

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Truth



SABBATH—MARCH 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Chronicles 25:2; Psalm 51:17; Jeremiah 29:13; John 7:16, 17; John 14:6; John 17:3; Hebrews 5:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “When you look for me with all your heart, you will find me” (Jeremiah 29:13, NlrV).

THE GREEK WORD FOR TRUTH, *ALETHEIA*, HAS TWO MEANINGS. One is objective truth (actual [true] facts, real events, or principle [the law]). The other is subjective truth (personal truth—a mind that is free from lies and false or imagined ideas). Truth is what we know, the objective “facts on the ground.” But there is the subjective part of truth too. It involves how each one of us as a person answers and follows what we learn. When both of these are real in our lives, we will show truth as a fruit of the Spirit.

That is why both parts of truth are very important to the Christian walk. We need to know the basic objective truth as it is found in Jesus. And then we need the personal subjective experience of having our lives changed by that truth.

Consider Judas. He was with Jesus for more than three and a half years. Judas had all kinds of truth shown to him. He saw Jesus in real life and studied Him. He saw things the rest of us only can read about. But, in the end, how much good did it do him?

May Judas's example remind us all to be careful!

SUNDAY—MARCH 14**“I AM . . . THE TRUTH” (John 14:6)**

Write a short paragraph explaining what you think John 14:6 means.

On one level, this verse challenges the idea that truth is only subjective and personal. This idea is very popular in much of the world today. Jesus’ words are very clear: there is none of this *“Each finds his own path to God.”* With these words, Jesus shows that objective truth is very real. *Here is Truth. Period.*

At the same time, there is a whole other part too. The Truth is a Person. You come to truth through a relationship¹ with a Person. This is very different from the idea of truth being only a group of facts. Jesus, a human being, is the Truth. So, if you want to know truth, you have to know Jesus.



The Truth is a Person.

How does what is written so far in Sunday’s study help us understand Christ’s words in John 17:3?

But we have to be careful with this idea that religion means having a relationship with God. Everyone lives in a relationship with God, one way or another. People who deny God is real live in relationship with Him. Pilate had a relationship with Jesus. So did Caiaphas, the high priest. Even the devil has a relationship with Jesus. Satan hates Him. The gospel² does not ask us to have a relationship with Jesus. Instead, it asks us to make a commitment³ to Him. For example, Nicodemus had a relationship with Jesus. As time went on, Nicodemus committed (dedicated) his life and all that he had to Christ. That is the kind of relationship we all need!

No question, you have a relationship with Jesus. The question you need to ask yourself is, What kind of relationship do you have? And how can you make it better?

MONDAY—MARCH 15**THE SPIRIT AND TRUTH
(John 16:13)**

We learned yesterday that the work of the Holy Spirit is to point us to Christ and to help us abide (stay) in Him. “I will send the Friend [Holy Spirit] to you from the Father. He is the Spirit of truth, who comes out from the Father. When

1. relationship—an emotional connection (tie) between two people and how deep their feelings are for each other.

2. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

3. commitment—to dedicate or pledge yourself to a person or a cause.

the Friend comes to help you, he will give witness about me' ” (John 15:26, NlrV).

Think about these powerful words of wisdom: “The preaching of the word will be nothing without the continual leading and help of the Holy Spirit. This is the only and best Teacher of God’s truth. Only when the truth enters the heart by the Spirit will it awaken the conscience and change the life. A person might be able to teach the Word of God [the Bible]. He might know all its commands and promises. But if the Holy Spirit does not hit home the truth, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 671, 672.



As the truth enters the heart by the Spirit, the life of a person becomes changed.

How important does Ellen G. White make the work of the Holy Spirit?

What we find in the work of the Holy Spirit is both the objective and subjective parts of Truth. The Spirit comes, and He speaks of Jesus and warns “ ‘the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ ” (John

16:8, NKJV). These are hard facts about the world and about God.

At the same time, the work of the Holy Spirit does not stop with teaching us these truths. Our lives need to be changed by our understanding of them. These objective and eternal (forever) truths will do us no good if our lives are not changed by them. According to Ellen G. White, part of that work (perhaps even the most important part) is for us to be broken on the Rock (read Psalm 51:17).

How were you broken (or were you ever)? What happened? What changes came? What did you learn about life, about suffering, about God from that experience? What other lessons might you still need to learn?

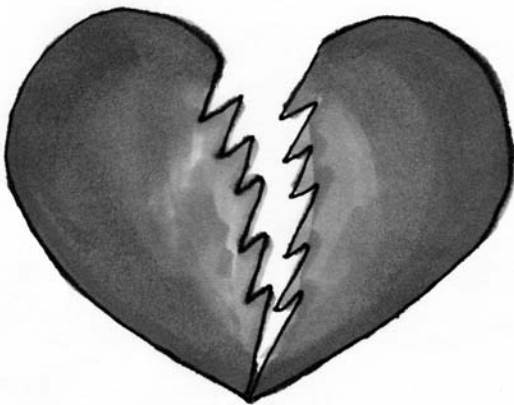
TUESDAY—MARCH 16

**“WITH ALL YOUR HEART”
(Jeremiah 29:13)**

“With all your heart” means “sincerely,” true in word and act. The word *sincere* comes from two Latin words—*sine* (without) and *cera* (wax). In the past, dishonest sculptors (marble carvers) would secretly fix the flaws and cracks in their work by filling them with wax. This wax often did not hold. *Sincerity* means being real and true, not false. It means speaking or acting “from the heart” and meaning it.

What does 2 Chronicles 25:2 mean? What important point is being made about what is inside us?

The Hebrew word translated in some versions as “perfect” comes from the root word *slm*. (The word *shalom* comes from this root word.) It means “full,” “complete,” or “at peace.” There is a king who did the right thing but with a heart that was not in the right place. He was not sincere in his actions. So it is possible that a person could be doing the right things for the wrong reasons. We may be able to fool some of the people some of the time, and ourselves all the time. But we cannot fool God any of the time. How interesting to know that when David prayed for his son, the first thing he wanted him to have was “a perfect heart” (1 Chronicles 29:19, NASB).



The one who is not sincere is someone with a divided heart.

Sincerity is important because the one who is not sincere is the one whose heart is not committed to what is true and right. Then he or she is someone with a divided heart. There

surely is something else pulling on such a person. As long as he or she does not let the heart be faithful to God, then the heart cannot be *slm*, complete or perfect before Him. The key is complete surrender⁴ to the Lord. He or she must let go of self completely. It is not easy. To have that happen you need to be broken on the Rock.

How sincere are you in your faith? We are not talking about doubts that you sometimes have. Or deep unanswered questions. (Everyone at times has doubts, and all have deep unanswered questions.) We are not talking about struggling with sin. Instead, we are talking about your heart. Is it fully faithful to God, “complete” before Him? Or is it divided between God and something of the world? If the second is the answer, what choices must you make?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 17

A CONSCIENCE⁵ SEARED (BURNED AND SCARRED) (1 Timothy 4:2)

Last week we read about how Jesus had sharp words for the fake “righteousness” of the scribes and the Pharisees (read Matthew 23:27). Jesus called them “hypocrites.”⁶ The word *hypocrite* in the Greek (*hupokrites*) means “actor.” Jesus

4. surrender—the act of giving oneself completely.

5. conscience—a sense or knowledge of right and wrong.

6. hypocrites—people who say one thing and do the other; false witnesses.

was letting them know that He could “see” their inner feelings and secret sins. It is the same as Jesus telling them, “You act one way but inside you are another, as though you were acting in a play. Can you not be real?” Another time Jesus said, “ ‘Isaiah was right. He prophesied⁷ about you people who pretend to be good. He said, “These people honor me by what they say. But their hearts are far away from me” ’ ” (Mark 7:6, NIV). Jesus’ meaning is very clear.

What important point is Paul talking about in 1 Timothy 4:2 and Titus 1:15? Our conscience is the place where the Holy Spirit tries to get in touch with us. What can happen to us if we keep on doing wrong?

No question, the more we continue in evil and do what is wrong, the more astray we go from the Truth. Again, you can have more than enough knowledge to be saved. But, sadly,



The Holy Spirit sears the heart with the knowledge of what it is doing wrong.

too many people who know more than enough objective truths to be saved will be lost. So, objective truth alone is not a fruit of the Spirit. Truth shown in our life is the fruit that we need to have and show.

How do Hebrews 5:14 and John 7:16, 17 help us better understand the idea of truth as a fruit of the Spirit?

What is your own experience of a “seared conscience”? How long did it take for this conscience to become not a conscience at all? Why did that happen? Why is that experience so spiritually dangerous?

THURSDAY—MARCH 18

WALKING IN TRUTH (2 John 4)

What important point is being made in both 2 John 4 and 1 John 1:6 about what it means to have a saving relationship with Jesus?

Truth is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not just what we know. It is what we do. Living in God’s light means more than just knowledge. John explains what walking in darkness is like (1 John 2:9–11).

Walking in the light or walking in the truth is more than just keeping the Ten Commandments. In the end, living in the truth is shown by how we work with people and how we treat

7. prophesied—said what would happen in the future; foretold.

them. Suppose we are sharp, cross, unforgiving, hateful, and rough with people. Suppose we use people to get ahead in life. Then we are walking in darkness. It does not matter how strictly we keep the Sabbath. It does not matter how faithfully we follow the health message. It does not matter how much we claim faith in Jesus, pay tithes, and go to church. In a way, it is often a lot easier to learn correct doctrine (church beliefs) than it is to be kind, selfless, and giving to others, is it not?

Think about your relationships with people in the past twenty-four hours. How have you treated them? What kind of words did you use? How comfortable would you be if your attitudes (feelings) and actions toward them were made public? (Don't worry, one day they will; read Matthew 10:26.) What does your answer tell you about what changes you need to make in your life?

FRIDAY—MARCH 19

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “It is not how long we work for God. It is our faithfulness in the work that makes it acceptable to God. In all our service a full surrender of self is required. The smallest duty done *sincerely and humbly* is more pleasing to God than the greatest work done with a reward in mind. God searches our hearts to

8. *Object Lessons*—lessons that use an object or a thing to teach a spiritual (holy) truth. Most often the object comes from nature, such as a flower, animal, tree, or seashell. But the object used to teach the lesson might be man-made instead.

9. character—who someone is; all that a person does, feels, and thinks are what he or she is made of.

10. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

show how much of the spirit of Christ we hold dear. He values more highly the love and faithfulness put into the work than the amount of work we do.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*,⁸ page 402, emphasis supplied.

“The service given with a sincere heart has a great reward. ‘Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you’ [Matthew 6:6, NIV]. The character⁹ is developed by the life we live through Christ's grace.¹⁰ The original loveliness begins to be restored [brought back] to the soul. The character of Christ is given, and God's image [likeness] begins to shine forth. The faces of men and women who walk and work with God show the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven. For these souls the kingdom of God has begun. They have Christ's joy. It is the joy of being a blessing to all people. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master's use. They are trusted to do His work in His name.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 535.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Is there any way truth could be very flexible? For example, it may not be true all the time in every situation. If not, why not? Are there certain truths that could be flexible while others are not?

② Think more on this idea of what it means to be sincere in your faith. Sincerity is important, but why is that not enough? For example, people who strap bombs to themselves and blow themselves up seem to be sincere. What else is needed?

③ Why is spending time in Bible study so important if truth is more than head knowledge? What are ways in which we can learn to study the Bible

so that the Truth in it can influence¹¹ and change our lives for the better?

④ How can you help someone whose mind has been so hardened in sin that he or she does not feel the need to get help?

⑤ In class, discuss this question: what is better—to do the right thing for the wrong reason or the wrong thing for the right reason?

11. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.