

Semicontinuous  
**2 Sam. 23:1–7**  
**Ps. 132:1–12**  
**(13–18)**

Complementary  
**Dan. 7:9–10, 13–14**  
**Ps. 93**

**Rev. 1:4b–8**  
**John 18:33–37**

# God's Life-Giving Truth

**Goal for the Session**      *Adults will explore Jesus' truth and commit to living it.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on John 18:33–37

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From "Exegetical Perspective," Robert A. Bryant

The Johannine theme of truth is central to this text. Indeed, the final references to truth in John occur here. John began his Gospel by identifying Jesus with God's truth (1:1–5, 9–14, 32–34; etc.), demonstrated the truthfulness of Jesus' perceptions (1:47; 2:25; etc.), and proved that Jesus' teaching bears witness to the truth (4:23–26; 5:33; 8:32, 40, 45, 46). Jesus also imparted truth to his disciples (14:6, 15–17, 25–26; 15:26; 16:7, 13–15; 17:17, 19). The opponents of Jesus, however, have rejected the "truth" (8:44) and sided with the "world" (11:47–53). In this last reference to truth, Jesus declares that his kingdom is present in everyone who hears and accepts his testimony.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From "Theological Perspective," Emilie M. Townes

We are aided in accepting the challenges of discerning obedience by remembering that the truth Jesus calls us to, in this passage and others, originates in God and not in humanity. This truth is neither relative nor provisional. It is eternal and an intricate part of God's ongoing revelation in our lives and in creation. God truly is a God of love and grace, who wills the blessings of creation in our lives. This can be brought out with compelling effect by exploring Jesus' words, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (v. 37), and then following this with Pilate's question, which Jesus does not answer: "What is truth?" (v. 38).

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From "Pastoral Perspective," Rodger Y. Nishioka

The reign of God is larger than any individual, even Jesus himself. Surely the kingdom is present wherever Jesus is present. It is present wherever we experience the reign of God through God's invitation, healing, and restoration—but our belonging is not up to each one of us alone. Our belonging is up to God. That is the new reality that Jesus proclaims. That is the new truth to which all of us—the community of those invited, healed, and restored—belong.

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From "Homiletical Perspective," Pete Peery

Here in the very last encounter Jesus has with a human being before his death, an encounter that leads to his death, he makes an offer to Pilate. "Everyone who belongs to truth listens to my voice," says Jesus to Pilate. Even to Pilate Jesus offers to be the good shepherd, the good shepherding king, who, when his sheep listen to his voice, are led into abundant life (John 10). This is always Jesus' offer. But to receive it means facing the truth about our lives, the truth Jesus holds up before us. Pilate refuses to face that truth. "What is truth?" he declares dismissively. What about those confronted by Jesus as this text is heard today? Jesus still offers the invitation to be authentic about how it is with us, and being authentic, to be led by the shepherding king into abundant life.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

*John 18:33–37*

## Focus on Your Teaching

Faithful adults who regularly attend this class explore many dimensions of the Christian life through the lectionary texts. At times they may be confused or unable to piece all the texts together. Christ the King Sunday marks the end of the church year and gives an excellent opportunity to summarize recent learnings and celebrate the final Sunday in the lectionary year before beginning Advent.

*It is your truth which Christ reveals, O God. May I listen for his voice and embrace your truth as I prepare to lead this session. Amen.*

## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### YOU WILL NEED

- newsprint or board
- markers
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- pens
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 for November 29, 2015

### For Responding

- option 1: newsprint, copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens, newsprint, markers
- option 3: copy of church mission statement, Resource Sheet 1, newsprint, marker

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, for option 1 in Responding, write the questions from that activity on a board or newsprint. For option 3 in Responding, secure a copy of your church's mission statement.

Welcome participants as they arrive and form pairs or small groups. Invite participants to recall the focus texts and discussions from the last couple of months. Do not distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Truths) yet, but consider using it yourself to prompt memories. Invite volunteers to name one way their life as a disciple has been challenged or energized by these discussions.

Tell participants that in this session they will explore the concept of truth that Jesus gives in the Gospel of John.

Say this prayer or one of your choosing:

*It is true, O God, you sent Jesus into the world to save us. Show us your truth, revealed in your Son, that we may follow. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Remind participants that today is Reign of Christ or Christ the King Sunday. It is the final Sunday of the lectionary year, which begins on the first Sunday of Advent. Explain that although Jesus was a poor, politically and socially powerless peasant from a minority oppressed religion, he represented God's way of relating and ruling this world. We are using Reign of Christ Sunday on the final Sunday of the liturgical year to summarize many teachings about Jesus learned in recent weeks.

Pilate was the Roman procurator in Judea from 26–36 CE. His role was to ensure that Judeans lived within Roman law and to keep stability in this outlying region of the Empire. Ancient sources indicate he was a mean-spirited and hard ruler.

Some may object to using patriarchal language for Jesus, such as King or Lord. The original intent of these titles was revolutionary. Followers of Jesus used these secular titles to claim that humble Jesus was their Lord and King, not any other political or religious leader.

**EASY  
PREP**

Prepare to read the focus scripture by telling people who Pilate was (see sidebar). Have them turn to John 18. Invite two volunteers to read Pilate's and Jesus' words in John 18:34–38; the leader should read verse 33.

Have participants put themselves in Pilate's role, and ask them:

- ✧ Does Jesus ever answer your questions?
- ✧ Why did you ask the question about truth?
- ✧ What do you think truth is?

Have participants put themselves in Jesus' role, and ask them:

- ✧ Obviously, you do not wish to answer Pilate directly. Why didn't you answer Pilate's question directly?
- ✧ What is truth?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Focus on John 18:33–37), and read the "What?" excerpt. Ask:

- ✧ What insights does this excerpt add to your understanding of truth?

Distribute Resource Sheet 2 and have participants review it. Work together to form an answer to Pilate's question (What is truth?) based on the truths learned in recent weeks.

To transition to Responding, read the "So What?" excerpt from Resource Sheet 1. Discuss:

- ✧ How does your faith community experience the reign of God through God's invitation, healing, and restoration?

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of these activities depending on the length of your session:

- 1. Discipleship Review** In this activity, participants will review their own discipleship and commit to specific actions to strengthen it. Distribute pens and paper and have participants write a job description for a disciple of Jesus today. Encourage them to use copies of Resource Sheet 2 to help them.

Now have people work individually to complete a self-evaluation of their discipleship using these questions displayed on newsprint:

- ✧ What characteristics of a disciple do you already have?
- ✧ What characteristics do you need? How will you strengthen or develop these?
- ✧ What specific actions will you work on during Advent?

Form pairs and have participants tell one another about the specific action that will be worked on during Advent. Encourage the pairs to check in with one another between now and Christmas for support and accountability.

2. **Commit to Discipleship** In this activity, participants develop a group definition of discipleship and commit to living it. Form groups of three or four, distribute pens and paper, and call attention to Resource Sheet 2. Challenge each group to write a definition of discipleship based on the resource sheet. Invite each group to read its definition.

As one group, create one definition. Have participants write the final definition on a piece of paper. Under the definition write a statement of commitment such as, "I commit to living as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ." Invite participants to sign the commitment, take it home, and post it somewhere they can see it.

3. **Living Jesus' Truth Together** Participants will evaluate their congregation's mission statement and activities regarding the ways they reflect Jesus' truth. Refer to the "So What?" excerpt from Resource Sheet 1 that was read in Exploring. Ask:

✧ How is Jesus' truth taught and lived?

Have a volunteer read your congregation's mission statement. Ask:

✧ How does this reflect the truth that Jesus taught and lived?

✧ What activities does your congregation engage in that reflect Jesus' truth?

✧ How might your church's mission be strengthened through existing programs and worship?

Brainstorm ways in which individuals or the group can support your congregation in bearing witness to Jesus' truth. Record these ideas on newsprint. Challenge participants to commit to doing one activity from the list. Show the list to your church leader or board for further action.

## CLOSING

Gather participants and invite them to call out one way that they most respect Jesus as King.

Lead participants in the following prayer or one like it:

*We hear messages about you, O Christ, our shepherd king. Help us to hear your voice and to follow your truth as we live in your world. Amen.*

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 for November 29, 2015, or e-mail it to the participants during the week. Next Sunday is the first week of Advent. Bring an Advent wreath with five candles (including a white Christ candle) and lighter to the next session.

## Focus on John 18:33–37

### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Robert A. Bryant

The Johannine theme of truth is central to this text. Indeed, the final references to truth in John occur here. John began his Gospel by identifying Jesus with God's truth (1:1–5, 9–14, 32–34; etc.), demonstrated the truthfulness of Jesus' perceptions (1:47; 2:25; etc.), and proved that Jesus' teaching bears witness to the truth (4:23–26; 5:33; 8:32, 40, 45, 46). Jesus also imparted truth to his disciples (14:6, 15–17, 25–26; 15:26; 16:7, 13–15; 17:17, 19). The opponents of Jesus, however, have rejected the “truth” (8:44) and sided with the “world” (11:47–53). In this last reference to truth, Jesus declares that his kingdom is present in everyone who hears and accepts his testimony.

### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Emilie M. Townes

We are aided in accepting the challenges of discerning obedience by remembering that the truth Jesus calls us to, in this passage and others, originates in God and not in humanity. This truth is neither relative nor provisional. It is eternal and an intricate part of God's ongoing revelation in our lives and in creation. God truly is a God of love and grace, who wills the blessings of creation in our lives. This can be brought out with compelling effect by exploring Jesus' words, “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (v. 37), and then following this with Pilate's question, which Jesus does not answer: “What is truth?” (v. 38).

### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”

Rodger Y. Nishioka

The reign of God is larger than any individual, even Jesus himself. Surely the kingdom is present wherever Jesus is present. It is present wherever we experience the reign of God through God's invitation, healing, and restoration—but our belonging is not up to each one of us alone. Our belonging is up to God. That is the new reality that Jesus proclaims. That is the new truth to which all of us—the community of those invited, healed, and restored—belong.

### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Pete Peery

Here in the very last encounter Jesus has with a human being before his death, an encounter that leads to his death, he makes an offer to Pilate. “Everyone who belongs to truth listens to my voice,” says Jesus to Pilate. Even to Pilate Jesus offers to be the good shepherd, the good shepherding king, who, when his sheep listen to his voice, are led into abundant life (John 10). This is always Jesus' offer. But to receive it means facing the truth about our lives, the truth Jesus holds up before us. Pilate refuses to face that truth. “What is truth?” he declares dismissively. What about those confronted by Jesus as this text is heard today? Jesus still offers the invitation to be authentic about how it is with us, and being authentic, to be led by the shepherding king into abundant life.

## Truths

*Instructions:* Review the focus scripture and truths learned for the sessions in this quarter. Add your understanding of the truth learned in today's focus scripture. Write a job description for disciples; include characteristics needed and tasks required of disciples.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Focus Scripture</b>	<b>Truths Learned</b>
September 6, 2015	Mark 7:24–37	Disciples overcome ethnic, gender, and other boundaries to show God's mercy.
September 13, 2015	Mark 8:27–38	Disciples can expect to suffer. The Christian life is not about being powerful.
September 20, 2015	Mark 9:30–37	Christian leadership and authority are based on service and humility.
September 27, 2015	James 5:13–20	Christians pray in community.
October 4, 2015	Mark 10:2–16	Discipleship is more than following a strict set of rules. One receives the kingdom of God like a child.
October 11, 2015	Mark 10:17–31	Wealth is a serious obstacle for disciples who are to follow Jesus' model of servanthood because it offers a false sense of security.
October 18, 2015	Mark 10:35–45	Disciples are not concerned about being first. They are to serve others.
October 25, 2015	Mark 10:46–52	Like the blind Bartimaeus who dropped his cloak and trusted Jesus would heal him, disciples risk all to have faith that Jesus will open their eyes to his truth.
November 1, 2015	Ruth 1:1–18	Like Ruth, disciples are committed to fierce inclusivity, especially to those whom society condemns because of national origin, religion, gender, ethnic background, and so on.
November 8, 2015	Mark 12:38–44	Like the poor widow who gave her two coins to the temple treasury, disciples offer all they have to others.
November 15, 2015	Mark 13:1–8	In spite of future predictions of destruction, fear and suffering, disciples continue the mission Christ began.
November 22, 2015	John 18:33–37	