



Lesson Guide

Lesson 1 - Veritology: What is Truth?

Introduction

In this initial episode, students receive a general introduction to the overall scope and purpose of *The Truth Project*. This series is designed to take participants on a guided *worldview tour*, following the points of the *worldview compass*, a tool designed to direct our thinking with regard to four fundamental issues: Truth, God, Man, and the Social Order. Along the way, we will attempt to build a logical, systematic framework of ideas by which to organize and evaluate the various truth claims to be encountered during the course of our tour. Our ultimate goal is not simply to gain knowledge, but to look upon the face of God – and to be *transformed* in the process.

Themes

Our destination in Lesson 1 lies due North. The focal point for this first hour of discussion is the concept of *Truth* itself. What is truth? Why is it important? What role does it play in the biblical view of the world, God's purpose for the cosmos, His will for mankind, His plan of salvation, and the way we live our personal lives? In his comments on this subject, Dr. Del Tackett will demonstrate how *truth* was fundamental to the mission of Jesus Christ in the world; how it forms the heart of the *Cosmic Battle* that has been raging since the beginning; how this battle has divided the world into two opposing camps or sides; how lies, the antithesis of Truth, take human hearts and minds captive by the power of deception; and how every man and woman now stands in the position of having to choose between God's truth claims and the opposing perspective of the world, the flesh, and the devil. To answer the question "what is truth?" Dr. Tackett consults the 1828 edition of Webster's Dictionary which defines truth as "Conformity to fact or reality..." We will also see how popular notions of truth (represented by man on the street interviews) contrast sharply with the biblical concept (as articulated by Ravi Zacharias, Os Guinness, and R. C. Sproul).

Points to Watch For

Dr. Tackett concludes that, in almost every case, the perspective of contemporary culture stands in direct opposition to the Truth-centered worldview presented in the Bible. In the process of making this case, he advances the bold claim that our culture is not only filled with lies but is actually heading in the direction of social insanity. As a result, he proposes that Pilate's query – "What is truth?" – is *the* most important question facing our society today. He ends Lesson 1 by challenging his audience with this all-important question: "***Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?***"

Discussion Questions (Pick 3 or 4 for your discussion time)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don't just "read" them, but become familiar with them so that they don't appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them. This is where we are praying that God will bring your group together and that He will continue to speak to them and bring about the transformation that we all are trusting God to perform in your people.)

1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask)

- A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items: Isaiah's encounter with God; being exposed; seeing our culture exposed; the idea of a comprehensive and systematic biblical worldview; why Jesus said He was born; scriptural evidence of the importance of Truth; the cosmic battle; connection between sin, lies, and deceit; equating an idol to a lie; common insanity; Jesus dealing with worry; what is faith; faith like a child; our actions reflect what we believe to be really real; do you really believe that what you believe is really real. [Add your own]
- B. Ask your guests to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.
- C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.
- D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

2) **Jesus stated plainly that He had come into the world "to testify to the truth" (John 18:37). Exactly what did He mean by this, and how is this claim connected with those other aspects of Jesus' mission – for example, forgiveness, salvation, redemption, and healing – that we more naturally associate with the ultimate purpose of His advent?** (Jesus identified Himself as "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" [John 14:6]. In other words, He *is*, as the Eternal *Logos* and the Incarnate Word of God, the Definition and Embodiment of Ultimate Reality. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 states, "God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the spirit and the belief in truth." This scripture reveals that salvation is a result of a person's belief in God's truth claims.)

3) **How does one's concept of *truth* affect or determine one's concept of *faith*?** (Genuine biblical faith has to have an *object*. It cannot be simply "faith in faith." Our faith is only as real and as strong as the *objective truth* upon which it is based.)

4) **What is the *key point of distinction* between the biblical concept of truth and popular cultural ideas about truth? How is this point related to the concept of *insanity*?** (Here again we are referring to the definition of truth as "conformity to fact or reality" [Webster's 1828 Dictionary]. Truth has reference *not* to our subjective imagination but to that which *really exists* external to ourselves. *Insanity*, by definition, is the denial or loss of touch with objective reality.)

5) **Read 2 Timothy 2:24, 26 and Colossians 4:5, 6. Why does Paul advise believers to be "gentle" rather than "quarrelsome" in their dealings with outsiders? How does our understanding of the *Cosmic Battle* affect the way we relate to non-believers?** (We deal

gently with non-believers because we understand that, within the context of the *Cosmic Battle*, they have actually been taken *captive* by the deceptive power of lies. There is a supernatural dimension to the conflict in which we are engaged. Ultimately, we cannot free anyone from this captivity by argumentation, but by helping them come to a belief in God's truth claims - See Luke 4:16-21 and Isaiah 61:1-2.)

6) Dr. Tackett poses the question, "Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?" How can we know what we *really* believe?

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "To believe is to obey and to obey is to believe." Our actions and behavior are the most reliable index to our beliefs. If we are convinced that certain propositions are true, we will behave accordingly. You have a belief system, whether you realize it or not, and our lifestyle often contradicts the beliefs we claim to hold.)

Expert Biography: Ravi Zacharias

Founder of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, for more than three decades Ravi Zacharias has spoken all over the world. Born in India in 1946, Zacharias immigrated to Canada with his family twenty years later. He received his Masters of Divinity from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois.

In discussing the relevance and value of Focus on the Family's The Truth Project, Zacharias remarked, "The single most important question any human being can ask is the question, 'What is truth?' ... The question of truth, and training minds in how to approach truth, is of importance that cannot be gainsaid." Underscoring the confusion in popular culture regarding truth, Zacharias continued, "The world is reeling with uncertainty, it's almost like it's in the air."

A prolific author, Zacharias has been a visiting scholar at Cambridge University, where he studied moralist philosophers and literature of the Romantic era. While at Cambridge he authored his first book, *A Shattered Visage: The Real Face of Atheism* (Baker). His second book, *Can Man Live without God* (Word Publishing, 1994), was awarded a Gold Medallion. *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Word, 2000) compares Jesus with the founders of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Zacharias also served as general editor of a revised edition of Walter Martin's book *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Bethany House, 2003). In 2006 he coauthored *Walking From East to West: God in the Shadows* (Zondervan).

His weekly radio program, "Let My People Think," is broadcast over 1500 stations worldwide. Ravi and his wife, Margie, have three grown children: Sarah, Naomi and Nathan.

Recommended Resources*

- *Jesus Among Other Gods*
- *Can Man Live Without God*
- *Deliver Us From Evil: Restoring the Soul in a Disintegrating Culture*
- *The Lotus and the Cross: Jesus Talks with Buddha*
- *The Lamb and the Fuhrer: Jesus Talks with Hitler*
- *Walking From East to West: God in the Shadows*

- **Links+**

Ravi Zacharias International
Ministries <http://www.rzim.org/>

"Let My People Think" radio program

http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/Let_My_People_Think/

<http://www.rzim.org/ravi.php>

* Inclusion of an item in the Recommended Resources section does not constitute an endorsement of all the content in a resource.

+ Referrals to sites not produced by Focus on the Family are for informational purposes only, and do not constitute an endorsement of the sites' content.

Expert Biography: R.C. Sproul

Dr. R.C. Sproul is the founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries—an organization that provides biblical and theological training for laypeople—and can be heard teaching daily on the "Renewing Your Mind" radio broadcast on more than 300 radio outlets in the United States and throughout 60 countries.

In his endorsement of Focus on the Family's The Truth Project, Sproul says, "My deepest longing for the church in our day is to find out who God is—not that He is, but who He is—to once again put our focus on His character and on His nature. We don't know who we are until we understand who God is."

Of particular relevance to The Truth Project, R.C.'s vision is for Christians to apply truth to every sphere of their lives. "I dream of a new reformation," he says, "a reformation that is not simply a renewal of life but a new vision of life: a vision that yields new forms and structures in society and culture. As long as Christians restrict their Christianity to a religion, a faith that is compartmentalized and isolated from life, they can have revival but never, ever reformation. We need to hear and do the Word of God in all of our lives."

Dr. Sproul has written more than 60 books and has authored scores of magazine articles for evangelical publications as well as being editor of the Reformation Study Bible.

Currently, Dr. Sproul serves as Senior Minister of Preaching and Teaching at Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Florida. Dr. Sproul's passion has always been lay education—specifically, the kind of in-depth educational resources Christian laypeople desperately need but often can't find.

Sproul holds degrees from Westminster College, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, the Free University of Amsterdam and Whitefield Theological Seminary. Dr. Sproul has served as a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Knox Seminary, Westminster Seminary/California, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Recommended Resources*

- *The Holiness of God*
- *Knowing Scripture*
- *One Holy Passion: The Consuming Thirst to Know God*
- *Renewing Your Mind: Basic Christian Beliefs You Need to Know*
- *The Consequences of Ideas: Understanding the Concepts That Shaped Our World*
- *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics*
- *Not a Chance: The Myth of Chance in Modern Science and Cosmology*

- **Links+**
Ligonier Ministries <http://www.ligonier.org/>
Saint Andrew's Chapel <http://www.saintandrewschapel.org/>
Reformation Study Bible <http://www.reformationstudybible.com/>
- **Sources**
<http://www.ligonier.org/history.php>
<http://www.saintandrewschapel.org/staff/rcsproul.php>
<http://www.nelsonministryservices.com/nms/bio.asp?cid=606>

- * Inclusion of an item in the Recommended Resources section does not constitute an endorsement of all the content in a resource.
- + Referrals to sites not produced by Focus on the Family are for informational purposes only, and do not constitute an endorsement of the sites' content.

Expert Biography: Os Guinness

Dr. Os Guinness is a writer and speaker living in Northern Virginia.

In endorsing Focus on the Family's The Truth Project, Dr. Guinness said, "Of all the issues today ... truth would be major because the crisis of truth strikes at the heart of faith, it strikes at the heart of freedom and it strikes at the heart of humanity. Without truth we have no biblical faith."

Born in China during World War II where his parents were medical missionaries, Guinness remained there until 1951 when the communists forced most foreigners to leave. Since then he has lived mostly in England, Switzerland, and the United States.

Educated in England, he did undergraduate studies at the University of London, and postgraduate studies at University of Oxford where he graduated with a D.Phil in the social sciences from Oriel College.

Since 1984, he has lived in the Washington, D.C. area. He was a Guest Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies and then a Guest Scholar and Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution. From 1986-1989 he was the Executive Director of the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, one of the drafters of the Williamsburg Charter, and coauthor of the public school curriculum Living With Our Deepest Differences. He is currently the Senior Fellow of the

Trinity Forum, a seminar-style forum for senior executives and political leaders that engages the leading ideas of our day in the context of faith. He is a member of The Falls Church, Episcopal, in Falls Church, Virginia.

His deep concern is to bridge the chasm between academic knowledge and popular knowledge, taking things that are academically important and making them intelligible and practicable to a wider audience.

Recommended Resources*

- *The Dust of Death: The Sixties Counterculture and How It Changed America*
- *The American Hour: A Time of Reckoning and the Once and Future Role of Faith*
- *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It*
- *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*
- *Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype and Spin*
- *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance*
- *Long Journey Home: A Guide to Your Search for the Meaning of Life*

Unspeakable: Facing Up to Evil in an Age of Genocide and Terror

Sources+

The Trinity Forum

<http://www.ttf.org/index/about/guinness/>

Ambassador Agency Biography

http://osguinness.ambassadoragency.com/client_profile.cfm/cid/135

* Inclusion of an item in the Recommended Resources section does not constitute an endorsement of all the content in a resource.

+ Referrals to sites not produced by Focus on the Family are for informational purposes only, and do not constitute an endorsement of the sites' content.