

The Word of God is Inerrant Psalm 119:160

So, what is truth, especially as it relates to the Bible?

In seventeenth-century London, convicted criminals were often branded on the right thumb in lieu of a more severe sentence. If they were ever accused of another crime, the judge would force them to “raise their right hand” to provide evidence of a previous conviction or leniency. After branding was abolished, the practice of raising the right hand in court continued as a means of swearing to truthfulness when testifying or swearing an oath.

The late evangelist Leonard Ravenhill regularly declared, “The Bible is either absolute, or it’s obsolete.”

In other words, it is either unchanging and without error or it is outdated, old-fashioned and archaic only to be a relic held under glass in some museum.

So, what is truth?

Bob Dylan stated that “All the truth in the world adds up to one big lie.”

Irish playwright Oscar Wilde wrote in a play that “The truth is rarely pure and never simple.”

At his trial, it was Pilate who asked Jesus the question: **What is truth?**

John 18:33-38

If Pilate’s question was merely a joke when Jesus said He came testify of the truth, he may simply have been asking “what does the truth really matter?” Or his question may have been a serious attempt at finding an answer to the elusiveness of truth in a culture and era, much like our own, which ponders the depths of trying to determine something uncertain where God is absent. What is truth? What was clear in Pilate’s response at the end of **verse 38** was that whatever truth was, Jesus was not a rebel and therefore had no basis on which to charge Him with a crime, let alone one worthy of execution by crucifixion.

The postmodern view is the latter. The Bible as truth has no merit or value for a civilized society which endeavors to live by reason and feeling. To the postmodern thinker, God is irrelevant and inconsequential and has no bearing on what should govern our lives and modern society, let alone dictate the moral code of our land.

Because of man’s rejection of God, truth is no longer absolute. There is no longer any basis for an unchanging belief of what is right and wrong. The postmodern culture we live in has embraced the idea of relativism. Without absolute truth, there can be no objective, universal truth, something that stays constant from one generation to the next and is the same regardless of the culture in which you live. Truth today is subjective, defined by whatever you want it to be at the time and changes at the mere whim of an individual or society who believes there is no God. Relativism believes that we establish our own standard of morality. Without God, man becomes the standard of truth. Such relative truth leads to personal and cultural preferences.

We see it in the policies and laws around life and abortion.

We see it in the policies and laws around marriage and gender.

We see it in the policies and laws around justice.

But there are consequences when absolute truth is ignored, especially the truth of God’s Word.

II Thessalonians 2:11-12

Now this passage is speaking about events yet future with the coming of the antichrist. The passage notes that God will send a strong delusion

What is truth is a question that has reverberated throughout history on into our postmodern world today where theologians and philosophers alike deliberate and debate over what it means. Can it be absolute or is it, as many today embrace, merely relative, an ever-changing fluid target of right and wrong? If truth is relative, it stands to reason that there should be an ever changing definition in the dictionary.

so that those who reject the truth of God will believe the lies of the man of lawlessness. The consequence is that all who reject the truth about God and His Word will be condemned. While it is spoken of something yet future, the same is true today for those who reject the truth about God and His Word. Those who do not believe but reject it and delight in wickedness are condemned.

While speaking about the characteristics of love, the Apostle Paul writes in **I Corinthians 13:5-6** that love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. The truth he is referring to is absolute.

Romans 2:6-11

Here again, we see that the consequence for ignoring the truth and following evil is to experience the anger and wrath of God. But perhaps the best passage to understand what happens to someone who rejects the truth of God's Word is in **Romans 1:18-22**.

Paul says that the truth about God is as plain as the nose on your face. The truth about Him is clearly evident in creation and yet man has chosen to ignore that truth. It is a deliberate rejection of what is plainly seen. Paul says that man's wickedness has suppressed this truth. The word suppress means to subdue by force. It is not simply a matter of ignorance where they didn't know. They go out of their way to purposefully and willfully disregard what is clearly evident. It is an outright refusal to believe what is the truth about God. Consequently because of their rejection of the truth, **verse 24** says that **"God gave them over to the sinful desires of their heart."** The result is living in their wickedness, which He condemns. Ignoring the truth leads to undesirable consequences.

So what is truth?

Let me first of all tell you what truth is not. But before I do here is a simple definition of truth from the dictionary: "Conformity to fact or actuality; a statement proven to be or accepted as true." Notice in that definition two important words: **fact and proven**. In other words, it's something that can't be

refuted. You can argue all you want, but the fact is that 2+2 will always equal 4, not 5, not 3.8 or 4.1. 2+2 does not equal green. It is not a philosophical description of love or a recipe for making cookies. It always has and always will be 4, nothing more and nothing less.

That's why it's confusing to me for those who think that truth is not absolute but is relative or subjective. By absolute I mean that which is perfect, complete, whole, unmixed, pure, definite and unchanging. Conversely then, relative or subjective truth means that some things may appear to be true for you, but not true for me. If you believe it, it is true for you. If I don't believe it, it is not true for me. Essentially it claims that you can believe whatever you want. If it fits or works for you, great, but I don't have to believe it if it doesn't work for me. Gravity may work fine for you, but I don't have to believe it. But if I step off the top of a building, I will find out very quickly that gravity is not relative, it is absolute.

There is a simple question to ask someone who believes that truth is relative, something based on your own personal value system. If they say that truth is relative, just ask them if they absolutely believe that. If they say yes, they have refuted their own concept of what relative truth is.

Relative truth essentially believes that there are no moral absolutes. Do whatever you want, because you make your own rules. There is no ultimate authority to determine right and wrong except you. Whatever feels right in the moment depending on the circumstances is okay and that may change tomorrow. It is a belief system that believes all lifestyles, all values, all beliefs, all claims to truth are equally valid.

One problem with relativism is man's finiteness. We are limited in knowledge and can't logically make a negative statement and be absolute about it. If a person says there is no God, he would have to have an infinite understanding of the universe from beginning to end. He can only say that to his limited knowledge he doesn't believe there is a God.

Another problem with relative truth is that it fails to

live up to what we know to be true regarding consequences that come from experience. Believing that what is right for me but not necessarily right for you, living by our own rules, runs the risk of hurting others. For example, what happens if I ignore the red light at the intersection? What happens if I believe it's okay to steal from you? There is a clear conflict of what is right and wrong. Morality is arbitrary.

If relative truth is to be followed to its logical conclusion, no one could say that anything is wrong. There would be no government, no laws, no justice. There would be no one to enforce standards because there are no standards if everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Rejecting absolute truth ignores any sense of moral accountability. Chaos ensues. Paul says when they reject the truth of God's Word, their foolish hearts are darkened, and God gives them over to their own sinful desires.

Some disturbing statistics come out of Barna research in which they surveyed some adults and some teens. From their research they found that 64% of adults believe that depending on the circumstances truth is always relative and not absolute. What is even more troubling is that 83% of teens believe that each situation determines the response. That's called situational ethics.

If we want to know what truth is, we need to know what truth is not.

Truth is not whatever works – the end justifies the means.

Truth is not a group of people getting together to fabricate a false story and sell it as true.

Truth is not whatever makes you feel good.

Truth is not what the majority says is true.

Truth is not defined by good intentions.

Truth is not simply what you believe. You can believe a lie and that still doesn't make it true.

Is there such a thing then as absolute truth?

The Greek word for truth literally means to unhide giving the idea that the truth is always there and available to be seen or known without being hidden.

What are some things that reveal truth?

Human conscience validates the existence of absolute truth.

Romans 2:14-16

Within each of us is a conscience that convinces us that some things are right and some things are wrong. Now we can continue doing something wrong to the point where our conscience no longer convicts us. But overall, our conscience tells us that lying, cheating, stealing, killing, raping and other evil actions are wrong while at the same time tells us that being loving, generous, compassionate, and peaceful are some of the things that are right to do.

Romans 2 essentially says that even a non-believer has this inner moral code written on their heart.

Religion, not just Christianity, also attests to absolute truth as it attempts to define the meaning of life, give hope for the future, provide a moral code of right and wrong, forgiveness for sin, and answer the deep questions of life. They look for the existence of a personal Creator, and if one exists, He becomes the standard of absolute truth, because His authority provides the framework for that truth.

But the greatest evidence for absolute truth is the Bible.

Psalms 119:160 "All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal."

Verse 52 "I remember Your ancient laws, O Lord, and I find comfort in them."

In other words, God's Word doesn't change, it won't change, it is not fickle. It is eternally the same in the past and will be the same for eternity to come. God's Word is grounded on the unchanging nature of God's own moral character. He isn't going to be one thing and then give us laws that are contrary to His nature. His Word isn't just a reflection of Him, it is His character throughout.

This verse tells us that the unchanging moral character of God's eternal Word is a source of tremendous comfort to the psalmist. That's why he cherishes it so much.

Verse 16 "I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word."

Verse 20 “My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times.”

Verse 24 “Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.”

Verse 30 “I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on Your laws.”

Verse 46 “How I long for Your precepts...”

Verse 97 “Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long.”

Set in the context of God’s deliverance of the psalmist from his enemies, the psalmist loves God’s Word because it is true, it is unchanging, it is eternal, it sustains him and keeps him from going astray.

Psalms 119:160 begins by saying “**All Your words are true.**” It literally means the sum of all God’s truth. In other words, all that God has written is truth or all of it can be trusted because it is true. He will never promise something and then not do it.

Matthew Henry writes “**Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth forever.**”

If God’s Word was not absolute, if parts of God’s Word were not true, how could we trust it? How would we know what to believe? Because it is absolute truth, because it is faithful to His character, we gain comfort from it because every word and every part of His Word can be trusted. Because God’s Word is absolute truth, it has never failed. It is faithful from beginning to end. Because God’s Word is absolute truth, it is unaltered and unalterable.

Here’s how we know God’s Word is absolute truth. It is because God is truth and does not lie.

Numbers 23:19 “**God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?**”

What God says He will do. He won’t go back on His Word.

II Corinthians 1:20 “**For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.**”

Hebrews 10:23 “**Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.**”

Hebrews 6:17-18 “**Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.**”

Titus 1:2 “**A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.**”

In a few weeks when we study **John 17:17** how the Word sanctifies, we will discover that we are sanctified by God’s Word which is truth. We can have every confidence in the truth of God’s Word because He is truth and does not lie. In the nature of His holiness He cannot lie.

What is truth? The Old English meaning of the word true meant steadfast, loyal, faithful, constant. The idea of faithfulness and loyalty is still preserved today in phrases like “true friend” or “loyal companion.” God’s Word is steadfast and constant.

The Hebrew language does not have a concept of truth, but the word is inseparably linked with the idea of being dependable, trustworthy, and faithful.

The Bible clearly attests to the truthfulness of itself. **The late Dr. Alfred Jepsen who taught Old Testament at the University of Greisfald defines truth this way: “Truth is that which is constant and unchangeable...something on which someone can rely, which will prove to be true in the future.”**

Today people understand truth as something declared fact by science. The problem with that is science isn’t always right. Science once believed that the earth was flat and there are still people today who believe it even though it has been proven that the world is round. Science once believed that the sun revolved around the earth. We know that is not true today.

Scientists once believed that the Coelacanth fish was extinct, but then discovered some in 1938.

Where science has been proven wrong time and again, the Bible never is wrong.

John Smith writes “Authentic, Biblical truth is inextricably linked to the dependable, unchanging character of God.”

In **Psalm 31:5**, King David calls the Lord the “**God of truth.**”

Isaiah says the same of God in Isaiah **65:14**.

If He then, is the God of truth, then His Word is truth, truth in every area.

The Bible is not a science book, but where it speaks of science, it is always true.

The Bible is not a geography book, but where it speaks of geography, it is always true.

The Bible is not a history book, but where it speaks of history, it is always true.

The Bible in every regard is absolute truth. That means it is true all the time and in all places. It will not change. It is absolute truth in every respect.

There are two terms you may hear them from time to time and you may wonder what they mean and they are important in understanding that the Bible is truth. The first term is **inerrant**. The second term is **infallible**. Both are used interchangeably but there is a distinction to be made.

The word **inerrant** simply means without error. In regard to the Bible, that it is inerrant means it is without error in the original text. Where translations may err, the original manuscripts given to us by the various authors are without error. Misprints, typos, and printing errors are human mistakes. What the authors of the Bible wrote were without error in the original because the Holy Spirit superintended their work. It’s what we call inspiration of Scripture and the topic of next week’s message.

Where inerrancy means without error, **infallibility** means incapable of error. That means it is never wrong and can be completely trustworthy. When you put the two words together, we mean that the Bible as absolute truth. It never fails. Since God is

infallible, it stands to reason that His Word is also infallible. Because God is without error, so His Word is without error.

One author notes that “the doctrine of Scripture’s infallibility is based on an understanding of God’s perfection of character.”

Psalm 12:6 “The words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”

Psalm 19:7 “God’s Word is perfect, reviving the soul.”

Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God is flawless.”

Because God is perfect, His Word is perfect. It is completely trustworthy. And up until the 16th century the reliability of Scripture was never in question. There was no need for a doctrine of inerrancy because it was always assumed it was without error. It was enough to affirm belief in the full inspiration of the Bible with the statement “I believe in the inspiration of the Bible.”

With the Age of Reason man began to question the reliability of Scripture. They began to assert that the Bible may be truth in matters of morality and the like, but when it came to other areas like science or history and so on there was room for error. They also began to contend that since fallible man wrote the Bible, it would invariably include mistakes. With each erroneous teaching about the Bible new affirmations on the inerrancy of Scripture were required.

Charles Ryrie writes “When some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, ‘I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.’ To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, ‘I believe in the verbal, plenary (absolute) inspiration of the Bible.’ Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, ‘I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible.’ But then ‘infallible’ and ‘inerrant’ began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all

that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of ‘unlimited inerrancy.’ Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.”

To clarify a Biblical stand on inerrancy a group of pastors and theologians formed The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy to combat the growing attacks on the Word of God. At their meeting in Chicago in 1978 they drafted the following statement: “Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace and individual lives.”

The Council continued by declaring that “Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching...”

In his book on Bibliology, Czeslaw Bassara asks and answers this question: What happens when this doctrine is denied? There are those who believe that inerrancy is not very important. We do not defend the Bible, particularly as it relates to the details of chronology, geography, history, or cosmology or the so-called alleged inconsistencies...If the Bible is God-breathed, it must be completely without any error. If the Bible teaches inerrancy, then to deny it is to deny that which the Bible claims is true. If the Bible contains some errors, how can we be sure that its claims concerning Jesus Christ, salvation, man and other doctrines, are true?”

He then quotes Charles Ryrie “Even if the errors are supposedly in ‘minor’ matters, any error opens the Bible to suspicion on other points which may not be so ‘minor.’ If inerrancy falls, other doctrines will fall too.”

Bassara concludes: “If we cannot trust the Bible in disciplines like history, etc., then how can we be certain that we can trust it in its message about salvation and the Christian life?”

To either outright deny or even just to dilute

Scripture in any way has serious repercussions. That’s why it is important to ascribe to the inerrancy of Scripture, that the Bible is Truth.

Abraham Lincoln remarked “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good of the Savior of the world is communicated to us through the Book. But for it, we could not know right from wrong.”

Does the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture matter? Indeed it does. It matters both for eternity to come and in how we conduct ourselves while we live out our days on earth.

Dr. Jepsen wrote that “Yahweh is the God in whose word and work one can place complete confidence.”

It is as **Psalm 119:105** attests stating that God’s Word is “**a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.**” Because it is truth, it will never lead the follower astray.

“All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal.”

As we take the next number of weeks to study the importance of God’s Word in the life of the believer, it is my hope that we will not only come to believe that all His words are true, but that His Word will shape our conduct as we grow to love His word and meditate on it all day long, letting it be a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.

If in fact God’s Word is truth, we would do well to obey them.