



# Staff Devotions

## Devotion 1: The Two Kingdoms

*Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Psalm 51:6*

When Pilate questioned Jesus about the charges the Jews were leveling at him, Jesus replied, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Can you hear the cynicism and sarcasm in Pilate’s voice as he asks dismissively, “What is truth?” and hands over Jesus to the Jews for crucifixion (John 18:37–38)?

Throughout the ages, people have echoed Pilate’s question, in sincerity as well as skepticism. In fact, the battle over truth is as ancient as the original sin. Take a look at the lies Satan told himself and those who rebelled with him against their Creator:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:12–14)

Satan knew the truth—that there is none in heaven like the Creator God—but he exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and in the process became the father of lies (John 8:44). His first temptation of Adam and Eve was a continuation on the theme. He introduced error into God’s words (Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Genesis 3:1) and then blatantly lied about what God had said (“Ye shall not surely die,” Genesis 3:4).

For the past six thousand years, we’ve been floundering, trying to find our own way and denying that truth comes from God and his infallible Word. Thankfully, God has called his children into his kingdom through the sacrifice of his Son. In his infinite grace, God has given us the armor we need to stand strong in this battle for truth and boldly serve our Creator.

This week as we examine the pieces of armor God has provided, ask yourself this: Where am I in the battle? Am I asking “what is truth?” along with Pilate, or do I know the difference between truth and error based on God’s Word?

“The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” (Proverbs 12:19).



## Devotion 2: The Belt

*Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. Psalm 119:160*

*There are no absolutes.* Ever heard that one before? Of course, the irony with that statement is that it's an absolute statement. Those who say that actually mean, "I choose not to accept the absolute truth claims you are making."

So, can we know truth? Is there any basis on which we can make absolute moral statements (e.g., "Homosexual behavior is sinful; Jesus is the only way to heaven; there are only two genders")?

The only basis for determining truth from error, and right from wrong, comes from embracing the one who is truth. Jesus is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). And Jesus reiterates that God is the source of truth when he claimed, "I am the way, *the truth*, and the life" (John 14:6, emphasis added).

When we know Jesus, we know truth. When we believe in Jesus, we believe in truth. Because he is the Creator, he is the one who sets the rules for his creation to follow. And he

has given us those rules in his Word. There is no room for wavering because he has confirmed that we can trust his Word to be truth (John 17:17).

Apart from the standard given in the Bible, there is no way to determine what truth is—everything becomes a matter of personal opinion. And who determines which opinion is correct?

Examine your heart today. As you teach the children the *truth* that the Savior King Jesus came to earth as a baby, died on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose from the dead, showing that God had accepted his payment, are you harboring doubts about God or his Word? Can you say with the psalmist, "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me." (Psalm 119:30)? Have you put on the belt of truth?



## Devotion 3: The Breastplate & Shoes

*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Psalm 119:142*

**Tolerance.** It's a word we hear a lot today . . . usually coming from those who are intolerant of any standard of truth (except their own, of course).

When Josiah became king of the nation of Israel in 640 BC, the people had been practicing "tolerance" for idol worship, child-killing, and all types of sexually immoral behavior for years, neglecting the truth in the book of the law that had been handed down to them.

King Josiah was twenty-six years old when he first read the words of the Lord. After reading the Scriptures (perhaps part of Deuteronomy), he immediately repented, realizing that he held truth in his hands and hadn't been obeying it. Josiah also shared the truth of the book of the law with his people and set about making reforms (being intolerant of tolerance) based on what he'd read. He burned the altars to idols, tore down the place where children were sacrificed to false gods, and rid the temple of priests who were leading the people astray. With his newfound knowledge of the truth, Josiah acted righteously, no longer tolerating the

views of those opposing the standard given in God's Word (2 Kings 22–23).

When we make *tolerance* our standard, we set ourselves up as gods, determining on our own which views and practices are acceptable and which are not. And we find ourselves in a morass of immorality. Are those who tolerate one view any more right than those who tolerate an opposing view? Who determines which actions to tolerate and which to forbid (if any)?

With the belt of truth firmly buckled around our waist, the question then becomes: What do I do about that truth? Do I obey God's Word, putting on the breastplate of righteousness? Do I share the truth of God's Word with others, putting on the shoes of the gospel of peace? King Josiah did both. May the Lord use young Josiah's example to encourage our hearts in the battle for truth.

May we say with the psalmist, "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name." (Psalm 86:11).



## Devotion 4: The Shield & Helmet

*Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. Psalm 119:165*

**Truth is relative.** (Are you *absolutely* sure?) When we get involved with people on a personal level (as we should!), experiences and emotions can cause us to lose sight of the absolute standard as we begin to rationalize and reason away that standard: “They’re so nice, can I really say that what they’re doing is wrong? Maybe it’s okay for them, just not for me.”

When David passed his kingdom to his son Solomon around 1000 BC, he reminded him of the command the Lord had given “to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul” (1 Kings 2:4). Soon after, when the Lord promised to give Solomon whatever he asked for, Solomon asked for wisdom—the ability to think clearly about the truth. And the Lord granted his request, as evidenced by the thousands of proverbs and songs Solomon wrote and the judgments he rendered. Solomon also knew the truth about God’s tangible creation—birds, creeping things, fish, and trees (1 Kings 4:30–34).

But somewhere along the way, Solomon began to allow his affections and attachments to the women (many women!) in his life to blur the lines between right and wrong, truth and error. Can you hear him begin to rationalize his behavior? “Sure, I know you don’t want me to marry foreign women, Lord, but I can handle it. That command is

for others—not for me.” Sadly, as he allowed himself to be influenced by his wives, he built altars for their false gods . . . and eventually joined them in worshipping at the feet of idols.

The helmet of salvation guards our minds and the way we think while the shield of faith helps us deflect temptations. Solomon neglected both of these vital pieces of armor. Solomon, the one who wrote, “The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.” (Proverbs 12:19), denied the absolute truth and turned away from the one who is truth.

We must never be satisfied with our current knowledge of the Christian faith, but instead we need to be continually studying God’s Word, so that when the devil lobbs his lies in our direction, we can easily deflect them with the shield of faith. And with the helmet of salvation firmly in place, we can guard what we put into our minds. Things we watch on TV, read in books, hear from our friends, and learn from our teachers should all be evaluated against the standard of truth found in the Bible before we allow ourselves to meditate on it and allow it to sink into our souls. May we take refuge in the truth of the Lord and his Word as the psalmist did: “Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth.” (Psalm 119:151).



## Devotion 5: The Sword & Prayer

*Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. Proverbs 8:1, 6–7*

*Truth is what you make it.* But what if I say that is a false statement? Am I making truth, or are you? You can see that absurdity reigns when we allow truth to be set aside in favor of opinion.

Satan knows there is an absolute standard of truth, but he delights in obscuring, changing, and denying it. He is the author of the false truth claims we've visited this week, and he loves it when Christians—the ones who hold truth in their hands every time they pick up a Bible—fall for his lies.

He has even been so bold as to lie to the King of kings—the one who banned him from heaven in the first place for his original lies. When he tempted Jesus, he lied in three ways:

1. He denied the truth that Jesus is God (Matthew 4:3).
2. He wrongly quoted Scripture to serve his own purposes (Matthew 4:6).
3. He lied about the power and authority he had (Matthew 4:9).

How many times have we fallen for one of these lies: doubting God, believing someone who twists a passage of Scripture to mean something other than what it does, or craving the things of the world more than Jesus?

When Satan tempted the King of kings in the wilderness, Jesus responded with the truth. Even though he was bone-weary, famished, and thirsty, he didn't stoop to Satan's level by falling for any of his lies. Instead, he rebuked and rebuffed the enemy by simply drawing the sword of the Spirit and quoting Scripture that he had already memorized and meditated on, Scripture that was readily available in his mind for him to speak, Scripture that he himself had written.

In this battle between truth and error, may we continually hunger to know the truth of God's Word and desire to seek his face in prayer. We know the end of the "story": God wins the war, and Satan will be forever sentenced to an eternity in fiery hell. But how are we fighting the battles in the meantime? How accurately can you handle the sword of the Spirit? How well does it fit in your hand? How comfortable are you using it to defeat the enemy? How intimately familiar are you with the Word of God?

May we stand strong in this battle for truth and say, "For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips." (Proverbs 8:7).