

TRUTH ENCOUNTER ASSESSMENT

A PASTORAL CARE WORKBOOK

A guided lens for encountering truth — and the One who is Truth — in the midst of conflict

*“We’re not seeking who’s right, but what is true —
and then we will find Who is true.”*

Truth Encounter Assessment

A Pastoral Care Workbook — Steps for Encountering Truth in Conflict

1 SAFETY  - Is anyone in danger? - If abuse, threats, coercion, sexual harm, or crime are involved, seek safety first. - Involve proper authorities and church elders. - Forgiveness never means enabling evil.	2 PRAY  - Ask God to search and lead you. - Invite the Holy Spirit. - Name your emotions honestly. - Pray: “Lord Jesus, You are Truth. Search me. Guard me from self-deception. Give me courage to face reality and faith to obey You.”	3 OBSERVE  - What actually happened? - State the facts plainly: who, what, when, where. - Record exact words or actions if possible. - Separate what you know from what you assume.	4 INTERPRET  - What did I conclude it meant? - Identify the story you started telling yourself. - Consider how the other person may have understood it. - Do not assume motive without honest conversation.
5 EXAMINE  - What did this expose in my heart? - Identify desires, fears, and demands. - Notice your reactions: control, withdraw, attack, people-please, despair. - Ask: what fruit showed up?	6 DISCERN  - What did the other person's observable actions reveal? - Describe patterns, not guessed motives. - Was there sin, immaturity, ignorance, or weakness? - What would need to happen for trust to be rebuilt?	7 TEST  - What beliefs formed, and are they biblical? - Name the lesson you absorbed. - Compare it with Scripture. - Take every thought captive to Christ.	8 GOSPEL  - What is true because I belong to Christ? - I am not condemned in Christ. - Draw near to the throne of grace for mercy and help. - Believe God's truth over unbelief and suspicion.
9 RESPOND  - Believe, confess, forgive, obey. - Own your sin without excuses. - Release the debt without denying justice or wisdom. - Take 1–3 concrete steps: conversation, mediation, or wise boundaries.	10 COMMUNITY  - Who should walk with me in this? - Involve elders, especially if leadership harm is involved. - Reject isolation. - Commit to accountable church life.	11 REVIEW  - Where do I still need wisdom or help? - Can I state facts without speculation? - Can I identify false beliefs and answer them with Scripture? - What concrete obedience step will I take this week?	

We're not seeking who's right, but what is true — and then we will find Who is true.

Truth, repentance, grace, reconciliation, and growth happen best in the light of Christ and in the life of His church.

INTRODUCTION

We're not seeking "who's right," but what is true — and then we will find Who is true.

*Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

— John 14:6

We're not here to win; we're here to come into the light with Jesus.

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

— John 3:20–21

We will take a posture of faith, hope, and love.

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

— 2 Corinthians 10:5

We walk in the promise that God's Word exposes us to healing, not to shame.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

— Hebrews 4:12, 16

STEP 1

SAFETY

Is anyone currently in danger?

SAFETY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS GUARDRAIL

If any situation involves ongoing abuse, threats, coercion, sexual harm, or criminal actions, the immediate "call to action" may be safety, distance, and involving the proper authorities and church elders (Rom. 13:1–4; 1 Pet. 5:2–3). Forgiveness never means enabling continued evil. "Peace" is not the same as "silence."

Before continuing to the steps below, pause here. This workbook assumes the situation is safe enough to process prayerfully. If it is not, seek safety and appropriate help first.

STEP 2

PRAY

Ask God to search and lead me.

Invite the Holy Spirit

In Psalm 139:23–24, David doesn't begin by defending himself; he begins by asking God to search him. That is not self-condemnation — it's confidence that God's searching leads to God's leading.

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, You are Truth. Search me. Guard me from self-deception. Give me courage to face reality and faith to obey You. Amen."

Heart Check (circle one)

I feel mostly:

anger / fear / shame / despair / numbness / bitterness / confusion



Write out any other feelings you may be having:

STEP 3

OBSERVE

What actually happened?

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *God is omniscient and near; truth is not fragile because God rules reality.*

Into your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.

— **Psalm 31:5**

God does not require you to pretend. He sees what was done, what was missing, what was lost.

Write the event plainly (no motives yet)

What happened? (who / what / when / where)

What was said or done? (exact words, if possible)

What did you do next?

Questions that keep it clean

- What do I know happened vs. what am I assuming happened?
- What evidence do I have for what I'm claiming?
- If a neutral witness wrote this, what would they include or exclude?

STEP 4

INTERPRET

What did I conclude it meant?

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Humans are finite and fallible; God alone is infallible. That's why we test interpretations by Scripture and by honest communication.*

When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.

— Psalm 73:16–17

Asaph's pain was real, but his conclusions were drifting. When he "entered the sanctuary," his interpretation was corrected by God's presence and God's truth. So Asaph did not necessarily misobserve what was happening; he misinterpreted what those facts ultimately meant because he was viewing them without the sanctuary perspective of God.

Name your meaning-making and write it out — this defines how we find the truth

"When that happened, I told myself it meant..."

"It made me feel... because I believed..."

"The story I started living in my head was..."

Then consider the other person carefully (with humility) and in a good light

"They might have meant..."

"They might have assumed..."

"I do / don't have proof of their intent because..."

Key diagnostic

- Did I treat my interpretation as infallible?
- Did I assume motive without a Matthew 18 conversation?

STEP 5

EXAMINE

What did this expose in my heart?

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Doctrine of indwelling sin: even believers carry remaining sin that must be daily put to death by the Spirit. The heart — not merely what was done to us — is the true wellspring of our desires and reactions, so naming it here is the Spirit's ordinary path to repentance, not evidence of God's rejection.*

Mini Devotional — Luke 6:45

Jesus teaches that words and actions don't come out of nowhere — they come from the "treasure" of the heart. This isn't to shame; it's to locate what must be shepherded.

What did it reveal about you? (Pick 2–3)

- What did I desire? Was the desire itself righteous, sinful, or mixed? If it was a good desire, did I begin to demand it in a way that displaced trust in God (or shut down)?
- What did I fear?
- What did I believe I "needed" to be okay?
- How did I respond: control / withdraw / attack / people-please / lie / despair?
- What fruit showed up: bitterness, slander, retaliation, self-pity, unbelief, manipulation?

James 4 Lens (very clarifying)

"What were my 'desires at war within me'?" (James 4:1–3)

STEP 6

DISCERN

What did the other person's observable actions reveal?

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Doctrine of sin and the heart: our problems are not merely external; we are acted upon and we act. This keeps victims from false guilt and keeps sinners from self-justification.*

Be cautious, humble, and quick to shed good light.

- What pattern was visible (not assumed motive)?
- Was there actual sin, immaturity, ignorance, or weakness?
- Was there a power dynamic? (leadership, dependency, vulnerability)
- What would be required for genuine trust to be rebuilt, if possible?

STEP 7

TEST

What beliefs formed, and are they biblical?

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Doctrine of Scripture's sufficiency and authority (2 Tim. 3:16–17). We don't treat feelings as final; we treat God's Word as final — while taking feelings seriously as indicators. Our interpretation of Scripture must also remain humble and accountable, because Scripture is infallible while our interpretation of Scripture is not.*

Mini Devotional — Genesis 3

The serpent's tactic isn't only temptation; it's reframing reality. "Did God really say...?" False doctrine often begins as a plausible interpretation that contradicts God's Word.

Identify the "lesson" you absorbed — finish the sentences

"I learned that God is..."

"I learned that people are..." and "I learned that I am..."

"I learned that church is..."

"I learned that authority is..."

Then test it with Scripture (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Claim I'm believing:

What Scripture says instead (book / chapter):

What that means I must repent of / trust / obey:

Common false "lessons" after church hurt (examples)

- "All authority is control" (instead of: authority can be abused, but Christ commands shepherding and accountability done humbly; 1 Pet. 5:2–3; Heb. 13:17).
- "Doctrine always divides" (instead of: falsehood divides; truth unites in maturity; Eph. 4:13–15).
- "If someone corrects me, they're rejecting me" (instead of: faithful wounds can be love; Prov. 27:6; Gal. 6:1).
- "I must protect myself by staying uncommitted" (instead of: love binds itself in covenant; John 13:34–35; 1 Cor. 12).

STEP 8

GOSPEL

What is true because I belong to Christ?

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Doctrine of union with Christ and justification by faith: my standing before God is fixed in Christ's finished work, not in how well I've handled this conflict or how the other person has treated me. Whatever was exposed in Steps 5–7, I am not condemned (Rom. 8:1) — I come to the throne of grace as a son or daughter, not a defendant.*

Mini Devotional — Hebrews 4:14–16

After God's Word exposes, we do not run away — we draw near to the throne of grace for mercy and help. Exposure is meant to move you toward Christ, not away from Him.

Believe (faith)

What truth about God must I believe right now?

Where am I tempted to unbelief or suspicion toward God's goodness?

STEP 9

RESPOND

Believe, confess, forgive, obey.

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Doctrine of repentance and forgiveness: genuine repentance is a Spirit-worked change of mind that produces confession without excuse; forgiveness releases the debt without denying justice or wisdom. Obedience follows as the fruit of grace already given — not the means of earning it.*

Break your response into four categories so it's not vague.

Confess (to God, and where appropriate to people — but never confessing someone else's sin as if it were yours)

What sin is mine to own, without excuses?

Who do I need to ask forgiveness from — specifically?

Keep this tight: confession is not self-hatred; it's agreeing with God. (1 John 1:9)

Forgive (from the heart)

What debt am I tempted to keep collecting?

What does forgiveness look like here, without denying justice or wisdom?

Ephesians 4:31–32 doesn't say "pretend it didn't matter." It says put away vengeance and give kindness.

Forgiveness can be granted from the heart before trust is restored; reconciliation ordinarily requires repentance and restored truth between the parties; restored trust may require demonstrated faithfulness over time.

Obey (wisdom + steps) — choose 1–3 concrete steps

- Initiate a Matthew 18 conversation (or request mediation).
- Establish wise boundaries (time, access, communication).
- Repair what you can repair; release what you cannot control.

DOCTRINAL ANCHOR *Doctrine of repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the church as Christ's appointed means of growth.*

STEP 10

COMMUNITY

Who should walk with me in this?

- **DOCTRINAL ANCHOR** *Doctrine of the church: Christ has not left His people to heal or grow in isolation. The local church — elders and members — is His appointed means of accountability, correction, and grace (Heb. 10:24–25; Gal. 6:1–2; Eph. 4:11–16). Withdrawing from the body is not neutral safety; it's forfeiting the ordinary means Christ uses to sanctify us.*
- Involve elders (especially if leadership harm is involved).
- Commit to church life in a way that is covenantal and accountable.

Pursue faithful covenant life in a biblically healthy local church rather than choosing permanent isolation.

The local church is Christ's appointed means of accountability and grace; withdrawing from it isn't neutral safety, it's forfeiting the ordinary means He uses to sanctify us.

STEP 11

REVIEW

Where do I still need wisdom or help?

This is not a holiness score or a measure of God's acceptance of you. It simply identifies areas where further discipleship may be needed.

Rate 0–5 (0 = not at all, 5 = strongly):

I can state the facts without speculation:	0	1	2	3	4	5
I can separate interpretation from evidence:	0	1	2	3	4	5
I can name what's happening in my heart:	0	1	2	3	4	5
I can identify at least one false belief I absorbed:	0	1	2	3	4	5
I can name at least two Scriptures that correct it:	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have one concrete obedience step I will do this week:	0	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing to be helped by Christ's people (not isolated):	0	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX

For Pastoral / Discipleship Use

A "Doctrine-Abuse" Sensitive Introduction (you can read aloud)

Doctrine is the church carefully summarizing and confessing what God has revealed in Scripture. The church does not create truth or stand above Scripture; it receives, teaches, and submits to God's Word.

When doctrine was used to shame or silence you, that was sin. But Jesus still speaks truth because He loves. In this process, no one is trying to 'win' — we're trying to come into the light with Christ, who heals by truth and grace.

The "Stuck Place" Diagnoses (use with grace and mercy)

FOR PASTORAL / DISCIPLESHIP USE — NOT FOR SELF-DIAGNOSIS OR ACCUSING ANOTHER PERSON

Do not use these questions to predetermine someone's motive. Ask them as hypotheses to explore, not conclusions to impose. When someone refuses doctrine or covenant, you can explore:

- "Are you afraid of humiliation (from past abuse) or afraid of repentance (from present pride) — or both?"
- "Do you want relationship without commitment because commitment feels unsafe — or because autonomy feels safer than obedience?"
- "If doctrine is 'control,' what becomes the authority in your life instead: feelings, fear, personal preference, majority opinion?"

CLOSING

Assignment

≤ 1 hour total

1) Scripture (25 minutes)

Read: Psalm 139:23–24; Hebrews 4:12–16; Ephesians 4:11–16; James 4:1–10 (NASB95).

Write two sentences each: What does this passage say about (a) truth, (b) the heart, (c) growth in the body?

2) Build Your First "Mini Devotional Narrative" Set (20 minutes)

Write three 5–7 sentence devotionals that match the steps:

- A "God who sees" devotional (Gen. 16:13 or Ps. 56:8)
- A "meaning corrected in worship" devotional (Ps. 73)
- A "Word exposes so grace can heal" devotional (Heb. 4:12–16)

3) Prayer + Plan (15 minutes)

Pray through one real conflict using the worksheet headings.

End by writing one obedience step you will complete within 7 days.