

Common Lies of Our Age

Lie #3: Live Your Truth

John 18:28-38

Intro: What is Truth?

What is truth? It's a very important question that answer by saying, "We don't know. And really, we can't know." Others would take it a step further and say, "There is no truth." Or "Truth is relative; defined by the individual. So there is no objective truth."

If that's where you are, I'm so glad you're hear. And I hope you're willing to listen to what Christians have to say about truth. Because if you step into our worldview/framework, you will realize that the most loving and genuine thing we could do is to speak truth to you.

Here's what I mean: the Bible, which I wholehearted believe is the very word of God, our Creator, to us, written through various human authors over a period of many years, says this: People will perish, meaning, they will not go to heaven, "because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." (2 Thess. 2:10)

That's why we care so much about the truth. We are convinced there truly is a God who made all of us...a God who defines truth. Truth comes from him. As one Christian author said, "God and truth are inseparable. Every thought about the essence of truth—what it is, what makes it 'true,' and how we can possibly know anything for sure, quickly moves us back to God." (MacArthur, *Truth War*, xv) He goes on to say, "This is also why it is not particularly surprising when someone who repudiates God [often] rejects [objective] truth as well." (MacArthur, *Truth War*, xv)

And that's the lie I want to tackle today: "Live your truth." Which normally means: "Whatever is true for you, IS true for you; so express it, live it. There's no objective standard of truth you must conform your life to. Truth is just whatever you want it to be. So live that."

I wanna argue that God has given us objective truth we must believe and conform our lives to, and if we don't, we'll perish. BUT what first comes to mind when you consider the topic of truth? Abstract ideas, concepts, facts? That's not where we should begin.

What IS truth? That's the very question Pilate, a Roman Governor, asked Jesus just before he sentenced him to death by crucifixion: *What is truth?* He doesn't seem to be asking, "What is THE truth?" ...as if there is objective truth out there, and he just wants to know what it is. He's asking a more fundamental question: What is truth *itself*? If there is a thing called truth, what is it? What's the nature of it?

What is truth? There's a lot of irony in Pilate's question because John—a disciple of Jesus, who heard teachings Jesus', saw the miracles of Jesus, became convinced of the identity of Jesus—writes about the life of Jesus in such a way that helps you, the reader, know the answer to Pilate's question.

So I wanna take a birds-eye of the Gospel of John, and trace the theme of *truth* across it, such that, when we land on Pilate's question as he looks into the eyes of Jesus, we feel the ironic force of the implied answer.

(This sermon's gonna feel a little different. Normally we take one passage of Scripture and

just milk it for all its worth. We've been working through Genesis, but we're taking a break to do a series called "Common Lies of Our Age." This morning, we're tackling Lie #3: Live Your Truth.)

So let's explore five principles on the relationship between Jesus and truth. And then we'll circle back to Pilate's question, and by that time, we should know the answer.

1) Jesus is the *source* of truth.

Meaning, it comes from him. Truth comes from Jesus. Now, that would be an utterly ridiculous proposition IF Jesus were a mere man. Let's see how he's portrayed in the gospel of John. **[1:1]** What does that phrase "In the beginning," remind you of? Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth."

But here, John says, "In the beginning was the Word..." Who's that? This "Word" is God himself! **[v3]** So this "Word" could not be a created thing himself, since anything that WAS made, HE made. **[v14a]** You know how that is! Jesus Christ is God who became flesh (man). Notice how John goes onto describe him. **[v14b]**

Now, do you see why I say Jesus is the SOURCE of truth? If it is true that he is God who he is before all things and made all things, then that statement “He is full of grace AND TRUTH,” must mean: “Truth ultimately *comes from* him.” That’s what John goes onto say. **[vv16-17]**

Truth CAME through him. When Jesus came to this earth so did the fuller picture of truth. How can that be? **[v18]** There is a God who existed for all eternity whom no one has seen in his fullness. But when Jesus became a man, he made the unseen God known.

So if it’s true that there is one God who made all things, then truth must begin with him. And if Jesus is God incarnate, then that must mean he is the source of all truth. So when he talks, we should listen. Of course, he didn’t speak all truth that could be known. But if all truth finds its origin in him, then what he did say not only must be true but it must be emphatically true—meaning, it’s the most important truth!

What did he say? What truth did he emphasize? Well get there.

2) Jesus is the *telos* of truth.

Meaning, he's the end goal of all truth. We don't look for truth as an end in itself. We wanna know the truth as it points to something greater than itself. There's an end, a goal, a *telos*. **[5:30-32]** Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders of his day who claimed to know the truth because they know God's word (OT). But the problem is, they don't believe in Jesus. So Jesus brings up witnesses that point to the truthfulness of who he is, one of which is the OT itself. **[vv39-40]**

You see? They have a high view of Scripture. They believe the Bible is true. So what's Jesus' problem with them? His problem is that they think in the Scriptures alone—apart from what they're ultimately pointing—they can find eternal life.

This is one of the traps of legalistic versions of Christianity. Having a have a very high view of Scripture but treating it as an *end in itself*. Is the Bible true? Absolutely! But is knowledge of the truth contained in the Bible the end goal? No. It is a means to an end. What's the end? Christ! Knowing Christ! The Bible points you to him!

Michael Reeves says, “The fault of the Pharisees was not that they had a *high* view of the Bible as the very word of God. Jesus had that. It was that the Pharisees had a *wrong* view of the Scripture *as the very object of saving faith*. They thought that...in the bare knowledge of the Scriptures... they had life.” (Reeves, 24)

He goes on to say: When this happens, “Instead of being treasured..., the Bible is used as a weapon for beating others or as a platform on which to parade our own brilliance...Where Scripture is an end in itself, preaching becomes a matter of making our people experts in [knowledge]. It may even make them more scrupulously moral, but it creates [Pharisees], not disciples. It creates people aware of their own biblical knowledge but unaware of the depth of their [sin] problem. Puffed up and... self-reliant, they are not humble, not dependent, not staggered at the mercy of God. They are not made worshipers and lovers of Christ.” (Reeves, *Evangelical Pharisees*, 26) And I would add, they’re made worshipers and lovers of self because the Bible becomes the means of self-exaltation.

So Reeves asks a very simple but heart-penetrating question: “Does [your] reading of Scripture drive [you] to Christ?” (Reeves, 27) HE is the telos of truth. HE is the end goal! All study of truth (even in the Bible) should be a means to an end, and the end is enjoying and knowing Jesus Christ.

John Piper put it like this, “...the Bible [is] not... like a masterpiece [of art] hanging ON the wall of [a cottage in the Alps] but rather like a window IN the wall of the [cottage], with the Alps on the other side. In other words,” he says, “I have been a Christian all these years not because I had the courage to hold on to an embattled view of Scripture, but because I have been held happily captive by the beauty of [Jesus] and his ways that I see through the Scriptures.” (*Peculiar Glory*, 18)

Is that how you view the Bible? Can I plead with you, when you read the Bible, come with a heart ready to see Christ. Plead with God, “Show me Christ today in the reading of your word today! Show me truth the finds it’s end in him.” Because Jesus is the telos of truth.

3) Jesus is the *revealer* of truth. [8:31-32]

Notice the intimate connection between Jesus' word and the truth. His word is truth. And to abide in it, is freedom. Now, that implies something: when you don't know the truth (specifically the truth he's speaking about here, the truth about himself), you're NOT free, which means, you're in bondage. And that's exactly how his audience heard it. **[v33]**

They think that because they are of the physical lineage of Abraham that they are already free people. They don't need freedom. "We've never been enslaved to anyone!" Which is a very interesting statement! Like, "Does Egypt ring a bell? 400 years? Bondage?"

Jesus doesn't go there. He addresses a deeper, more fundamental enslavement, not related to their history as a people, but to their present reality. **[v34]** "You're not free. You're a slave... not to Egyptians, not to Rome, but to your own sin." Now, how do you think that would land on self-righteous ears? Those who view themselves basically good have a hard time hearing: "You're not. You're a sinner. You're a slave to your sin."

How does that land on your ears? If your immediate posture is **defensive**, like, “A slave to sin? Sure, I do some bad things, but I’m overall pretty good!” OR your posture is **deflective**, “Sure I’m a sinner, but everyone is!” Could it be you are more self-righteous than you realize?

A few years ago, an agnostic lady showed up to our church—she didn’t know what she believed but she was pretty certain Christianity wasn’t true. And the more she came and talked to other ladies in our church, the more intrigued she was. She got to the point where some principles of Christianity made sense and she saw how they helped her live a better life.

But when she was asked, “What do you do with your sin problem?” She said, “What do you mean?” “Well, the Bible teaches you’re a sinner through and through, and that’s why Jesus came—to pay the penalty for sinners like you.”

Now she viewed herself as basically good, and Christianity merely served to help her become a better version of who she already was. So how do you think the news that she’s a sinner who

needs to be saved landed on her self-righteous ears? She got offended. "I don't see myself as a sinner. I'm not perfect, but I'm a pretty good."

Later she read passages like Luke 5:29-32, "...there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with [Jesus and his disciples]. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

See what he's saying? "Those who think they're healthy, don't feel the need for a doctor. Similarly, those who think they're good won't see their need for Jesus. But those who know the depth of their sinfulness run to him."

Many of you know, this lady came to see her need for Jesus because she got honest with her own sin. We had the privilege of baptizing her a little over a year ago. She was set free from the bondage of her sin because she clung to the truth about herself and the truth about Jesus.

This is exactly what Jesus goes onto say. **[v36]** Jesus sets you free from the bondage of your sin! But wait, didn't he say in v32 that the *truth* sets you free? See how the truth is tied to Jesus, because reveals the truth.

4) Jesus is the *giver* of truth.

He doesn't just reveal/show it; he hands over, passes it on. How? **[15:26-27]** Jesus is comforting his disciples with these words. He knows he's gonna die on a cross, rise again, and return to heaven. He said in 14:8, "I will not leave you as orphans. I'm not gonna let you be all alone after I return to the Father in heaven."

So what/who does he promise? "I'll send you my Spirit, the Spirit of truth." And what will he do? Jesus says, "Bear witness about me." That's the main job of the third person of the Trinity—to point you Christ. And isn't it telling that the job of the Spirit of TRUTH is to bear witness about...Jesus. Jesus/truth are integrally bound.

Now, notice how the giving of the Spirit is also the giving of truth. **[16:12-15]** Jesus, speaking to his disciples, who would spread the message of

the gospel and build the church, tells them that the HS will guide them *in all truth*. Therefore, the message of the apostles of Jesus is the same message of Jesus. This is why it makes no sense to say, “I like Jesus, and I like what he said in the gospels, but I don’t like Paul or Peter or John. I think they deviated from the message of Jesus.”

I was listening to a debate between an apologist named Wes Huff and another guy I can’t remember (which tells you who I agreed with!). the other guy was trying to argue that Jesus is the true definition of Christianity (great!), but what he meant by that was, we should only listen to and obey the “red letters” in the Bible—the words that Jesus spoke. And all this other stuff later on (especially Paul’s letters) is a deviation of the true Christian message—especially when they start talking about substitutionary atonement.

“Jesus,” he said, “didn’t come to die as an atoning sacrifice for sinners; he just came to show the way of love for people to emulate.”
Which makes no sense because Jesus himself said THIS was the reason he came to this earth.

John 10, “I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep” (10:11). John 12, “For this very reason I came to this hour.” (12:27)—he’s talking about his death. But even this passage, Jesus says that the Spirit of God will take his words and give them to his disciples to pass them on. The apostles didn’t not make up new stuff! We can’t bifurcate the NT! All of it is consistent with the truth Jesus gave.

He's the *source* of truth, the *telos* of truth, the *revealer* of truth, the *giver* of truth. And we’ve seen this intimate connection between Jesus and the truth *because* there’s an intimate connection between Jesus and the God of truth, which comes together in ch14 and takes us to...

5) Jesus is the *definition* of truth. [14:1-6]

Jesus defines truth. I think the words “truth” and “life” modify the word “way.” The reason Jesus is the way—the only way—to the Father is because he is the truth of God and the life of God. He is not A way; he is THE way. And notice, he does not say, “I provide the way.” He says, “I AM the way.” As one writer clarifies, “Jesus does not simply blaze a trail, commanding others to

take the way that he himself takes; rather he *is* the way.” (Carson, 491) He isn’t pointing you to a way to follow. He’s pointing you to himself!

What does this mean? It means that the only way for sinners like you and me to get to God is to go through Jesus. **[Gospel]** “I am the way and the TRUTH and the life.” There’s a reason Christians quote that verse so much. It gets right to the heart of Christianity. *Milwaukee Bucks let every player post on thing on their main X account. Sounds dangerous! AJ Green posted this verse! John 14:6, “I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” And then he gave a heart emoji.*

Now how can Jesus possibly say he is the very definition of truth? **[vv7-9]** Jesus ultimately defines truth because God ultimately defines truth and Jesus is God. It’s words like this uttered from the mouth of Jesus that force you to reckon with his identity. This is why I love the words of CS Lewis who said, “I [wanna] prevent anyone [from] saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I

don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity)

Conclusion: Jesus is the *embodiment* of truth.

Let's finish where we started (ch18) with Pilate's question: What is truth? The exchange between Pilate and Jesus draws out themes we've already explored! **[vv33-36]** We know what he means by that! He is King OVER this world, not just another king IN this world. **[v37]** And that's when Pilate asks the all-important question...a question, perhaps, some of you were asking when you walked in today: **[v38a]**

Interestingly, we don't hear an answer from Jesus. Maybe he responded, but John doesn't record it. He just goes to the next scene. Why? We know why. John has been telling the story of Jesus' life in such a way that when you hear Pilate ask this question as he looks into the face of Jesus, you wanna just scream: "Truth is standing right in front of you!"

Jesus is the embodiment of truth because Jesus is the embodiment of God. God is the source of truth, the telos of truth, the revealer of truth, the giver of truth, and the definition of truth. And Jesus is God in the flesh! So what does that make him? The embodiment of truth.

Don't be Pilate. Don't overlook who Jesus really is. You say, "But he's not standing right in front of me!" But you got everything you need right here (in the Bible). Pick it up. Read it. And behold the truth. Don't "live your truth." Look to the truth. Look to Christ.