

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com
E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE

Scripture over Self

SERIES

Truth or Trend

DATE

6/1/2025

KEY SCRIPTURE

Various scriptures

SYNOPSIS

There are many popular ideas that often sound good, but aren't really biblical. As believers, we must distinguish truth from trend.

HIGHLIGHTS

4-Day devotional attached





☞ Sermon Series: Truth or Trend

We've been talking about truth for several weeks now; it's a very important subject, especially since it's one of the primary reasons Jesus became a man. Last week, I mentioned that, like Timothy, we should be aware of popular, but false teachings, which abound today. These phrases are found in songs, social media, and self-help books, often promising freedom, fulfillment, and a feel-good message. But, the truth of the Gospel is not about making people feel good, it's about making people new. There are many popular ideas that often sound good, but aren't actually biblical. So, today, we are starting a spin-off from our What is Truth series, to a new series titled, Truth or Trend. In this series we will examine some of these pop-culture ideas and compare them with the Word of God.

To start, I thought it might be fun to have a little quiz to see how well you can distinguish between Truth and Trend... I call this quiz **"Bible or Not?"**

☞ **"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."** **Answer:** Biblical. From Matthew 26:41, by Jesus in Gethsemane.

☞ **"God helps those who help themselves."** **Answer:** Not Biblical. Popularized by Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1736), rooted in earlier works.

☞ **"Do not throw your pearls before swine."** **Answer:** Biblical. From Matthew 7:6.

☞ **"A friend loves at all times."** **Answer:** Biblical. From Proverbs 17:17.

☞ **"Money is the root of all evil."** **Answer:** Not Biblical (Misquote). 1 Timothy 6:10 says, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." The misquoted version is common.

Now, let's get to today's pop-culture quotes:

☞ Sermon 1: Scripture Over Self

1: "Follow Your Heart"

The world says to "follow your heart," suggesting our emotions are a reliable guide for life's decisions. This was popularized heavily through the Star Wars Franchise, with frequent comments like, "search your feelings." Here are a few more similar quotes: *Writer Audre Lorde said, "Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge." Steve Jobs said, "Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become."*

☞ But scripture actually warns us of the heart's unreliable nature. **Jeremiah 17:9** says, **"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"** **Proverbs 3:5-6** says, "Trust in



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

Christian theologians and philosophers offer a more biblical view: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, author of *The Cost of Discipleship*, and whose life story was recently portrayed in a movie produced by Angel Studios said, **“Feelings come and go, but the Word of God stands forever.”** And, C.S. Lewis said, *“Feelings, feelings, and feelings. Let me try thinking instead.”*

Still some might want to quote **Psalm 37:4**, where it says, “Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” But, notice that verse is strongly tied to a right relationship with God first. Also, I tend to think it means that God will give you new and better desires as you put him first.

There’s a story of a young Christian woman who was smitten by a charming man who seemed perfect. Her heart urged her to dive into the relationship, ignoring red flags like his lack of faith and controlling tendencies. Friends encouraged her to “follow her heart,” but she felt uneasy. And then one Sunday, she heard Proverbs 3:5-6 preached and began praying for God’s guidance. Through scripture and counsel from her small group, she realized her heart had misled her. She ended the relationship, trusting God’s wisdom, and later found peace and true love in a godly partnership that honored the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon - *“The heart is a poor guide; let God’s Word be your compass.”*

Your feelings will lie to you. So, before following your feelings, pause and pray, asking, “Does this align with God’s will as revealed in scripture?” Don’t just follow your heart.

☞ 2: “Believe in Yourself”

Ralph Waldo Emerson - *“Self-trust is the first secret of success.”* The phrase “believe in yourself” advocates for self-confidence as the key to success. While confidence has a place, the Bible directs us to trust in God’s strength, not our own.

☞ **Philippians 4:13** says, **“I can do all this through Christ who strengthens me.”** There is a measure of confidence there, but note its true source – through Christ. Charles Spurgeon said, *“Self-confidence is a house built on sand; faith in Christ is a fortress on the rock.”* And, John MacArthur adds, **“Believing in yourself apart from God is a recipe for pride and failure. Trust in Him, and He will lift you up.”** In fact, that is what the Bible says in **Isaiah 40:31**... “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Believing in yourself is not a biblical viewpoint. Remember Gideon? He’s one of my favorite characters. He didn’t believe in himself much at all. In fact, when God called him he claimed to be the least of the least, not capable of what God was asking. Still, God called him “mighty warrior.” By trusting God’s



power, Gideon led 300 men to victory against a vast army. His story reminds us that our limitations are no barrier to God's strength. It's his strength, not ours. And, there are a number of other stories in the bible about people with little self-confidence whom God used powerfully. In fact, it seems that God is drawn to those kinds of people. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**... But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Now, I'm not saying you need to be down on yourself. No. Instead, you need to be realistic about yourself, but put your real faith in the Lord, who is your strength. *A.W. Tozer said, "Our strength lies not in ourselves but in the One who holds all things." And, Corrie ten Boom made a memorable statement when she said, "If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest."*

So, ground your confidence in Christ, and if in some area you feel especially weak, ask the Lord to renew your strength as in Isaiah 40:31. Then, use your gifts to serve God and others, but rely on His power to sustain you. It's not about believing in yourself; it's about trusting the Lord.

☞3: "Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide"

Mark Twain said, "A man's conscience is his compass, and though the needle sometimes deviates, it will always point to true north." This one is not completely off the mark, but it's not quite exactly on the mark, either. The saying "let your conscience be your guide" assumes our moral compass is always true. Yet, scripture warns that conscience, shaped by culture or sin, can be unreliable without God's ☞Word. **Proverbs 14:12** says, **"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death."**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer speaks again: *"A conscience without God is like a court without a judge."* And I like how *Billy Graham put it: "Our conscience can guide us, but only when it is shaped by the Holy Spirit and God's Word."* This fits with the scripture in **Hebrews 4:12**: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

In Acts 23, Paul stood before the Sanhedrin, claiming a clear conscience. Yet, he relied on scripture ☞and God's revelation to guide him, not his conscience alone. **When our conscience wavers, God's Word remains steadfast**, as Hebrews 4:12 reveals. *John Calvin said, "Conscience witnesses, but Scripture judges."*



Always test your conscience against scripture. When you read the Bible, ask God to shape your moral compass. If your conscience is bothering you, ask God to give you a clear conscience, and it would also be wise to get counsel from a mature believer, as well. Your conscience is only part of the equation in directing your life. God's Word and will must also inform your conscience.

☞ 4: "Do What's Right for You"

I'm actually disappointed to quote *Lucille Ball on this one, who once said, "Love yourself first and everything else falls into line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world."* The mantra "do what's right for you" prioritizes personal desires, but God calls us to prioritize His will and the good of others, reflecting His selfless love.

Other authors and celebrities tout this self-focused, popular idea. *Cheryl Strayed says, "You don't have to be good all the time. You just have to be good to yourself first."* And, *Oprah Winfrey said, "You have to put yourself first because if your cup isn't full, you can't pour into anyone else's."* That sort of sounds right, but it's not quite biblical.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer again, goes strongly in the other direction. He said, *"The call to follow Christ is a call to die to self and live for others."* I think Tim Keller does a pretty good job of summarizing the ☞ conflict with his statement: **"You cannot serve others well if you neglect your soul, but true self-care is found in losing yourself in Christ's service."**

Let's let God's Word be our guide on this one: **John 15:13:** "Greater love has no one than this: to lay ☞ down his life for his friends." And, **Philippians 2:3-4** says, **"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."**

Consider Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). He could have chosen what was "right for Him" by avoiding the cross, but He submitted to God's will, saying, **"Not my will, but yours be done."** His sacrifice shows us the ultimate example of prioritizing God's plan over personal desires. *Elisabeth Elliot said, "True freedom comes in doing what's right for God, not you."*

Choose one act of service this week—perhaps helping a neighbor, serving at church, or mentoring a child—to reflect God's love. Then, notice how this act of selflessness impacts your heart. Don't just do what's right for you; do what's right for God and others.

☞ Many of the world's slogans promise freedom, but often lead to chaos. Instead, let's **anchor ourselves in God's Word**, which **Psalms 119:105** calls **"a lamp for my feet, and a light on my path."** We need the steady compass of scripture to guide us in this unstable, spinning-out-of-control world. Trust God's guidance, and He will lead you to a life of purpose and peace.



4-Day Devotional: Scripture Over Self

This 4-day devotional is based on the sermon "Scripture Over Self," contrasting worldly slogans with biblical truth. Each day focuses on one of the sermon's four key points, offering a scripture reading, reflection, cross-references, application, and prayer to guide you in prioritizing God's Word over worldly wisdom.

Day 1: Trusting God Over Your Heart

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 17:9 – "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

Reflection: The world's advice to "follow your heart" is misleading, as scripture warns that our emotions can deceive us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Feelings come and go, but the Word of God stands forever." Psalm 37:4 teaches that delighting in the Lord aligns our desires with His will.

Cross-References to Explore:

- Proverbs 3:5-6 – Trust in the Lord and submit to Him for straight paths.
- Psalm 37:4 – Delight in the Lord to receive godly desires.
- Psalm 119:105 – God's Word as a lamp for your path.

Application: Reflect on a recent emotional decision (e.g., a purchase, relationship choice, or career move). Evaluate that decision in light of today's scriptures. Ask a trusted Christian friend to pray with you about aligning your next decision with God's Word.

Prayer: Lord, I confess I often let my emotions guide me. Teach me to trust Your Word over my heart. Illuminate my path with Your truth and give me discernment to follow Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Day 2: Finding Strength in Christ

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all this through Christ who strengthens me.”

Reflection: The world’s call to “believe in yourself” pales compared to trusting Christ’s strength. Gideon’s transformation from self-doubt to a “mighty warrior” (Judges 6:11-16) shows God’s power works through our weaknesses. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 and Isaiah 40:31 remind us that God’s strength sustains us when we feel inadequate.

Cross-References to Explore:

- Isaiah 40:31 – Hope in the Lord renews strength.
- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 – God’s power is perfected in weakness.
- Judges 6:11-16 – Gideon’s call despite his self-doubt.

Application: Identify a challenge where you feel insufficient (e.g., a work task, parenting, or ministry role). Memorize Philippians 4:13 and repeat it when doubt arises. Pray for Christ’s strength to guide you.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your strength that sustains me in my weakness. Help me rely on Christ’s power rather than my own. Empower me to face today’s challenges with confidence in You alone. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Day 3: Shaping Your Conscience with Scripture

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Reflection: The saying “let your conscience be your guide” assumes our moral compass is reliable, but Proverbs 14:12 warns that what seems right can lead to destruction. Paul’s clear conscience in Acts 23 was anchored in scripture, not feelings alone. Billy Graham noted that our conscience guides only when shaped by the Holy Spirit and God’s Word. Let scripture refine your moral decisions.

Cross-References to Explore:

- Proverbs 14:12 – A way may seem right but lead to death.
- Acts 23:1 – Paul’s clear conscience before the Sanhedrin.
- 1 Timothy 1:5 – A clear conscience rooted in faith and love.

Application: Examine a recent moral choice (e.g., how you handled a conflict or temptation). Consider how God’s Word could guide a similar situation in the future. Get further advice, if needed.

Prayer: God, thank You for Your Word that judges and refines my heart. Shape my conscience to reflect Your truth. Grant me clarity and courage to align my decisions with Your will, seeking guidance from Your Spirit and wise counsel. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Day 4: Living for God and Others

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:3-4 – “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Reflection: The world’s “do what’s right for you” mantra promotes selfishness, but Jesus’ submission in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46) models choosing God’s will. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s call to die to self, aligns with John 15:13, where true love sacrifices for others. Tim Keller notes that serving Christ brings true self-care. Selflessness reflects God’s love and leads to freedom.

Cross-References to Explore:

- John 15:13 – The greatest love lays down its life for others.
- Matthew 26:36-46 – Jesus submits to God’s will.
- Romans 12:2 – Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Application: Choose one selfless act this week, such as cooking a meal for a neighbor, volunteering at a local charity, or writing an encouraging note to someone. Ask God to help you prioritize others. Reflect on how this impacts your heart.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for laying down Your life for me. Help me set aside selfish desires to serve You and others. Renew my mind to seek Your will and fill me with Your love to act humbly and selflessly. In Your name, Amen.

Closing Thought: Psalm 119:105 declares, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” In a culture of deceptive slogans, anchor yourself in scripture. Trust God’s Word to guide you to a life of purpose and peace.