

HEROIC TRUTH



Small Group Leader Guide

A Josh McDowell Ministry Initiative

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Welcome to the Heroic Truth Series

In an increasingly hostile spiritual climate, our youth today face conflicting ideologies, societal pressure and confusion that may lead them to question or doubt their faith. The Heroic Truth video series was developed and designed to equip young people, their parents, youth leaders and Christian educators with why they believe what they believe in order to stand firm in their faith.

The age of 15 is usually when someone starts asking “So what? Why does Christianity matter?” The latest data reveals that starting at age 15, out of 100 students in a youth group, 60 will leave the church. Many of them, for good. It looks as if those who ask, “So what?”, never actually try to find an answer.

God has given us Scripture that contains unmatched, unrivaled, heroic truth, that is defensible, actionable, and transferable. John 8:31-32 says, *“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* The best gift we can give the next generation is an understanding that the Bible is reliable and guide them to develop a love for it so that through its truth, they will indeed be set free.

Your Role as the Group Leader

Thank you for making a commitment to lead your group through the Heroic Truth video series. We understand that preparation for each meeting will take extra time and effort. Whether you're hosting a group in your home, at church, another location, or on-line, we want you to be encouraged that your dedication will produce fruit in the lives of those you serve.

As you prepare for each meeting, we encourage you to do so prayerfully. Be open to God's leading and ready to receive whatever He has for you and your group.

Prepare in advance for each meeting:

1. Watch the video and review the discussion guide
2. Complete the personal response questions and be ready to share them with the group
3. Identify any talking points in the video that aren't in the workbook that you feel would benefit the group to discuss
4. Send a reminder out to the group with details of the upcoming meeting (date, time, location, tasks they are to complete in advance, etc.)

NOTE: Session 2: The Truth About Atheists contains a lot of rich discussions points. For this session, your group may prefer to watch the video at home prior to the meeting and come prepared to use the entire meeting for discussion.

Be prepared to lead the group in fruitful discussions and respond to challenging questions. Consider the suggestions below to encourage a positive experience for everyone.

Foster a healthy, supportive environment where discussions are:

1. *Positive and constructive.* People bring different personalities and experiences to the group. Ensure all members get the most out of your time together by managing discussions to keep them constructive and positive.
2. *On topic.* Prepare in advance to bring conversations back from tangents in a supportive way.

Respond to questions you don't know the answer to:

1. *Be honest.* Let the group know that although you don't have an answer, you will find one and discuss it at the next meeting.
2. *Keep a list.* Using a white board, a sheet of paper, or some other means, keep track of all questions asked that you need to follow up with the group on. Cross them off after you answer them.

During each meeting:

1. Use your **LEADER NOTES** as a guide to structure your time and initiate discussions.

Session Overview

Session 1

Introduction (1 Hour)

An introduction to the Heroic Truth Series

Objectives:

1. Get to know each other
2. Discuss the purpose of the study and what to expect

Session 2

The Truth About Atheists (1 ½ Hours)

Watch the dynamics of Sean's audience as he slips into the shoes of an atheist character. This role play is designed to reveal the importance of being equipped to defend our faith as well as speak the truth in love.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe verbal and non-verbal communication that can either make or break your biblical truth sharing experience
2. Identify some strategies used by non-believers to discredit Christian beliefs

Session 3

The Skeptic's Quest (1 ½ Hours)

Go along with Josh as he revisits his journey from a skeptic to a champion of faith in Jesus Christ. Listen as he shares about how the Bible is God's gift to us and that as we comb through its historical accounts, prayers and prophecies, we find answers to our questions.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how prophecies support the Bible's reliability
2. Describe how to supportively respond to a youth's expression of doubt in Christianity

Session 4

Talking Truth Together (1 ½ Hours)

Learn why truth matters and how to discern it in areas of history, morality and religion.

Learning Objectives:

1. List 3 reasons why truth matters
2. Identify steps to maintain an effective influence on youth's perception of truth

Session Overview

Session 5

The Truth About the Old Testament (1 ½ Hours)

Discover the exhaustive steps taken by the early Jewish people to preserve the integrity of God's word so that it is the same today as it was when it was originally penned.

Learning Objectives:

1. List steps taken to preserve the reliability of Scripture
2. Explain why the Old Testament is just as important to study as the New Testament

Session 6

The Truth About Intelligent Design (1 ½ Hours)

Join Sean as he teaches about God's intelligent design. Learn about facts you can share with young people to equip them to remain firmly rooted in their faith when faced with anti-Christian claims about the world and science.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how science is a tool God has given us to explore the natural world
2. Describe how evidence in the natural world points to God

Session 7

The Truth About the New Testament (1 ½ Hours)

Discover Josh's extensive collection of biblical artifacts and learn about the role they have played in history as well as how they serve as evidence for the reliability of Scripture.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe how archaeology and artifacts affirm the Bible's reliability
2. Identify steps you can take to explore the history of the Bible with youth and make it come alive for them

Introduction

Leader Notes:

Once everyone has arrived and settled, begin the meeting. Here are some talking points to get started:

- 1. Thank the participants for being a part of the group and let them know about the exciting things they'll learn which will help them to pass on a legacy of faith to the young people in their lives.*
- 2. Hand out a meeting schedule with dates, times, locations, etc. for the series.*
- 3. Establish expectations of how the meetings will be conducted.*
- 4. Lead the group in a round table introduction exercise allowing all members to introduce themselves and share a little about their faith and family.*
- 5. Ask the group what they are looking forward to getting out of the study. This will help you tailor the discussions to meet their expectations.*
- 6. Lead the group to thoughtfully consider and discuss the questions below.*

On this journey of Heroic Truth, our goal is to equip you to defend the truth of the Bible with confidence, be motivated to live it out, and to pass it on with conviction from a heart of love.

Consider the young people in your life:

1. Who are the young people in your life whom you would like to see grow up with a resilient relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. What challenges do you think they may be facing in their journey of faith?
3. What challenges, questions or concerns have they expressed about Jesus or the Bible that need to be addressed which may be serving as a road block to a confident, resilient faith?
4. Are you prepared to address these challenges, questions or concerns? What might happen if you don't and someone else does?
5. Youth can ask their friends or search the Internet for answers to their questions without judgment. Do you have a healthy relationship with them which enables them to feel comfortable enough to come to you instead?

Introduction

Kick off the series by praying together.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for those whom You have placed in our lives to love and influence toward a strong understanding of Your truth. With conflicting messages and increasing opposition toward Christianity in our culture, please guard the hearts of our youth. Bury Your truth in their hearts, that when faced with confusion or deception, they will be able to discern truth. For those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, help them to stand firm in their faith. For those who haven't yet to come to Christ, open their eyes and lead them to Him. Cause them to recall the Scriptures that will help them to think clearly and cling to You, the author of truth who longs for them to seek You in search of freedom. In the world we face tribulation, but in You, we have peace. Open, prepare and speak to our hearts as we walk through this journey of Heroic Truth, that we may glean from it everything that You desire for us to learn. Help us to apply it to our lives. Guide us that we may be able to effectively pass on the knowledge and understanding to the youth in our lives. Give them eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts to embrace it all.

Thank You for Your word, love and guidance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and give them a brief snapshot about what they will learn next week in the *The Truth About Atheists* session.*

The Truth About Atheists

Leader Notes:

1. *Begin your session with prayer.*
2. *Discuss the intro paragraph and Scripture verse to prepare your minds for this session's important message.*

In an increasingly hostile spiritual climate, our youth today are more likely than ever to cross paths with skeptics. The question is, "Will they influence the skeptics or will the skeptics influence them?" Equipping the young people in our lives to know what they believe and why they believe is paramount to building their resilient faith and passing it on to others.

"But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ." (1 Peter 3:14–16, NLT)

Watch the video together and encourage the group to answer the questions below as they're addressed.

Watch the video and take notes

Atheist Role Play

How old was the atheist when he started questioning his faith and what occurred that caused him to turn away from it?

(14, 15 yrs old; friend who posed questions he couldn't answer and caused him to doubt and then turn away)

Sean's Post-Atheist Role Play Message

Sean is a Christian for one main reason. What is it?

(It's defensible and it makes the most sense out of the world we live in.)

“There's the means by which you communicate something and there's the message you want to communicate. There's the truth and there's the (relationship).”

“Stories we tell, jokes we laugh at, the words we use, often communicate—in terms of medium—in a way that prevents people from even (hearing) what we believe is true.”

“I wonder why we get defensive as Christians. I think the reason is because we don't know what we (believe) and why.”

“When we have answers, there's a (calm) (confidence) that comes with it.”

Consider and discuss the following questions as a group.

What do you think?

Did any of the atheist's arguments make you feel uncertain about the truth of what you believe? Why or why not?

Did any of the atheist's challenges about the Bible or evidence for Christianity elicit questions in your mind you need to have answered? If so, list your questions here. (Keep them handy throughout the video series to make sure all of them are answered. See Appendix A for a short explanation of each)

What emotions did you feel during the atheist's interaction with the audience? Why do you think you felt that way?

Reiterate to the group where Appendix A is in their Workbook in case they need more information about why the atheist's claims aren't a strong defense against Christianity.

If the atheist made you uncomfortable or caused you to question what you know, how do you think the youth in your life would feel if they had an interaction with a real skeptic like this? How could this affect their faith?

What do you think?

Sometimes, skeptics will try to discredit evidence for belief and belittle believers to cause doubt. Being able to recognize these tactics is important. Consider the following quotes from the atheist and answer the questions.

1. How did the atheist use the following statement to discredit Christianity?

“In ancient Greco-Roman culture, they didn’t know why water fell from the sky, they said the gods or goddesses were crying. It’s called god of the gaps when you put God into your lack of knowledge, but the problem is this is dangerous, or it’s foolish. Because when knowledge advances, what we used to say was explained by God, we then begin to fill these gaps with scientific advancement.”

(By asserting that scientific advancement disproves Christianity)

2. How did the atheist use the following statement to make the audience feel foolish for their beliefs?

“Now look, if you want to believe in God because it gives you community, gives you purpose, gives you something to live for, makes you feel good, that’s great! If it helps you believe in God, go for it! I just don’t need the crutch.”

(Makes the reason for belief seem weak and selfish)

3. What was the atheist hoping to accomplish by using the following statement?

“My problem is when people say it’s true as if there’s evidence for it.”

(To sow seeds of doubt about the validity of any historical evidence of the Bible)

Reflection

1. If you were at this event, how do you think you would have responded to the atheist?

2. Read Matthew 5:44–48 and 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Did the audience’s treatment of the atheist reflect Jesus’ commandment in these verses?

Matthew 5:44–48, NLT *“But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.”*

1 Corinthians 13:4–7, NLT *“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”*

Points to Ponder

1. Consider Sean's comment below and answer the questions.

"How do you think, as a whole, you treated your atheist guest? What words would you use? I've done this with tens of thousands of people around the church. Pretty consistently, the words that people say are defensive, hostile, angry and judgmental. I think one reason is because we don't know what we believe and why. Think about it, if someone starts pressing us and we don't really have thoughtful answers, isn't it human nature to get defensive? Yet, when we have answers, there's a calm confidence that comes with it."

What verbal and non-verbal cues did audience members exhibit that indicated they had a defensive, hostile, angry and judgmental demeanor toward the atheist?

How does a defensive, hostile, angry or judgmental demeanor prevent others from seeing your point of view?

What demeanor would better lead to an open conversation with someone who holds differing beliefs and why is it important?

Points to Ponder

2. Read the following comments of people in the group of atheists and skeptics Sean visited with and answer the questions.

“My Christian friends want to tell me why I’m wrong; they preach at me, but they don’t want to listen when I share my beliefs. Why do I want to listen to what they believe when they won’t listen to me?”

When we listen to what others have to say it makes them feel valued. Why is listening so important when sharing the gospel?

How does understanding other people’s perspectives help us to understand where they’re coming from? Why is this important?

“Almost every time I go into a church, there’s some cheap shot, insult or joke about atheists or some other non-Christian group from the stage.”

How do you think the person who shared this experience feels about Christians and Christianity?

3. Colossians 4:5 (NLT) says, “Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity.” Jesus commands us to love others as He has loved us (John 15:12). How differently do you think atheists would feel about Christianity if they felt valued and loved every time they went to church or interacted with Christians?

Takeaways

After watching this atheist encounter, list 3 things you were most surprised about regarding the interaction between the atheist and the audience.

How will these realizations change how you interact with people going forward?

Upon wrapping up the discussion about the video, ask the members in the group how they feel after watching the encounter with the atheist. If there is any indication that anyone in the group was shaken by the atheist's claims, walk alongside them on their journey to getting the answers they need in order to feel strong in their faith.

Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and give them a brief snapshot about what they will learn next week in The Skeptic's Quest session.

Appendix A

The truth about the atheist's arguments:

1. God of the gaps—putting God into the lack of knowledge that is later explained by science.

The “god of the gaps” argument suggests that most or all evidence proposed for the existence of God is actually not evidence at all, but merely an observation of something which science has yet to explain. For instance, an atheist may admit that they don't have answers for why the universe appears designed, but that is because they are still learning about the universe, not because God exists. They worry that if we supply God as the answer, we will never bother to find out the “real” answer, and the advancement of science is jeopardized.

The atheist's concern is easy to understand. We would have never learned how tsunamis worked or how to predict them and save lives if our only answer was “the gods are angry!” Because of this, some level of openness to a naturalistic explanation is appropriate. But to refuse the *possibility* of God is the same mistake in the opposite direction. Through recent developments in biology, cosmology, and elsewhere, science has been widening these “gaps,” not closing them. Further, belief in God is not against science because God and science are not fighting for the same space. Theology is concerned about the God who made this world. Science is concerned about how this world works.

For further reading, see <https://www.josh.org/is-science-opposed-to-faith-in-god/>

2. “My problem is when people say it's true as if there's evidence for it.”

This was a small, intentional jab on atheist-Sean's part. The language is provocative, but it spells out a common notion among atheists: that there is no evidence for God or for Jesus. This leaves a lot of apologists shaking their heads. If there is no evidence for Christianity, what then are the atheists so busy debunking? It's one thing to say that the evidence is inconclusive or unconvincing. It's quite another thing to say that evidence doesn't even exist.

Perhaps the real issue is that standard arguments for Christianity do not supply the kind of evidence that atheists were hoping for. For instance, the resurrection of Jesus cannot be caught on film or reproduced in a test tube, but it can be defended on historical grounds. One must be careful to consider what kind of evidence is necessary for the issue at hand.

For evidence in Christianity, see *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh and Sean McDowell

3. “Josephus doesn't actually refer to Jesus of Nazareth.”

This was a sneaky move on atheist-Sean's part. Someone in the audience brought up the Jewish historian Josephus. Josephus mentioned Jesus, brother of James, and how he was called “Christ” in *Antiquities*, Book 20 Ch. 9.1. This part of Josephus's writing is considered authentic by most scholars, and it would shut down atheist-Sean's argument that there is no evidence for Jesus. So instead, Sean brings up *Antiquities*, Book 18 Ch. 3.3. In this section, Josephus makes lofty claims about Jesus, sounding as if he were a Christian. Most scholars agree that this part of the text was a forgery by early Christians.

It could be that Josephus mentioned Jesus in 18.3.3, but he probably didn't admit that Jesus was the miracle-working messiah. Still, even if Josephus never mentioned Jesus in that text, his referral to Jesus in 20.9.1 is very firm and widely accepted.

For further study, see “Flavius Josephus” in the Baker Encyclopedia on Christian Apologetics.

Appendix A

4. “The gospels are full of contradictions and clearly biased.”

It can be difficult holding a conversation with an atheist or skeptic because they may unleash a foray of challenges in a single statement. In this example, atheist-Sean presents two separate issues which both deserve their own treatment.

Contradictions don't necessarily mean that Christianity is false or that Jesus never resurrected, but they are still important to address. Most alleged contradictions in the Gospels can be reasonably solved after close examination. The remaining challenges are getting smaller as we learn more about the early Jewish setting, their styles of communication and so forth. As it turns out, most of these alleged contradictions are merely differences.

As for bias, everyone writes with some level of bias. But this is not necessarily bad. The Gospel writers were devoted to Christ, and therefore devoted to preserving what he actually said and did.

For further study, see <https://www.josh.org/contradictions-skew-bible-truth/>

5. “I began to realize that there's no good, scientific evidence that God exists, there's no reason to think the Bible is true after all, it's full of far too many errors, contradictions, and immoral teachings like slavery, misogyny, and genocide to come from a holy God.”

Once again, we are faced with a foray of challenges. Since most of this has already been discussed, let's focus on the accusation that the Bible is full of immoral teachings.

First, the Bible does not endorse everything it says. Many immoral acts are recorded for historical purposes, not as a moral teaching. Even if they appear in God's law (e.g., slavery), we understand by Matthew 19:8 that law was written to accommodate a morally-compromised people. Second, the outlook of Scripture is that all people have sinned against a holy God and deserve to die. If this is true, then God's destruction of people in the Bible is not the problem. The problem is sin, and the solution is Jesus. If anything, we should wonder why God has allowed anyone to continue to live.

A classic book defending God's behavior, particularly in the Old Testament, would be *Is God a Moral Monster?* By Paul Copan.

6. “Darwinian evolution . . . Don't you think if you're going to reject something so basic as modern science, you should understand what it is first?”

Atheist-Sean likes to say this after asking someone in the audience to give a good definition of Darwinian evolution. In some ways, Sean is stacking the deck in his favor. After knocking down his audience over and over, people are second-guessing themselves and worried that if they raise their hand, they would be called on.

But atheist-Sean's rebuke should not be totally ignored. He is right that anyone who seeks to reject evolution should have a basic understanding of what it is and what it isn't. Christians should be prepared to know the opposing world-view just as well as the world-view they advocate. This will prepare them to defend their faith, it will prevent them from embarrassing errors, and it will help them to represent God as a faithful witness.

Appendix A

7. “There’s no evidence for an immaterial soul surviving the ceasing to function of the physical body.”

Again, the soul cannot be caught on film or reproduced in a test tube, but there are philosophical arguments for the existence of a soul. Call it “evidence” or don’t—either way, it’s reason to believe.

J.P. Moreland has done much work in this field of philosophy. He has provided several reasons for the soul which add up to a compelling case. For example, a person without an arm is still 100% human, with the same rights, responsibilities, etc. as any other human. If we accept this, then something must be true of a human beyond its physical properties. The best candidate for this would be the soul.

In addition to the philosophical arguments for the existence of a soul, most Christians believe in a soul because they believe in Christianity which speaks about the soul. So the evidence for Christianity in general can lead us to accept the existence of a soul.

For a full overview of the Soul, see *The Soul* by J.P. Moreland. Mind you, this is a philosophy book, so it will be quite technical.

8. “The RNA World Hypothesis is the most compelling and supported explanation for the origin of life.”

Calling the RNA World Hypothesis the “most compelling and supported explanation for the origin of life” isn’t saying much. The origin of life remains a significant challenge for naturalism, and those who are in the search for life’s origin are aware of this.

Although the “RNA World” sounds attractive to some, there are significant problems with RNA as the hypothetical beginning point of life on Earth. These problems exist every step of the way, including how RNA arose in the first place. This conversation can become very technical very quickly. But for those who wish to take the plunge, we refer you to “The RNA World: A Critique” by Mills and Kenyon.

9. “Craig Venter has been able to synthesize life in a lab.”

What Venter (along with Miller, Urey and others) has done is create substances which contain some properties of life, though not all properties. But the most important thing to recognize here is that they did it in a laboratory, with expensive instruments and careful work after years of research and many failed attempts. In other words, they helped pave a way to show that life could arise through intelligent design.

Appendix A

10. “We have zero evidence to believe that Matthew even penned that gospel. It wasn’t signed by him. We don’t have a document until the 3rd or 4th century.”

That document in the 3rd or 4th century *is evidence*. We may argue that the evidence is unconvincing because it came so late, *but it is evidence*.

Go back in time as far as you can, and you will find that church tradition is unanimous that Matthew is the author of the gospel attributed to him. So the burden of proof falls to anyone who chooses to deny Matthew as the author. Further, it is unlikely that Matthew would be a forged name because he was not prominent among the apostles of Christ. There is no reason to falsely attribute Matthew, a former tax-collector, to a gospel.

Leon Morris gives a good treatment on the authorship of Matthew in the introduction to *The Gospel According to Matthew* in the Pillar Commentary.

11. “The Alexandria and Byzantine copies of the gospels are contradictory to each other on the gospel of Mark. Because they were re-written and they were changed from one generation to the next.”

The manuscript copies which reflect the Alexandrian tradition tend to have the fewest errors between themselves, and so most scholars give preference to those manuscripts. This goes for the Gospel of Mark or any other book for that matter.

Regardless, this argument sidesteps the fact that we have extraordinary manuscript support for the New Testament. Atheist-Sean may argue that our earliest manuscripts are still several hundred years after the original copies, but how concerning is this, really? A well-kept manuscript could last decades (Many have survived for centuries!). So our 2nd–4th century manuscripts (which combined represent the New Testament several times over) are probably only a couple generations removed. When we cross-check these manuscripts against each other and employ our methods of textual criticism, we can reconstruct what the original text said with a high degree of certainty.

For further study on manuscript evidence, see <https://www.josh.org/resources/apologetics/discover-the-evidence/>

If you still have questions about the atheists arguments, contact us at customerservice@josh.org.

The Skeptic's Quest

Leader Notes:

1. *Begin your session with prayer.*
2. *Discuss the intro paragraph and Scripture verse to prepare your minds for this session's important message.*

Have you ever wondered if there is a way to know for sure that God exists and that His Word is reliable? The Bible is God's gift to us and as we comb through its historical accounts, prayers and prophecies, we find answers to our deepest questions.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work"
(2 Timothy 3:16, NLT)

Watch the video together and encourage the group to answer the questions below as they're addressed.

Watch the video and take notes

Josh's Story

When Josh asked the group of students and professors he met at the university what made them different, the young girl indicated that it wasn't religion, the Church, the Bible, God, Christians or Christianity. What did she say it was?

(The person of Jesus Christ)

Josh's Search for Truth

What was the one thing that caught Josh's attention, but very few people appeal to?

(Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament.)

How many prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ? (333)

The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, contains all the prophecies fulfilled in Christ. How many years before He was born was it written? (250)

Sean's Search for Truth

When Sean was 19 years old, what planted a seed of doubt in his mind about the truth of Christianity?

(Atheist and secular websites refuting "Evidence that Demands a Verdict")

Consider and discuss the following questions as a group.

Reflection

1. Why do you think God took such care to make sure that so many prophecies were documented before Christ's birth?

2. Why is it so important for Christians to understand the evidence that points to the Bible's reliability?

3. Were you surprised by Sean's doubt of the reliability of the Bible as a young man who grew up in a Christian home? When Sean told Josh about his doubts, Josh responded in a loving, supportive way. How do you think this encouraged Sean to seek out the truth rather than blindly turning his back on it?

Points to Ponder

Consider Josh's comments and answer the questions.

1. *"I knew the Bible was true. I don't just believe the Bible is true, I know why, intellectually I believe it's true. I knew the Bible was true and I knew God commanded me to forgive. If I hadn't done that, the bitterness and shame would have destroyed everything I would have ever touched in my life."*

It was very difficult for Josh to forgive Wayne Bailey, but he knew he needed to and it freed him from harboring bitterness and shame. How do you think this has led to healing and paved the way for Josh to have healthy relationships?

2. *"When it comes to my salvation, all I need is Jesus. It's not Jesus plus works, Jesus plus baptism, all I need is Jesus. He paid the whole price. Almost everything after my salvation, I've needed more than Jesus. I've needed the Church, the body of Christ. When we confess our sins to God, the Bible promises forgiveness. When we confess our sins to one another, God promises healing."*

Many Scriptures address how God desires for us to love and care for one another. Sometimes we lose sight of how important strong, healthy relationships are. How does Josh's explanation affect your thoughts about the importance of having people in your life you can trust and confide in? How does it make you feel about being that person for others?

Takeaways

List 3 things that impacted you from Josh's testimony, the prophecies fulfilled in Christ, or Sean's season of doubt.

How will these realizations influence your life?

Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and give them a brief snapshot about what they will learn next week in the Talking Truth Together session.

Talking Truth Together

Leader Notes:

1. *Begin your session with prayer.*
2. *Discuss the intro paragraph and Scripture verse to prepare your minds for this session's important message.*

Today's culture suggests that truth is what we feel rather than being aligned with the way the world works. Equipped with an understanding of what truth really is, our kids will not be swayed by culture's influence.

*"The man of lawlessness . . . will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them."
(2 Thessalonians 2:8, 10, NLT)*

Watch the video together and encourage the group to answer the questions below as they're addressed.

Watch the video and take notes

How many verses in the New Testament make it clear that Jesus is the only way to get to God?

(at least 100)

What are the 3 explicit reasons Sean gives as to why truth matters so much?

1. (Truth has consequences)
2. (Truth is a compass for your life)
3. (Believing is not enough)

Sean defines truth using the Correspondence Theory of Truth which says that a statement is true if it matches up with (reality).

Subjective claims, or opinions, are personal and private. They are matters of (preference).

Objective truths are (facts) in the external world we've discovered. The world in itself makes them true or false.

Moral values deal with objective (truth).

What sets Christianity apart from other religions is that it's rooted in (history).

Consider and discuss the following questions as a group.

Reflection

1. What are some examples in your own life of subjective (ice cream) and objective (insulin) claims?

2. Is morality like ice cream (subjective opinion) or insulin (objective fact)? Why or why not?

3. When Sean was asked, “Why is truth so important? Why does truth matter?”, his response was: “Do you want the true answer or the false answer?” Our culture today is teaching children that everyone has their own truth. This is the strategy Paul was referring to in which people would be deceived and steered away from the truth of God. *“He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10, NLT)*

Prepare a simple statement that you can use in response to youth in the event that they come to you asking why truth matters.

Points to Ponder

Consider Sean’s comments below and answer the questions.

1. *“The biggest lie in our culture today is that freedom is doing whatever feels good to you. That’s not freedom. Freedom is orienting our lives around truth. That’s why truth matters.”*

Prayerfully consider this wisdom. What does it mean to orient our lives around truth? How can we do that as individuals and families?

2. *“I encourage you to consider a few questions. Do you really want to know the truth? Do you love truth? Even if it is inconvenient, are you willing to follow truth? If we want to influence those around us, we have to first look within and make sure we are living and modeling a life based on truth.”*

In your own words, how would you explain to someone why moral values are objective facts and not based on personal preference?

Takeaways

Jesus' desire for us is to live in freedom by understanding who He is and what He did for us. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reveals this beautiful story. Prayerfully consider your family's devotion to Bible study. Based on what God lays on your heart, what 3 steps can you take as a family to realize more of the freedom Christ wants for you by growing in your understanding of God's word?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Ask God how to pray for your family's continued search for truth. Write down the prayers He lays on your heart and put them in a place where you will see them and pray regularly.

Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and give them a brief snapshot about what they will learn next week in the The Truth About the Old Testament session.

The Truth About the Old Testament

Leader Notes:

1. *Begin your session with prayer.*
2. *Discuss the intro paragraph and Scripture verse to prepare your minds about why this session is so important.*

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reveals who God is, laying out His love and plan for humanity. Understanding the amazing methods and processes used to preserve the original writings of the Bible is key to believing it is reliable.

*“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear,
not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.”
(Matthew 5:18, NLT)*

Watch the video together and encourage the group to answer the questions below as they're addressed.

Watch the video and take notes

What are the 5 books of the Bible contained in the Lodz Scroll?

1. (Genesis)
2. (Exodus)
3. (Leviticus)
4. (Deuteronomy)
5. (Numbers)

What are the 3 names given for the first 5 books of the Bible in the scroll form?

1. (Pentateuch)
2. (Torah)
3. (The Law of Moses)

How old is the Lodz Scroll? (550-600 years old)

SCRIBE VIDEO: Before Scribes could even touch ink to paper, how many rules did they have to memorize? (4000)

What 5 accuracies were the rules designed to guarantee?

1. (That it's copied correctly)
2. (That it's read correctly)
3. (That it's interpreted correctly)
4. (That it's pronounced correctly)
5. (That it's treated with the greatest sacredness)

A Torah scroll took (1-3) years to copy.

Consider and discuss the following questions as a group.

Points to Ponder

Consider Josh’s comments below and answer the questions.

- 1. *“We have a commitment to the Bible. We respect the Bible, we admire it, we hold it in reverence, we quote it and we go to it, daily, many of us, and in times of need. But can you really trust it?”*

Josh listed many critical rules the Scribes followed in order to preserve the integrity of the Torah’s text. Why do you think this was so important to God?

- 2. *“When I was a skeptic of Christianity I thought it was ridiculous to believe that the words we have in the Bible today were the same words written down thousands of years ago. But you know, my mind changed when I got the chance to look at some of the old scrolls and manuscripts of the Bible.”*

Now that you’ve learned about how the old scrolls were copied, have your feelings about the reliability of the Bible changed? If so, how?

Takeaways

God made sure that our Scriptures today contain the same truth as the original scrolls because they give us a glimpse into who He is and serve as a guide in our lives. Deuteronomy 8:3 says: “. . . *people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*”

God desires for us to not only nourish our bodies with food, but to equally nourish our minds and hearts with His Word. Prayerfully consider your time in God’s Word and how you and your family can make it even more effective. Write down what He speaks to your heart and share it with your family.

Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and give them a brief snapshot about what they will learn next week in the Talking Truth About Intelligent Design session.

The Truth About Intelligent Design

Leader Notes:

1. *Begin your session with prayer.*
2. *Discuss the intro paragraph and Scripture verse to prepare your minds for this session's important message.*

The human body performs miraculous functions working to keep us alive. The earth and atmosphere provide us with oxygen, water and food, along with the precisely balanced environment in which life can thrive.

What are the odds that this precision would come about by accident? Does the creation story hold up to Darwinism and can we defend it or do we have to take it by faith alone?

For those of us who believe the Bible's account of creation, there are many small details in God's work that can be taken for granted. Looking more closely at the intricacy of creation will help us to understand why it is the only answer that stands up to the question of how we got here. Equipping our children with this knowledge will help them to remain firmly rooted in their faith when faced with opposing views.

*"The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known."
(Psalm 19:1-2, NLT)*

Watch the video together and encourage the group to answer the questions below as they're addressed.

Watch the video and take notes

World-views answer 3 questions, what are they?

1. (Origin—How did we get here?)
2. (Predicament or Problem—What went wrong in the world?)
3. (Resolution—How do we fix it?)

The Christian story is: God created us, we rebelled - which is what we call sin - and salvation is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Victor Stenger, a profound atheist, said, "Darwinism implies humanity developed by (accident)."¹

Agnostic theoretical physicist Lee Smolin writes. "We should ask just how probable it is that a universe created by randomly choosing parameters would contain stars. The answer in round numbers comes to about 1 chance in 10 to the (229) power."²

Philosopher of science, Dr. Steven Meyers says, "Whenever we find specified information and we know the causal story of how it arose, we always find it arose from an (intelligent) source."³

It's as if, in the universal language of mathematics and science, God has (autographed) every cell.

1. Victor J. Stenger, *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2009), 76.

2. Lee Smolin, *The Life of the Cosmos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53.

3. Steven C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2009).

Consider and discuss the following questions as a group.

Reflection

1. Sean recommends to research both sides on any issue. Why is this so important?

(So we can understand the perspective of others who hold opposing views, to educate ourselves better on the topic so we have a stronger foundation of belief, and to develop convictions on our own and not just believe something we were told is true.)

Points to Ponder

Consider Sean’s comments below and answer the questions.

1. *“Atheist Daniel Dennett said, ‘Darwinism is like a universal acid. It eats away at all of our traditional beliefs and makes us see the world completely through a new lens.’ So that’s why we have books like Why We Get Sick, the New Science of Darwinian Medicine, Economics as a New Evolutionary Science, Evolutionary Jurisprudence, Religion Explained, the Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought and Literary Darwinism, Evolution, Human Nature and Literature; in fact it’s even reached popular culture.”*

Sean explains how university students are immersed in evolutionary theory which is presented as factual, not theoretical, in their curricula. Consider all the sources of information you and your family receive every day that contain an evolutionary theory assumption that is positioned as a fact. What can you do to better recognize this type of information, evaluate whether or not it makes sense according to what we know about the world and make intelligent conclusions about it?

2. *“As Christians, we have nothing to be afraid of by science or by the evidence. Science is simply one tool God has given us to explore the natural world. And as many of the greatest scientists throughout history have concluded, there is good evidence in the natural world pointing towards God.”*

Why do you think this is so important to understand? How do you think it will help you when talking to others who hold a different perspective?

Takeaways

Sean states that people across the spectrum who believe in evolution admit that although they don't believe the world was designed, it looks as though it was.

Born in 1623, Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, physicist and Catholic theologian said, "There is enough light for those who are willing to be convinced, but enough darkness for those who wish to remain blind, to remain so still."⁴

Given all the evidence that Sean shared, prayerfully consider the two paragraphs above and ask God to reveal to you new understanding about how to connect with people who choose not to believe that God is the intelligent Designer of this beautiful universe.

Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and give them a brief snapshot about what they will learn next week in the The Truth About the New Testament session.

4. Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters, Pensees, Scientific Treaties*. Translated by W. F. Trotter. Vol. 33, Great Books of the Western World series, edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins. Chicago: The University of Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1984.

The Truth About the New Testament

Leader Notes:

1. *Begin your session with prayer.*
2. *Discuss the intro paragraph and Scripture verse to prepare your minds for this session's important message.*

The Bible is the divinely inspired word of God and it is also a historical document. Archaeologists find artifacts in the exact locations mentioned in Scripture. Some of these artifacts have preserved some of the earliest biblical manuscripts which serve as proof of the reliability of the Bible.

*“Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.”
(Matthew 24:35, NLT)*

Watch the video together and encourage the group to answer the questions below as they're addressed.

Watch the video and take notes

_____ (*Historiography*) : the principles of determining authenticity.

The bibliographical test asks two questions of the manuscript, one, what is the _____ (*timeline from the original*) _____ and two, _____ (*how many are there*) _____ .

The more manuscripts you have, the easier it is to reconstruct the _____ (*autographa/original*) _____ .
Any part of a manuscript is considered a _____ (*full*) _____ manuscript.

The total biblical scrolls and manuscripts now documented total _____ (*66,462*) _____ .

The number two manuscript authority after the New Testament is the _____ (*Iliad*) _____ which has _____ (*1,800*) _____ manuscripts.

Consider and discuss the following questions as a group.

Reflection

1. Imagine you were able to touch and experience these artifacts in person. Envision the role they played in history from first being used to share the gospel with the church to getting worn out and being discarded then used as filler for a mask or a book binding, etc. How beautifully God has preserved them so that they can still declare that His word is true and reliable!

How would you feel if you were able to touch and experience these artifacts in person? How much more does seeing them and knowing they played a role in history bring the Bible to life for you?

2. How does God's preservation of these manuscripts make you feel about His hand in history and in your life today?

Points to Ponder

Consider Josh’s comment below and answer the question.

“The more manuscripts you have, the easier it is to reconstruct the autographa—the original—and check out any errors or discrepancies to come up with what you call a percentage of a pure text.”

The Iliad, the second manuscript authority after the Bible, has **1,800** manuscripts. The Bible has **66,462** documented biblical scrolls and manuscripts. How does this significant number of biblical manuscripts increase our confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures?

Conclusion

Having completed your journey through the Heroic Truth Series, we pray you feel more readily equipped to defend the truth of the Bible with confidence, be motivated to live it out, and to pass it on with conviction from a heart of love. Sharing this truth with the young people in your life will be such a blessing for you both as you pass on a legacy of faith.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the evidence of truth which You so generously provide for us that we can be assured, without a reasonable doubt, of Your sovereignty, love and grace. As we've learned more about why we can believe what we believe, help us to continue to grow in our knowledge and strengthen our conviction. As Jesus said, in this world we will have tribulation, but You have overcome the world. Continue to equip us, give us eyes to see the world through your lens, help us to love others as You do, and give us boldness and confidence to stand firm in our faith. Guide us as we strive to pass this truth and faith on to the young people in our lives. Prepare their hearts to receive it and give them a passion to live it out, not only finding freedom in Christ themselves, but also sharing it with others. We pray this in the name of Jesus, whose undying love set us free, Amen.

Conclude the meeting by thanking everyone for being a part of the Heroic Truth Series. For anyone who is interested in continuing their study of the topics addressed, there are relevant Josh McDowell Ministry resources available. See our list of resources on the Resource page of this series as well as www.josh.org.

A Special Message from Josh:

Thank you for the time and dedication you committed to leading this study. Your efforts will bear fruit not only in the lives of your group members, but also those whom they influence themselves. We pray you were blessed by these sessions and that as you stand as a leader of faith, that you will be filled with the peace of God as you continue to share it and live it out.

