

The Fruit of *the* Spirit Is Truth



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.

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?

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. Folks 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 Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *John 17:3*

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Comprehend that truth is found supremely in Jesus.

Feel: Express delight in the freedom that truth brings.

Do: Live his or her life to show that Scripture is the ultimate guide for salvation, life, and hope.

► **Lesson Outline:**

I. Know: Jesus Defines Truth

A The truths found in Scripture are *revealed* truths. They cannot be deduced by reason, but they are not hostile to reason. They are accepted by faith.

B Spiritual truth is defined by Jesus. There is no higher authority.

1. List some truths that cannot be known by reason.
2. Why do we believe truth is defined by Jesus?
3. How do we understand Jesus' claim that He was the only Way to God and that He was Truth and Life?
4. How does the Holy Spirit guide us into truth?

II. Feel: Freedom and Truth

A Jesus says the truth sets us free. What are some of the freedoms that truth brings?

B Jesus defines eternal life as knowing "the only true God" and Jesus Himself. How do we understand what *knowing* means?

III. Do: Making Truth Our Guide

A The understanding of truth as revealed in Scripture requires close thinking and effort. Yet, essential as understanding is, it is of no real value unless we are willing to submit to truth.

1. In what way does Scripture become the guide for our daily life?
2. What is the relation of truth to hope?

► **Summary:** Scripture is revealed truth as defined by Jesus and understood by submission to the Holy Spirit's guidance; it is the guide for life.

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?

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 Ellen G. White 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?

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Truth is a Person, namely Jesus Christ. Both objective and subjective truth come together in Jesus. For the believer to know and understand truth, he or she must possess Jesus. For the believer to live a life of fealty to the truth, he or she must possess Jesus.

Few human beings have desired to live a life of truth more than Gandhi, the great twentieth-century catalyst of Indian liberation through the ethic of nonviolent civil action. Perhaps this is why he subtitled his autobiography “The Story of My Experiments With Truth” and why he endured extreme trials and persecutions for the sake of truth. Yet, Gandhi understood that the pursuit of truth requires the help of a perfect seer, a knowing one. Gandhi never embraced Christianity or Jesus, but he sure captured the dilemma of pursuing truth minus a Helper.

Jesus minced no words when He declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (*John 14:6*). Jesus does not just help us to find truth; He is Truth. That’s the central message students need to take away from this week’s study.

Consider This: Many religious faiths differ in their understanding of truth. Are those faiths wrong in their understanding and interpretation of truth? Why, or why not? Why would a follower of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam even consider becoming a follower of Jesus? What makes the Christian’s truth attractive?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. We Can Know Truth (*Review John 14:6 and John 8:32 with your class.*)

Before Jesus declared to His disciples that He was the Truth, He told them that it was possible to know the truth and that knowing the truth would “make you free” (*John 8:32*). Of course, they had no clue about the deeper meaning of His words. They were literally walking and talking, eating and sleeping, with

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“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?

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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Truth, but they were unaware of the subtle transformation that had begun in their lives. They were getting to know the Truth.

The word *know* used by Jesus in John 8:32 comes from the Greek word *ginosko*, which means to perceive, understand, recognize, gain knowledge, and come to know. It is knowledge of truth that begins as perception and progresses to full attainment. It is truth gained through personal experience. This concept of knowing truth radically is different from mastering a set of facts. It is relational.

Prior to the First Advent of Jesus, truth had become obscured by many “creative” spiritual practices. People groped in spiritual darkness, so much so that even when they read the Old Testament they could not comprehend it or the One to whom the ancient prophets pointed (*2 Cor. 3:14, 15*). Today we cannot fully appreciate how radical it was for Jesus to say that truth could be known by the average noncleric of His day. This truth in itself, set many free in His day.


Consider This: How does the truth as it is in Jesus still set us free today?

II. The Big Dig (Review *2 Timothy 2:15* and *John 5:39* with your class.)

The Bible, God’s Holy Word, reveals who Jesus is. It is the means by which we understand the great metanarrative of human existence—the great controversy between God and Satan, the plan of salvation, the end of sin and Satan forever. It is therefore impossible to know the Truth—Jesus—minus God’s Holy Word.

Paul counseled Timothy to study God’s Word diligently, so that He might rightly divide it and never be put to shame. With lives hanging in the balance, a clear-eyed knowledge of the objective facts of the truth would be essential to the young Timothy’s ministry. Those who profess a love for Jesus will be found diligently plumbing the depths of God’s Word.

Consider This: If studying God’s Word is essential to knowing and rightly dividing truth, why did Jesus rebuke the Pharisees of His day for searching the Scriptures? (See *John 5:39*.) Make the point that the Pharisees believed that they could be saved by their knowledge of the Scriptures. They felt no need for a Savior. This partially explains why they were so ready to have Jesus killed. In light of this, what was it

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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?

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 folks 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?

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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

specifically about the study habits of the Pharisees that merited condemnation from Jesus?

III. Unfolding the Infinite *(Review John 15:26 and John 16:13 with your class.)*

Both of these texts underscore the pivotal role that the Holy Spirit plays in helping the believer know and live the truth as found in Jesus. No matter how earnest our efforts, no amount of digging for truth will avail much without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Why do we need the Holy Spirit? For one, the human mind is finite and severely weakened by sin. Infinite truth can be comprehended only by finite minds at a limited rate. For this reason alone, we need the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would guide us “into all truth.” On the face of it, that is terrific news, but there’s more to Jesus’ words than the eye first perceives. This promise refers not only to truths that will be unfolded while we are here on earth but also to truths unfolded in the world to come. It must, for God’s truth is infinite. The fact that the redeemed continually will be learning the truths of God may give us a hint about the role of the Holy Spirit in heaven’s educational plan for the redeemed.

Consider This: We’ve learned so far that Truth is a Person—Jesus—and that Truth is unfolded to the believer through the person of the Holy Spirit. It is possible to get to know Jesus, the Truth. How is it likewise possible to know the Holy Spirit? How can we distinguish the Spirit’s voice amid the chorus of voices shouting for our attention?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Thought Questions:

- 1 We are urged in Scripture to commit our lives to Jesus, to go beyond a mere profession of truth to a full embrace of it. Why is it not enough simply to live the truth without ever openly confessing it?
- 2 Many well-meaning believers use their knowledge of truth to bludgeon those who may not share their beliefs. If the Truth is Jesus, how does this behavior impact the nonbeliever’s view of Jesus?

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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?

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 whether 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 tithe, 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 folks 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 be; see Matt. 10:26). What does your answer tell you about what changes you need to see made in your life?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED**Application Questions:**

1 If you were to embrace completely the truth already revealed to you by the Holy Spirit, how would your life change? For instance, would your attitude at work be different? What about your speech? Would you need to change your driving habits? What about your entertainment choices? What are you doing with the truth that God has already revealed to you?

2 Complete the following statements.

The truth that I want God to help me live this week is:

I am choosing to live this truth because:

► STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Ask the class members, “What do the following activities teach me about why Jesus is the living Truth and the only road to heaven?”

Jesus came to remove the veil from the hearts of the people concerning their lack of understanding of the Old Testament and to open their eyes to the truth. Invite a class member, or members, who are musically inclined to write a song in the coming week that describes how Jesus removes the veil from our hearts and takes away our spiritual blindness. Open or close the class with the song. Or teach the song to the class. Discuss how the words of the song deepen our understanding of how Jesus opens our minds and hearts to the truth.

MapQuest will give you directions from any beginning point to any destination in the world. GPS (global positioning system) technology beams your exact location to your vehicle from a satellite positioned up in space. Both of these navigational tools help you to get where you need to go more efficiently and accurately. If the Bible is our atlas to heaven, what would be on the “map” that gets us there? If you were to give someone directions to get there or draw a map to heaven, what turns, road signs, and spiritual landmarks would those directions include? For those who wish to take it a step further, what would such a map look like? Discuss your ideas as a class and draw it out on paper. Provide markers and paper or draw your map on a blackboard.

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:

- ❶ 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?
- ❷ 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, folks who strap bombs to themselves and blow themselves up are, it would seem, sincere. What else is needed?
- ❸ 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?
- ❹ How can you help someone whose conscience has been so hardened in sin that they don’t feel their need of help?
- ❺ 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?