

God's Word is Truth

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[0 : 0 0] If you would, turn in your Bible to 2 Timothy chapter 3 and put your finger there, and then John chapter 17.

2 Timothy chapter 3, and then John chapter 17, and just hold those places. There's going to be very little PowerPoint this morning.

I messed it up. I couldn't figure out something that was very simple, user error, but I always do the PowerPoint last. I mean, last, last, because I fiddled with outlines and various things right up to the last minute, put the PowerPoint together, and come on down here.

Well, I waited too late after my problem, and so there's very little PowerPoint, but I had someone say after the first service, they like it better without PowerPoint, and I'm sure some of you do too, so that'll balance out, I hope.

Billy Graham was the world's most well-known evangelist, world's most well-known preacher for over half a century. It began in 1949 when God used his Los Angeles crusade as really an introduction of Billy Graham to the world.

[1 : 2 5] God actually used an unbelieving newspaper man, Randolph Hearst, who was so captured by the attendance and everything that he, through print media, thrust Billy Graham onto the national scene.

Now, following that, he went on to preach the gospel to more people in person, live audiences than anyone else in history.

According to their website, he preached in nearly 250 million people in over 185 countries in person.

They were there. Hundreds of millions more people were influenced by his preaching and teaching through television, film, video, books.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Organization has gotten the gospel throughout the world in just unbelievable ways, media, and so forth. Well, Billy Graham made his final public appearance in 2013 on his 95th birthday.

[2 : 4 3] There were about 1,000 invited guests who packed the grand ballroom at the Omni Grove Park Inn to celebrate not just his birthday, but his life and his legacy.

Franklin Graham, his son, said about him that night, it's been a burden on his heart for the last three years to preach one more time. He thought he could do it in a stadium.

He realized he didn't have the strength, so he shot this video, The Cross. It was a 30-minute video, and that night, the Fox News Channel aired it.

It was aired over the next week or so on numerous stations, numerous times. But Billy Graham did deliver a message that night. Shortly after he was rolled out in a wheelchair by his grandson, the lights went out in the grand ballroom, and three giant screens with Billy Graham's last filmed message.

And he said this. You see it at the top of the screen there. With all my heart, I want to leave you with truth. Evidently, that's how he introduced the 30-minute message of the cross.

- [4 : 02] Well, I want to use Billy Graham's final statement as the theme of my final five messages as your pastor. With all my heart, it is my desire to leave you with truth.
- That's my goal today and for the next four Sundays. That has been my goal every Sunday I've been here throughout all these 25 years. But we're going to focus on specific aspects of the truth over the next four weeks.
- Today, I want us to see that God's Word is truth. God's Word is truth. First note, God's Word is objective truth.
- The Bible, God's Word. God has given us His authoritative, right out there for us in black and white, objective truth.
- In Jesus' final prayer for His people, John chapter 17, He asks the Father to do this. Sanctify them in the truth.
- [5 : 12] Your Word is truth. John 17, 17. Jesus praying for His people. That includes us. Sanctify them in the truth.
- Your Word is truth. That word sanctify simply means to set them apart, help them to grow. When God saves us, He does a work of regeneration and brings about a new birth.
- And through faith in Jesus, He declares we are right with Him. He justifies us through faith in Jesus, the Bible talks about. Well, from that moment on, God begins to work in us to sanctify us.
- When He saves us, He declares us to be His children. He declares us to be His holy, set-apart people. But from that moment on, He starts working us to make us actually live like, enable us to actually live like His holy, set-apart people.
- And the primary tool that God uses is His Word, the Bible. And so that's why Jesus prayed. Sanctify them with the truth.
- [6 : 20] Your Word is truth. Now, I want you to think. Jesus did not use the word true as an adjective to describe God's Word as you might think He would.
- Like, your Word is true. That would be a truthful statement. But that's not what Jesus prayed. That's not how He expressed it. Jesus used the noun truth to describe God's Word.
- That was His way of emphasizing that God's Word is not only true, but it is truth itself. Think about it this way.
- Jesus came into this world, and He embodied the truth of God. He said it on one occasion. I am the way, the truth, and the life.
- No one can come to the Father except through Me. Jesus embodied, modeled, demonstrated the truth of God by the way He lived, the things He taught.
- [7 : 23] Well, God's Word reveals the truth about God, about life in this world, about us as human beings, about the way of salvation, about the way of Christian living.
- Wayne Grudem explains why it's important to understand why Jesus used the word truth and said God's Word is truth, rather than just saying God's Word is truthful.
- Grudem says the Bible is God's Word, and God's Word is the ultimate definition of what is true and what is not true. God's Word in itself is truth.
- Now, this understanding of truth is what the Christian church has believed since the first century. What I just told you, God's Word, it is truth.
- It communicates the truth of what God wants us to know, believe, how He wants us to live. Well, the church has always understood it that way. In the book of Jude, if you want to turn there, turn to the back and go one more book over.

[8 : 34] Jude, there's only one chapter, verse 3. Jude described Christian teaching in absolute terms like this. He says, the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

The word faith there describes everything the apostles taught. When Jude was talking about the faith, everything that Christians have taught and believed.

The apostles taught it, it's recorded in the New Testament. But the apostles also taught the Old Testament. If you've read through the New Testament, you know countless numbers of references, quotations from the Old Testament.

So when Jude talked about the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, he was talking about the Christian faith in its entirety, the truth of God.

The phrase, once for all delivered to the saints, means that this body of truth, well, let's just say the Bible, was given by God to the church, and it will not change.

[9 : 41] It will stand forever. Look at this, Isaiah describes it well. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Everything in this world changes. You know where you can verify that? First, look in the mirror. We all change.

I mean, as I look around this room, I thought about it earlier in first service. When I first came here, I was standing on this platform 25 years ago, and there were some godly men and women sitting out here, actively involved in this church, that are no longer here today.

They've died. They're in heaven. Some of you, some of your spouses, parents, grandparents. But also, as I look around, there are some people sitting close by.

They've aged. I mean, there's people in here that, when I first came, they were going to be considered, you know, young adults in their 30s.

[10 : 53] Now they've got AARP cards, some of them Medicare cards. Everything changes. Your house has changed. Your property, it changes.

Everything changes. God does not change. And God's Word does not change. Now, when Jude described the Christian faith as he did, he was doing more than just giving a description about the faith.

It's been once and for all delivered to the saints. He was calling for Christians to do something with this body of teaching that God has given us. Here's the full statement from Jude.

It's in verse 3. He wrote, Jude is writing this letter.

Jude is writing this letter. He says, you know, I wanted to write to you about something else. I wanted to write to you about some of the great things God has done for us in Christ about living a Christian life.

[12 : 08] But I have to deal with some difficult things. Because I want you to contend. I want you to fight for the faith.

The body of truth that God has given us to believe and live by in this world. The word contend there. It was used in that day to describe an athlete's exertion, his strong effort, his hard work.

It's really a defensive and offensive word. We're to put forth strong effort to defend the faith against false teaching and false teachers.

You know, a lot of times today, we have the idea, live and let live. Don't stir up controversy. Well, you know, if you go home today, you got a family dinner, and you got all kinds of different world views there, liberals, conservatives.

I don't think you need to contend for the faith around the family meal today. No use having a knockdown drag out, not be able to enjoy your fried chicken or whatever it is you're going to have.

[13 : 14] But generally speaking, as we live in this world as Christians, we cannot have this mindset, live and let live. That's why we're in the situation we're in right now that we'll come to in a moment.

This word contend for the faith, for the truth of God's word, the whole thing. Defend the faith against false teachers and false teaching.

But we're also to be on the offensive, actively and energetically promoting Christian truth and living it out, showing what it means to live like a Christian.

Begin in your home, where you work, at school. That's how it will affect this community. You know, Christians have always been called to contend for the faith.

And in the New Testament, it's described in different ways. Jesus used words like salt and light to describe how he expects us to be actively involved in this world, contending, fighting, defending for the truth, for the faith.

[14 : 24] I want you to think about what he's saying in Matthew chapter 5. Matthew 5, beginning in verse 13, he says, You are the salt of the earth. But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. Jesus said to us as Christians, you're the salt of the earth. You're supposed to be in this world, in this culture, flavoring.

Preserving. We should count in this world. He goes on to say, You're the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand. And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

We're supposed to be living in this world, living like Christians. Living like people who know Jesus and are following Jesus. And we're like shining the light of truth in the darkness around us.

[15 : 37] That's our job. That's what we're called to do. We're to be seen. People are, we're to be out, public, seen, visible, shining a light. So that as people see our good works, we do it in such a way that we don't hide that we're Christians.

We let it be known we're doing this for the glory of God and the good of other people. And the scripture says when we do that and people see our good works, God will be praised.

God will be honored. God will get the glory. That's how we can be witnesses in this world and contend for, fight for the faith.

Do you realize that the call to contend for the faith in our church, or let me rephrase that. The call to contend for the faith is a part of our church's official statement of faith, the Baptist faith and message.

Which is also the official statement of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention. I want you to listen to this. If you're not familiar with how we do this, we as a church, we believe the Bible is God's word and that is our ultimate source of authority.

[16 : 51] But we've also written a statement of faith explaining some of the things we believe about God's word. One of these, the article is called, is Article 15, The Christian and Social Order.

I want you to listen to what we, as a church, through our statement of faith and all of Southern Baptists, what we understand our responsibility to be. It says, all Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society.

You think about it. You may think this way and maybe even said it, but you've heard it. My faith is a private thing. You know, what we need more of in today's culture is for people to keep their beliefs to themselves and just have a private faith.

No. If you think that, you're wrong. How can you be sought and liked privately? How can you contend for the faith and not let anyone ever know it?

This article goes on. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.

[18 : 17] That's our job.

Because Christians, as a whole, we've not taken our responsibility seriously and actually sought to be salt and light in our communities, which affects our state, which affects our country.

As a result, we can't point to many success stories lately. How we've brought industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.

I mean, you look around. Look, think. What have we, as God's people collectively, what have we done to promote the faith lately?

To contend, to influence, to change? There's been times in the past when Christians made, brought about great changes in the Western world.

[19 : 51] The slave trade was stopped in England because of the influence of Christians. Some of you children in here. There was a time in this country when you, at 10 years of age, worked 40 or more hours a week in a factory.

Child labor laws came about a lot of influence by Christians saying, this is not right. Many things have been affected in this country for the good of everyone, not just Christians, through the influence of Christians.

But now we have so many failure stories where we just haven't done anything. We've remained silent or we've even retreated. This has resulted in almost a total rejection of biblical truth in just about every area of life now around about us.

I want you to think. In most of us, in most of our lives, most of us in this room, in our lifetime, abortion has been legalized, protected under our Constitution.

Think about that. In our lifetimes, most of us, a baby can be killed in the womb of its mother simply because that's what that mother wants to do.

[21 : 12] And we have leaders today that have been elected by this country, like our current president and vice president, who contend for a woman being able to kill her baby at any point in her pregnancy.

Think about it. Think about it. In everyone in this room's lifetime, same-sex marriage has been legalized.

Now you think about that. 25 years ago when I became pastor of this church, I would never have dreamed that there would be a such thing as same-sex marriage.

Not only has it become grown, but it's accepted, legalized under our Constitution. We know that all these matters, we know the truth about all these matters because God has revealed it to us.

Life is sacred. Life is sacred in the womb all the way to the very end of natural life. We know that. But we've sat back and let others who reject the truth of God's Word contend for that secular, ungodly worldview, and they've succeeded.

[22 : 40] God has revealed to us His objective truth about such things. But I want you to look at one more thing. God also works in another way. God's Word is useful truth or practical truth or profitable truth.

Here's where 2 Timothy 3 comes in. 2 Timothy 3, 16. I hope you've got it open. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

The word profitable is translated in some of your translations, useful. Practical is what it's talking about as well. The Word of God is profitable, useful, practical.

It works for us who are God's children. Paul identifies four ways the Bible is profitable for us to use. Look at it. The Bible is profitable for teaching.

Let's talk about positive teaching. God makes His ways and will known to us through the pages of Scripture so that we can know how to live a life that pleases Him. That's real simple. Well, the Bible is also profitable for reproof or rebuking.

[23 : 49] This is the negative aspect of teaching. It describes correcting error. The Bible is like a referee in any sport, like a referee in basketball. It calls a foul when fouls are committed.

It calls a person who steps out of line when they step out of bounds. The Spirit of God convicts us of sin when we break His rules of life, when we step out of bounds from what the Bible allows.

Here's an example of how the Bible is profitable or useful for teaching and rebuking in terms of what we believe. One of the most popular things that is believed in our country today, taught today, is that there are many ways to God.

In fact, there's a lot of people who think, and I hope there's no one in this room who actually thinks this, but a lot of people think, when all is said and done, all religions ultimately lead to God and heaven.

Well, we need to understand. Jesus made it very clear there's only one way to be made right with God, and that's through Him. The Bible teaches, Jesus said, John 14, 6, I am the way and the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.

[25 : 15] No one except through Him. The only way to be right with God is through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible also rebukes anyone who would teach otherwise.

Paul said this to the Galatian Christians. He said in chapter 1, verse 8, But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

Let him be doomed eternally. Think about this. The Bible is profitable or useful in that it teaches us the truth, and it rebukes us whenever we are in error.

That's how practical the Bible is. You need to think in terms of developing your belief system based on what the Bible clearly teaches. You need to think in terms of how you're going to live in this world, your morals, your values, and base it on what the Bible teaches, what is clear in Scripture.

It goes on and says the Bible is profitable for correction. Correction means to confront what is wrong and teach the correct way. The Bible gives us practical instruction for how to do that, how we should and should not live.

[26 : 32] And then look at the fourth one. The Bible is profitable for training and righteousness. God doesn't just correct us when we do wrong. God gives us positive instruction about how we can please Him.

The Bible trains or disciplines us to live in a right relationship with God and other people. When you correct your children, you don't just say that's wrong, do you?

You don't just punish them for something they did without explaining, this is wrong, this is what you should do. Or you know they know what they should do. That's the way God is with us. Here's an example of correction and training in righteousness.

Same-sex marriage has become legal in this country. Today's culture willingly accepts homosexual behavior and condemns anyone who calls it sinful.

There are liberal churches who do that. There are liberal churches that even ordain gay pastors. And there are liberal churches that even perform what they call weddings for people of the same sex.

[27 : 46] Well, the Bible really does correct this erroneous and sinful behavior by pointing out how God, He does not accept this. God condemns such relationships and behaviors.

I'll give you one example. It's from 1 Corinthians chapter 6. If you want to turn to that, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, we'll look at verse 9. And the reason I'm going to use this one is, it lumps a lot of different things that God does not approve of together.

It doesn't just single out homosexuality. And there's a positive part of this at the end, how people who are of this persuasion can be changed.

Look at it if you've got your Bible open. 1 Corinthians 6, 9. He's writing to the church. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

[28 : 54] So there's a broad list there. And Paul's point is, he's saying to people in that church, if you live an ungodly life, if your lifestyle is you're just a greedy person, selfish person, you're a lying person, you're somebody, you're not faithful to your wife or husband, you're just a serial adulterer, as well as involved in homosexual behavior.

He says, if you just make it a practice, that's just who you are. You're living a sinful life of whatever type. You're not going to heaven. You will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It's as clear as anything can be. But then he goes on to say, and such were some of you. People in that church, they came from that kind of background, those kind of backgrounds.

But then he says, you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God. There's a word of hope in this verse.

Some members of the church of Corinth have been involved in sinful lifestyles, including a homosexual lifestyle. But God saved them, forgave them, changed them.

[30 : 18] You know, there are places in this country, it's being debated in a place in our state right now, where it is and can become illegal for a counselor, even a pastoral counselor, to lead somebody to understanding that homosexual behavior is sinful behavior, leading them to repent and seek God's help to change.

In the good old United States of America, in some places, such counseling is illegal. God's word condemns sin.

But God's word also offers salvation and forgiveness to all sinners who will admit it, this is wrong, this is sinful, turn from it, and turn to Jesus Christ in faith and commitment, which involves living life God's way as revealed in his word.

The Bible also trains us in righteousness concerning this subject. By teaching us how God designed men and women to live together in what he considers a marriage relationship.

Genesis 2.24, listen to this. Jesus echoes this, or quotes this, Matthew 19, Paul does the same thing. Genesis 2.24, the very beginning.

- [31 : 46] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. The Bible's very clear. God designed, created marriage to be between one man and one woman in a one flesh relationship for all of their lives.
- And that's it. There is no other marriage relationship before God. There is none. The Bible is very useful or practical.
- The Spirit of God uses the word of God to correct us when we make sinful choices, and then to teach us, train us, to make right choices that will please God.
- And the kind of lifestyle that pleases God will be the most satisfying lifestyle for us. Because God created us. He knows what works best. And living life His way always works best.
- You know, the Bible is the Holy Spirit's most useful tool to teach, to rebuke, to correct, and train us in right living. Now, as God's people, we do not have to search for the truth about the things in life that matter most.
- [33 : 09] God has revealed the things that matter most in His Word. And as Christians, God has put His Spirit in us to help us to understand it and to learn how to put it into practice.
- That's a lifetime endeavor. When God saves us, He puts His Spirit within us who gives us the desired ability to please God, to live according to the truth of God's Word.
- But we also have a sinful nature and we struggle with temptation and old habits. And throughout our lives, we're going to have to resist temptation, say no to sin, seek God's forgiveness when we don't.
- But by God's grace, we can make progress because God's going to work through His Word and Spirit to help us. Now, I want to ask you, we're going to wind this up. Do you believe the Bible as God's authoritative, infallible, inerrant Word?
- Do you believe that? Do you accept what the Bible teaches as God's objective and useful truth?
- [34 : 29] Now, if you say no, why are you here? Now, if you say no, I don't believe the Bible is God's inerrant Word.
- I don't accept it as His objective and useful truth. If you say, I don't believe that, but I'm open to you convincing me otherwise, that's okay.
- If you're an atheist here this morning, you don't believe anything about what the Bible says, but you're willing to listen. You're open.
- I'll be glad to talk with you. Other people in this church will be glad to talk with you. And I'm so glad you're here. Really. But if you're a member of this church and you say, I don't believe that the Bible is God's infallible, inerrant Word.
- And I don't accept what it says as God's objective and useful truth, then I say to you, why are you here? Because we, as Pickens First Baptist Church, we, in writing, confess, through our statement of faith, this is what we believe.
- [35 : 42] This is what our denomination to the Baptist Convention believes. It's not a matter of me. You can say, well, if I can just endure four more weeks, you won't be here.
- Let me tell you something. It's in the Constitution and bylaws, and that's not going to change when I leave. That's still the statement of faith of this church. And I've got news for you.
- It'll disappoint you if you can't wait for me to leave because you want to try to liberalize things. I have the utmost confidence that whoever this church calls will be their pastor. As a matter of integrity, but also of conviction, he will embrace the Baptist faith and message.

And so that means he will believe that the Bible is the infallible and inerrant word of God as well. So if you just hate the idea that God's word is truth, you ought to find somewhere else to go because you're going to live a life of real frustration in this church.

But I have confidence confidence that 99% of people in this church, you believe that. You believe what I have spoken, taught this morning.

[36 : 58] So I want us to go a step further. You believe this is God's word. Will you ask God now to help you to faithfully and consistently read it, study it, believe it, obey it, and when you have the opportunity, teach it or share it with other people.

I want to encourage you. Let God, ask God, and he will, ask him to show you what you should believe through his word and through his spirit.

Ask God to show you what you should not believe, what you should reject. Ask God to show you how you should live as a Christian in this world, beginning at home.

Ask God to show you how you should not live. He will do that. He is the God of truth. His word is truth.

And if we want to live as God's people pleasing him honoring him, doing his will, we've got to embrace and live as though God's word is truth.

[38 : 22] Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful that you have not left us alone in this world just to sort of figure it out for ourselves, but that you have given us your objective word clearly.

and we're so thankful that it is practical, profitable, useful in teaching us how to live, what to believe.

So dear God, I pray for Christians in this room. Help them to commit or recommit or just seek your help to continue on believing and obeying your word.

And Lord, help us all together to live according to your truth and be more effective in the days to come to contend for the faith and truly make a difference as salt, flavoring and preserving and as light shining the truth of your word in a dark world.

Show us how we all should respond now. Help us to do that in these next few minutes. So just with the heads bowed and eyes closed and attitude of prayer, let's listen to the Lord. Let's respond to him as we all need to.

[39 : 52] And for many people, reaffirm your commitment that God's word is true.