



PART I



**An Encounter  
with the Truth**





## ONE

### **What Is Truth?**

BETSY GÓMEZ

#### A BLIND ENCOUNTER WITH THE TRUTH

**G**o get your Bible—physical or digital—and read John 18:33–38. This is a surprising encounter. For a long time, I didn’t understand what really happened here. Pilate received Jesus from the hands of the priests to judge Him and later submitted Him to them to be crucified. But first, they had a conversation that seemed more like a game of questions, and if we examine the scene carefully, we will see the contrasts that took place there. An earthly governor who “decides” the fate of the supreme authority of all existence. An unjust man who “judges” the author of all justice. A blind man with a clouded understanding in the face of the Light of the World.

In his attempt to figure out who this man was, Pilate asked Him whether He was king, but Jesus’s answer puts an end to his curiosity.

Pilate said, “So you are a king?”

Jesus responded, “You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and *came into the world to testify to the truth*. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.”

“What is truth?” Pilate asked. (verses 37–38)

Pilate reacted with a final question: “What is truth?” We know he didn’t wait for Jesus to answer because he had not finished asking and already his feet

were directed toward the exit door. Either because he was convinced there was no answer, or, more likely, because he did not want to hear it.<sup>1</sup>

This scenario has been repeated throughout the history of humanity. Pilate's insolence and cynicism have echoed in the minds of the philosophers who have shaped the thinking of our generations.

Through the years, humans have asked themselves what truth is, but only in order to define it according to their own reasoning and imagination. And do you know what the only thing they have found is? Confusion and deceit. Instead of looking straight to the source of absolute truth, they have tried to look aside in order to avoid it and numb their understanding. Just like Pilate, humans do not want to learn the truth. They prefer to filter it to avoid the harshness of things as they really are.

If you go into your social media or turn on the TV or radio, you will see Pilate's insolence interwoven in the way this world thinks. The sad part is that these currents of thought are not only filtered through the media but also hidden in our hearts. They are like sugarcoated poisonous candies. They are such attractive thoughts, so logical and accessible, that they make us forget the power they have to destroy us. I'm talking about thoughts like these:

- I define my own truth!
- Don't try to define me by your personal truth!
- No one can judge me.
- The truth is what works for me or makes me feel good.
- The truth is what I have been taught.
- You offend me if you do not accept and respect my truth.
- The truth is relative. Everyone can decide the truth that is "right" for them.
- The truth is subjective. Everyone has the right to define it according to their experience or reasoning.

These ideas are so familiar to us that it's difficult for us to discern whether they are correct or not. Just like a video clip I saw recently in which a young female artist was singing at the top of her lungs, telling people not to mess with her freedom against a backdrop showing "sexually empowered" women. It will always be easier to appeal to a personal truth to excuse immoral behavior, which goes against God's plan. What she cannot see is that what they call freedom actually binds them in chains.

I challenge you to join me in unmasking culture's lies. We will explore how Pilate's attitude in the face of truth has infiltrated our hearts. But first I should warn you that we will expose ourselves to the fact that the truth is not going to make us feel like we're on a gentle sleigh ride down a mountain and into green

meadows filled with colorful flowers. There will probably be moments when it feels like climbing a rocky peak against a fierce wind.

Maybe the same thing that happened to me will happen to you. I felt like everything that had defined me for years was being taken away. I had to let go of things that I had treasured. Sometimes, this was delightful, but other times, because of my pride, it has been painful. But I admit that I have examined what I've left behind and realized that it was all unnecessary baggage that was weighing down my life and robbing me of freedom and joy.

## LIKE EYELESS ZOMBIES

This is nothing new. Ever since humans were created, the truth has been under attack, and our sin has made us prone to reject and disobey it. Below we'll spend some time looking at the darkest moment in the history of God's people. Take my hand and come with me—you'll see how everything makes sense later.

In the first three chapters of Genesis, we see a very clear picture: God, the author of creation, took the initiative to reveal Himself to man and woman. His instructions were true and precise. Then the deceiver entered the scene and found a place in the hearts of God's creations. Until that moment, humankind had everything they needed and knew only the truth. But that didn't last long. Stop for a moment and read Genesis 3:1–14.

Everything changed forever when their hearts echoed questions of the goodness of God ("Did God really say . . . ?"), when they gave their ears over to hearing a whispered lie ("You won't die!"), and when their curious minds gave in to the invitation to usurp the throne of the Creator ("You will be like God").

They accepted the poison that came out of the mouth of the Father of Lies and disobeyed God—the single source of all that is true. They went from living in a paradise filled with splendor to living in a profound abyss of darkness. Their eyes dimmed until they ceased to see the truth that was so clearly before them. On that horrible day, sin extinguished all light within humanity, and from that moment, we began our journey into darkness—a darkness that our fallen hearts have come to love.

But God, in His love, did not leave us there. He promised that He would send His Light to restore everything; He promised that One would come who would conquer the power of death (verse 15). He chose a people from which the Savior would come, and despite the darkness that surrounded them, He guided them with His truth. Their journey shows that, although they put their trust in God's promise, their hearts insisted on rejecting the truth and loving the darkness.

- Abram and Isaac tried to save their lives by lying and hiding the truth (Genesis 12:10–20; 26:6–11).
- Because of their jealousy, the sons of Jacob sold Joseph and concealed the truth (Genesis 37).
- When God communicated His truth to Moses, the people gave themselves over to darkness and worshipped an idol, putting aside the truth they had received from God. By their actions, they showed the darkness that reigned in their hearts (Exodus 32:8).
- David hid his sin until the prophet Nathan confronted him with the truth (2 Samuel 12:1–23).
- Solomon was granted great wisdom, but he decided to put aside the truth and gave himself over to lies that entangled his heart in sin (1 Kings 11:1–13).
- Jonah fled because he refused to tell the truth to a nation that was in darkness (Jonah 1:1–3).
- God sent prophets with the truth of His Word, but the people rejected them (Nehemiah 9:26).

The list could continue because this has been the pattern of humanity right up to the present. We insist on distancing ourselves from the truth. We love darkness more than light. We suppress the truth out of love for our sins.



**God promised that He would send His Light to restore everything.**

But God is different. He did not hide the sin of His people. He did not use Instagram filters to make them look better. He constantly revealed how dark the condition of humankind was and how great was humanity's need for a savior. Again and again, God revealed His truth and the people rejected it (Romans 1:18–19) just like when someone wakes you up in the middle of the night and you hide your face because your eyes cannot bear the light.

And this is not just the history of biblical characters that you might've learned in Sunday school. It is your history. It is our history. From the moment sin brought death to humankind, we became eyeless zombies who seek dark places to live in. If we are separated from the truth, we look quite alive on the outside, but our spiritual reality is horrible. We pull ourselves together and try to look good, but the stench of the lies that dominate us is going to come through one way or another.

It's incredible that God has not looked away from us or ignored our needs. He fulfilled His promise and, in due time, sent the light that eliminates all darkness.

I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life. (John 8:12)

The Word gave life to everything that was created,  
and his life brought light to everyone.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.  
(1:4–5)

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.” The people for whom the Savior came did the same as had been done for generations: fled from it instead of running toward the Light. Worse still, they conspired to destroy it, like eyeless zombies who reject the only hope in life (3:19–21).

This was Pilate's situation when he received Jesus from the hands of blind people. The saddest part is that he was just as blind as they were. And, of course, it is so easy to see this like a Netflix movie and say, “What a dumb man! How could he fail to see?”

But how can you be sure there is not a Pilate in you? How do you know you are not so used to the lies of this world that you don't recognize the truth when it is in front of you? Are you turning your back on the Light because your eyes are full of darkness?

## UNMASKING THE LIES

That was how things were with me. Like I said in the introduction, although I was a church girl and truly wished to devote my life to God and His work, my heart was saturated with lies about God, the work of Christ, and my identity and design as a woman. I couldn't tell the difference between the truth and the lies. My faith in Jesus was so mixed in with worldly thinking that I didn't know how to distinguish biblical truth from false, humanistic reasoning.

Don't worry. I'm not about to give you a philosophy lesson, but I do want you to be able to see that each decision, no matter how simple, has its origin in your definition of the truth. How you approach the truth affects all areas

of your life. Whether you realize it or not, everything you do is a reflection of your relationship with the truth: the clothes you choose, the texts you send, the friends you have, your posts on social media, and what you see when you look in the mirror. Absolutely everything!



**Everything you do is a reflection of your  
relationship with the truth.**

And well, yes, I might sound like the old-fashioned lady you want to run away from before she starts giving you a lecture, but I am writing to you with tears in my eyes. I would have given anything for someone to shake me out of my foolishness!

Even though I identified as a Christian, postmodernism ran through my veins. Do you want to know how this thirteen-letter word works? I used to think that if what other people said about God and the Bible made me feel good, then it must be true—without even checking it firsthand in Scripture. I approached the Bible with the idea that I was the center of God's plan, and I used verses—without taking their context into account—to claim what God had in store for me. My perceptions and my points of view counted for more than the absolute truth of His Word.

That is how I built my own definition of what truth was. If it worked and made me feel good, then it was true for me. If I found a Bible verse that supported what I was doing, then it was right.

For example, this advice was repeated to me often: "If you want to be someone in life, you must work and not depend on anyone." I connected that with what I found in my deceitful heart, which drove me toward ambition. Then I reconciled all that with an idea that seemed biblical to me, such as "The Lord will make you the head and not the tail," and boom! I had created "my truth" about how success should work for a woman.

Of course, this wasn't something that happened consciously. It was just that the pieces I had inside me resulted in the "truths" that defined me.

My lack of appreciation for motherhood originated in the idea that God had called me to do big things, and that if others could help me with that kind of "mundane" thing, then I could focus on empowering myself to pursue greatness and blah, blah, blah. During some of my teenage years, I dressed so others would see me as an evangelical without understanding that, in reality, I was doing it to make myself stand out, so others would notice my "dedication." Later, I found myself using more provocative clothing because, ultimately, no one could judge me. What a fool!



I  
AM  
THE  
TRUTH  
*-Jesus*

---

JOHN 14:6

Do you see how my thoughts informed my decisions? And this did not happen overnight. Just exposing myself to lies, like taking little sips, was slowly poisoning me. Like those occasions when—while flipping through the pages of a magazine in doctors' waiting rooms—I exposed myself to lies about sex. Or watching a commercial encouraging me to think that I deserved everything or a movie that subtly inspired me to feel compassion for a woman who “had reasons” to be unfaithful to her husband. Unfortunately, I did not expose myself to the lies just in the media but also in Christian circles where the truth of the Word of God did not prevail.

Do you see? These are the same thoughts that have repeated throughout history. The lies that infiltrate our hearts and promise to make us feel good. Let's go over the list, and this time mark the ones you've found yourself thinking:

- I define my own truth!
- Don't try to define me by your personal truth!
- No one can judge me.
- The truth is what works for me or makes me feel good.
- The truth is what I have been taught.
- You offend me if you do not accept and respect my truth.
- The truth is relative. Everyone can decide the truth that is “right” for them.
- The truth is subjective. Everyone has the right to define it according to their experience or reasoning.

These thoughts pass silently through our minds, but our actions display their effects. And they all come from the same source: the deceitful words that Satan spoke to the woman. Look at how they are manifested in our times:

- “*Did God really say that?*” His authority is not as radical as you might think. You don't have to take everything literally. Maybe He said this for the people in ancient times. Open your mind, listen to what others think, and make your own conclusions.
- “*You won't die.*” Don't exaggerate! Do you really think that such a good God would send you to hell for something so simple? Follow your heart and do what seems right to you. Things will turn out fine.
- “*You will be like God.*” Just wait and see how good it feels when you empower yourself and live according to your personal truth. Be faithful to yourself and take control of your life.

This is the central message of deceit: “Ignore the truth. Jump on the roller coaster of your own desires and decisions. Enjoy the intensity and adrenaline of sin, and you will find that at the end of the ride, you will be safe and without a scratch.” I have bought this lie more times than I’d like to admit, and what has driven me is my delight in the sin, my poor discernment, and my lack of love for the truth.

## THE TRUTH IS A PERSON

In this complicated mess, how can we define the truth? If, unlike Pilate, we leave cynicism behind and we ask with a pure heart, what would the answer be?

The answer is as simple as it is profound.

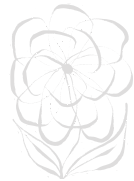
Truth is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God. Even more to the point: Truth is the self-expression of God.<sup>2</sup>

All truth flows from the nature of God. His truth stands forever (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25). His Word is the truth (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17), and Jesus is the visible manifestation of that truth (Colossians 1:15). He is the truth incarnate (John 1:14). Any attempt to define truth without seeking Him and His Word as a reference point will end in error.

Because truth is the self-expression of God, Jesus told Pilate that his purpose was to testify to the truth (John 18:37). He is the path to return to the garden we were cast out of. He is the truth that frees us from the power of lies. He is the life that saves us from death (14:6). He is the light that illuminates our darkness (8:12). Jesus is the truth incarnate that Pilate did not recognize.

This is not a mere philosophical subject. The truth is a person and His name is Christ. The truth of God is absolute. It does not come in half measures, nor does it allow for any negotiation. This is why we reject it, because it is absolute. It does not allow any reasoning that may excuse our sin. It places us either in the light or in the darkness.

**The truth is a person and His name is Christ.**



God’s truth is not passive but rather calls us to action. With Jesus, it is all or nothing. That is how profound His truth is.

Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? (Mark 8:35–36)

Do you see why it is easier to run from the truth? Because we cannot play with it. It not only exposes our sin but also requires everything from us. The seduction of the world, of our sinful desires, and of Satan are much easier because they invite us to give free rein to our passions. And it may seem much more appealing to go with the flow that urges us to live for ourselves and put ourselves on the thrones of our lives. Who wouldn't want to live by their own rules? The only problem is that true life is not found there. It is only an illusion of pleasure, like fireworks that light up but then vanish in the blink of an eye.

And you might think, like I did and like Jesus's disciples did, "These are really tough words! The way of truth is radical!"

Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?" (John 6:60)

But no matter how narrow the door looks (Matthew 7:13–14), do not run from the truth, because eternal life is only in Jesus.

At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you also going to leave?"

Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God." (verses 66–69)

It is my prayer that you may be able to say, like Simon Peter, "To whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life." It is in the person of Christ, in His work on our behalf, in His promises, and in His Word, that we find the truth.

Whether you are exploring the faith, you are a new believer, or—like me—you have been on this path for years, I invite you to assume that you do not know everything. Set your own reasoning down on the table. Listen to Christ and ask God to open your eyes to the truth of His Word, for His Holy Spirit to guide you to the whole truth and conquer any rebellion that may arise against His authority. Then you will see the freedom that can be found when we give ourselves over to the truth!

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.  
(8:32)

I pray that the Holy Spirit gives you a heart on fire for His truth, a deep thirst for the living water, and a renewed passion for His Word. I invite you to take a moment to present yourself before the Lord.

## **Make It Personal**

- How would you define *truth* in your own words?
- Do your actions reflect the thinking of the world or the truth of God's Word?
- While you were reading this chapter, did you identify any lies that you have believed?
- Ask the Lord to reveal the lies you have stored in your heart throughout this journey. Pray the words of Psalm 139:23–24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”
- Ask the Lord to grant you sincere repentance and transform your mind with the truth.



## TWO

### **How Will the Truth Change Me?**

BETSY GÓMEZ

**H**ere is the Bible. Show me where it says that.” These words fell on us like a bucket of cold water in the middle of the night. We were eating dinner at the house of some really close friends, and it was there that we met Lázaro, the first person to challenge our convictions. My husband loves debating issues of faith—with much passion. We both enjoy the conversations, and we always had a biblical answer—or at least we thought so. Our passion for defending our points of view made us appear very convincing, and we won the argument in most cases.

But this night was different. Lázaro’s challenge disarmed us. He left us in a silence revealing that we had no idea where we had gotten that belief we considered biblical and fiercely defended. You cannot imagine how clueless we felt (though we didn’t show it because we wanted to win the argument). But he did know where to find the passage we were referring to.

Reading it carefully was enough to convince us that, in reality, it said the opposite of what we had been thinking. All it took was opening the Bible and reading the entire chapter instead of focusing on a single verse. We could not believe what we were seeing. Our world was turned upside down!

We went home that night with a lot of questions. I wish I could tell you that we were new believers and that we didn’t know much, but my husband and I had been serving as youth leaders in the church for years. Although we both grew up in Christian contexts and loved God, we were holding on to many wrong convictions that we learned from others. Unlike the people in Berea, who respectfully received the teaching but examined everything in the light of the

Scriptures in order to confirm whether it was true (Acts 17:10–11), we took everything for granted and did not verify whether anything we were learning was in line with the Word of God and, even worse, we repeated these things to others.

If it was logical, if it said something impressive, if it made us feel good and seemed biblical or spiritual, then we considered it the truth.

Yes, we knew and believed we were sinners and that Jesus had died on the cross to save us from our sins, but we piled on a mountain of theories and practices that did not come from the Word of God.

God, in His grace, used Lázaro—who is a great friend today—so that we would realize that professing Christ as Lord and Savior requires an absolute submission to the authority of His Word.

From that moment, God brought a revival into our lives, and everything—absolutely everything—changed. That is the effect of the truth.

**Professing Christ as Lord and Savior  
requires an absolute submission to the  
authority of His Word.**



For the first time, we were ready to put our convictions aside so that the Word of God could transform our understanding (Romans 12:1–2). The cost of submitting ourselves to His authority was high, but nothing could compare with the joy we felt from consuming the truth (Jeremiah 15:16; Philippians 3:8). We were like newborn babies, hungry to know more about God (1 Peter 2:2)!

Everything changed. Christian life seemed more colorful, and our hearts were overflowing with fullness. The truth transformed my way of seeing God and how I approached Him. It replaced the lies I had believed about what it meant to be a woman and reshaped my emotions. It shifted my priorities and revolutionized my whole way of living.

When I share this with young people, they often ask me, “How did you change? How do I know if my life isn’t shaped by the truth? What do I have to do to change?”

I wish I could give you three simple steps to help you put your life in order. If only I could jump out of the pages to give you a quick fix. But if I did, I would be leading you down a path of shallow moralism.

Before we dive into how life under the authority of the Word of God works, we need to pass Go. (Ever played Monopoly?) To get to a starting point so we can see where everything truly comes from. The starting point in your journey

to shape your life by the truth is the gospel because the work of Christ is the only gateway to the transformation that you're longing for.

## BAD NEWS

Imagine someone tells you, "We've got some bad news and good news. Which would you like to hear first?" How would you answer? I have always chosen the bad news first, in the hope that the good news would ease the problem. But I admit that when it came to the gospel, I made an exception, and I wanted only the good news.

I was fine knowing that Christ died for my sins and that He had a wonderful plan for me. I knew I was a sinner and needed help, but I didn't understand the reality of my condition. Much less understand the greatness of the holiness of God or the magnitude of my rebellion against this God who condemns sin. The bad news that I learned didn't seem to be so dreadful.

I didn't think of myself as bad because I considered myself a church girl—until the Word of God, like a mirror, showed me the truth. I couldn't believe what it revealed. I thought I was going to see a Caribbean version of *Sleeping Beauty*, but the mirror showed me something else. It showed that I was dead.

Not understanding the depth of my awful condition kept me from appreciating the good news of the gospel. To truly value what Christ did for us, we first need to see the reality of who we are with open eyes. So we must take a look at the dark side and see how the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden broke the communion between God and humankind and damaged everything.

Look at this portrait of our condition without Christ, brought to us by the Word of God (and don't rush through the verses; take the time to find them and read them in your Bible).

- We are living apart from God (Ephesians 2:12; Romans 3:23).
- We are enemies of God (Colossians 1:21; Romans 5:10).
- We are daughters of disobedience (Ephesians 2:1–2).
- We are to delight in and follow the way of this world (Ephesians 2:3).
- We are children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3).
- We are incapable of seeking God and doing good (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:10).
- We are blind and cannot see the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3–4).
- We are dead because of our offenses and sins (Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 2:5).



How awful! This description defines not only the worst of criminals but also the condition of every human being, and we are no exception. Whether we think that we have never messed up or that we are the biggest sinners in history, because of our sin, the only thing we deserve is eternal condemnation and separation from the glory of God (Romans 3:23). In Adam, our sin made us enemies of God—yes, you read that right—enemies! Enemies of the king and creator of everything that exists.

But there is something even darker. Without Christ, we were the object of God's wrath. Can you imagine the force of the wrath of an omnipotent God? Even worse, no matter how hard we tried, we were incapable of doing anything good enough to earn God's approval. So of course there was no way to meet His standard. We weren't able to attain the justice and holiness that God demands. Our sin turned all our works into filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). How depressing!

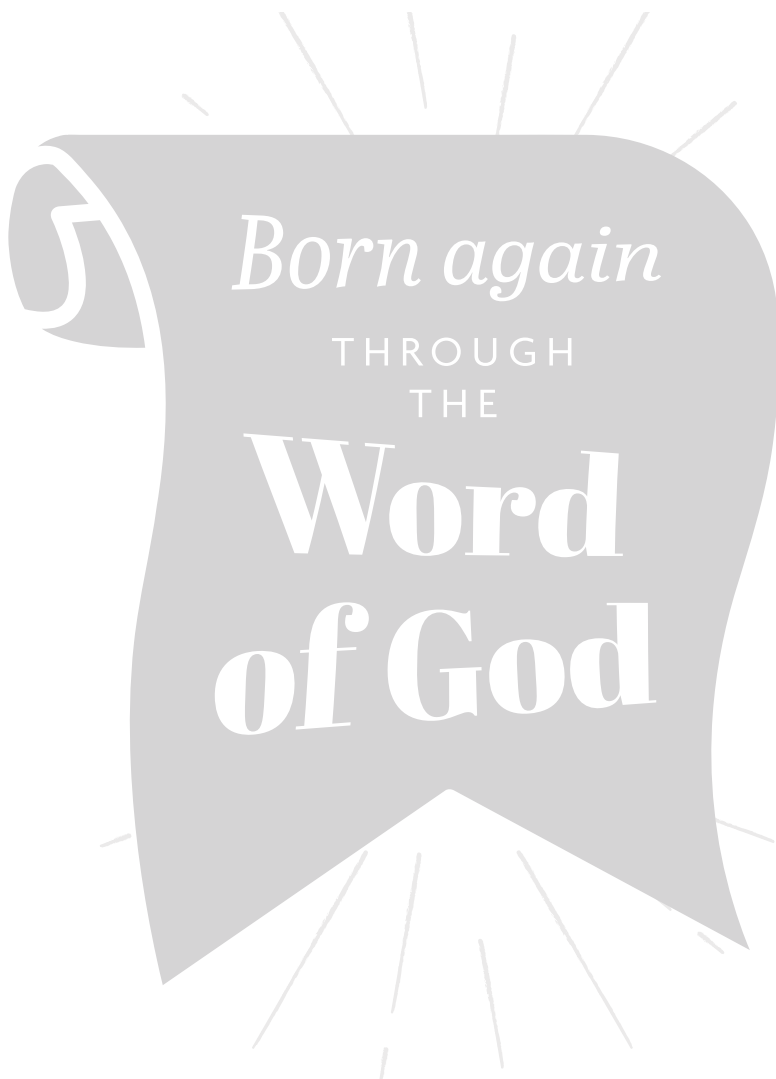
Do you see how dreadful our reality was? A dead person cannot do anything for themselves. We did not need any kind of medicine; we needed a resurrection.

## GOOD NEWS!

Good news please! In the midst of the darkness that sin brought upon humanity, God promised that One would come who would destroy the power of death (Genesis 3:15)—One better than Adam, who would come to save us from our horrendous condition and the consequences we deserved. (What a relief!) And throughout the Scriptures, we see how God lifted up men who pointed to this Savior. Christ is the culmination of the promise of God! He is the truth incarnate, who came to rescue us from the abyss that separated us from God.

From Genesis to Revelation, God's revealed plan is Christ. Every character in the Bible—the ones you probably learned about in Sunday school or in Christian movies—is only a shadow of the best and truest. I love how Pastor Tim Keller summed up how everything points to Him.

- There is a true and better Adam, who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is granted to us. . . .
- There is a true and better Abraham, who answered the call of God to leave everything behind and who went out into the void to form a new people of God.
- There is a true and better Isaac. The son of laughter, of grace, who was not only offered by his father on the mountain but was truly sacrificed for us. . . .



---

I PETER 1:23

- There is a true and better Joseph, who, at the right hand of the King, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.
- There is a true and better Moses, who stepped into the breach between the people and the Lord and is the mediator of a new covenant. . . .
- There is a true and better David, whose victory is turned into the victory of the people, even though they didn't lift a stone. . . .
- There is a true and better Passover lamb: innocent, perfect, defenseless, sacrificed so that the angel of death might pass by.
- He is the true temple, the true prophet, priest and king, the true lamb and sacrifice, the true light, and the true bread.<sup>1</sup>

Do you see how our perspective changes when we see how the whole Bible points to Christ?

The gospel is the culmination of the promise of salvation. It is the good news that in Christ, God sent the solution to the problem of our sin.

What wonderful news! God sent His Son to save us from all condemnation. Jesus came down from His throne and took the form of a servant, similar to us.

**The gospel is the good news that in Christ, God sent the solution to the problem of our sin.**



He lived a perfect life and obeyed God in everything—something that neither you nor I will ever be able to achieve. He followed the 613 laws of the Old Testament. (Yes, you read that correctly, 613!) And being innocent, He took the punishment we deserve for our sins. The Just One went to the cross for our wrongs and died as we should have.

But the story does not end there.

The good news is truly very good because He did not remain in the tomb.

He rose and conquered the power of death. His resurrection is the guarantee that God accepted His sacrifice in our place and granted Him victory over every power.

Jesus lived, died, and rose in our place.

The truth of the gospel not only restores our relationship with God on this earth but also gives us a hope that extends beyond this world. Christ will return and restore all things. Then there will be no more death, suffering, or

sin, only joy in His presence for all eternity. The happy ending that we all wish for!

## HOW DOES THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL TRANSFORM ME?

When we see the truth about our awful condition and the beautiful work of Christ in saving us, all the lies we have believed regarding the gospel disappear. Have you identified any? I have.

I am free from the misconception that the gospel is a list of rules I have to follow to earn my salvation or that it's merely to create a better version of myself. It's not about the prosperity I can gain in this world. It's not just about repeating a prayer on my knees at an altar. I was dead, unable to do anything by myself, and was resurrected by the one who conquered death!

The gospel places me at the foot of the cross because I remember that there is absolutely nothing I can do to deserve or earn such a great salvation. It crushes my pride and humbles me, leading me to recognize that only God is worthy of glory. The gospel helps me to understand that someone without life cannot love, that I love Him now simply because He loved me first (1 John 4:19). It reminds me that my love for Christ is a response to the work He began in me.

## EVERYTHING CHANGES

Do you get it? The truth of the gospel transforms absolutely everything! It changes our desires and priorities; it changes our hearts. It moves us out of the darkness into the light, from error to truth, from death to life.

However, if we are honest, we must admit that there are times when it is not easy to connect the gospel with our everyday lives. It was much easier for me to settle for the superficiality that defined the young women of my generation than to ground my identity in these profound truths.

For many years, I was like a weak tree in a hurricane because I did not feed my roots with the truth spoken about me in God's Word.

Do you know what helped me stand firm when my emotions wanted to deceive me or the pressure of the world was screaming lies about my worth or purpose? Remembering what Christ did, what I am in Him, and all the blessings that He granted me through His salvation.

This is totally countercultural! I want to challenge you to fill your mind with these truths, even if they sound like a Sunday sermon to you. Do you

know why? Because I don't want you to be like an old woman on her deathbed who realizes that, long ago, a relative had left her a millionaire's inheritance and she lived in poverty her whole life out of ignorance. Believing the truth gives you an abundant life!

## HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

Once we've recognized the bad news of our condition and learned the good news of Christ's work, the next question is, How should we respond?

The only way to respond to this good news is by faith. There is no YouTube tutorial. There is no series of steps or shortcuts.

By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9 RSV)

We believe in the gospel by faith, and faith is a gift from God; it is a change of heart. God removes our dead hearts, our hearts of stone, and gives us new hearts that now live for God (Ezekiel 36:26). This is the greatest and most wonderful miracle of all! What a great mystery!

If by now you have realized that you need this change of heart, I want to invite you to pause in order to come before God in repentance. Acknowledge your inability to save yourself and ask Him to give you eyes to see Christ as your Savior. Put all your trust in His sacrifice and power to give you a new life in Him. When God gives us the faith to believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell inside us and enables us to live according to His will. Isn't it incredible, that God, Creator of heaven and earth, would come to dwell in us?

**When God gives us the faith to believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell inside us and enables us to live according to His will.**



If you are now a daughter of God, consider joining in the apostle Paul's plea:

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy  
[*for all that Christ has done on your behalf*], to offer your

bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship [*this is the logical response to such mercy*]. Do not conform to the pattern of this world [*don't imitate the behaviors of this world or be shaped by its patterns*], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [*let the truth of God's Word renew your mind and transform your actions*]. Then you will be able to test and approve [*so that you will know and love*] what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1–2 NIV)

## LIVE IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH

### ***You Belong to a New Kingdom***

In Christ, you are not a slave to sin! In the past, sin commanded us, and we obeyed. We had no choice but to live chained to sin, tripping up on it again and again.

But Christ broke those chains. We are no longer slaves under the control of sin because the same power that resurrected Him from the dead enables us to please God and live in freedom (John 8:36; Romans 8:11). You no longer need to live bound to that sin that secretly robs you of freedom.

You are free!

Christ paid the price of our freedom with His blood. We are no longer slaves (Ephesians 1:7).

### ***You Belong to a New Family***

Sin left us wounded, orphaned, helpless, and unprotected. That's why most young women do whatever they need in order to feel that they belong to something or someone. However, we do not have to chase after an illusion of refuge. God showed His great love for us by choosing us from before the beginning of the world to be His through His Son (Ephesians 1:4–6).

God saved us and adopted us as daughters. He is our Father, and in Him we have everything we need. In Christ, we have been adopted into the family of God (John 1:12). Now the blessings that Christ enjoys as the Son of God are ours because of His obedience on our behalf. We are coheirs with Christ (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7)!

We do not have to beg for the crumbs the world offers. We do not have to seek acceptance anywhere else. We have a place at the table of our Father, the King of Kings. What could be better?

### ***There Are More Blessings!***

Jesus did not just die for us. He also lived a perfect life in our place and, by resurrecting, offered us the greatest exchange there could be. He took our sin-stained garments and gave us His robes of righteousness. A complete transformation! He dressed us in the blessings of His perfect life, death, and resurrection (Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 3:4).

**We do not have to beg for the crumbs the world offers. We have a place at the table of our Father, the King of Kings.**



*We are clothed in the garments of Christ's justice and perfection,* twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:1).

We are free from the exhaustion of trying to please God in order to earn His favor, because all the approval that Christ earned is now ours (Romans 5:1). He erased the D from our report card and inserted the A+ that He had earned. Wonderful! Christ met the standard. He declares us justified.

*We have been separated for God.* It's awesome to know that the holiness of Christ is now our identities and also our callings. When God looks at you, do you know what He sees? The holiness of Christ! Best of all, He does not leave us as we are. He has promised to make us more like Him every day. Is that not great?

When you feel discouraged by your weakness, you can cling to this promise: God is shaping the image of Christ in you.

*We are loved and accepted.* Christ bore all the wrath of God that weighed down on us (Hebrews 2:17; John 3:36). God isn't angry with us! His perfect sacrifice appeased all the wrath that weighed down on our shoulders. Now, instead of fleeing from Him, we can run confidently to His throne, knowing that we will receive the grace and aid we need (Hebrews 4:16).

Christ relieved us of the label that says "Guilty, unjust, slave, orphan, enemy, and dead in sin" and gave us one that says "Free, just, adopted, daughter, risen in Christ."

We have an identity and a purpose! We belong exclusively to God to share the goodness that has taken us out of darkness and brought us into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

I feel like my head is going to explode! These are truths we need to believe and process because they are essential to grounding ourselves in Christ.

The world will shout lies at you about your identity. They will probably

come from the voices of people you admire or sources that seem trustworthy. They will feel like strong gusts of wind, but none of them will knock you down if you stand firm in the truth of what Christ did for you.

Take a moment to meditate on everything Christ has done for you, and ask Him to increase your awe of His mercy and help you align your life with the truth as a result. Pray to be convicted of sin in the areas where you need to repent, and ask Him to help you live in light of the identity He has provided for you. The gospel is the engine that drives everything that we do for God!

## **Make It Personal**

- Do the ideas you consume pass through the filter of the Word of God, or do you rely on your own logic?
- Are you willing to put your convictions aside and submit yourself to the authority of the Word of God?
- Why is the gospel the starting point of our journey to the truth?
- Read Romans 12:1–2. How can you present your life as an offering to God for what He has done for you? In what practical ways can you avoid copying the behavior and ways of this world in your everyday life?