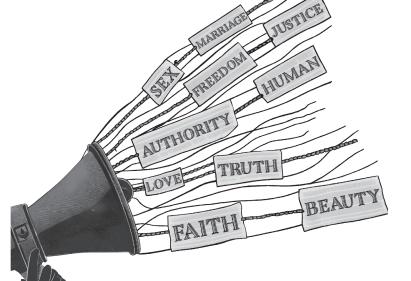
A BIBLE STUDY FOR

10 NORDS TO HEALOUR BROKEN WORLD



A 10-WEEK COURSE

SCOTT DAVID ALLEN



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WELCOME

This study aims to help you grow your faith by deepening your understanding of ten vital words. Why these words? They are so foundational—so essential. How they are defined and understood will do more to shape a life, a family, or an entire nation, for good or ill, than almost anything else.

We often take words for granted, but we shouldn't. They are incredibly powerful. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," begins the Gospel of John. The Word spoke the universe into being. It's no overstatement to say that we live in a word-based universe.

God created us in his image with the capacity to use words and language to create culture. "Culture lives by language," wrote historian Robert Lewis Wilken, "and the sentiments, thoughts, and feelings of a Christian culture are formed and carried by the language of the Scriptures." If we long to see a revival in our churches and a reformation in our culture, we must recover the biblical definitions of these ten words that have, tragically, been redefined in popular culture.

As my friend and mentor Darrow Miller has taught me, if you want to change culture you must begin by changing language. The enemies of the gospel understand this very well. They have been strategically redefining the ten words that are the focus of this course to change society to reflect their false, destructive ideologies.

Someone will shape the culture by defining words and embedding them into the institutions at the foundations of a culture. If not Christians with true, biblical definitions that lead to freedom and human flourishing, then non-Christians with false redefinitions that destroy nations.

Our calling as followers of Jesus Christ is to bless our broken nations. A significant way we do this is by knowing and defending true definitions. These ten words are not empty vessels to be filled with whatever meaning people wish. These are God-spoken words, and to redefine them is an act of rebellion against the Creator.

Because we are all shaped by the surrounding culture more profoundly than most of us realize, we've likely absorbed false understandings of these ten words to some degree. This is a significant problem because our formation in Christlikeness must be grounded on the proper, biblical meanings of words. That's why I wrote this study—to help open your eyes to the power, beauty, and veracity of biblical words and motivate you to build your life faithfully, based on true definitions. I hope to help equip you to steward, preserve, and pass along these words and meanings to future generations.

So, welcome! I'm so glad you are here.

Scott David Allen

HOW THE COURSE WORKS

- This course is designed for personal study, reflection, and learning in community, whether with a few friends around a table, in your small group, in a larger class format, or with your entire church.
- The course is ten sessions long. We recommend one session per week.
- We recommend scheduling a one- to two-hour group meeting for each session, depending on how long you allow for discussion. Group meetings involve watching a 10- to 15-minute video, prayer, and discussion. See the sample session on the following page.
- Each session includes a homework assignment that should be completed before the group meeting. This should take no more than an hour and involves reading and prayerfully reflecting on key Bible passages.
- Each session concludes with a personal reflection and application exercise.
- You will need a copy of this Study Guide to participate. You may order print versions or download free digital PDF versions at 10WordsBook.org.

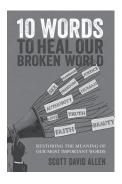
SAMPLE GROUP SESSION

Here's what a typical group meeting session could look like.

- Welcome and open with prayer.
- Discuss what you learned during your personal study about the true definition of each word (15 to 20 minutes).
- Course video (10 to 15 minutes)
- Read the true and the false definitions. Discuss the meaning and consequences of the *false* definition (15 to 20 minutes).
- Review the personal application questions together, but answer them on your own.
- Close with prayer.

The 10 Words course is designed to work for various group sizes and in various environments. Your gatherings may include additional elements like a meal or worship time or follow a structure different from this sample. Please adapt as you see fit.

THE 10 WORDS TO HEAL OUR BROKEN WORLD BOOK



We highly recommend reading the book 10 Words to Heal Our Broken World: Recovering the True Meaning of Our Most Important Words by Scott David Allen alongside this course, as it will greatly enhance your learning experience. The book contains a chapter for each of the ten words that can be read during the week you are studying the word in this course.

SESSION 1

TRUTH

"What is truth?"

This question, famously posed by Pontius Pilate to Jesus during his inquisition, continues to ring down through the ages, right into the present.¹

Many people today speak of "your truth" or "my truth."

They talk of truth as if it's a personal, private belief.

Is truth what you or I believe, or does it actually exist and have a real, objective meaning?

Charles Chaput states, "Truth exists, whether we like it or not. We don't create the truth; we find it, and we have no power to change it to our tastes."²

How do you understand truth?



This week we're reading Chapter 1, "Truth," in 10 Words to Heal Our Broken World by Scott David Allen.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY: TRUTH

Before You Begin

In the space below write a concise, dictionary-style definition of "truth" from your current understanding without consulting sources such as a dictionary, the internet, or another person. The purpose is to record your current understanding and see how it changes due to this study.

BIBLE STUDY

Read the following passages and prayerfully respond to the question below.

Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89)

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. (Proverbs 30:5 ESV)

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19)

It is impossible for God to lie. (Hebrews 6:18)

QUESTION: What do these passages teach about the relationship between God and truth?

QUESTION: In your own words, why is God necessary for the concept of truth to exist?

Reflect on these quotes from the 10 Words book:

Truth requires fixed points of reference that exist apart from our ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. The most obvious fixed point is the world around us. The computer I'm typing on, the desk I'm working at, the

chair I'm sitting in. The sky, trees, stars, and galaxies. The cells, atoms, and electrons. These things exist whether or not I believe in them. We study the physical world through science, and, as such, science is a quest for truth, a discovery of what actually exists or is real.

But is there a reality that exists beyond the physical world? A reality as basic, but more ultimate? The physical world itself points to the answer. Every effect must have a sufficient cause. The design and purposefulness of the natural world point to a transcendent, intelligent, purposeful designer. The existence of complex information, such as we find in the DNA molecule, necessitates an author—a great Word behind all words. This is the point that the apostle Paul makes in his letter to the Romans: "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made" (Romans 1:20). The physical world isn't a cosmic accident; it is a creation, and it points to a Creator in a way that is "clearly seen," or, as America's founding fathers put it, "self-evident."

God has revealed himself to us through his creation but also through his words. He spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He spoke to Moses and revealed himself through the prophets. He revealed moral truth on Mount Sinai in the form of the Ten Commandments, which he wrote by his own hand. These truths stand as a fixed moral point for all peoples at all times.

As the church fathers put it, God reveals truth to us in "two books"—the book of God's Word (the Bible), and the book of God's world (creation). We can add to this a third "book," the book of human reason and the internal witness of conscience, or "the law written on the heart" (Romans 2:15). We search out the truth through the careful study of God's creation using the tools and methods of science, as well as through the careful study of God's written Word through

the principles of sound hermeneutics and with the indispensable illumination of the Holy Spirit—the "Spirit of truth" (John 16:13).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for truth is translated as emeth, a noun or adverb meaning firmness, stability, or reliability. God is the firm, fixed, solid foundation for truth. He is the Great Truth behind all truth. Apart from him truth has no meaning. It vanishes in a morass of subjectivism and relativism.

The adversary, Satan, is referred to in the Bible as "the father of lies." Reflect on these passages and prayerfully respond to the questions below:

"[Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." (John 10:10)

QUESTION: What is the relationship between Satan and truth?

QUESTION: What do Satan's lies result in?

Reflect on these quotes from the 10 Words book:

Through the Bible we also learn why evil exists. Reality is both physical and spiritual. The spiritual realm is the domain of God, but also of angels. The most powerful of these angelic beings, Satan, rebelled against God before the creation of the world. To modern ears talk of angels and demons sounds crazy. Many people see reality as entirely physical. The spiritual realm is derided as a fantasy, but it is as real as the chair on which you sit. This unseen realm exists all around us.

Satan advances his rebellion against God mainly through deception. Adam and Eve believed his lies in the Garden of Eden, and in so doing, they followed Satan's anti-God rebellion. Fallen humanity has been rebelling ever since. This explains our propensity to lie, deceive, or shade the truth. We commit these offenses, at least in part, out of fear that we might be known as we truly are—as sinners. Like Adam and Eve, we hide from God and from others by lying—by making ourselves out to be something we are not.

God, the source of all life—of all that is good and beautiful—cannot lie. Satan, by contrast, continually lies. His deceptions are behind all of the world's evil, brokenness, chaos, and heartbreak. "[Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy," says Jesus in John 10:10. "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Read the following passages and prayerfully respond to the questions below.

[Jesus said,] "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6)

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:30–32)

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Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:37)

[Jesus said,] "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth... When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." (John 14:16, 17; 16:13)

[Jesus prayed to God the Father on behalf of His followers, saying,] "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)

QUESTION: What do these passages teach about the relationship between Jesus and truth?

QUESTION: What does the truth result in, according to Jesus?

QUESTION: According to John 18:37, for what purpose did Jesus say he was born and came into the world?

QUESTION: How does Jesus help us to know the truth?

Reflect on these quotes from the 10 Words book:

In Jesus, ultimate reality became flesh and dwelt among us. Ultimate truth isn't a philosophical abstraction or metaphysical necessity. It is a person—Jesus Christ.

The New Testament word for truth is aletheia, meaning "to be revealed." The Greek word from which this noun is derived is lanthano, which means "to lie hidden." The Greeks (not unlike today's postmodernists) thought that truth was hidden. But according to the Bible, truth is now revealed in Christ. To express this the writers of Scripture added the negative participle a to lanthano to get the word aletheia. The truth that was hidden is now revealed.

Jesus was a man like no other. He made claims no other man has made—not Buddha, Muhammad, or Confucius. He claimed not merely to speak the truth but to be the truth.

Read the following passages and prayerfully respond to the questions below.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16).

The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. (Proverbs 12:22)

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist. (Ephesians 6:14)

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6)

QUESTION: What do these passages teach us about how we should relate to truth?

QUESTION: What is the relationship between being truthful and being trustworthy?

QUESTION: In what ways do you need to "stand firm" in the truth?

Reflect on these quotes from the 10 Words book:

A commitment to truth-telling is necessary for healthy relationships and a society's basic functioning. Try to imagine a society—a marriage, family, business, organization, or nation—in which everyone lied, all the time. Nobody could be trusted. Things would fall apart quickly. We forget just how important honesty is. A culture that worships a God who is good, who is utterly trustworthy, who cannot lie, will be a culture that highly values honesty in everyday relationships. It will enjoy high levels of trust in its institutions.

Without a commitment to truth, there would be no university. Nor would there be modern science, nor journalism, nor the study of history. There would be no liberal democracy, for without truth government becomes an exercise in raw power. It is no exaggeration to say that without a commitment to truth as revealed, objective, and knowable, there would be no such thing as civilization.³

Without truth, everything devolves into chaos or tyranny. Professor Sinan Aral at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology got it exactly right: "Some notion of truth is central to the proper functioning of nearly every realm of human endeavor. If we allow the world to be consumed by falsity, we are inviting catastrophe."

LEARNING TOGETHER: TRUTH

Welcome and Opening

- Go around the room and briefly introduce yourself.
- What drew you to this course?
- What are you looking forward to?

Opening Prayer

Opening Discussion

Discuss together what you learned about truth during your personal study. What ideas stood out to you? How did God speak to you through the Scripture?



Watch the Video and Discuss the Questions Below: *Note:* You'll find the "truth" video at 10WordsBook.org.

incights did you gain from the video about truth?

- What insights did you gain from the video about truth?
- What insights did you gain about the redefinition of truth?

Definitions and Discussion

Read the two definitions and quotes below. Discuss the contemporary redefinition of truth and its cultural consequences.

TRUTH

That which accords with factual, objective reality.

TRUTH REDEFINED

(1) An internal, personal, and subjective sense of reality that exists only in the mind. (2) A social construct created to advantage the dominant group.¹

"There are no facts, only interpretations."—Fredrick Nietzsche⁴

"There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of. Almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative."—Allan Bloom⁵

Postmodernism, which rejects any notion of universal, objective truth, was preceded by "modernism," or the worldview of secular materialism. Modernism rejected God, the Bible, and spiritual reality as sources of objective truth, yet it retained the material universe as a fixed point of reference for truth. Postmodernism does away with that, also. It asserts that no fixed points exist. Everything is relative, either to the individual or to the "identity group." There are no publicly authoritative facts or truths that transcend groups or cultures. There are only perspectives or interpretations—your truth, or my truth, but no longer the truth.

If there are no fixed points, no boundaries that divide truth from untruth or good from evil, if everything is a matter of perspective or interpretation, then the very concept of objective truth is defined out

of existence. Is it any surprise that "post-truth" was selected in 2016 by Oxford Dictionaries as the international word of the year—after a two thousand percent increase in usage from 2015? The dictionary defined "post-truth" as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

At a societal level, without public truth; without shared understandings of what is real, true, good, or evil; if even words and texts no longer have a shared public meaning, then there is no center around which different groups can communicate, much less unify. We have no way to achieve consensus or to pursue the common good. Rather, we retreat into our "identity group" bubbles and find it almost impossible to speak to each other, much less agree. Post-truth culture thus is marked by disunity, distrust, or even hatred.

"If there is no objective or universal truth, then any claim to have objective truth will be treated as nothing but an attempt by one [group] to impose its own limited, subjective perspective on everyone else. An act of oppression. A power grab."—Nancy Pearcey⁷

In the absence of a shared, objective truth, we are left with competing identity groups jockeying for power through "narrative creation" and perpetuation. Postmodern evangelists sell narratives as truth, but they are highly distorted accounts of current or past events created to achieve particular outcomes. They are conveyed in a manner designed to bypass reason and appeal to emotion—to sway the masses. To ensure that their narratives go unchallenged, powerful elites use an array of methods to silence dissenting voices, including overt censorship, along with charges of "fake news" and "conspiracy theory," as well as attacks against so-called "misinformation," "disinformation," and "malinformation." All of this is the direct result of postmodernism's denial of objective truth.

"You believe that reality is something objective, external, existing in its own right. You also believe that the nature of reality is self-evident. When you delude yourself into thinking that you see something, you assume that everyone else sees the same thing as you. But I tell you, Winston, that reality is not external. Reality exists in the human mind and nowhere else. Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes and, in any case, soon perishes: only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be the truth is truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the Party. That is the fact that you have got to relearn, Winston."—George Orwell from his novel 19848

Discussion Questions

- How does the redefinition of truth differ from the original, accurate definition? Discuss all that has changed.
- In what ways have you seen or experienced the redefinition of truth?
- What are some of the social and cultural changes that the redefinition of *truth* has brought about? What kinds of changes have resulted in policies and laws?

Personal Reflection and Application

Next week at home, take time to reflect on these areas of application. Read the questions and write down your responses.

Examine your assumptions about truth

Today, the dominant worldview shaping Western culture is postmodernism, a worldview that rejects the concept of objective truth. We now live in a "post-truth" world, and if we are honest we'll discover that it shapes our thinking—even as Christians—more deeply than we may realize. For example, many Christians claim that their faith is personal and subjective. It is "true for me"

but not an objective truth that is true for everyone and the whole of society.

QUESTION: Examine your assumptions about truth. If your thinking about truth is more personal and subjective, I encourage you to repent. God exists—not just as a Christian belief but as a reality for everyone. His Word in Scripture is true, not just for Christians but for everyone, Christian and non-Christian alike.

A consequence of living in a post-truth world is the proliferation of lies, deceptions, spin, and distorted narratives. Today these dominate network news, the internet, and social media. Propaganda has become so pervasive that knowing the truth about almost any matter has become incredibly challenging. Many are tempted to cynically throw up their hands in despair and ask, "Why even bother?"

But as followers of Jesus, we must not fall into this trap. Despair is a sin. Truth exists, and God has called us to be truth-seekers and critical thinkers, not herd-followers.

Truth-seekers welcome questions, encourage dialogue, and keep an open mind. Our grasp of truth will always be partial and limited, since we are finite beings. Uncovering the truth of a matter can be difficult, particularly in our time. Sometimes it takes years of searching, investigating, listening, discussing, and debating. But that is our job. God has filled us with the Spirit of truth and given us the capacity to know it. We honor him by seeking it. This is how we love God "with all [our] mind" (Luke 10:27). We dishonor him by cynically throwing up our hands and asking, "What's the point?"

QUESTION: Have you fallen into the trap of cynicism and despair about knowing the truth regarding things or events? This may be an area you need to repent over.

To strengthen our grasp of the truth, we Christians must strengthen our confidence in the authority of God's Word, the Bible. We must reject the postmodern idea that the Bible, or any other text, has no objective meaning but only a multitude of interpretations. We must grow in our confidence that the truth of the Bible can be known through careful study, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the help of respected teachers in the church, past and present.

QUESTION: In what areas do you still harbor doubts about the truthfulness and reliability of the Bible as God's Word? Turn those doubts into specific questions and seek out honest answers. Pray for God's help and seek wise counsel as you seek the truth.

Personal integrity

Our work as ambassadors of truth must begin at the most basic level—with our personal honesty. While none of us is perfect, we must grow in this area. We can have tremendous influence if we are known as trustworthy, honest, and reliable. After all, this is what God is like. He never lies. He is solid and firm, and we are to imitate him. Let's remember the simple but profound truth that honesty leads to trust, which is the glue that binds together relationships—and society. As the world fractures and fragments, we can do our part to push back by strengthening relationships—with our spouses, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and customers—by living honestly.

QUESTION: Are you careful to speak truthfully, to not lie or shade the truth? Do you keep your word, even when it is costly? Do you keep your agreements, contracts, and vows?

Commitment to free speech and civil, open debate

As followers of Jesus, we must affirm the goodness of reason and logic and free, open, and civil discussion and debate. Our post-truth culture has undermined all of these things, while elevating emotion and power tactics, including shaming, silencing, censoring, and threatening. Of course, emotions are a God-given good, but reason must pull the train. Of all people, Christians should be the most outspoken champions of free speech, free and open inquiry, and civil discussion. As Catholic economist Michael Novak put it, "Only when truth is cherished as an imperative does civilization become possible. Only then can human beings enter into rational conversation with one another. For civilization is constituted by conversation. Barbarians bully; civilized people persuade."¹⁰

QUESTION: What can you do to support free speech and civil, open dialogue in the pursuit of truth? What steps might you take to resist the growing trends of censorship and shaming in our culture?

Speaking out courageously against deadly cultural lies

In our post-truth culture, truth and love have been scandalously separated. For instance, we are told in countless ways that if we fail to accept and affirm people's chosen identities, we fail to love them. If we insist on objective truth, we are branded intolerant "haters." But dividing truth from love will give us neither.

To be silent or passive in the face of destructive, and even deadly, cultural lies is to fail in our Christian duty to love our neighbors. This dereliction of our Christian duty borders on apostasy. According to Charles Chaput, Christians "don't need to

publicly renounce their [faith] to be apostates. They simply need to be silent when their [faith] demands that they speak out; to be cowards when Jesus asks them to have courage; to 'stand away' from the truth when they need to work for it and fight for it."¹¹

This is a warning that all who claim Christ must heed. Our standard is always to speak the truth in humility and gentleness—but speak it we must.

QUESTION: Where have you felt cultural or peer pressure to remain silent about important cultural or moral issues that are destroying lives and fracturing society? About what issue is God calling you to speak out truthfully, lovingly, and courageously?

Concluding Thoughts

"The Evangelical is not afraid of facts, for he knows that all facts are God's facts; nor is he afraid of thinking, for he knows that all truth is God's truth, and right reason cannot endanger sound faith. He is called to love God with all his mind . . . A confident intellectualism expressive of robust faith in God, whose Word is truth, is part of the historic evangelical tradition. If present-day evangelicals fall short of this, they are false to their own principles and heritage." —J. I Packer¹²

Are you prepared to live within the truth? If so, your light will shine brightly in an ever-darkening world; yours will be the salt that slows its decay. As Christ-followers, we fix our eyes on our Savior, confident that the "truth will win out" because Jesus is on the throne. The devil's lies may confuse us for a time, but the truth of God will prevail.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity by Nancy Pearcey (2008)
- Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes by Nancy Pearcey (2015)
- Saving Truth: Finding Meaning and Clarity in a Post-Truth World by Abdu Murray (2018)
- Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype and Spin by Os Guinness (2000)
- Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism by Douglas Groothuis (2000)
- True Truth: Defending Absolute Truth in a Relativistic World by Art Lindsley (2004)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott David Allen is president of the Disciple Nations Alliance. He is a frequent teacher on topics ranging from Christianity and culture to worldview, family, biblical justice, and poverty. He has authored and coauthored numerous books, including his bestselling book Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a Time of Social Crisis.

Before serving as president of the Disciple Nations Alliance, Scott served for 19 years with the Christian poverty alleviation organization Food for the Hungry.

He has traveled extensively in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, equipping Christian leaders to embrace a biblical worldview and to live it out personally and publicly in faithfulness to Christ's command to make disciples of all nations.

He and his wife, Kimberly, live in Bend, Oregon. Scott is the proud father of five children and has three grandchildren.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1: TRUTH

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- 7. Nancy Pearcey, Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015), 120.
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CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Q 10wordsbook.org



BIBLE STUDY

This study guide is designed for small group Bible study and is built around a ten-part short video series and thoughtful discussion questions.

PODCAST

Join Scott on the Ideas
Have Consequences
podcast as he discusses
each of the ten words
from the book. The
podcast is a great way to
introduce people to the
book and study guide.



ABOUT THE DISCIPLE NATIONS ALLIANCE

disciplenations.org

Nations, communities, families, and people are broken and crying out for hope, healing, and restoration. God blessed His people, the Church, to be His ambassadors in reconciling and restoring the broken nations of this world.

Our vision at the Disciple Nations Alliance is to see blessed nations profoundly shaped by biblical truth in ways that lead to freedom, justice, and human flourishing.

Learn how you can join the movement at *disciplenations.org*.

