

7-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

TRUTHFILLED

THE PRACTICE OF PREACHING
TO YOURSELF THROUGH EVERY SEASON



RUTH CHOU SIMONS

AUTHOR OF *gracefaced*

**THIS STUDY
BELONGS TO**

TRUTHFILLED

The Practice of Preaching to Yourself Through Every Season

Ruth Chou Simons



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruth Chou Simons is a bestselling and award-winning author of several books—including *GraceLaced*, *Beholding and Becoming*, and *Foundations*. She is an artist, entrepreneur, and speaker, using each of these platforms to spiritually sow the Word of God into people’s hearts. Ruth is the watercolorist and artist behind *GraceLaced.com*, a popular brand and retail website that features her unique style of art paired with biblical truth in prints, stationery, and lifestyle products, which reaches a wide audience each month with beauty and truth. Through her ministry, business, writing, and social media community, Ruth shares her journey of God’s grace intersecting daily life. Ruth and her husband, Troy, are grateful parents to six boys—their greatest adventure.



DEAR FRIENDS,

I live in Western Colorado where the seasons are pronounced and intensely vibrant. When it snows here, we get eight inches in a few hours! In spring, all the birds and buds burst forth to meet us as if they couldn't wait to be done with the cold as well. When it's summer, the wildflowers cover an entire hillside. And when the leaves turn here in the mountains, they make a bold statement with waves of gold and blazing shades of orange. If you've never experienced these seasons, be sure to make a visit—you won't be disappointed.

I can't help but think in imagery as an artist as I look out my window and see the similarities between the seasons that occur in creation and the seasons of my heart. Winter, with its waiting and wondering if anything will ever change or grow, spring, with its promises of tender shoots and new blooms, summer, exploding with fruit and evidence of growth, fall, heavy with harvest and ready for rest.

In my 2017 book, *GraceLaced: Discovering Timeless Truths Through Seasons of the Heart*, I wrote devotions to accompany these seasons—seasons of growth, loss, fruitfulness, and weariness that we navigate as believers. I love hearing how those meditations in *GraceLaced* have encouraged and inspired you as readers. In those pages, I suggested through art and writing that we can respond to each season with one of four reminders of our hope in Christ—a response appropriate for the season we're in:

Winter . . . Rest in His Character

Spring . . . Rehearse Your Identity in Christ

Summer . . . Respond in Faith

Fall . . . Remember His Provision¹

As you and I begin this journey here in the *TruthFilled* study, my goal is to show you the why and how behind preaching these truths—of God's character, our identity in Christ, our response in faith, and our provision for endurance—back to ourselves, whatever season we're in.

We will use the Book of Colossians to walk through the pattern and practice of preaching truth to ourselves as Paul set the example for what we preach to ourselves. The practice of preaching truth to yourself isn't an easy fix, a form of self-help, or a formula for success. It's meeting your perennial trials and challenges of faith with the truth of what is unchanging in Christ.

I can't wait to grow together, replacing what naturally fills our hearts and minds with biblical truth that will both fulfill and satisfy us like nothing else.

Here's to being truth-filled.

Ruth Chou Simons



HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

I'm so grateful you're learning with me what it means to preach truth to your own heart. It is such a privilege to come along on this journey with you as we study God's Word, reminding ourselves who He is and who we are because of Him.

This study may be structured a little differently than studies you've done in the past, so I wanted to take a moment to explain how to use it. This study is meant to be just that—a place for you to study Scripture, jot down questions and answers and prayers, and chart how God is using His Word to teach you more about His heart. I would encourage you to get a group of friends together to walk through this study. When we join hands and walk through the Bible in community, we're reminded of the God who is with us and His commands to care for one another. We have the opportunity to witness His work in the lives of our friends and be reminded of His work in our own lives as well. Encourage and challenge one another as you grow and dwell on the truth.

In each session, you'll find a video viewer guide and sections of personal study. Because this study is going to ask you to put into practice what we're learning, I broke the sessions up in sections instead of days. My hope is that this encourages you to take time where you need to hang out a bit longer and dive deep into the truth of Scripture. You can choose when and how long you spend on each section—completing all of them at once, or a little each day, according to your personality and schedule.

VIEWER GUIDES

You'll find video viewer guides before each session, with a few questions to guide your discussion if you're doing this study with a group. The questions will both review the previous week's study as well as ask for feedback about the video teaching. Feel free to use these or to make up your own discussion questions! You know your group best; use these as a starting point if you get stuck.

The order of the study is intended for groups to meet together first, watch the first video session, and then do the first session of personal study. The next week, you'll review the last session's personal study, watch the next video teaching session, and then preview the next week's topic in discussion.

If you haven't already done so, you can purchase or rent the video teaching sessions at LifeWay.com/TruthFilled.

During this study, you'll be invited to practice preaching truth to yourself every week. I am praying you'll step up to the challenge and your heart will fall even more deeply in love with our God—the Source of the truth with which we seek to be filled.



SESSION ONE | INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

COLOSSIANS *1:1 - 14*





Do not be
conformed to this
world, but be
transformed by the
renewal of your mind,
that by testing you
may discern what
is the will of
God, what is good and
acceptable and perfect.

ROMANS 12:2

Notes

WELCOME

As we begin, discuss the following questions with your group:

What drew you to this study?

What words would you use to describe your relationship with God's Word?

Share with the group something you hope to learn from this study.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Feel free to use the space on the previous page to jot down notes as you watch Ruth's video teaching.

DISCUSS

Take a few moments to think through these questions from the video teaching or discuss them with your small group.

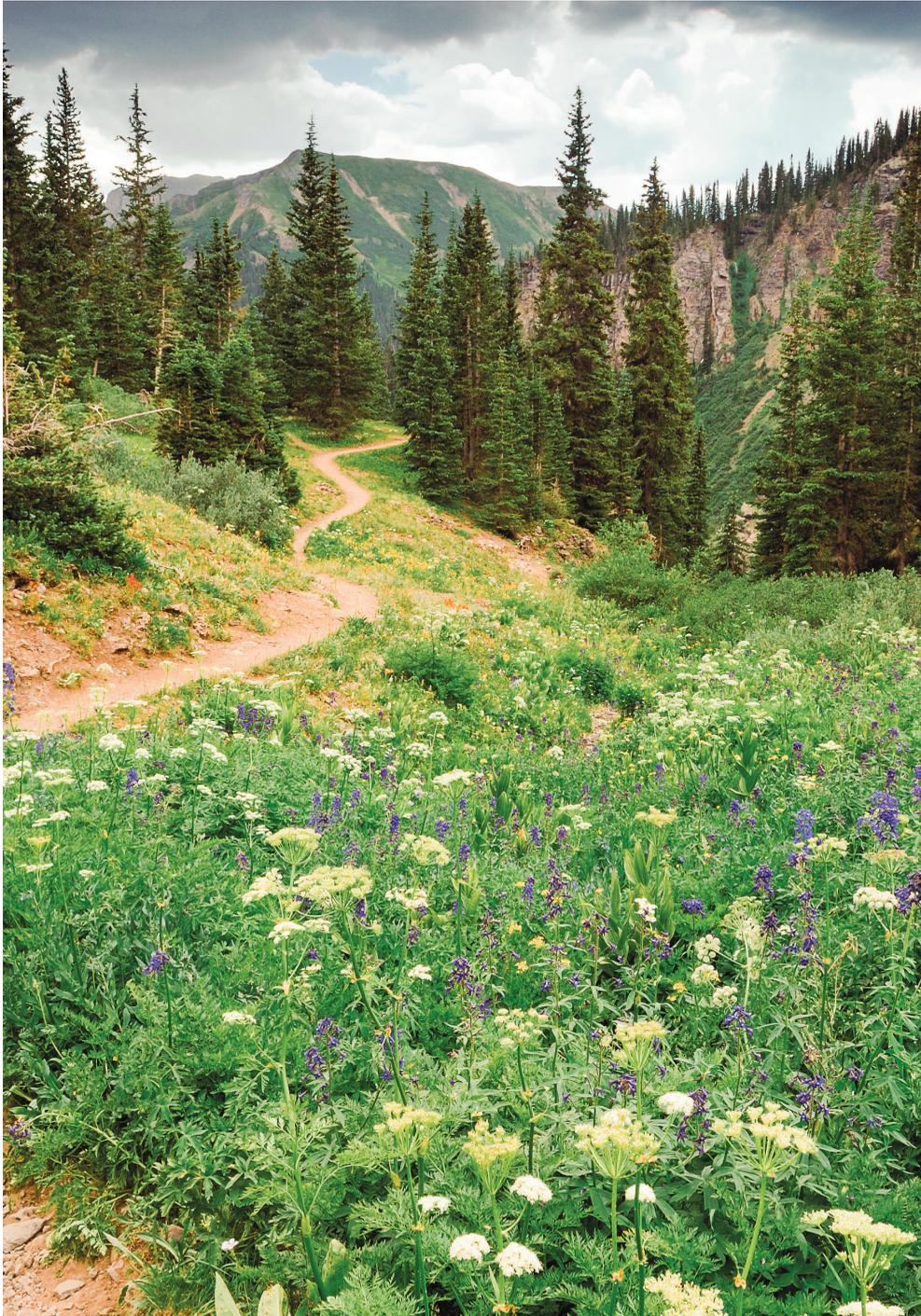
When have you found yourself, "like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind" (Jas. 1:6, NIV) in the circumstances of life? In those moments, how do you typically respond?

In the moments when you allow yourself to spin out of control instead of binding yourself to the Lord in truth, what might be keeping you from trusting the Lord over your own heart?

Is there a specific lie in relation to God or yourself that you continually have to preach truth to your heart about? If you feel comfortable, share it with a friend or your small group.

What truth from God's Word would directly apply to the lie that you mentioned above?

Close your time in prayer, thanking God for the truth of His Word and asking Him to give you the grace to preach truth to your own heart this week, moment by moment, day by day.



If I were to ask you who your greatest influences are, you might cite your hardworking father, your witty grandmother, or maybe your eleventh grade history teacher. Perhaps you'd think of a mentor, pastor, or close friend.

But Paul David Tripp tells it to us straight, saying, “no one is more influential in your life than you are, because no one talks to you more than you do.”¹ Oh, how true this is. Turns out we are more influential in our own lives than we realize. Just one quick inventory of the thoughts that dominated our thinking this day can leave us confronted with the truth: We are what we think.

What are some of the thoughts that go through your mind in the day-to-day? Here are some of mine, even now:

I'll never change—I'll never overcome this weakness. I'm not a good mom—I'll ruin these kids. I'm not capable of this difficult task. I shouldn't trust people—I'll inevitably get hurt. I should be so much further along in my walk with the Lord—God must be disappointed in me. I can't minister or lead if I don't have all the answers. I wouldn't be going through these circumstances if I were a better Christian.

My guess is that while those statements seem recognizable as lies when someone else says them, you too allow them to form in your mind about yourself and your own circumstances. See how much your thoughts direct your days? Can you see why Tripp says no one is more influential than you are?

Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (NKJV).

The principle here is that your heart and your mind are connected. You can try to act or behave in a certain way, but ultimately, your actions will take the shape of what drives our hearts and minds.

Take an inventory. What are the most common thoughts that fill your mind in the day-to-day?

You see, this conviction to meet the jumbled-up thoughts and lies in my mind with the truth of God's Word didn't form out of a noble pursuit of spiritual discipline, but rather through the most brutal of seasons where my emotions and feelings about my life threatened to pull me under the tide of life's unexpected waves of doubt, fear, exhaustion, and disappointment.

Maybe you know what “unexpected” feels like. Most of us intentionally or unintentionally write narratives for our ideal lives that include graduating college with very little school debt and marrying a godly man who will not only be handsome eternally but will also always read our minds when we have needs and always have the right answer for how to lead us into the future. We write scripts for our lives that perhaps include adventures abroad, a good job, nice benefits, a squad of fun friends who will never betray us, a vibrant church to plug into, and lots of opportunities to use our gifts in ways that feel natural and encouraging.

None of us plan to write confusion or failure or chapters of loss, pain, conflict, or suffering into our stories. No one plans to struggle to love her husband, to feel helpless in motherhood, to feel lonely in ministry, to wrestle with identity. But there I was in my late twenties, chaffing from all this and more. In that time of my life, I was in a pattern of bowing to my emotions and stumbling about in my doubt—like James says—“like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (Jas. 1:6, NIV).

My husband Troy and I were both believers, but reality pressed in with the tension of our faith against the pressures of life. And he said to me one day, in the midst of me feeling sorry for myself and in a slump:

“Honey, you really need to preach truth to yourself. You believe the gospel and the hope we have in Christ. Tell yourself what to do like the psalmist does.”

The psalm he referred to is Psalm 42.

Read Psalm 42:5-11.

Whom was the psalmist addressing in these verses?

What was the state of the psalmist’s heart as he questioned himself?

What were some things he honestly confessed regarding . . .

HIS FEARS?	
HIS PHYSICAL PAIN?	
HIS SADNESS?	

What did he tell his own soul to do?

If the psalmist’s remedy for a downcast soul was to tell his soul to put his hope in God, then we must know why putting our hope in Jesus changes our hearts and minds. Somehow as believers we trust Jesus to save us from our sins, but we so easily forget He saves us to a new way of thinking, living, and being.

We may be familiar with Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12:2—“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV)—but so often we try to figure out what God wants to do with our lives by comparing the patterns to success, productivity, or happiness we see in the world.

Describe some formulas or patterns the world prescribes . . .

FOR SUCCESS:	
FOR LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP:	
FOR SECURITY:	
FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH:	
FOR ACCEPTANCE:	

Read Romans 12:2 again.

How did Paul say we are transformed?

Describe what it looks like to renew your mind.

We are transformed by the renewing of our minds. We renew our minds by developing new patterns. Instead of bowing to the pattern of my feelings or my old thoughts, I worked to practice a pattern of preaching truth from God's Word to my own heart, like the psalmist did.

Over the next few weeks, we'll practice this new pattern together. Only by being filled with truth can we be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Father, help us to rightly assess the deceitful patterns in our minds, the false notions, lies, and inadequate substitutes to being truly renewed of mind in You. So, Lord, as we begin establishing new patterns of belief and thought, change our hearts. Help us to study Your Word, open the eyes of our hearts that we might understand it, and teach us to speak it back to ourselves, in and through every season. Amen.



PAUL'S PATTERN: INDICATIVES VERSUS IMPERATIVES

Have you ever started doing things or buying things in winter in hopes that spring will come more quickly—like when I walk into The Home Depot® and involuntarily reach for all the tiny tomato plants and cucumbers even when snow is still falling?

The other day I saw a huge indoor pot of lettuces growing—and naturally believed I needed to buy a pretty container of lettuce—because what could be more spring-welcoming than to snip lettuce that's growing up from dirt? (I act as if growing veggies on my windowsill will cause snow to melt.)

My boys have their version of this. (You may know that I'm mom to six boys!) They have a habit of putting on sandals and shorts any time the sun is out and the temp reaches above forty degrees Fahrenheit. They start pulling out their summer clothes, bike helmets, and swim trunks. They are ready to be summer people—to do summery things. But the truth is, no matter how diligent they are to wear sandals or how many garden plants I'm ready to plant, we won't be involved with the affairs of summer until the snow melts away and the true changes of the season occur.

You see, the truth is: True change only happens after our state of being changes.

Just like putting on sandals in snow or snipping lettuce from a container in your kitchen has no power to bring on spring, neither does our striving change our hearts apart from gospel transformation.

If you're like me, sometimes it's tempting to want to jump straight into the dos and don'ts of how we should live and skip over the reminders of who God is and who we are in Christ. (Do you sometimes think it is repetitive and maybe even a little boring?)

Read Colossians 3:1-2.

What part of this passage do you immediately respond to?

What do these two verses tell us about who Christ is?

What do these two verses show us to do in response?



I'm tempted to focus on how I must set my mind on things above and dismiss the reminder that the power to do so comes from being raised with Christ as a born-again believer.

A fancy word for right conduct or practice is the word *orthopraxy*²—*ortho* meaning straight,³ *praxy* meaning practice⁴ (or *imperatives*). *Orthopraxy* is what we do because of our faith, and *orthodoxy* (or *indicatives*) is what we believe.⁵ *Orthodoxy* tells us what is straight; *orthopraxy* tells us how to walk along that straight line.

Without the indicatives—or what is true about who God is and what He's done—the imperatives would be basically impossible. Attempting to do great things for God without trusting in the great things He's already done for us will always lead to either a whole lot of self-righteousness or total despair and distance from God, fearing that you've failed Him.

Right believing leads to right living, so let's grow in the practice of believing and preaching the truth of God's Word to ourselves, together.

WHY COLOSSIANS?

The apostle Paul wrote Colossians to the church of Colossae—what we now know as a part of modern day Turkey.⁶ Paul wrote the letter while in prison in Rome. News reached Paul that heresy was swarming around the church at Colossae and threatened to influence the believers there with worldly belief systems. Paul wrote to warn the Colossians and direct them to truth in the face of heresy in Colossae. The church at Colossae was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers, and though they had heard the truth of the gospel, they were in danger of caving to paganism, worldliness, and the false beliefs in philosophical and legalistic thought.

The lie that threatened the Colossians was simply the idea that Christ was not sufficient—that He alone was not enough. Paul sought to reestablish the truth with his letter: Christ is all.

Paul sought to encourage the believers in Colossae to passionately serve and follow after Christ, but in order to do so, they had to hold steadfastly to be filled by the truth of who God is, who we are in Him, what we must do in response, and how to persevere in the truth as a Christ-follower.



Paul knew that to be filled with the truth of the gospel isn't a one-time outward adherence or acknowledgment, but a daily clinging to what is true while discerning what is false.

Through studying the Book of Colossians, we will also learn to establish a pattern of becoming truth-filled.

How often, in the face of doubt and fear, do we forget the truth that Christ is sufficient?

Like the Colossians, how can you know the gospel and yet become swayed by the persuasive philosophies and messages from the world?

Name some of the ways in which current books, entertainment, media, or pop culture tell us Jesus is not enough.

Assess and confess: How are you, at times . . .

FORGETFUL THAT JESUS IS GOD AND IS OUR SUFFICIENCY?	
FORGETFUL THAT WE DO NOT NEED TO PROVE OUR OWN SUFFICIENCY?	



BEGIN WITH WHAT WE KNOW

Knowing who God is and what He has really done for us is the foundation to any truth we preach to ourselves. How can we believe what He says about us or what He promises for the days to come if we don't first trust what He says about Himself? Paul began his letter to the Colossians with a clear reminder of what they already knew.

Friend, you may feel like you already know these truths as well, but I encourage you to slow down and encounter them anew.

Read Colossians 1:1-14.

As we've already learned, letters were the primary form of communication in Paul's day. Important warnings, praise, exhortation, and instruction were sent as letters and read aloud to the churches during Paul's imprisonment and times when he was unable to visit the churches himself. Paul penned this letter to the Colossians beginning with greetings from himself and Timothy, Paul's mentee and missionary companion.

Imagine the whole church gathered together to hear a word of encouragement from a hero of their faith. This was personal, special, and carried the weight of a personal visit and the authority of a leader who had trained their own pastor. The church in Colossae was founded by Epaphras, a colaborer in the gospel, from whom they learned the gospel (v. 7).

It's clear from reading the letter's introduction that the Colossians' love for one another and for the Lord encouraged Paul.

THE GOAL—TO BE FILLED AND TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY

The word *worthy* comes from the root word that means *a balancing of scales*—as in with business transactions—that what is paid matches the work that's being done.⁷ Another way to put it: that our lives would correspond appropriately to the measure of position and calling we've been given as followers of Christ.

We can never pay back or earn what salvation in Christ has purchased for us—that's not what was being said here. Instead, Paul was saying that if you are filled with the truth of God's wisdom and understanding, your living will match that fullness and bear fruit.

We don't walk in a worthy manner to *get* saved; we walk in a worthy manner because we *are* saved.

Paul knew that in order to encourage the Colossians to stand firm and “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (v. 10), he must remind them to be fueled by what made them worthy in the first place.

Does our everyday living match our inheritance in Christ (v. 12)? Paul, in just the introduction and greetings of his letter, sought to unpack the truths of that inheritance and that redemption for their recollection.

What are some phrases Paul used to define and describe the gospel (vv. 5-6)?

Why is it so important that we know the truth of the grace of God and not subtle counterfeits?

Name some close-but-not-quite versions of the grace of God that can be found in popular culture.

Look at verses 9 and 10: “. . . be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . increasing in the knowledge of God” (NKJV).

The word for *filled* here is *plēroō*, meaning more than just filled up: consumed, controlled, completely overtaken.⁸ Have you ever noticed how, when you are fully satisfied after a meal, even the most tempting dessert loses its appeal?

In the same way, we make little room for false belief, counterfeit faith, or unfruitful self-help strategies when we are filled up with the truth.

Paul encouraged similarly in his letter to the Ephesians:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

EPHESIANS 4:14, NIV

Preaching the truth of the gospel and our knowledge of God’s Word isn’t rooted in storing up more information. It is to be deeply rooted in truths that you can quickly recall when seasons are tumultuous, tender, or difficult to discern. We won’t be swept away by wrong thinking when we are maturing in right believing.

Read Colossians 1:10-11 again.

According to Paul, what accompanies being filled with the knowledge of God with wisdom and understanding?

Reread Colossians 1:12.

We will certainly look more at how we are sons and daughters, why we are “qualified . . . to share in the inheritance” when we get to the second pattern next week—preaching to ourselves the truth of who we are in Christ. But for now, let’s focus on the gift Paul wanted his readers to remember. We see it in other places in the New Testament, too.

Read Ephesians 1:11-14 and 1 Peter 1:4.

What do these verses, along with Colossians 1:12, show us about our inheritance in Christ?

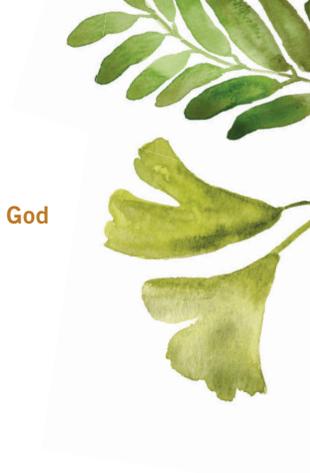
Reread Colossians 1:1-14 and answer the following questions based on what you see in those verses:

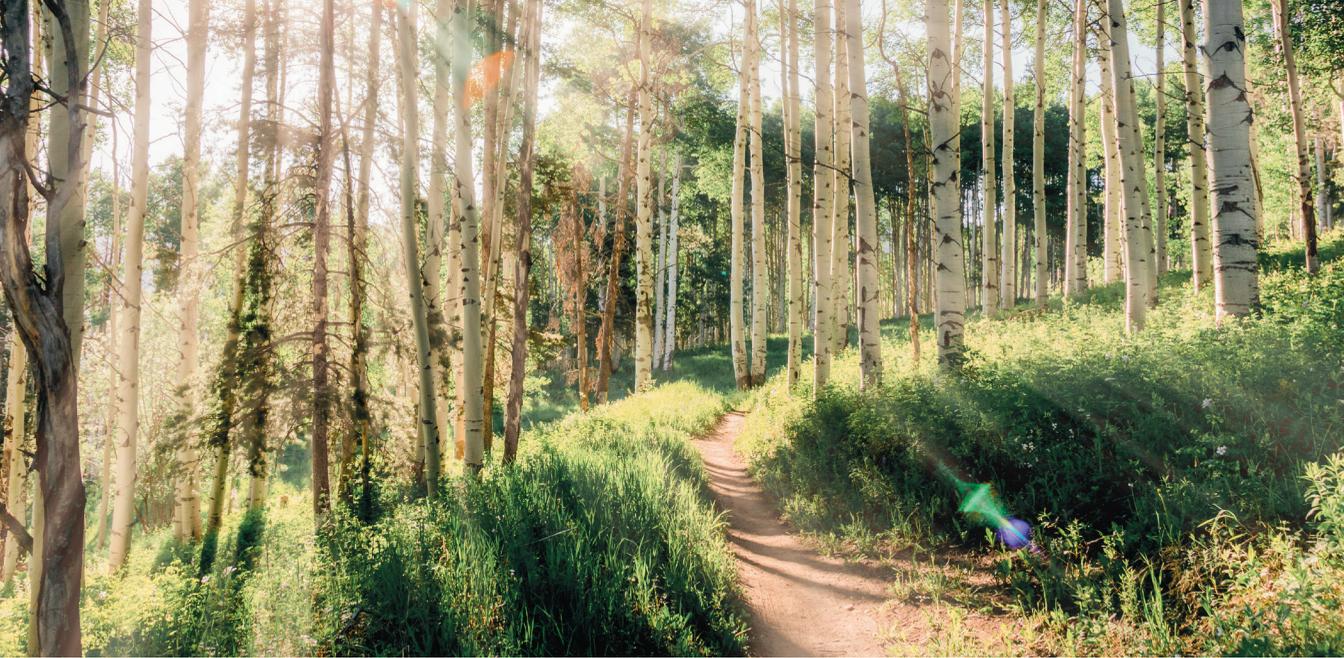
What is true about God?

What is true about Christ?

What has He done for us?

What have we been given?





HOW TO WRITE A SERMON TO PREACH TO YOUR OWN HEART

We're going to practice preaching to ourselves week-by-week. A good sermon preached to your own heart takes practice, and it takes content! It's not preaching truth to yourself if you're not filled up with the truth. Let's try and construct a sermon to preach to ourselves, together:

1

Identify the care. What's the issue? "Why are you downcast?" (Ps. 42:5, BSB).

Write out what your concern is.

For example: I'm overwhelmed by my to-do list.

2

Tell your soul what to do. "Put your hope in God" (Ps. 42:5, BSB).

How? You put your hope in God by looking to the Word and recounting the hope of the gospel and the character of Christ.

The psalmist, David, showed us in Psalm 103 how to preach a sermon to ourselves. He told himself how to keep his eyes on his Father rather than his circumstances by recounting what God has done, what's true about His character, and why he can trust Him.

Read all of Psalm 103.

Let's look more closely at verse 2.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

P S A L M 103 : 2

To “forget not all his benefits” is to rehearse God’s faithfulness instead of your fears, to praise Him instead of pouting, and to humble yourself as a child who trusts in her Father instead of herself.

Write out some of God’s benefits, His character, and what’s true about Christ and our hope in Him.

For example: Jesus paid every debt I owe as a sinner. He doesn’t just save me *from* guilt and condemnation; He saves me *to* freedom and eternal joy. I’m qualified for my inheritance in Christ (Col. 1:12). He delivered me from darkness to light (v. 13) and has forgiven my sins (v. 14). This is how I’m able to “walk in a manner worthy” of Him and bear fruit (v. 10).

3

Embrace gospel hope. How does the good news of Christ (the gospel) change your perspective?

Preach the sermon to yourself and write out how Jesus satisfies—at the core—the concerns of your heart.

For example: I’m overwhelmed by my to-do list. But because Jesus, on the cross, fulfilled every requirement ever needed to be acceptable in God’s sight, I do not have to look at my to-do list as a means of securing acceptance or freedom. Jesus has already secured those things for me, and in Christ, I can pursue my to-do lists as someone approved, not needing approval. The Bible tells me that “His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through

the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3, CSB). That means I have everything I need to do all that He’s given me to do, by His power.

The work God has accomplished through Christ, to secure eternal hope for us, His children, is the most important sermon we can preach to ourselves. It is the foundational truth upon which we rest everything else we believe about who we are and what He has for us to do. It’s the only fuel that will drive our efforts to obey, serve, or be fruitful in our faith. And when we believe God is who He says He is, we also have the basis for the truths of how He will sustain us to the end.

PRACTICE THE PATTERN

So as we finish this week’s study, consider how you can preach or counsel your heart with these truths of who God is and what He’s done for us, right in the midst of your current circumstance in these areas.

I am filled.

God satisfies me with truth and grace.

1 In what current circumstance do you feel weary and lacking strength?

2 Preach it to yourself:

Because grace is mine through Jesus (Col. 1:6), and He is the substance of true knowledge (vv. 9-10) and hope (v. 14), I don’t need to be filled up with any other counterfeit in my life.

3

Practice writing your own:

I have an inheritance.

God has eternal treasure and hope for me.

1

In what current circumstance do you think you're lacking all you need?

2

Preach it to yourself:

Because of Jesus, I'm given an inheritance that will not fade, can't be lost, and isn't dependent on impressing everyone around me. I don't need to put my hope in what I can achieve, acquire, or produce today (v. 12).

3

Practice writing your own:



