

M 2 · WEEK FIVE

Zeitgeist

Understanding our place in history — the spirit of the age, the foundations of truth, and the hope we are called to carry into it.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What is truth?

WEEK FIVE

The battle for truth

ZEITGEIST · GERMAN

The spirit or mood of a particular culture as defined by their ideas and beliefs of the time.

ESTHER 4:14 · NIV

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

2 CORINTHIANS 4:4 · ESV

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There is a battle for truth today. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" in **John 18:38**. That question still resonates. The John Thomas Scopes trial ran from July 10 to July 21, 1925, and though Scopes was found guilty of teaching evolution — which was against the law at the time — and ordered to pay a \$100 fine, the trial was more of a stage. What was really on trial was the fundamental Christian belief in Creation versus Science. Attorneys argued that there should be a separation of Church and State, and since schools are funded by the State, then they shouldn't be teaching fundamental Christian beliefs.

The consequence of that trial has been that evolution has been taught in our school systems and colleges for nearly 100 years. The predominant curriculums today teach that evolution is a fact, and not just an alternative belief to Creation.

WEEK FIVE

Cultural norms

We tell our children that Santa, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy are real, and then expect them to decipher the difference between the Gospel and fairy tales. We've created a

paradox within our culture that now questions everything and lacks a foundational truth spectrum through which to accurately view God, Creation, and our world.

I'm not condemning anyone who plays the Santa game; I did it with my children when they were young. But looking back, I wish I hadn't. Santa has godlike qualities — he's benevolent and magically travels to every child's home across the world in one night. He also judges between "naughty" and "nice" children. Personally, I wish I had taught my children that Santa was a "game" we play, and not tried to convince them that he was real. I should have read the Word to them more. That should have been the priority in my home, not the American tradition of Santa or other "traditions."

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9 · NIV

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts. And you shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as reminders on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Our job as men is to hold fast to the Word of God and pass it on to our children. There are plenty of competing voices for "truth" in the world today. The world will tell you that there are more than two binary sexes; the world denies that there is a God; or if it admits to His existence, it diminishes Him, His Creation, and denies the deity of Jesus. You must decide what you believe. You must decide what truth you pass on to your children. After taking inventory, I decided that what I knew about God was truth.

WEEK FIVE

Foundations of truth

There are many truths you could list out if you took the time. The list below is short, but a firm foundation to build a life upon. If we use these truths and use the Word of God as the litmus test for every motive, action, directive, and pursuit, then our lives will be calibrated to the will of God.

- There is one God, and He loves me.
- God is holy. He cannot lie. He cannot sin.
- Every word of the Bible is true.
- The Gospel of Jesus is true.
- Jesus is the only way to heaven. There is no other way.
- Heaven and Hell are real places.
- We are eternal creations, and we will spend eternity in either Heaven or Hell.

- We wrestle not against flesh and blood (**Ephesians 6:12**).
- God and Jesus are more powerful than all the powers of evil. Jesus has all authority on earth and in heaven.
- God desires good things for me.
- God is love. He loves me right where I am.
- Jesus died for all my sin. There is nothing He left undone when He gave His life for me. *All* my sins are forgiven — past, present, and future.
- There is a purpose to my life. My existence isn't by accident.
- The paramount purpose of my life is to help build God's eternal Kingdom.
- God has equipped me with talent and skills to help me fulfill that purpose.
- Everything bad that has ever happened to me wasn't God's design. Anger at God is misdirected anger.
- The fulcrum of the Gospel of Christ is forgiveness. I play a part in that, in that I must ask for and receive forgiveness from God.
- My required response to the forgiveness God has given me is to forgive others.
- What others may have meant for harm, God can use for good.
- The Holy Spirit is my teacher, my guide, my counselor, and my friend.

We will not fall for the deception the world sets forth as truth. We will not pursue worthless things that will pass away. Our hearts will pant for eternity. Our lives will have purpose and meaning. We aren't called to argue a person into heaven, but we are called to know the truth and be ready to share the good news that we have found in Christ (**1 Peter 3:15**).

WEEK FIVE

Zeitgeist beliefs

Here is a set of modern belief systems of which we must be cognizant. **Postmodernism** says: *I define truth. Each has his own truth. Your truth may not be my truth. Since I define truth, I therefore define God.*

17%

of adult Christians in the U.S. believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

28%

of Christians believe in the "New Spirituality" — that all people pray to the same god or spirit, no matter what name they use for that spiritual being.

27%

believe that meaning and purpose come from becoming one with all that is (pantheism).

32%

believe that if you do good, you will receive good; if you do bad, you will receive bad.

SOURCE · BARNA GROUP, 2018

The world is full of false religions, systems, ideologies, and beliefs. It is the plan of the enemy of our souls to confuse, to dilute, and to turn people away from God. Why? Because Lucifer has denied God, rejecting Him and His goodness and mercy. The enemy cannot love because he has no part of God in him, for God is love. When we think about the attributes of God, we can easily see that a creation that opposed God and has lost everything good God originally gave him is a depraved, hateful, scorned, and jealous creation. Lucifer is the opposite of God because God left him to his own depravity.

When the gates finally close and Hell is sealed for eternity, all hope, all love, all joy, all peace, and every good and perfect gift that God has given will be removed from those in Hell, and they'll be there for eternity without a trace of God. Not because God wants it that way — for it is His will that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9). People will spend eternity in Hell because they've rejected God's grace, rejected the Gospel and Jesus, and have decided to pay for their own sin.

We tend to resemble our parents physically, but our personality and our traits tend to resemble those around us. If we adopt an infant from India and bring her to America, she won't speak Hindi unless you speak it. She won't dress the way they do in India; she will dress the way you do. She will acclimate to her surroundings and become a part of her culture. As the world denies God and moves away from Him, it will come to resemble Him less and less. As that occurs, people will be drawn to our salt and light. God's goodness should shine through His people. Our job is to be the hands and feet of Jesus and to be His reflection in a world that needs Him.

WEEK FIVE

Zeitgeist fear

There is a pervasive undercurrent of fear in the world today. Fear seems to be a driver of a great deal of human behavior. According to the National Institute of Health, 31.1% of Americans will have an anxiety episode sometime in their lives. Yet Americans have a better per-capita standard of living than most people in the world, and there hasn't been a war fought on our soil since the Civil War.

What is the driving force behind the fear and anxiety that seems so pervasive in our society today? It's the lack of trust in God. Even Christians suffer from fear, but this shouldn't be the case. The words "Do not fear" appear 365 times in the Bible — one for every day of the year.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 · NKJV

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

The Bible addresses fear and tells us not to be afraid. As Christians, we know how the world ends. We should take comfort in knowing the endgame, while we're still living it out. Here are some of the current pervasive fears of the age:

- Famine
- Nuclear threat
- Global warming
- Crime
- Ozone depletion
- Natural disasters
- End of America
- Asteroids hitting the earth
- Global overpopulation
- Natural-resource depletion
- Terrorism
- Wars
- Economic crash
- End of the world

You may read this list and think, "Gee, thanks — I forgot what I was supposed to be worried about until you mentioned them." We have a good Father who loves us, cares for us, and provides for us. When we're in His will, nothing on this list should bother you. In fact, for God's children, there are promises we can run to.

PSALM 37:18–19 · NKJV

The Lord knows the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

Furthermore, in **Psalm 138:8** the Bible says, "The LORD will work out his plans for my life — for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever." God has a plan. Does that mean we won't suffer? Absolutely not. But it does mean that our suffering will not be in vain. Our suffering will be used to fulfill His purposes. Recall what we learned last week in **Proverbs 12:21**, which says that "no harm befalls the righteous" (Berean Study Bible). The original Hebrew word for "harm" is *aven*, which means "no meaningless, purposeless affliction." God's purposes are going to be fulfilled, and when we decide that we trust Him enough to allow His purpose to be fulfilled in our lives, we step into an eternal perspective. We understand that bad things will happen because we live in a fallen world, but these momentary and light troubles — as Paul describes them — aren't as painful, because our hope and our focus are on eternal things.

However, we shouldn't condemn or judge others for being afraid. It would be incredibly scary to live in a world where we had no hope. I can't imagine what they go through, not knowing or believing in God.

QUESTION

Do I trust God with my future?

WEEK FIVE

Anti-Zeitgeist perspective

We have a foundation of truth that we can build a life upon.

PSALM 1:1–3 · BSB

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does.

We shouldn't be afraid of the future. We shouldn't be afraid of the times in which we live, for we were made for "such a time as this." Each and every one of us was specifically made for these days. God has a purpose for you, and one of them is to share the hope that you have. So many people are afraid today,

and you have the opportunity to share with them why you're at peace.

1 PETER 3:15 · NIV

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

The only way someone would ask you why we have hope is if we demonstrate hope.

WEEK FIVE

The prophesy

I know when Jesus is coming back. He told us in His Word. Many people say they know, but I know for certain. We all actually play a part in *when* Jesus will return. Here it is:

MATTHEW 24:14 · NIV

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Sorry to disappoint you if you thought I was going to toss a date out there. I don't know the date or the time. No one does. I only know that my job — and your job, if you'll take it on — is to spread the good news.

JOHN 3:16 · NKJV

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

God placed the desire to spread good news within you. We don't have to be coaxed to tell people about a great restaurant or movie; we shouldn't be ashamed to tell others about the hope that we have in Jesus.

WEEK FIVE

Week Five summary

The world's foundational beliefs aren't based in the Word. We have a foundational truth that guides us. We have a hope that the world does not have. We have not been given a spirit of fear.

Regardless of the economy or the geopolitical landscape, God is still sovereign. About 2,000 years ago, Pilate asked, "What is truth?" That question is more poignant than ever. We should be ready to give the world the good news — the hope that we have in the Gospel. We should live in such a way that others see hope in us.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. God did not give us a spirit of fear.
2. We are more than conquerors.
3. We are sons of the King.
4. The word "Gospel" means "good news" — the war is won.
5. We have a place in history.
6. Do not worry about the one who can kill the body (**Matthew 10:28**).
7. God wants to prosper us, not harm us (**Jeremiah 29:11**). There was the land of Goshen in the Exodus during the plagues of Egypt — the Israelites didn't feel the wrath of God, and Revelation states that the elect won't either.
8. The wealth of the wicked will be laid up for the righteous (**Proverbs 13:22**).
9. God appointed our leaders just as He appointed Caesar and Pilate (**John 19:11**).
10. We should be ready to share the hope that we have (**1 Peter 3:15**).