



Global College of Ministry

EXPLAIN

The Christian and the Truth

What Is Truth?

“And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness” (Acts 26:24-25).

Paul was committed to preaching the truth. Throughout the Book of Acts the gospel is preached and truth explained. “The importance of the book of Acts is in its preservation of the main doctrinal themes presented in apostolic preaching” (*New Testament Introduction* by Donald Guthrie as quoted in the *MacArthur New Testament Commentary*).

**“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”
(John 8:32).**

Long ago a man asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). This question has been repeated countless times throughout history.

The world is full of religions. Among these are a multitude of opinions. Which one is correct? Which one teaches truth? The wise teacher admonished, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23). How do we find truth in the maze of the religions available? Truth can be found in the Holy Bible, the written Word of God. *The Word of God is the measurement of truth.* Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The “God of truth” wrote the Bible (Isaiah 65:16; Psalm 31:5). In fact, Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

God’s truth is passed from generation to generation. It is being passed to you. Like David, a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), we believe that “thou desirest truth in the inward parts” (Psalms 51:6).

The Holy Spirit is given to lead and guide us in truth. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

The Bible explains, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). It is dangerous to measure ourselves against what others believe, or what our church says. We need to measure ourselves against the Word. We cannot put confidence in tradition for the Bible warns, “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:13). It has been said, “What is popular is not always right; what is right is not always popular.”

Carlton L. Coon, Sr. in his Bible study series *Take Root* states, “What men are taught determines what they believe. What they believe determines what they do. What they do determines their destiny.”

Ed Cole once said, "A person's beliefs hold the greatest potential for good or harm in life." What we believe about our salvation matters much when we consider our future destiny. We need to adjust to the truth of God's Word. If someone says something that is wrong, and then a thousand people say that it is correct, it is still wrong.

How then can we measure ourselves? Right, with the Bible! The Bible states clearly that we must "study to shew ourselves approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15). Why must we study? So that we can "rightly divide the word of TRUTH." E. Stewart in his study, "Truth Never Changes" tells us that this Scripture implies that the Word can be wrongly divided.

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Stewart says, "In 2 Peter 3:16 we find Peter writing about actual people who misapply or distort the scriptures to their own destruction." These are people who are "unlearned and unstable" who "wrest" (means distort, twist the nature or meaning of, divert to an improper use; misapply) the "scriptures, unto their own destruction." He further advises, "We should conform our lives to the Bible instead of conforming the Bible to our lives."

Let us continue to, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

The Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God. All doctrine must be based upon and be in harmony with the Word of God. The Bible is not just partially inspired; it is totally inspired. All Scripture is inspired. The Bible is also inerrant. This means that as the Holy Ghost moved on men (2 Peter 1:20-21), all of the limitations and shortcomings of the writers were overcome, and they were able to write without mistakes. The Bible can be trusted in all matters of faith.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The word, "inspiration" in this Scripture comes from a Greek word that literally means, "God-breathed."

-  "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).
-  "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

📖 “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix in their book, *Power in the Pulpit*, suggest that there are many benefits to the Word of God. This list includes:

- 📖 Prosperity and success for those who obey the Word (Joshua 1:8).
- 📖 Converts the soul, makes wise the simple, gives joy to the heart, and enlightens the eyes (Psalms 19:7-11).
- 📖 The Word is everlasting, true, righteous, invaluable, and sweet. It provides warning and reward.
- 📖 The Word cleanses and helps us avoid sin (Psalms 119:9-11).
- 📖 Provides guidance and direction (Psalms 119:105).
- 📖 The Word is truth (John 17:17).
- 📖 It results in faith (Romans 10:17).
- 📖 The Scriptures give wisdom, teaching about what is right, rebuke when in the wrong, correction for those who have erred, and instruction on how to live righteously. All of these help us to become mature (2 Timothy 3:14-17).
- 📖 The Word is alive, sharp, penetrating, and detects our thoughts and intents (Hebrews 4:12).
- 📖 It provides spiritual nourishment (2 Peter 2:2).

Study Questions

1. What does Donald Guthrie claim to be the importance of the Book of Acts? _____

2. What question did Pilate ask in John 18:38? _____

3. What is the only measurement of truth? _____

4. What does John 17:17 say? _____

5. How is truth passed on? _____

6. What is one of the reasons that the Holy Spirit is given to us (according to this lesson)?

7. What is _____ is not always right and what is _____ is not always popular.

8. According to Mark 7:13, what makes the Word of God of no effect? _____

9. What does Ed Cole say about the potential of a person's beliefs? _____

10. What is Scripture profitable for? _____

11. What kind of people are written about in 2 Peter 3:16? _____

12. According to 2 Timothy 2:15 why should we study? _____

13. List five (5) of the many benefits of the Word of God.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Dropping Tradition; Accepting Truth

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"
(Acts 17:11).

That sounds like every pastor's dream congregation. These people—

-  Were noble.
-  Received the truth quickly.
-  Searched the Scriptures daily.

Sorry to say, not every one is like the people just described. Some want to stay with man-made traditions that they have received. However, not all traditions are bad. The apostle Paul passed biblically based traditions on to the churches where he ministered. These traditions were based on truth found in the Word of God. They were not just the opinions of men. The Word of God, not tradition, is the final test of truth. Traditions should not be given doctrinal status. Tradition is not bad unless it conflicts with the Word of God.

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Many people pick and choose what they want to accept, believe, and obey from the Word of God. If they could, they would rip pages out of God's Word. They think, "Holiness? I don't need that!" They may say, "Baptism in Jesus' name doesn't fit well with my traditions. I won't take that." "Baptism of the Holy Ghost? I really don't think that is for us today." Men's rejection of certain parts of the Bible does not change God's Word.

"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written" (Romans 3:3-4).

Our attitude should be, "They don't want it. I want it. I'll take it."

The Day the Sacred Stone Was Dropped

A story is told from Japan of a man who inherited a sacred stone from his father. His father had received the stone from his father and his father before him. The sacred stone had been in the family for many years. It was kept in a place of honor and highly valued. Even though the man did not really understand the reason for the stone, he believed in the tradition.

One day the man was taking a trip across the ocean in a boat. A storm arose. The boat began to toss and then sink. The man had several belongings with him and had to choose which he

would try to save. He chose the sacred stone. However, as soon as he entered the water, he began to sink. He could not swim hard enough to get his head above the water. He sank deeper and deeper and knew he was about to drown. A decision had to be made. He thought, "Do I hold onto the stone and die, or do I let go and live?" He quickly concluded that living was more important than the sacred stone. The man dropped the stone into the deep and quickly swam to the surface. As he broke through the surface, he breathed in deeply and knew that he had made the right choice. Life is more important than a tradition that will only weigh you down and finally bring death. We must be careful that we never hold traditions more sacred than the Word of God.

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Is there anything in my life that I hold as sacred that the Bible tells me to drop and walk away from?

South Africa has the world's largest man-made hole. Here a man named Cecil Rhodes (who funded the Rhodes Scholarships) began to make his riches. Miners dug there and were able to find diamonds. Soon many miners rushed there and were digging as deeply as they could. They did not realize the largest diamonds were found near the surface. That is a lot like the Bible. As we dig deeply into God's Word, we can find spiritual treasures. However, the most valuable diamonds are found right on the surface of God's Word. His truth is not hidden so deeply that it is difficult to find. Truth is easy to find and easy for anyone to understand. It only requires a careful search at the surface of God's Word.

Much confusion exists over what it takes for a man to be saved. Many ask, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). This is a simple question to answer. It is not necessarily answered by tradition, nor by digging deeply into the Word, as if difficult to find. It is right there on the surface, easy for all to find, see, believe, and obey. This question was answered the day the New Testament Church was established.

Question Asked on the Day of Pentecost

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

The Answer Given

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

If someone in your church were to ask this same question, would he receive the same answer?

The Apostle Peter went on to say, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

Are you called by God? All those that the Lord calls are entitled to the promise given above. If you do not obey Acts 2:38, you are saying that you have not been “called” by God.

Some feel baptism is not important. It was important in the Book of Acts. In Acts 16 a badly beaten preacher named Paul believed it was so important that he baptized the jailer in the middle of the night. It could not wait until morning. (Today baptismal classes are taught for weeks and sometimes months. Pastors announce baptismal services few and far between. Prolonged baptismal classes or prolonging baptism is not scriptural.)

Baptism must have been important if Paul with wounds on his back was willing to baptize the jailer. Can you imagine the physical pain Paul suffered? Some would likely have said, “Can’t it wait until I feel better? I’ve just been beaten for the cause of Christ.”

- 📖 Baptism must have been important for God to take Philip from a great revival in Samaria and send him down a lonely road to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8).
- 📖 It was important enough for God to send a man named Ananias to a street called Straight to baptize Saul (Acts 9).
- 📖 God also sent an angel to Cornelius and a vision to Peter to prompt him to go and baptize Cornelius. (Acts 10) Peter risked getting into trouble with church authorities over baptizing Gentiles.

Some argue over the method used in baptism. Biblically it was done by immersion in the name of Jesus. In fact, the Bible says:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

O Taste and See That the Lord Is Good!

Perhaps, you have not been taught any type of Christian tradition. Maybe you have not been searching for answers to, “What must I do to be saved?” You may have even had bad experiences with churches and so-called Christians. This final story is for you.

A farmer had an orchard of orange trees. His friend came to visit one day, and the farmer offered him one of his oranges to refresh him. The farmer was surprised when his friend refused to eat one of his oranges. This had happened on one other occasion, and it provoked

the farmer to ask, "Why don't you ever want to eat one of my oranges?" His friend hesitantly responded, "I really don't like your oranges."

The farmer asked, "What is wrong with my oranges?"

The friend answered, "They are very bitter!"

The farmer looked at him with a puzzled look and asked, "When have you eaten one?"

He responded, "One day I picked one of your oranges, at the edge of the orchard, close to the road. I found it to be very unpleasant."

The farmer roared in laughter. He explained, "The trees that I planted at the edge of the orchard are indeed bitter. I did this on purpose to discourage the children from stealing the oranges. However, the trees in the middle of the orchard are very good and produce a very sweet fruit. You just needed to come into the orchard, pick an orange, eat and enjoy."

* * * * *

Many times a person on the edge of accepting the truth of Christianity and God's Word experiences bitter things like guilt, conviction, and condemnation (blame). But, when he moves on into the midst of the church, he finds that the closer he gets to God, the more pleasant and sweet the Christian life becomes.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalms 34:8).

Truth is being revealed to you. Will you drop tradition to accept truth? Will you obey the treasures of salvation revealed on the surface of God's Word? Will you taste and see that the Lord is good? The choice is yours.

Study Questions

1. What qualities did the Bereans possess? _____

2. Are all traditions bad? Explain. _____

3. When is a tradition considered to be bad? _____

4. What did you learn from the story of the sacred stone? _____

5. According to the diamond story, where were the best diamonds found? _____

6. How does this relate to the Word of God? _____

7. On the Day of Pentecost the question was asked, "What shall we do?" What was the answer given? _____

8. Where can you find a good answer to "What must I do to be saved?" _____

9. Provide three biblical examples (with Scripture reference) that show the importance of baptism.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

The Power of Truth

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32, *NKJV*).

In Luke 6:39, *NKJV*, Jesus asked, “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?” The message is clear, unless we know where we are going we are like blind men and should not lead others. It is here that we see the value of a compass. A compass gives direction and always begins with magnetic north. It is only from this position of magnetic north that we are able to determine all other directions.

In a general sense, the compass represents God’s Word which is truth (Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8). It will never change. But in a specific sense, truth represents apostolic doctrine and is our magnetic north. It is difficult to follow the directions given in God’s Word if we have not first identified apostolic doctrine. Once truth has been discovered and understood we can move forward with confidence in evangelism, spiritual growth, and relationships because magnetic north has already been determined. Everything begins from the position of truth. For example, it is impossible to effectively evangelize the world without a proper understanding of the plan of salvation. And there can be no true spiritual growth without obedience. If we are to experience the power of truth we must choose to follow the way of truth.

Psalm 119:30, *NKJV*, states, “I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me.”

- ❖ A guiding principle of truth is that it can always be stated as a fact.
- ❖ Truth must be possessed, proclaimed, and preserved.

What insights can we learn about truth from Psalm 119:30?

- ❖ Understanding truth is a choice that everyone can make.
- ❖ If a person can “choose” to follow truth, he/she can also choose “not” to follow truth.
- ❖ Truth is a direction that we choose. It is a way of life.
- ❖ Truth acknowledges that there are consequences (judgments) for our choices.

Truth begins on the inside and is seen on the outside. It should affect all areas of our lives. Philippians 4:8, *NKJV* states, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.”

- ❖ Notice that this wise advice regarding our thought life begins with truth. Everything else follows. What you meditate on is what you will eventually speak. Your talk is a revelation of your thoughts.

- ❖ That's why it is so important to know truth. It is one of the direction indicators on our core values compass that lets us know, "This is the way to go."
- ❖ Truth will lead you with a clear conscious informing you that this way is noble, just, pure, lovely, good, and worthy of praise.
- ❖ When we choose the way of truth we can live an open life without fear because we have nothing to hide.

POSSESS TRUTH

Jesus shows us the power of possessing truth in John 18. When he was brought before Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest, he stood openly and spoke with clarity. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John 18:23-24, *NIV*).

They could not stand up to truth because they were working with lies so Christ was sent to Caiaphas the high priest who then sent him to the Governor of Judea. Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." (John 18:37, *NKJV*). Pilate, not willing to experience the power of truth pushed it aside by asking a question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38).

- ❖ Truth will set us apart from the world.
- ❖ Truth will always point in the right direction.
- ❖ Truth can always be stated as a fact.
- ❖ Truth is Jesus Christ. When we follow truth, we follow Christ (John 14:6).

Truth is not always easy, accepted, or enjoyed but in the end it will triumph. That's why Pilate eventually stood before the Jews and said of Jesus, "I find no fault in Him at all" (John 18:38).

Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32, *NKJV*). Truth is something you possess and when you have it, no one can take it from you. In the specific sense, truth is possessed by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- ❖ The gospel can be discovered in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
- ❖ Paul then shows us how to identify with the gospel in Romans 6:3-5.
- ❖ Peter explains how to respond to the gospel in Acts 2:38.

It is our response to truth that allows us to possess truth. Once we have identified magnetic north, we can move forward with confidence proclaiming what we possess.

PROCLAIM TRUTH

If we fail to proclaim the truth of God's grace, faith, repentance, water baptism in Jesus name, and infilling of the Holy Ghost they will not be understood. And until magnetic north has been established, it is very difficult to properly read the compass.

Most will not discover truth on their own. It must be clearly proclaimed by those it truly possesses. When we talk clearly it shows that we are thinking clearly.

After we have experienced the power of truth, we need to boldly proclaim truth so others can understand and receive direction for their lives.

Let's take a look at a few examples of proclaimed truth:

❖ Acts 2:14-40

Verse 14, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, **lifted up his voice, and said** unto them."

Verses 38-40, "**Then Peter said** unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with **many other words did he testify and exhort**, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

❖ Acts 8:5-6, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached** Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake."

❖ Acts 9:17, "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him **said**, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

❖ Acts 9:20, "And straightway he [Paul] **preached** Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."

❖ Acts 10:34-48

Verse 34, "Then **Peter opened his mouth, and said**, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

❖ Acts 16:31-32, "And **they said**, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And **they spake** unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

❖ Acts 19:1-6

Verse 2, "**He said unto them**, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

When we proclaim truth we preserve truth. Truth is proclaimed in two ways: by what we "say" and "do." Both must be consistently practiced if truth is to be preserved.

PRESERVE TRUTH

The scribes and Pharisees were called hypocrites because they did not practice truth. They were able to proclaim it but did not practice it. That is why Jesus told the people to obey everything they said but don't do what they do because they do not practice what they preach (Matthew 23:1-3).

The scribes and Pharisees had truth. They were not able to preserve truth in their organization because they did not practice it. As a result truth was minimized and they followed the tradition of men rather than the commandment of God (Mark 7:8).

Here is how it works...

**PROCLAIMED TRUTH IS ONLY PRESERVED
WHEN IT IS CONSISTENTLY PRACTICED.**

Notice the earlier examples of proclaimed truth in the Book of Acts. In each account truth was first possessed, proclaimed and then practiced. This preserved truth in the early church and kept them from compromise.

Truth Possessed	Acts 2:1-4, 17
Truth Proclaimed	Acts 2:38-39
Truth Practiced	Acts 2:42

If we only proclaim the doctrines of Christ (truth) but do not consistently practice them in the body of Christ, truth will not be preserved. Instead, it will be compromised. And the smallest change can make a big difference.

Just how big of a difference can the smallest change make? This same question was asked to an engineer named Fred who worked for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration – better known as NASA. This is a non military space agency in the United States that studies and explores space.

How important is it to be 100% accurate? What if your calculations were off by only two degrees? Will the rocket reach the moon?

Fred, with a knowing smile reached for his special calculator. Ever so patiently he began, “If the distance from the earth to the moon is 217,614 miles and your flight path is off by only two degrees you will miss the moon by 11, 121 miles!” (Adapted from *Heart Shift*, John Trent, p. 17)

There is a great need to accurately proclaim truth. It must never be compromised or it fails to be truth. Compromise ignores truth and leads you in the wrong direction with the end result being disastrous.

So how do we experience the power of truth?

- ❖ Possess truth.
- ❖ Proclaim truth.
- ❖ Practice truth.

When we do this we will preserve truth and cause others to understand it. Truth is a core value that should direct our thoughts, speech, actions and reactions. It determines our movement through life. If we cannot determine magnetic north, all future movement will be affected.

Truth keeps us correct doctrinally. From this position we can effectively move towards evangelism, spiritual growth and healthy relationships. When we follow truth we follow Christ as revealed in the Word of God. It is a choice. Choose truth!

Study Questions

1. What three (3) steps do we need to take to experience the power of truth? _____

2. What four (4) insights can we learn about truth from Psalm 119:30? _____

3. What two ways is truth proclaimed? _____

4. How is truth preserved? _____

5. Truth keeps us correct _____. From this position we can effectively move towards _____, spiritual _____ and healthy _____.
6. When we follow _____ we follow Christ as _____ in the _____ of _____. It is a _____.
7. What is the guiding principle of truth? _____

Further Truth for Serious Seekers

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”
(Acts 17:11).

A mistake often made when witnessing to people from various denominational backgrounds is the failure to recognize that God has been at work in their lives. They may possess a basic relationship with God already. At times, our arrogant declaration of truth has a negative effect on people. One person referred to this as the "We got it all, and you have nothing!" attitude.

Ed Silvoso in *Prayer Evangelism* says, “Preaching the truth without love is like giving someone a good kiss when you have bad breath. No matter how good your kiss is, all the recipient will remember is your bad breath! This is what happens when, in anger or disgust, we tell the lost how terrible and depraved their lives are and how they are surely going to hell. Even though this may be true, our negative approach blocks and distorts the...message...”

We need to be longsuffering when dealing with people because we do not want them to perish (Acts 17:30). Care should be taken to be sensitive to the feelings of others while presenting the truth. As long as growth is seen, and truth has not been rejected, we should continue witnessing. There still is hope.

Training is needed to determine where people are in their spiritual development and sensitivity to present information at appropriate levels of understanding.

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30).

“Tolerance” is one of the prevailing attitudes in the world today. Everyone wants to do his or her own thing. There is political tolerance; tolerance of sexual orientation; and tolerance of different ways of thinking. There is also religious tolerance that says, “It doesn’t matter which religion you follow. We are all worshipping the same God.” The cry seems to be, “Accept me as I am!” In witnessing it is good to accept people as they are, but we cannot leave them there to perish. We should be always mindful that we are trying to pull others up to our level of spiritual understanding, rather than being pulled down to their lack of understanding.

Throughout the Book of Acts, the apostles encountered people with various levels of spiritual understanding and development. What did they do? Did they say, “It doesn’t matter. We all serve the same God. You believe what you believe, and I’ll just believe what I believe”?

They identified the person’s spiritual development and “began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35).

Apollos

“And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26).

Apollos—

- Was an eloquent man.
- Was mighty in the Scriptures.
- Was instructed in the way of the Lord.
- Was fervent in the Spirit.
- Taught diligently the things of the Lord.
- Spoke boldly in the synagogue.

That sounds like a good candidate for the church, if not the ministry. BUT there was one problem. He knew only the baptism of John. Therefore, Aquilla and Priscilla “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). They were able to recognize Apollos’ relationship with God and spiritual development, and they knew that they had more to offer him. Apollos possessed an admirable quality. He was open to further truth for serious seeker.

Cornelius

Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band looks like a man any pastor would want in his church.
Cornelius—

- Was a devout man.
- Feared God with his entire house.
- Gave MUCH money to the people.
- Prayed to God always.
- Saw visions.
- Was a just man.
- Had a good report among all the nations of the Jews.
- Saw an angel.
- Fasted.

Cornelius would be a welcome prospect in almost any church. But, Cornelius was apparently not saved. He even wanted to worship Peter. He was interested in further truth for serious seekers. He was told to send for Peter, “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). Peter came to preach to Cornelius and his household. While he was preaching, the Holy Ghost was poured out on them. They spoke with tongues, and Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:44-48).

Cornelius and Apollos both possessed a seeking heart. They lived in the light (the understanding) that they had, and God gave them more truth and understanding. God honors a seeking, willing heart.

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:13-14).

Lydia

One day Paul spoke at a ladies’ prayer meeting by the riverside (Acts 16). Lydia, a seller of purple, was there. Lydia—

Was praying.
Worshipped God.
Had an open heart.

Thank the Lord for an “open heart.” She listened to what Paul had to say and was immediately baptized.

Disciples at Ephesus

In Acts 19 we find “certain disciples.” Paul asked them, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

These disciples of John had not heard that the baptism of the Holy Ghost that John preached had come. Because they were “serious seekers,” they were willing to receive “further truth.” They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5) and received the Holy Ghost.

Many other examples could be given of people in the Book of Acts who desired further truth. They obeyed the instruction of John 5:39, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

Bereans

The Bereans mentioned in our Key Scripture are models for all. They wanted all that God had prepared for them. They did not just accept what was being said to them, but they examined it carefully in light of the Scriptures. They received the word with all readiness of mind and then searched the Scriptures to see if what they had heard was correct. Once they were sure that it was true, they believed. They accepted further truth for serious seekers.

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11 *NIV*).

Study Questions

1. What is one mistake often made when witnessing to people from different denominations?

2. Why should one be longsuffering or patient when witnessing? _____

3. What does Proverbs 11:30 say? _____

4. What is the prevailing attitude in the world today? _____

5. How did the apostles react to people of various levels of spiritual understanding? _____

6. Describe Apollos. _____

7. What was Apollos lacking? _____
