

“What is Truth?”

Opening

“Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” — John 18:37–38

Full text: *“Then Pilate said to Him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate said to him, ‘What is truth?’”*

Context: Pilate, a Roman governor, is interrogating Jesus before His crucifixion. Standing before the embodiment of Truth, Pilate cynically questions the very concept of it — a question that still echoes in our time.

From Pilate to the present day, humanity has wrestled with the question: *What is truth?*

We live in a world overflowing with competing claims — each group, each voice certain that *their* truth is *the* truth.

But there’s a deeper danger.

Often, what we call “seeking truth” is really **seeking power** — or **desire** — the desire to be right, the desire to win, the desire to justify ourselves. And if the “truth” we pursue serves *our* glory or gratifies our desire instead of glorifying God, it’s not truth at all. It’s a lie dressed in the clothing of truth.

1. The Limited Reach of Human Truth

Jeremiah 17:9 — *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”*

Context: God, through Jeremiah, warns Judah about trusting their own hearts and self-made security instead of obeying Him. It reminds us that even our self-perception can be warped — so we should be slow to assume we see others clearly.

1 Corinthians 4:5 — *“Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”*

Context: Paul addresses the Corinthian church’s divisions and premature

judgments about leaders. Only God sees motives perfectly — so final judgment belongs to Him.

When we claim to know the “truth” about another person — their motives, their heart — we’re often projecting our own wounds, fears, or desires to judge. That’s not discernment. That’s presumption.

2. The Power of Belief

Belief is powerful. It shapes our perception, it directs our choices, and over time, it can change the course of our lives.

Proverbs 23:7 — *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”* (KJV)

Context: This proverb warns about deceptive people — a host pretending generosity while harboring selfish intent. It shows how inward thoughts shape outward behavior and reality.

Romans 1:25 — *“They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”*

Context: Paul describes humanity’s fall into idolatry — replacing God’s truth with man-made worship. It’s the ultimate example of belief shaping reality in destructive ways.

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12 — *“Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

Context: Paul warns about end-times deception, where rejection of God’s truth leaves people vulnerable to powerful lies — even to the point of God allowing them to be hardened in false belief.

Belief can make a lie *feel* true — and when mixed with desire, it becomes even more dangerous.

But here’s the danger: **Believing something doesn’t make it true.**

- In witchcraft, some people believe rituals give them power — and sometimes, things happen. But that doesn’t mean the source is holy, or the “truth” behind it is from God. Likewise, it also doesn’t mean the source is unholy, or that they are seeking power.

- In history, entire nations have believed lies so deeply they destroyed millions of lives in the name of their “truth.”
- In cults, devotion to a leader or system feels righteous, but is often bondage to human deception.

Belief can make a lie *feel* true, and that’s why it’s so dangerous — because you can live your whole life serving something false with the conviction of a martyr.

3. The Desire That Deceives

James 1:14–15 — *“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”*

Context: James explains the inner process of temptation — it begins in desire, grows into sinful action, and ends in destruction. This applies to our pursuit of “truth” when desire, not God, is in control.

Desire is not neutral.

- The **desire for something so badly** — love, acceptance, control, revenge — can lead us to lie to ourselves and call it truth.
- The stronger the desire, the easier it is to reinterpret reality until it fits what we want.

4. The Desire That Surrenders

Not all desire is corrupt. There is a holy desire such as **the desire to trust God so much that we are willing to accept the truth He reveals, even when it hurts.**

Psalms 139:23–24 — *“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”*

Context: David invites God’s searching light into his innermost being. This is holy desire — the willingness to hear God’s truth about ourselves, even if it challenges us.

This kind of desire says:

- “*Lord, tell me the truth about me, even if I don’t like what I hear.*”
- “*I want You more than I want to be right.*”

5. The Only Truths We Can Stand On

1. **The truth of who God is** — revealed in Scripture: unchanging, faithful, holy.
2. **The truth God reveals about our own hearts** — through the Spirit’s conviction, which brings life, not condemnation.

Everything else — what we think we know about other people, hidden motives, or events — must be held with humility.

6. Discernment vs. Judgment

John 7:24 — “*Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.*”

Context: Jesus speaks during the Feast of Booths, confronting religious leaders who condemned Him for healing on the Sabbath. He calls them to align judgment with God’s standards, not surface impressions.

- **Discernment:** Spirit-led recognition for the sake of restoration, protection, or intercession.
- **Judgment:** Self-led assumption for the sake of control, shaming, or exclusion.

When we “judge” without God’s heart, we’re not serving truth — we’re serving ourselves.

7. Power and Desire Disguised as Truth

Many pursue “truth” because they want *power*. Many hold to “truth” because it serves a *desire*. But truth is not a weapon for our ambitions.

- Power to prove themselves right.

- Power to condemn others.
- Power to shape reality according to their will.

But Jesus didn't say, *"Blessed are the powerful."* He said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*(Matthew 5:8)

The question we must ask ourselves is:

- *Am I seeking truth to glorify God, or to satisfy my desire?*
- *Does my belief set me free — or does it give me leverage over others?*

8. Returning to the True Judge

1 Samuel 16:7 — *"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'"*

Context: Samuel is sent to anoint a new king and initially assumes Jesse's oldest son must be God's choice based on appearance. God corrects him — reminding us that only He sees the truth of the heart.

John 8:31–32 — *"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"*

Context: Jesus links truth to discipleship and obedience to His teaching — freedom comes not from "our truth" but from living in His truth.

Only God knows all hearts. Only God can declare the ultimate truth about someone's life. Our role is to walk humbly, test everything against His Word, and abide in Him so that our reality is shaped by *His* truth — not our power, not our preference, and not our desires.

Closing Call

The world is full of voices claiming to tell you the truth. Some are honest mistakes. Some are intentional lies. Some are almost true — but "almost" is still false.

So the invitation is this:

- Seek the truth of God's Word.
- Receive the truth about yourself, even when it's uncomfortable.
- Hold your assumptions about others with mercy.
- Let your belief be anchored in God's reality, not your own desire or pursuit of power.

Benediction Prayer

“Lord, let me know the truth You have for me,
and teach me to hold others with the same mercy You have shown me.
Guard me from false judgments, selfish desires, and the hunger for power.
Anchor me in Your Word, so that I may walk in freedom
and guide others toward Your light.”

Reflection Questions

1. When have I sought “truth” but was really serving a desire?
2. Have I ever believed something so strongly it felt true — but later learned it was false?
3. What truth about myself is God trying to show me right now?
4. How can I tell when I'm discerning versus when I'm judging?
5. Which of my beliefs need to be tested against God's Word today?