

In **Galatians 1:1-5** -- Paul opened his letter with a familiar greeting and pronouncement of God's grace and peace. In verse four, Paul referred to the gospel (the good news) that we have been rescued from our sins by the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the will of God the Father.

Why is that important?

Because with that brief summarization of the true gospel, Paul was setting the stage for a stern rebuke of the Galatians in verses six through ten.

So let's read that passage -- **Galatians 1:6-10:**

Gal 1:6 NIV I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel --

Gal 1:7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

Gal 1:9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

Gal 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ

The believers in Galatia had turned away from the true gospel to a different or false gospel. And Paul was upset. He's mad. He's angry. And he says, what's going on with you guys -- so quickly? So quickly -- meaning either in terms of the time between when he ministered to them, planted the churches, shared the true gospel -- and now, the spirit -- or the fact that somebody came with some kind of other word and very quickly, they just went in that direction. So he says, how come you've so quickly -- I'm astonished, he says -- that you have turned this way.

But that necessitates us asking the question -- so what is the true gospel message?

Here's one way to state it -- and this is what we covered last week:

“We, who were dead in our sins, were saved from the consequences and penalty of our sins. We were saved from eternal separation from God and restored in relationship with Him -- not by our good works -- no. We were saved by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone.”

What happened to the believers -- the believers in Galatia?

We'll find out in chapter two that the believers had turned to "keeping the law" rather than appropriating the grace of God and living by faith. And they were thinking that that was the means by which they would be saved, or they would continue in their salvation.

But here in chapter one, verses six through ten, in admonishing the Galatians to adhere to the true gospel, Paul is getting us to consider three critical questions.

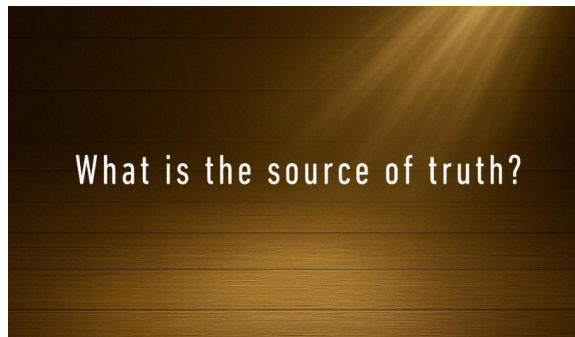
1. Question number one is -- **What is the source of the true gospel?** What is the source of truth? And closely related to that:
2. Question number two is -- **How do we discern what is true?** So that we may apply that truth in our lives, so that we may live by that truth.
3. And then the third question -- **Whose approval are we seeking?** ... by the way we live? Or stated differently -- **Who are we trying to please with our lives?**

So let's consider the first question -- what is the source of the true gospel? What is the source of truth?

Answer: The source of truth is the true and living God -- the one whose very nature is true -- in whom there is no lie, no shadow of turning -- of whom **Jeremiah 10:10** states,

Jer 10:10 ... "the LORD (Yahweh) is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King." ...

So it seems very straightforward, but it needs to be stated. **And that's what the Bible tells us.** What is the source of truth? It is the Lord Almighty -- the true and living God. **And the true gospel is the most vital message of truth that this true God declares.**



At the end of His earthly ministry -- right before dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins -- in **John 17:1-3**, we read that Jesus looked toward heaven and He prayed:

Joh 17:1 ... "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

Joh 17:2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Joh 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

If you don't know this truth -- if you don't understand this true God -- if you don't understand that this is what the Lord has done -- you miss the gospel. But Jesus is making very clear -- He said, "I came into this world for this purpose. I have accomplished what you gave me to do. Now, Lord, they have understood -- or they have received -- eternal life."

What is eternal life? That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ.

So truth is defined in terms of the true and living God. **Truth is not relative. It is absolute. Truth originates from God.** And the true and living God has communicated His truth to us through the Word of God --

the Holy Scriptures. God has confirmed His Word through Jesus, and enabled us to apply the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In **2 Timothy 3:15-17**, Paul wrote to his mentee, Timothy, and he says this to Timothy: “From infancy, you have known the Holy Scriptures” -- because he had a godly mother and grandmother, and they would speak these Scriptures, and they would instruct him in it. And there was this atmosphere of having grown up with the Scriptures. And so Paul says to Timothy:

2Ti 3:15 ...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise (not for living in the world, not for excelling at your job -- all those things can be there -- the Lord shows favor -- but the Lord gives His Word primarily to make you wise) for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed (all Scripture is divinely inspired) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting (that's what Paul's doing with the Galatians, for correcting) and training in righteousness,

2Ti 3:17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped (empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit -- thoroughly equipped) for every good work.

God has purposed, and He has a plan for each one of our lives. **When we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Savior -- that's when we have our identity.** The gospel is giving us our identity, and the gospel is bringing us into relationship with the Lord Jesus and the Heavenly Father, who says, “Here is what I have purposed for you. **And in order for you to fulfill this purpose, I give you the Holy Spirit. I give you myself.** I fill you with my presence -- my will, my Word, my wisdom, my strength” -- oh, my stamina, we've been talking about this too -- so with all of that in place -- we have what we need. God, in three persons, has provided all that we need for life and godliness.

For Paul, the gospel is true because of its source.

He makes it very clear here in Galatians and in his other epistles that he didn't “arrive at truth.” He wasn't coming up with something. It wasn't a philosophy that he defined. It wasn't something that he said, “Well, I'll take the best of this and the best of that, and I'll come up with the Christian faith. I'll come up with some set of doctrines -- some beliefs.”

He says, “No. None of that. It wasn't because I was imitating some other person, or what they had to say. I wasn't following some ‘spiritual guide,’ but rather,” he says, “I have received. I didn't formulate the gospel. **I received the gospel from the Lord.** And the gospel that I speak to you -- this message of salvation that I speak to you -- this truth that I'm sharing with you -- I have received from the Lord.”

So that's what he is pointing to. Paul's not pointing to his skills and his training and his charisma and his thinking -- he says, I have received from the Lord that which I'm also sharing with you. And that's a clear and very important distinction.

When we speak about Christianity, we're not saying, “This is what I think.” We're saying, “This is what the Lord says.” “This is not what I have come up with. This is what the Lord has given.”

And so, we are not sharing something of our own making. We don't have to add anything to this. We don't have to enhance it. That was what was going on with the Galatians. But we are able to say -- because of what I have received -- I'm freely able to share it with somebody else.

Let me make this one point too: When we hesitate to share with somebody else, it's because we think we don't know what to share. We say, I don't know what to say. I don't know how to say it. I don't know if they'll receive it.

But if you're just passing along a message, you don't have to worry. You don't have to say, "Oh, I don't know what to say." You just say, "Hey -- by the way -- let me tell you about a message that I heard -- that the person who was sharing it said, 'Go share this with other people.' And here's what that person said -- not me -- not me -- here's what that person said. Now, if you disagree with this, take it up with him."

So you are not responsible. You're not the one trying to say, "Let me convince you." You simply are saying, "I have heard good news. I have heard how I can be reconciled to God. I have heard that my life has purpose. I have heard that God is with me and that He has ordained something for me. Let me share that with you. Let me just tell you about this Jesus."

But notice the implication for Paul -- and for us -- in verses eight ~~to nine~~ of having received truth directly from the Lord. Paul states:

Gal 1:8 ...even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

That's an incredible statement! Because when we say something to somebody -- we say, "And you got to keep doing," or "You got to believe," or "You got to be obedient to what I have told you" -- what happens? We live our lives inconsistently, and that person comes back and says, "You told me to do this, but you're not doing that." So what do we say? "Well, there are some exceptions. Let me justify why I did that."

But you know what we have to point to? We have to say, "Look, even if I mess up -- even if I share with you the truth and then I don't live by the truth -- that shouldn't affect your relationship with the Lord. Because the Lord is still true. Let every man be a liar -- but the Lord is still true."

And so what we're pointing out to people is "not to follow us." We're not saying -- Paul makes the statement, "Follow me" or "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." But he's not saying, "Imitate me in whatever I do." He's saying, really, "Imitate Christ. I'm going to try to imitate Christ. You also come along here. You may see me as your example, but as I'm imitating Christ, you can imitate me -- **but really, the whole point is: imitate Christ.**" **That's the message. That's the statement that he's making.**

So he's so confident that he says, "Even if we come and we say something different to you -- don't believe me." How many of us are willing to do that? We'll say, "Oh no -- whatever I say goes, right? I'm the one who brought you to the Lord. I'm the one who told you about Jesus. I'm the one who told you how to live a Christian life. What do you mean you won't listen to me?" That's how we deal with life.

Paul says, "Even if we -- even if we tell you something different -- don't believe it. **Go with what the Lord has already spoken to you.** If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted..."

How did you accept the gospel? Not because I convinced you -- but because the Holy Spirit convicted you.

How did you accept the gospel? Because the Lord chose you. Because the Lord showed His grace to you. **Because the Lord said, "Here is truth," and revealed Himself to you.**

And so he says, "Don't go by anything else. Don't go by any other kind of statement. If you have accepted the gospel -- stick with that. No matter what anybody else says. No matter how many people fall. No matter

whether a church closes -- that doesn't matter. That's not your focus. **You have accepted the gospel. Live according to the gospel.**"

Source -- what is the source? The true and living God. The source matters.

Now, how does the Lord use human beings? He uses us to reinforce, to reiterate, to just repeat. I tell people all the time -- preaching on a Sunday morning is easy because I just read the Scriptures. I don't have to come up with anything. I just have to read the Scripture. I just repeat what He has said. That's all that human beings are doing. We just resonate with the message that the Lord has already given -- with the truth that He has already shared.

And so when we do that -- when we hear something from some channel, some agency, some human being, or other source -- what we should do is to examine that according to the Scriptures, as the Bereans did when Paul spoke. **We have to say, "Is what this person is saying lining up with Scripture? Is this true?"** Not because the person is true, or not because they said truth in the past -- not for anything else -- **but according to the Word of God: is what they're saying true?** Can I examine it, evaluate it, put it to the test, and see that it remains consistent? That it remains true?

That's the call on our lives.

Which means -- and in this day and age, even more so than being afraid of human beings who give us false teaching or angels from heaven giving some sort of message and appearing in a dream -- people are concerned about ChatGPT. And they're concerned that if I ask ChatGPT for an answer -- will I trust that answer?

Guess what -- the same principle applies. **You've got to evaluate whatever source of information you're getting by the true and living Word of God.** By the true and living God. You have to be able to say, "This is what I am receiving, hearing, and encountering -- how do I process this? How do I evaluate this in light of the Word of God?" **That becomes our responsibility. And the Lord does reveal Himself. The Lord does speak. The Lord does give us truth.**

So having established that God declares truth, the next question for us is -- how do we discern?

How do we clearly differentiate what is true -- when we are constantly hearing the voice of God, the world, ourselves, and the devil?

And by the way, I've said this before -- all those voices sound the same. If you speak with the accent, all those voices speak with an accent. Right? They all sound the same. You will hear them the same way. You don't have a way of saying, "God speaks in a deep voice. The devil speaks in a squeaky voice. My voice is normal." You can't distinguish it that way. You can't say, "I hear all these voices and I can easily discern what is true and what is false." All these voices are coming at you -- all the time. All the time.

So question is -- how do we discern what is true so that we may live a true life?

Paul warned the Galatians that they should not receive a different message -- from natural -- human beings -- or even supernatural -- angels, demons, unexplained phenomenon. "Aliens are coming to the world and they've got a message for me -- that's what I need to pay attention to."

He says, don't pay attention to any of these sources. But how do we tell them apart? How do we distinguish?

Hebrews 5:12-14 -- it says this:

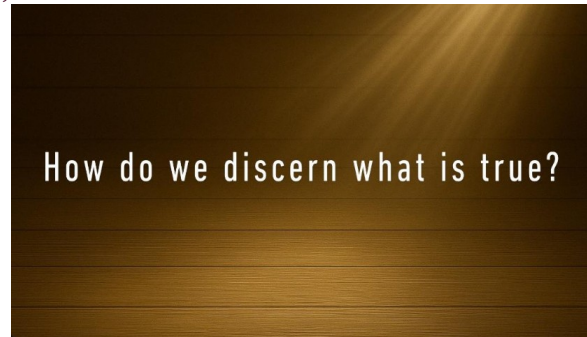
Heb 5:12 ESV For though by this time you ought to be teachers, (though you should be maturing, growing in discipleship, maturing in all areas of life, able to lead and to teach and to mentor -- to do all of those things -- “though you should be maturing and you ought to be teachers) you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

Heb 5:13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

The Amplified Bible renders verse 14 as:

Heb 5:14 AMP ...solid food is for the [spiritually] mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish between what is morally good and what is evil.



We train our natural senses of sight and smell and sound and touch and taste to distinguish what we see or hear -- all kinds of flavors, different textures. And you know -- you yourself may be an expert in some area like this. You can hear a sound and you know exactly what that is. You can touch something and you go, “This is silk with a little bit of rayon,” right? And then you can taste something, and you can say, “Oh, I taste a hint of cardamom in this.” We have trained our senses to be able to distinguish all kinds of things in the world.

But the Bible is saying -- and it seems obvious, it seems obvious to us -- that the higher the level of the training, the more readily we can distinguish the differences.

It's the same principle for knowing what is true and what is false spiritually.

The Bible is saying -- you need to train. You need to practice. You need to develop. You can't say, “I'm saved -- I'm good.” Because every single voice that is coming at you doesn't stop now.

So now you need to be training, discerning, distinguishing, and saying, “Okay -- all right -- I'm saved. I have received the truth. I have received the gospel. But now -- how do I distinguish between what is good and evil? Now -- how do I decide where I move to? How do I decide what job to take? How do I raise my children? How do I decide on marriage? What do I do? How do I do these things?”

By the way -- the Bible has answers for all of those things -- including what car you should drive and everything else. It does. It does. If you want to know more about this -- more about that point -- you'll have to attend the weekly sermon discussion on Wednesday.

The whole point is that we need to train our senses. There's no shortcut on this. We have to train our senses by constant, consistent application of spiritual disciplines.

- **We have to read – we have to study the Word of God.**
- We have to meditate on what the Lord is saying to us.
- We have to apply the Word of God.
- We have to pray without ceasing.
- We have to fast. We have to fast from essential needs so that we spend time with God.
- We have to take thoughts captive.

- We have to fellowship in the church.
- We have to give generously and serve others.
- We have to evangelize.
- We have to mature.
- And we have to worship God.
- We have to glorify God forever and ever.
- We keep practicing.
- We keep doing.
- We keep striving.
- We keep grappling with those things that are struggles in our lives.

And we say,

“Lord God, I need you. I need help in this. And I have gained something in this area, but I'm lacking in this area. I need you to move. I need you to have your way in me. I submit to you.”

And we are constantly, constantly, constantly continuing to practice. **We are training our senses because the Lord says, “I will open your eyes. I will open your ears. I will give you the words to speak. I will tell you -- touch and see, do whatever. Don't be like one groping about in the darkness, but rather I will give you the light so that you will be able to move forward. I will do those things for you, so that your senses -- your spiritual senses -- are trained. Are trained to distinguish, to discern between what is good and what is evil.** Oh, that brings us to the final question:

Whose approval are we seeking?

In **Colossians 3:17**, it says this:

Col 3:17 ... whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And then later, in **Colossians 3:22-25**, when Paul is addressing slaves and earthly masters -- and we've talked about this in the past -- that the Bible is not condoning physical slavery, but he's using that, and he's talking about it, and he speaks in this way. He says:

Col 3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

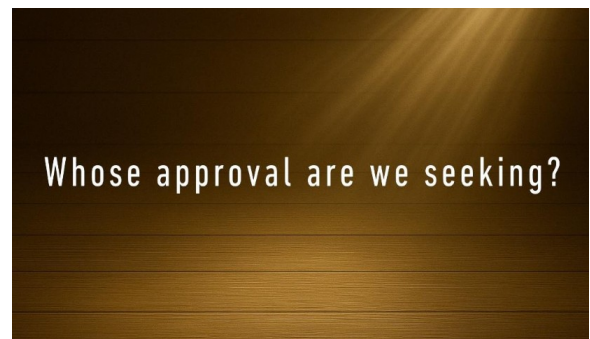
Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

Col 3:24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Col 3:25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

Paul makes it very clear -- do you think I'm doing all these things to please you? Do you think I'm serving the Lord so that I will get your praise? Do you think that I am seeking your approval?

He says no. “I'm doing all things as unto the Lord. I'm fulfilling the call and the purpose that He has for me, so that He may be glorified. I am not trying to please you at all.”



Now -- if in the pleasing of the Lord you are also pleased -- great. Wonderful. Bonus. But that is not my objective.

It is exactly the reverse of what we do. We say, "If we can please everybody, maybe I'll also please God." We say, "Oh, if everybody is happy with me -- if everybody is thinking well of me -- maybe God will also think well of me. Maybe I can go to God and say, 'God, 90% of the people like me -- don't you like me too?'" That's how we approach life. We think that by living our lives in this world for the world -- God will be pleased.

But you know, when we read and understand all of these things and go through this, we respond and apply the Word of God that we have heard by pleasing the Lord.

In **1 Thessalonians 2:1-12** -- it's a wonderful passage, because in that passage, Paul is writing to the Thessalonian believers, and he's saying something very similar to what he does to the Galatian believers.

So as I read through this few verses here, pay attention to the same themes -- the same points -- that he has made to the Galatians already.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 -- he says:

1Th 2:1 You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results.

1Th 2:2 We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

1Th 2:3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.

1Th 2:4 On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts.

1Th 2:5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed -- God is our witness.

1Th 2:6 We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority.

1Th 2:7 Instead, we were like young children among you (innocent). Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,


1Th 2:8 so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

1Th 2:9 Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

1Th 2:10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.

1Th 2:11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,

1Th 2:12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.



We respond and apply by
pleasing the Lord

What is our response to the Word of God? But we say,

“Oh God, I want to live to please you. I want to live for your purpose. I want to live to fulfill your plan. I want you to be central in everything that I do. And I want, Lord, to have that approval of God -- where God would say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’ -- every single day. And definitely at the end of our days, that He would say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’”

That's what we want to do. That's how we want to live.

In **1 John 3:19-24**, it says this:

1Jn 3:19 This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence:

1Jn 3:20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

1Jn 3:21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God

1Jn 3:22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

What is the confidence that we have? Not in our ability to do the right thing -- but in our ability, or in our response to God, to obey what He says. We keep His commands. We say, “Lord, you have your way.” And as we do that, we experience the Lord's pleasure.

1Jn 3:23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

Love God. Love others.

1Jn 3:24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Any confusions? Are you struggling with any confusions about the true gospel?

Go ask the Lord:

“Lord, you have promised your Holy Spirit. You have given your Holy Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit confirm the truth. Let the Holy Spirit guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus with His peace that passes understanding. Let the Holy Spirit bring conviction, confirmation, Oh, and the ability to persevere in this call -- by the strength of God alone.”

Oh, that's what we pray for -- when we hold to that. You see, it's not that we are not susceptible to different gospels. It's not that there aren't all sorts of other voices claiming all sorts of solutions, and seeking to lead us in those ways. The only way that we can stay true -- the only way that we can stay in the path that the Lord has for us -- is if we will say:

“Lord God, I seek to please you. Not all these voices that I'm hearing. Not all these people. I seek to please you.”

And when I do -- by the power of the Holy Spirit -- oh Lord God, what a joy, what a privilege, what a wonderful outcome -- that I get to spend eternity with you.

Challenge for us this morning is not to say, “Oh, the Galatians -- foolish Galatians -- they went after the law. Hmm.” But you know, we're prone to go after some of the other things ourselves.

The biggest issue in the world today is not a lack of knowledge. You can easily find information. You can ask and find sources of information from all sorts of places. The big issue is not the lack of information -- it is the idolatry in our hearts.

We are all meant to worship.

We will worship something or someone. You will either worship God, or you will worship your career, your spouse, your children, your hobby, your whatever. You will worship. You will pursue it. You will give yourself to it. You will spend your resources for it. You will talk to others about it. You will say, “Oh, this is so good.”

And the Bible is making clear that every one of those “different gospels” will draw our hearts away from the Lord Almighty.

Our response to what the Lord has done is to say,

“Lord, I give you all of myself.”

Heavenly Father, we thank you. We praise you. We worship you, Lord, that there is a true gospel. There is a true and living God.

We thank you, Lord, that you have not kept that in some kind of mystery. But rather Lord, you have revealed your plan of salvation. You have made it known.

Father, our confusion comes from the fact that we don't receive it. We don't believe it. We don't accept it. We don't submit to it. But Lord, I pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit, convicted deeply, we would indeed lift ourselves -- lift our hearts, our minds, our voices -- to you.

We would lift our eyes to you. We would submit our spiritual senses to you. And we would say, “Lord God, you help me to walk this out. You help me to live this out. You help me to stay true to the true gospel and not turn away to anything else.”

I thank you, Lord, that when we pray like that, you are absolutely faithful to hear and answer that prayer.

And so Lord, we thank you that we are sustained in the true gospel, Lord, by you. We don't have to be anxious or fearful of whether we will go away -- we just have to look to you, and you sustain us.

We are so grateful. Thank you, Lord.

Let this word continue to resonate in us Lord, all through this week, so that we will, Lord, follow hard after you -- so that our hearts would receive the truth from you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.