

# Why do people suppress the truth?

## For Discussion:

"Truth is relative". What do you think of that statement?

At the Conference, we are looking at the topic of "Truth Vs the suppression of Truth". The opening discussion question raises the theme. Just accept answers at this stage, though you may want to probe and ask why a person believes the answer they have given.

## Romans 1:18-23

<sup>18</sup>The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup>since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

<sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

According to Paul, how do people suppress the truth?

Suppression of the truth is a function of the intellect but of the will. It is a conscious choice. It is a choice to replace the creator with something in the creation.

What words are used to describe this suppression? What is God's response?

Godlessness and wickedness, which brings about God's wrath.

How do people see their suppression of the truth? What is Paul's opinion of them?

People think suppression of the truth is wise. Paul calls it foolishness.

What testimony is there to people of who God is? Is this enough to save, or does it just condemn?

From the passage the creation is the testimony, a natural revelation. Here there is only condemnation – they should have known but did not. A testimony ignored brings judgement. Note: in Acts 17:22-31 Paul uses natural revelation in his speech to the Areopagus not to condemn his hearers but to persuade them.

# Is the Bible true or not?

## For Discussion:

How do you know if the Bible is true or not?

There will be a range of answers here. Accept the answers as if they are opinions.

## Read 2 Timothy 3:12-17

<sup>12</sup>In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup>while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup>and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What happens to evil people (v13)?

Evil people suppress the truth (see study 1). Therefore they both deceive and are deceived.

Why should Timothy be convinced of the truth of the Bible (v14)?

The character of those who taught him does not include deception – note the “But” at the beginning of the verse. Trustworthy people speak a trustworthy message.

Why should Timothy be convinced of the truth of the Bible (v15)?

The message itself leads to wisdom, (not deception), and upward to salvation, (not from bad to worse).

Where does Scripture lead (v16-17)?

Scripture leads to good works. Contrast that with the bad to worse of evildoers and impostors in their deception (v13)

Reflect again on the question: How do you know if the Bible is true or not? Has your answer changed?

# How do you know the Truth?

## For Discussion:

Are knowledge and belief (or faith) two different things?

*Just accept answers. Don't get into a long discussion on this point.*

## Read John 14:1-7

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God; trust also in me.<sup>2</sup> My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.<sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going."

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.<sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Why should we trust in Jesus (v1)? Can you think of what makes him trustworthy?

*Consider both Jesus' life and work. Consider both his character and actions.*

Why is Jesus the only way to God (v6)?

*Sin needs to be dealt with and only Jesus does that. Remember no other philosophy or religion does that.*

How might this truth be offensive to people today? What might they be tempted to do with this truth?

*There are several possibilities to why offense might be caused and it might be worth discussing people's ideas. It is worth making sure that you cover the offense caused in our pluralistic society by absolutes, especially moral absolutes and also that human nature hates being told when it is wrong.*

From these verses, how can we know God?

*Through Jesus alone. There is no other way. Note here that knowledge is a function of relationship not academia.*

For discussion: Is knowledge and belief the same thing?

*Knowledge is a big concept in the bible and more relational than "factual". That is, knowledge is more about being in relationship with a person than knowing facts about them. Therefore if you know someone to be trustworthy then you can believe (or trust) them.*

# How can the Truth set you free?

## For Discussion:

Have you ever been in a place in your life where you have felt captive to something? Be that a disease or a physical or mental ailment or an incarceration or hospitalisation or a mindset or worldview. How did it feel when you were free?

*Just accept answers. Don't get into a long discussion on this point.*

## Read John 8:31-36

<sup>31</sup>To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

<sup>32</sup>Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

<sup>33</sup>They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup>Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Many people quote verse 32. However, Jesus places a condition on this verse. What is it?

*Look back to verse 31 for the context.*

How can we hold to Jesus' teachings?

*There will several types of answers that people might give here... By obeying his commands, reading the Bible, meeting together to discuss the Bible and encourage each other, accountability groups and so on.*

Do you consider yourself a slave to sin?

*This question asks people for their opinion of themselves and as such do not press too hard to be doctrinally correct on the answer. This might bring out some personal information or issues that people are dealing with. It also might bring out denial or a justification of behaviour.*

How does Jesus set us free? What do you think he has set us free to do?

*We come to cross here. We need to realise that he has won the victory over sin for us, we did not win it ourselves, we could not. We are now free to have a relationship with the Living God.*

For discussion: How have you been set free by the truth of Jesus Christ?

*Note: This question might bring out some private and personal information. It would be worth praying with each other after this discussion and giving thanks for what God has done.*