

Series: **Confident Hope**
Today's Title: ***"Discerning What is True"***

May 22, 2022 – 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22

Objective: To help Christians cling to God's truth and live holy lives.

Today is ***National Children's Ministry Day*** - Next Gen Kids - Nursery thru 5th grade.

Director: Kim Berko

Asst. Director: Dani White

Staff / Volunteers: Please Stand

Opening Prayer

Why is Children' Ministry so important?

Why bother with the work, commitment, expense of helping kids learn about the Bible - specifically, about Jesus?

Because, at a young age, gaining a solid, Biblical foundation and knowing the truth about the love and grace of Christ is huge in a person's life and it's crucial to their understanding and faithfulness to God throughout their life.

Especially in their Jr. High and H.S. years.

It's during those years - in our Next Gen Students ministry - that Pastor Scott and the other adult leaders in that ministry work to help students (1) be faithful to Christ in the teenage years, (2) to answer the tough questions they and their friends are starting to ask - and (3) to help them develop a solid foundation for their faith as they enter adulthood and the

challenges of college, work, marriage, and raising their own kids.

Arizona Christian University (in Phoenix), a new study by ACU's *Cultural Research Center*, which is led by George Barna, helps us answer why so many young people are not embracing Christianity.

They found:

“Across all parents of pre-teens, only 2 percent hold a biblical worldview...”

“Fully 94 percent subscribed to “...a blending of multiple worldviews in which no single life philosophy is dominant.”

“The needle scarcely moves for all self-identified Christians (not just pre-teen parents). Only 6% of them look at and interpret the world through a biblical lens; that number rises to 21% among those attending evangelical Protestant churches.”

“All around, we see the results of our abandonment of the biblical worldview. According to CRC research, **more than half of the population accepts that truth is subjective.**

Without objective truth, there is no way to determine what's real and no moral absolutes to distinguish right from wrong. So, we hear the popular “*my truth*” refrain as the justification for any idea or behavior depending upon what feels right at the time.”

<https://thefederalist.com/2022/03/28/why-are-so-many-kids-rejecting-christianity-look-at-their-parents/>

<https://www.arizonachristian.edu/culturalresearchcenter/>

Maybe you're one of those 21% in an evangelical, Protestant church, and you know the value of truth - of God's truth. You know the value of faith - not only in the next life, but in this life.

But this is where we come to a fork in the road in our modern-day culture.

Those who value - prioritize Faith - Religion - Church. Choosing which church to attend can be like looking at the menu at Cheesecake Factory...so many choices!!!!

Overwhelming!! Hard to decide!

I don't envy you.

As a pastor, I don't really have to 'select' a church.

I certainly have to take a close and critical look at a church before I become its pastor - but I don't have to 'church shop'.

The process of finding a church - deciding what church is a good church - is seldom easy - and it can be very confusing, daunting, discouraging, and frustrating.

Of course, there is no perfect church.

So, the standard is not perfection.

The standard is Biblically Faithful.

But it's even more than that. (What does Biblically Faithful mean?)

I tell people when they are moving - or if I know they're looking for a church.

First, I tell them they should come here - to CDOBC.

Second, I tell them they should look for 2 primary things.

1) Make sure the church has a high view of the Bible.

Meaning, make sure the church believes the Bible is God's inspired, authoritative Word.

2) Make sure the church has a high view of Christ. Meaning, make sure the church believes that faith in Jesus is the only way to have forgiveness of sins. Make sure they believe in His deity, His sinless life, miraculous works, atoning death, literal, bodily resurrection, the future return, and eternal reign of Christ.

Unfortunately, in our world today, there are many churches - of all denominations, that do not believe these 2 things.

There are many churches who have walked away from the truth of Scripture - from the inclusive and exclusive nature of the Gospel - and from the high calling and mission of those in the Church.

There are many great dangers in the world that are working and fighting against the Church.

In some countries it is illegal to be a Christian - illegal for Christians to meet together for worship - or for any purpose.

We have just come through a 2-year period where in some states / some cities - it was declared illegal for groups over 20 or 50 to gather together for public worship.

Even when legalities aren't the issue, there are many churches who have distanced themselves from God's Word - from teaching what the Bible teaches if the teaching goes against the popular cultural trends.

One of the taboos in modern-day-America - one of the forbidden things - is for someone to claim 1 thing is right / true - and another thing is wrong / false.

Its taboo to say / believe, that you have spiritual truth, and someone else has spiritual falsehoods / error.

Its taboo to claim something as objective truth - and other options / opinions to be false.

But these are the very things the Bible puts forth.

- The Bible makes no apology for claiming to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God.
- The Bible makes no apology for claiming that the God of the Bible is the only true God, and all other gods are not - they are non-gods.
- The Bible makes no apology for revealing human sin and evil.
- The Bible makes no apology for God's judgment of sin and evil.
- The Bible makes no apology for claiming Jesus is "the way, the truth" and the only way to eternal life and forgiveness of sins.

So, for those of us who follow Christ - who are Christians - we have a job to do - a challenging job in this culture.

Our job: We must discern truth from error.

We must judge when something is wrong - when it is false - and when something is right - when it is true.

Today's passage commands us to do that difficult, culturally taboo - yet essential / vital work of discernment.

Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 - p. 988

We have 2 more sermons to finish this 1st of Paul's letters to the Thessalonian Christians - and then we'll start our study of his 2nd letter to them.

In this closing section Paul has strung together a number of commands - from **vs. 13** through our verses today.

In **vs. 20-22** - there are 4 commands in the Greek.

“Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise prophecies,

but test everything; hold fast what is good.

Abstain from every form of evil.”

Be eager to hear God's truth. vs. 20

This point is the positive implication of **vs. 20**, which Paul states in the negative.

Restating the verse in the negative would be: *Don't ignore or disregard when you hear God's truth.*

“Do not despise prophecies...”

I believe the previous verse - **vs. 19** - which we focused on last week - is important to obeying the command of this verse. If we “quench” or suffocate the Holy Spirit's work in our life, we have a greater chance of despising “prophecies”.

The command of **vs. 19** is not isolated or disconnected from the commands of our verses today.

In Greek, the word order can change - move around to serve the author's intent.

The most important word or idea is put first in the sentence - this is called the '*emphatic*' position.

In this verse, "prophecies" is in the emphatic position.

Lit. - '*prophecies not despise*'

The Greek word - *propheteias* = prophecy, prophesying; the gift of communicating and enforcing revealed truth.

In this context, the people prophesying or communicating God's revealed truth would be those in the Thessalonian church who are teaching God's truth - the truth about Jesus - the truth about salvation.

Paul says, "Do not despise" the truth of God.

Don't ignore it - don't set it aside - don't consider it trivial or worthless - unimportant.

Jesus' ministry was primarily a preaching ministry.

The early church's ministry - the ministry of the Apostles was primarily a preaching ministry.

The church today - the primary ministry of the church - is a preaching ministry, or we can say a proclaiming ministry - in which we proclaim the gospel of Christ.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

“...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

Acts 8:4

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”

Preaching - teaching God's truth - is essential to the faith.

It's one of the primary ways Christians grow in their faith.

It's one of the primary ways non-Christians hear the good news of the Gospel.

The command is clear: Don't despise the teaching / proclaiming of God's truth.

Discern what is true and false. vs. 21

“...but test everything; hold fast what is good.”

Interesting...Paul puts “everything” in the emphatic position.

Lit. *‘Everything however test - to the good hold fast.’*

“Everything” - no matter who says it - no matter how good it sounds - put it to the test!

“test” is a word in the Greek which was used in determining if something was genuine - to determine the quality of precious metals.

This is a rare thing in our culture.

Critical thinking - testing or examining what we see on the TV, social media, or hear on the radio or on a podcast.

This is our job - the Christian's job - to "test" or examine what we hear - and see if it's real - genuine - truthful - in-line with God's truth.

This is exactly what the Bereans did.

After they heard Paul preach, it says they:

Acts 17:11-12

"...received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men."

The N.T. is full of similar warnings and commands.

Matthew 7:15 - *Jesus is speaking*

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Acts 20:28-30 - *Paul, speaking with the elders from Ephesus*

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Ephesians 4:14-15

“...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.
Rather, speaking the truth in love...”

Titus 1:9 - Paul, instructions to Titus for appointing elders

“He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

1 Timothy 6:20

“Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you.”

2 Timothy 1:13-14

“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”

After we test it, and we judge whether it’s true or false, we are to hold fast what is good.”

“hold fast” means to hold onto - take possession of - embrace it - accept it fully - cling to it.

Quite a lesson for many in our world today!

There is such a thing as ‘truth’.

Many deny or dismiss the idea of ‘truth’ - objective truth.

We live in a post-truth culture right now.

Not just post-Christian, but post-truth.

Which is why we can have this:

- Pregnant man emoji.

There are college educated people - people with advanced college degrees - those who are M.D.’s - - who believe / say that a man can get pregnant.

The following is an article I found - doing a simple search.

The website claimed this article was “Medically Reviewed” by a M.D. who is a board certified OBGYN.

The question the article is asking and answering:

Can Men Get Pregnant?

Here is the 1st line of the article.

Is it possible? (*heading*)

Yes, it’s possible for men to become pregnant and give birth to children of their own. In fact, it’s probably a lot more common than you might think. In order to explain, we’ll need to break down some common misconceptions about how we understand the term “man.”

<https://www.healthline.com/health/transgender/can-men-get-pregnant>

I looked at another article that brought some truth to this issue.

Can men become pregnant? (*heading*)

“A person who was born male and is living as a man cannot get pregnant. However, some transgender men and nonbinary people can.”

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/can-men-become-pregnant>

When you dismiss truth - “despise” truth (spiritual, biological) - then you get all sorts of confusion and falsehoods into your life.

That’s an example from culture - but we could come up with other examples from churches - where God’s truth

is dismissed or “despised” - and replaced with what someone thinks is better - a good idea.

Some false teachings are:

- Being made in God’s image means we share in His divine nature.
- Salvation brings health and wealth as the right of all believers (Prosperity Gospel).
- God speaks truth / new truth - directly to leaders.
- That we are living in a 2nd Apostolic Age
- Apostolic Age leaders have supernatural powers - and they can provide new doctrinal revelation.
- Jesus was the only child of Mary - Mary’s perpetual virginity - Mary being sinless - Mary as co-Redemptrix. (Roman Catholic belief)
- Jesus is a created being (Jehovah Witness belief)
- Jesus and Lucifer are brothers (LDS belief)
- A woman gains access to heaven through her husband (LDS belief).

<https://godwords.org/list-of-false-teachers/>

In the church there have been moral codes put forth as Biblical commands - but they were either cultural preferences or someone’s personal preference.

Men with long hair.

Women with short hair.

Women wearing pants.

Smoking or drinking lead you to Hell.

We could go on...and make a very long list.

As Christians, we are commanded to:

- Be eager to hear God's truth.
- Test what we hear - is it true? Does it agree with God's revealed truth?
- Hold on tight to what is good!!

Jay Adams, a man who had many letters after his name - he was a pastor, author, seminary professor, denominational leader, and he was the founder of various Christian counseling organizations.

He wrote a book in 1987 titled, A Call for Discernment, Distinguishing truth from error in today's church.

"From the garden of Eden with its two trees, one allowed and one forbidden, to the eternal destiny of the human being in heaven or in hell, the Bible sets forth two and only two ways: God's way and all others.

Accordingly, people are said to be saved or lost. They belong to God's people or the world. There was Gerizim the mount of blessing and Ebal the mount of cursing.

There is the narrow way and the wide way. One leads to eternal life, the other to eternal destruction. There are those who are against and those who are with us. There are those within and those without. There is life and

death, truth, and falsehood, good and bad, light and darkness, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. There's love and hate, spiritual wisdom, and the wisdom of the world. Christ is said to be the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him. He is the only name under the sky by which one may be saved."

Christian - we need to realize - there is a right - and there is a wrong.

There is objective truth.

God commands us to discern what is true - from what is false.

Colossians 2:7-8

"...rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

H.S. Graduates - You are entering a phase of life where your faith will be challenged. You must decide if you will embrace Jesus - embrace the truths of Christianity for yourself.

Up until now, for most of you, your parent's faith is what has sustained you and kept you in the church.

But over the next few years, you will begin making decisions which will determine the course of your life over the coming years.

Will you use your mind and think?

Will you obey the commands we have before us today?

Will you be eager to hear God's truth - or will you start despising the truth of God?

Will you test everything you're presented with - will you sift it through the screen of God's Word?

Or will you be open to all sorts of human philosophies and traditions - theories and high-sounding rhetoric that pretends to be intelligent and truthful?

1 Timothy 6:20

"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge..."

Ephesians 5:6

"Let no one deceive you with empty words..."

It's up to every follower of Christ to discern what is true, embrace what is true, and reject what is false.

God's truth leads you to holy living. vs. 22

"Abstain from every form of evil."

"Abstain" = stay away from - have nothing to do with.
Pretty clear.

It's not *'How close can I get to it without crossing the line.'*

It's stay completely away - walk the other direction.

But notice...there are multiple forms of evil!

“...every form of evil”.

When you are eager to hear God’s truth.

When you test what you hear against God’s truth - and then cling to what is good.

You have an advantage toward holiness, but you can still choose evil.

We have the crazy ability to know truth - to be convinced of truth - and still choose evil - sin - the flesh!
So, Paul gives a 4th command: “Abstain” - stay away from evil!

Apply it...

Value God’s truth.

Don’t despise His truth. Test everything you hear / see.

Cling to God’s truth.

Hold on tightly to His truth. It’s not just someone’s opinion!

Obey God’s truth.

“Abstain from every form of evil.”

God’s truth should impact how we live - our attitude and actions.

Close in prayer