

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRUTH
(Transcription from April 27, 2025)
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So, we've been pursuing the topic of truth. This will be the third session in the Truth series. An effort has been made so far, in the first session, to discuss the relationship between that which is divine in the concept of what we call Truth. That was kind of the gist of that whole first session: demonstrating that truth as a particular relationship with God the Father. Truth has a particular relationship with God the Son. And Truth has a particular relationship with God the Holy Spirit.

In particular, the Holy Spirit has become the focus. In one of Jesus sayings, He (the Holy Spirit) became the "Spirit of Truth," and He is the custodian if you will of the presence of eternal Truth in the earth. That was the gist of our first session together.

In the second session, we kind of looked at Truth from the worldly point of view, what truth is. What it's composed of, in terms of the way people in the world perceive the truth. One of the great things that separates us from the full realization of the love of God, and from our relationship to that, is the inability for us to adequately deal with what Truth is. We'll look at a number of venues of human effort that purport to seek and find and (in some cases), even to define truth, the very phenomenon of truth, and work through several areas such as: science, law, politics, and philosophy. But not really in depth in philosophy because virtually every form of philosophy already claims to be the way to truth *or* that there is none. And I wanted to do a quick recap on those three things. Not a recap really but a summary statement on those three or four. And then we'll get into today's topic, which is how we, in particular, as the children of God and how humans generally actually relate to the truth, not so much the defining if you will, but more of how we relate to it.

So, I'm going to be referring back briefly to some notes from our second time together. We can say that scientific truth, supposedly scientific truth as revealed or as required by the thing called the "scientific method," is designed to produce truth *from a material point of view*. Science can't do very well with immaterial things, and it has an ongoing debate with itself, in fact, as to whether the social or so-called soft sciences are legitimately science. Many natural scientists are of the opinion that social sciences are not really science because the things they're looking for are immaterial things. So, the great project if you will of modern social science is to prove the validity of its methods and its findings as over against the definitions that are required in the physical sciences.

But let me summarize a couple of things. In physical sciences or in science, as we typically think of it, we have the requirement of inference by way of cohesion of facts. And by that, I mean, we infer that a thing is at least likely to be true or more particularly, is consistent with the body of existing knowledge because we have produced evidence of a kind that reveals,

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supposedly, facts, new facts, and require that those facts relate according to some rules to pre-existing facts. That's just peeling away down to the core of what natural sciences or physical sciences are. Just plain science as we ordinarily think of it has to "behave" itself. Now, it doesn't deal directly with truth. The main point of the discussion on that was that science doesn't actually (in a pure definition), doesn't actually deal with truth. It deals with providing evidence through things that are called *factual*, said evidence of such nature and quantity as to be persuasive to whomever is seeing the evidence as to what the truth is in a matter, the factual or actual what we call factual or actual truth.

We're looking at something almost certainly more substantial, and that's a big part of what we want to do in continuing to study Truth. In the case of the *legal system*, the legal system is based on the idea that we will infer truth by way of the corroboration of *testimony* to various "facts" on the basis of credible witnesses. Those witnesses will need to speak to the facts at hand and, in their opinions, verify or negate the opinions at hand, the so-called facts. So, in law, we actually ordinarily can think of it as being a *trial of the facts*, not a trial of people, but a trial of the facts in some particular matter wherein there's a dispute between one person and another, or between a person and society at large by way of the legal system. This disputation of facts is supposed to result in the discovery of that which is actually true and upon which decisions can be made.

This discovery of facts doesn't generate Truth as we think of it. It generates an argument that something is probably true and that's all that it can do, but it's not actually finding Truth. There's a linkage here that we haven't gotten into yet. That's the linkage between the content of some fact, the *actual content* of a fact and any truth that that fact might be related to. I have deliberately not done that yet. We'll get to that at a later point.

In the case of politics, I want to quote for you two pretty well-known philosophers from the mid-20th century who were popular in the literary genre of the time. One of those, almost certainly everybody's aware of, was a fellow named George Orwell. George Orwell wrote a series of books, one called *Animal Farm*, one called *1984*. And Orwell was basically a kind of socialist. Not the kind of socialist that we saw emerge in the Soviet Union when socialism took over there. But more of a socialist-by-mutual-consent would have been the philosophy that Orwell had. Now, I don't know that anybody with any of those philosophies thinks through to the logical conclusion. By the way, his real name wasn't Orwell, it was something like, I forget what it was. It was a pseudonym, a *nom de plume*. That was the name we knew him by, George Orwell. He said in one place, "politics makes lies to sound truthful and murder to be respectable." He wasn't very fond of politics. Now, you can't really be a socialist and not like to meddle in politics, but it was a point of view that he was expressing.

Another person from roughly the same time frame was a woman from (I think) Poland, but I'm not 100% sure. She was known a little bit later by her work, a lady named Hanna Arendt. She's been given the nickname, self-hating Jewess. She was a Jewish lady from Europe during the period World War II and all of the holocaust that went on, who at least examined the questions of whether or not the Jewish people had brought the holocaust on themselves. She's very much not popular, wasn't anyway for a long time, among Jewish authorities, but she has an interesting

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take on politics as well. I love this one. She said, “truth and politics are on rather bad terms with each other.” That’s a pretty good summary statement - not getting along well.

And further, one of my favorite quotes related to truth in politics is – I don’t know to whom to attribute this one, is that “truth is the first casualty of politics.” Truth will go first. It will be killed, or have something done to it to neuter it, early on in any political process. I’m trying to avoid getting into a philosophical discussion of politics. One of these days I’m actually going to do that, but I don’t want to do it yet because they probably already know where I am. But they’ll definitely be looking for me when I do that. I don’t really want to feed that particular phenomenon yet.

And then we talked a little bit about *philosophical truth*. And the problem for philosophical truth is it doesn’t know whether its truth that is its subject. But it, at the same time it maintains that a particular philosophical system will yield truth and is the “true system,” or it is, in essence, the truth that someone is looking for. So that again is sort of recapping but also adding to a little bit some summary statements from the last two sessions on Truth.

Now today’s session will go on endlessly. I had enough notes to take up a page on sessions one and two, I have enough notes to take up an entire page just on session three, but it’s probably generally simpler material, and I probably can move through it a bit more efficiently than ordinary. We’re using, as one of our main scripture references, a quotation that Jesus uttered in John 16:13, in which He said “the Spirit of truth will guide you into all the truth” – all The Truth. The Latin language has no definite articles in it. There’s no “the” in Latin, there’s ways to express “the” but it doesn’t really have a definite article. Other languages go to the opposite extreme and they really stress the definite article: English and German are pretty much in that direction. We do accept a little bit of ambiguity but Latin just doesn’t have it. Generally speaking, the Slavic languages don’t. You find the definite article by inference whether or not there’s a “the” in the sentence by inference.

I say that because Greek has a pretty strong emphasis on definite articles, and they make the definite articles do a lot of work in Greek. I’m not sure the exact number of sounds that are used to utter definite articles, but there are quite a few of them in the Greek language; seven, arguably eight cases. And all of those cases have multiple forms (virtually all) have multiple forms of definite articles dependent on the pronoun or whether it’s masculine or feminine, singular or plural, all those kinds of things. So, it’s almost overrun with pronouns, in the writing of New Testament scripture in Greek anyway. And nobody doubts much that the whole of the New Testament was originally written in Greek. Some portions might have borrowed or been partially derived from the Hebrew. And I’m a strong proponent of the fact that we have underestimated the impact of Hebrew on scripture. But it is safe to say, I think, that the Greek version (of NT) has been very significant, if not really the only real source for the modern translations of the Bible. And in the Greek, there are often cases where the definite article is present, and we wouldn’t do it in English. We wouldn’t have the definite article there. We would leave that alone.

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But there's a disagreement among some concerning the particular passage I quoted a moment ago where Jesus said, "the Spirit of truth will lead you into all *the* truth." The definite article "the" is present before the word truth, and it may be read by many as not being present: it's that sort of extraneous definite article. And by others, it is an intended definite article that actually needs to be read into the translation. And you see that verse translated both ways, and it does matter a little bit in terms of your understanding. Will He guide us into *all the truth* or will He simply guide us into *all truth*? I think other passages have to be consulted in order to answer that question. Which is it? We're going to take the point of view in our studies that it is speaking of The Truth in a very definite way. It's not just a matter of a definite article; it's a matter of a very particular noun.

We can, for example, in English say, "the person did this or that or the other," but the person could still be one of a whole lot of other persons. That just happens. You're picking "the person" out of a mass of persons, for example. But, some of us have been in, or are in, marital relationships in which we would say we might use the term "the person" to refer to the only person whose opinion matters – very definite. There isn't anybody else except that particular person. The use of the definite articles here doesn't help us with that that much, but it does at least interject into the Greek form of the scripture the necessity of thinking about whether or not "truth" is very particular in its nature.

There is something that can be called The Truth, and no other thing can be called The Truth. In our common, almost always constant I should say, use of the word truth in dialogue and in written material, we are normally *not* referring to what we will call The Truth. We're talking about the truth in some particular situation, which is the collection of factual ideas about the situation. And that's maybe all there is to it. It is that group of factual ideas. So, for example, in a legal case, in a courtroom, we try the facts that are presented as though they were all individual candidates to be true. And the collection of them when that's over with, collectively they are "the truth" that the legal system says it's looking for. But that's *not The Eternal Truth*. That's some other kind of thing. It may (or may not) be related to the eternal truth.

I'm going to mention something here, and we'll come back to it on another occasion. That's the idea of truth content. If a thing has truth content, that means that it is in some sense, truth adjacent, we don't necessarily know how truthful it is, but it is at least, sort of, we might say, at least in English in the ballpark, it's close to being true: in some of its dimensionality it's true, and other dimensionality maybe not, we're not sure necessarily. So, *truth content* then is a way that I can express whether or not some stream of thought, for example, has in it inherently the capacity to bear actual truth. The things that are factual in their nature either have or do not have truth content, they're presented as though they were true. Facts are presented as though they were true, particularly both in science and in the courts of law based on the necessity of having those things proven to be actual in order to reach a conclusion about whatever matter we happen to be looking into, whether we're trying facts in the case of law or whether we're looking for a new theoretical explanation for a natural phenomenon.

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Anyway, so Jesus said, the “Spirit of truth is going to guide you into all truth.” Now, in another place in John 15, He called the Spirit, the Paraclete, *paracletos* and the paracletos or the Paraclete has this function. He is going to, I believe, let's see, man, I didn't write that one down, but I believe His job is to witness to or bring about the, the testimony of Jesus in the world. So, Truth, the Spirit of Truth, has that function. Or the Holy Spirit has that function as the Spirit of Truth. My perception at this point is that in scripture, Truth is a very specific, complete and absolute body of things. It is probably essentially related to God, by which I mean, it is part of His very essence. Truth is, and it's inseparable from Him. As long as He is consistent, then the Truth is unchanging. So, that leads us then into the realm of human endeavor when it comes to Truth, which is again today's primary topic, because we tend to not see it the same way, that I believe God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit see it. We tend to see truth differently than the Godhead sees Truth. We could say, well, that's a function of our weakness, the function of our inability relative to the capacities of the Godhead. They, the Godhead collectively, being all powerful, all knowing, and the other things we talk about – give them their Latin names, omniscient and omnipotent. The Godhead having those properties then has full, complete 24/7/365 access to everything that The Truth consists of. And in fact, the Godhead seems to have bound itself to The Truth. The Godhead seems to have said when I express something, it is The Truth. In fact, in scripture, we saw, I forget the exact spot, but in one of the prophets, I believe it was God the Father specifically who said “when I speak, I'm speaking The Truth. It's that simple. If I speak, it's the Truth.”

Now, you and I often have an option, or multiple options, available to us with respect to some factual matter. And we not only have – perhaps not in every case – but perhaps we have access to that which is “absolutely true”. But we also have access to all kinds of ways of attempting to express that that might, to an outside observer, appear to be different from the absolute Truth. In other words, there are a number of ways that we can speak about things that are true, that actually maybe have a lot of truth content, but have some dressings that go along with it, of our own choosing, to make it more palatable to ourselves or more palatable to others.

So, a big part of what we want to do is to look at this nature of truth as we handle it, not as God handles it, but as we handle it, that makes it suspect in some cases. When God is handling Truth, He's simply handling that which is eternal. When you or I are handling things that we consider to be true or not true on an ordinary basis, we're not so much dealing with what is eternal as we're dealing with what's present in the here-and-now but should be reliable at least, if not the actual truth, reliable to some reasonable degree. So, we tend to think of truth, when we hear the word truth, we tend to think of it as kind of slippery. It's just a word that we use. We're not 100% sure exactly what we mean by it, or we don't want to consider that. If we think of it in another manner, we might say it's very flexible, it's either slippery or flexible.

The Truth itself and the *core truth content* of some fact in the natural order of things, are not as easy for us as are things in the eternal for the Godhead. Now, if the Spirit of Truth is going to guide you into all The Truth, then He becomes an absolutely reliable source for that which is true. What I'm saying is He doesn't do little white lies or little fibs or little prevarications or little

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one of the other kinds of things we call more minor untruth, and we're going to be spending, on another occasion, we're going to be spending time understanding *untruth* and the reason untruth doesn't stick very well to The Truth.

You, some of you, have heard me say that in the beginning on the very first day of creation in fact, according to scripture, I think it's maybe the second verse, but in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, they were dark and formless and void. And then God said, let there be light and one of the properties of light – and almost everybody agrees with this – is that where light is, darkness loses its power. Darkness never actually has any power relative to light. Darkness is, in fact, the absence of light. So, untruth is a very similar kind of phenomenon. It doesn't have any real being, any real substance in itself. *Untruth is merely the absence of truth.*

If the Godhead: God the Father Almighty, God the Son of God (or God the Son), and God the Holy Spirit have all of The Truth in their possession, let's just say for the moment that They have no untruth. They don't have untruth. It's not a possession of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. They don't have untruth. Anything that they deal with is dealt with from the perspective of absolute Truth, absolute and eternal Truth. Sometimes when we see apparent contradictions in scripture, for example, we allow ourselves to get into pretty significant arguments that we probably would be better to avoid because we see a way to slip something in between somebody's perspective on what is actually The Truth and our own perspective, based not on what the Truth is, but based on some accouterment that has been attached to the Truth in terms of conducting an examination or an argument.

OK. So, when Jesus said, the “Spirit of Truth will lead you into all the truth,” He seems to be leaving us with one or two options. Either, He's speaking to the disciples at the time, just preceding His crucifixion. And we know that the disciples were all by birth, ethnically speaking, they were Jewish. There were disagreements amongst, say, the southern population of Jews centered in Jerusalem and the Galilean population as to whether the Galileans were legitimately Jewish. But that was pretty well settled even though the arguments remained. It was pretty well settled that in fact, the Galileans could prove, most of them could prove, that they were in fact Jewish. Or when Jesus spoke, He was speaking to a crowd that was entirely Jewish. That's all we can actually say about it for the moment. But we do want to make that clear because we're going to look at another passage in a while. At least I hope to get to it, where it's very explicit that He was speaking to a group of people known to the Jews who had believed in Him, that is Jewish believers, not necessarily just the apostles, what we call the apostles, but also any other Jewish believers that were in the vicinity when He was speaking. There were no recognized instances of non-Jewish believers at that point in time. So that's perfectly fine. I only say that because of the arguments that can come up in scripture about whether He was distinguishing between Jewish and non-Jewish believers, He both was and wasn't. That wasn't the point.

OK. Now, if we are to take His word for it, that the “Spirit is going to guide us into all Truth”. And He had a particularly homogeneous group of people to whom He was speaking, not

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necessarily totally homogeneous because you would have Galileans and Judeans for example, but mostly Galileans in the group (maybe entirely Galilean), the question emerges, would they be somehow forced to embrace the Truth, or would they take advantage of the fact that the Spirit would lead them into the Truth? Do we embrace the Truth by coercion, or do we embrace the Truth because it's a desirable thing to embrace? That's actually not an unreasonable question. If we are going to be *required* to embrace the Truth, then we're going to fairly quickly be producing rules, laws and norms, not real norms. And we won't get to that actually in this series. But a norm is a thing that is attached to the Truth, the eternal truth. Norms, in my opinion, actual real, actual norms are that which is *actually normal in absolute sense* or properties of the eternal Truth, not to our made-up truths. But we'll cover part of that later. *If we are going to embrace the Truth, will it be because we choose to embrace the Truth, or will it be because someone is forcing us to do so?*

Now, I don't think that Jesus ever intended for us to understand that we would be forced into the Truth. That this guy, this helper, this Paraclete, this counselor would provide some kind of enablement to us along the way *to be able to begin to draw into and embrace the Truth*.

Now, here is a fundamental human problem: *Truth is sometimes offensive to us*. For a variety of different kinds of reasons, Truth may be quite offensive. People often don't want to believe a thing because the thing that they need to decide about is so potentially harmful to them.

We had a phenomenon – I think you are probably all aware of it back in the fifties and sixties. It was kind of one of those, the-sky-is-falling kind of things. The Russians are coming; the Russians are coming! Well, they weren't really coming here at the time, but it was a scare-tactic. It was designed as part of an overall large scale propaganda war that was going on generally in the west, particularly in the United States having to do with the political climate of the times. And if people had actually seen Russian soldiers in the streets, they wouldn't have known what to do. They were taking some time for that fact to actually penetrate their consciousness.

You all can probably relate to the phenomenon called the fire drill. Having been all of my adult life associated with educational institutions. I went through a lot of fire drills. Suddenly they would have to test the fire drill system, and it was a requirement. They didn't get away with not doing it and like, did the things that caused people to react as though there was a fire, even though virtually everybody didn't believe there was a fire. Almost nobody ever believed it. I don't think more than three or four times in my whole academic career I ever even left my desk during a fire drill. I just assumed, like most people did, that if there were a fire, I would soon smell it, and I could get out of the building. I knew where the exits were. We never actually had a fire. Now when we had a bomb drill that was different, they came and found you and made you go outside when there was a bomb threat. But we didn't really have drills for that. We just assumed that it was happening. But somebody might be calling in a bomb threat because they were about to have a final exam they hadn't studied for, that kind of thing. “There's a bomb in the building” disrupts everybody. So, they didn't have to take the exam that they didn't want to take.

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But there are times and situations where Truth is offensive to us because we disagree, not because of the factual nature of a fire in the building, but because it's something that we find that we disagree with. One of the controversies between the Roman Catholic church and Western, what we call Protestant evangelical churches, by definition is the issue of transubstantiation. Yeah, transubstantiation, not consubstantiation, no, transubstantiation in the taking of, it's called the Eucharist or communion, or the Lord's Supper, a variety of different things. And in the doctrine of transubstantiation, at the moment of the consumption, or at the moment of the priest's blessing, I suppose that might have varied. I don't know, I lost some facts there, the bread and wine were actually at least temporarily converted into actual body and blood of Christ. And that's what made it have the salience that it had in terms of the recognition or declaration of redemption. Generally, in the non-Catholic Western churches, people have held that "no, it really is purely symbolic." Philosophically by the way, you can just get yourself tied up in knots trying to work that out. That's not a good venture to engage in. But, if we believe that it is the actual substance, then we will think differently about it than if we don't. And if someone says to us, well, that's not really Jesus's body, but we believe in transubstantiation, then that becomes an offense. That person's statement becomes an offense to us. It's offensive to us because it's an offense, essentially a blasphemy, uttered against the person of the Christ.

One of the areas that we will always, I assume at least all of my life, I've seen it and I assume it will go on yet perhaps until the end of things, is that *we have formed a wide variety of different approaches to what The Truth is and how to embrace The Truth that exclude the Holy Spirit for all practical purposes*. And this is kind of the key point here. If He is the one who will guide us into all Truth, then how is it that we will approach all Truth and embrace it in the absence of some realization of who He is? How is it that we would claim access to all The Truth and discount the activity of the Holy Spirit? One might say, "well, the Holy Spirit was kind of involved at the beginning in the launching of things, but then He's kind of turned all that over to other folks." There's no particular reason for the Spirit to have done that. You can't find a reason in scripture for the Spirit of the living God to turn over something as important as Truth to vessels of untruth. And we are vessels of untruth sometimes, and that wouldn't work out very well.

So, I'm going to take the position here that we will not actually approach very near to The Truth in the absence of having the Holy Spirit as our guide to The Truth. And I'm not referring to this in some ethereal manner in which there's a formulation, a formulated magical spell that gets it all done in any language whatsoever. I don't really mean to be terribly offensive by saying that, but some of you are more sensitive to what I just said than others. I'm quite certain of that, not, you know, hopefully not in a negative way. So, we are going to go forward from here, go ahead and embrace in its fullness the statement that "the Spirit of Truth is going to guide us into all Truth." I'm going to add to that "and is already doing so." If He's not already doing so, then we haven't embraced any of the Truth yet. Well, obviously, it is an action, it is a form of thing that is, a form of something that is already underway.

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Last time, I think last time we were together, I mentioned the fact that the Book of Acts is often called the Acts of the Apostles, (actually, I didn't with this group, sorry). But an older name that was associated with this book was the Acts of the Holy Spirit. That particular approach says to us that the Holy Spirit is what's being reported on, is Who is being reported upon in the Book of Acts because He is the power. The Apostles were the vessels, the tools, but the Spirit Himself is the power that's in question. And that's a point of view thing. I don't want to try to build a doctrine. That's just worthy of us to think about because it is not the apostles who produced the fruits of the Spirit. It's not the apostles who produced the gifts of the Spirit. It was the Spirit Himself.

OK. Now, if the Holy Spirit is kind of in charge of this entire project that is bringing us to all Truth, then what is our actual relationship to the Truth to which He's bringing us? Is that relationship a very normative relationship? Like it just is what it is or, is it a more practical relationship? I'm asking you a question that I've already asked but looking at it in a different manner.

So, I want to talk about that for a minute, the normative aspects of the Truth having to do with norms which are normal. From the standpoint of the standards, the *divine standards*, the standards of the Godhead simply say what it is. This is it. Nothing else is it. This is it. In one place, Jesus said that the *logos* was the Truth. In another place He said that He was the *logos*, which is often how people pronounce that. And both statements are true. They're pointing to a complex idea of interrelations between phenomena and dynamics within the Godhead in the eternal as experienced by you and me, whatever experience we have with these things to date has been in the creation. We were born first of water and secondly of Spirit. Our having been born of water is a birth that's temporary in its nature, but very present in its circumstance. Our having been born of Spirit is eternal in its nature, but it's more ethereal to us because it is not of the material of the natural, right? So, one of the human problems is that the exigencies of life in the flesh are ever present, screaming to get our attention. And the realities, the substantial realities, of the eternal aren't competing with that. They are something else. They are of another kind altogether. And in fact, God the Father Almighty is looking for those who will withstand, or push aside, or bring under control their reactions to the exigencies of the flesh and embrace the normative nature of the Truth. One of the normative things in Truth is: God is unchanging. He just won't change.

I'm looking at the names on the screen in front of me. I don't think any of you have ever done this very much. But I'm often amazed that people come to me and say, I want to do, or I'm interested in this particular thing, and I know what the Bible says, but. . . Well, the "but" means we're about to take the argument out of the normative aspects of the Truth and to do something to the Truth, that'll make it some other truth that will enable us to feel that we have permission to do the thing that we want to do.

And I've even had not in the too distant past a person say to me, well, it was just simply what I wanted to do. Often what we want to do is an irrelevancy, but sometimes what we want to do is not consistent with the Truth. And that's when, of course, the human condition is manifesting

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itself. And we have then the very practical question, not normative at all; the very practical question of how to reconcile being a human being inside the creation where we negotiate virtually everything and being a son of God within the context of the eternal. Well, we don't really negotiate. We don't. You can attempt to negotiate with God, but you're negotiating with yourself at best. If you do that, He's not interested in what you have to offer in your efforts to talk Him into getting it, having it your own way. He's not interested in your offers. They're not much good.

In Leviticus 23 for example, trying to maybe move through this fairly quickly, in Leviticus 23 we have a whole list of celebrations that God was announcing to the Jewish (actually Hebrew) people. By way of Levitical practice, He was providing them with liturgy that wasn't Catholic liturgy. It wasn't Protestant liturgy. It wasn't any liturgy that we would currently recognize that you and I have been exposed to, but it was still liturgy. It was a liturgy because the people would not embrace Him at Sinai. But He was going to have a particular people in the world regardless.

And so, in order that they be recognizable, He gave them liturgy, and that liturgy was what we call the Aaronic or the Levitical code, all of those 600, whatever it is, 613, I think, *mitzvaot* commandments. And among those Moses was laying out for the people what God was actually dictating to Moses, what to tell them about things like Sabbath, New Moons, and so forth, and so on. So, if you read through Leviticus 23 you'll see a catalog of instances that the Lord was speaking, giving to the Jewish population, the Hebrew population, in the desert, things that *if* they would do them, they would bear the marks of being His people. And they would do these things – *en masse* – all of them, all the males above a certain age in particular, but all of them together. And then as it turned out, they eventually made these observances primarily in Jerusalem in the context of the temple, after the temple was built. For a while it wasn't quite that centralized and formalized. But it was nonetheless, eventually, a very prescribed group of liturgical elements for each of these different holidays, different days, even sometimes within any given holiday. We often criticize, in fact, there's a passage in Isaiah, Isaiah 1:13-14, where God said, “you know, I don't like *your* Sabbaths, and I don't like *your* new moons. And I don't like these, this festival and that festival” – appearing to contradict Himself. He gave it to them back in Leviticus. Why is He now telling them He doesn't like it? The answer must simply be what it almost seems apparent to be, that it's the stuff they added on, the way they went about it. It was their way of softening it or making it more palatable to themselves.

So, they added many regulations to these celebrations that the Lord provided for them to mark their peculiarity as a people and then they became just as zealous about the added-on regulations as they might have been about what God was attempting to establish among them to begin with. They then had taken something like the Sabbath and turned it into *their Sabbath* as a thing that they did to provide to God rather than God providing it to them as it was originally given. They were only to celebrate it, not to offer it necessarily to God. And there were elements that were offerings, but the thing itself was for them, not for Him. He knew about Sabbaths and He knew about new moons. He's the one that created the moon. At least they didn't have to do anything particular to call His attention to that.

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So, we have this tendency to take *a truth* and run with it in more conservative veins of politics, religion, social philosophy and so forth. We have a tendency to take the fairly fixed form of the written word. In politics these days and in legal politics that talk about justices, supreme court justices as being strict interpreters versus more liberal interpreters. Do they stick necessarily to the letter of the law, or do they make up a new meaning for the law to suit some case? Human beings then relate to the Truth; however, they choose to relate to the Truth. And we think of the Truth in much broader terms than was given to us originally. And in fact, we disagree about the Truth often amongst ourselves.

Much of the trouble in the world is a function of national governments, in particular, disagreeing about the content of Truth, disagreeing about something that anyway, has some bearing on what is true, what is not true. Jesus solves this problem, but He does it in a way that places no particular requirements on humans.

In John 8:31-32, He says to the Jews who had believed Him, that is, to His Jewish disciples, Jesus said, “if you hold to my teaching, then you are really my disciples. And if you're really my disciples, then you're going to know the Truth and the Truth will set you free” – “or you can sing songs and burn things and get free that way.” No, he didn't say that part. You see what I'm getting at. We take a lot of liberty with what is purported to be the freedom that He was talking about, but to be His disciples doesn't include a lot of the stuff that is included in our religious ceremonies, our liturgies, or in our social activities or discourse.

I've been known to say, and I'll repeat it now, that most of the practice of the modern Christian church, most of the actual practices that we do, not the reasons for them, but the practices, are found in the seventh chapter of the book of Ephesians. For the scholars among you, Ephesians only has six chapters. OK. Just so you don't have to go look that up and find out what I'm talking about.

All right. Now, there are different ways that we're going to engage in fixing The Truth. We have got to fix it because it isn't what we want it to be in many instances. And so, I want to just kind of quickly go through some of those things. First of all, though, before we get into it, I need to reiterate something I said earlier, we are interested in The Truth. Human beings very frequently mention the truth. We say things like, “well, to tell you the truth.” Rarely has anyone ever said to me, “Well, to lie to you,” we don't do that. We'll say, “well to tell you the truth or, if the truth be known, or in truth,” or you know, those kinds of terms, stressing the proposed at least, veracity, of what we're about to say or show. We want to be believed, sometimes wanting to be believed is a process that comes about because we know that if we're not believed, we're going to be in trouble and sometimes we just plain want to be believed. We want to be considered to be persons who are influenced by truth.

So, if we have these conflicts I've been talking about like, the Truth is inconvenient to me. . . I think a pretty prominent American politician wrote a book a number of years ago called *An Inconvenient Truth*, having to do with climatological change. And that's going on now for quite
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some time since he wrote that book. And there's still a whole lot of debate about what in the world it is that is going on that is being called climate change. Now, you can take a position however you want to take a position on that. But your position is probably going to be influenced by what you want the truth to be as opposed to what the truth might actually be with respect to this very important, on the one hand, and yet not very eternal phenomenon.

So, we are, in essence, often having enough disagreement about Truth between and among ourselves that we want to get involved in some method to work out the difficulties that are related to the disagreement. We want to find the truth, and, sometimes, we don't really want to find it. We just stumble across it, and it's inconvenient. We just kind of stumble over it like if my dad told me when I was a boy, my dad said, "I want you to go put that pick up that garden hose out there on the front sidewalk." (Trying to remember whether we ever had a front sidewalk. Not sure we did, it doesn't matter.) Then he walked out there in the evening after it was dark, and he stumbled over that hose, he would jump to the conclusion that I didn't put the hose up, and that would probably be true *in the absence of any further investigation*. He would probably be right that I didn't put the hose up. Good chance I didn't. But anyway, that's another matter.

We have this kind of almost touchy-feely aspect because we have to deal with Truth in this very limited and broken creation in which we live. So, we are often going to accidentally find things out anyway. Like when Isaac Newton had the apple fall and bonk him on the head, I don't think his intention in sitting under the apple tree that day was that an apple fall and bonk him so he could figure out gravity. Or when, was it Archimedes(?), who jumped into his bathtub one day, and discovered that the water rose and he ran through town naked and said, "I found it, I found it," speaking of the principle of buoyancy. You know, those were *accidental* findings for people that were really looking for and asking substantial questions, but the findings themselves were accidental.

But usually if we're looking for truth, we have some purpose in finding the truth. I've listed six different methods of grappling with what truth is *in the natural order of things*, the non-eternal natural order of truth. One method of doing that is to take something that we know and try to make it into something that we wish it was. I call it bending the truth. Probably, I did that. I don't know for sure. But I don't know if I was smart enough. Then probably at some point in time and dealing with, more likely my mother than my father, I knew that I was in trouble, and I thought that I could maybe get away with taking something that was true and *modifying* it in a manner that made my behavior more acceptable, more reasonable under the circumstances. I knew that the truth would be found out probably sooner or later, but I wasn't interested in dealing with the whole thing right then and there. I might bend it just a little bit, modify it.

Now, sometimes one of us might create a truth. There's this truth. And I want you to believe me about this thing. And there may not be any basis for you believing me. So, I will have to create a scenario, create an argument out of whole cloth that suits the truth, suits the thing I want you to believe. We may take a truth from one place and apply it in another place, you know, metaphors are slippery little rascals because metaphors can be inappropriately used in discussion and trying

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to prove or demonstrate something. We often use a metaphor because it's easier to understand theoretically. But we use it *incorrectly sometimes on purpose, sometimes not*. There's a term, mixing metaphors. It has to do with people taking elements of things, borrowing elements of different things, and putting them together in a new configuration.

A common method for dealing with truth in political systems is the imposition of truth. The system may simply impose truth. "It's the truth because we said it was." Unfortunately, we as parents sometimes do something like that. "Well, I said so that's what makes it the truth." Or, "I am your mother. I'm your father. I said it. Therefore, it's the truth." That's an imposing of the truth most of the time and examples like the ones I was just giving, that's not a very dangerous thing, and we can even make excuses for it like, "the kid wouldn't understand what I was talking about, so I had to put it in terms the child could understand and in the process, I might mess it up just a little bit," but we don't worry about that. We find truth that is useful, and we not only impose it, but we enforce it. In totalitarian systems, the governing bodies or person find it necessary to provide at least a modicum of persuasion, for a course of action that they desire to take. And so, they say to people "here is a truth and you can either embrace it or we've got a special place you can go live with other people who didn't embrace it."

Well, I think scripturally, I think of Babel, you know, the people, it says, decided among themselves, "let's build a tower. We'll build a really high tower, and we will mark our presence in the world. This God fellow has told us to spread out, and we don't want to spread out. We're going to, not only are we going to just stay where we are, we're going to collectivize staying where we are." You have to believe, I hope you believe as I do, that some of the folks weren't that crazy about that idea. What happened to the ones that weren't that crazy about that idea? Well, they took a magic pill and changed their mind, right? No, of course not. We had to have a way to get the tower built. We had to have a way of getting most of the people to believe the idea – well enough – that we were doing it for their welfare to protect them from the lions and tigers and bears, that they would encounter if they went out into the world.

One of my favorite ones, the last one I'm going to mention, is repeating the truth or, actually repeating a lie until it sounds like the truth. That's seems to me to be fairly political also. Sometimes, you know, we're looking for a way of selling an idea politically, and we come up with something that's not actually true. And then we find that we're stuck with it. We have to keep saying it because if we back up, say "I lied to you," we just lost the political battle. So, we continue to repeat the lie. Sometimes that actually works and sometimes it fails. Ultimately, it always fails because the truth always shows up eventually and overturns this figment of truth.

Now, each of these forms of producing human truth is at variance with The Truth to some degree. In some qualitative way, it's at variance with the actual Truth. It would appear to me that it would behoove the Almighty in creating The Truth, and in seeking sons whom his Spirit would lead to The Truth, that He would have already settled all the issues before that began. So, when we engage in any of these kinds of activities, I just enumerated, we're in essence saying to Him, "we didn't like your solutions very well. So, we're going to offer you a different one." Yeah, that's not

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necessarily a function of overt rebellion. Sometimes it's a function of ignorance. Sometimes it's the function of what I might call *foot stomping*. I have spoken with people who said to me, "God must not like me very much, or God must be mad at me, or God must be deaf because He's not doing what I expect Him to do in the moment." Whatever the reasons, whatever the motivations, whatever the underlying feelings and everything that is going on, they're basically saying if the truth is that God isn't doing this thing, then "He must be wrong, and I want to fix that. I want to help Him."

You ever try to help God? Oh, you did, come on, you've tried to help Him before. There was an occasion on which He said, "I want you to take this particular course of action." And you said, "I like this other one better. Let's go there instead. It's close, it's almost the same thing. So, it must be all right to do it that way." You know, He probably has in His will for you, He probably has plenty of provision for everything needful. And we often fear that He's not going to provide what we need. And so, we try to help Him, get that all fixed up, snuffed up and squared away.

I want to speak briefly to a phenomenon that we've been hearing particularly, but not only, in the political realm in recent years, it's become a byword of political resistance, and I'll clarify, I hope, what I mean by political resistance here. This byword is, *speaking truth to power*. It's become a phrase that's often used by people who are in disagreement with the recognized government. And the implication of it is very interesting to me and that is that the recognized government doesn't know The Truth, that the exercise of power by the existent government results in its inability to know what Truth is. Now, that might not be far from correct. You know, it's not the point, the assumption is because you're not in power, you have full access to The Truth, or whatever you say is The Truth. That assumption is an arrogance of very high order. And it's true, it doesn't matter where you are in a political spectrum, where you are in the world, where you are in some particular political debate.

But that's not the point at all. In this statement, if you take the position or adopt the position or stumble across and then adopt the position, "I'm going to speak truth to power." You really need to know where this truth that you're going to speak is coming from. Otherwise, you'll be trapped in rebellion against some authority, whether we like it or not. Now, this is by way of an example, largely now, whether we like it or not, the Spirit of the scripture actually instructs us to recognize authorities and to recognize that *whatever authorities there are, are appointed by God* for our welfare. We may not recognize it all the time. Now you get in, then we get into debates about legitimate authorities and non-legitimate authorities and all those kinds of hair-splitting things where there's no definition at all. No, there can't be any, any agreement on what we're, what we're agreeing, what we're talking about or disagreeing about to begin with. When we *speak truth to power*, we may actually be engaging The Truth, but there's a really good chance we're engaging the word "truth" because truth is so attractive to human beings. And we believe by saying "truth," we make a thing truth. Again, I reiterate, we can't make a thing true by simply saying it's true. It's only true if it comports itself with The Truth. If it does not comport itself with The Truth, then it's not true. If it's not true, then it is an untruth. And it is as darkness is to light, as far as the truth is concerned, as darkness is to light. So is untruth to The Truth. In both cases, the problem is the light will prevail, and the truth will prevail – maybe not immediately. When

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there is darkness, the light doesn't prevail until we bring the light into the place where the darkness is, where The Truth does not prevail and untruth does prevail, then untruth will continue to prevail until Truth is brought into the environment where the untruth is. But as soon as the light comes into the environment of darkness, and the truth comes into the environment of untruth, then that which is eternal triumphs.

When the light comes, when the truth comes, and here I'm practically making them the same thing for emphasis, when they come, the obligation of the sons of God is to be aligned with The Truth and aligned with the light, or we will be blinded by the coming of the light and swept away with the fleeing untruth because the untruth flees away when the truth comes. Yeah, it looks like that doesn't always happen so well in the world. In the world it isn't always true because we're trying to split hairs about something that is actually always true because the truth is The Truth is always The Truth.

The truth about The Truth is that The Truth is The Truth.

It is not subject to our perceptions of it, or our efforts to fix it. And I want to submit to you that as saints, as sons of God, we often believe that we're going to fix The Truth by trying to make it more palatable to someone who doesn't want to believe it.

Paul did say, "I've become all things to all men so that I can win some of them. By all means." Paul said that, but he wasn't talking about lying to them. He was talking about getting out and building tents with them, or some other more ordinary thing. He didn't adopt – he refuted. He said to the Athenians. You know, you guys are real sensitive about gods around here. You even got a god you called the "unknown god." Let me tell you that unknown God is the only God. The rest of them are your attempts, in essence, to leave yourselves frustrated by not being able to find the unknown God. Now think about that. They've got a statue or shrine to an unknown god in case they omitted the actual God. That is how bizarre it was.

Paul didn't cut them a break. "So, you guys are really religious. You got all these statues to all these gods. You must be reaching out to the eternal in some manner, must have some sensitivity to it. Let me tell you, I saw one that says this is a shrine to the unknown god. I'm going to tell you the God about whom I'm speaking is the unknown god because you don't know Him. He's unknown to you because you don't know Him. Let me tell you who He is," and he fixed their untruth by producing for them The Truth. I just about got off on a tangent.

We're going to, in a later session, take a modest amount of time to really get deeply into the concept of worldview. We use the term worldview a lot. And another term we use related to it is perspective, and we'll get into those because it's important to understand that these fellows in Athens had a worldview that was essentially very nearly pantheist. It wasn't quite, they had emerged from a kind of pantheistic system into a more well-ordered polytheistic system, and the differences are just matters of definition, number of gods involved basically. The fact of the matter is they were still looking for the Almighty, the fact that mattered in Athens, because they were still looking for the Almighty. They didn't see that as their problem. What they saw was

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they were hedging their bets. You've had it said to you. I'm almost certain someone has said to you, "I believe, but, wow, you're taking this too far," you know, or something like that, "I believe but," It's pretty much a statement of unbelief.

Ok. Now I'm going to wrap this up by just pointing out, well, a couple of things really, there's a couple more major points. In the world today, the world that you and I know, there appears to be, particularly in Western society, there appears to be a general philosophy of "scream it loud enough and it will be The Truth." If you scream it loud enough, nobody can hear anything else, and they'll believe you and therefore it will be The Truth. Well, yeah, it kind of seems to be the way things are.

There's an awareness, and the awareness has always been with us, but it's not necessarily always very clear cut. In fact, there's a lot of very unfortunate history around the idea of things that are extra natural, for example of a phenomenon known as the near-death experience. Some research has been done in people reporting near-death experiences. Well, the vast majority of us, most of the time, we will say, if we hear that someone had a near-death experience, we will say they're either exaggerating, or they're deluded in some manner. But that's merely the statement that there was an extra natural phenomenon. They may be lying. They may have made it up, they may be deluded, but there's always a possibility that something happened that can't be explained in terms of the ordinary natural phenomenon and that particular kind of thing, is being discussed. Let's just say it that way. It's hard to do research on that. But all you got is somebody has reported on a near death experience, and you say, do you know anybody else that had one of those? And they say yes, and you talk to them when you talk about this, and you keep talking to people that have reported near death experiences, hoping you'll find a thread, then you produce the thread, and it still isn't scientific, not scientific because it's extra natural.

So, there are extra natural phenomena that are hushed or so strongly condemned in public discussion that you don't hear about them very much. A whole lot of the stuff that comes up with extra natural truth really is probably hooey. Is that a good technical term? Hooey? A lot of it is probably just hooey, but, you know, you can't do anything about that because you can't prove the thing, or you can't prove it one way or the other. It cannot be proven scientifically speaking as I'd like.

Now, what I would like you to do, and I don't really mean this, but it's an interesting thing to do is to go start looking at the definitions of words, like real and reality and actual and actual and factual and fact and factuality, and you just run around. So, there's just an open-endedness to trying to talk about these things that are considered important in the natural creation. If you look up and start trying to figure out what really is going on in the definition of fact, for example, you'll find all kinds of things about, in essence, you come along with the feeling of the facts, the facts because somebody said it was a fact. That's the way the law works. It's a fact, and, until it can be refuted in court, anybody can say anything. And it's a fact that until it can be refuted in court - it may not ever make it to court because it's so outrageous. This is the kind of flaccidity with which we treat Truth. We treat it as though it were a very useful tool as opposed to a standard of life, a standard of being.