

What Is Truth? By Ginny Larsen

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32 ESV)

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” (John 14:6)

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

*“Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’”
(John 18:38)*

What is truth? Just like Pilate, many today are asking that question. Oprah Winfrey, at the 75th Annual Golden Globes, stated, “Speaking ‘your truth’ is the most powerful tool we have.” These days everyone has their own “truth,” which has completely redefined what the word means. In fact it has turned the word “truth” into a lie. This is the pattern of Satan’s subtle way of lying to us. He turns everything to mean the very opposite of its true meaning or essence. Satan has convinced the world of his lie that he has used for ages past—that speaking his lie, which he convinces the deceived is truth, is the most powerful weapon there is. Indeed, it is his only weapon against us truly. Just as in the garden, he first convinced Eve that what God said was not true and gave God’s Words a little twist so that it appeared he, himself, actually had the real truth for Eve and it would benefit her. This is his same deception today, and it is working well through the world’s media and those given over to his ways.

But Jesus Himself claimed to *be* the truth. He *is* the way, the truth, and the life. So all truth is measured by Him, the living Word, and the written Word, which He gave and stands by. It is this truth by which we receive freedom from the corruption of this world, our sinful nature, and the bondage of lies. It is only this truth that sets humankind free. Lies will always end in a bondage of sorts, even though their appeal promises otherwise. Lies appeal to our senses, our self-love, our pride, our passions and desires, but they draw away from God and a true relationship and understanding of Him. Therefore, in some way, even as we are Christians, born of His Spirit, we can unknowingly be under a wrong relationship with God or under bondage to some lie that gives us a wrong concept of God, His salvation, His love toward us, or His ultimate plan. There have been times in my Christian life when I walked under fear and oppression because Satan convinced me of a lie about God, or about my standing with Him. You see, he is not only the accuser of the brethren, but he is an accuser of God to the brethren as well. When God opened my eyes to see His Word and the truth of Who He is, what His gift to me truly is, what His love to me is, I was set free! Satan could no longer torment me or deceive me. I saw the truth! I saw Jesus.

Satan’s lies had sounded so true. They even sounded Biblical. I read those Scriptures he had twisted over and over. So how do we know what is truly “Biblical?” There are many, many groups out there claiming a corner on the truth. There are many Christians claiming a love for the truth, and that they only teach truth. In fact I came across a website once that named itself “The Truth.” Yet this person, as I began reading their blog, showed his “truth” was in his own interpretations, not in the Word itself, and if you disagreed with his interpretations, he condemned you and said you hated the truth. So many Biblically illiterate men and women

follow these types of people because they don't read the Bible and study it as a whole for themselves, but just follow someone who seems to have a corner on it all, and think themselves in the truth because of that.

If Christians love the truth, why are there so many differences in Christendom over what truth is? I see at least 3 things, which I have observed in my own life, that at least influence some of that:

1. We are still in this body of flesh and have a sinful nature, even though born again. The flesh strives against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: *"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do"* (Galatians 5:17). Though we may even convince ourselves that we desire God's truth, our own hearts can deceive us and there may be some teaching or thought that appeals to our sinful nature – yes, even our religious flesh. We can be masters at deceiving ourselves and convincing ourselves we have the truth, even using God's Word to stand on. Why? Because:

2. Satan sees the weaknesses in our flesh and uses them to persuade us, just as he did with Eve. And even as he tempts us because of the lusts of our own flesh, he persuades our religious flesh that is it something good, it is "Christian" and it is "truth." What does it produce in us? Does it open our hearts in love to God, humility in ourselves, and grace and love toward others? If not, it probably isn't "the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

3. We all come from different backgrounds, as well as denominational backgrounds and teachings. As a new Believer, I bonded immediately with those who showed me Christ. Those who taught me that I could be saved through faith in Jesus Christ and that I could count on His Word that saved me. I trusted that they had the truth of His Word to teach me how to live it. Now, they were good Christian people who loved God, but they also had some things wrong, which I did not understand for a long time in my Christian walk. Because of that, for many years I lived under a bondage and fear of God that was not the kind of fear a Believer in Christ should have. But I only saw certain Scriptures through the eyes of those who taught me certain doctrines. I was blind to seeing it any other way. I loved the truth. I gave my all to that truth, trying to live according to it. I defended that truth with all I had. But the hardest thing for me to go through finally, one day, was to face that what I thought was truth and clung to as truth was not the truth at all. As I got on my face before God, I asked Him to just take away all I had understood until now that was not right and to teach me over again – to teach me His true Word. And He began opening my eyes, reminding me of times in my experiences that He tried to teach me, ways He tried to show me, and how I was so stuck on what I had learned that I was blind to it. But suddenly now my eyes were really seeing His Word, and what it was saying. I was set free. When His truth comes into our hearts, it sets free, and we are free indeed. His whole Word began to open up to me more and more as I learned what it meant to be "in Christ" – crucified and risen with Him, passed from death to life, now able to live by the Spirit unto Him in newness of life.

Sometimes it takes a crisis of faith in our own lives to drive us to really, really take a look into His Word more thoroughly. Perhaps we haven't learned how to study His Word. I wish when I

had first become a Christian, someone would have given me a class on how to study His Word. There are methods people use with His Word to come to a conclusion, which is really a mishandling of His Word. We hear His Word in a message but don't perceive it is misused, taken out of context, or not accurately comparing Scripture with Scripture. We need to be of a humble heart and a teachable spirit in the church, as we learn His Word from one another, "speaking the truth to one another with love." We are in different places in our walk, where spiritual pride should never have a place in our minds and hearts.

The most learned Christian scholars do not have a corner on the truth, simply because they have studied hard. Sometimes we can study ourselves right into the wrong thinking. We cannot depend on our own intellect or ability to study. We must depend on God alone, as His truth is spiritually discerned, not intellectually. He can use our intellect when given over to Him, but if we trust in that itself, we are open for deception. We must bring it to Him, surrender it to His cross, as it is also our flesh, and trust Him to fill us with His Spirit of truth that leads into all truth. If we cannot admit that we can be wrong, then we are already deceived. We are deceiving ourselves. Yes, Christians can be deceived. Yet, if we **abide** in the Truth, we come to know Him more and more and grow in His truth and understanding. One of the hardest things is to admit to ourselves that we were deceived or that we were wrong. But it is one of the most freeing things as well. May the Lord teach our hearts and lead us into His truth alone and bring us the grace to overcome through that truth, in Jesus name.