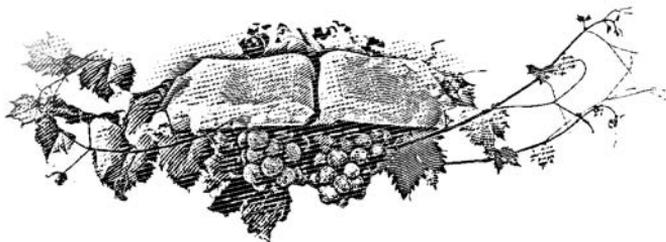


# The Fruit of the Spirit Is Truth



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SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** 2 Chron. 25:2; Ps. 51:17; Jer. 29:13; John 7:16, 17; 14:6; 17:3; Heb. 5:14.

**Memory Text:** “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (*Jeremiah 29:13, NKJV*).

The Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, has two meanings. One is objective truth (actual facts, verity, or principle), and the other is subjective truth (truth as a personal excellence—a candor of mind that is free from affectation, pretense, dissimulation, falsehood, and deceit). Truth, then, is what we know, the objective “facts on the ground,” as it were. But there’s the subjective element of truth, as well, which entails how we individually respond to what we learn. When both of these are real in our lives, we will manifest truth as a fruit of the Spirit.

That’s why both elements are crucial 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.

Look at Judas. He was with Jesus for more than three and a half years. Judas had all sorts of truth revealed to him. He saw things the rest of us only can read about. And yet, in the end, look what good it did him.

May we all take heed.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 20.*

## “I Am . . . the Truth”

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’ ” (*John 14:6, NKJV*). Write out a short paragraph explaining what you think this text means.

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On one level, this text radically challenges the relativism (the idea that truth is only subjective and personal) so current in much of the world today. Jesus’ words leave no ambiguity: There’s none of this “Each finds his own path to God,” and so forth. With these words, Jesus establishes the reality of objective truth. Here is Truth. Period. Few verses in the whole Bible are more contrary to the sentiment of relativism than this.

At the same time, there’s a whole other element, as well. The Truth is a Person. You come to truth through a relationship with a Person. This is a radically different idea from the notion of truth being only a group of facts. Jesus, a human being, is the Truth; thus, if you want to know truth, you have to know Jesus.

**How** does what’s written above help us understand Christ’s words in John 17:3?

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We have to be careful, however, with this notion that all our religion means is having a relationship with God. Everyone lives in a relationship with God, one way or another. Folk who deny His existence live in relationship with God. Pilate had a relationship with Jesus; so did Caiaphas. Even the devil has a relationship with Jesus—he hates Him. The gospel is not a call to have a relationship with Jesus but to make a commitment to Him. Nicodemus, for instance, had a relationship with Jesus, one in which he eventually committed his life and all that he had to Christ. That’s the kind we all need!

**No question, you have a relationship with Jesus. The questions you need to ask yourself are, What kind do I have? And, How can I make it better?**

## The Spirit and Truth

**“ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth’ ”** (*John 16:13, NKJV*).

In view of what we learned yesterday, it is obvious that the work of the Holy Spirit is to point us to Christ and to help us abide in Him. “ But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me’ ” (*John 15:26, NKJV*).

Look at this powerful insight: “The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit. This is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life. One might be able to present the letter of the word of God, he might be familiar with all its commands and promises; but unless the Holy Spirit sets home the truth, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 671, 672.

**What** emphasis is Ellen G. White placing on the work of the Holy Spirit here?

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What we see in the work of the Holy Spirit is both the objective and subjective aspect of Truth. The Spirit comes, and He testifies of Jesus and reproves “ the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ ” (*John 16:8*). These are hard facts about the world, about God, about reality.

At the same time, the work of the Holy Spirit doesn’t end simply with teaching us these truths. Our lives need to be changed by our understanding of them. These objective and eternal truths will do us no good unless our lives are transformed by them, and part of that process (perhaps even the most important part) is for us, as she wrote, to be broken on the Rock (*see Ps. 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?**

## “With All Your Heart”

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (*Jer. 29:13, NKJV*).

“With all your heart” means “sincerely,” true in word and act. The word *sincere* comes from two Latin words—*sine* (without) and *cera* (wax). Apparently in the past, less-than-honest sculptors would secretly fix the flaws and cracks in their work by plugging them with wax, which, of course, doesn’t hold. Hence, *sincerity* means being real and genuine, not artificial. It means speaking or acting “from the heart” and meaning it.

**Read 2 Chronicles 25:2.** What is that text saying? What important point is being made about what’s inside us?

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The Hebrew word translated in some versions as “perfect” comes from the root *slm* (from which *shalom* is derived). It means, basically, “full,” “complete,” or “at peace.” Thus, we have here a king who did the right thing but not with a heart that was in the right place. He wasn’t sincere in his actions. This raises the possibility that a person could be doing the right things for the wrong reasons. Though we may be able to fool some of the people some of the time, and ourselves all the time, we can’t fool God any of the time. How interesting that when David prayed for his son, the first thing he wanted him to have was “a perfect heart” (*1 Chron. 29:19, NASB*).

Sincerity is important because the one who isn’t sincere, the one whose heart isn’t committed to what’s true and right, is someone with a divided heart. There surely is something else pulling on such a person, and as long as he or she doesn’t let go, as long as this person still allows those other allegiances a place, the heart cannot be *slm*, complete, or perfect before God. The key, then, is complete surrender to the Lord, a complete letting go of self. It’s not easy; in a real sense, to have that happen, you need to be, as we saw yesterday, broken on the Rock.

**How sincere are you in your faith? We’re not talking about occasional doubts, or having deep unanswered questions (everyone at times has doubts, and all have deep unanswered questions), nor are we talking about struggling with sin. Instead, we’re talking about your heart. Is it fully committed to God, “complete” before Him, or is it divided between God and something of the world? If it is the latter, what choices must you make?**

## A Conscience Seared

Last week we saw how Jesus had sharp words for the fake “righteousness” of the scribes and the Pharisees (*see Matt. 23:27*), calling them “hypocrites.” The word *hypocrite* in the original language (*hupokrites*) means “actor.” Jesus was letting them know that He could discern their inner feelings and secret sins. It was as though He was telling them, “You act one way but inside you are another, as though you were acting in a play. Cannot you be real?” Another time Jesus said, “ ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” ’ ” (*Mark 7:6, NKJV*). His meaning is obvious.

**Read** 1 Timothy 4:2 and Titus 1:15. What important point is Paul talking about here? Our conscience is the place where the Holy Spirit makes contact with us. What can happen to us if we constantly are doing wrong?

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No question, the more we continue in evil, and the more we do what we know is wrong, the more defiled our conscience becomes and the further from the Truth we get. Again, you can have more than enough head knowledge to be saved. The final fires will, unfortunately, have way too many folk who knew more than enough objective truths to be saved. But, as we are saying, objective truth alone is not a fruit of the Spirit. Truth lived out in our life, that’s the fruit we need to bear.

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

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What’s your own experience of a “seared conscience”? How long did it take until the act that had, at first, seared your conscience barely touched it at all? Why did that happen, and why is it so spiritually dangerous?

## Walking in Truth

**“I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father” (2 John 4, NKJV). “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6, NKJV). What important point is being made in both these texts regarding what it means to have a saving relationship with Jesus?**

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Truth, as a fruit of the Spirit, isn’t just what we know—it’s what we do. Living in God’s light means more than just knowledge. Look at how John explains what walking in darkness is like: “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:9–11).

Thus, walking in the light, walking in the truth, is more than just keeping the Ten Commandments, at least according to the letter of the law. In the end, when all is said and done, isn’t living in the truth basically manifested by how we deal with people and how we treat them? If we are sharp, cross, unforgiving, vengeful, hateful, unsympathetic; if we treat people as means rather than as ends, if we are trampling upon others in an attempt to advance ourselves, then we are walking in darkness, no matter how strictly we keep the Sabbath, no matter how faithfully we adhere to the health message, no matter how much we profess faith in Jesus, pay tithes, and go to church. In one sense, it’s often a lot easier to learn correct doctrine and theology than it is to be kind, selfless, and giving to others, is it not?

**Think about your interactions with folk 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 and actions toward them were made public (one day they will; see Matt. 10:26). What does your answer tell you about what changes you need to see made in your life?**

**Further Study:** “It is not the length of time we labor but our willingness and fidelity in the work that makes it acceptable to God. In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded. The smallest duty done in *sincerity and self-forgetfulness* is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking. He looks to see how much of the spirit of Christ we cherish, and how much of the likeness of Christ our work reveals. He regards more the love and faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 402, emphasis supplied.

“The service rendered in sincerity of heart has great recompense. ‘Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.’ By the life we live through the grace of Christ, the character is formed. The original loveliness begins to be restored to the soul. The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted, and the image of the Divine begins to shine forth. The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express 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, the joy of being a blessing to humanity. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master’s use; they are trusted to do His work in His name.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 535.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- 1** Is there any sense at all in which truth could be relative; that is, it may not apply all the time to every situation? If not, why not? Are there certain truths, perhaps, that could be relative while others aren’t?
- 2** Dwell more on this idea of what it means to be sincere in your faith. However crucial sincerity is, why is that not enough? After all, folk who strap bombs to themselves and blow themselves up are, it would seem, sincere. What else is needed?
- 3** Why is spending time in the Word so important if truth is more than head knowledge? What are ways in which we can learn to study our Bible so that the Truth in there can impact and change our lives for the better?
- 4** How can you help someone whose conscience has been so hardened in sin that they don’t feel their need of help?
- 5** In class, discuss this question: What’s better, to do the right thing for the wrong reason or the wrong thing for the right reason?

## In Difficult Times: Part 1

by RICHARD LASU

My partner and I arrived in Kajo Keji, a small town in southern Sudan, to plant a church. We knew no one and had no place to stay, so we prayed for God's leading.

We found a Protestant pastor's home, and he invited us to stay with him that night. The next day was Sabbath, and we spent time explaining to the pastor who we were and what we believe. He invited us to preach in his church the next day, which is a custom in our region. We gladly accepted.

We chose to speak on the Second Coming, for we knew the people would rejoice to be reminded that Jesus is coming again. After church many of the members stopped by the pastor's house where we were staying to visit with us. The next morning we thanked the pastor for his hospitality and went in search of a hut in which to live.

We met a woman in town who said that she had been at church on Sunday. When we told her that we were looking for a place to stay, she suggested that her husband had several huts he wasn't using and was willing to introduce us to him. Her husband agreed to give us a hut at no cost because we were pastors. We thanked the couple and moved in.

That evening the woman gathered her neighbors at the hut to worship with us. For three days we worshiped with these neighbors in the morning and again in the evening. But the woman's husband lost interest and stopped coming.

The next evening as I sat in the hut, I heard feet running on the dirt path. Suddenly our landlord burst into the hut with a gun. "Why are you making my hut a place for worship?" he demanded.

Before I could answer the man, his wife, who had heard the shouting, ran to my hut. Then a soldier entered and pointed his gun at me. He thought I was robbing the man, and he tried to stab me. The landlord's wife cried out, and the soldier realized his mistake.

The landlord ordered us to leave his compound and throw our things outside. We picked up our things and wondered where to go. It was ten o'clock at night, and we had no place to go. Soldiers had imposed a curfew, and it was dangerous to be out. We didn't know what to do.

(Continued next week)