



#4 In the Anchored Series
Anchored in Truth
Forest Park Church
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Christopher Columbus was considered to be mad, and was rejected and even threatened with being burnt at the stake. All this was because he believed the world wasn't flat, but round. Isn't that amazing? What's really astonishing, is that in 322 BC Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, knew that the world was round. Not only did the Greeks know that the world was spherical in shape, but in 240 BC another Greek, Eratosthenes, (Eratostaneez) accurately calculated the Earth's diameter! So why, more than 1700 years later, did they believe the earth to be flat?

If you repeat a lie often enough and for long enough, people begin to believe it's the truth.

Ask most people today, "What is truth?" and you're sure to start an interesting conversation.

- On a university campus the concept of an absolute truth is likely to receive skepticism or worse.
- On the street you might be met by confusion
- And in certain circles you would be challenged to see the word through a "particular truth".

The concept of an absolute truth (at least in terms of morality) has clearly fallen on hard times, and the consequences of rejecting it are ravaging human society.

And yet this concept of truth is central to the message of the Bible and particularly the teachings of Christ!

Roger Scruton British philosopher

When someone tells you there is no such thing as truth, they are asking you not to believe them – so don't.

Jesus Said

John 8:32

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

I. A Biblical Definition of truth.

So let's go back to the original question: What is truth?

One of the most profound and eternally significant questions in the Bible was posed by the unbeliever Pilate—the man who handed Jesus over to be crucified—turned to Jesus in His final hour, and asked, “What is truth?”

- It was a rhetorical question, a cynical response to what Jesus had just revealed: “I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.”

Two thousand years later, the whole world breathes Pilate's cynicism.

- Some say truth is a power play, an ideal constructed by the powerful for the purpose of controlling the ignorant masses.
- To some, truth is subjective, the individual world of preference and opinion.
- Others believe truth is a collective judgment, the product of cultural consensus,
- and still others flatly deny the concept of truth altogether.

It seems to me however that each of these concepts tend to enslave us

- To some Powerful elite
- To a personal Preference
- To cultural whims
- Or with the enormous weight of living without any boundaries whatever.

So what is truth as defined by Jesus? He indicated that truth was the doorway to freedom.

Here's a simple Biblical definition:

Truth is that which is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God.

Said another way:

Truth is the self-expression of God.

By this definition truth flows from God, which makes it **theological**.

We also argue that truth is **ontological**—which is a fancy way of saying it is the way things really are.

- Reality is what it is because God declared it so and made it so.
- Therefore God is the author, source, determiner, governor, arbiter, ultimate standard, and final judge of all truth.

The Old Testament refers to God as the “*God of truth*” in **Isaiah 65:16**

II. Jesus and Truth.

Jesus said of Himself, “I am...the truth”

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

The Truth: In the Greek, the word “truth” is “alētheia.”

Jesus used the definite article to emphasize Himself as “the only truth.”

- He is not “a” truth
- or an “option” to eternal life,
- but He says He is the only truth.

In which he was making a profound claim about His own deity.

- He was also making it clear that all truth must ultimately be defined in terms of God and His eternal glory.

Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus:

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”

- He is truth in the body of a human—the perfect expression of God and therefore the absolute embodiment of all that is true.

Aristotle (Greek philosopher 384 - 322BC) wrote a lot of famous books, one of which was **Politics**. About a third of the way through, he says imagine you are trying to create a perfect society and in this perfect society someone arrives who is so perfect they are considered to be a god amongst men. What would a society do with such a person, he asks?

A perfect person, if he ever came amongst us, would reveal, by his very nature, all the imperfection around him.

Aristotle is very clear: they’d be ostracized or killed!

- Why? Well, a perfect person, if he ever came amongst us, would reveal, by his very nature, all the imperfection around him.
- In other words, you wouldn’t want it revealed who you really are.
- This is exactly who Jesus claimed to be: a god amongst men – someone without fault.

When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, he looked at Pilate and said, ‘Everyone who is on the side of truth believes in me’.

- Pilate responded, ‘What is truth?’, before walking away.
- If you knew the moral complications that were going on in Pilate’s life at the time you would understand,
- but interestingly he goes on to say to the crowd that he found no fault, no error at all in Jesus – nothing deceptive or morally wrong.

The uncomfortable nature of truth

Truth has this uncanny way of revealing things as they are, and that can often catch us off guard.

- Maybe that is why we often become defensive when something true about us is revealed,
- something we might otherwise have liked to keep hidden.

Jesus Christ speaks about this to his disciples when he says the light shines in the darkness, but people prefer the darkness (John 3:19),

In other words, it might reveal the kind of people we really are.

- This is an uncomfortable thought, but most of us go around trying to pretend to others we are something we are not.
- There is a part in every human being that recognizes that if people really saw us as we are, they might be put off.
- We try hard to appear patient, and loving, and kind, while repressing the urge to tell the world how we really think.

Yet the gospel would be very bad news if it was simply true and only revealed things as they really are, without any hope for things to get better!

Jesus claimed

- to be the truth,
- to have the truth,
- to proclaim the truth,
- to reveal the truth
- and to offer evidence for what he claimed he was telling us was the truth.

But, he also claimed that this truth wouldn't simply reveal the way things are, but it would transform the way things will be.

- “It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error.
- It is better to speak the truth that hurts and then heals, then falsehood that comforts and then kills.
- It is not love and it is not friendship if we fail to declare the whole counsel of God.
- It is better to be hated for telling the truth than to be loved for telling a lie.

“It is impossible to find anyone in the Bible who was a power for God who did not feel the sting of rejection.

- It's better to stand alone with the truth than to be wrong with a multitude.

- It is better ultimately to succeed with truth than to temporarily succeed with a lie.”

III. Transformed by Truth.

Let's go back to John 8 and read the verse

John 8:31-32

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Truth and Love

Today it seems we culturally value the words "education" and "relationship," When we turn to the Bible. We find in place of the words, "education" and "relationship," the words, "truth" and "love.

So what does the Bible say about how truth and love relate to each other?

Here are four ways our heart (lives) are transformed by truth!

1. Truth points to love.

1 Timothy 1:5

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Notice that Paul doesn't say learning the truth is the end goal, he says love is.

Instruction is simply the tool we use to share truth.

- Truth serves love.
- Education serves relationships
- In our relationship with God,
- Also between Christians,
- And between us and unbelievers.

The "goal" of all our education is love.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to

love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The aim of our "considering one another" and "encouraging one another" is that we stir up love.

The truth of doctrine and the reality of life should unite to point at love.

2. Love points to truth.

1 Corinthians 13:6

it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Love rejoices when truth is spoken.

- Therefore love points to truth.
- It supports truth.

Here is an example of how love aims at truth.

2 Corinthians 2:4

For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

Paul is filled with love and it compels him to write a letter that was full of truth,

- It caused sorrow in him and in the Corinthians.
- But it needed to be said.
- So love said it.
- Love speaks the truth personally and doctrinally.

Love points to truth!

3. Love shapes how to speak the truth.

Ephesians 4:15

"Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ"

There is a loving and unloving way to speak the truth.

- It is not always a soft way to speak, or Jesus would have to be accused of lack of love in dealing with some folks in the Gospels.
- But it does force us to ask ourselves what is the most helpful thing to say when everything is considered.
- Often not the most satisfying.

Sometimes what would be harsh for one group is a needed by another group,

Love takes time to shape truth into words and ways that are patient and gentle

2 Timothy 2:24-25

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

4. Truth shapes how to show love.

1 John 5:2

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome"

It's not always obvious how to be truly Loving.

- John tells us truth will help us know if our acts are loving.
- One truth test for our love is whether we are keeping the commandments of God toward people,
- Love cannot be cut loose from the truth of God's will.
- Truth shapes how to show love.

John 13:1

*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2** During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, **3** Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, **4** rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. **5** Then*

he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Conclusion:

The story is told of a man who came to visit his old friend, a music teacher. As the man came in, he said, "What's the good news today?" The old teacher was silent as he stood up and walked across the room. He picked up a small hammer and struck a tuning fork. As the note sounded throughout the room, he said, "That is &ls;A.' It is &ls;A' today; it was &ls;A' 5, 000 years ago, and it will be &ls;A' 10, 000 years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, the tenor across the hall flats on his high notes, and the piano downstairs is out of tune." He struck the note again and said, "That is &ls;A,' my friend, and that's the good news for today!"

The only hope for a world out of tune is to know that Jesus is the truth:
"Yesterday, today and forever"

If you got lost hiking in the woods, what would you do to find your way? If you knew anything about outdoor survival, you wouldn't keep wandering around, trying new paths and hoping you'd eventually stumble upon the right one. Instead, you'd turn around and retrace your steps until you found where you went wrong. Then you'd make a better choice and go on from there.

In our search for truth, we get lost.

In fact, some of us have given up hope of ever reaching our destination.

Some looking for truth choose to keep wandering rather than turn around and fix past mistakes.

But making that 180-degree turn and taking a hard look at where we've gone wrong in the past is exactly what we need to do.

Additional Material:

Recognizing the Need for Truth

And it's even reasonable to search for ultimate truth in God. Those who say there is no God on whom to base our standards have a very hard time dealing with these questions:

- Why do we have personalities? If there is no personal God who “shared these bits of His personality with us,” where did we get them? Petersen, p. 139.
- Why do the pieces of the universe fit together so intricately? If there isn't a higher standard outside the natural world ordering the way things work, then why do they work so well?
- Why do we have a strong desire for purpose and meaning in life? If there is no “big picture” that explains where we came from and why we're here, why do we ask questions about purpose and spend our lives trying to find the answers?