



TIME OF GRACE®

Whose Truth Do I Trust? My Truth?

Study Notes

Summary

If one message has been repeated to this generation, it is this: “Be true to yourself.” Since churches, religions, and families are so obviously flawed, we are taught to turn inward in order to find out what is true, beautiful, and right. But how do we sift through the countless (and sometimes conflicting!) desires that we find within? And how can we tell anyone to change their behavior if they are just doing what their hearts desire? This message explores one of the most important claims of our time and urges us to look elsewhere to find certain truth.

- **John 8:32:** The truth will set you free.—Jesus
- My Truth? _____.
- **Romans 2:15:** They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.
- **1 Corinthians 12:27:** Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
- My Truth? _____.
- **Ephesians 4:17,18:** ¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.
- “Truth” in the Bible?
 - “Truth” appears _____ times.
 - “The truth” is _____ of those times.
 - “My truth” is _____ of those times.
- **John 17:17:** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Points to Ponder

1. Listen to the song “Once for All” by CityAlight to prepare for next week’s message.
2. Read and reflect on Jeremiah 17:5-9. What connections do you see between Jeremiah’s words and Jesus’ teaching from today’s message?
3. Do you have an intentional plan for generosity? If not, find a mature Christian you know and ask them how they think about giving as a way to worship God.
4. Can you think of a friend who uses the phrase “my truth”? Share this message with them and discuss it afterward or invite them to check out timeofgrace.org to learn more about Truth in the weeks ahead.

Homework for Next Week

Read Proverbs 27:17.

Time of Grace Ministry
Whose Truth Do I Trust? My Truth?
John 8:32; Romans 2:15; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:17,18; John 17:17
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The simple fact is that at the end of the day, every one of us is believing some voice. And this series is all about figuring out which voice we should believe. It is really hard to know what to do when you are not exactly sure what is true. Let me repeat that because I think it is really important. It is really hard to know what to do when you are not quite sure what is true.

When it comes to the morality of sexuality whose truth do you trust? Ask your grandparents and they would probably say this. Ask the average college student and they would probably say that. Ask a pastor like me and I would tell you a. Find another pastor in town, and they would tell you b. Some cultures would say this. Other cultures would say that. You might really feel this, and another person might really feel that. This is no small thing. Right? This is not how you are going to vote every four years. This is your love life, your relationship, your possible marriage, your family. If you care about God, you probably want to do the right thing in his eyes. But it is really hard to know what to do when you do not know what is true.

Alright, you are sitting on the back deck or on the dinner table with your extended family. And your brother's there. And your mom and dad are there, and some big social issue comes up. And in like 30 seconds it has gotten really tense in the room and passionate. You might be talking about race. You might be talking about climate change. You might be talking about the police force. And your dad heard this on cable news. And your brother learned this when he was at college. And you know a police officer. A friend who is black and they say this. And you have always kind of had this hunch in your own heart that that is more closer to the truth. So what do you do? How do you react? What do you say? What do you stand for?

When there are 15 conflicting ideas and they cannot all be true, which truth do you choose? It is hard to know what to do when you are not sure what is true. Or maybe that moment comes for you or for someone you really care about when you realize that your same sex attraction, it doesn't change. And you can choose it and it feels like there is nothing you can do to change it. It is just this desire. And yes, you have prayed. And no, it has not gone away. So what do you do? Whose truth do you trust? Do you go with the historic position? Do you go with the modern one? Do you go with your gut? Your intuition. Do you trust your elders? Do you believe the people who have the holy book and have studied it the longest? And if so, which people who have the book and studied it the longest do you agree with? Truth. Whose do you trust?

Two thousand years ago Jesus of Nazareth said this in John 8. He said, "The truth will set you free." If you could just figure out what the truth is, according to Jesus, it would set you free. You

will be released from wondering. From doubting. From questioning yourself. From wondering what God thinks. If you could just stumble upon the truth, if you could find it, according to Jesus, it would set you free. And that is why, for the next few weeks, I want to join Jesus in a passionate pursuit of the truth. We are going to talk about all kinds of things in the weeks to come. We are going to talk about whether you should trust your truth. Go with your gut. Let your heart be your guide. Follow your heart. Be true to yourself. Is that true?

And then we are going to talk about their truth. We are going to talk about culture. We are going to talk about your parents. We are going to talk about your friends. We are going to talk about your favorite Youtubers, Instagrammers, cable news host. Should we trust them? How much should we trust? When should we trust them? How should we listen to their truth?

And then, this is going to be the fun part. We are going to talk about people like me and places like this. How do you know if you can trust the church? Should you? With the church's obvious historical flaws, should there be anything in this place that you lean in and listen to? Whose truth do you trust?

We are going to go on that journey together. But I want to warn you up front. The more I thought about this, and I have written all these messages already, the more I become convinced of this - that you need two qualities to come anywhere close to the truth. You have to be humble. And you have to be hard working. Proud people do not want to change. They are going to pick and choose the kind of sources that let them stay comfortable. You have to be humble. And you have to be hard working. It is easy and convenient just to believe everything you read. It takes a lot of work like a good journalist to check sources, survey sizes, sample to test theories to push on weak spots. But if you are willing today to be humble and hardworking, then Jesus is willing to lead you to the truth.

So, if you are up for that journey let us kick things off with the most popular place in modern culture to define truth, here. My truth. Your truth. That is what Moana did. If you remember the 2016 Disney movie Moana. You got a Moana tattoo, did not you sir? No sorry. I was going to pick on someone, and you know it was going to be you. You sat right there. So if you have not heard the plot, Moana is this beautiful little cartoonish island teenager. And her parents are grooming her to be the next chief of their island. But in her heart, she does not want to. Now instead she feels this pull, this calling and this destiny to travel beyond the reef and to explore the ocean. The problem however, is that her truth is not their truth. Her father absolutely forbids it. Her mother sympathizes but laments it. It is just not going to happen. The island, the village is not ready for it. But then the music begins. And I ask my oldest daughter about this part of the message. She said, dad, you cannot sing, so I will not. But you remember the lyrics. She feels like the sea is calling her and no one knows how far she will go. And it is so catchy, little kids sing it at karaoke all the time.

And in the end, what Moana decides, is to be true to herself. She disobeys her father. She disregards her mother. She turns her back on the advice of almost all of her neighbors and she lives her truth. And by the end of the movie her truth has set everyone free. And that is the perfect message of modern culture. Mom might not agree. Dad might not agree. It might not be

normal around here, but if you look deep inside, if you are true to yourself, you will find the most important thing in the universe. And when I slow down and think about that idea, I think there is something to it. We do not have time to pass the microphone around church today, but I have a hunch that you are a little bit different than your dad or your mom or your siblings or your classmates. There is something about you, the way you are wired, your passions and your personality that does not quite fit into the mold of your parents.

Some of you had like those meat and potatoes kind of fathers. You know what I am talking about. The farmers, the factory workers. You keep your head down. You bite your lip. You do the same job for 40 years. You provide for those that you care about. And that is not you. You are artistic. You are creative. You are adaptable. You do not want to tinker with some widget for 40 years. You want to see the world. You want to live simply. You want to explore. Your passion is not his passion. You are not him. The apple has fallen very far from the tree. And there is something to be said for not being him but for being you. Should I follow my heart? Should I go with my gut? Should I take this advice, look within and let no one deny what I consider to be true? If you are taking notes here or at home, I want you to write this down. The Bible would say to that question, should I live my truth? The Bible's answer would be...maybe. If you could somehow speed read the Bible cover to cover after church today the Bible would say, maybe.

I will not cover all the Bible's support of the concept but let me give you two quick passages. The first one comes from Romans 2 where the apostle Paul says this. He says, "the requirements of the law," so the law is like God's law, God's truth, "are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them." Sometimes when your gut says this is not right, God agrees. Sometimes when your conscience defends itself, no, no, I am not in the wrong, God agrees. In fact, sometimes when everyone else in the room is saying a and you feel within b, God looks at you and he says, me too. Now that may seem like a dangerous thing to say, right? Like your vote could out vote the other ten people in the room but actually that is true. Forgive the gross analogy but I call this the bathroom factor. You know the people who forget exactly how bad a public bathroom smells? It's the people who've been in it the longest. You know how bad -- who knows perhaps better than anyone how bad the bathroom actually smells? The person who just walked in. You know who sometimes really knows from God's perspective what is good or bad about a church, a school, a family? The person who walks into the room for the very first time and listens to their own conscience.

Alright sometimes, after a while, you know that person at the school, maybe even the pastor at the church. Everyone is kind of used to the outbursts, and the anger, and the impatience. Sometimes it takes a brand-new member to say, but that is not okay. Oh, that is just pastor so and so. You will get used to it after a while. No. No, no, no. My heart is telling this is not good, this is not godly, this is not kind, this is not appropriate. And if that were not enough of a case, let me show you one more passage. In 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul said this, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

When it comes to the difference between hands and feet, it is pretty easy to see the difference. When it comes to the differences in people and their gifts, not so easy to see the difference.

Right? I mean, I cannot look at you like I could with my eyes and see the label that God stamped on your forehead. Like this is your part, this is your gift. So how am I going to know if it is your gift? If it is your passion, if it is what you were made to do unless you speak from within. How am I going to know if you are right for public speaking, if you could do announcements, if you could stand on a stage, if you could lead a group. How am I going to know if that fires you up or that terrifies you unless you speak from the heart? Now some of you are amazing at small talk right. Every gas station attendant, they do not even see you coming. Every waitress does not know what is about to happen, and you love it. You're just going to win over a perfect stranger in 30 seconds or less. And others of you hate it. Like small talk is the worst.

How I am going to know that that is how you feel unless you speak the truth. And so we can talk about your conscience. We can talk about your spiritual gifting. We can talk about your thoughts. We can talk about your experiences. If you would ask the God of the Bible, should I live my truth, his answer would be, maybe. How you feel about something may be exactly how God feels about it. Or maybe not. If you want to know the whole truth about my truth, grab your pen and write this down too. Ask God, should I live my truth? He might say to you, maybe not. Should I accept all of the desires in my heart like they are from God? Should I assume that my initial reaction to a situation is accurate. Should I always follow my heart because that is you leading me God? He would say I love you but maybe not.

The basic problem with the concept of living your truth is that it is not always true. What a person feels as good or bad, right or wrong is not always factual. And I bet you have seen this. You have a family member and everyone in the family is concerned how much he is drinking. And you try to talk to him about it and he feels like it is under control. That is what he feels. Should he live his truth? Should he keep going? No, we need to intervene. We need to stop. God help us. We are praying this needs to change. Because what he feels is not the truth.

My wife's a preschool teacher. Sometimes she hears the 911 scream like a kid's being murdered in the corner of the classroom. She comes over, you know the little three-year-old who has all the toys and he is holding on to them like this. And she says, Johnny do you think it is okay to have all the toys? And what does Johnny say? Yes. No. Okay Johnny, you might feel it, you might believe it but that is not okay. She needs to speak truth to him. Not just accept the truth that comes from him.

Those of you who have been in relationships you've felt this too, haven't you? Like you are just like eighth place on the list. That she is so devoted to the kids. He is so devoted to his work. They come home and their first priority is their phone or emails from the job they just left. And you try to express that you are lonely. That something is not right about this. And they feel like you are overreacting. They feel like the situation is fine. Is what they feel factual? You see this is Jesus' problem with the concept of living your truth. It might be good. It might not be. It might be sanctified and holy. Or it might not be. This is why the apostle Paul, the same guy who wrote the stuff about the conscience and our thoughts and our hearts, he also said this in Ephesians 4. He said, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do." Do not live like those people.

Okay Paul, how do those people live? He says they live in the futility of their thinking. "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is," do not miss these two words, "in them due to the hardening of their hearts."

Honestly, I wish I could not relate to any of that. So, I have been following Jesus for 40 years now plus. Someone asked me a couple of days ago how many times I have read the Bible cover to cover? Fifteen at least. Even Leviticus. Are there times though when what I feel does not line up with that book? How I instinctively react to situations? I wish. I wish I could tell you otherwise. I notice it most, and I am not sure if you have been there, when I get into a disagreement with my wife, which I am grateful is pretty rare, my heart has -- if it was not evil, it would be impressive. My heart has this instinctive ability as soon as the first criticism comes, in less than a second, to produce an excel spreadsheet of all the things I have done right in marriage. Alright. Just honey, just pause these words, and I am going to speak and I am going to remind you what a great husband you got. At the same time, it is running another report which reminds of the things she is not doing so well. And when it is my turn, I can say all that. And I think some of you are not giggling at me. Right. You are giggling with me. What comes out of the human heart is sometimes beautiful. And sometimes it is just broken. Sometimes it is aggressive. Sometimes it is defensive. Sometimes it is Godly and sometimes it is Godless.

And that is why Jesus, who called himself the truth, wanted something better from me and you than what is in here. He wanted some sort of outside standard that we could use to evaluate our hearts, our thoughts, our actions and our desires. And today I want to share with you what that is. And it is some really nerdy, slash, really great Bible research on the word truth. Grab your pen and write this down. Here is what I learned.

Cover to cover in the Bible the word truth shows up 137 different times. One hundred and thirty-seven. What I was curious about was how many of those 137 fell into the concept of the truth. Like objective. Does not matter how I feel. It is the truth. And then how many of them were in the more subjective internal concept of my truth. One hundred thirty-seven different options. Here is what I found. Ninety-nine times, 99 times in the Bible before the word truth is the word the. Ninety-nine times. The Bible almost cannot bring up the word truth without the definite article, the truth. Which leaves 38 left over. So how many times when the word truth came up did the little word my come before it? The Bible's answer is... zero. Never. Not once.

The phrase, your truth, showed three times in the Bible but only when someone is speaking to God. We hear it constantly. Moana builds its rhythmic message into our hearts, but Jesus would say I am sorry but no. The truth is never yours or mine. It is never his or hers. It is never theirs. It is the truth. It is God's unchanging truth. That is why, and maybe the most important verse for this entire series, Jesus spoke these words. He was praying to his Father, and he said Father, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

So today before I land this plane, I have some homework for you. I want you to memorize those words from Jesus. I will have Les put John 17:17 back up on the screen. "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." In fact, I am even going to make you a deal today. I am only going to make you memorize half of that. Your word is truth. Come back next week, there is going to be a

quiz. Your word is truth. The blank will say. Blank is truth. And you are going to have to say, yeah, your word is truth. Let us practice it together, your word is truth. One more time. Your word is truth.

If you will say God, I want to know the truth. I want to know what to do but I cannot unless I know it is true. And we say oh yeah, Father, your word is truth. Our Father in heaven cannot go a single day without thinking, gushing, loving every son and every daughter that he has. And you may not believe that just yet, but I do not care what you believe. It is true. Because Father your word is truth.

Let us pray.

Father, thank you for not agreeing with us. If we had to come up with our own faith, there would always be strings attached. There would always be x number of sinful strikes and then we would be out. So grace, unconditional love, a God who runs the universe, who cares about stubbed toes and job cuts and social media. We would never think of that. So thank you Father that you know the truth. And thank you Father that you revealed the truth in your word. It will challenge us. For some of us it will force us and command us and demand of us to carry a cross and deny what is inside of our own hearts.

And Father you know that is going to be hard. But Father you also know that listening to you is infinitely better than not. That no one would speak words of mercy like this. Of patience like this. Of unconditional love like this. So Father, we trust your truth. Even when we do not feel it. Even when the world says otherwise. Today we make a commitment to trust your truth. Because if the son of God comes down from heaven and gives his life on the cross for the deceived and the strained and those who are lying to themselves, you must be trustworthy Father.

So we put everything into your hands. We put money and morality. We put family. We put dating. We put sexuality. We put work. We put everything into your hands. And we just pray today, Father speak to us, because we have come to believe that your word is the truth.

We pray this all in the saving name of your son Jesus Christ. And all God's people say, amen.