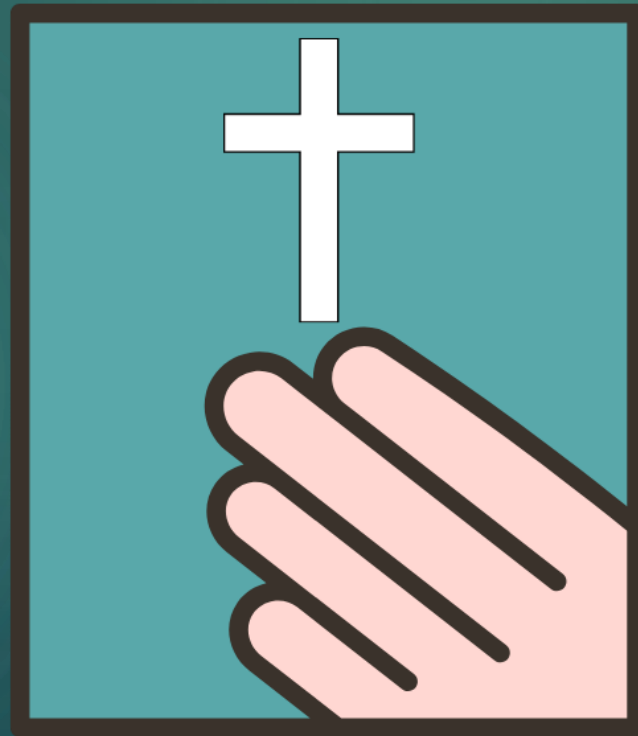


Living in Truth

Confident Conversation in a Conflicted Culture




Bible Study adapted from
Living in Truth by
Mary Jo Sharp

Welcome

- Recap of Week 1
 - Seeing the need for Truth
- What is Truth?
 - Epistemology: justified belief vs. Opinion
 - Modernism
 - Postmodernism
- Why is Truth important?



2



Session 2: Know What You Believe



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PREVIEW

A Firm Foundation

- Read Matthew 7:24-28. Jesus uses these two houses as a metaphor for what?
- Hearing the Word of God and acknowledging it as true is different from obeying the Word and constructing your life upon it.
- How would you describe to a new believer the difference between simply believing something is true and building your life on that truth?

A Firm Foundation

- Trials not only test our faith in the sense of stretching us, but also provide a reality check, to see if our faith is genuine. Trials don't just build character, they reveal it.
- What would you describe as the greatest trial you have had to endure in your lifetime?
- What has been the greatest test of your foundation of obedience to Christ's teachings?

Rooting Out Falsehood



- Sometimes digging down to the bedrock means moving aside the dirt.
- What "dirt" or false beliefs about God have you seen in the Christian community? What "dirt" or false beliefs have you had to move aside in your own life?
- When we do not daily build on the foundation of Jesus – when we do not practice His teaching – how do you think that affects our ability to converse with others about God?

Rooting Out Falsehood

- At the end of the story in Matthew chapter 7, Jesus says, "and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it!" (Matt. 7:27). The fall was great because the building was great, but it had a faulty foundation.
- Humans are the only creation of God made in His image (Gen. 1:27). When that human life falls due to one's own poor construction, the image of God is distorted and the fall is great indeed.

Rooting Out Falsehood



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Rooting Out Falsehood



- Before we can engage others with the Truth, we need to build our own house on the only firm foundation – Jesus Christ. If our actions do not genuinely testify to our foundation of Truth, then we have already discredited our witness and built a barrier between ourselves and those we wish to engage with about Christ.

Starting Small



- We all have habits that we do which are a small reflection of a larger truth, yet rarely do we stop to consider *why* we do them.
- Why would you say you do whatever it is you do in your morning routine?

Starting Small

- Which of the following contributed most to convince you to practice brushing your teeth?
 - I've experienced cavities as a result of not brushing
 - An authority (dentist, orthodontist) told me to
 - I read something about it
 - I have a degree in dental studies
 - It's just a habit I've never thought much about
- How is the daily habit of brushing your teeth a small way of showing commitment to a larger truth?

Starting Small



- The small things of life are the outworking of what you believe – your life philosophy – *and* in what or whom you trust as an authority.
- If we lack sufficient time and resources to make fully substantiated decisions on all matters, how can we discern truth?

Jesus' Authority

- Read Matthew 7:28-29, 28:18, and John 3:2. What do these verses say about the authority of Jesus?
- Unlike the Jewish rabbis and scribes of the time, Jesus did not need to cite other teachers to establish the credibility of His teaching. He spoke from His own authority, which amazed people.
- Atheists and skeptics sometimes claim that Christians have no basis to put their trust in Jesus. How would you respond to that claim?

Jesus' Authority

- Most Christians have not analyzed the relation of their beliefs to evidence, experiences and authority.
- It's a bit like saying "I brush my teeth because that's what I've always done," versus "I brush my teeth because I have good reason to believe it is true that this practice is good for me."
- In order to have more robust conversations about Christ, we need to know why we believe in Him.

Can we trust the Bible?

- Short answer: Yes
 - As the inspired Word of God, we can trust that it is true
- Long answer: Yes, but it's not merely a matter of "blind faith"
 - Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
 - We have additional evidence outside of the Biblical record for Jesus' existence
 - Fulfilled prophecy is a strong argument for the veracity of Scripture

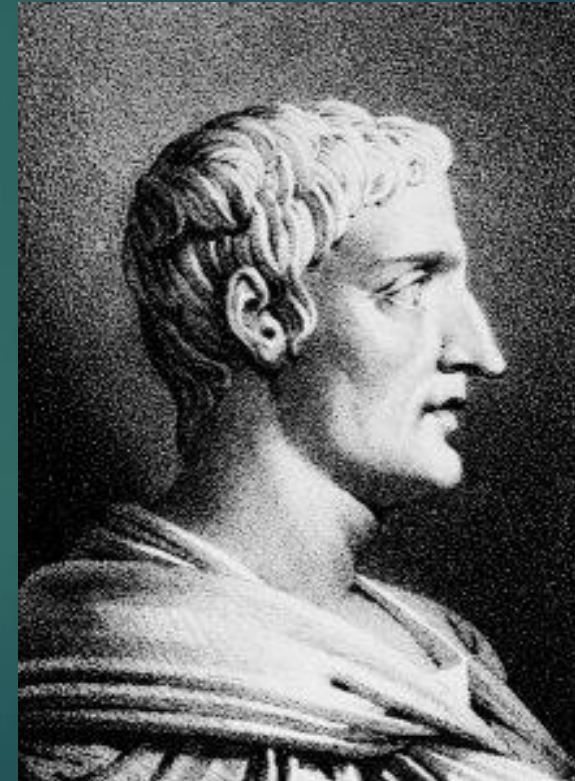
Extra-biblical evidence of Jesus

- Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, mentions Jesus in his writings, written around 93-94 A.D.
 - "And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin, and brought before them the brother of **Jesus, the one called Christ**, whose name was James, and certain others, and accusing them of having transgressed the law delivered them up to be stoned." - Josephus, *Antiquities*
 - "At this time there was a wise man who was **called Jesus**. And his conduct was good, and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. **Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die**. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. **They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive**. Accordingly, **he was perhaps the Messiah** concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders." - Josephus, *Testimonium Flavianum*



Extra-biblical evidence of Jesus

- Tacitus, a Roman senator and historian, also mentions Jesus in his writings around 116 A.D.
- "[N]either human effort nor the emperor's generosity nor the placating of the gods ended the scandalous belief that the fire had been ordered [by Nero]. Therefore, to put down the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits and punished in the most unusual ways those hated for their shameful acts ... whom the crowd called "Chrestians." The founder of this name, Christ [*Christus* in Latin], had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate ... Suppressed for a time, the deadly superstition erupted again not only in Judea, the origin of this evil, but also in the city [Rome], where all things horrible and shameful from everywhere come together and become popular" - Tacitus, *Annals*



Fulfilled Prophecy

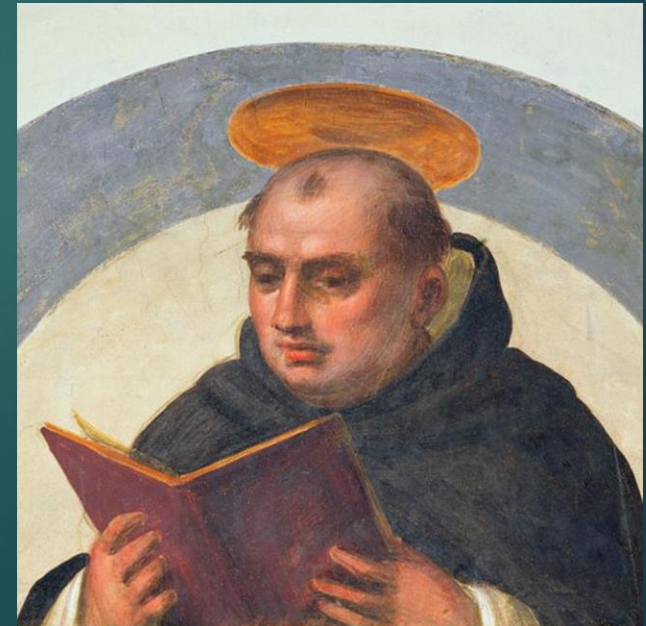
- There are about 2,500 prophecies in the Bible, depending on how you count them. Roughly 2,000 have been fulfilled, and 500 are yet to be fulfilled. Of the 2,000 or so fulfilled prophecies many of them are Messianic – pertaining to Jesus.
- The probability that even one prophecy is fulfilled by coincidence is around 1 in 10 (conservatively). That means that the probability of all of these being fulfilled by coincidence is 1 in 10^{2000} (or 1 in 10 with 2,000 zeros at the end of it)
- It may have been possible for Jesus to "fake" a few prophecies, but it would be statistically impossible for one man to arrange and fulfill all of the Messianic prophecies.

The Testimony of the Resurrection

- Read Matthew 28:16-20. What reasons to trust Jesus do you see there? What do you make of some of the disciples' doubt?
- What is your criteria for trusting someone as an authority? Does Jesus fit your criteria?
- Think of someone who doubts Jesus as an authority. Why do they doubt? What is their criteria, and does Jesus meet it?

Knowing and Believing

- When a person does not trust Jesus as an authority, they by necessity shift their authority to someone or something else, whether they realize it or not.
- Faith in Christ is not just a knowledge issue, it's a heart issue.
- Thomas Aquinas noted that there are three components of faith:
 - *Notia* (knowledge)
 - *Assensus* (agreement)
 - *Fiducia* (trust)



Sharing What We Believe



- If you were asked to give a 30-second elevator pitch of the Gospel, what would you say?