

## **What cannot be shaken**

Good morning! As I was considering what I should speak about today, I began to think about what it is, exactly, that we put our confidence in. Do we put our confidence in governments? Work? Money? Health? Family? Food? Education? Intellect? Innovations? Technology? Friends? What happens when these things let us down or disappear? We, humans, are weak and easily shaken. Ideologies come in and out of fashion. When we look at God's Word, we see that are not to put our confidence in worldly things or ideologies.

1 John 2:15

**“Do not love the world or anything in the world.”**

1 Corinthians 3:19

**“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.”**

However, knowing what God's Word says and actually examining what we believe are two different things. *We need to make sure we have our foundation in God's word.* Without a good foundation in God's word, without knowing what God's word really says, we are as easily tossed as waves in the ocean. *What I am going to talk about today is about the process I went through which really tested my foundations. Maybe it will help you, too.*

*As I said before, there is not a whole lot that we can put our trust in. Many people will go so far as to say that there is no such thing as truth, that everything is relative.*

What we believe to be true and important forms our worldview. It is the foundation we build our lives upon. Your worldview can be absorbed through a collection of experiences or through media or culture, and it can be challenged when set beside a different worldview, but in the end, it is something you choose.

In a previous message I mentioned that I attended a liberal arts college. The emphasis should be on “liberal”. I met so many people with different worldviews. Every class I took challenged me to look at what I believed to be true. Do I only believe in the Bible because I was raised in a Christian home? If I were born in Saudi Arabia, would I believe the Bible was true? Should I believe what my professors tell me? Should I believe the Bible at all? Does “Christianity” always reflect what is written in God's word? How do I reconcile what I see in the world and in academic research with what I read in God's word?

In the end, I made a choice to stand on God's word, even when I couldn't reconcile the differences—especially when I couldn't reconcile the differences.

Proverbs 3:5-6

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”**

I was not popular in most of my classes, I quoted scripture in many of the assignments I turned in to atheist professors. I argued the major flaws in sociological and anthropological theory based on whether or not they were in line with Biblical truth. I had decided that God's word was more trustworthy than the ideologies mankind could come up with. Even what I saw with my eyes, what I observed, could not be understood as “truth” without God's word to back it up. *Some of the questions I had to struggle through may help you as well. Think about some of*

*these questions- perhaps as you watch TV, commercials, read the newspaper, think about politics, or talk with friends.*

What do I believe about gender? What do I believe about social equality? Justice? Racial conflict? World religions? The history of mankind? Language? Poverty? Morality? Culture?

Before I made the choice to stand on scripture, I felt so weak and powerless in class as my peers and professors taunted me and flaunted ideologies I opposed. After, I felt grounded in something, and I used that foundation to start to build up arguments against those ideologies. Without a foundation based on God's word, I had nothing to fight back with.

Jesus talked about this in Luke 6:47-49 in the parable of the wise and foolish builders-

**"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."**

One built his life on the rock of Jesus' teachings and one built his life without a foundation- and his destruction was utterly complete.

My answer to the question- Why is Truth so important? It is the difference between a firm foundation and complete destruction. The difference between powerlessness and power.

My worldview was not only challenged and affirmed in classes. I had a friend in college named Cheng Liang. He was born in China, but immigrated to the US at age 7. He was aggressively seeking the truth. He would pound on my door at 11 pm because he had a question about the Bible. He would keep me up to the wee hours of the morning asking seriously difficult questions. I had never really thought about many of the things he asked, and it forced me to open up my Bible and look at God's word. It forced me to examine why I believed what I claimed to believe. Even though there were nights when I was so tired that I told Cheng to just go home so I could sleep, and even though there were times when I got frustrated at his inability to just accept the Bible as true, I am grateful for Cheng and the challenges he presented. I will never forget one conversation I had with Cheng while at a retreat. After a year and a half of witnessing to Cheng, in frustration, I said, "You know, Cheng, I have told you just about everything I can to convince you that this is the truth. Why cant you just believe it?" His response was, "I am already 20 years old. If I find out that the Bible is true, then it means I have to tear down the last 20 years of my life that I have built on something untrue and start over. I don't want to find out another 20 years from now that the Bible is wrong and have to do that again."

I was very impressed with his answer because it showed me, truly, how important it is for us to be sure our lives are built on a foundation of truth. *No one really wants to live a lie. The consequences are clear- in Luke 6- complete destruction. But sometimes we can be so afraid of finding out the truth, that we shut our eyes to it.* I am grateful that Cheng pushed me to check

my foundations as well.

*Before we can check whether our foundations are built on truth or not, we need know where to find truth.*

*(Example of something hidden in my hand).*

Praise be to God, God has revealed Truth to us. And since He has revealed himself to us, we are without excuse. *Once we know the truth, we must act upon it.*

Romans 1:18-20 says:

**“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”**

Psalm 19:1-4 says:

**“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”**

*There are really only two responses to the truth- in Romans 1 we find that we can either suppress the truth with wickedness or live by the truth.*

*If you remember some of the questions I asked at the beginning, like what do I believe about the history of mankind?*

How did we get here? Why are we here? Who is God? What is Truth? What is moral and right?

Isaiah 45:18-24 sums it up quite well.

**“For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—he says:**

**“I am the Lord, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendents, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right. Gather together and come, assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. Declare what is to be, present it—let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee shall bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.’”**

*We see here that God's word will not be revoked. That's great. That sounds like something solid to put my trust in. But for what purpose? The whole of scripture points to Truth in relationship to a person- Jesus Christ. God revealed himself to us so that we might fulfill our original purpose of being in a relationship with God. Jesus said, in John 14:6-7:*

**"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."**

Hebrews 1:1-3 confirms this.

**"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."**

In another conversation with Cheng, he asked me, "Why doesn't God just come to me and show me that He exists? If He loves me and wants me to be in a relationship with Him so much, why doesn't He just show me some miracle?"

My answer was, "That's what He did already when He sent Jesus. Jesus came and performed miracles and taught us about God and the right way to live. He even died on the cross to reconcile our relationship with God. Do you want Him to do all that again? Just because it happened 2000 years ago doesn't mean He hasn't done it. Living 2000 years after just means we have to experience it and hear it through the Bible."

Not long after this conversation with Cheng, I came to Japan as an exchange student. He started to hang out with another girl who had recently come to faith in Jesus. I got an email from Cheng saying that after one hour of talking with this girl, he realized he needed to know Jesus personally. Praise the Lord.

*So, we can know and be in a relationship with the source of all truth. Praise the Lord!*

1 Peter 3:15-16

**"But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."**

*Why is it so important to have a good foundation? Just like 1 Peter says, we need to be ready to give an answer- to give a reason, an account for why we believe what we do. In order to do that, we need to know God's word. One day we will give an account in Heaven.*

*Let me give you an example. How many people here have a keitai? (cellphone?) Do you like your cellphone company? Who is convinced they have the best company? Who doesn't have the foggiest clue about their contract?*

*I recently got a new cellphone. I had been using a company for 4 years. When I made the*

*contract 4 years ago, I didn't know much Japanese. I thought it was a little expensive, but the service had been good, so I didn't complain. Only last week, I found out that I had been paying almost 2,000 yen a month that I didn't need to be paying. That's 24,000 yen a year for 4 years! I was heartbroken! And angry! But, the company realized I was upset and helped me negotiate a new contract for much cheaper and now I am happy. But, just imagine, you lived your whole life sure that there was more you could understand, but that you didn't investigate, only to find out in the end that you had wasted so much of your life. You'd be more than heartbroken!*

In conclusion, faith is a wonderful thing, a beautiful thing, a necessary thing, but it needs to be grounded in God's word.

Hebrews 11:1 says,

**“Now faith is being sure of we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”**

*We don't just hope blindly. I hope I'm going to heaven! A lot of people hope that. How do we know that we are going to heaven? Because Jesus paid for our sin by dying on the cross and then he rose again to make a way for us.*

Paul himself spoke of the importance of putting our hope in the truth. In 1 Corinthians 15:13-14;17-19, he wrote to the Corinthian church about Christ's resurrection as the basis for our faith and hope.

**“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”**

But, there's good news- Christ has been raised. The grave is empty. Our sins have been forgiven. There is a reason for our hope. The Bible promises that we are not going to find out we've been living and serving for nothing. We can say with David, in Psalm 16:8-11

**“I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”**

Hebrews 12:28 says:

**“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”**

There's not a whole lot in this world we can put our hope or trust in. If we don't put our hope in Christ Jesus and build our lives on the foundation of His eternal word, we will be easily shaken. If you are looking for something solid to put your trust in, I want to encourage you to open up the Bible, maybe for the first time, and wrestle with what you find written there.

Matthew 7:7-8 says

**“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who**

**knocks, the door will be opened.”**

Ask God to reveal himself to you as you read it. Seek God, Seek the Truth. Knock on Pastor Dan’s door at 11 pm and ask him difficult questions... Just kidding.

Let us pray:

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you so much that you have revealed yourself to us in creation, through your words spoken by prophets, and through the Living Word, your Son Jesus Christ. Help us to know you more. Help us to not only know the truth, but to put it into practice, to build our lives on it. Forgive our many sins and doubts. Give us your strength to overcome the challenges and temptations and struggles we face here on earth. We pray for your will to be done on earth, for your kingdom to come here on earth, for your glory to be revealed here on earth, in our lives, and in Your church. I pray that your Holy Spirit would come and fill us so that we might understand your word and your will. Thank you that you are always at work in our lives. Heal our sicknesses. Encourage the weak. Bind us together in perfect love and unity through your blessed Son Jesus Christ. We love you and pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.