

Day 4: So we can be pure in a world that does not embrace truth

Read it: Psalm 119:9-16 & Ephesians 4: 14, 19

Think about it:

What do you think of when you hear the word “pure”? How about a young boy with a brand new white shirt on? Fresh out of the pack, his mama told him to wear it to church and look good. He was looking good until he took his cup of fruit punch and went out in the backyard with his pet dogs right before church. When he came in with dirty pawprints and fruit punch spots on that new shirt, that “pure” shirt was now stained, defaced, possibly ruined—and no longer acceptable for its intended purpose.

For 3 days this week we have looked at truth and the opposition to it in society today. Like that fruit punch and muddy paws, purity will take a hit unless we properly train and prepare to defend it. In Psalm 119 God shows us how we can keep our way pure—by living according to His Word (verse 9). When we seek God with all of our heart (through prayer, bible study and other growth habits) and even hide His Word in our heart (memorization) we can truly fight against sin overcoming us (verse 11).

Look at Ephesians 4—verse 14 tells us we need to steady ourselves, to resist the “waves” of deceit and scheming that will try to toss us back and forth. These are the opponents we read about in day 3. Verse 19 shows us a dangerous path: once we start becoming insensitive to these “evils”, we are heading toward a place where we will “indulge in impurity”—and that is not God’s best for us! So that takes us back to living according to God’s Word...that is how we chart a path toward purity. In a world that does not embrace truth, we must be intentional to hide His Word in our heart that we might not sin against Him—and that is Christ-like purity!



Act on it: Memorize—yes, today, memorize Psalm 119:11. Underline it in your bible, write it down somewhere visible and read through it a bunch. It is that important to internalize this principle!

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Week 1b
April 26.
2009

Purpose: To nail down this week’s topic from Bethlehem’s current series, “GPS: Why study the bible?”

How to use it: Individuals can do it on their own 4 times a week to cultivate this habit of reading and applying the bible. Families: adults are encouraged to do HammerTime on their own & then meet with their whole family to go through it together.

Example of time: Read verses (3 min), Discuss/think about (5 min), Pray (2 min)

For more tools: check out Bethlehembc.com or BethlehemToolbox.com.



HAMMERTIME

Day 1: So we will know truth Read it: John 8:31-36; 43-46 & John 14:6

Think about it: Have you ever had a time when you thought someone was lying to you? That they were not telling you the truth? Maybe you were looking to buy a used car or searching for a tv on ebay. While those scenarios could turn out fine, sometimes don’t you feel like someone is withholding information, distorting the facts or just plain lying to you? What about if you were standing at a fork in the road with a decision to make—one that would affect eternity? That is when you really need the truth to make a good decision.

In John chapter 8 Jesus is speaking to people who are at that eternal fork in the road. In their hearts they are faced with a question: what is going to happen to me after I die? We are faced with the same question. In verse 32 Jesus says the truth will set the people free—and in 14:6 He further clarifies this by saying that He is the truth. Literally, He had come to set the people free (from sin) and lead them to heaven if they followed Him.

Jesus knew that this truth could get us to heaven and it could also influence us every day of our lives. He also knows that the devil is a liar (8:43-44) and will try to steer us away from truth. We can combat Satan’s schemes by studying the bible—because spending time in God’s Word is an antidote to Truth Decay. By taking our focus off the world and filling our mind instead with scripture, we can become more like Jesus...for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Act on it: Commit this week to be a person of truth, God’s way. Don’t lie or exaggerate. Don’t stand by and let people speak false words about others. Focus on John 8:32 & 14:6—see how God works in you!



Day 2: So we will correctly handle truth

Read it: 2 Timothy 2:15 & Matthew 16:18

Think about it:

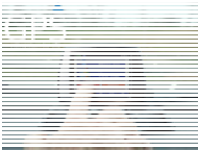
The security guard at the Gaston County Courthouse was handed an envelope. Written on it in big black letters was the word “evidence” and all the person delivering it said was “get this to the judge—it will clear the defendant’s name”. So the officer started taking it to the courtroom but was interrupted & slowed down. Then he stopped in the restroom and accidentally left it on the counter. Halfway down the hall he remembered it, went back to get it but now it was wet and he had lost precious time. Walking to the courtroom he opened the clasp and 2 papers fell out, sliding on the floor. Once he got into the courtroom, the wet, crumpled evidence (“the truth”) was too late and unacceptable to help the defendant at all. Truth had been mishandled.

You also have access to truth. See the verse in Timothy—you have been given the word of truth to handle. You are a workman, one that God will look at with approval or disappointment. In a world full of sin and evil, God wants you to correctly handle what you have been given—His words to us, describing what truth is.

Truth is loving one another. Truth is defending the defenseless. Truth is speaking with wholesome words and living in honesty, fairness and justice. Truth is what Jesus died for—the gift of salvation for anyone who follows Christ. God wants His truth to make an impact on this world; He literally wants His Church to prevail against the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18). For His people to be part of a prevailing mission, we must be competent and effective in handling the word of truth that He has given us.

Act on it:

Read 2 Timothy 2:15 again and think about how you are doing at reading and applying truth from the bible. Are you “approved by God”? If not, where can you focus on improvement?



Day 3: So we can identify & resist opponents of God’s truth

Read it: Romans 1:25 & Proverbs 29:18 & Isaiah 59:14

Think about it:

It can be very tempting to see some of the sinful cultures in the Old Testament and scoff at them. Need reminders of what happened in some of those societies? Child sacrifice, orgies at city temples, stealing, worship of idols, disrespect of authority, persecution of God-followers & the list goes on. In reality, though, that list could also be descriptive of America today: abortion, prostitution, carjacking, greed/materialism, similar disrespect of authority and an ever-increasing persecution of Christ-followers. Romans 1:25 describes it well: that whole list is the “lie” that has taken the place of God’s truth. In many ways society does worship created things (celebrities, rich & powerful people, expensive toys, etc.) rather than the Creator of those things...God Himself.

That “idol worship” is also surrounded by the illegal actions (Proverbs 29:18) and injustice (Isaiah 59:14) that is so rampant today. What is a Christ-follower to do? We are to identify and resist these opponents of God’s truth. Those list of “sins” above can best be identified by knowing God’s truth—internalizing His Word. It is then up to us as Christ-followers to value that truth enough to stand up for it: in what we teach our kids, in how we vote and in what we stand against—even when taking a stand is painful. Jesus stood for truth and the better we know His Word, the better we can stand for it, too.

Act on it: Pray for an opportunity to take a stand for truth. Pray every day until God brings a chance your way. Look through that list above and see what stirs your heart to stand against, in a Christ-honoring way to defend truth.