

Trustworthy Answers in Untrusting Times

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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by John MacArthur

From the human perspective, life doesn't always make sense. It is a difficult journey with obstacles to face and pitfalls to avoid. All of us have asked the same hard questions: "Is there a God?"; "Does He really love me?"; "Why am I here?"; "Why did this have to happen?"; "What is life really about?"

Life is a process of seeking answers for the road ahead. But the real question is: "Where do I go to get the answers to those questions?" Philosophers can only speculate about the meaning of life. At best, they can suggest theories for the reasons of suffering, the existence of God, and other basic spiritual questions. In the end, philosophy's answers are totally unsatisfying. Even Bertrand Russell, perhaps the premier philosopher of the twentieth century and a man totally opposed to Christianity, admitted before he died that philosophy had availed him nothing.

I'll never forget a man I once met while hiking through the mountains of northern California. He was a graduate of Boston University who lived in an overturned Frigidaire box by a stream.

I saw him there and introduced myself. After describing his frustrating search for the meaning of life, he told me, "I've escaped."

"Well, have you found the answers?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "but I've put myself into a situation where I don't have to ask the questions!" Unfortunately, that is the best human wisdom can do.

Information, But No Answers

The last fifty years have produced an information explosion unparalleled in human history. Yet with all we have learned and with all the volumes that have been written, modern knowledge has been unable to shed any new light on the most basic spiritual questions facing the human race. That's exactly the situation the Bible ascribes to mankind in the end times: "always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Man has solved incredibly difficult problems in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, microbiology, and even space travel. But the true meaning of life stubbornly eludes those whose methods of pursuit are merely rational. They end up totally puzzled about life, death, God, man, sin, heaven, hell, love,

joy, and peace.

The problem is that spiritual answers cannot be deduced by human reason alone (1 Corinthians 2:14). It's not that spiritual truth is irrational or illogical, but human wisdom is defective because it is tainted by man's sinfulness and unable to perceive the things of God.

Trustworthy Answers from the Unchanging God

That is why the Bible is so important. It gives us the answers we can't find on our own. It is God's Word to mankind. Scripture is divinely revealed truth that fills the vacuum of spiritual ignorance in all of us. Psalm 19 contains a hymn of praise to God for the wonders of His Word. It is also a marvelous lesson about the authority and sufficiency of Scripture to answer all the questions of life.

Perfect Answers

Verse 7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul." "Perfect" comes from a Hebrew word that means comprehensive, or complete. In other words, the Bible contains all the truth that is necessary to transform and restore the human soul.

Thus the Bible offers hope for those weighted down by a sense of their own failure. Because it is perfect truth, it can revive man's broken soul and offer new life to those defeated by sin and failure. If you are apathetic, Scripture will convict you of sin and show you your real needs. If on the other hand you are crushed with emptiness, guilt, and anxiety, God's Word contains truth that can transform your soul with new life in Christ.

Certain Answers

The psalmist goes on: "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (v. 7). Natural intelligence is at best a leap in the dark. Even the most perceptive philosopher will tell you that there is no certainty in human wisdom. At his best, man is totally inadequate in the pursuit of truth.

Not so with Scripture. God's Word is sure, certain, infallible, inerrant, and totally reliable in every sense. In contrast to human wisdom, which is based on academic pursuit, the Bible can make a simple person wise. What a fantastic promise! Whatever you need to know in life is covered in the Word of God. Study it for yourself. It will tell you how to build lasting friendships, how to develop communication skills, and how to build a solid marriage. All you need is an open mind, a receptive spirit, and an obedient heart.

Satisfying Answers

Verse 8 continues: "The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Everyone wants a happy and contented life. The problem is that people look for joy in all the wrong places. Real happiness cannot be found in pleasure and materialism. You can't find lasting joy in sinful self-gratification and the hedonistic pursuit of money, sex, alcohol, and drugs. All these things lead to a dead end.

God offers real satisfaction to people who obey His Word. He *wants* us to be happy. Too many people think of God as a joyless ogre who stamps out pleasure wherever He finds it. God does not look at mankind from heaven saying, "There's one having fun; get him!" He designed us so that the greatest possible joy comes as a fruit of our obedience to Him.

Best of all, the gladness He gives is not the kind that ends when the party is over. It is a rich, deep joy that operates even in the midst of life's most difficult trials. No matter what pressures you may face in life, He will strengthen and guide you through His Word.

Enlightening Answers

"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (v. 8). Scripture makes sense out of life. It helps us understand the depth of man's depravity without God. It is no wonder our world is filled with lying, cheating, murder, war, and tragedy. It is easy to understand why someone without spiritual understanding would want to escape into a box and hide!

What comfort does philosophy offer to someone who loses a child? What can human wisdom say to a person whose spouse has cancer? Only God's Word can speak with authority to the deep needs of life as it enlightens the eyes of those who submit to its truth.

The Bible may not always give easy answers to the hard questions we ask, but the truth it reveals is far superior to the pat answers of human wisdom. The Scripture declares the character of God. It shows Him as a loving, caring, all-wise, and omnipotent Sovereign who remains in control--no matter how bleak this world may seem.

Enduring Answers

Verse 9 says, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever." "The fear of the Lord" is parallel to "the law," "the testimony," "the precepts," and "the commandment" (vv. 7-8). It is another of the psalmist's names for Scripture. More than that, "the fear of the Lord" signifies the sum of man's response to God's Word.

The Bible, unlike any other book, endures forever. It is relevant in every generation--never out of date or obsolete. Though it is an ancient document, it never needs another edition. It has been translated to update the language, but for two millennia it has remained the same in content. It speaks to us as pointedly and authoritatively as it ever did to any generation since it was written.

Human philosophies come in and out of style. Every field of science known to man is constantly in a state of flux: changing, growing, discarding one maxim and replacing it with another. But one thing that never changes is the eternal Word of God.

True Answers

Finally, the psalmist says, "The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether" (v. 9). What a bold statement that is! God's Word is *true*. This is the unequivocal testimony of Scripture to itself. It is hard today to find anything we can count on for truth. The media, politicians, and even some preachers all have a reputation for lacking credibility. In fact, we take it for granted that they regularly distort the truth.

In a world of lies, people despair of trying to find the truth. That was even true in the time of Christ. Pilate, facing Jesus on one hand and an angry mob on the other, cynically asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), as if to say, "I give up"--just like the man in the refrigerator box!

Franz Kafka, the brilliant German novelist, used a parable to illustrate the futility of man's search for truth. He described a bombed-out city of rubble where death and ruin were everywhere. People had been crushed under debris, where they lay dying in agony. In the middle of this total holocaust, one solitary figure sits in a bathroom. Kafka calls him the defiant fisherman. He sits on a toilet seat with a fishing line dangling in the bathtub. There is no water in the tub, and obviously no fish, but the defiant fisherman keeps on fishing anyhow.

That, said Kafka, is what the search for truth is like. It is a futile quest for something that isn't really there. It is a worthless pursuit for meaning, while the whole world is dying all around.

It is a hopeless picture, but that is *exactly* what it's like to look for truth apart from the Bible. The natural man cannot find truth in the spiritual realm. He is spiritually dead and unresponsive to God (Ephesians 2:1-2). The only way he can find truth is if the spiritual realm invades his coffin of flesh.

That's exactly what the Bible does! It is a supernatural revelation from God that invades the human heart with the sum of spiritual truth we need to know. If you are looking for the transformation of your soul; if you are in need of true wisdom and real joy; if you long for eternal life, the only place you'll ever find it is in the pages of God's Word, the Bible.

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