

CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

TRUTH THAT IS RELIABLE

41

SERIES

In dedication to all the soul-winners that need a Bible study on the trustworthiness of the Bible.

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City of ^{the} Living God



“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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

One of the most profound foundational facts is that all truth comes from God. Truths found in the Bible are absolute, universal and unchanging. Without the Bible, there is no balance or understanding of true knowledge. In fact, the Scriptures speak about people, “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” That is why God has provided us a very powerful source of truth which is his Word, which meets our deep desire to have something that is solid and trustworthy.

If we can hold on to the truths that are written in the Word of God and use it as a path towards righteous living, then we will be successful in every area of our lives. Our search for truth without the Word can go in a million different directions depending on the path that we choose. Obviously, without a true foundation of truth, we are most likely not going to find the right path.

THE CHAOS OF OPINIONS

With a world's population of 9 billion people coming from more than 190 different countries, there are so many differing opinions and beliefs about philosophies and religion. If we had no basis at all for truth, then everyone's opinion would all be equal, and we would come to the conclusion that there are no absolutes and that all truths are relative to whatever culture and socio-economic people group that we are part of. Without a strong basis in biblical truths and teachings, we would be lost without any true sense of direction.

With the coming of the internet and social media, we are bombarded with new ideas, philosophies, supposed cures, conspiracies, and much more. Before the internet the warning was "don't believe everything you read just because it is in a book." Most of the information we see on the internet and social media is not closely examined or endorsed by any repudiable source. It is easy to believe anything that comes across those channels of media without any real thorough examination. One day we hear one clever idea and another day a completely new opposing one. Which argument do we believe?

STRATEGIES OF DECEIT

From the very beginning of creation, the devil has used partial truths to convince mankind of erroneous beliefs. God told Adam, "*Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*" (Gen. 2:16-17). That was a fact. The devil took that truth and put a question mark using the same quote.

Genesis 6:20

"Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Not only did he question it, but he only quoted part of what God said. That is how false teachings are created. They build their teachings on partial truths that everyone recognizes and then they put their twists and false teachings incorporated into it. It makes it much easier to deceive someone when they already recognize part of it as truth.

Another way of recognizing false teachings is by looking at the source. Who is the person that is teaching this belief? What else do they teach? Carefully looking at their fruit will most of the time reveal whether the teachings are unholy, unhealthy, and/or destructive.

1 Timothy 6:3-5

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”

Do their teachings bring with it godless living? Paul lists the outcome of false teachings as being full of disputes, arguments, people with corrupt minds that are taking advantage of others for selfish gain.

DANGERS OF PHILOSOPHIES

The Word of God warns of great danger about opening yourself up to the world's philosophies. The world's philosophies can look so appealing to the eye. If you could see the many Christians that have fallen to these deceitful teachings, it would help you to be extra cautious when hearing of a new teaching. The apostle warns us of following the philosophies of men and describes them as “empty.” In other words, these philosophies are humanistic and although they offer to give answers to life's questions, they are really just meaningless.

Colossians 2:8

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Notice it describes the outcomes of philosophy as “empty deceit.” It is empty because there is no good fruit produced by the false teachings. They are traditions of mankind. They are based on the temporal pleasures of mankind. They claim to have answers, but they lead to destructive lives and habits that not only affect themselves, but their loved ones.

1 Timothy 6:20

“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.”

Paul describes these false teachings as godless and unproductive and full of contradictions. It is also interesting that he states that even though the world calls this “knowledge” it really is just false teachings.

WHEN ARE WE OPEN TO DECEIT?

We leave ourselves open to being deceived by the world’s philosophies when we do not have our guard up. As we just read earlier, the Apostle Paul commands us to “Guard what was committed” to us. If we are to guard the biblical teachings, then it is obvious that it can be snatched away from us.

1 John 4:1-3

“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. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that

does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

John tells us that one way we can know when someone is teaching false doctrine is if they deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

We open ourselves to false doctrine by allowing others to influence us by their false teachings. However, before we allow others to influence us, we usually are already in a position to accept erroneous doctrine for a number of reasons:

- Bitterness – Sometimes because of leadership conflicts in our life, we rebel against whatever they taught. Other times it could be from anger towards God for whatever reason.
- Continual Fellowship with those that hold false teachings.
- A shallow foundational knowledge of the scriptural teachings of the Bible.

DISCERNING TRUTH

With so many philosophies and supposed truths being spread all the time, we need to learn how to decipher between true and false teachings. It's imperative that we use good judgement and basic foundational teachings within the Bible to know what is right and what is wrong. The era that we live in has made it even more difficult because of the many different bombardments against truth that are present in our world. With the invention of the internet, people have become lost in their pursuit of truth. The internet can be a useful tool but can also be a curse if one does not know how to use it properly. Also, with the development of AI, it can be even more difficult to know what is real and what is not real. It will become even more difficult as time goes on. Of course, there will always be means to decipher the real from the fake. As fast as people develop ways to decipher what is AI and what is not, AI learns how to

fix those weaknesses so that it looks even more real. There will always be people and companies dedicated to analyzing it as it gets more difficult.

As Christians, we do not have to worry about the Bible losing its value of truth. The truths of the Scripture will never change.

Matthew 24:35

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

There have been so many attacks against the Bible throughout the ages since it was written, and it has stood the test of time. People have tried to burn it, change it, add to it, take away from it, they have tried slander it and disregard it and still we have the Word of God. There are more Bibles on earth than ever before. The Bible will outlast all of us until the end.

The problem of deception is not with the Word of God; it is with those that convince people of erroneous beliefs about the Bible. If the devil cannot remove the Bible, his next best strategy is to try to get us to not believe in the Bible. He does this several ways by teachings such as:

- The idea that God did not write the Bible. They would say imperfect men wrote it. But what they fail to understand is that God used men. The Scriptures were written by men, but they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and they wrote the Word of God under his direction. The phrase, “inspired of God” is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to describe the Scriptures and means literally, “God-breathed.” In other words, God breathed the Word by his Spirit unto the men that wrote it.

2 Peter 1:21

“for the prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

- There are those that espouse that certain parts of the Scriptures are not for the Church. Some would state that the Old Testament is not for us which is completely opposed to the teachings of the Bible. Others would state that certain parts of the New Testament were only for the Jews. Those that believe this have fallen into the trap of the enemy and have basically started the process of rejecting the belief of the Bible.

HOW DO WE AVOID FALSE TEACHINGS?

Although this study is not exhaustive in this area, it is important that we have good practices of where we obtain good teachings, what we read and listen to, who we open our minds to, and how we live our life in Christ.

There are practical steps that we can make as a habit in our lives that will help us to avoid the pitfalls of false teachings.

1. **Consider the source of the teaching.** Who is teaching it? What authority does that person have? Do you know his background? Does he have good fruit (reputation)? What other teachings does he teach? Is the website reputable?
2. **Don't use AI to find out Biblical truths.** AI gets its information from the internet, so whatever is on the internet it spits out that content. Just because AI says it, does not mean it is truth. AI is biased by the information and data that it chooses to grab from the internet. There is so much biased information injected into the platforms depending on the company that produced it. If you do a query of each, you will get a different answer from each. Some of them are more anti-Christian than others. There have already been many tests to prove this. Why would you want to listen or read from a platform that is already against you? It's not bad to use it for other purposes, but it's not the place to look for truth.

3. **Don't get your information for truth from social media.** Social media was made for entertainment and business. Every post is intended to grab the attention of people and bring in clicks. People and businesses make money off the number of clicks that come from the posts. So, the more radical and eye-catching, the more money they make. There may be some truth sometimes, but often it is littered with other false and misleading content. It is very difficult to get truths from those places unless you already know the individual and have trust in that person.
4. **Don't use Google, Wikipedia, or other sites to search for truth.** Did you know that universities do not allow students to cite their formal research papers with those websites? They often lack expert credentials, editorial oversight, and fact-checking. They know that there are all kinds of errors written on those pages. While some of it can be correct, oftentimes there are very biased and erroneous statements written in them. Anyone can make a website, add a video, make a post, or edit a page and we have no idea who that person was that did it. How can we prove what he/she wrote was accurate unless it was from a trustworthy website? So much can be written about this.
5. **Don't look for truth from YouTube unless you know the source is trustworthy.** Anyone can upload a video and say they have credentials such as being an expert or doctor or whatever. It does not mean that they really are one. It is embarrassing to cite YouTube as being the place that you look for truth. It is full of conspiracy click driven videos. The crazier the title and first frame picture, the more clicks are produced. It's click-bait driven; not truth driven. Can you imagine if your doctor used YouTube to treat his patients? Sometimes we watch a short biography of someone and believe it just because it's on YouTube. I know we can use it for DIY projects and oftentimes that is helpful but stay away from it when looking for truth.

6. **Not even every reputable site is a good for searching for truth.** Even University, medical, and news sites are biased. Depending on what article you read and who it is written by will determine their own bias. Even studies that are in journals online are biased and not always accurate. It does not mean you should not use them. We should use them, but we should use common sense to know that there is a bias, and it may not be completely truthful. We have learned during the Covid outbreak that news networks across the world were being very deceitful and could not be trusted for certain truths. It has left the world with a sense of not trusting everything that they say.

There is one source of truth that we can always trust. I thank God that he gave us his Word. It has stood the test of time. With over 40 writers from various backgrounds such as priests, prophets, kings, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, doctor, and apostles and yet not one contradiction in the entire Bible! It was written over a 1500-year span and still no contradictions!

2 Timothy 3:15-17

“and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

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