

VALUES THAT HELP US LIVE TRUTHFULLY & TRIUMPHANTLY
Sermon Series: Truth — How Do You Know It When You Hear It?
Next Steps Devotional Guide
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Instructions: This devotional guide can be used individually, by families or in a small group as a way to reinforce the biblical truth you learned from the sermon. If you are using this at home, spread the points throughout the whole week. If you are using this in a small group, divide people up into sub-groups to discuss and share and bring them back to the whole group to share. Do not force anyone to share. Be sure to pray in your group.

1. We live in a crazy, tragic and sinful world. Our culture seems to literally gone off the deep end. Read 1 John 2:6 in your sermon notes. What do you think makes it so hard today to live as Christ did? Do you think it is any harder today to live like Christ than in Christ's time or any time in history? Why or why not?
2. Read Matthew 21:3-5, John 12:12-16, and John 12:17-18 in your sermon notes. What is it about this story — Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem in what we call "Palm Sunday" that resonates with you and why?
3. Read Matthew 21:10, Matthew 21:9 and then again Matthew 21:9-10 from your sermon notes.
 - a. Why does John say the people came to see Jesus riding outside of Jerusalem to the city? They refer to Jesus as "Son of David," a title that refers means "Messiah." Jesus had healed many in His 3 year ministry and He had also raised a few from the dead. What do you think raising Lazarus from the dead created such a "seismic" event that the people would call Jesus Messiah?
 - b. Yet, after riding the donkey into the city another "seismic" event occurred. They go from calling Jesus Messiah to "prophet." Use your imagination. What caused the people to shift from from Messiah to prophet?
 - c. Read Matthew 16:13-17 in your sermon notes. It ultimately comes down to this question: "Who is Jesus to you?" When you read this passage you can almost hear the disciples stammering and stuttering in giving their answers. Why do you think they struggled with this?
 - d. Of course, Peter, under the influence of the Holy Spirit gives the right answer when Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was. Think back over your life. Reflect on the good times/bad times, the obedient times and the disobedient times. Who was Jesus to you in each of those and why? What does this say to you?
4. Having godly and Christlike values is what sets us part from our culture.
 - a. Read Romans 12:2 in your sermon notes in point #1. God wants us to evaluate the culture around us. You ask things like, "Is this the truth? Does this square with reality? Is it God's worldview? Or is it just at the most a passing fad?" How often do you do this and why?
 - b. Read Jesus' words in John 7:24 in your sermon notes in point #1. God does not want us to be cynics, or skeptics or judgmental nitpickers, criticizing and condemning others by pointing out everyone's faults and sins. Take your Bible this week and go through the four Gospels and highlight or write down every time Jesus uses the phrase "watch out," or "beware" or "be careful" or "guard yourself" and etc. How many did you discover and what does this say?
 - c. Read Jesus' words in Luke 12:35 in your sermon notes in point #1. Nearly everyone of us would say that we do not believe everything we read in a newspaper; we do not believe everything we read in a magazine; we do not believe everything we see on TV, or the radio, or the Internet or the movies. Yet we would say we believe everything God says as being true. Do you spend more time listening, watching, and reading something you do not believe rather than what you do believe? Why or why not?
5. Most people do not understand the word "integrity." They think it means 'being honest or telling the truth.' That's part of it, but not all of it. Read the explanation for what integrity means. When you have integrity, you do not compartmentalize your life. You don't act one way with one group of people — like, *"this is how I act at church, this is how I act with my golfing buddies, this is how I act at work and this is how I act at home and this is how I act over here when nobody knows it's me."* This is hypocrisy because you can be honest in one area and not in another area.
 - a. Are there any areas of your life where you compartmentalize and why?
 - b. Read Jesus' words in Luke 11:36 in your sermon notes in point #2. Jesus' point is that integrity is like the brightest light shining in the darkness. Does this describe you and why?
 - c. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:13 in point #3 in your sermon notes. You were given two reasons salt is used. Would you say this describes you (i.e., you are helping to keep the world from spoiling and you are helping the world taste better)?
6. Many people put themselves down and thus think they are being humble. You were given a definition of what being humble is. Would you say you are more or less dependent on God? Why?
 - a. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:3 in point #3 in your sermon notes. Being stressed is an indicator that you are not being dependent on God. Would you say you are more stressed, less stressed or about the same in terms of stress today? What does this tell you?
 - b. You were given two primary causes of stress. Look at your fill-in in your sermon notes. Where in your life do these two causes of stress impact your life?
 - c. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 11:29 in point #3 in your sermon notes. Why do you think we are impatient to go at the pace Jesus is going?

7. There is an old hymn that begins this way, *"Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free . . ."* Would you say you have more, less or about the same in terms of "stuff" today than you did years ago? What does this tell you?
 - a. Read Jesus' words in Luke 12:15 in point #4 in your sermon notes. Some people have so much stuff they rent a Personal Storage Unit. My definition of a house is this: *"A house is a pile of stuff with a cover over it."* Our culture says, *"He who dies with the most toys wins."* No, *"He who dies with the most toys . . . still dies."* Why do you think we acquire so much stuff that in time makes our lives more stressful rather than more simpler?
 - b. Here is what I have noticed. Many people spend the first half of their life getting wealth and acquiring stuff. Then they spend the second half of their life using their wealth to get health. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 16:26 in point #4 in your sermon notes. How can you apply the implications in this verse to your life?
 - c. Think about one of your most cherished material possessions. If God told you to give it away, would you? If you can't give it away, it owns you. You do not own it.
8. Read Galatians 2:20b, Hebrews 11:6a, and Romans 14:23b in your sermon notes in point #5. 35 years ago, singer George Michael, had a hit song titled, *"You Gotta Have Faith."* Why do you think it is easy to have faith in some things (ex., sitting in a chair) but a challenge in other things (your relationship to Christ)?
 - a. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 9:29 and Matthew 9:23 in point #5 in your sermon notes. What rating of faith (i.e., scale of 1-100) of Jesus' words would you say your life demonstrates this to others?
 - b. If you were to go out on the street and ask someone, *"What do you think is the worst sin?"* The might say terrorism or murder, genocide, or rape or sexual abuse. According to Scripture, the worst sin is not taking God at His Word. It's not trusting God. What would you say is the hardest thing for you to trust God with?
 - c. Hell is a real place, but there is another form of "hell." It would be God showing up and revealing to you and me all the possibilities that could have become realities in our lives but didn't because we did not trust Him. What "possibilities" do you think have not become realities because of your lack of faith?
 - i. In your sermon notes you were given 3 question to ask yourself. Where in your life are you limiting God?
 - ii. Look over your life: what needs changing or modifying in your life?
 - iii. What is holding you back or what are you waiting for and why?
9. Time magazine had an article entitled, *"Teaching doctors have to care."* That sounds a little odd. Here is a quote: *"At Harvard and other medical schools across the country educators are beginning to realize that empathy is as valuable to a doctor as any clinical skill."* Duh! Here's the irony. Hospitals should be hospitable. It's the same word. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 10:41-42 and Matthew 25:40, 45 in point #6 in your sermon notes. Based on the passages you just read, who should you be doing this for right now and why?
10. Our culture has become so vile. People today are flat out rude and crude. They are not polite to each other nor civil with each other. People give each other the finger. Road rage is almost an epidemic. We see this in the character assassination that goes on in political and presidential elections.
 - a. We saw this at the Oscars this year when actor Will Smith ran up on stage and smacked comedian Chris Rock across the face for a joke Chris Rock made about Will Smith's wife. Why do you think Hollywood — the mass producer of violent movies — was shocked by this violent attack by Smith?
 - b. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:9, Matthew 7:12 and again in Matthew 5:9a in your sermon notes in point #7. Who in your life is hard for you to do what Jesus says? How and when should you do this?
11. Read 1 Corinthians 13:13-14:1 in the NLT and KJV in your sermon notes in point #8.
 - a. If God gives me free choice, I ought to give it to everybody else, even if they make the wrong choice. Who do you need to do this with and why?
 - b. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:44 in your sermon notes in point #8. Who would you says in an "enemy" of yours and why? How can you do what Jesus says to do to your "enemies"?
 - c. Read Jesus' words in Luke 6:37 and John 3:16-17 in your sermon notes in point #8. Jesus said He did not come to judge the world, so why do we think we can and should? Judging another is a form of idolatry because you think you are just as qualified as God to know a person's heart. Joy is a "Fruit of the Spirit." Meaning — you can't produce it — only the Holy Spirit can. You can produce happiness, but not joy. The Holy Spirit stops producing joy in our lives when we start judging others. Where have you see this happen in your own life? Did you learn from it or are you still judging others? What does this say about you.
 - d. It is so easy to see the people we disagree with as being our nemesis, but they are not. They are the people Jesus died for on the cross. What can you do to show you care about people in the same way Jesus does?
12. God is a giver. That is the whole point of John 3:16. Every time you give, it makes your more like Jesus. It helps to break the hold of materialism and greed on your life.
 - a. Read Jesus' words in Luke 16:9 and 1 Timothy 6:10a in your sermon notes in point #9. How can you get better at using money and loving people with it?
 - b. Read Jesus' words in Luke 6:38 in your sermon notes in point #9. What should this kind of generosity look like in your life and why?
13. Read Jesus' words in Luke 2:49 and John 19:30. These two verses are the bookends of a successful life. Worry is practical theism. It says, *"I really don't believe God is going to take care of me."* Read Jesus' words in Luke 12:3-31 and Matthew 10:39. How can you "put God first" and "forget about yourself" as Jesus describes in these verses? Where are you more like the culture and less like Christ? How can you reverse this?

¹ <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,1196411,00.html>.