

LET GOD BE TRUE

Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

ROMANS 3:4 (NIV)

In essence, this scripture verse is saying that we must allow God to be true in our lives. In other words, we must yield to His truth in every circumstance. What does this mean, and how do we do it?

To allow God to be true in our lives, we have to believe once and for all that God says what He means and means what He says. As long as we put our faith in God's Word, His Word will always produce results because God is not a liar.

How do we allow God to be true in our lives? By simply taking Him at His Word and acting on it. For example, since He says in Psalm 103:3 that He heals all our diseases, then He means exactly what He says: He heals all our diseases. Since He says in 1 John 1:9 that He is faithful to forgive our sins when we confess them, then He forgives our sins when we confess them.

If someone were to imply that God does not tell the truth, we would immediately protest. Then why do we ourselves have so much trouble believing that God is telling the truth when He says that we are healed, that we are prosperous, that we are forgiven? The reason, I believe, is that we have not heard enough of what God says nor have we heard it often enough. Faith in God's Word — belief in what God says — comes only from hearing over and over what God says.

Remember: God says what He means and means what He says. If you want to experience victory in every area of your life, believe this and live your life as though it were true — because it is!

Lord, forgive us when we don't believe what you tell us so clearly. Open our hearts and minds to your truth. Amen.

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THE ABUNDANT LIFE

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

JOHN 10:10-11 (NKJV)

A few years ago I had the privilege of attending a Wesleyan Women's Retreat in southern Florida. The key speaker was Mrs. Gloria Gaither. She started her talk by telling us that she had invited a daughter and grandchild to travel down with her. During the night the child became ill and sleep was no more for them. Feeling she might lose her train of thought, she thus began by telling about the time she and her husband had to go to the home of an aunt, newly deceased, to start cleaning out her belongings. She told us about the old hats and other items of long ago that they found.

I began to wonder what this had to do with a spiritual emphasis. Then she let us have it by asking us, "What will your family find when they go through your things?" Good question indeed, and one for thought. What will our families find that tells who we really are?

Isn't it interesting that when Jesus died all that the people found was an empty tomb? Give that some thought this Lenten season.

He gave His life that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Dear Lord, thank you for giving your life that we might have life abundantly. Help us to see how great our lives really are because of your gift to us. Amen.

CAROL PHILLIPS

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNITIES, PITMAN



The most important aspect of Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain and the surrounding influence and qualities produced by that relationship. That is all God asks us to give our attention to, and it is the one thing that is continually under attack.

*Oswald Chambers
My Utmost for His Highest*

THE GOOD STEWARD

“... So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’”

LUKE 16:2 (NKJV)

Webster gives us a definition of *steward* as a *manager* or *trustee*. The Bible sometimes even expands it to include *servant*.

In our Bible verse, the rich man asked his steward/manager to give an account of his actions to counter the claim he heard that this steward was wasting the employer's goods. His steward was serving himself, not his employer.

How can we be a good steward of what God has entrusted to us? In thinking about this, we can consider four things He has given us: our souls, our bodies, our possessions, and our talents.

Our soul is an immortal spirit that is *us forevermore*. We are made in the image of God! The world is always telling us to be happy and do what we want, but we will be much happier and more blessed by doing God's will. In Philippians 4:7 (KJV), Paul says, “The peace of God ... shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Prayer, Bible study, and church attendance are foundations for keeping our souls heavenbound.

Our bodies are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) with many members and abilities. We have our five senses, our hands and feet, our speech, and more. However, our tongue is one member of our body that can do instant harm or instant good. The tongue is a member that we have to constantly guard.

Each of us is entrusted with possessions. Some of us have very many things, others not as much. Compared to most of the world, we are truly blessed with many things. But these “worldly goods” can overwhelm us and keep us from seeing God in our lives. Luke 16:8 suggests that worldly people are often more “shrewd” about their earthly interests than Christians. We are to be good stewards of our possessions that we may give a good account.

Finally, we have our talents. In our church body, God has provided each person with a talent to help fulfill the needs of the body. It is wise to be a good steward of your talents for the betterment of your church or any situation where you may find yourself.

Dear God, you have reached out to us. We pray that we will reach back to you and be good managers of all that you have given us.

TOM BENNETT
PITMAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

ENCOURAGEMENT

But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging, and comfort.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:3 (NIV)

One day while I was at my physical therapy session, I met Jesus in an elderly lady named Jenny. Jenny was bent over and used a walker, but she was so happy and thankful to the therapist who worked with her. As my therapist worked with me, Jenny said we were doing a great job. She was encouraging to everyone.

Jenny left before me, but when I left she was still waiting in the lobby for her transportation. So I stopped to talk to her and asked, “Jenny, what church do you go to?” She told me she went to a local Methodist church. I said, “I knew you had Jesus Christ in your heart.” She laughed and said that she hopes He stays there. Again she told me what a good job I did at physical therapy. I thanked her and told her what a blessing it was to meet her.

I was so happy the rest of the day because I had been shown love and encouragement from a woman who wanted to share it freely with everyone.

Heavenly Father, please help me to have a heart like you that loves all people unconditionally.

KIM TORTELLA

PITMAN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MAUNDY THURSDAY

(Matthew 26:17-30)

On Thursday evening of Holy Week, it is thought that Jesus had His last supper with His disciples. It was a reflective and tender hour of fellowship when Jesus shared some of His greatest insights with them. In many churches, the holy communion service on Thursday evening is held in memory of Jesus’ last supper.

Sometimes the day is called Maundy Thursday, from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means *mandate*, and refers to the “new commandment” that Jesus gave his followers, “that ye love one another.” Another explanation for the name comes from the Latin words, *mandatum novum do bovis*, which relate to the custom of carrying gifts to the poor in maunds (hand baskets).

The German name for Holy Thursday is *grundonnerstag*, which is translated as “Green Thursday.” It was also known as “The Day of Foot Washing” because the Gospel often read is the account of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet.

WHAT A GRACIOUS ACT! WHAT A SELFISH RESPONSE!

READ LUKE 22:7-26

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!"

LUKE 22:20-22 (NIV)

The strangest thing happened at the end of the last supper. The disciples were still with Jesus in the upper room. Jesus had just taken the bread and the cup on the table and had given it new meaning. We know it as the Lord's Supper/Communion. His body broken. His blood shed. Jesus emptied and humbled Himself — and then it happened! The disciples began to discuss, converse, and argue about which of them would be the greatest. How absurd! How foolish! We'd never!

And yet, in some of the most sacred times, we find ourselves doing the same thing. At weddings and funerals, people often say and do crazy and absurd things because they feel they are entitled to something. Forget about the couple making a grand commitment before God and others. Forget about a loved one who has passed and their families who are grieving. People show some unflattering colors at some inappropriate times. Maybe you have seen it too. So sad.

There is a better way. May we have the grace, strength, and character to live out our faith in ways that build others up and not tear them down. May we do for others and think of others rather than just worry about ourselves. God sent His Son that all may have life, joy, and peace, especially in a world that is full of sadness, pain, and emptiness. May we each choose to walk in the ways of our Lord, who emptied Himself, who took on the very form of a servant, and who was obedient even to death.

It's funny (ironic), that emptying ourselves leads to life and fulfillment. But that's the story of our faith, our God, and hopefully our lives. Thanks be to God!

Gracious God, help us to embody your spirit and presence by showing your love and grace to others in all of our days. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PASTOR PAUL MELSON
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THERE IS A GREEN HILL

There was a time in my life when I could perhaps sense in a small way what my Lord had to face in going to the cross.

One evening many years ago in late December I realized I did not have enough lunchmeat and bread to pack my husband's lunch for his midnight shift. So my daughter (age 16 at the time) and I went to the store in town. As we pulled into the parking lot, we sensed something was wrong. Before we could get out of the car, two men came toward us with guns. One gun was pointed at me, and the other gun was pointed at my daughter's head. The men ordered us out of the car and asked for the car keys. As we walked toward the store's entrance, I had the feeling we were going to be shot. As we entered the store, we could see people lying facedown on the floor. By the grace of God, the police arrived and ordered us to get into the patrol car. The policeman drove us home and my husband, who had an extra set of car keys, was able to get the car so he could go to work. (My set of keys was found the next day under a bush in back of the store.) I'll never forget that scary moment, and my daughter was clearly shaken, too.

Thank you, Dear Lord, for saving us and helping us cope. Your Word, Lord, says you are always with us, and this was proven at that time.

Surely the shocking incident my daughter and I experienced cannot compare in any way to what our Lord had to bear alone (captured, tried, tortured, humiliated, and crucified). How awful for Him to have to suffer such agony. We must never forget that green hill (Golgotha) where our precious Lord died for us all because He dearly loved us. However, we must remember that He was then resurrected to save us from our sins. The following three verses of the hymn "There is a Green Hill Far Away" express our Lord's suffering.

There is a green hill far away, Beyond the city wall
Where the dear Lord was crucified, Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell, What pains He had to bear;
But we believe it was for us He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven, Saved by His precious blood.

Dear Lord, forgive all of us sinners for sending you to the rugged cross of sorrows. But with the rolling away of the stone, you have won over death and sin to be our King of Glory. Alleluia! Amen.

HELEN DUNK
ZION COMMUNITY CHURCH

MAKE THE WEB TREMBLE!

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver bowls, but also those of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-21 (HCSB)

A friend of ours recently went to the Philadelphia Zoo. Amidst the crowd, he walked into a variety of cultures. What caught his attention were Amish visitors sitting right next to Muslim visitors. Both cultures stood out as they were dressed in their traditional clothing.

This is part of the modern world we live in today. It is no longer a world where we can assume that people have the same value systems or even the same understanding of who Jesus is. This is the world Jesus calls us to penetrate in love for Him.

Sometimes we may feel that our lives aren't making any impact for God. The human race now numbers more than 7 billion people, many of whom don't know Jesus. Our praying, witnessing, and giving may seem to be doing little to change our ungodly world. But the words of Frederick Buechner from *The Hungering Dark* may lift our hearts. Comparing the world to a great spider web, Buechner wrote:

If you touch it anywhere, you set the whole thing trembling ...
As we move around this world and as we act with kindness, perhaps, or with indifference, or with hostility toward the people we meet, we too are setting the great spider web a-tremble. The life we touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place and time our touch will be felt. Our lives are linked. No man is an island.

As we go through each day we touch many lives. In all of these encounters we can be a vessel used for honorable purposes, dedicated and serviceable for the use of the Master. We can set the web a-trembling with Jesus' love, starting in southern New Jersey. As people receive the words and the love of Jesus in their hearts, who knows where they will take it? Who knows how far they will set the web a-trembling?

God uses us in our weakness and smallness to accomplish His far-reaching purposes. No deed is small when done for Christ. Only eternity will reveal all that God has done through our willing, loving service for Him.

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