

King's Online Bible School
Introductory Course

Truth and Trust

Here are conclusions at which two men of Israel arrived in their lives: "Every word of God is pure. He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him" (Prov 30:5). "I esteem as right all Thy precepts about everything" (Ps 119:128a).

There has always been a Source for words that can be trusted. God is Absolute Truth, eternal and faithful. All reality depends on God Who speaks. He created and upholds all things by the word of His mouth. The second Person of the Trinity is the Word of God. Words are important to God! He handles communication powerfully and perfectly.

I. God's Word Fits Reality

Telling

He provides words and makes us able to process them so we can relate safely and meaningfully in His world. He supplies the knowledge about all reality. God tells us things. It is a speech act essential to our well-being.

Whenever you tell someone something you are also exercising this act of speech – this act of telling. You are matching up words with realities. Telling is an action that makes your words fit the world – the way things are.

Telling may not seem very significant. We do it all the time. It isn't a hard thing. God's gift of speech empowers us to share thousands of details of interest or importance with those around us. Whenever your words fit the way things really are, you are providing truth.

Questioning

But the way words match reality has become a battleground. It has been that way ever since the day the prudent Serpent asked what appeared to be an innocent question about a simple fact: "Did God really say?"

Every day, all around us, the father of lies is still attacking God's Word with the same tactics.

Genesis 3:1. "Indeed, did God say, 'You shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden?'" The Serpent starts with a question. This allows him to quote God's Word in a twisted way and still seem like an innocent seeker of truth. He is only asking!

Rebellion attacks truth with questions – questions that shouldn't be asked. The question the Serpent asks carries a false, accusing insinuation against God's character. "Isn't God allowing you to eat? Oh, I see, it is just that one tree." But surely God has wronged the man and woman, depriving them of their rights and withholding equality. You may recognize these issues as the very ones by which Satan and his allies are still undermining biblical authority.

The Serpent charges that God's words are a misfit. He speaks as though there is a goodness higher than God, a standard the Lord has failed to keep. The Serpent asserts that God's warning is a lie, an empty threat revealing His jealous insecurity. The woman should take the knowledge and the power that are rightfully hers. Read Genesis 3:4-5.

For the first time in her life the woman doubts God. Trusting her own objectivity more, she fixes her attention on the fruit God had forbidden them to eat. There she thinks she sees evidence that supports the Serpent's words and their claim to reality.

Doubting

Having allowed herself to question God's words, she is defenseless against the lie. When she abandoned trust she lost her grip on truth. This is the key issue in our discussion: *knowing truth depends on committed trusting.*

Adam took his wife's position. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They cut themselves off from the One Whose knowledge is perfect and Whose speech is pure. They opened themselves to all the deceptions of their own self-will and to the will of Satan. No one was more explicit about Satan's nature and influence than Jesus: John 8:43-45, 47.

Losing

Satan is a liar. Because of his words the woman abandoned God's words. Still it was God's word of truth that happened to them. Reality was just as He said it would be. It did not change. Their dying began. Their death was certain. Eating of the fruit did bring the knowledge of good and evil, not because Satan said it would, but because God placed that tree with those properties in the garden. Adam and his wife received the knowledge God had warned them to avoid. It was the knowledge of themselves as evil, the enemies of good. This is the knowledge with which a guilty man processes every opportunity and issue in his life.

In getting guilty, they corrupted their ability to receive the knowledge that comes from God. They could no longer stand in the presence of God or in the light of truth. They lost safe spiritual awareness. They tampered with the way words fit reality, not realizing how essential that is to rationality and peace. The man and woman rejected the One in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Col 2:3). Man could not find his way back to truth again. He was helpless against the Liar and he could not trust his own thoughts or words anymore.

II. God's Word Restores Life

God decides

Then God spoke. His words brought order and definition. He spoke sovereignly for His Own sake in man's hearing. Man heard truth again in wise and exact judgment and great mercy. Reality and all the previous words of truth remained. No resistant, false creature could ruin or alter the Creator's will or His eternal plan. Man must fill and rule the earth. The woman will bear children in pain. Nothing of God's original order for man and woman would be altered. Nor was God's threat an empty one. Man must die.

The Lord God watches over His Word. It determines and fits reality. Those who presume to alter it distort themselves. They resist life and life resists them. As He judges them, God's words impose particular punishment and limitation on the evildoers. He does not abandon them. In justice He aligns them and in mercy He makes sinning painful for them. He makes the woman's offspring hate falsehood. The Lord God brings enmity.

He stands in the day of man's ruin and, addressing the Serpent, proclaims His victory for Himself and for men in words, which spoken, cannot fail. "He will bruise your head and you will bruise His heel" (3:15). The descendant will arrive, the Champion of truth. He will suffer and He will defeat the cursed Liar.

Satan deceives

Ever since that day the battle of words has been joined. These two antagonists, the creature Satan and the Most High God are always approaching individuals with words through whatever persons or means are available to their cause. God's words fit reality exactly. Satan's fit it partially. He wraps his lies in truths or in good causes. He lays hold of speech to put you off-balance, to attract, destroy, and ruin you. God comes with true words that convict, restore, and establish you. Satan can only lie to you. The Lord God can only tell the truth.

We know Satan deceives. The difference should be obvious. What chance does the Liar have? Who wouldn't want and choose the truth every time? Well, we wouldn't. *We haven't.*

Men resist

People want the truth when it is to their own advantage. This is a big problem for humans, because God's truth resists self-seeking. The influences of Satan, on the other hand, and the thoughts of your own selfish heart always tell you what you want to hear. Satan finds a ready ally in every human's pride and desire. "We have turned every one of us to our own way" (Isa 53:6b). God's truth always insists on His way. When it is different than your own, it is limiting and awkward.

Sin obstructs our ability to receive truth from God readily. The thinking of the flesh is enmity against God. It opposes Him (Rom 8:7).

God restrains

So each man chooses his truth and behaves accordingly. What is there to stop him? What besides hurt and suffering, loss, disappointment, emptiness, frustration, anxiety, conflict and the prospect of death? As much as we prefer our own ways, God, so faithful with truth, has made our way hard. He has made everyone of us allergic to the sin we love.

Experience reinforces

Reality is on truth's side. Falsehood finds it hard to maintain its claims in God's universe. God is present everywhere confirming truth. Wisdom cries out at every street corner. Life, society, business, and art depend on harmony and order. Man knows. Conscience holds God's moral plumb line across every human heart. The lawbreaker bears his guilt, even if he is successful in hiding it from others. Man knows. It is cruel labor and crippling distortion for a man to rehearse arguments day after day against what he knows is right. Weary of fighting against reality, men finally surrender. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps 19:7a).

Scripture convicts

How intently God labors at revealing Himself to every generation. How precise and magnificent His communication is through human authors. How wise He is to use paper and ink. Any second grader can read from the Scriptures, encounter Him, and hear Him. Any derelict can listen to the words and find the answers he needs. The Almighty God, the Holy Spirit, stands by every heart to convict and convince and restore. Only God's words can make a man fit reality again.

Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
They cried out to the Lord in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.
He sent His Word and healed them,
And delivered them from their destructions (Ps 107:17-20).

Faith saves

These testimonies of hope and healing are words from the Old Testament. Words of truth were bringing salvation and transforming men's lives through all those centuries between Adam and Christ. How was it so?

"Abram believed in the Lord, and He reckoned it to Him as righteousness" (Gen 15.6). God spoke words. Did they match reality? Did it fit the way things are to tell an old man with a barren wife that he would have more descendants than anyone could count? Abram thought so! He knew it was reality for one reason: because it was the Lord Who was speaking. Read Romans 4:18-22.

This was a complete reversal of what had happened in the garden. What God said Abram accepted without question because this man refused to question God. He believed Him. Reverent trust ruled the way this man responded to words God spoke. God had won in Abram's heart, and Abraham was constantly secured in words that fit reality. He is the father of all who believe.

The Bible presents the lives and responses of Abraham and other trusting men along with the words God spoke to them. What was it about these words that sinful, selfish men came to love more than their own lives?

Faith hopes

Why did they love the Law when they could not keep it? First, because it was a refreshing alternative to the waywardness of their own hearts. But there was more. Helpless as they were to meet its terms, they knew it was God's Word expressing His will for human lives and that it must be presenting a reality. It must be more than an unattainable ideal that disappointed and condemned them. They trusted God Who is good and Who is faithful. Some day the Law would have a Champion, a man who would run the course it had set without faltering and would secure its blessings.

They knew the promised descendant would come to defeat the liar. Such a man must be true. So also must be all God's words anticipating and preparing for this promised One. Faithful men trusted and preserved faithful promises.

Truth comes

Then He came. The Eternal Truth entered the human race to keep the Law, to do the Father's will. This is how Jesus would destroy the works of the devil.

Truth lives

He entered the arena against the liar. Satan was well aware of what Jesus represented – man's one and only hope to be restored to truth and to God. All Satan needed was one little victory. Just one misstep and Jesus would fail His mission and lose the battle – just one independent word or act, just one condescending thought, just one!

Here in our world He began His marathon. Jesus contended as a baby, then a toddler, a boy, a teenager, the carpenter, the teacher from Nazareth, tempted in every way man has been tempted and in many ways we can't ever imagine, able to sin, able to doubt, able to compromise, but day after day refusing to adjust reality for His advantage, moment by moment yielding all His senses to God's words.

How Satan labored to make Jesus compromise! How he fought this living truth. How he tempted Him, pressuring, flattering, challenging, offering an easier way. Still the Champion ran on, setting His face like a flint, running straight ahead to His goal. The contest built to its ugliest, fiercest intensity. Satan incited men to launch bitter accusations against this blameless One. Still Jesus would not open His mouth on His Own behalf. Shame, hatred, injustice, threatenings, and pain: Jesus en-

dured them all. Death and cursing lay ahead. Every obstacle was brought to bear to make Christ's way harder, to shake His obedience, to make Him relent.

Jesus was well aware of His alternatives. He Himself referred to legions of angels He could summon in an instant. A helpless victim? No. A willing victim? Yes! "Father, Thy will be done."

Satan was divided against himself now. What hope, what strategy did he have but to push Jesus to the extreme, to orchestrate His death, and to make things so bad that Jesus would cave. But this Man Jesus was a problem. What if He got through to the end of His life unsullied? The liar must keep Him from laying His life down in obedience to the Father, from finishing perfectly. He was desperate to break Jesus' trust in His Father.

Bearing man's sin, cursed, hammered by God's just wrath, Jesus hung on. God Who had forsaken Him was His God. Into His hands He commended His Spirit.

Truth triumphs

Then it was finished. His race was over. He breathed His last. He broke the tape. The perfect, blameless life crossed the line. A spotless Lamb presented Himself slain on behalf of all mankind, the sacrifice that removed their sin. The liar lost his grip and his right. The Father received His Son. The victory lap began, right through death and the grave and then up to the Father's throne, where God exalted the man Jesus, Who had triumphed in human living. Now He offers that very life to all who put their trust in Him.

Truth abides

He is the One the Scriptures present, and He is the One Who presents the Scriptures, true and abiding, now completed and fulfilled.

III. God's Word Confronts You

A matter of receiving

Life is to be lived according to God's Word and in Jesus it can be. In Him, the Scriptures, so high, so treasured, so impossible for men, become the attainable reality for each of us. Their ideal and truth was realized by Him and is being realized in everyone who places their trust in Him. The Scriptures are handed to you, already kept for you. You needn't fear them, fight them, adjust them, or question them.

A matter of trust

You may be reserving to yourself the right to be cautious about accepting the Bible or some parts of it. But all the while you are placing confidence in someone. Whom is it you are trusting? John Kelly warns all of us about ourselves: "Our natural minds are preset to interpret reality in distorted ways" (J. Kelly, *The Body of Christ, Roots and Shoots* series).

A matter of peace

Many words around us and many thoughts within us claim to be true. We are always having to decide. What an advantage certainty is! What peace it is to be able to be sure of truth! That is why the Bible is so dear. Here is the only book to which I can come and rest. These are the only words I can trust implicitly. I will never need to question whether they are true and right. This book is where my soul runs home.

By God's grace I trust God. I trust God's ability and faithfulness to communicate truth in words. I trust His declaration that He has done it in the way He has done it through the written record of the Scriptures as they have come down to us today. Here is ground on which I can stand and know it will not shift.

That is not to say I understand as I would like. It is not to claim that I can satisfactorily answer objections to what the Bible says. But how I thank our faithful Father Who on a September evening in 1971 won my heart and mind to trust Him and His Word!

What a benefit when His Holy Spirit settles that issue in our thinking! What other firm footing do we have or could we possibly find?

A matter of surrender

"The righteous man shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17). "The way you think about God's Word is the way you think about God" (Derek Prince). The decision to trust the Word of God is an issue of surrender, honor, and worship.

A testimony from Billy Graham's life:

The year was 1949. [As] thirty-year-old Billy Graham . . . readied himself for his breakthrough crusade in Los Angeles, he found himself grappling with uncertainty – not over the existence of God or the divinity of Jesus, but over the fundamental issue of whether he could totally trust what his Bible was telling him.

In his autobiography, Graham said he felt as if he were being stretched on a rack.

Graham searched the Scriptures for answers; he prayed; he pondered. Finally, in a heavy-hearted walk in the moonlit San Bernardino Mountains, everything came to a climax. Gripping a Bible, Graham dropped to his knees and confessed he couldn't answer some of the philosophical and psychological questions that Templeton and others were raising.

"I was trying to be on the level with God, but something remained unspoken," he wrote. "At last the Holy Spirit freed me to say it. 'Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word – by *faith!* I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be your inspired Word.'"

Rising from his knees, tears in his eyes, Graham said he sensed the power of God as he hadn't felt it for months. "Not all my questions were answered, but a major bridge had been crossed," he said. "In my heart and mind, I knew a spiritual battle in my soul had been fought and won."

For Graham, it was a pivotal moment (from Lee Strobel's *The Case for Faith*, pp. 9-10, 12).

This is an issue every Christian must settle before God. However young or old you are, do not leave yourself defenseless. The pressure to challenge the Scriptures is all around you and lies ahead of you and is even within you. Satan's words appeal to your self-advantage. They tell you what you want to hear: that God's words don't mean what they say or that they don't fit your situation exactly. How Satan hates the Bible. He clothes his offensive against it in clever, convincing arguments. He denies that the Bible is clear. He presses for tolerance and open mindedness and even does so in the name of Christ's love. It is not just in the schools or in the secular media that he advances his lies. It is in Christian bookstores and in evangelical churches. Paul, Peter, John, and Jude all warned that false ideas and teachings would arise from within the church.

In the end each of us will stand before our Lord, the Word of God, and give an answer for what we have done with His words. He is calling each of us to make or reaffirm a decision. You need not be defenseless against lies. There is no reason for you to be at a loss. You can know that there is a line you will not cross, a trust you will not violate, ideas you will not entertain, a God and Savior Whose integrity, witness, and word you will not question. You can settle that issue today. You cannot commit yourself to keeping His Word perfectly, but you can agree that His Word is perfect. You can make the commitment Billy Graham did.

You can seize a victory today that will spare you from many battles and snares and even from complete deception. You can agree that the words of the Book are a weapon you will trust and use. This is God's sword for us against the Liar and all the lies. If you start questioning it, with what are you left but your own ideas? Not even Jesus ventured to answer the enemy apart from the Scriptures.

Satan launches every possible attack against the Bible. What better strategy than to get you as a Christian to doubt your one weapon against him? Even in the Garden of Eden, God armed the innocent and perfect man and the woman with a command and a warning. He armed them with His Word. Take up His armor! Put on truth. Enthroned His words above your own thinking. Trust His Word so that you may stand in the evil day!

God has successfully achieved the clear revealing of all His essential truth for men in the words of the Bible as they have been preserved for us that we may live. Hallelujah!

Psalm 19:7-13. Verse 14 closes the psalm with a prayer for us as persons, who must speak and think words and must always do so in God's presence, that His Spirit would do His aligning work in our hearts.