

## 501 Where Can We Find *The Truth*?

by Phil Sanders

You've probably heard someone say: "No one knows what the truth is." or "There are no absolute truths." or "There is no right or wrong; only what people think." or "Everybody can believe whatever they want. It's a free country." These are the kinds of statements you hear on television or hear in conversations with friends. Many people believe they are true, but I wonder if they have taken the time to evaluate them to see if they are really true.

Perhaps you remember the exchange between **Pontius Pilate** and Jesus just before his crucifixion. In **John 18:37** 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?**" That question has burned in the hearts of many people: "What is truth?"

Webster defines truth as, "the true or actual state of a matter." Truth conforms to reality or to fact. Truth is that which is opposed to falsehood. Courts seek the truth when they try a person, so they can determine his innocence or guilt. Doctors give tests to find out what is really happening in a patient so they can prescribe a remedy. But truth is not always so easy to find. **Authorities disagree.** We hear contradictory information about the foods we eat, the medicines we take. What is bad for you in one report is good for you in another. We are often left confused and wishing for answers.

**There are some places people go to seek the truth, but they aren't always trustworthy:**

### 1. Some people look to their Feelings

Jacob believed his ten sons and thought Joseph was dead. He mourned for years, even though Joseph wasn't dead. His brothers had only sold him into Egypt. The feelings were real, but they were based on a lie. People often trust their gut feelings and lie to themselves. They want something to be true so badly, they are willing to believe their own lies. Since the days of "Star Wars," we have heard the phrase, "Trust your feelings, Luke." But what we feel and what is actually true may be very different. The Jews had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge (**Rom. 10:2**). Martin Luther wrote, "Feelings come and feelings go; and feelings can be deceiving. I rest my warrant on the Word of God; nothing else is worth believing."

### 2. Some people look to Opinions or Consensus

The majority aren't always right. Opinion polls are not always trustworthy. **Acts 28:3-6** But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. "When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they *began* saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." "However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. "But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and *began* to say that he was a god. Opinions and beliefs are as fickle and as changeable as night and day. You can't rely on them in the long run.

### 3. Some people go to Authorities

Compare any history, science, or psychology textbook from 50 years ago, 25 years ago, and the present. Even your dictionary has more than 50,000 words in it that were not in existence a century ago. You go to get a second doctor's opinion, because you want to be sure. We have appeal's courts, because sometimes a court makes a wrong decision.

The fact is, even authorities are human and make mistakes. Their knowledge and their judgment are imperfect.

### 4. Some people look inside to their Consciences

The conscience, if trained properly, can be a marvelous motivator to do right and to avoid wrong; but the conscience can believe a lie. In **Acts 23:1** Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." *He may have thought what he was doing persecuting Christians was right, but later found out he was wrong!* He later admitted in **1 Tim. 1:15**, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." *Some people's consciences are past feeling anything.*

**1 Tim. 4:1-2** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup>by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron. *When someone uses a branding iron, that part of the skin has its nerve cells destroyed; and the person no longer can feel. You may know people past feeling remorse, willing to do anything that is immoral, people who do not seem to have a conscience. The conscience is a valuable gift for those who can feel and for those who are informed; otherwise one can sin and not care.*

**If we are looking within ourselves, or to other people, we cannot expect to find a standard of truth and right that is indisputable.** If we ask serious questions like:

- Where did I come from? Is there a God, or am I here by evolution?
- Why am I here? What is the purpose of life?
- What will happen to me after I die? Will I be judged at death?

**Men cannot answer these questions;** they don't know the answer.

### Where do we find the Truth?

We must look beyond humanity to a higher power, a higher authority. Now, many people have not wanted to listen to God about anything. Is that really wise? If we have been listening only to our hearts or other people and have become confused and often disappointed, perhaps it is time to go to God for the answers to life's most perplexing questions. **Jesus claimed to be the Truth and to have the truth. Let's examine some of those claims: John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." **John 8:31-32** Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

John said of Jesus in **John 1:17** "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

Truth is personalized in Jesus Christ. He speaks about our souls and to our souls. He opens the door to those eternal questions of where we came from, why we are here, and what will happen to us when we leave this life. You may be asking, "**Why should I believe Him?**" Perhaps you've seen hypocritical Christians or have heard false claims some Christians make. I have to admit the biggest problem with Christianity is the way Christians act. But have you looked at Jesus himself? Have you given Him a hearing by reading the Bible for yourself? Many people think they know a lot about Jesus, but they only know what they've heard someone else say—they've never studied for themselves.

### My trust in Jesus comes from a number of things.

First, it's not in the nature of Jesus to **pretend or fake**. He is genuine, real. He taught in **Matthew 6:1**, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." Jesus was the Son of God but was not pretentious or arrogant. He did not exalt Himself or make a show of what He did. He practiced what He believed.

Jesus never asked anyone to do anything that He himself was not willing to do. For instance, Jesus commanded us to forgive others.

He said in **Matt. 6:14-15**, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” I realize that it’s not always easy to forgive those who abuse you or sin against you, but look at Jesus. When they were putting nails through His hands and feet, Jesus kept saying “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing” (**Luke 23:34**). Would you cry for forgiveness while they were putting nails through your hands? Peter said about Jesus in **1 Peter 2:21-24**, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

Jesus commanded us to give, but no one ever gave more than Jesus. He taught, “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (**Luke 6:38**). Jesus demonstrated by his whole life what it means to give. He gave of Himself when he taught, when he healed the sick, when he fed the hungry, when he comforted the hurting, and when he blessed the children. Most of all, Jesus gave Himself when he died the cross. Jesus could say in **John 13:34-35**, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Jesus was never proud or arrogant.** He walked among the humble and the lowly. Jesus was not too good to do lowly work. He could wash the disciples’ feet. In **John 13:12-15**, when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.” Jesus lived what He taught. For this reason we can see He is no fraud.

**Jesus loved the people who were hard to love.** He cared for the tax collector, the prostitute, and the sinner. He touched lepers when others would not. He ate with people others shunned. When the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?” But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, “*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners*” (**Matthew 9:12-13**). He gave hope to people who felt only scorn from others. He helped people to see what they could become; He gave them hope that they could change!

I trust Jesus because I cannot believe that someone so honest and loving would ever lie to me, deceive me, or lead me astray. I can trust Him, because I know that He loves me so much. I have a beautiful wife who loves me, children and grandchildren who love me, an 85-year-old mother who loves me, and friends who love me. Only Jesus, however, ever died for me. He died for my mistakes and sins, for all my faults. That kind of love can never go unnoticed or unappreciated. **I love Jesus, because He first loved me.**

**I trust Jesus to keep His promises because I know that He can.** A promise is only as good as the word of the one making that promise, and it is only as good as that person’s ability to fulfill that promise. Jesus’ word is good, and His power is sufficient. Jesus can do things in our lives no one else can do.

In **John 11** Jesus didn’t merely tell Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus didn’t merely have compassion on the hungry multitudes, He fed them. Jesus didn’t merely talk salvation, He died upon the cross. He died merely talk His own resurrection; He appeared on the third day. When Jesus makes a promise we can believe Him. He said in **Matt. 7:7-11**, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>“For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup>“Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>“Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? <sup>11</sup>“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” **We do not have to go begging to God.** He invites us to ask, to seek, and to knock. He is a good Father who wants to bless our lives.

The last reason I trust Jesus to tell me the truth is that **He knows what people do not know.** Jesus can see things we can’t see. When it comes to spiritual truths about life and death and the hereafter, we must go to someone who knows. In **John 1**, Jesus saw Nathaniel under the fig tree before they ever met. In **John 4**, Jesus knew about the Samaritan woman at the well, who had had five husbands and was living with a man to whom she was not married. In **John 13**, Jesus knew who it was that was to betray Him—Judas. In **John 20**, Jesus knew what Thomas said, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Jesus knows all about you; and in spite of it all loves you very much.

Truth is so very important in our lives. It is no wonder that Solomon urges us in **Proverbs 23:23**, “Buy truth, and do not sell *it*, *Get* wisdom and instruction and understanding.” Truth is not cheap; it costs something. Telling the truth cost Jesus His life. Many of the early apostles died because they would not deny the Lord or His truth. One must work to get truth. Buying the truth may mean finding out that what you believed before is wrong. Truth could demand that you leave an old way of thinking to start in a new direction. Buying the truth may mean that you must change your ways. Admitting the truth always seems to call for repentance. One reason why people refuse to believe the truth is that they do not want to give up their old way of life—even if that life is destructive to them and to their families. Once a person has the truth, he must treasure it and never sell it for shoddy thinking or worldly ways. It is unfortunate that some people sell the truth to gain some personal advantage. They may say what people want to hear rather than what they need to hear. This is why Paul challenged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 to “preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

**Truth is so important,** because Truth is what sets us free. In **John 8:31-32**, Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Whether you and I know the truth matters, then, because TRUTH is what makes us free. **Free from what?** Free from the lies of this life that enslave and destroy us. Truth sets us free from the things people say that simply aren’t true. When we know the truth, we are able to spot the lies. Then lies don’t have the power to hurt or to lead us astray. Much of popular religion today tells people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear; I fear that many people are sold not on the truth but on false hopes and the teachings of men. Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.” The

religions of men, because they conflict with the teachings of Jesus, will not stand the test of time and are simply worthless. When people push their own ideas and seek to hush Jesus up and refuse to hear Him, they are planting something that will be uprooted. By forgetting God people destroy their own lives and the lives of their loved ones. Selfishness and foolishness can never grant us spiritual freedom. Freedom never comes from falsehood or deception; freedom comes from the truth—the truth found in the words of Jesus. That’s what makes the truth of God’s Word so valuable to our lives. Nothing else will replace it.

**John 14:6:** “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Jesus Himself personalizes what truth is all about. He is so real, so genuine, so authentic as the Son of God, that He is the truth. He is the standard of right and wrong. Every concept, every belief, and every religious doctrine must be weighed against the words of Jesus. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48). You and I will not be judged by our feelings, by opinions, by human authorities, or by what our conscience tells. We will be judged by what Jesus teaches. Doesn’t it make sense that we know as much as possible what His will for our lives is?

One last thought from **John 16:12-13**. Jesus said: “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.”<sup>13</sup>“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” Jesus promised that all truth would come to His disciples through the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit in the first century. The Holy Spirit will speak from God and will tell you what He hears God say. He will guide the apostles and prophets of the first century into *all the Truth*. “All the truth.” That means every religious truth God wanted us to know was revealed by His Spirit through the apostles in the first century. If that is true, then there is no new truths being revealed today—since they knew all the truth.

Jude in verse 3 of his brief letter confirms this understanding when he says, “<sup>3</sup>Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” The faith that Jesus wanted us to know has been revealed once for all time within the pages of the New Testament—the Word of truth. We don’t need to search the literature of the world for truth. The truth that will get us to heaven is found in the Bible. We need to read it, to love it, to meditate on it, to memorize it, to obey it and to share it with others, so that they too can understand the truth.

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:22-25, “<sup>22</sup>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, <sup>23</sup>for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup>For, ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER. And this is the word which was preached to you.” The Lord purifies our souls when we obey the Truth! That’s when we become Christians, children of God, who are washed in the blood of Jesus.

You see, the Truth is a great gift God gives to us. Now gifts are free but not always cheap. The truth can make a huge difference in your life, but only if you will open your heart to hear it. Truth is like a medicine, it only does its job when you are willing to swallow it. It won’t do you any good if you merely look at it, play with it, judge it, or throw it away. It only works when you welcome it and obey it. The truth can make you free from sin, free from the heartache and destruction that sin brings. Without the truth, we are

all left in confusion, trying things that won’t bring the change we really seek and want.

The truth is where it has always been—in the Word of God!

Jesus gives us a very personal challenge in John 7:17, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself.” What He is saying is that if you will give His Word a real test in your life, really listening to Him and obeying His will, you’ll know that what He has spoken is Divine Truth. Many Christians are unhappy with their lives because they seek to hold onto Christ while they hold onto the world. The trouble is they are never really happy in their Christianity and never really happy in the world. Why not give faith a real hearing this time. The most important thing you can do for your soul this year is begin listening to God. God ought to have a voice in your life. The world right now wants to tell Him to “shut up,” because they don’t want to face the truth about their lives or the consequences of their actions. Perhaps the main reason our society is in such a mess is because we have kept God out of it. What we really need today is a good long look at the cross. Once we see the love of God, perhaps we’ll also listen to all the wonderful things He has to share.

You can be sure of it. You can build your life on it and die in peace because of it. Wouldn’t you want that kind of assurance in your life. You can have it when you put your loving trust in the Lord. Trust Him with your heart, turn from every sin in repentance, confess to all the name of Jesus, and be baptized (immersed) in water so that your sins will be forgiven. When you become a Christian at the time of baptism, the Lord will add you to His church and count you as His child. He’ll bless your life in ways you’ve never imagined. Don’t be fooled by popular religion, feelings, or the notions of men. Look to Jesus for every answer to the questions of your life. You’ll never regret it!

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