day and age where God's word is mocked and ridiculed, what we need to embrace and be confident in, is that the whole word of God is truth, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of that truth.

That the God who made everything, controls everything, has a purpose for everything, this God has spoken to us. As James read out to us from 2 Timothy, all scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

In what he has revealed, we are not left without a knowledge of his will. We are not left with a knowledge of him at, sorry, we are left with a knowledge of work in the world.

[27 : 02] we are not left without wisdom. We are not left without a revelation of the way of salvation. And this, my friends, is absolutely priceless.

Absolutely priceless. If we could awaken in our hearts and minds of the confidence that this is so, just imagine how we would navigate our lives.

Just imagine how we would navigate the complexity of life in this world. The implication for our lives would be countless and viable. The Bible is God's provision for us and it is sufficient for all that we need to know in life and salvation.

Every single thing we face in life is touched by the Bible. It is either directly touched because it is in the Bible or indirectly touched because the Bible shapes all the attitudes and the criteria in which we deal with it.

the Bible ought to be the sun in the solar system of all of our learning in his world. It gives light, it gives perspective, it gives meaning.

[28 : 13] It will not be just one book among many books in our shelves, it will be the central book. Every idea that we face in the world will be judged by this book. This book must be known first and known better than all other books and ideas and information.

and the whole aim, the whole aim in knowing our Bibles is to know the God who has given it to us.

Our aim in seeking to see Jesus, to be led to Jesus and being led to him have life. our concern must be to enlargen our acquaintance with the God who defines all things, to walk with him day in and day out.

So one quick tip from the great J.I. Packer and how to turn our knowledge about God from his word into a knowledge and intimate relationship with God.

how to shift from the masterpiece if you like to seeing through a window of a world that's alive and active. I think it's both demanding and simple at the same time but here's the point.

[29 : 36] Turn every truth that we learn about God into a matter of meditation before God that is with God communication with God leading to obedience of God and prayer and praise to God.

I'll say it again turn every truth that we learn about God into a matter of meditation before God leading to obedience of God and prayer and praise to God.

Meditation is the activity of calling to mind and lingering over and dwelling on and applying to ourselves that what we have engaged with in God's word about the works, the ways, the purposes, the promises and the character of God.

God and the effect will be to humble us as we contemplate God's greatness and glory and our own smallness and sinfulness to challenge us, to change us, to encourage us and comfort us and to reassure us as we contemplate the unsearchable riches of God's mercy to us.

I said to my community group on Friday night that I'm now into the fourth year of a five-year program to read through the Bible every year, the Old Testament once, New Testament twice, Psalms twice in a year.

[30 : 55] And so I'm up to year number four. And there's two things that I've gained from it. One so far is a sense of the scope, of scripture, of where everything's fitting.

I can quickly recall where I've been over the last number of years. But the second profound thing that it's done in terms of changing me is that I've walked away each year and gone, God is just bigger and bigger and bigger and I am smaller and smaller and smaller.

for my joy. I've said to the guys on Friday night, I can tell you one thing that's changed in me. Having read through the scriptures so much in the last four years, I am so much more settled than I've ever been in life.

So much more settled, more content, consciously so. Not anxious, consciously so.

And that's because the truth sets us free. And that's why I want to encourage you to pick up your Bibles, because the truth sets us free.

[32 : 25] Jesus said, and another astounding thing in John's Gospel, chapter 8, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples, and then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Know Jesus, and you know true freedom. The reason why this is so important, because in our day and age, the culture that we're marinating in, a culture that wants to get rid of any absolute truth claims, doesn't matter who it is.

I mean, you probably heard the statement, there is no absolute truth out there by which we must live our lives by. The irony is that itself a statement is a statement of absolute truth in itself.

That's an irony, but let's leave that to one side. Why don't I pick that for the time being? But the reason why our culture says there's no absolute truth is because of the assumption that any truth claim, absolute truth claim, results in oppression.

It oppresses others. And I want to say the truth claim that Jesus is the truth, the way, the truth, and the life is a truth that sets you free.

[33 : 47] And therefore, we should pursue it. no Jesus and no freedom. There is no freedom, ironically, outside of Jesus. The person who says there is no absolute truth and I am the full determiner of my truth, you are not free.

You have lumbered yourself with a burden that it's impossible for you to carry the weight of, to determine yourself how the world should work.

Jesus promises here the very thing that we are striving in our secular individual society, striving to achieve. I take it that every single person in this room wants to be free in the deepest, fullest sense.

If the opposite is bondage and slavery, no one wants to go there. Although it's possible to be enslaved to some habits that are very pleasurable in the sense that it's possible to love your slavery, even so, all of us would rather be happy in freedom rather than a slave to pleasant addictions.

We all want to be truly free. And Jesus makes this walloping statement, if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples and then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

[35 : 13] free. And the people answered him, just as some of us might do right now, what are you talking about, Jesus? I'm not a slave to anyone. I'm completely free. That's what they said, we are Abraham's descendants have never been slaves of anyone.

How can you say that you're going to set us free? I mean, the irony of that statement is they'd hardly ever known a time when they were not enslaved to someone. They're thinking about just one aspect of freedom, but Jesus is thinking about something entirely different and he immediately clarifies, I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

That's the walloping statement right there. It would take ages to unpack the implications of that for us. But to put it briefly, Jesus is saying that everyone sins and therefore everyone is enslaved.

to sin. This means that sin is not just a bad act, it is a power over our hearts and over our lives that makes us do bad acts and sets us against God and other people.

There are many kinds of freedoms that we can make for ourselves, but we cannot make this freedom for ourselves. sin enslave us by making anything look more desirable than knowing Jesus.

[36 : 51] It also enslaves us by eventually damning us and it will enslave us into hell until someone or something intervenes.

Jesus says in verse 36, if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. The son who is Jesus, who is the truth in verse 32, is the one who sets us free.

He frees us from the damnation of slavery by becoming damned for us in his death on the cross as our substitute. He frees us from the dominion of a sin over our hearts by changing our hearts to see him as more desirable than anything.

So that we are free to truly love him and free to love others. Only Jesus, the son of God who came, died and rose for us, can set us free and make us happy forever.

If Jesus sets you free, you'll be free indeed. And unbeknownst to me, that's what happened to me 31 years ago.

[38 : 04] For the very first time in my life, it's like God moved the masterpiece and helped me gaze to the window that it was hiding.

The landscape showed me the reality that was behind it, a God who was behind it. I want to say that 31 years ago, I discovered, increasingly so over these past three decades, that the Bible was not so much an instruction manual on how to live life as a letter that revealed a good and majestic and beautiful and glorious God.

It is a letter to us from the creator of the universe. In that sense, the Bible is deeply, deeply personal.

It is designed to deeply connect us to the heart and the mind of the writer. So friends, let me just say, for those of you who are Christian, Christian, we have no sure sight of God's excellencies, his beauty, his majesty, his wonder, except through the word, the Bible.

When we pick up the Bible in our daily devotions or study it in our community groups or hear it preached, the church or youth group, we are dealing with the creator of the universe and the book that he inspired as a gift for all peoples of the world, that we might know the truth, him the truth, the only one who can set us free.

[39 : 58] to know the God of all truth, to see and savour the God of all truth, to delight in the God of all truth.

Not just simply an artwork on a wall to be marvelled as we walk by, occasionally stare at, but mostly just have a general presence around, but to have the window opened to reality.

to see the God behind all things. I know of no greater quest in life than to search it, to know it, and in knowing it, in increasing measure, seeing the beauty and worth and glory and majesty of the God who is true, who is true and who wants to be known and can be known in increasing measure.