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I am happy to see you here. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_ and if I have not had the honor of meeting you, please come up to me after service so I can give you an elbow bump and learn your name. We want you to belong here, so please let us have the privilege of getting to know you.

I believe that it is no accident you are here today and that the Holy Spirit is drawing you to Himself. God wants to speak into the questions you have been subconsciously wrestling with and we are going to have some straight talk today. It’s a good day to talk about things that matter. Amen?

[Leader Note: tell a personal funny story here about your experience with gold, fool’s gold, or the tourist attraction for kids where you mine for gems. Or show a YouTube clip about searching for gold. An example is below.]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5jMNtSrjPw>

Let’s talk about sifting gold for a minute. [Leader Note: Pull out your homemade sieve and start sifting with it as a prop.] To be a true prospectorin the olden days, you would have to go down to a river and sift through a bunch of rocks and dirt to get to the gold! People left everything they had to move to where gold was found in search of their fortune.

Everyone, look at the piece of fool’s gold on your seat. [Omit this if you are not using this analogy.] It’s not the real thing. It looks ok, but it’s not genuine. It doesn’t hold much value. It’s a counterfeit.

I believe God wants to use me today to tell you that this world we are living in has been selling you fool’s gold.

Throughout this new series that we are starting today, we are going to be looking at the book of 2 Peter. Here’s what Peter wrote **in 2 Peter 2:1 (NLT)**, “*there will be false teachers among you.”*

Here is why I think we need to be prospectors again; not sifting for literal gold but sifting for the truth because there are “false teachers” among us.

In your life, you are going to have to decide what you believe and why because there are a lot of rocks and dirt in the stream called the 21st century. You are going to need better reasons for why you follow Jesus than, “I feel God” or “I had an experience” or “people I respect believe it.” Those aren’t bad things; they are just shaky ground.

We have an enemy who is ready to pounce like a lion and not just wound you but destroy you. Algorithms, news outlets, certain educational systems, things we used to think we could trust, subtly and not-so-subtly, are trying to change our worldview and turn it away from the Bible. I’m not talking about conspiracy theories; I’m talking about the sinful nature of humanity. The world is trying to talk us out of living God’s way. This is not a new thing. It’s been happening since sin hit the scene.

You hear things at school and on Netflix. You see things on Instagram and Snapchat and TikTok. You have friends who live their lives and make decisions based on a different set of assumptions, perceptions, and experiences than you. You have teachers who operate out of a certain way of thinking. Some of you are from non-Christian families, and your parents have a different moral compass than you. And don’t be offended on this one: some of you claim to be Christians, and yet you have unknowingly adopted beliefs and language and ways of thinking that are influenced by other religions and spiritual systems. Can you believe it?

All of this is about what we call “worldview.” The definition of worldview according to the dictionary is: *“The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets*

*the world.”* It’s your story about reality. We all are living out of a certain worldview.

And statistically speaking, religion in American is not on the decline or dying out, but having a biblical worldview is declining. Less than 3% of Generation Z (you) sees the world and lives their life based on what God has laid out in the Bible. And when polled on what they believe, an increasing number of people will claim “none.” They won’t pick a specific religion. They are creating their own worldview by mixing the things they like from different belief systems.[[1]](#footnote-1)

I don’t think this way of living and believing is causing people to flourish. It’s not the way we were created to worship. We have walked away from the authority of God and the Bible.

I’m not saying you can’t ask hard questions—in fact, the opposite. I want this series to make you wrestle with what you believe like never before. I want you to think, struggle, pray, and discover together with your small group why you believe what you do.

I love what Jesus said in **Matthew 13:44 (NLT)**, *“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.”*

Jesus is not fool’s gold. He’s the real thing. Following Jesus, thinking God’s thoughts, and living God’s way is worth giving everything else up to embrace. It’s not easy or popular. You will likely get cancelled. But He is the treasure in the field. And if it’s true that Jesus is who He claimed to be, then our hearts will be empty until we worship Him alone. If He is the way, the truth, and the life, then we simply must give everything else up to gain Him.

I’ve been hearing more about moral failures of faith leaders, more public faith “deconstructions,” more people picking and choosing what they think is true for them until there is no longer anything for sure anymore.

And as teenagers, you must train your brains to SIFT all the junk you are seeing and hearing and experiencing to make sure you are basing your life around truth and not getting swindled into fool’s gold. [Leader Note: you can put the sift down here.] We need the Holy Spirit to do this.

There is an onslaught of opinions from every person on Earth, via the internet, giving you their opinions every day. We cannot just accept what everyone else is feeding us, even if it sounds logical or feels good or keeps you in other’s good graces.

We need to stop being lulled to sleep by the pied piper, clean house in our hearts, and really filter out the junk—the lies, the sin, the false narratives that have made their home in our bed without us knowing it.

We need to replace the world’s distorted version of reality with sure and stable footing: the Bible. We need a rational faith that will stand up to false teachers. And, with great love need to take back any ground that the enemy has tried to steal.

[Leader Note: Tell a quick story here about a time in your life when you wrestled with questions and doubts and how your faith grew through that that. Or talk about a time when you were persuaded by a “false teacher,” or a cultural norm, because of feelings or not being grounded in a biblical worldview.]

We all have big questions:

Who am I?

Am I loved?

Will everything be ok?

Does my life matter? What is my purpose?

Why are things broken and how do I fix them?

Who are my people?

How can I be happy?

How can I make sense of my reality?

What is true?

Who can I believe?

These are our big questions. And what I’m saying is that no one can give you the answers except for Jesus.

Your identity is not determined by who your friends are, what you are good at, where you are from, the way you look, or to whom you are sexually or physically attracted. Your identity is not even determined by you.

And that will most likely make you a little uneasy or mad even. That’s because we have been conditioned by our culture to determine our own reality. To be our own god. We don’t like authority.

As Christians, we are not just claiming that Jesus is the Savior of our sins (although He is) but also, we declare as Christians that He is our Lord. The one who calls the shots and sets reality in stone. Reality is not moving. Truth is not moving. God doesn’t change. His love for you does not change. We need to come back to the beginning, strip away all the confusion you have grown up immersed in, and submit ourselves again to the authority that is Jesus. You don’t have to get cleaned up to come to God; come as you are! Jesus died for you on your worst day. But I can promise you that Jesus will also demand your full allegiance.

I think of the movie “The Truman Show.” If you haven’t seen it, I’m about to ruin it for you. Essentially, Truman is born and immediately put in a reality TV show. His parents are actors, his friends are actors, everything about his life is scripted. He lives his entire life on a TV set. Here’s the kicker: he doesn’t know it. And when He realizes he has been lied to his entire life, he is out of there! [Check out this clip. Either watch the whole thing or start at 3:32. Note: There is one mention of “shi\*” in the clip.]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABp8zPjTGKQ>

The way that Truman sees the world changes after he realized he had believed that the fool’s gold was real; that the “truth” he was living in was a counterfeit all along. His worldview changed.

To a lesser extent, we have been immersed in a culture of fake thinking. We’ve been brainwashed. But Jesus is the truth. He is loving. He is worth submitting to. But he’s got a list of the ways to do things that work best. They aren’t the keys to heaven. We cannot be good enough or earn God’s acceptance. Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross is the only way to be saved. But He is the only way. No other way is going to cut it. We need to sift the things we see and hear and think and feel and experience, so we can get to the real gold. The gold is Him. Jesus is the gold. He’s the best.

So how do we know what’s true and what is a counterfeit? Like Peter said in **2 Peter 2:1 (NLT)**, “*there will be false teachers among you.”*

I have some questions we can use to SIFT everything around us so that we know we are living in a gospel-centered way and not being deceived or led astray. That’s what these next five weeks are all about. Here they are:

-Is this a worldly saying/concept or is it biblical?

-Are my feelings and desires in this moment going to be my boss or is God?

-Am I avoiding a confrontation because I don’t want to be persecuted?

-Am I living God’s way in humility, compassion, and love towards others? Or am I pridefully showing off my holiness?

-Am I resting in my identity as God’s son or daughter? Or am I striving to be a good person and do good things?

We need to SIFT our beliefs and decisions through these types of questions. Everything that comes in through your ears and eyes first goes through the sieve that is the Bible.

Many of us are good students of “me-ology.” If you haven’t taken that class in school yet, it’s the study of what we want, and feel and need. I’m just kidding. It’s just another way to say we are masters at selfishness.

Instead of “me-ology” we need to know our “theology.” That’s the study of God and who He is and how He wants to save everyone from the destructive path we are going down. Over the next five weeks, we are going to look at some big “theological” (God) concepts as we dismantle some false truth bombs that you probably have started saying or living. Can I give you a sneak peek?

Next week we will talk about “living your truth.”

Week three will be about “sending positive vibes.”

Week four we’ll consider “to hell with the hustle”

Week five will be about “self-love.”

And the final week, we’ll focus on “living your best life now.”

You aren’t going to want to miss a single week. I want you to ask hard questions and sift. We want your small group to be the safest place on Earth to wrestle with why you believe what you believe. We also want it to be a place for you to realize that following Jesus intellectually makes sense and is the most fulfilling way you could live. We also want you to be able to communicate the good news of Jesus with your friends whose worldview may be based more on feelings or cultural norms than actual truth. We want to sift for the truth.

[Leader Note: tell a personal story about how you were living under a “me-ology” and doing it your way based on your feelings, culture-based beliefs, your physical desires, your fear of persecution or desire to fit in and not lose your status, etc., instead of an orthodoxy based on the Bible and the transformation you experienced.]

Friends, I’m excited for the next five weeks. Remember how Truman experienced the Earth-shattering truth that he had been in a TV show his entire life? Can I tell you the most Earth-shattering truth you will ever hear to end our time together? One of my favorite good news teachers of all time said this, “We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

You are loved, friends. It’s not because you don’t do all the bad things. It’s not because you do all the good things you should do. You are loved because Jesus made you. He has made a way for you to be let off the hook for all the ways you blow it every single day. Walk out today with your sieve ready. The Holy Spirit is with you. See you next week!

1. https://www.arizonachristian.edu/category/crc/awvi/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Timothy Keller, Twitter.com [↑](#footnote-ref-2)