**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Rolla, Missouri**

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**Honesty in Our Search for Truth**

If I asked the question, “Do you want truth?” my guess is that most people would say “yes.” Generally, we want to get correct answers, the truth, to the questions we ask. The more important the questions are, the more we would like to feel we’re on track in getting the right answers to them. We want the doctor to tell us the truth about our illness. We don’t want to be misled. We want our government leaders to tell us the truth about how they are going to spend our tax dollars. It would seem obvious that correct answers, or the truth, are nowhere more critical than with respect to the general question of religion. Is there a God who created us? Is He a personal God who works in our lives? Has He communicated to us, and if so, how and where? Did Jesus Christ live, and is He the Son of God? Did He die to save us from our sins? If so, is there anything we must do to be saved from sin? What must we do to be saved? Is there life after death? These are questions that we ought to want to have answered with nothing less than the full truth.

But getting the right answers to these questions is not a “mechanical” process. We can’t assume the truth is going to yield itself up automatically to anyone who pushes the right logical buttons, regardless of what his character or his intentions might be. The fact is getting the right answers depend largely on whether we are a certain kind of person and whether we are asking for a certain kind of reason. To put it more bluntly: whether we are able to get at the truth about God, Jesus Christ, and salvation depends on what we intend to do WITH the truth. Before we can be in a position to ask questions about the thing called Christianity, there is a more fundamental question we are required to ask about OURSELVES — and that is whether we are really honest inquirers who intend to do what is right about the truth, whatever it may turn out to be. Jesus said in John 7:17, *“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”*  Who will know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God? Jesus says those who desire to DO His will. What that says is simply if I don’t have the integrity and honesty to do what I know I ought to do about the right answers I say I’m looking for, then I may not even recognize those right answers when I come across them. If I do not desire to implement the truth I learn, whatever it may be, I cannot be assured that I will ever learn the truth.

There is really no more sobering text in the New Testament than 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, which asserts that God will actually lead those away from the truth who are not honestly looking to obey it. The passage says, *“and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* Notice, “God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie…” Who is this talking about? In verse 10 it says, “they did not receive the love of the truth.” These are people who do not love the truth. They don’t want the truth. In verse 12 he describes them as people who “did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” These are people to whom truth is presented, who have been given opportunities to know and do the truth, but they don’t want it. No matter how much they say they want the truth, and no matter how diligently and scholarly they pursue the truth, their investigation will be skewed by the fact that they are merely looking for curiosities to think about. They are not interested in putting it into practice in their lives. But the fellow who loves the truth and searches for the truth so that he can render OBEDIENCE to it, whatever it may be, that is the individual who is going to get the information he is seeking.

It is of utmost importance, then, that we be honest about why we want the truth, and why we are seeking for the truth. To come to the knowledge of the truth, I need to be willing to live it, when I learn it. So many times we say we want the truth and nothing but the truth, but we don’t see it when it slaps us in the face because we don’t like its implications for our lives. For example, my doctor tells me that I have heart disease and that I need to eat healthier and start an exercise program, or I will not have much longer to live. I don’t want to eat healthier or start an exercise program, so I will find some way to rationalize my decision. I convince myself that the doctor doesn’t know what he’s talking about and I give examples of others who eat the way I want to eat and they lived to be 90 years old. In other words, if I don’t like the implications of the truth I hear, then I will find some way to justify what I want to believe.

In John 9 we read of Jesus healing a man who had been born blind. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva. He then anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went and washed and came back seeing. Here a miracle is done by Jesus, proving that He is of God. The truth is Jesus is of God and the evidence is presented. Now, it was the Sabbath day when Jesus did this. The man is brought before the Pharisees and the man tells them how Jesus opened his eyes. Some of the Pharisees said, "This Man [referring to Jesus] is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Later they say to the man, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.” And then later they say to him, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." Now, notice what the man said to the Pharisees next, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." The Pharisee then answered and said to him, “‘You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?’ And they cast him out.”

The truth concerning Jesus was right before the Pharisee eyes. They could see if they wanted to. But they didn’t like its implications. If Jesus is of God, then we must listen to Him and follow Him. This they did not want to do, so they find some way to rationalize their disbelief.

In 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul tells Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” He then says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” A person who has itching ears is one who is looking for someone to teach what he wants to hear rather than what God wants him to hear. He may say he wants to hear the truth preached, but in reality he wants to hear what will tickle his ears, what will help him to justify what he wants to do. The one who will find the truth is the one who is willing to accept the truth and all its implications for his life.

It is of utmost importance, then, that we be honest about the truth. The trouble is we are often not willing to be honest about whether we are honest. Sometimes we are not willing to see ourselves as we really are. We claim we want the truth and nothing but the truth, because we know that is what we should say. But the fact is, we have closed our minds to truth. Someone might ask, if I am a person who really wants to know the truth about the questions of religion, how can I know whether I am honest or not?

One good place to begin testing our own honesty is to ask, “What are we doing about the religious truth we already possess.” Is there any truth that I have heard that I am not implementing in my life because it is unpleasant? The person deserves no additional light who is wasting what he presently has, and if we are avoiding dealing with obligations that have been in plain view for quite some time, there is little point in discussing what else the truth may be. We have proven we don’t want it by the way we are responding to the truth we already have.

But there are some other tests that may help us focus on our honesty. Am I, for example, capable of being persuaded, or is my mind basically made up already? Will I change if I learn that I am wrong? The apostle Paul once was a persecutor of Christians, but he learned he was wrong and changed. What would have happened if Paul had a mind that could not be persuaded? Also, am I a person who decides questions on the basis of evidence, or am I guided by prejudices and preconceptions? Do I tend to believe that the truth is whatever I want it to be? How hard am I willing to dig for truth? How careful am I in approaching weighty issues? Am I fair? On the question of God, do I harbor any reservations about how far I’d be willing to go in accepting the implications and consequences of the truth? Questions like these ought to tell us some significant things about the level of honesty at which we approach the issues of life.

In the parable of the sower Jesus tells about a sower who sowed seed on various kinds of soil, the hard wayside soil, the rocky soil, the thorny soil, and the good soil. The only soil that produced fruit was the good soil. The seed in this parable represents the word of God and the soils represent the hearts of men. Concerning the good soil Jesus said, *“But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”* (Luke 8:15) The good soil is the honest and good heart. Deciding to have just that sort of heart has got to be the beginning point for any serious quest for truth. It is, as Jesus said elsewhere, the truth that will make us “free” ([Jn. 8:32](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn.%208.32)) — but the truth is a maiden who will not be wooed by just anybody. Anything less on our part than a bona fide commitment to be faithful to truth — whatever that may entail, at whatever cost — then truth may disguise herself from us. If we are serious about getting at the right answers to the questions that pertain to life’s deepest meaning, then we can ill afford to have anything other than this honest and good heart. We need to have the attitude of the Psalmist recorded in Psalm 25:4-5, *“Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation;*

*On You I wait all the day.”*  It’s that kind of honesty that gives us a chance to make progress. Without it, we are as lost intellectually as we are spiritually.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

Before we close we want to invite you to check out our website. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of Bible topics, and you also are able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts. The web address is sjchurchofchrist.com, that’s sjchurchofchrist.com.

Also, before we close, I want to announce a special series of meetings that begins today (April 16), and continues through Friday night of this week, the 21st. We have Jason Hardin from New Albany, Indiana, with us, and he will be presenting lessons from God’s word, lessons that will help us to be what God wants us to be. We will meet this morning at 9:30 and 10:15, this evening at 5:00 and then Monday through Friday of this week we will meet at 7:00 each evening. Come and be with us. Our building is located at 685 Sidney Street in St. James where Sidney Street and Highway B intersect.