



"Most of the grand truths of God have to be learned by trouble. They must be burned into us with the hot iron of affliction; otherwise we will not truly receive them."
—Charles H. Spurgeon

19-Sep-25

Knowledge and the Truth (Part Two)

[Part One](#) taught us that truth has a simple definition: The Word of [God](#). But it is a definition with infinite implications, beginning with the fact that the apostle John introduces [Jesus Christ](#) as "The Word" in [John 1:1](#). In Scripture, a deep truth appears as small words on a page, but however small, they still represent that deep truth.

How do we find the correct deep truths? Many people misunderstand, thinking that they must seek it like seeking treasure. While something like that can be involved in finding the truth (for instance, we are advised to seek [wisdom](#) in [Proverbs 8:17](#); see 3:13; 4:7), it lacks a vital precursor. The understanding of the truth is not present in man by nature, but something that God must give. He requires us to make a covenant with Him, and then He gives the knowledge of the truth through His gift of the [Holy Spirit](#). Combined with the insight that comes from God-inspired spiritual teachers, we can begin learning the deep things of God ([I Corinthians 2:10-12](#)).

But the richness of knowing the truth can be a distraction from holding fast and doing good works. Much like [repentance](#), [kindness](#), [love](#), or [faith](#), truth

involves action. Jesus says in [John 3:21](#): "But he who *does* the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (emphasis ours throughout).

This verse contains very significant teaching. People claim, "I have spoken the truth." But Jesus, the Word, is the truth in every act. We, too, will become that way at our glorification ([I John 3:2](#)). And knowing that, we ought to be practicing it, as verse 3 implies: "And everyone who has this hope in Him [of being like Christ in the resurrection] purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Over decades or centuries, the meanings of some words tend to converge. In the modern world, "truth" and "knowledge" are treated as synonyms, though they were originally different. As their distinctions have blurred, scientists have come to believe they are seeking truth despite acknowledging that they are not at all concerned with God. In fact, most comfortably eliminate Him from all their calculations.

But truth and knowledge are very different concepts in the Word of God, and knowing the difference will help us greatly with our understanding when we study.

- "Truth" comes from the word *altheia*, meaning truth, but not merely truth as spoken. It implies the truth of an idea, reality, sincerity, truth in the moral sphere, and especially, divine truth revealed to man.
- Several Greek words are translated into the English word "knowledge," one of which is *gnosis*. However, they are mostly different forms of personal experience, indicating "to recognize" or "to perceive."

Gnosis is the source of Gnostic or [Gnosticism](#). We are frequently admonished to remember that an enemy of the truth is Gnosticism, which was creeping into the church toward the latter half of the first century. However, this philosophical idea is not always present in the New Testament usages of this word. For example, in [Luke 1:34](#), when Jesus' mother Mary asks, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" Mary's use of "know" (*gnosis*) is sexual in nature—a physical experience. Again, in [Matthew 9:30](#), when Jesus heals two blind men, "Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows

it." It is the same word, *gnsis*, that Mary used, this time referring to people's awareness of the healing.

In one respect, the two words translated as "truth" and "knowledge" are opposites. *Altheia* involves what is perceived and learned through the Holy Spirit, while *gnsis* is about what is discernible and learned through a person's physical senses.

[Hebrews 10:26](#) provides a profound usage of both of these words together, and both add essential and different perspectives to the message: "For if we [sin](#) willfully after we have received the *knowledge* [*gnsis*] of the truth [*altheia*], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." Consistent with the original Greek, this means:

1. An individual has personally heard the words that represent Christ's teachings—knowledge—and
2. he or she has understood their spiritual significance—truth.

From this differentiation, the understanding of sinning willfully becomes clear. A person knows and understands the spiritual significance of God's instructions and sins anyway. As the author says, a certain fearful expectation of judgment comes from having understood those truths, and those who sin willfully become adversaries who await God's fiery indignation ([Hebrews 10:27](#)).

Obviously, the first word, *altheia*, "truth," is the most important to us. It is the spiritual treasure accrued by faith and the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the sanctification process that spans our converted lives. The Bible is clear that a person—even a converted person—is either living the truth or living the lie. Notice what the apostle writes in [James 3:13-17](#):

Who is wise [*sophia*: with insight] and understanding [*epistémón*: with knowledge or experience] among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the [meekness](#) of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and *lie against the truth*. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-

seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Interestingly, James teaches that when we are discussing the truth with others, we had better be thinking, speaking, and acting with truth and in humility, or we are liars. If we only gain knowledge of the truth, without putting on the whole mind of God and living it out, we will not attain God's Kingdom. We will not even understand the answers to our prayers or perceive how God is working with us.

Another aspect of this is that we cannot show true zeal without study and knowledge of the truth. [Romans 10:2](#) says, "For I bear [Israel] witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Zeal for God but without truth leads to many evils, as the history of Israel and Judah clearly shows.

We are brought to the truth through our calling. The ministry and our own studies educate us in the truth with the aid of the Holy Spirit. By God's grace and election, we now have access to the truth, a thing of tremendous value. We are to hold onto it with all our heart and all our strength and strive to grow in truth daily.

But we must not let it go to our heads! Consider the letter to the [church at Laodicea](#) with James' admonition, "do not boast," in mind:

Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. (Revelation 3:17-18)

We should all listen carefully and humbly grow in the practice of the truth through the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our lives.

New Transcripts

[1833b: Holy Ground](#)

Given by Ted E. Bowling on 23-Aug-25

[1836c: Watershed Moment](#)

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 13-Sep-25

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Tests of True Knowledge](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Knowledge of the truth is essential, but it must be God's knowledge, and not a syncretistic mixture of worldly philosophy or mystical Gnosticism. Political correctness, a modern application of Gnosticism, can usher in some unacceptable consequences, such as occurred with the prideful 'tolerance' of incest as practiced in the Corinthian congregation. Like leavening, toleration of one offense would lead to toleration of other offenses. Progressives in American politics shamelessly call evil good and good evil, murdering fetuses in the name of 'women's rights' and practicing sodomy in the name of marriage 'equality.' All of these progressive insights emanate from Satan, who has 'transformed' himself as an angel of light. Similarly, ditchism in religion (veering from one extreme or the other, such as overly strict or overly lenient) leads to unpleasant imbalances. Relying solely on human intellect is one such ditch when it is isolated from the heart and from practice. Proper knowledge must always be joined to the will of God. A person who is puffed up parades his knowledge either by exhibiting impatience, intolerance, or an obsequious false modesty, marginalizing what they consider to be the weak or uneducated. Some prideful people, caught up in their wealth of knowledge, are rendered totally useless in serving others. Conversely, the love of Christ surpasses all knowledge, putting us into proper humble and lowly perspective; to know and love God is to understand

Him. Knowledge of God creates love for God as well as perfecting our relationships with others. The happiest people in the church are those who know His teachings and practice them 24 hours a day, growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord, actively practicing love as motivated by God's Holy Spirit, instill

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Whole Truth](#)

by John O. Reid

Most of us have heard the courtroom mantra, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." John Reid, however, applies these criteria to our behavior, showing that many of us shy away from "nothing but the truth"!

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 19-Sep-25) will be **Acts (Part Twenty-Seven)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday** (EST) and all day Saturday.

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