

“The Key to Overcoming Division Is...”

Description

“The Key to Overcoming Division Is...”

A study related to the SDA
Sabbath School Lesson for 2021, 3rd Quarter
The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant
Week 3
by Mary Zebrowski
Edited by Trent Wilde

This week’s lesson is entitled, “The Roots of Restlessness.” “Restlessness,” in this week’s lesson, is synonymous with sin basically. The lesson this week looks at division, selfishness, ambition, and hypocrisy. Then Thursday’s lesson asks,

“What is the key to overcoming division, selfishness, ambition, hypocrisy, and truly finding rest?” Sabbath School Quarterly Lesson, Thursday, July 15, 2021

To answer this question, we thought that John 17:17 was a good place to start because it really holds the key to overcoming these issues, not only in ourselves but in our church. We invite you to stay with us and see if you agree.

John 17:17 reads,

¹⁷ “Sanctify them [set them apart] by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

So, here we can see the key to being set apart for holiness, and that is ultimately through the truth.

Now many think that God’s word is truth *because* God spoke it, but it actually is much deeper than that.

Let’s consider something for a moment. Is it true that Judas betrayed Jesus? I’m sure you’ll agree that it is true – Judas really did betray Jesus. But why is it true? If we say it is true because the word of God says it happened, we run into a problem. The fact is, there were a number of years between the actual event of Judas betraying Jesus, and the time it was written down. Was the statement “Judas betrayed Jesus” true in those intervening years? Obviously yes. What this shows us is that the reason why the statement is true isn’t that the Word of God says it’s true – it is because it actually happened in reality. The fact that it was written isn’t what made it true – the writing just recorded something that was already true. This is just one example, but if you think of it, you’ll easily be able to come up with many more. The fact is, something is true before it is spoken or written. This is the case even for God. God’s word is truth because what He says is true, not because He, in particular, said it.

The truth is actually not dependent on God. It is outside of God, and this is really a powerful and amazing thing! God's word, again, is truth simply because He relays that truth to us in His word.

So let's get back to the rest of John 17:17 – the part about us being “sanctified” by the truth.

The Greek word for “sanctify” here is synonymous with being dedicated, consecrated, or set apart. The translator notes in the NET for this verse says that “the sphere in which the disciples are to be set apart is in the truth.”

So again, God's word *contains* the truth, but remember, something is true before it is spoken, written, or even thought about. So how do we know what is true? Well, as we have talked about in other videos, the Truth is whatever comports with material reality.

For example, if I said you are sitting next to me right now, you could know that this is a lie, it is false because in material reality you are not sitting with me right now. This is why it is not true. It does not comport with material reality, and no matter who says you are sitting next to me right now, that wouldn't make it true. It would be false no matter who said it, no matter how many people believe it. Even if God said this, it would be false.

Now to be clear, I'm not saying that God would ever lie, and therefore He would not ever say that you are sitting with me right now if you are not. But, His word is truth *only* because He *only* speaks what is true, not because it is true by the power of Him saying it. Basically, even if God said you were sitting with me right now, assuming you are not of course, that would not inherently make it true.

Satan has twisted the understanding of what makes something true by twisting the understanding of scriptures like these. If you experience “division, selfishness, ambition, and hypocrisy” in your life or in your church, as the lesson assumes you do, the misunderstanding of the meaning of “truth” as it relates to “God's Word” is probably at the root of it. To prove this point, let's look at a group of undivided, selfless, and genuinely righteous individuals who are set apart (sanctified) from the rest of the world. These people are brought to view in Revelation 7 and 14, and, as we will see, the key to their sanctified condition is in knowing and acting according to what is truth.

This group, of course, is the 144,000. Let's look at some statements about them in Revelation and the writings of Ellen White.

Revelation 14:5 reads,

⁵ And in their [the 144,000's] mouth was found no deceit [no falsehood], for they are without fault before the throne of God. NKJV

The NASB reads,

⁵And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless. NASB

Ellen White adds,

“The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united.” Early Writings, p. 15

So again, here we see the 144,000 have no division among them, and there is no falsehood found in them. The truth is what unifies these people.

I have heard sermons on unity, and the solution given for the problem of division was to basically allow for differences in brotherly love. While it is important to allow for differences in many things, we should never let allowance for differences come at the expense of the truth. To act together on the basis of truth requires a shared understanding of truth. If we are part of a group with many different beliefs as to what is true, well, we can't really be a cohesive group.

Imagine a military composed of soldiers with different opinions on who the enemy is, or what the strategy should be. Basically, this is very similar to the condition of the church today. We are in the midst of the Great Controversy between God and Satan, and Satan has us so confused that we mostly fight against each other.

Unity comes by knowing the truth. And the truth must be understood through evidence. If we do not know something to be true, based on evidence, we should not believe it. It is not commendable to God that we have “blind faith.” Our faith must be based on evidence, and this evidence, if it is legitimate evidence, will be sufficient for all to be certain of it.

Now, as I always say, don't get hung up on the number. Yes, 144,000 is a definite number. This can easily be seen by looking at the description of the “Great Multitude” in the very next verse of Revelation 7. If John meant to indicate that the 144,000 were a larger and indefinite number, he could have said so, as he did for the “Great Multitude.”

With that said, John also said that the 144,000, although a definite number, are only the first fruits. Where there is a first, there is a second. But the second fruits, the “Great Multitude,” will be equally united, also having no lie found in their mouths. They too will be sanctified by the truth. So, either way, whether the first or second fruits, the condition for being among them is the same.

Now, this begs the question, with all the division among us, all the sincere differences in beliefs concerning all kinds of things: women's ordination, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, etc., how will we ever come to know the truth for certain?

Well, Ephesians 4 has the answer. It reads,

¹ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. Ephesians 4:1-6

This again sounds like what we ultimately want! Since we just showed that in order to have this unity and love, we must know the truth, we must ask, “What is the key to knowing the truth and spreading the truth to others?” Paul continues with the prescription. It is to be attained by having all of the spiritual gifts active in the church. He says,

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ...

¹¹ And He Himself [Jesus] gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ *till we all come to the unity of the faith* and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, *speaking the truth* in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:7, 11-16

So here, we can see that the spiritual gifts are given to unify us, so we can speak the TRUTH in love. They are to exist in the church until, as verse 13 says, “we all come to the unity of the faith, and all come up to the stature of the fullness of Christ.” We are not there yet, as the Sabbath School question for Thursday admits.

And what are these gifts as delineated in verse 11? Well, first of all, apostles, second, prophets, third, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Now, we know that our church is full of professed evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but not many would profess to be an apostle or prophet. Yes, we had Ellen White, who was both apostle and prophet (she said that her “work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies” – see Selected Messages, Vol 1, p. 32, and the only office higher than prophet both here in Ephesians 4 and in 1 Corinthians 12:28, is apostle), but she is gone now. The purpose of the people of God having a prophet is for God to have a spokesperson through whom to speak. This is the way designed by God to teach us how to find out what the truth is, and also to tell us about the truth about Him and His plans for the future.

Yes, God teaches us – through His spokesperson – how to find out what the truth is. Basically, God teaches us principles of truth. Actually, Ellen White said that the reason Jesus came was for this very purpose. She said,

“He [Jesus] came to live the law of God, because Satan was bringing his power to bear upon men, and his lying fallacies were all the time pressing upon them.” Ellen White, 1 SAT, 241.1

A fallacy is basically an error in reasoning. Part of how Jesus saves us from these lying fallacies is to teach us how to reason rightly to arrive at the right conclusion. He does this by the Holy Spirit speaking through a living spokesperson – a prophet – to guide us into all truth. This is actually what the Spirit of Prophecy is. See our study, [“What is the Spirit of Prophecy? SDA Edition”](#) for more information. In this way, we can be made right – or righteous, if you will. He had to do this, again – as Ellen said, because Satan is trying to do just the opposite of this. Satan is pressing his lying fallacies all the time upon us. That is, he is encouraging faulty reasoning skills in our ways of thinking.

One important principle of truth is that, in order to ensure that our reasoning is sound, we need to check it against material reality by means of scientific experiment. Scientific experiment is how we test anything to see if it is true, even God’s word, as the Apostle Paul admonished us as recorded in Acts 17, and as David recommended in Psalm 34:8, and as Ellen White taught us in [Testimonies Volume 3, chapter 29, “Experience Not Reliable.”](#)

When we know the truth through scientific experiment interpreted via sound reasoning, there is no tossing to and fro. We can then truly know and understand what God is telling us about Himself and His plans. We will know the truth for sure, so we can be certain of it, whatever it is, and therefore be able to be united in it, just like the 144,000 and the Great Multitude will be!

We believe there is a prophet living among us today, through whom the Holy Spirit is active, giving fresh messages of truth for the present – present truth for today’s circumstances. Won’t you investigate this claim for yourself? Won’t you do the scientific experiment on this claim? If you would like to do that, we have provided links in the description below to the studies, [“What is the Spirit of Prophecy, SDA Edition,”](#) and [“The King of Crises in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,”](#) both by [Trent Wilde](#), and to [other video studies](#) for you to check out.