

The Importance of the Truth in the Church

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”
(1 John 5:20)

Knowledge of God's Will [God's Word]	Knowledge of God [God's Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
1. God wants us to realize our purpose as the true church. 2. God's true church has a special mission.	God is true and the source of all truth.	Pursue, prize, protect, and preach the truth that God has revealed to the church.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Church Is Special to God
- B. Defining the Truth
- C. Pursue, Protect, and Spread the Truth
- D. Discerning the Truth

Life Application

- 1. Seeking Out the Truth of God's Word
- 2. Witnessing the Truth in Our Lives

Memory Verse

Conclusion: God's purpose and mission for the church is found in the truth, and this mission requires that the church remain steadfast in the truth.

Spiritual Teachings

A. The Church Is Special to God

In the Old Testament, God chose Abraham and his descendants for Himself, and separated the Israelite nation from the other people of the earth (Lev 20:26). In the New Testament, Jesus' followers eventually built up the apostolic church after the Holy Spirit's descent. Hundreds of years later, the same Spirit descended once again and built up the true church that we know today. Like the Israelites and the apostles, we have been separated by the Lord to be His special and holy people. But what makes our church so special is not any particular trait of its members, but the fact that the Lord Jesus loved the church so much that He gave His life for her.

We must understand that as God's chosen people, we need to treasure our status and special purpose in this world. 1 Peter 2:9–10 says of us, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

God's Special Mission for the Church

Before we knew God, we lived in darkness. Someone who is in darkness has no direction. They don't know where to go, or if there is even a destination to go towards. Jesus once said, "He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). The Greek word for darkness here, *skotia*, refers to one who dwells in ignorance of divine things. The word is associated with both wickedness and punishment in hell. The truth within the Bible teaches us not only that we exist in sin – a fact that many are unaware of – but also how to escape from the death that sin leads to. It is the light that leads us to eternal life.

Jesus calls us the "light of the world" (Mt 5:14). He commanded us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:16). Once we come to know God, we must live in the light and proclaim the truth of God to others.

The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

For the True Jesus Church, truth is fundamentally important. Without the truth, the church is merely another human organization or a social club. Paul describes the house of God as "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). The true church and its body, the members, have been chosen by God to serve as witnesses to the truth.

Throughout history, God specially chose and called out particular people to be holy to Him and serve as His witnesses. From Abraham, Moses, and the twelve tribes of Israel, to the judges, kings, prophets, and the apostles of the New Testament – all could be considered part of God's special people. Some of these people were able to obtain God's promises and blessings. Others, unfortunately, could not fulfill their calling and failed. Today, the church is made up of many different types of people. And like those in the Bible, none of them are perfect or without sin.

Today, unbelievers may criticize the church as hypocritical because our lives do not perfectly show God's truth. The lives of our members may even be contrary to what the church preaches. Such hypocrisy can hinder the church, both in its internal and evangelical work. Therefore, we must strive to learn from

those who failed their calling in the Bible, and instead do our best to follow God’s will. When we do, we reflect His character and live out God’s truth.

Our purpose in the true church, then, is not to arrogantly proclaim that “I am more special because God chose me,” but to chase after God Himself, because if we do not know God or His ways, how can we call ourselves His chosen church? When we diligently seek Him out, our lives serve as an active testimony of God and His truth. Only then can our church serve as the “pillar and ground of the truth.”

B. Defining the Truth¹

To be the pillar and ground of the truth, we must first understand what the “truth” refers to. We all know the meaning of the word, but in the context of life, it is not so easy to define. In the world around us, “truth” is something flexible – it is personal, and often malleable. People choose their own truths. What they believe depends on what they watch in the media, hear from political or social leaders, or read from different authors. Whether it is science, faith, or morality, everyone’s personal “truths” differ from person to person and change from day to day. The truth in the world around us is defined by personal feelings or perspectives. It is not absolute.

So how do we define the truth? According to the Bible, its definition is simple: God Himself is truth, and by extension, His words are also truth (Heb 6:18). So, how is this different from the truth of the world around us? Overall, God’s truth has three characteristics:

1. God Is the Source of All Truth

Consider what we know of the laws of the universe, the way our bodies work, and the nature of the earth we live on. All of these exist because God declared and made them the way they are. Without God, the truth would not even exist. James wrote, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth” (Jas 1:18). With His word, all things came into existence, including the truth itself. So, if God is truth, then the truth that our church follows must be from God, not from ourselves or from human reasoning.

2. God’s Truth Never Changes

God’s truth is different because He never changes. Scripture says, “For I am the LORD, I do not change” (Mal 3:6). He is the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8), and His words, too, can never be changed (1 Pet 1:23–25). But in this world, morals, cultural norms, and politics shift from generation to generation. The world around us is constantly changing because unlike God, all things in it eventually die. Only God’s truth is eternal, and it never changes to meet human standards. He has been, and always will be, holy and true (Jas 1:17).

3. God’s Truth Is Good

The third characteristic of God’s truth is that it reveals who God is and all of His goodness. Jesus once said, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God” (Mt 19:17). Paul called God’s truth, “the truth that leads to godliness” (Tit 1:1 NIV). This is because the truth teaches us more about God and how we can reflect Him in our lives. When we learn to reflect God in our lives, we will be able to serve as effective witnesses for Him, and our church will eventually become a

¹ For a deeper understanding of this section, refer to J1 Year 2 Book 2 Lesson 5 – *God Is Truth*

pillar and ground of the truth.

In summary, the truth that the church must live out and represent is God's eternal truth. Unlike the world around us, it never changes, and it leads to the goodness of His salvation. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth only because she grounds herself upon Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:19–22). Therefore, for the church to do a good job of reflecting the truth, she must come to know God Himself. This requires us to think a little bit more about God's character, and how He wants us to act in our daily lives.

C. Pursue, Protect, and Spread the Truth

Without the truth, our worship of God is worthless (Jn 4:24). If, on the one hand, we say we bow down and pray to God, yet, on the other hand, act however we want – even against God's will – then we aren't worshipping God in truth. Knowing the truth and following the truth are two separate things. There are many scholars who know the words of the Bible inside and out, and we ourselves may know the doctrines of True Jesus Church, but it's never good enough just to know God's word. Once we know the truth, we have to choose whether we will follow the truth. With this in mind, the church has a few important duties when it comes to the truth.

1. Pursue and Prize the Truth (Jer 29:13; Prov 2:1–5)

Hosea 6:3 says, "Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD." Have you ever really wanted something? For example, perhaps you have begged your parents to buy you something in the past. Maybe you worked hard on a test for the sake of a promised reward or prayed hard for the Holy Spirit during a student spiritual convocation. When we want something, we pursue it. It has to do with our personal passion and our love for whatever we are pursuing. Let's read Proverbs 2:1–5.

To seek the truth "as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures" means to understand the real value of the truth. As God's chosen, we must prize the truth more than the things of the world. When we pursue and treasure it, God will give us wisdom and help us understand the knowledge of God that leads to eternal life.

2. Protect and Guard the Truth (Gal 1:6–12)

It is important for us to protect the truth that God has given us. We need to ensure that the truth we have received is never changed. There are two important ways for us to do this. The first is to defend ourselves against false prophets and teachings, so that we – and the church – do not stray as the apostolic church eventually did. The second is to ensure that we do not simply pick and choose which parts of the Bible we want to uphold in our lives.

It is common enough for Christians – both within our church and in other churches – to follow only the commandments that they find convenient to follow. For example, we may keep the Sabbath but fail to honor our parents. But if we only keep and protect the commands that we like, the truth that the church received from God will very easily slip away from us. The smallest things that we think are unimportant for our faith may be the same things that Satan uses to attack us and hinder our faith. Unless we protect and guard the truth, we will eventually lose it.

3. Spread the Truth (Acts 10:42; 2 Cor 4:3–6)

The commandment that is easiest for us to forget is the commandment to share God's love with

others. God has commanded us to “proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9), and “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18). Whether we testify of His grace through our actions or actively invite our friends and family to come to church, we need to remember to put effort into sharing what God freely gave to us: His truth that leads to salvation.

D. Discerning the Truth

A key aspect of both prizing and protecting the truth is the ability to discern the truth. In order to become the pillar and ground of the truth, being able to discern the truth is an ability that we must cultivate. So how do we discern the truth? Let’s read Philippians 4:8–9:

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. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

These verses describe what we should meditate on. In other words, they describe the things of God. What are the characteristics listed here? (*True, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy, taught and exemplified by the apostles.*) When trying to discern the truth, we need to first ask if what we hear is any of these things. If not, then we know that it is not the truth. We need to remember that the truth is a reflection of God’s character, which is noble, pure, and holy. Most importantly, the truth is a reflection of God’s love, because God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16).

Of course, it isn’t always easy to discern the truth, especially because false teachings may even come from within our own church. But when we develop our spiritual wisdom, we can fulfill our duty of discerning and revealing God’s truth to the world (2 Tim 3:15–17).

Check for Understanding

- 1. What does it mean to be the “pillar and ground of truth”?** It means to know God and His ways, and to diligently seek Him out so that our lives can serve as an active testimony of God and His truth.
- 2. How do we define truth according to the Bible? How is this different from the world around us?** God Himself is truth, and by extension, His words are also truth. It is different because God is the source of all truth; it never changes, and God’s truth is good.
- 3. What actions must we take once we know the truth?** We must pursue and prize the truth, protect and guard it, and lastly, spread it.
- 4. What are the characteristics of God’s truth according to Philippians 4:8–9?** True, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy, taught and exemplified by the disciples.

Life Application

1. Seeking Out the Truth of God’s Word

When we want to get to know a person better, we often try to gather as much information about that person as possible. For example, if we are studying a famous leader like George Washington for a school assignment, we might do a web search to learn information. Or if we want to get to know one of our

friends better, we will usually spend a lot of time talking and doing things together with them. Our relationship with God is the same. It takes dedicated time and an active pursuit.

Apart from communicating with God directly in prayer, the Bible is our best resource for learning about who God is. So, if we really want to know God better and come to understand the truth, we have to treasure the Bible. But reading the Bible is not just something we do to check off our “to-do list.” We read it so that we can know and understand what God wants us to do in real life.

Today, it is always easier to spend countless hours on worldly entertainment such as movies, games, or social media. But these are always short-lived in our lives; we always move on from them because they are transient and temporary. But the things of God are everlasting and more fulfilling. When we spend time seeking out the truth in God’s word, we will receive lasting rewards. Do you pursue the truth in the Bible? Why, or why not?

2. Witnessing the Truth in Our Lives

God gave the church the truth so that it could be a witness for the truth. As Jesus Christ said, no one lights a lamp to put it under a basket (Mt 5:15). We could share many things about God and His truth, but the most important truth we can share is the truth that leads a person to receive salvation in Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16; Eph 1:13).

There are many ways to share the truth of God with others. First, we must consider our behavior. Do you spend an excessive amount of time on your phone? Or do you spend time listening to a friend in need or making someone happy through an act of kindness? If we act like an unbeliever who does not have or know the truth, then it’s as if we never knew the truth to begin with. What is your behavior like at home? With your friends? With your family? To become a light in this world requires changing our mindset and making deliberate choices to show God’s love in our behavior.

Besides our actions, the gospel of salvation must be communicated with our words. Whether the person we share the truth with accepts or rejects our message, at the very least, we need to open our mouth to give the person an opportunity to receive the truth (Rom 10:14). We can think about a few things to help us as we preach:

- a. It seems obvious, but in order to share the gospel, we first have to be willing to share. Many Christians today do not want to share because they are unsure, shy, or perhaps “don’t know how to share.” At times, it is true that we don’t know how, or are unable to figure out the best time, to share with others. It’s alright to be unsure, but we must also be wary of using it as an excuse not to evangelize. It takes courage to share, and time to learn how. But to learn how, we must at least try. With time, effort, and purposeful preparation, sharing can become easier for us.
- b. Second, we need to rely upon God to open up the way to share the truth (2 Cor 2:12). When a door has been opened to share the gospel, it only means God has provided us an opportunity. It doesn’t mean we won’t face any obstacles or opposition (1 Cor 16:9). But we cannot let this discourage us. God can open up a person’s heart to receive the truth (Acts 16:14), so we must rely on God all the more, and simply do our own part as best we can.

So, evangelism requires these two important things: First, we must have a great desire to share. Second, we must realize that we cannot evangelize with our own strength and wisdom. When we rely on the Lord for wisdom and strength, God will help us live the truth in our lives and open opportunities for us to share His gospel.

Memory Verse

“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”
(1 John 5:20)

Meaning

God’s truth is fundamental to the very life of the church. The church is born of God and God’s truth, but the world lies under the influence of Satan. Jesus came to reveal the truth so that the church could better understand God and fulfill its special mission and purpose. As followers of Jesus, we must understand that God’s purpose and mission for the church is found in the truth, and that this mission requires that the church remain steadfast in the truth.

Conclusion

God’s purpose and mission for the church is found in the truth, and this mission requires that the church remain steadfast in the truth. But to remain steadfast in the truth requires that we grow in spiritual wisdom, able to discern, pursue, and protect the truth even while we spread it to the world. When we do so, with God’s help, our church can truly become the pillar and ground of truth.

Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why is God's truth so important to our church?
As followers of Jesus, we must understand that God's purpose and mission for the church is found in the truth, and this mission requires that the church remain steadfast in the truth.
2. "I write so that you may know how you ought to _____ yourself in the _____ of _____, which is the _____ of the living God, the _____ and _____ of the _____." (1 Timothy 3:15)
conduct, house, God, church, pillar, ground, truth
3. Why do unbelievers call our church hypocritical? What does hypocrisy do to the church?
Because our lives do not perfectly show God's truth. The lives of our members may even be contrary to what the church preaches. Hypocrisy hinders the church, both in its internal and evangelical work.
4. What does it mean to "pursue and prize" God's truth?
It means to seek it "as silver" and to search for it as a "hidden treasure." This means to understand the true value of the truth and to prize it more than the things of the world.
5. Do you pick and choose parts of the Bible to follow and to ignore? Explain how.
Personal answers.
6. How can you be a better witness to the truth in your personal life?
Personal answers.