

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GREAT BIBLE LESSONS “How to Know You Know the Truth”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Do you know the truth? Are you **sure** you know the truth? How do you **know** you know the truth? Welcome to our study of how to know you know the truth. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that truth is not subjective. We live in a world where people often think that whatever is true for them ought to be true for everyone, or that whatever is true for everyone else is not necessarily true for them. But the Bible is our objective moral standard. It must be our sole guide to the truth in a world that is caught up in things that are not true. In John 8:32 Jesus spoke of the importance of truth when He said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Not only is truth something we **can** know, but it also is something we **must** know if we want to be right with God. Today I would like to offer some thoughts to help you know that you are right with God, and so that you can better understand the truth of God and His will for your life.

Our goal is not to determine **if** we can know the truth. The Scriptures teach that we **can** and **must** know the truth in order to go to Heaven. It is not a matter of **if** we can know the truth. We can! In Ephesians 5:17 the apostle Paul said, “Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” We can understand God’s will, and we can know what we need to know to get to Heaven. Paul said in Ephesians 3:4 that when we read we can understand the mystery of Christ. His point was that we can read the Bible, come out of ignorance, and know what the truth is. Again, Jesus said in John 8:32, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” It is not a matter of **if** we can know the truth. We can! Our goal today is not to determine whether our parents or our families knew the truth. Regardless of what a mother, father, family member, or religious leader in our lives has done, their actions do not affect the truth. We are not here to determine if they knew the truth. Rather, we are asking if **we** know the truth. We will not be called to give an account for what our parents, friends, or family members have done. Instead, we will have to give an account for what **we** have done. Romans 14:12 says, “**Each** of us shall give account of himself to God.” In Luke 16:27-28 the rich man and Lazarus stood before God individually to be judged for what they had done during their lifetimes. Each of us is going to give an account for what we have done, so we must determine whether or not we know the truth, not what someone else has done or known. Our goal is not to debate what the truth is. In John 18:38 Pilate asked, “What is truth?” We are not here today to debate what truth is. We **know** that the truth is God’s Word. Psalm 119:160 says, “The entirety of Your word is truth.” In John 17:17 Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” Today we need to understand that the Word of God is truth. Our goal is to determine from Scripture how a person can be sure that he knows the truth.

The Bible tells us that we can **know** that we are saved. In 1 John 5:13 John wrote, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” We can **know** that we have eternal life, and we can **know** that we are saved. But how do we know that? And what steps must we take to ensure that we are right before God?

First, I would like to mention some **hindrances** to our knowing the truth. There are some things that, if we are not careful, can get in the way of our understanding and knowing the truth of God's Word. We live in a world where Satan is actively trying to hinder seekers of truth from coming to a knowledge of God's will. What are some hindrances of our knowing the truth? What are some things that we might need to avoid?

One major hindrance to knowing the truth is believing and practicing what other people tell us. If we are doing something because "it's what we've always done" or because "it's what we've been told to do," that can be a major hindrance to knowing the truth. We must realize that we are not to act based on what we've always done, or because of what others do. Rather, we are to act based on what the Word of God says. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus said, "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." The illustration used here is almost humorous. A blind man is walking down the road, and there is a ditch on both sides. He is heading toward the ditch, but someone comes along and grabs him by the arm—and then they **both** fall into the ditch because the second person was blind as well! Can you imagine what it would be like if blind people went around leading other blind people? Jesus was teaching that if we do something just because someone else does it, how can we be sure we are right? In Exodus 23:2 Moses told the Israelites, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil." We are not to "follow the crowd" because the crowd often is not right in God's sight. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." We need to ask ourselves if we are being hindered from knowing the truth because we are believing and practicing what others have told us. Paul had done this at one point in his life. In Galatians 1:14 Paul said, "I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." Was Paul right because he was "zealous in the tradition of his fathers"? No. Paul actually was living in sin, was lost, and was persecuting the church of God. But Paul was doing those things because he was willing to believe and do what others had taught him. We must not simply take **as** the truth what our parents or friends tell us to **be** the truth. Just because someone who is close to us does something, that does not mean it is right. Just because our parents do something, that does not mean it is right. We must not blindly accept what certain religious leaders tell us. There is so much confusion in the religious world today. There are so many people with so many different messages. One person will tell us one thing, while another person will tell us something entirely different. We must not blindly accept what people tell us. That is a hindrance to knowing the truth.

Another hindrance to knowing the truth is human tradition and personal bias. If we put our trust in what others believe, in human tradition, "what we've always done," "what we like," or "what feels good," then it will hinder us from knowing the truth. In Jesus' time, one of the things that He despised the most were people who trusted traditions more than they did the Word of God. The Jews were well known for this. They taught that a person had to do certain things in certain ways ("Wash up to your elbows; wash your pitchers and pots; wash your couches"). The Old Law never commanded that. It was simply tradition. Jesus spoke of such people as hypocrites. In Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus said, "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" Jesus said, "You claim to love Me, and you claim that you want to follow Me, yet your hearts are far from Me." Why? It was because they worshiped in vain, "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." In Matthew 23

Jesus repeatedly said, "Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites." He then said, "You travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (vs. 15). Jesus accused these people of cleansing the outside, while on the inside being full of dead men's bones. These people were completely focused on their traditions. I suspect that in Hell there will be a theme song that will go like this: "That's the way we've always done it." Some of the people who end up in Hell will be there because they said, "We're going to do this because that's the way we've always done it." There will be another song in Hell, which says, "That's the way I like it." There have been a lot of people who have thought like that, but it has never worked. In Leviticus 10:1-2 Nadab and Abihu found a new way to light the fire on the altar. We are told that they "offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them." As a result, "fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died." They lit the fire the way **they** liked it. Maybe it was easier or more convenient. But it was not advantageous to their souls. It was not something that helped them know and obey the truth. In 1 Samuel 15:20-22 we read of King Saul, who had been told to destroy the Amalekites. He was told not to save anything. Yet when Saul returned, Samuel heard the bleating of sheep. Samuel asked why Saul had done what he had done, and the king replied, "The people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord." Samuel then said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." We must not let human traditions or personal bias (that is, what we've always done, or what we like) get in the way of knowing the truth.

Another hindrance to knowing the truth is putting our faith in the uninspired books of men. There have been multitudes of books written by men on salvation, Christian living, how to worship God correctly, and so on. But there is only one book that we must follow in order to get to Heaven. When we put our faith or practices in the writings of men—whether it be a catechism, a "book of discipline," or a creed book—then we have departed from knowing the truth. The Bible teaches us that we must focus solely on God's Word. In Romans 4:3 we find an important question: "What does the Scripture say?" We could not have a more appropriate mind-set than that. We need to forget about the writings of men. As Paul said in Romans 3:4, "Let God be true but every man a liar." We need to ask: "What does the Scripture say?" We need to ask the same question that is found in Jeremiah 37:17—"Is there any word from the Lord?" We need to inquire as to whether or not **God** has spoken on this subject. In 2 Peter 1:3 we are told that God has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." We must understand today that the Bible is the only inspired road map to Heaven. Do you believe that if you take the Bible and do exactly what it says—without human tradition or personal bias, and without adding to or taking away—you will get to Heaven? The Bible is the perfect road map to Heaven. It is "God's power unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). It is "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Jesus" (Heb. 7:25). James said in James 1:21 that we are to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls." It is the Word of God by which we are born again (1 Pet. 1:23). Knowing the Word of God is the only way that we can know we are right with God. Books written by men cannot save our souls. We may read the books and writings of men until our eyes hurt. But we will never find there the way to salvation. The Bible is the only book that can provide salvation for us. In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." This Earth, all fleshly things, and everything that we can see (including all the books of men) are going to be burned up with a fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:9-12). But the Scriptures teach us that the one book that will last forever, and that therefore must be our guide, is the Word of God. John 12:48 says that this Word will judge

us in the last day. The Bible is "all truth," just as Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give its writers. The Bible, therefore, must be our sole guide. Things like the apocrypha, church creeds, and traditions of men will serve to separate us from knowing the truth.

Another hindrance to knowing the truth (and one that is a powerful tool of the devil) is having an attachment to the world. Satan's allurements, passions, and lusts will get in our way of knowing and doing what is right. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we are told that Satan is the god of this world. In 1 John 2:15-17 we are taught that if we allow the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life to get in the way, we will pass away with such things since they are "not of the Father." Hebrews 11:25 teaches us that we to put our trust in God. Moses, we are told, "chose to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." We today need to realize that worldliness will cost us our souls. Look at the harsh language God uses to describe the worldly person. If we are worldly, and allow Satan's allurements to get in our way of going to Heaven, then we cannot know the truth. We will be blinded by the world. Notice the words in James 4:4, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." We cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in the church. We cannot have the world as our main goal, and then expect to be able to know and obey the truth.

Now, however, let's shift gears for a moment. Suppose we have taken these hindrances out of the way, and that we have a strong desire to do only what God wants us to do. What are some things that we can do in our lives to help us know the truth? There are many things a person can do to come closer to the truth, but surely one of the most important is to have a good and honest heart. If we want to be sure that we are on the right path, then we must change our hearts. We must effect an "attitude change." If we want to be a seeker of truth, and one who has getting to Heaven as our main goal, then we need to have a good and honest heart. Proverbs 16:18 tells us that pride leads to destruction and a fall. We must not have hearts filled with pride. Instead, we need to be like Paul in Acts 9:6 when he cried out, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" We need to have the attitude that was expressed by Christ's mother in John 2:5. She turned to the servants and said, "Whatever He tells you, do it." We need the attitude of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:14 when he said, "Whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak." Consider, too, the words of 1 Samuel 3:9. You will not find a more humble and submissive attitude than is expressed in these verses. Young Samuel said, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.' If we want to know the truth, then we must have the attitude which says, "Lord, I am ready for You to speak to me. I am ready to listen and to obey."

Another help to knowing the truth is that we must be ready and willing to test everything we hear. We will never come to a knowledge of the truth if we are not willing to separate truth from error. It does not make God angry when we strive to prove what is right or wrong. In Isaiah 34:16 God said, "Search from the book of the Lord, and read; not one of these shall fail." We are to search for and seek God's will. We are to prove everything, as 1 John 4:1 says: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 we are commanded to "test all things and hold fast what is good." How can we prove what is right if we do not compare what we are told with Scripture? The proper way to test things is found in Acts 17:11, which sets a standard for the way to prove something. Paul said of the Christians in Berea, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." The people heard the Word taught. Someone told them about Jesus and the Gospel. But they did not immediately accept it.

Instead, they took what they heard and compared it to the Scriptures. The Scriptures were their final authority, and if what they heard lined up with the Scriptures so that it could be proved and tested, then the Bereans believed it. They did not believe something merely because someone told them, but because it was true according to the Word of God. Let me make this practical for you by testing some doctrines of men for just a moment. Let's say that we are told that the Catholic pope is "God's vicar on Earth today." He is "God's spokesman," and when he speaks in an *ex cathedra* fashion, he is speaking for God so that his law is like God's law. Is it right to call a man "father" in a religious sense? Matthew 23:9 teaches us that it is not. People frequently speak of the pope or Catholic priests as their "father." But that is in direct contradiction to what Jesus taught. Jesus said, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." He was not talking about using the word "father" to describe someone as being someone's earthly father, because the Bible uses the word "father" to describe earthly fathers. Rather, Jesus was saying that, in a spiritual sense, we are to call no man "father" in order to give him the honor and glory that is due only to God. Hebrews 1:1-2 teaches us that "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." In John 16:13 Jesus promised His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came, He would guide them "into all truth." We know that they wrote that truth down, since James 1:25 speaks of "the perfect law of liberty" that we possess.

Let's test another doctrine of men. Some suggest that it is acceptable for women to preach today. We certainly do not have anything against women, their value, or their role in the kingdom of God. But is it acceptable for women to preach today? The Bible says it is not. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul said, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." In 1 Corinthians 14:34 Paul said, "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak." We cannot hold up against Scripture the idea that women can be preachers, and prove it to be true. It is in direct opposition to what the Scriptures teach.

Let's test another doctrine. Someone may say, "Baptism is not essential to salvation." There are many people in religion today who believe that a person does indeed need to be baptized (since Jesus was), but who also believe that baptism is not essential in order to be saved. Let's see what Jesus had to say on this matter. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Jesus said that both belief and baptism are essential for salvation. In Acts 2:38 Peter commanded, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." If baptism is for the remission of sins, and if we are saved when our sins are washed away, how could we ever say that we are saved before being baptized? That is what Peter was saying in 1 Peter 3:21 when he wrote, "Baptism does now also save us."

There are many false doctrines that we could test against the Bible. But it is important for us to know that we must take whatever we hear and test it against God's Word. If we want to know the truth, we must be committed to studying the Scriptures for ourselves. We will never come to a knowledge of God's will until we make up our minds that we can, and must, get out the Bible and study it for ourselves. We must stop believing what we have been told, stop listening to religious leaders, and instead study the Bible for ourselves. Each of us will stand before God one day to give account of how we have lived, so we better be studying the Bible as individuals. We must look to the Bible and ask, "Is this **really** what **God** wants me to do?" Over and over again, this is what we are taught in Scripture. Paul said in Ephesians 3:4 that when we read, we can understand. Each person must read and understand God's will. We also are told to study to make sure that we are right with God. Look at the words of 2 Timothy 2:15 where Paul wrote, "Be diligent to present yourself ap-

proved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We have to get out our Bibles and study. We must not believe what anyone tells us unless it is found in the Scriptures.

Another help to knowing the truth is that we must be open-minded enough to accept the truth. Some people are not open-minded about truth. In Acts 18 we read of a man who was. Apollos was an eloquent Gospel preacher who was preaching valiantly what he knew. But he knew only the baptism of John. So, Aquila and Priscilla pulled him aside and taught him more perfectly the way of the Lord. When Apollos learned that he had been teaching error, he was open-minded enough to accept their chastisement. Ultimately, he went on to do great things in the kingdom. That is a lot different from how some people today react. On occasion when we try to teach a person the truth, that person will get angry, bow his back, and get into a defensive posture. Apollos was not like that. He accepted God's instruction as truth and changed his ways. No one, of course, is asking you to be **so** open-minded that "your brain will fall out," so to speak. Some people are so open-minded that they don't bother to think through things. Others are so close-minded that they cannot be taught of God. Today, I suggest that you find the balance between those two. Be open-minded enough to say, "If God's Word says it, I will do it, regardless of what changes become necessary in my life."

So, let me ask you again: Do you really **know** the truth? Are you **sure** that what you are doing is based on the Scriptures? Are you **sure** that you are part of the church that Jesus built? Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Have you checked to see if denominationalism is approved by God? It's not. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 that there should be "no divisions" among us. Some were saying, "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Cephas," or "I'm of Christ." But Paul said that there were not to be any such divisions. Paul asked, "Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" We need to understand that denominationalism is a sin. We need to be sure that we are worshiping God in an acceptable way. In John 4:24 Jesus said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The truth is God's Word. Yes, we must put our spirit (i.e., our emotion, zeal, and desire to honor God) into our worship, but that worship must be governed by the truth of God's Word. But most important, you need to ask yourself: **Are you sure you are saved?** Are you sure right now that the things you have done to be saved, you could prove from Scripture to be correct? Or, have you merely done what someone else told you to do? Have you followed the tradition of your parents? Are you **sure** you are right with God? This is something about which you want to have **no** doubts. The Bible makes it clear that if a person is willing to believe in Jesus, repent of his past sins, confess the name of Jesus before men, and be baptized in water, then that person can be saved. In Acts 2:37 the Jews cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Are you **sure** you **know** the truth?

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “HOW TO KNOW YOU KNOW THE TRUTH”

1. What did Jesus say in John 8:32 that relates to truth?
2. What important piece of information is contained in Romans 14:12?
3. What important piece of information related to truth is contained in Ephesians 3:4?
4. What important piece of information related to truth is contained in Ephesians 5:17?
5. What important piece of information related to truth is contained in Psalm 119:160?
6. What important question did Pilate ask in John 18:38?
7. What, according to John 17:17, is truth?
8. According to 1 John 5:13, what can a person know?
9. What command did Moses give the Israelites in Exodus 23:2 that applies to us today?
10. According to Christ's statements in Matthew 7:13-14, how many people are willing to do what it takes to understand and obey the truth?
11. According to Paul's own admission (Gal. 1:14), of what had he been guilty at one time?
12. In Matthew 15:7-9, of what did Jesus accuse the people to whom He was speaking?
13. In Leviticus 10:1-2, what did Nadab and Abihu do that elicited God's wrath?
14. In 1 Samuel 15:20-22, what did King Saul do that elicited God's wrath?
15. What point was the prophet Samuel making when he said, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22)?
16. What point was Paul making when he said in Romans 3:4, “Let God be true but every man a liar”?
17. According to Romans 1:16, what is the Gospel?
18. In James 1:21, what did James admonish us to do?
19. What important question is asked in Romans 4:3?
20. What important question is asked in Jeremiah 37:17?
21. According to 1 John 2:16, what are three things that can hinder our knowledge of truth?
22. What good advice is found in Isaiah 34:16?
23. What good thing did the Christians in Berea do, according to Acts 17:11?