

Video... (<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/434158/watch-college-kids-cant-explain-why-short-white-man-isnt-tall-asian-woman>)

We've come a long way since this nation was founded on the solid premise that some truths are self-evident such as, "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..." But what if you live in a culture where no truth is self-evident? No one can be wrong in such a culture and everyone can be right if you believe you're right. These students are learning a new morality unknown to previous generations of Americans that defines immorality as any act of "intolerance" that interferes with another's autonomy. All is tolerated except the intolerant and all are included except the exclusive.

If we cannot agree on the most basic truths, it's hard to see how we will be able to agree on anything - who can be married, who is male and female, who is black and who is white.

Rachel Dolezal stepped down as head of the Spokane NAACP when it was discovered that she was born to white parents in Montana. You might think that makes her white. Not so fast. Dolezal defended her role with the NAACP saying, "I identify as black." Is it possible that someone might misrepresent themselves by claiming they were black in order to gain a leadership position in one of the nation's top advocacy groups for African-Americans? Or am I being judgmental. Her parents didn't seem confused about their daughter. Her mother, Ruthanne Dolezal, characterized her daughter as "irrational and very disconnected from reality," while her father, Larry, said her actions aren't those of "a normal sane person." Who are they to judge? (For the record I identify as an all-pro QB). Our culture, particularly on the university campus, seems to be dominated by a bunch of Humpty Dumpys. Remember the passage in Alice in Wonderland, "'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.'"

One of the most effective tactics of our unseen enemy is to confuse us with respect to what is true. If we cannot agree on the truth, then confusion wins and chaos takes over. Today we are going to begin thinking through the armor of God in Eph. 6:10-20 in order to discover the weapons God has provided us to be effective in this invisible war. Let me start out with two reminders as we turn to Ephesians.

We are not unarmed in this invisible war...v. 10. We have access to powerful weapons in order to withstand the assault of the enemy that are unlike anything we are familiar with on earth. "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4). An invisible war calls for invisible weapons. We access those weapons by "putting on Christ." (Eph. 4:24) We are to take on the character of Christ and stand firm until the war is over. Paul makes this concept more practical by using the vivid imagery of a soldier's armor.

The devil has a strategy...v. 11. The word "schemes" is *methodeia*. There is a method to the devil's madness. The enemy's success is dependent upon the power of the lie. Satan is a liar. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Jn. 8:44. He is a master of deception, distortion, and doubt.

The assault on truth begins with **deception**. **Genesis 3:1** tells us that this beast was “crafty” (sly, cunning). After the very first sin, “the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” Gen. 3:13. This sophisticated enemy appeared anything but dangerous. 2 Cor. 11:13-14 says, “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

There are a lot of ideas that first appear to be good or attractive that turn out to be false and even destructive. One of the most famous is “all religions are basically the same and promote good.” Morgan Freeman is making headlines with “The Story of God,” one of the highest-rated programs in the history of National Geographic Channel. His goal is to unite people of different religions, showing that “we’re all seeking the samething . . . and basically coming up with the same ideas about who we are, what we are, and where we are going.” When asked if he would consider himself an atheist or agnostic, he replied, “I think we invented God. So if I believe in God, and I do, it’s because I think I’m God.”

Notice his next move, **distortion**. The truth gets twisted. “**Has God said...**” When Jesus was in the wilderness the devil tempted Him by distorting the scriptures for his own selfish purposes. When someone quotes Mt. 7:1, “Do not judge lest you be judged,” they are hijacking Jesus’ words to support their own personal autonomy. A few verses later Jesus said, “A very healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit...you will recognize them by their fruits.” Sounds a little judgmental to me. When we have no objective values, tolerance for all values is the only value left.

Deception and distortion lead to **doubt** - The devil planted the seed of doubt in Eve. His strategy was obvious, to confuse her, to get her to wonder if she heard God right, to get her to question the motives of God and to think that His limitation was unloving. The devil will do everything possible to discredit God’s word. If he can cause you to question the authority of scripture, he can get you to question the goodness of God. That’s when doubt sets in. I don’t think God is going to give me what I want. I want a husband but the clock is ticking and I’m not sure He is going to deliver so I will go ahead and marry that unbelieving man. If he can get you to question the validity of Christ’s sacrifice he can keep you from the cross. If he can keep you from the cross, he can keep you away from the only remedy for sin.

Death and Destruction - woman in our church whose brother was accidentally shot and killed. The devil’s goal is to eliminate any semblance of faith.

This great conflict is spiritual in nature...v. 12. Paul is concerned that the Ephesians see their local situation in light of the bigger picture. We are not physical beings having a temporary spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a temporary physical experience. We are actors on a stage playing out a divine drama before heavenly beings. The greatest divide in our culture is not black vs. white, Republicans vs. Democrats or rich vs. poor but between those who set their minds on things above and those who set their minds on things below. Since our enemy is unseen we will have to learn to use invisible weapons, “divinely powerful” weapons.

Let's review the armor of God...Eph. 6:13-17

The first one Paul mentions in Ephesians 6 is the belt of truth. The six pieces of armor are not random. There is an order to them and the first piece of armor to put on is the belt of truth. Without the truth, none of the rest of the armor will be of any benefit. The belt is a picture of readiness. To be successful in warfare we must be prepared and unencumbered. You could not fight in typical middle-Eastern dress. Unless we gird our minds with truth we will stumble over the lies of the enemy. When you are under enemy attack your first step is to remember what is true. There are three things I know to be true that will provide a firm foundation in a flimsy age.

1. God's person is true. God is the author of truth so if you do not seek Him you will never know the truth because He is truth. The Bible often refers to God as "the God of truth" or "the one true God." 1 John 5:19-21...

Jesus said life can only be found in the one true God. John 17:3 says, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Jesus said, "I am the truth..." He didn't say, "I have the truth or I know the truth or I tell the truth. He doesn't even say, "I am A truth or even I am true." He said, "I am the truth."

There is no falsehood in God. "God can do anything." He cannot lie. That would be self-contradictory. God cannot lie.

2. God's words are true. If God is the embodiment of truth then every word out of His mouth is true. **Ps. 33:4 For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.**

Until we abide in the truth we will not be free from the devil's deception. Notice the progression in John 8:31-32, "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" These words are etched into the stone on the main building at the University of Texas. Free from what? Free from the devil's evil deception, distortion, doubt and destruction.

Notice the order of the passage. Many people want to know the truth before they settle down with Christianity. John says abide first, then you will "know." This past week I listened to a number of speakers some who love studying our culture. One of the men who has written on the purported exile of young people from the church made an interesting claim. He said the leading indicator of whether a young person who grows up in a Christian home will continue in the faith is their relationship with the Bible.

That's why we publish a Daily Prayer guide on The City...Life Together daily reading and prayer group on the City...696 people on that group.

3. God's promises are true. That's good news and bad news. Truth is often painful or at least inconvenient. In a culture that values pleasure and convenience over just about everything else, the truth Jesus brought falls hard on the ear. "Lay down your life, die to self, love your enemies, give your life away." These are not easy but they lead to life.

At the graveside I often speak of the good news and bad news of God's promises. **"The wages of sin is death** and we are gathered here today because God keeps His promises. But we do not grieve as those who have no hope because I have good news - God always keeps His promises. If the first half of the verse is verifiably true then trust the second half of the promise, **"the gift of God is eternal life."** That leads not to doubt but to confidence. "I go to prepare a place for you. If it were not so I would have told you."

Let me challenge you as we close, if you have never settled the issue of truth today is the day. Abide in the truth. Settle down and be at home with the truth. This book is true. This testimony is trustworthy. Think about it: the disciples followed a man who represented Himself as "the Truth." They followed a man who began over 70 statements in the N.T. with the words, "I tell you the truth." Is it conceivable that they would endure persecution for their commitment to the truth and be willing to die a gruesome death if it was all a big lie?

Don't wait to get your theology straight or you will lose the battle. When the crisis comes it's too late if you have no theology. You will lose the battle. You are unarmed in a war of competing truth claims. Settle down with the truth.

To those of you who have already done that, I would say, "Live the truth." We are not called to just believe the truth. We are called to live it out. We are God's ambassadors, His truth-tellers. Our job is not merely to give an explanation but to provide a demonstration of the truth.

Be firm in the center and soft around the edges. One of the least attractive qualities of Christian people is the perceived necessity of being right all the time. As a result, we become hard on the outside and soft in the middle. We go after people we have never met. I remember when the greatest threat to our way of life was "secular humanists." Many people had no idea what that meant and had never met one of those but we have to stop them. Secular does not mean the absence of belief. It means the contestability of belief. And that is what many Christians are uncomfortable with. Do you have an answer for same-sex attraction, gender dysphoria, homelessness, the refugee crisis? Bible verses for these topics are hard to come by. So we can afford to listen, even to those who are not from our tribe. Because there is one truth that is abundantly clear in the Bible. It is the transforming power of love. So love God, love one another, love your neighbor and yes, love even your enemies. Love may turn your enemy into a friend. This I know is true, "if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." So speak the truth in love and let's grow up into Him who is the Head of the church.

And, by all means, the next time a short, white man tells you he is a 6'5" Asian woman, feel free to tell him, "That's just not true."