

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SINCERE?

Sincerity is a subject that is worthy of consideration in the world we live in. It is a quality that is valued and respected by most. But it is something that is lacking in the lives (or areas of their life) of many. It is also a subject that is misunderstood, especially in the religious world. So tonight, I want to take a few moments and talk about the subject of sincerity.

I. What is sincerity?

- a. Defined – Biblically the term is defined as genuine, without hypocrisy. Similarly, the word is defined in our English language as, “free from pretense or deceit; proceeding from genuine feelings.”¹
- b. Something we need as Christians – 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 Peter 1:22, Philippians 1:10, etc.
- c. But when it comes to applying God’s word, it is something often misunderstood. There are some who reason that as long as one is sincere that such is all that matters. This belief dismisses the importance of total obedience and puts the heart above truth. We all know that the heart is important, but so is truth.
- d. We have noted in times past, and rightly so, that one can be sincere and still be wrong.
 - i. Paul serves as an example of this – Acts 26:9 – as he persecuted Christians, he thought he was doing the right thing. But he was wrong.
 - ii. I suspect that Uzzah as he reached to steady the ark thought he was doing the right thing – but he died anyways (2 Samuel 6).
 - iii. Matthew 7:21-23 bears this out as well. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’”
 - iv. Proverbs 14:12, *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*
- e. SO, what are some qualities we need to ensure that our sincerity is also right?

II. What are some qualities of true sincerity?

- a. *We must be open-minded –*
 - i. When it comes to studying God’s word, are we willing to consider what someone else has to say? Are we willing to admit that it is possible we may be wrong? Understand, more than likely, on certain subjects we are NOT wrong, but our attitude needs to be a willingness to consider a message.
 - ii. Acts 10:33 – Cornelius and his household were all present, ready to hear God’s message
 - iii. John 7:51, Nicodemus, trying to defend Jesus, noted that they were SUPPOSED to be open minded.
 - iv. Proverbs 18:13 - *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.*
 - v. cf. Acts 7:57 – we have here an example of a closed mind.
 - vi. Far too many have made up their minds about something before they hear all the facts. They may be sincere, but their information is limited or incomplete. Sadly, many try to see to it that the information you get IS incomplete – they only tell their side.
- b. *We need to be willing to investigate –*
 - i. Acts 17:11 speaks of the Bereans. They were described as “more noble minded” or “fair-minded”. The word means to have high character and a willingness to learn.
 - ii. This is where genuine open mindedness comes in. When you hear something are you willing to take the time to investigate it? Especially before you reach a conclusion either way?
 - iii. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 calls for us to test all things and hold fast to what is good. 1 John 4:1 makes the point concerning true and false teachers. The idea of “testing” is to examine

¹ Microsoft Bing Search. Definition – sincere. (5/13/2022)

something carefully. Bullinger associates the word with something being refined by fire – and thus the impurities are burned out.

- iv. If we are sincere, we are going to WANT to be right, so we will take time to investigate.
- c. *We must place the truth first* –
 - i. God's word needs to be the source of our sincerity.
 - ii. And we need to value it as it is in truth – His word. Proverbs 23:23, we should NEVER sell it! 1 Thessalonians 2:13 commended these brethren for receiving the word of God for what it is – truth.
 - iii. Psalm 119:104-105 – *through Your precepts I get understanding... a lamp to my feet and a light to my path...*
 - iv. The problem with many today is not their sincerity, but the SOURCE upon which it is based.
- d. *We need to handle accurately God's word* –
 - i. When we are investigating are we using accurate methods? It is possible to investigate something with flawed methods. Maybe you are using sources that are inaccurate or skewed (something where one's mind was made up before they started). Are we taking verses and words out of their intended context? Are we considering a subject with preconceived ideas?
 - ii. 2 Timothy 2:15 – we are to with diligence (study – KJV) striving to be approved by God by rightly dividing the word of truth? NASB – *accurately handling the word of truth*.
 - iii. 1 Peter 2:2 – do we desire the “*sincere milk of the word*” (KJV), (NKJV & NASB – pure) that we may grow thereby? Note vs. 1, what you are to put away as you do this – malice, deceit, hypocrisy, etc.
 - iv. cf. 2 Peter 3:16 speaks of untaught and unstable men who twisted the truth to their own destruction.
 - v. 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul was clear, *For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*
- e. *We must be willing to change if we learn that we are wrong* –
 - i. All the knowledge in the world is meaningless if we are unwilling to apply it.
 - ii. Again, consider Matthew 7:21-23. Also, Matthew 28:19-20 – we are to observe all things commanded.
 - iii. Galatians 1:13-14, what gave Paul his “credentials” was his sincerity. He was willing to change when he learned the truth. He appealed to that as he taught others.
 - iv. Acts 18:24-28 we read about Apollos, who was teaching MOSTLY truth, though he taught “the baptism of John”. When corrected, he immediately changed his teaching. Acts 19:1-5 we find another example, POSSIBLY through the erroneous teachings of Apollos. Paul comes to Ephesus and finds some who had only heard of John's baptism. Paul corrected them and they were baptized PROPERLY. Here we find a willingness to change to follow the truth.
- f. *We need to be consistent* –
 - i. A quality of genuine sincerity is consistency. One who is sincere will be so in every area of his life.
 - ii. Matthew 15:7-9 finds Jesus condemning the Pharisees and scribes as hypocrites because they inconsistently applied God's law (see vs. 1-6). They may have claimed to be following God's law sincerely, but they had changed parts of it to suit their own agenda. Matthew 23:23-24 points this out as they strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel (BTW, both animals were unclean according to Jewish law).
 - iii. Titus 1:16, *They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.*
 - iv. Philippians 1:16, Paul even notes some who taught the truth, but their motives were “*not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains.*”

- v. 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul told young Timothy that as he preached, he was to take heed to the doctrine himself, so that he could save himself and others. Consistency in life. Remember, people would rather see a sermon than hear it. AND often, they are unwilling to listen if they do not see it in practice.
- g. *We need to be focused* –
 - i. Our final observation. If we are sincere, we are not going to let the world and its ways distract us from doing what we ought to do.
 - ii. James 4:4 – notes that friendship with the world is enmity with God. We cannot let the ways of the world distract us from truth. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warn about those who desire to be rich...
 - iii. Even good things within themselves can distract us – Luke 10:40-42 – Martha was distracted with serving Jesus. It took her away from what was most important.
 - iv. Many are sincere in desiring to serve God, but they let the things and ways of the world weigh them down and keep them from being everything God wants them to be. Consider Hebrews 12:1-2 – lay aside every weight and sin, and run with endurance.

It goes without question that we need to be sincere. In fact, most will admit that we need sincerity. BUT is our sincerity leading us to God or somewhere else? Think about it!