

Introduction: Case Manager Conversation

The other day I was in the hospital visiting with one of our folks who had a curious case of the migrating kidney stone. As we were talking, his hospital case manager showed up and we got to talking about religion. As the conversation progressed she claimed that:

- 1) Jesus was just a prophet.
- 2) Jesus lied about being the Messiah because if he were, there would be peace on earth right now.
- 3) The Bible was written by men and therefore can't be true. Although I responded with a series of apologetic defeaters, she remained largely unconvinced.

In our "Church Is" series we have seen that the church is God's community of faith, victory, and transformation. We now see that we are his community of truth. Our starter Scripture is I Timothy 3:15 where Paul, corresponds with his protégé Timothy:

If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Why the Church is Truth: Trinity Truth

Who comes to church because you love the worship? Preaching? Fellowship? Now who loves the church because it's the "Pillar and foundation of the Truth." Who comes with the awesome realization that if objective truth can be found anywhere it can be found in the Church? Paul calls the church the "Pillar and foundation of the truth" primarily because the church is the creation of our Trinitarian God and our Trinitarian God is the basis of all truth.

When the Great Commandment declares, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is a One" (Deuteronomy 6:4) it is emphasizing that God himself is the one unified reality and therefore, who he is, what he says, and what he does, is the source of all truth. In Psalm 31:5 David praises God as the "God of all truth."

When the 2nd Person of the Trinity, i.e., Jesus, came to this earth in the miracle of the incarnation we are told in John 1:14:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

About Jesus, Paul adds in Ephesians 1:13:

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Speaking of himself, Jesus claimed in John 14:6:

*I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Truth is not only a proposition it's also a person! And one of the primary reasons Jesus came to earth was to "Give testimony to the truth" (John 18:37). As the God of truth, Jesus is the "Chief corner

stone” (Ephesians 2:20) upon which his Church, a.k.a. “The Pillar and foundation of truth” is built. In places like John 14:17 the HS is called the “Spirit of truth.”

Truth: Biblical Truth

The objective truth revealed to us by our Trinitarian Creator is recorded very carefully for us in the Bible, a.k.a. the “Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Because the Bible is “God breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16) Jesus prayed (John 17:17):

Make them holy by your Word, your word is truth.

The “Word of Truth” is not only external but eternal as well. Listen to the prophet Isaiah (40:8):

The grass withers and the flowers fades but the word of our God endures forever.

Every time I read this passage I think of the line in the great hymn, “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and the inspiring lyrics, “His truth goes marching on.” The Bible is truth timeless, truth universal, and truth transformational for all people, in all places, for all time.

Truth Decay

As a species that is routinely deceived and enslaved by falsehoods and fabrications, we should commit to the truth that is revealed to us through the Living Word (Jesus) and the Written Word (Bible). However, a recent Barna survey revealed quite the opposite.

7/10 Americans don't believe in absolutes...that truth is relevant, situational, and constantly evolving to one's personal view or perspective.

Truth has become centered in the individual and as such is verbalized often as “My Truth” and/or “Your Truth.” What I find ironic in these laughable claims is how inaccurate they are. Truth is substituted for “My Experience” or “My Feelings” which may indeed be “My Reality” but is in no way THE TRUTH. Which, if I can replace objective truth with personal experience I then only have to be accountable to me. No wonder Paul called us “Children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). I digress, but I find the Barna survey surprising in that 7/10 Americans also claim a personal relationship with God and believe in the Bible. However, what is most disappointing about the survey is that only 20% of Protestants say the Bible influences what they think or how they live. What gives? What gives is that for the last 100 years or so, our culture has been suffering from what Douglas Groothuis calls, “Truth Decay” and this decay has infected the church.

[SLIDE 13] If you are not a diligent flosser and brusher, or regularly go to your annual cleanings and check-ups, you run the risk of developing tooth decay which is usually quite ugly, painful, and not to mention, expensive (root canal). Truth decay begins when we deny that truth is external or eternal but fluid, context/circumstance/situationally dependent, and based IN individuals or groups. In other words, as we have seen, when it is subjective, experience based, and socially created. All these “beliefs” slowly decay trust in the truth.

[SLIDE 14] *The Pilate Syndrome*

The Truth That Sets Us Free

We might live in the day of truth decay but as Christ followers we hold to the truth of Jesus' absolute promise in John 8:32:

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

The truth is not just a bunch of data bytes or church doctrines but a person name Jesus. Therefore, when we grow in our relationship with him the more confident we will be in the truth that he is and the truth he reveals. Furthermore, the more we are committed to be a biblically centered church, the more confident we will be in the truth. Why? Because the church is the last place on earth that tells the truth about God, this world, and this life. Thus, the more we see ourselves as the "Community of Truth" the better equipped we will be to fend off the lies the "Father of Lies" (devil-John 8:44) whispers in our ears 24/7 every day. The devil is the master of misinformation and as Keith Green once put it, "All of the devil's wicked lies." "You believe them and your faith just dies."

Conclusion

I read about a church that worships for over 2.5 hours each Sunday. It's pastor tells why:

I must gather my people together and get their heads on straight. I am compelled to tell them that everything about the world is a lie. It takes me so long to get them straight because the world perverts them so terribly.

After seemingly getting nowhere with the case manager I invited her to hear me preach. She asked, "Why would I ever do that?" I responded, "Because I'm the Sermonator and you will hear the true truth from God's Word." Astonishingly, she said, "Okay, what's your Website address" and even took my phone number.

Church, our world is hungry for the truth. Let's give it to them and never forget that we are "The pillars and foundation of the truth!" We are God's community of truth!