

LIVING IN THE  
REAL

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BIBLICAL REALITIES FOR LIFE

REGULAR BAPTIST PRESS

## The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

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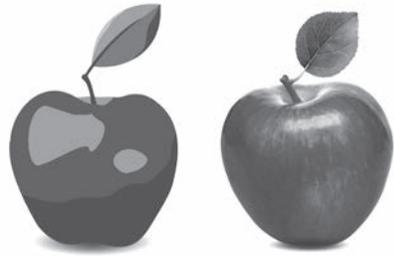
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# Preface

## What is real?

That question is harder for people to answer now than perhaps ever before. The line between real and fiction is blurred in many people's minds. They are so used to living a lie that it has become their reality.

Perhaps you have adopted this approach to life and have turned your spiritual life into a display. Maybe your persona is more important than your heart, and your reputation is more important than your relationships with God.

The apostle Paul sounded alarms to three churches that had lost touch with reality. He told them to WAKE UP! It could be that you need to hear those same alarms. Those alarms form the starting point for this course.

*Living in the Real* will encourage you to honestly examine your life in light of God's Word. It will confront you with the need to live according to Biblical realities. It will emphasize how the truth about God, the Bible, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and future reward and judgment should shape and direct your life.

Believers who live in the real will produce real fruit. Their lives will be useful to God and will bear everlasting results.

Believers who ignore Biblical realities are living a lie and wasting their lives. Their fruit, like the digital apple on the cover, is just for show; it has no real value as fruit.

This course will confront you with Biblical realities and challenge you to examine your life in light of those realities. And it will encourage you to approach future study of God's Word with honesty and with a desire to grow.

Pray for yourself as you complete this study. Ask God to wake you from any pretentious living and to drive you to live in the real that your life might be characterized by real fruit with everlasting results.



# Wake Up!

## Scripture Focus

Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Cor. 15:30–34; Eph. 5:3–17

## Theme

God wants us to live by Biblical realities and have a real impact on the world.

### Memory Verses

*“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:14–16).*

## GETTING STARTED

Sleepwalking can be quite scary. Some people even sleep drive. A young woman used to get up in the middle of the night, drive down the highway to her brother’s house, honk the car horn, and then drive back home. To keep her from doing it again, her friends tied her to her bed each night.

1. Tell about a time when you walked or talked in your sleep.
2. How might you describe “spiritual sleepwalking”?

Even as believers we have a tendency to spiritually sleepwalk through life. Without realizing it, we become out of touch with reality. God wants us to live in the real and have a real impact on the world, so He has given us Biblical realities for life. This course will challenge you to live in light of those Biblical realities.

### **Our Flesh Demands Control**

God is real, and He wants us as believers to live in reality (Heb. 11:6). That sounds agreeable. But living in reality is not something you just decide to do. It is a lifelong battle made up of daily decisions to follow God in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 6:11–14; 7:22, 23).

As sinners, people believe the lies that there is no higher person than self and no higher purposes than personal satisfaction, pleasure, and recognition. Even as believers, our flesh, or sin nature, believes these lies. Our flesh desperately wants us to live according to them. It is committed to the lies, never wavering in its dedication and devotion.

3. Read Isaiah 53:6. What clear message does this verse give about our flesh, our sin nature?
  
4. Read Proverbs 12:15. Why is the person who thinks his way is right called a fool?

The word “reality” could be substituted for the word “way” in both Isaiah 53:6 and Proverbs 12:15. Everyone creates his own reality, believes it is true, and turns from God, the ultimate reality. Without God’s intervention on our behalf, we would all be forever lost.

### **Our Flesh Creates False Realities**

After placing our trust in Christ for salvation, we as believers should know better than to create our own reality, but we do it anyway. Our reasons for creating false realities fall into five categories.

Some of us want to create a world in which we are at the controls. We want to call the shots in our lives and determine what is right and wrong. Our reality makes it okay for us to write all the “rules” to our own liking.

Others of us want to create a reality that excuses us from the responsibilities of being a believer. We see living the Christian life as a burden and

perhaps even a bore. When we consider living for Christ, we see a list of restrictions and demands instead of a Person. We are too busy, not talented enough, or too overwhelmed with life to contribute to the cause of Christ.

Some of us create a world in which spirituality is just for show. We seek recognition for being spiritual under false pretenses. We want people to praise us for what they think we are.

Relieving guilt is another reason for creating our own reality. We enjoy sin and don't like to feel guilty or convicted when we sin. So we make up our own world in which our sin is okay.

And some of us think we simply don't matter to God and that He doesn't care what we do in our little corners of the world. We imagine a God Who is too big to bother with us. So we do our own thing in life as if it doesn't matter in the end.

5. What other reasons might a believer have for creating a reality?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Which of the reasons for creating one's own reality have you seen in your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Which ones might you recognize in your life right now?

## **Live in the Real—Awake to Righteousness**

God directed Paul to write to three churches about living in the real. Some in the church at Corinth had created a reality that made it okay for them to commit indulgent sins. Paul gave the church a wake-up call.

Paul put his life on the line daily for the sake of the gospel and the the resurrection in particular (1 Cor. 15:30, 31). Paul even “fought with beasts at Ephesus” (15:32), perhaps a reference to literal wild animals. He willingly lived in jeopardy because God is real and worth living and dying for.

Paul's life of jeopardy stood in stark contrast to the Corinthians' indulgent lives. The indulgent Corinthians rejected a future resurrection of believers in order to excuse their sin. They created their own reality in which

what they did with their bodies did not matter since God was not going to resurrect their bodies. They believed they should live for pleasure now, for perhaps “tomorrow” they would die (15:32).

8. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8. How established is the reality of Christ’s resurrection?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20–23. What is the important connection between Christ’s resurrection and the resurrection of believers?

The indulgent Corinthians were bold in creating a reality that denied the resurrection in that it struck at the core of the gospel. Obviously Paul took their actions seriously and called on the rest of the church at Corinth to respond.

Those who denied the resurrection were corrupt and in a sense “contagious.” Believers who embraced the true doctrine of the resurrection needed to separate themselves from those who denied the resurrection (15:33).

Paul told the Corinthians to wake up to righteousness and resist living in a dream world (15:34). They could not just make up reality because reality is based in God’s person. All attempts at reality outside of God are dreams and lies. To create a new reality would be to change God. That cannot happen.

10. Read Malachi 3:6, Psalm 102:24–27, and James 1:17. What do these passages teach about the changeableness of God?

Paul went on to point out that the Corinthians needed to resist living in a dream world because some did not have a knowledge of God (1 Cor. 15:34). The Corinthian believers were God’s vessels for shining the light of the gospel before the lost. If they as God’s vessels were filthy, then the gospel’s light would be dim and rendered ineffective. They needed to live righteously before the wicked.

11. Read 1 Corinthians 15:34. How should the Corinthians have responded to Paul’s condemnation of living in a dream world?

The “dreaming” Corinthians were enjoying fleeting moments of pleasure instead of sharing eternal life with those facing eternity in the torments of the Lake of Fire.

Imagine the Corinthians watching unbelievers plunged into the Lake of Fire as they call after them, “I’m so sorry you are about to experience agonizing, eternal torment. I was too busy living in my own dream world to tell you about the reality of eternity without God.” Such a scene would never happen, but it is what Paul wanted the Corinthians to consider.

12. How should you respond when you understand the connection between reality and eternity?

## **Live in the Real—Put on the Armor of Light**

Paul gave the Romans a similar message about living in a dream world.

13. Read Romans 13:11. Why is “sleep” a good analogy for living out of touch with reality?

Paul called on the Romans to awake out of sleep as the reality of Christ’s return drew near (Rom. 13:11, 12). The “night” refers to the present time when Christ is not on the earth and Satan is working. The “day” that is at hand is the return of Christ. In a sense, the return of Christ is always at hand because Christ’s promised return is at any moment (Rev. 22:7, 12). We are to be living with urgency because our time to serve God and reach others for Christ in this age is limited.

Paul again used the day and night contrast as he described how the Romans should live in light of Christ’s return (Rom. 13:13). Paul told them to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light instead (13:12; cf. Eph. 6:10–18).

14. Read Romans 13:12, 14 and Ephesians 6:10–18. Why would putting on the armor of light be the same as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ? Consider how each piece of armor describes Christ.

Putting on the armor of light and putting on Christ are both akin to living in the real. Our lives should be characterized by Christlikeness. That happens only when we live in God's reality rather than in the dream world our flesh created. That is why Paul told the Romans not to make any provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (Rom. 13:14). To make "provision" means to "plan out ways" to indulge the flesh.

15. What might stimulate a person to make provisions for the flesh?

The armor of light protects us from living according to the lies our flesh and the devil want us to adopt (Eph. 6:11–13). Appropriately, "truth" is associated with the belt, the first piece of the armor we are to put on. We put on the belt of truth by immersing ourselves in God's Word, the source of truth. Attached to our belt of truth is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (6:17). So our protection from living in a dream world begins with truth. And that truth, as found in the Word of God, becomes our offensive weapon to defeat the devil and his lies. Putting on the armor of light, beginning with the belt of truth, is crucial to living in the real.

### **Live in the Real—Walk in the Light**

Paul's instructions to the Corinthians and Romans are echoed in his letter to the Ephesians. Paul encouraged the Ephesians to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8b). "Goodness and righteousness and truth" characterize those who walk as "children of light" (5:9). Conversely, God's wrath comes on those who walk as "sons of disobedience" (5:3–6). Paul wanted the Ephesians to find that fact motivating. If they did not shine the light of God's love to the lost, then how would the lost escape the darkness and God's coming wrath?

Paul pointed to the role of the Spirit in making it possible for a believer to walk in the light (5:9). "Goodness and righteousness and truth" is the "fruit" that comes from living by the Spirit. "Goodness" is showing love to others. "Righteousness" refers to our character from God's perspective. "Truth" is essentially reality. We live according to God's Word, the source of truth, when we live by the Spirit.

The more we walk in the light, the more in touch we become with reality. We learn what is acceptable to the Lord (5:10), and it shows in our lives.

As we walk in the light, our lives will contrast the “darkness” around us. Paul told the Ephesians to “reprove” the “unfruitful works of darkness” (5:11). As we walk in the light and live in reality, we will expose people’s lives. The realities they have created for themselves will be shown to be lies.

16. What are some of the lies the lost order their lives by?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. Read Ephesians 5:12, 13. How might a believer expose “unfruitful works of darkness”?

God doesn’t want us walking in the light instead of “sleeping” (5:14). Paul told the “drowsy” Ephesians to “awake.” They needed a dose of reality. “Look around you, Ephesian believers!” Paul essentially told them. “The world desperately needs to see the light of the truth! Stop living in darkness like the lost so they will see the truth and respond.”

The word “circumspectly” in verse 15 means to look around. We must take time to look around us and consider reality. Doing so is wise. Wisdom is seeing life from God’s perspective and responding accordingly. Ignoring reality is foolish.

Our time to walk in the light and introduce the lost to the reality of Christ is limited. Paul instructed the Ephesians to redeem, or buy up, their time (5:16). “Time” refers to a critical period of time or a special opportunity. Every believer’s life is critical to the cause of Christ. Your life is critical to the cause of Christ! That is reality!

Instead of seeking to make sense of life, finding our way, or trying to build a legacy, we should be focused on understanding God’s will (5:17). That means living in reality. The Bible contains all the Biblical realities for life we need to know. This course will help you recognize those Biblical realities so you might live wide awake and might walk in the light as Christ intends.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

18. Have you been living in a dream world or in reality? What would you cite as evidence for your conclusion?

19. What advantages might you hope to gain by living in a dream world?

20. Do you fear living by Biblical realities? What are those fears?

Answering questions like these takes more than a few moments. Sometimes we have so carefully constructed our lives that we fail to see we are living in disobedience to God. And our flesh is going to fight to convince us that we are fine. A true evaluation of ourselves should be ongoing and guided by Scripture and the Spirit. This study will help you with that process.

21. What could you do to begin to live according to Biblical realities? Add to the following ideas.

- Be honest with God about your life.
- Take sin in your life seriously.
- Block out extended periods of time for prayer and renewal of your relationship with God.
- Put on the belt of truth by studying God's Word daily.
- Strap on the sword of the Spirit by memorizing Bible verses that speak directly to your tendency to live in a pretend world.
- Study the Biblical realities in this course faithfully and thoughtfully.
- Seek godly counseling from your pastor or a trusted fellow believer.
- Find an accountability partner to specifically monitor whether you are living in the real.

22. What *will* you do to begin to live according to Biblical realities?