

## WHAT IS TRUTH?

There was a man who was on a business trip in Europe. He called his wife from Frankfurt and during the conversation asked her "How's my cat?" "Dead" she answered. "Oh dear, that's mean. Don't be so blunt. Why didn't you break the news to me slowly? You've ruined my trip." "What do you mean?" the wife asked. "Well, you could have prepared me first. You could have told me the cat was on the roof. And when I called you from Paris, you could have told me that he had fallen from the roof but was fine. Then when I called from London, you could have said he had taken a turn for the worst. When I called you from New York, you could have said he was at the vet. Then, when I arrived home, you could have said he was dead." The wife listened and eventually said "OK, I'll do better next time." "By the way," he asked, "how's Mom?" There was a long silence, then she replied, "Uh, she's on the roof."

Today we are continuing our series on Reframing Your Worldview. Last week we asked the question "why is my worldview important?" Today I want to ask the question "What is Truth?"

John 8:31-32 To the Jews who had believed him, 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."

Sixty years ago people mostly agreed on what was right and what was wrong. There was a shared standard of morality. Everyone did not always DO what was right and wrong, but most people AGREED and knew what was right and wrong. Today many people claim that you cannot even know the difference between right and wrong. A lot of people even claim there's no such thing as truth. Something can be truth for you but not truth for me. So there is no absolute right or wrong.

Back in 2008 a man called Tim McLean was travelling by Greyhound bus in Manitoba. While he was sleeping, the man sitting next to him named Vince Li stabbed him and cut off his head. He was arrested but was eventually found to be not guilty. He was not criminally responsible for the murder. Less than 10 years later Vince Li is a free man because the court determined that he did not know the difference between right and wrong.

This idea that there is no such thing as absolute truth is called postmodernism or relativism. Basically it says that what's true for you may not be true for me. And what's right for you may not be right for me. This is very convenient philosophy because it means I can do whatever I want to do. It basically lets me off the hook saying there is no objective standard of behavior and I can do whatever I want to do.

It is a philosophy built on the idea there are no absolutes. The idea that there are no absolutes is an absolutely ridiculous thing to say. It is not only illogical, it's unreasonable. In the first place, when you say there are no absolutes you are making an absolute statement. If someone says to you that they do not believe in absolutes you should say to them "are you absolutely sure about that?" It is illogical.

Not only that but it is unreasonable. The entire world operates on absolutes every second of every day. When you go into a pharmacy to get a prescription filled you don't say, "Just give me anything." And the pharmacist doesn't say, "well, I didn't have what you wanted but this is also medication so just take it and hopefully it will do the same thing." You want the pharmacist to give you absolutely the correct prescription in the right dosage. You do not want partial truth, you want absolute truth.

Naomi likes playing the online game Words With Friends. It is based on the board game Scrabble. Have you ever played Scrabble with someone who just made up words?

Somebody says, “Snifflefritz is a real word! It’s worth 257 points.” But you say, “I’m sorry. I’ve never heard of it.” And they say, “It may not be true for you but it’s true for me. It is a word. I use it all the time.” So what you do is you appeal to an objective standard called the dictionary. If it’s not in the dictionary it’s not a word no matter how many points you thought you are going to get for it.

In postmodernism, what has happened is that people now value tolerance more than they value truth. The supreme value in our culture used to be truth, but now it is more important to be tolerant than it is to be truthful. In fact, if you are truthful you are considered intolerant. How dare you say that something is always right and something is always wrong. That is intolerant and that is being judgmental.

We’ve even redefined the word “tolerance.” Tolerance used to mean that even though we may totally disagree on something, I will still treat you with respect because you’re a human being. You’re made in the image of God. Although we may totally disagree on politics or morality, whatever, we’re still going to treat each other politely. That’s tolerance.

The word now means that all ideas are equally valid. That’s nonsense. All ideas are not equally valid. If I say, “The moon is made out of rock,” and you say, “The moon is made out of Swiss cheese,” those are not equally valid ideas. If I say, “The sun rotates around the earth,” and somebody else says, “The earth rotates around the sun,” those are not equally valid ideas. If I say “The earth is flat,” and you say “It’s round,” those are not equally valid ideas. There are things in life that are absolutely true and things in life that are absolutely false. They will always be true and they will always be false.

What happens when we sacrifice truth on the altar of tolerance? All kinds of bad things happen. There are actually six signs of truth decay. You can see them all around us in our culture today. These things happen when you start giving up on truth.

## 1. Immaturity

Immaturity happens when we value tolerance more than truth. In many ways our society is getting more and more immature every day. You see it all the time on television shows. One of the ways you can see it is that people are less willing to accept responsibility, which is a mark of maturity. When there is no absolute right and wrong there is no standard of responsibility. I can just be a kid, I can just act like a juvenile. I can be disorganized. I can blame other people for my problems. I can expect other people to take care of me, which is what immature kids expect. Let the government or everybody else solve my problems because I’m not responsible. That’s immaturity.

Remember when you were in junior high school? One person would tell you one thing and you believed that until somebody else told you something else and then you believed that until somebody else told you something else. The gossip went on and on and on. Have you ever noticed how often immature people change their minds?

Ephesians 4:14-15 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Maybe as a kid you played that game Simon Says. One person says Simon says and then they say something like raise your hand. Simon Says raise your other hand... and on it goes.

Immaturity is when you do things just because the world says to. The world says sex before marriage is fine – so you do it. The world says same sex relationships are fine – so you do it. The world says that using drugs is fine – so you do it. The world says rebelling against your parents is fine...

If you call yourself a believer in Jesus Christ it means that God has set you apart from the world. You play a new game called Jesus says. Instead of following Simon, we follow Jesus. The tragedy is that at the end of time many will find themselves lifting their eyes from hell standing right next to Simon.

One of the other signs of maturity we see all around us in this culture is a lack of gratitude. People have a sense of entitlement, so when something is done for them they show no gratitude. That is a lack of maturity. Infants do not always appreciate what parents do for them. They have short memories. Their concern is not what you did for me yesterday, but what are you doing for me today. The past is meaningless and so is the future. They live for the present.

Andrew Carnegie, the multimillionaire, left \$1 million for one of his relatives. Instead of gratitude, the relative cursed Carnegie publically thoroughly because he had left \$300 million to public charities and had cut him off with just one measly million.

Samuel Leibowitz, criminal lawyer and judge, saved 78 men from the electric chair. Not one of them ever did bother to thank him.

Many years ago, as the story is told, a devout king was disturbed by the ingratitude of his royal court. He prepared a large banquet for them. When the king and his royal guests were seated, by prearrangement, a beggar shuffled into the hall, sat down at the king's table, and gorged himself with food. Without saying a word, he then left the room. The guests were furious and asked permission to seize the tramp and tear him limb from limb for his ingratitude. The king replied, "That beggar has done only once to an earthly king what each of you does three times each day to God. You sit there at the table and eat until you are satisfied. Then you walk away without recognizing God, or expressing one word of thanks to Him."

How do you know if you have bought into this culture? You expect other people to take care of you and you blame others for your problems. You buy into fads and are ungrateful.

## 2. Immorality

Immorality just means no morals. It means I do whatever I want to do. If there is no standard of right or wrong then anything goes. The Bible tells us back in the book of Judges that there was no king, no ruler in Israel and it says "*Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.*" In other words everyone did their own thing. When there is no law or the law is not enforced, people do what they want.

It sounds like our culture today. If there is no standard of right or wrong, anything goes. When there is no truth and no god then you become the center of the universe and you get very concerned about your own needs and wants. You are self-centered, and everything is about you. Therefore, if it feels good, do it. Who cares about anybody else.

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

So many TV shows today poke fun at any attempt at morality. Nothing is sacred. They make fun of everything including things that are true, things that are right, things that are good.

Proverbs 14:9 Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.

Visiting Pompeii the tour guide said it was a very immoral place. The walls were covered with images of people in sexual immorality. At one point he paused and said “you know, some people say that the Pompeii was such a wicked place it is why God destroyed it. I don’t know about that... but it does make you think.”

Bruce Wilkinson, author of Prayer of Jabez, said: Sexual immorality is a threshold sin. On one side of the threshold is immorality and on the other is purity. On one side are guilt, lying, deceit, addiction, and shame, and on the other side are freedom, honesty, transparency, liberty, and a clear conscience. Believers who are in bondage to immorality find that unless they experience victory in this area, they cannot grow in holiness or serve the Lord with passion and power...”

How do you know if you have bought into this culture? You rationalize things you know are wrong.

### 3. Illusion

When people stop believing in truth, they’ll believe anything. When they stop believing in right or wrong, true and false, they’re gullible. They are out of touch with reality. There are people today who don’t trust Jesus, but they do trust in reading their horoscope and they trust in tea leaves and tarot cards. They don’t believe in God but they believe in UFOs and Big Foot. They are willing to put their trust in absolutely anything except the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

As a society today we value illusion. We idolize people who have the illusion of success and wealth. We would rather live in the world of make believe than our own reality. You know what a society really values by the people they make their heroes. Who are the heroes of our society? Who do we acknowledge and award and try to emulate? Actors.

What are the actors good at? They’re good at getting you to believe an illusion. That they really are the characters that they portray. It makes sense that in a society that doesn’t value truth that the people we value the most are the people who are the best at faking it. The people who are best at pretending. The people who are best at making unreality seem like reality.

How do you know if you have bought into this culture? There are areas of your life where you are faking it. Where you are pretending to be something or someone that you are not.

### 4. Injustice

When there’s no standard of right and wrong, no truth and no falsehood you can get away with anything.

Isaiah 59:14-15 So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. 15 Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.

What a great picture of our world today. If there is no standard of right or wrong then everything can be considered legal. Because all law is built on an idea that there are things that are right and there are things that are wrong. If there is no right and there is no wrong, then there is no true justice. It doesn't matter if you go out and murder somebody, just don't get caught. And even if you do get caught it is OK because you can get off on a technicality.

Two brothers were getting ready to boil some eggs to color for Easter. "I'll give you a dollar if you let me break three of these raw eggs on your head," said the older one. "Promise?" asked the younger. "Promise!" Gleefully, the older boy broke two eggs over his brother's head. Standing stiff for fear the gooey mess would get all over him, the little boy asked, "When is the third egg coming?" "It's not," replied the brother. "That would cost me a dollar." What was the problem with what the older brother did? It is not the technicality of the three eggs, it was the fact that what he did was wrong!

There are some people that fall for the myth of the Titanic. It called Compartmentalized Thinking. That means that if we just compartmentalize stuff in our lives we can't sink. Until the Titanic came along the ships had one giant hull. If that got breached the whole hull would fill up with water and the thing would sink. So the Titanic was called unsinkable because they compartmentalized the hull. This had never been done before. The theory was we you could take on a little bit of water in one ship compartment and still not sink. They were wrong.

If you are compartmentalizing your life you're in for a disaster eventually of Titanic proportions. You can say, I have this little sin going on over here but that's compartmentalized. I am messing around with pornography but it's compartmentalized. Or I've got this little relationship over here. I know it's wrong but I've got it compartmentalized. It's not going to sink my ship or my family or my reputation.

The word "integrity" comes from the same word as "integer." Remember from math class? That means one. I means one digit. Integrity means your entire life is integrated, not compartmentalized. You cannot have integrity if your life is compartmentalized: this is my sex life, this is my family life, this is my work life, this is my church life. No. If you've got it compartmentalized you lack integrity. Integrity is, What you see is what you get. You're authentic. You act toward your kids the way you act toward your friends. You act the same way at the party as you do at church. You're not wearing a mask. You're not a hypocrite. You're the same with everybody. That's integrity.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.

It is interesting that when they took prayer out of schools, when they removed the ten commandments from schoolroom walls, when they removed the moral truths accepted by our culture in days past that violence increased. Think about all the school shootings. Of course the media says there is "no connection" at all between that. When truth is given a sideline and there are no absolutes then anything becomes possible. When focus shifts from God to self bad things happen. When there is ignorance of God crime runs wild and eventually anarchy happens.

How do you know if you have bought into this culture? Are you living a life of integrity?

## 5. Idolatry

When I don't know right from wrong and do not know the truth, then my priorities and my values and the things I worship get out of whack and get really messed up. You start idolizing things like wealth and success and beauty and intelligence. These things may not be wrong in themselves, but they don't deserve worship. They don't deserve to be top, to be number one goal in your life.

Romans 1:22-25 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

An idol is simply anything in your life that you place before God. It could be anything or anyone. When God spoke the 10 commandments to Moses he started by saying;

Exodus 20:2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before me.

What's the principle? Put God first. In my life and in my family. God says, I demand top priority in your life. I'm not going to play second fiddle to anyone or anything.

How do you know if you have bought into this culture? What do you worship? Have you placed anything in your life before God?

As believers in Jesus Christ we need to be committed to the truth. We cannot buy into the lies of postmodernism. Truth is not relative, it is absolute.

There is the old story of a guy that sees a sign in front of a house: "Talking Dog for Sale." He rings the bell and the owner tells him the dog is in the backyard. The guy goes into the backyard and sees a black mutt just sitting there. "You talk?" he asks. "Yep," the mutt replies. "So, what's your story?"

The mutt looks up and says, "Well, I discovered my gift of talking pretty young and I wanted to help the government, so I told the CIA about my gift, and in no time they had me jetting from country to country, sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping. I was one of their most valuable spies eight years running. The jetting around really tired me out, and I knew I wasn't getting any younger and I wanted to settle down. So I signed up for a job at the airport to do some undercover security work, mostly wandering near suspicious characters and listening in. I uncovered some incredible dealings there and was awarded a batch of medals. Had a wife, a mess of puppies, and now I'm just retired."

The guy is amazed. He goes back in and asks the owner what he wants for the dog. The owner says, "Ten dollars." The guy says, "This dog is amazing. Why on earth are you selling him so cheap?" The owner replies, "He's a big liar. He didn't do any of that stuff." You can't believe a word he says.

You may be tempted to buy that dog anyways, just because it talks. You may overlook the lie in sheer amazement. However, we dare not buy into the lies that the world is trying to sell us today. We need to stand on the truth and declare it boldly.

Adrian Rogers once said, “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, than 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 have enemies and was not hated. It’s better to stand alone with the truth than to be wrong with a multitude. It is better to ultimately succeed with truth than to temporarily succeed with a lie.”