

The God of Truth

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[0:00] What are ways in which we lie? This is a question for your response. What are ways in which we can lie?

! The way we live. How is it that we can lie by the way we live? Very good. We say one thing and do something else. That's a lie.

What other cases would the fact that they asked you a question and say you're coming up saying you don't want to do it? You say you're going to do something and you don't want to do it.

Well I don't know it's wrong to say you're going to do something when you don't want to do it, but it's wrong to say you want to do it maybe when you don't. Yes. Yes. Okay, good. Mike.

We can act one way and think another. Act one way and think another. We're hypocrites aren't we?

What else? Okay, telling half truths, leaving information out, which is critical for the full truth to be known. Exaggerating. I always, or you always, you never. I never do that.

[1:18] Any other ways? Well this is what we are, isn't it? We ourselves are liars. We live amongst liars. We breathe the air of liars. We even catch family and our most trusted friends and lies and half truths.

This is just the environment we live in. And against this backdrop, God declares himself to be the God of truth.

Just let that sink in for a minute. The God of truth. Think of how many times in the last week you've caught yourself in lies of one form or another through the many ways we've just described.

And our God is a God of truth. And our God is a God of truth. Think about your politicians. No, let's not. But just the amount of lies that are just hitting us every day from everyone, from every source, from those we want to trust and we cannot.

And our God declares that he is the God of truth. Well this morning we're going to be proceeding to consider chapter 11 of J.I. Packer's book, Knowing God, with the title of the chapter, Thy Word is Truth.

[2:45] And I want to proceed under two main heads. Very simply, man's relationship with the God of truth. And then important categories of God's truth.

So first, man's relationship with the God of truth. And under this head we will have four very simple steps. First, God is truth. Second, the God of truth is spoken.

Thirdly, man has rebelled against the God of truth. And then fourthly, God has saved man by awakening his soul to the truth. So first, God is truth.

Please turn to Hebrews 6.18. Hebrews 6.18.

God is truth in his very essence. Psalm 31.5 says, Into your hands I commit my spirit. Redeem ye, O Lord, the God of truth.

[3:50] And Isaiah echoes the same thing when he says in Isaiah 65.16, Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth.

He who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth. What does it mean for our God to be the God of truth?

Well, it means that he does not lie. That he does not tell half-truths. Titus encourages us with reminder in Titus 1.2, A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

I began this lesson by considering what we are. Because again, in living with ourselves and humanity, we breathe the air of deceitfulness every day.

And as such, we have a very difficult time getting our hands around a person who is in his very nature, in his very essence, truth. And is this not why God declared in Numbers 23.19, God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind.

Which is to say that the God of truth is perfectly faithful. When God passed before Moses and he described the essence of who he was, what did he choose in just a very few number of words to describe himself as?

A very concise statement about who he is. And he threw in there, he is the God who is faithful. He does what he says. He is the God of truth. For great is your love, higher than the heavens.

[6:24] God did this so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us, may be greatly encouraged.

That the rest of the leaves will not perish for that everlasting life. So if he's not true, then I'm sunk forever. Amen. Very good.

Anyone? I mean, how do you know they're faithful? What's caused you to come to that conclusion? Pardon? They've never been unfaithful.

But somebody can be faithful. They can be truthful. But until they declare something, until they promise something, and then fulfill it, we don't know that that's their character, do we?

So instead, he has it written down and sealed so that we now have his truth, the faithful one who is truth, in our very hands that we can go to as often as we'd like.

[9:15] And he testifies to the divine origin of that book. And this lesson isn't an apologetic on the faithfulness of the Word of God, but just a few verses.

Or 2 Timothy 3.16 All Scripture, all Scripture, is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Or Proverbs 35, Every word of God is flawless.

2 Samuel 7.28 O sovereign Lord, You are God, Your words are trustworthy. Jesus in his prayer for us, for his disciples in John 17.17, sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth.

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He's spoken to enable us to know him so that we may love him. And Packer goes on and says, It comes to woo us as well as to instruct us.

It not merely puts us in the picture of what God has done and is doing, but also calls us into personal communion with the loving Lord himself.

It's only fitting, then, that we should respond to the word of truth from the God of truth with unwavering obedience and submission. Packer goes on to say, Always it is stressed that the claim of the word of God upon us is absolute.

The word is to be revealed, I'm sorry, the word is to be received, trusted, and obeyed because it is the word of God, the king. So thus far we've seen God is truth.

[11:44] The God of truth has spoken. And now thirdly, man has rebelled against the God of truth. At his core, what is man's problem?

Well, we say he's a sinner. Yes. But what's the root of sin? Is it not rebellion against our God?

And how do we rebel against another? Is it not to rebel against their word? One definition of rebellion states, An act or a show of defiance toward an authority or established convention.

How is rebellion manifested? By setting one's own will above the will of his master. And this is accomplished through rejecting of the words of one sovereign. So we hear this spoken in Jeremiah 13:10 from God himself, These wicked people who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts, and go after other gods to serve and worship them.

The essence of rebellion is the refusal to hear and obey God's word. Stated simply, one's allegiance is revealed by what one does with God's word.

[13:06] Please turn to Romans 1:17. Romans 1:17. Romans 1 contrasts the righteous with the wicked at this very point.

And we see in Romans 1:17 and 18, For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. On the one hand, we have the righteous.

And they love God. They live for him. They embrace the truth. And they therefore allow it to control their lives. On the other hand, you have the wicked.

And those are the ones we see in this passage that suppress the truth. How? Well, by their wickedness. Notice that living wickedly is synonymous with suppressing the truth.

[14:12] Living in a way that ignores God's truth. And in so doing, I'm declaring through my lifestyle that I do not believe or accept God's word as truth. But praise be to God that part of his saving work in the heart of a rebel is to awaken that believer's soul to the truth.

So we've seen one, God is truth. Two, the God of truth is spoken. Three, man has rebelled against the God of truth. And now, fourth and lastly, God saves man by awakening his soul to the truth.

A dramatic change occurs in the heart of every sinner whom God chooses to save. And the touchstone of that change is measured through his response to the word of truth.

Isaiah 66:2. This is the one I esteem, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. Packer states, he is a man without reserve to the word of God written in the scripture of truth, believing the teaching, trusting the promises, following the commands.

He goes on, the word of God has both convinced him of sin and assured him of forgiveness. In short, a rebel's been transformed from a hater of God to a child of God who now loves God and God's law.

[15:44] The psalmist gushes, oh, how I love your law. I meditate on it all day long. Well, the believer's new love for the law of God, his submission to that law is going to affect every aspect of his life.

And so in the second half the lesson today, I want to look at important categories of God's truth.

The God of truth has shared that truth with man and awakens the souls of his elect to love and to hunger that truth.

What are the important categories of truth that God has shared with man and how should they be affecting us? Firstly, important facts about history.

What's the first question instinctively young parents that every child asks? You don't have to be a young parent. Where did I come from?

Well, God tells us. God puts context around where we are. God informs us that he created all things.

[17:00] We learn that man rebelled against his creator which resulted in the entrance of sin and evil into this world. God then responded by cursing the world.

And thus, we now have pain, we have suffering, we toil, there is sin in the world. Without this context, we could come to some very wrong ideas about God.

And in fact, many have. Those who mock religion, those who, for one reason or another, have chosen to reject what the Bible says. Maybe they don't even know what the Bible says.

But not only does God, the God of truth, give us correct context to understand the source of evil and suffering, he informs us of another amazing fact.

That all events in this world, this sin, cursed world, are still under the sovereign control of the word of God. The rise and fall of nations in Jeremiah 1.10.

[18:06] Even the changes of the weather. In other words, God hasn't advocated his throne. What God says still goes. For the Lord Almighty is purposed and who can thwart him?

His hand is stretched out and who can turn it back? So that gives us the context, the important facts about history. But then secondly, he gives us essential facts about ourselves, essential facts about man.

The world's always been filled with philosophers and psychiatrists and psychologists. And as with any science, we can learn much good things from it so long as it becomes subordinated to the word of truth.

But God's commands require no clinical testing. They simply and plainly tell us the unchanging truth about our own nature. They tell us what we are, what we're made of.

They inform us of what man has become because of our choice of rebellion. They teach us how to be truly human. And they warn against moral self-destruction.

[19:15] Packer uses the human body as an analogy. He talks about how our bodies are machines and depending upon how we treat that body, it will either remain healthy, if we exercise, if we take in the right diet, we get the right nutrition, or it will run down and eventually break down in death.

And he says our human souls are very much the same way. If they get the wrong fuel, are abused and not maintained properly, they will begin to run down and eventually seize up.

Well, our souls were also made to run on certain practices such as worship, law-keeping, truthfulness, honesty, discipline, self-control, service to God and our fellow man.

When we begin cutting our souls off from some of these practices, one's character will begin to disintegrate, which will manifest itself through a loss of conscience, through a loss of shame, through a loss of truthfulness.

We'll lose being loyal, we'll cease to be honest. In a word, we steadily become dehumanized.

[20:27] Richard Baxter said that there are only two alternatives of humanity, saint or brute. He says, sexual laxity does not make you more of a man, but less so.

It brutalizes you and tears your soul to pieces. The same is true wherever any of God's commandments are disregarded. We are only living true human lives just so far as we are laboring to keep God's commandment.

No further. So can we see the incredible blessing that God's commandments are? Our societies become crazed with naturalists, with vitamins, with all these things to try to make us healthy.

Returning to Packer's illustration. Can you imagine how big of a bestseller it would be if somebody could write a book that actually had everything you possibly needed to know for your body to run the best it could run in this world?

And you knew that every single word in that book was absolute truth. Well, God has given that to us for our soul. God, through his word of truth, has told us everything we need to know for our souls to run optimally if we would just obey his commands.

[21:50] Thirdly, the word of truth provides the foundation for one's beliefs and convictions. Please turn to Psalm 119.5. What is conscience? Well, it's a gift from God that warns us when we're pursuing a path contrary to what we believe to be true.

What we believe to be true is the key to that statement. For by developing wrong beliefs, one's conscience can actually mislead us. It's for this reason that our conscience is to be held captive to the word of God.

Look at Psalm 119.5. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees. Jump down to verse 10.

I seek you with all my heart. Do not let me stray from your commands. Look at verse 26. I recounted my ways and you answered me.

Teach me your decrees. Jump down to verse 36. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

[23:04] And finally, verse 80. May my heart be blameless toward your decrees that I may not be put to shame.

Our convictions are to be based on the word of God. They define for us right from wrong, important life principles, and what the qualities of true character are.

The fourth area of truth, the basis for our reliance on God. The word of truth is the basis for our reliance on God. As we've said before, God could have chosen to not give us any promises and still been the God of truth.

However, it's only through his promises that we can exercise trust in him for what he said. Hebrews 10.23, let us hold on swervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful.

Hope, confident expectation in future good, is only predicated upon promise. Without the promise, we cannot hope.

[24:19] God's promises are our lifeline for experiencing his faithfulness. So how well do you know the promises of God? For example, when you sin against God, how are you able to go on?

Well, if you know 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness, we can rest in that promise as a child of God who is trusted in the redemption of Christ on our behalf.

But what if it's the 10,000th time? What if I've just sinned and sinned and sinned against him in the same area? Please turn to Lamentations 3.

Lamentations 3, verse 19. Doesn't it often seem hopeless that he could actually forgive me again, yet again?

Has anybody ever felt that tinge of doubt in your heart? How do we battle it? Lamentations 3, verse 19.

[25:36] Jeremiah echoes these same thoughts. I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I remember them and my soul is downcast within me.

Yet, this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed.

His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I latch on to a promise of God about who God is just as Jeremiah did.

and it enables me to go on. It returns the hope because my hope is predicated upon the promise of God and the promise of the God who is the God of truth and who cannot lie, who does not exaggerate, who does not tell half-truths.

But if I don't know his promises, how can they lift my soul from despair? The latter-day Puritan Samuel Clark put it this way, a fixed constant attention to the promises and a firm belief of them would prevent solitude and anxiety about the concerns of life.

[26:57] It would keep the mind quiet and composed in every change and support and keep up our sinking spirits under the several troubles of life.

Jesus echoed this same cause and effect relationship between the word of God and freedom. You might recall in John 8, 32, when he said, then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. It's no surprise then that the man whose heart has been turned towards God is the one who now depends on the promises of God and trusts in God's ordering and circumstances of life for his good. When my heart is melting away in anxiety, I must turn to the word of truth for my peace and strength. This isn't some form of wishing, wishful thinking.

It's not self-taught, believing something hard enough. This is remembering that God is true, he has spoken and his promises are true and if I search out and I find his promises that state facts to me that I can rely on them with my entire soul, I can lean on them with everything.

[28:26] It's also only as we lay hold of God's promises that we can experience effective prayer life. They embolden us to enter into prayer by praying back the promises of God.

They enable us to boldly make requests of him because he's already said it and we know what his desires and will is. They enable us to enter into emotional communion with God because they tell us beforehand what his emotional responses are for our actions and our words.

Packer comments that people sneer today at the promise boxes which our grandparents used but this attitude is not a wise one. The promise boxes may have been open to abuse but the approach to scripture and to prayer which they expressed was right.

It is something we have lost and need to recover. Well, fifthly, God's word gives us everything needed for life and godliness.

Second Peter 1.3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

[29 : 47] First, the word of truth establishes correct values. It will change our passions, our hopes, what we love, what we hate.

How many of our problems can be traced back to wrong values? I know this is the war of my soul. If I'm responding incorrectly in some area, inevitably, if I dig deep, it's because I'm holding the wrong values, which are driving those wrong responses.

Are you enslaved with fears and worries about what others think? It's likely because you value man's thoughts over God's. Are you embarrassed by your physical or mental weakness?

You haven't taken to heart that physical ability and mental acumen are not traits which God delights in. Rather, he delights in those who fear him.

At every point at which we are enslaved to wrong responses, it can be traced back to wrong values. Wrong beliefs drive our wrong values.

[31 : 00] And our wrong values will only be purged and replaced with what God values as we're constantly meditating on his word of truth.

The word of truth also tells us how to live. It tells us how we're to work, play, use our time, spend our money. But most importantly, God's word transforms what, or should I say who, we are to worship.

God's truth teaches us to no longer live for self. It commands us to live for God's glory. It commands us to live for his pleasure. Those are blessed commands.

And how do we live for Christ and his pleasure? Why, the word of truth informs us. It characterizes what delights him and forewarns of what he hates.

It reveals what will draw his heart toward us in compassion. It advises us what will cause him to hide his face from us in anger. God's This is all from the word of truth.

[32 : 13] Do you want to know with absolute certainty when your responses and actions are delighting your God and when you're bringing him displeasure? Then search his word of truth.

As an example, I took just twelve passages, which I have memorized, and gleaned from them that he has no delight in the strength of the horse, human might and power, or the legs of a man, athletic ability.

This would be a good reminder for our society in which we honor and revere talent, physical, raw talent, mental skill. That's not where God's delight is.

but he is close to, he loves, he hears, he delights. Again, just from twelve short passages.

And those who are brokenhearted, crushed in spirit, thankful, and those who do not rely on themselves, humble themselves under his mighty hand, repent and rest in him, take refuge in him, trust in him, cast all their anxiety on him, fear him, hope in him, acknowledge him, wait quietly for him, fulfill their vows to him, walk blamelessly before him, praise him, and worship him.

[33 : 50] He loves those who do not look to the proud, lean on their own understanding, or turn aside to false gods. If we can learn that much in just twelve short passages, we should be about this book, shouldn't we?

It's what lifts our hearts out of the mire. It's what takes the fears and the anxieties and transforms it into hope. Because we can lay hold of his words and rely on it.

It teaches us what to live for. Sixthly and lastly, God's word instructs us how to worship him. It obviously, first of all, tells us who we are to worship, but it also tells us how we are to worship.

The regulative principle of worship is nothing more than acknowledging that we will worship him via the means and methods that he's ordained and prescribed for approaching him in worship.

In concert with some of these things we just reviewed that delight him, we reject our own wisdom as we approach him in worship.

[35 : 08] We reject what we think is right, and we bow to the word of God as it relates to how we are to approach him. I'd like to close by making a few observations regarding our propensity for rebellion, for rejecting the truth.

I want to make sure this is practical because I believe most of us, I know I do, will sit and listen to a lesson like this and nod our heads and say, yes, I believe in the word of truth, I obey the word of truth, at least I seek to, and we don't appreciate the propensity we have to reject the word of truth. Packer comments that the word of God is used as a touchstone by which to test the various views that are put to him, and he will not touch anything which he is not sure the scripture sanctions. He then goes on to ask, why does this description fit so few of us who profess to be Christians in these days? Paul describes to Timothy the wicked as being those who are always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

Every one of us has a built-in propensity to reject the truth that does not match our way, our desire. Do we appreciate that?

[36 : 39] Do we realize that? it's deceitful because if we've attended to church especially all of our life, we've been taught from the cradle certain truths and we've made them our own.

And so when those truths come to us, we nod in agreement and we say yes. And as those truths are applied to our lives, if they happen to be areas in our lives that we aren't having a great struggle with, we nod in agreement.

And so we look on ourselves and think we're pretty good. We do quite well. I mean 90 some percent of all of this I don't struggle with at all. Yet that is not the measuring point at which we either accept or reject the truth.

It's when that truth crosses our way, our biases, when we have our ideas and our beliefs and then that truth comes and whoa, I didn't see that before.

Well, there must be another explanation. I need to figure out the context. I'm not saying we don't, but so often I find my own heart rejecting truths subconsciously that cross my way because they go against my biases and previous beliefs.

[38 : 12] Until we accept this reality that this is what we are, that this is what we're like, we're going to continue stumbling through life unwittingly rejecting truth that comes at us in many different forms.

Yes, at salvation we're given a new heart and God puts his spirit within us. We begin hating what we once loved and we begin loving what we once hated.

we begin to delight in his word. However, the war of Romans 7, which we have with our flesh and I think we appreciate is ongoing with our flesh, with our passions, with our lusts.

That same war is going on in our minds. The battle lines of that war are drawn around our submission to the word of truth. Consider, think for a moment, the war you wage against your passions and your desires, your fleshly passions and desires.

I think everyone who is a believer this morning would acknowledge it's an ongoing battle, something we are constantly conscious of, we are constantly warring against, we're seeking to be vigilant, to be aware of how it attacks.

[39 : 27] Do we have an equal appreciation for the fact that the flesh and Satan are bombarding our minds with wrong beliefs and ideas with liked intensity?

While many of us are keenly in tune to our fleshly passions and are vigilantly guarding against falling in that area, may we resolve to bring our minds into captivity to the word of God in the same level of passion.

May we develop a knee-jerk response of submission to the word of truth regardless of the cost. May we cease setting ourselves up as judges over God's word and instead foster a heart of sensitive obedience to whatever the spirit brings our way.

Thank you and we're dismissed.