

Your Word is Truth

Introduction

Week 1 - Introduce question of truth

What is truth?

How we know it and communicate it?

The Postmodern view and why it's important to know this.

What does the Bible teach?

Week 2 - Postmodernism in the church / Areas of Caution

Week 3 - Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Some guidelines for interpreting Scripture?

Why do we ignore some commands and not others?

Every promise in the Book is not yours? How do we know?

Week 4 - Communicating with a postmodern world, especially the under-40 generations.

Session 1

Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" John 18:38

What do we mean when we say something is true?

Is it possible to know something is true?

What are some ways we know things are true?

Is it possible to communicate truth from one person to another?

Postmodern concept of truth and communication

Real foundational truth does not exist.

High level of skepticism regarding propositions and logic

(Propositions are statements that are either true or false)

Disdain for claims of certainty

Christians think that God can be dissected and analyzed like a scientific specimen

Truth is how YOU perceive things and everyone's perception is different.

To be unclear on truth is a sign of true humility and wisdom

True communication is not possible.

We learn from experience, feelings and relationship, not statements of fact.

It's a matter of how we perceive things, not what's actually stated.

One result of all this is the belief that strong people and dominant cultures tend to control and dominate others through their claims of authority, right and truth.

Postmodernism is not all bad. It has helped to subdue the human tendency to think mankind will know all the answers and that science will solve every problem.

What does the Bible say?

John 17:17; John 8:32; 1 Thess 2:13

1. The Bible claims to be _____. You must be _____ of this or everything falls apart.
2. The Bible claims that truth can be _____ (John 8:32).
3. The Bible claims that truth can be _____ (Acts 26:25; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Timothy 2:7)
4. We cannot _____ about God (Romans 1:19).
5. The Bible contains many _____. List some:

6. The Bible uses _____ and _____. (See Acts 26:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:13 for example)

How would you respond?

You believe all of this just because that is the way you were raised. Others believe their way just as strongly.

The God I worship would never have ordered the killing of all those Amalekites.

You Baptists act like you have everything figured out and there's no room for doubt or questions.

I would rather have a real relationship of love and communication with God rather than knowing all the facts about God like the deity of Christ, the trinity and justification and all those other big words.

Brief History of Thinking about Truth

This is of necessity very brief and very watered down and so you need to realize these generalizations don't apply rigidly and a lot has been left out.

Premodern (Before the 1500's) - Feudalism, agricultural society. Limited knowledge of outside world. They believed in an open universe which means gods and spirits were included in what was true. There was a lot of superstition along with Christianity and other religions.

Modern –(Late 1500's to mid 1900's) Characterized by development of science and technology. Man believed that he was capable of figuring things out without any divine help. Science began to explain some of the mysteries that were attributed to the gods. Man believed that through his reason he could figure out virtually everything including how to heal all diseases, how to overcome war, how to figure out the foundation of all things including morality without the help of the gods or God. God if there was one was removed and not involved (deism). The revelation of the Bible was subjected to scientific scrutiny and gradual disbelief. The big 'I' had replaced God. Modernists believed there was absolute truth, but they believed they could discover it through the power of human reasoning.

Because of the printing press and other forms of more recent communication methods, modern ideas were quickly disseminated throughout the world.

Christians were opposed to much of modernism because of its skepticism and criticism of the Bible and biblical miracles. But also many used reason and scientific ways of thinking to outline, chart, describe and analyze the Scriptures and Christian doctrine and thus helped people to understand sometimes complex teachings of the Bible.

Postmodern – (After about 1960) Postmodernism continues with 'I' as the center of all things. However, because of the fact that the modern promises of peace and human progress were shattered by world wars, violence and crime in the cities and poverty and disease continuing, people began to think that the modern approach was not all that it was cracked up to be. Some saw modernism being used to espouse what they claimed was the truth and then to use that to subjugate other nations or other ethnic groups or cultures.

The idea began to develop that because everything depends on a person's perspective, it's impossible to actually know what the truth about anything is. Those who claim to have the truth (not just Christian truth, any truth) were out to impose their truth on others with negative consequences for those who were thus under that imposition.

Since everything involves a person's background, culture and perspective, the modern idea that information can be communicated effectively to others began to be abandoned. It is claimed that you can't really know what an author is saying. The modern idea of being able to figure out what the basics of life are is being abandoned. I am my own reality.

The Christian should be happy about some of this because it shows that man without God cannot find the foundations of life. But the God who is actually there has communicated those fundamentals to us. Of course the problem for the postmodern is that communication isn't possible.

So for the postmodern there is no external reality that can be known. There is no truth, no moral absolute, no direction, no purpose. The only reality is that which we create within ourselves.

As a result of no known purpose or direction, some postmoderns jump into “spirituality” to try to replace what has been lost, but it is a spirituality of their own invention and no one can say it isn't real because it's real to them.

Your Word is Truth Session 2

According to the Scripture:

Truth exists

Truth can be known. We can't know all truth about everything, but we can know some things truly.

Truth can be communicated.

When some or all of this is denied, there are consequences even within the church. Some of them are:

Authority is questioned.

People look into themselves for the answers rather than authority figures.

Personal opinion becomes basis of belief.

Interpretation of Scripture becomes personal.

Spiritual experience takes precedence over doctrine.

Experience and emotion lead the way.

People tend to look for therapeutic solutions to meet their problems.

Some, but not all, of the reasons younger people are leaving churches are related to these issues.

Sometimes there is a nugget of truth in these concerns. In those cases we need to examine ourselves and make necessary changes.

People are unloving and judgmental

Church seems to think it is right about everything, no room for doubts or questions

Routines are stodgy and perfunctory, not real and authentic

They just use the Bible as an encyclopedia dissect it and prove things with it but don't seem to really have life

Uncaring attitude toward poor

Right wing politics

Salvation – you're either saved or not – too absolutist; it should be more of a journey

Not willing to realize the church's viewpoint changes; The church used to support slavery, now not. Same thing could happen to gay rights or all kinds of other things.

The history of ills the church has perpetrated in the name of Christ because people thought they were right

We just want a relationship with Christ, not all this doctrine.

The above list is more blatant. Some other ways this trend away from truth include:

People saying, “You can't judge me. Take care of your own life!”

“I don't agree with your interpretation. I think the Scripture allows me to do this.”

“To me, the Bible is saying...”

Sometimes people just have the attitude that they can do what they want and act like the Word of God has no bearing on what they do. Sometimes it outright disobedience. Sometimes it's the belief that they just don't see it the same way as others do.

Sometimes people mention that more tolerance is needed. But tolerance and agreement are not the same thing. If you agree with something you can't be said to tolerate it. Tolerance means allowing others to hold their opinion or behave in ways you don't agree with.

We need to _____ the word as the word of _____. 1 Thess 2:13

We need to understand that our problem is not therapeutic, it is _____. Romans 1:18-32

We can know nothing of God except what He _____. Romans 1:19; 2 Tim 3:16

No one naturally _____ the true God. Romans 3:11

All seeking for the true God is from the drawing of the Spirit. All other seeking is for a false god to meet perceived needs.

The world in its wisdom does not know God. Therefore God uses _____. 1 Cor 1:21

Scripture does not have a private _____. 2 Peter 1:20

(This means there is one meaning. People may disagree, but two opposing opinions can't both be "right".)

God does give the _____ to give us understanding, but He doesn't have multiple interpretations. (John 16:13)

God has given us _____ and _____ to equip the saints. Eph 4:11

God has given us authorities: Government, Husbands, Fathers, Church Leaders whom we are to _____. Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 3:1; Eph 6:1; Romans 13:1

Knowing God is directly related to our _____ of the _____. 1 John 4:6

We need to avoid teaching the commands of _____ as though they were from God. Matt 15:9

In areas not specifically commanded in Scripture, we are to allow people to act according to their own conscience. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. Romans 14:1-5

We need to have great humility in areas where the Scripture has not spoken, or is not as clear as we would like.

How would you respond?

The God I worship would never have ordered the killing of all those Amalekites.

You Baptists act like you have everything figured out and there's no room for doubt or questions.

I would rather have a real relationship of love and communication with God rather than knowing all the facts about God like the deity of Christ, the trinity and justification and all those other big words.

I would rather worship with a church where people are actually trying to solve the poverty problem and other social ills the way Jesus would.

Your Word is Truth
Session 3
...rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

1. All scripture is _____ and _____. 2 Timothy 3:16
2. No scripture is of _____ interpretation. 2 Peter 1:20
3. Must receive it as it is in truth, the _____ of _____. 1 Thess 2:13

**The Bible doesn't become the word of God as it speaks to your heart. It is the word of God.
It doesn't contain the word of God. It is the word of God. John 14:26; 16:14, 15**

Ask yourself questions -

- What kind of writing is this? History, Teaching, Poetry, Etc.
- Who is it being written to or about?
- Who is speaking?
- What is the broader context?

Learn to distinguish between-

The Old and New Covenant

Hebrews 8:3 Old covenant is obsolete.
Colossians 2:14 Wiped out the handwriting that was against us
See also Galatians 4:21-31

Israel and the Church

Both are a people of God
Israel had specific promises including material blessings and a land. These cannot just be spiritualized.

Law and Grace

John 1:17 Law through Moses, grace and truth through Jesus Christ
Romans 6:14 Not under law but under grace

God's character has not changed. Right and wrong have not changed. But God's relationship with us is not a legal one any longer.

Romans 5:20 Law entered that the offense might abound
Romans 7:1-6 We have died to the law.
Romans 8:4 What law could not do, God did.
Romans 3:20 Cannot be justified by law-keeping
Galatians 3:1-9 Cannot be sanctified by law-keeping

God's various economies (dispensations)

Revelation has been gradual. God has dealt with people in various ways based on what He had revealed to them. Consider Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, Church, Millennium
The commandments and requirements were different in each era.
Men have always been sinners and salvation has always been by grace through faith.

Experience and Revelation

Experience must be validated by revelation. 2 Peter 1:16-21

In other words, when your experience, emotions, or feelings are pointing one way and the Word of God is pointing a different way, you must trust Scripture and not your feelings.

Commands and Examples

Just because someone in the Bible did something does not mean that it is a requirement for others.

You must evaluate their life and testimony and consistency with the rest of scripture.

Commands and Preference

Do not teach as commandments of God things that are your preferences. Allow others their preferences.

Romans 14:1-10

The Baptisms of John, Jesus (Spirit), and Christian

Acts 19:3, 4, 5; Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16

Examples: Romans 6:3; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12

Statements in Scripture made by people speaking the truth or by people speaking falsehood.

Learn to ask, "Is what this person saying true?"

Acts is a transition book – transitioning between Israel and Church

You need to pay particularly close attention to who the audience is and what the circumstances are, especially related to baptism and signs.

Signs confirmed authenticity – Mark 16:20; Acts 2:43; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Corinthians 14:22

Once Scripture was complete, signs no longer necessary. 1 Cor 13:8-10

Conclusion

What does the Scripture say? (Romans 4:3; Galatians 4:30)

What does the Scripture mean? (Neh 8:8)

Does it involve information to be known, a promise to be believed, or a commandment to be obeyed?

Since all Scripture is profitable, which of these areas does this passage profit me:

Doctrines (teaching)?

Reproof (convict, admonish)?

Correct?

Instruct in righteousness?

Where the Scripture is clear, we need to stand strong for the truth. Where the Scripture is vague, we need to have the humility to say we don't know. And where the Scripture is silent, we should be silent.