

The Fruit of the Spirit
The Fruit of the Spirit Is Truth

Lesson #12 for March 20, 2010

Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 25:2; Psalms 51:17; Jeremiah 29:13; John 7:16,17; 14:6; 17:3; Hebrews 5:14.

1. The focus of this lesson is on truth. What is truth? That was Pilate's famous question! (John 18:38) Our lesson identifies two aspects of the Greek word *aletheia* or truth. There is "objective truth" which means the facts in the case, the actual details as they happened, or even principle (as in "guiding principle"). Then, there is the "subjective truth"—the truth as lived—without pretense, without affectation, falsehood, or deceit. How many of us live lives without deceit? How do we respond to God's instruction given to us in Scripture? Do we always tell the truth when someone asks us how we are in the morning? Is that just a rhetorical question? Are we learning to lie?
2. Read John 14:6. What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . ." Notice that He followed by saying, "No one comes to the Father except by Me." Is Jesus the only way to the Father? Would we know anything about the Father apart from the life and teachings of Jesus? Did Jesus explain to us—and live out—the truth about the Father? Do we fully accept the truth as presented in John 16:25-27? Or do we leave out the "not" in that passage? Do we know and understand the truth about God? Or, do we believe that someone needs to plead with the "hostile" Father on our behalf? We know that life comes only from God. Do we experience true life in and from God? Have we experienced the true Christian form of living? Do we really understand a Christ-like life?
3. Jesus left no question as to what the source and meaning of truth are. That is not one truth among many or perhaps even a truth superior to others; it is the only truth. We cannot find our own way to God. In light of that, is there only one true church?
4. Truth may be "stranger than fiction" as some have said. It can also be said that truth must always be consistent with itself. You cannot have two true statements that are inconsistent with each other. They may appear to be inconsistent; but when the full details are understood, they will be consistent. There was once a "philosopher's club." One member said, "If you give me any false statement, I can use the methods of logic to prove any other false statement." Other members doubted his statement, so one of them said, "Assuming that $4=5$ (a false statement), prove that I am the pope" (Another false statement)! He responded by saying, "Mathematically, you can subtract equal amounts from each side and still have a valid formula, so subtract 3 from each side and you will get $1=2$. We all know that I and the pope are two, so I and the pope are one!" This demonstrates the importance of making sure that our original assumptions are correct! What about divine truth? Is God always consistent? Does the God of the Old Testament seem consistent with the God of the New Testament? (1 Corinthians 10:4) Are they different "Gods" as some have suggested?
5. Read John 17:3. What was Jesus trying to tell us in that prayer? What kind of a relationship was Jesus talking about? We need to recognize that everyone has some kind of relationship with God. We would not be alive without a living connection to God. Even the Devil would die without that living connection. But the Devil hates God! But that is a kind of relationship! What about us? What word or words best describe our relationship with God. Do we have the kind of relationship which would allow us to commit ourselves fully and completely to Him?
6. The truth of Scripture, the truth as expressed in the life and death of Jesus, is a "revealed" truth. What does that mean? It is not discoverable by feeble, mortal human beings. Mathematicians cannot work it out. Does that mean that divine truth is unreasonable or beyond reason? What about *Steps to Christ* p.105? God provides us adequate evidence. Truth is both

revealed and reasonable.

7. In the middle of His most contentious discussion with the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, Jesus said, "The truth will set you free." (John 8:32) What did He mean by that? Would we be more free if we clearly understood God's will for us and did it?
8. Philosophers and even politicians have suggested that freedom means being able to do what you want to do. Does your freedom end where my nose begins? Does the freedom we have in Jesus give us permission to do wrong things? Or does knowing Jesus fully and completely and understanding what He wants for us and knowing that what He wants for us is what is best for us, eventually lead us to always want to do what is right? If we always want to do what is right, are we completely free? God has set us free to do what we ought to do? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in divine truth?
9. Since we live in the 21st century and do not have the privilege of seeing and knowing Jesus here on this earth as a human being, how are we supposed to get acquainted with Him? What would it be like to have a ten-minute appointment with Jesus every week? Would we stop thinking for ourselves? Who would immediately demand equal time? God placed the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden as a protection for Adam and Eve. Satan was limited to that location to tempt them. He could not chase them all over the garden. How does the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth? (John 16:13) The truth about Jesus is revealed all through the Bible—Old Testament and New Testament. Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. (1 Corinthians 10:4) By inspiring prophets, apostles, and others to write the Bible which includes the history of the great controversy, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to know God.
10. Read 2 Peter 1:12-15. What did Peter have in mind? Peter was the author of the Gospel of Mark. Mark simply did the writing either at the end of Peter's life or perhaps shortly after Peter's death. Peter suspected that he was about to be killed. So, Peter left that record so that we could acquaint ourselves with the life, teachings, actions, and thoughts of Jesus. The Holy Spirit inspired Peter and Mark to write it down so we can learn.
11. But the Holy Spirit does more than just provide the written record.

The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit. This is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. Only [672] when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life. One might be able to present the letter of the word of God, he might be familiar with all its commands and promises; but **unless the Holy Spirit sets home the truth**, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken. No amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light without the co-operation of the Spirit of God. The sowing of the gospel seed will not be a success unless the seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Before one book of the New Testament was written, before one gospel sermon had been preached after Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon the praying apostles. Then the testimony of their enemies was, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Acts 5:28.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671,672.

Compare Acts 4:13.

12. What does it mean to "fall on the Rock and be broken"? What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit "set home the truth"? Does studying about the life of Jesus convict us of the truth? The parables of Jesus were so plain and the meaning was so obvious that everyone could get it? When Jesus answered the toughest questions that the Pharisees and Sadducees brought to Him, they were completely amazed! Can there be truth that is different from "saving truth"? Are we willing not only to learn the facts in the case but also to allow our lives to be changed?

Surrendering self is a very challenging issue. Can we be true followers of Jesus without surrendering self? Think back in your religious experience. At what point in your life did you truly surrender self? What happened? What was the result? Are we trying to earn our way into heaven?

13. Mahatma Gandhi wrote a book entitled, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. He recognized that the pursuit of truth requires a guide. Unfortunately, he told us that while he respected Christians, he did not find many who actually lived like Christ!
14. Christians have a Guide and Mentor. Jesus does not leave us without guidance. If we could learn from this lesson the hard fact that Jesus is the only source of ultimate truth and commit ourselves to following His guidance wherever it might lead, this lesson would be fantastically successful.
15. However, there are many religions that profess to be following the truth. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam suggest that they are following the truth. There are hundreds of Christian churches all of which profess to be following the truth. How can we know that we are following truth without deceiving ourselves? Do we have the truth? Does it have us?
16. If we are honest, we will recognize the words of Jeremiah, "The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Jeremiah also suggested the solution: "You will seek me, and you will find me because you will seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13, *GNB*) How many people really accept the Bible today?
17. Think of all the biblical examples that you can concerning people who did not follow God seriously. What about the Sadducees, the scribes, and the Pharisees? Read 2 Chronicles 25:2. What does it mean to say, "He did not follow the Lord with a perfect heart"? Are there people who do the right things for the wrong reasons? If we are doing the right things, is that all that counts? Who are we fooling? We may be able to deceive others and even deceive ourselves, but we never can deceive God. (Galatians 6:7) We must approach this task of following God with a sincere heart. *Sincere* is a Latin word meaning "without wax"! Sculptors in ancient times would sometimes fill small cracks and defects in the sculpture with wax, making it look fine. The wax, of course, later would deteriorate and come out, revealing the faults in the sculpture. We need to have lives without any such faults.
18. Read again John 8:31,32. What does it mean to "know"? To be "set free"? We have discussed this on many occasions. Adam knew Eve and she became pregnant. (Genesis 4:1) That is not to suggest that intimate sexual contact is the only form of knowing! However, it does mean that such knowing implies a serious relationship. It is more than knowing a set of facts. For hundreds of years, religionists and clerics have told people that **they** were the only ones who were able to correctly read and interpret the Scriptures. By contrast, Jesus suggested that every one of us needs to learn the truth for himself.
19. Read 2 Timothy 2:15 and John 5:39. Compare different versions. 2 Timothy 2:15 is not really about studying with the use of books, etc. Rather, it is about the efforts Paul asked Timothy to put in. He was saying "do your best" to be a true follower and representative of Jesus Christ. By contrast, in John 5:39, in effect, Jesus was saying, "You study the Scriptures, in fact, you memorize them and you believe that your knowledge of the Scriptures will guarantee you eternal life. But the truth is, unless you develop a relationship with Me from studying those Scriptures, it will do you no good!"
20. Surely, we would recognize that it is impossible to get to know Jesus without the Scriptures. The Bible is the major contribution of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit must also work with us as individuals to apply those scriptural truths to our lives.
21. Read 1 Timothy 4:2 and Titus 1:15. What do these verses teach us about the dangers of ignoring the Holy Spirit's promptings? Is it possible to actually damage your conscience? Can

we become so insensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit that we consider wrong to be “okay”?

22. Jesus encouraged every one of us to start our Christian lives like a small child. (Matthew 18:1-4) The apostle Paul encouraged us to continue growing—which is the ultimate and most important characteristic of a small child. Ephesians 4:11-16 and Hebrews 5:14-6:3 make it very clear that our lives need to grow and mature spiritually. The Holy Spirit will help us to be willing to know the truth. (John 7:16,17)
23. What truths about God, His character, and His will for our lives are the hardest for us to learn and accept? What do we do with truths that we believe we have come to understand from Scripture? Do we bludgeon our friends and relatives with the truths that we believe?
24. What does it mean to walk in the truth? (2 John 4; 1 John 1:6) Truth must be lived. If we truly were following Jesus as we should, would others look at us and praise God? (Matthew 5:16) Would you be happy to have all your thoughts and actions made public? They will be someday. (1 John 2:9-11; Matthew 10:26) Has the truth that you have learned from Scripture truly impacted the way you live? Can the people at work tell the difference?
25. It is not the length of time we labor but our willingness and fidelity in the work that makes it acceptable to God. In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded. **The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking. He looks to see how much of the spirit of Christ we cherish, and how much of the likeness of Christ our work reveals.** He regards more the love and faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 402.
26. The service rendered in sincerity of heart has great recompense. “Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.” By the life we live through the grace of Christ, the character is formed. The original loveliness begins to be restored to the soul. **The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted, and the image of the Divine begins to shine forth.** The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven. **For these souls the kingdom of God has begun.** They have Christ's joy, the joy of being a blessing to humanity. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master's use; they are trusted to do His work in His name.—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 535.
27. So, is there such a thing as relative truth? Is there a place for situation ethics? If we take into account the entire great controversy as the context or situation in which we are living our lives, would it then be safe?
28. Which would be better, to do what is right for the wrong reason? Or, to do the wrong thing for the right reason?
29. Those of us who believe in the “larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing” model of the plan of salvation are convinced that our picture of God is correct, but incomplete. How can we continually improve our understanding of God and His character? Do others see us as good examples of what a Christian should be? Do our actions support our profession?

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