



WOODLAND HEIGHTS

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Good News in a Divided World

Part #3 – Clarity in a Confused Culture: Why Truth still Matters?

Small Group Discussion Guide on John 18:33-38

Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on John 18:33–38 aligns with the core value of Biblical Authority and Biblical Worldview at Woodland Heights Christian Church. We believe that in a culture that treats truth as flexible, personal, and negotiable, followers of Jesus must anchor their minds and lives in God's unchanging Word. A Biblical worldview declares that truth is not invented by culture but revealed by God, centered in Christ, and confirmed by Scripture, giving believers clarity and courage to stand firm when the world follows shifting opinions.

This message calls us to wrestle with Pilate's question, "What is truth?", to expose the ways our culture denies truth, and see why rejecting God's divine truth leads to compromise, corruption, and destruction. It challenges us to trust that Jesus is the embodiment of truth, that His Word defines reality, and that embracing His truth sets us free to live with wisdom and lasting purpose in a divided world.

Section 1 – ENCOUNTER

Observing God's Word

Imagine a Roman governor pacing the stone floors of his headquarters – military banners hanging above, shouts from a restless crowd echoing outside, political pressure weighing on his shoulders. In front of him stands a prisoner unlike any other: Jesus of Nazareth, beaten yet unshaken, silent yet sovereign, claiming a kingdom not of this world and a mission "to bear witness to the truth." Pilate is surrounded by noise – religious leaders demanding death, a fearful empire demanding order – but in that moment he is face to face with the One who is the truth.

Instead of bowing to the truth before him, Pilate proudly asks the question that still haunts our culture today: "What is truth?" – then walks away. John 18:33–38 records this encounter not just as ancient history, but as a mirror to a world that wants peace without repentance and comfort without conviction.

Let's start our study by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read John 18:33–38 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in.

Core Questions

- What do you notice about Pilate's questions and Jesus' answers in John 18:33–38? Why is this relevant in today?
- What key words, phrases, or themes stand out to you?
- Where do you see yourself in this passage – more like Pilate under pressure or like someone listening to the voice of Jesus?

Section 2 – EXPLORE

As we dig deeper into John 18:33–38, we discover that this is a courtroom for truth itself. Jesus declares that He was born and came into the world “to bear witness to the truth,” and that everyone who is “of the truth” listens to His voice. Pilate responds not with honest seeking, but with cynical dismissal—“What is truth?”—and then turns away, choosing crowd-pleasing politics over obedience to truth.

The sermon points out “**The Law of Convenient Denial**” where people tend to reject truth not because it is unclear, but because it is uncomfortable, choosing instead what protects their pride or preserves their current way of living. From Pilate’s day to ours, there are three main categories of denial that explain why people turn away from God’s divine truth.

Three Categories of the Denial of Truth

Category #1 – Cynicism

Pilate’s sarcastic question “What is truth?” reveals a heart that treats truth as a nuisance rather than a necessity. Cynicism says, “Everyone has their own truth—why bother?” but Scripture says God’s reality is plain in creation and conscience, and those who suppress the truth are without excuse.

- How does Romans 1:18-20 describe people who suppress God’s truth?
- Where do you see cynicism about truth in our culture, and how has it affected conversations about morality, eternity, and Jesus?

Category #2 – Intolerance

Pilate snaps, “Am I a Jew?” distancing himself from the spiritual issues in front of him and refusing to engage with the truth standing in his courtroom. In the same way, many today accuse Christians of being intolerant while themselves refusing to tolerate God’s claims about sin, holiness, and judgment.

Jesus says that people “love darkness rather than light” because their deeds are evil, and they avoid the light so their works are not exposed. Intolerance toward God’s truth is not intellectual; it is moral.

- How does John 3:19-20 help explain why some people become hostile when confronted with Biblical truth?
- Where do you see intolerance toward God’s truth in media, education, or conversations about right and wrong?

Category #3 – Self-Preservation

Pilate knows Jesus is innocent—he even says, “I find no guilt in him”—yet he still sends Him to the cross because he is more afraid of riots and Rome than he is of rejecting God’s truth. This is self-preservation: knowing the truth but refusing to act on it because obedience might cost reputation, comfort, or control. Proverbs 29:25 warns that “the fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” Many today, like Pilate, know enough truth to be accountable, but choose the approval of people over the authority of God.

- Where are you most tempted to let the fear of people overrule the fear of God?
- How have you seen self-preservation keep someone from following Christ openly or standing for Biblical truth?

Answers to the Big Question: “What happens when you reject God’s divine truth?”

Answer #1 – Rejection of Truth Leads to Compromise and Corruption in This Life

The sermon reminds us that God’s divine, absolute truth directs your life on the path that honors Him, while rejecting that truth takes you down a path of compromise and corruption. Jesus introduces in John 18:36-37 to the “Law of Reality Revealed.” It is here where He reveals who He is and what happens when you reject God’s truth. When people refuse sound teaching, they “accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions” and wander off into myths, trading truth for spiritual lies.

- Read 2 Timothy 4:3–4 and John 17:17. How do these verses contrast the effects of embracing truth versus rejecting it?
- Where do you see evidence in our culture that people have traded truth for myths or feelings?
- How can standing on God’s Word give you wisdom, direction, and discernment?

Answer #2 – Rejection of Truth Leads to Destruction in Eternity

The sermon emphasizes that God’s truth brings life, but rejecting truth brings judgment and destruction. Scripture warns that those who “enjoy evil rather than believing the truth” will be condemned, and that there is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death.

- Read 2 Thessalonians 2:12 and Proverbs 14:12. How do these verses cut through the idea that sincerity alone is enough?
- Why is it loving—not harsh—to warn people that rejecting God’s truth has eternal consequences?

Key Reflections

- When you look at Pilate’s story, where do you see compromise, corruption, and eventual tragic outcome flowing from his refusal to embrace the truth?
- What warning—and what invitation—does his story give to people today who keep pushing Jesus to the edges of their lives?

Answering Pilate’s Question: “What Is Truth?”

Jesus does not just speak truth; He is the truth. When He says, “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,” He is claiming that real truth is tied to His person and His words. Scripture gives us several key facts about truth from God’s Word that answer Pilate’s question and ground our faith in a confused culture.

Fact #1 – Truth Cannot Be Separated from God’s Living Word, the Savior

John 14:6 declares, “Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” This verse is so critical because it reminds us that Truth is not just correct information; it is reality as God defines it, embodied in the person of Christ. The Greek word for “truth” speaks of what matches reality, that which is solid and dependable in God’s eyes, not man’s.

- Why is it important to see truth as personal (rooted in Christ) rather than merely abstract or philosophical?
- How does John 14:6 challenge the idea that all spiritual paths are equally true?

Fact #2 – Truth Cannot Be Separated from God’s Written Word

Jesus prayed in John 17:7, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” We also read in Psalm 119:160 these words, “The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” These verses remind us that God’s written Word is not one opinion among many; it is the divine standard by which every thought, claim, and worldview must be measured.

- How does seeing Scripture as God’s truthful, enduring Word shape the way you approach cultural debates about morality and identity?
- What difference does it make in your discipleship to know that God’s Word is not changing with every generation?

Fact #3 – Truth Builds, Protects, and Makes Us Wise

The sermon highlights several ways God’s truth works in us: it builds us up spiritually, protects us from sin, and makes us wise for salvation and living that honors the Lord. We read these very truths in verses like Acts 20:32 where it reminds us that God’s Word “is able to build you up” and in 2 Timothy 3:15 which declares that the Word “makes you wise for salvation.”

- Which of these functions—building, protecting, making wise—do you most need in this season of life?
- How might a renewed commitment to Scripture strengthen your ability to answer challenges to the Christian faith?

Fact #4 – Truth Cannot Be Separated from the Hope of the Gospel

Colossians 1:5 speaks of “the hope laid up for you in heaven...of this you have heard in the word of the truth, the Gospel.” Truth and hope belong together. God’s truth does not crush us; it rescues us, forgives us, and reorients us toward eternity.

- How does linking truth with hope change the way you talk about apologetics and hard cultural issues?
- In what ways can you show people that Biblical truth is not just right—it is good and life-giving?

Section 3 – EMBRACE

Applying God’s Word

Go deeper into the Word of God by applying what you’ve learned to your life today. Reflect on these action steps and discuss how you can live out the truths from John 18:33–38 in an apologetic way that both defends and displays the Gospel.

Practice Listening to the Voice of Truth

Jesus said, “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” (John 18:37) This week, set aside intentional time to read John 14–18, asking the Lord to tune your heart to His voice above the noise of culture. Note one truth from Jesus’ words each day and how it confronts a lie you hear around you.

Strengthen Your Foundation

Choose one of the “facts about truth from God’s Word” (John 14:6, John 17:17, Acts 20:32, Colossians 1:5, Titus 1:1). Memorize that verse and write a short explanation of how it answers a common cultural

claim (for example: “All truth is relative,” “The Bible is just one religious book among many,” “Christianity is bad news, not good news”). Share your response with your group or family.

Memorize and Reflect

Memorize John 8:32 (ESV): “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Reflect this week: Where have you experienced the truth of Christ setting you free – from lies, from fear, from sin, from confusion? How might sharing that story help someone else see that truth is not a prison, but a pathway to life?

Closing Challenge and Prayer

Pilate once stood within arm’s reach of the Truth made flesh and walked away asking, “What is truth?” without waiting for an answer. In a confused culture that repeats his question, God is calling His people not to shrug, but to stand – to reject the lies of the culture, to receive and live God’s absolute truth, and to lovingly call others to the only One who can set them free.

- Father, in a world where so many shrug and ask, “What is truth?”, we thank You that You have not left us guessing. You have spoken in Your Word, You have revealed Yourself in Your Son, and You have given us Your Spirit to guide us into all truth. Forgive us for every moment of convenient denial, for every time we chose the crowd of the culture over the clarity of Your Word. Today we ask that You would make us people “of the truth.” Anchor our minds and hearts in Scripture; sanctify us in the truth, for Your Word is truth.