

Moments *for* You

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Theme: Truth



“

If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and **THE TRUTH** will set you free.

John 8:31-32

”

PEOPLE OF TRUTH

We live in a culture of lies. The devil is the father of all lies and this world is filled with a web of lies. When it comes to life in general, people expect to be told lies. We anticipate it at the car dealership, in the world of sales, and certainly in the world of politics.

In 1988, Gary Hart was the man to beat in the presidential campaign. He was smart, charismatic, and he possessed a political savvy that enabled him to answer key questions with clarity. However, a story was told that he was committing adultery on his wife and it spread like wildfire. Gary Hart insisted that it was a lie. He even said the following, “Follow me around. I don’t care. I’m serious. If anybody wants to put a tail on me, go ahead. They’ll be very bored.” Sure enough, the media did follow him around and soon enough they found him with his mistress on a boat named, “Monkey Business.” Gary Hart was mixed up in a web of lies. Those lies ruined his chance to be president and left deep scars on his personal life.

In Jesus’ sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:33–37), we find Him spotlighting the loopholes of the Jews who would swear by all sorts of things other than God Himself in order to provide an opportunity to break their oath. They had arranged a system of deceit, filled with loopholes, in order to avoid breaking Leviticus 19:12 which reads, “You shall not swear by My name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.” So, they would swear by Heaven because that sounded spiritual. They would swear by the earth because

that sounded big. They would swear by Jerusalem because that sounded official. They would even swear by their own head, because that sounded sacred. It was all a scheme and Jesus knew it. So, He confronted that in His sermon and said, “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil” (Matthew 5:37).

One of the clearest marks of a Christian is that he or she is marked by truth. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6) and that the devil is the father of all lies (John 8:44). In a more sobering warning, Jesus stated the following, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36–37). The fact is, when we see a list of vile sinners such as murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, and idolaters—we likewise see liars included in that list of people who will not be welcomed into Heaven and who will be sent to Hell (Revelation 21:8).

Tell the truth. Be marked by truth. The only way this is possible is to have a life that is transformed by Jesus Christ. When you are born again, you have a new heart with new motives. Suddenly, your old deceitful loophole schemes violate your conscience in a way that they never did before. Living honestly will also spare you from many of the consequences of lying—ruined marriages, broken relationships, failed jobs, and a tarnished reputation. Submit to Jesus, walk in the light, and tell the truth for the glory of God.

—Josh Buice

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TRUTH?

In our world, the idea of ultimate truth—something that is true at all times in all places and has relevance for our lives—is about as extinct as the dinosaur. In fact, nearly three out of four Americans say there is no such thing as ultimate, or absolute, truth. And the numbers don't look much better among those who claim to follow Jesus.

In a society where ultimate truth is treated like a fairy tale, an outdated idea or even an insult to human intelligence, the motto of the day becomes, "WHATEVER!" Believe whatever you want. Do whatever seems best to you. Live for whatever brings you pleasure, as long as it doesn't hurt anyone. And of course, be tolerant. Don't try to tell anyone that their *whatever* is wrong.

But where does that leave us? If we have ultimate truth, it gives us both a way to explain the world around us and a basis for making decisions. Without it, we're alone. We're just eight billion organisms running around, bumping into each other. It's every man for himself. And we're without a purpose; if there's no true story of where we came from and why we're here, then there's nothing that really gives our lives meaning. Sounds a little depressing, huh? And maybe frightening.

The first rung on the ladder out of this "no-truth" hole is realizing that it's reasonable to desire truth. In fact, those who tell you it's useless or narrow-minded to believe in ultimate truth have more explaining to do than they can pull off. When someone says, "There is no such thing as absolute truth," that person is actually making a statement that he

or she believes to be absolutely true. Contradictory, isn't it?

And it's even reasonable to search for ultimate truth in God. There is a huge mound of evidence for Christianity, God, Jesus and the Bible. And based on this evidence, it's reasonable to believe that God reveals truth through revelation.

Where can we find revelation today? And what do we learn from it? The best source of revelation is God's word—that's right, the Bible! In the Bible, God gives us history lessons, unfolds His plan of salvation, and gives us guidelines for how to live our lives. The word *truth* appears more than 200 times in the Bible, because it holds the truth for all kinds of circumstances, and we can trust it for answers to all kinds of questions.

Truth is powerful. It brings life. It has been here since the beginning, and it still exists today. Truth is available to all who seek it in the person of Jesus Christ. Even though our society tells us that it's narrow-minded to believe in ultimate truth, there's lots of evidence that says we should run after it with all our hearts. Christ says the truth will set us free. And that promise is true for all time.

—Lindy Keffer, adapted

BECOMING TRUTHFUL

"Do not lie to one another" (Colossians 3:9).

A minister noticed a group of boys standing around a small stray dog. "What are you doing, boys?" "Telling lies," said one of the boys. "The one who tells the biggest lie gets the dog."

The minister was shocked. "Why, when I was your age," he said, "I never thought of telling a lie." The boys looked at one another, a little crestfallen. Finally one of them shrugged and said, "I guess he wins the dog."

Most of us would probably be offended if someone called us a liar or questioned our truthfulness. We'd say, "I know I have some problems, but lying is not one of them." But, be careful or you'll join that minister in lying about your truthfulness!

A SHARED STRUGGLE

The truth is, we *all* struggle constantly to be truthful, because our human default mode is to bend the truth to our own advantage. Think of some of the ways that we can easily fall into lying. There's the *half-truth*. You tell the truth as far as you go, but you just don't tell the whole truth, so that you convey a false impression. Similar to the half-truth is the *lie of omission*, which tempts us all at tax season. You "forget" to report extra cash income you earned.

Then there's *exaggeration*—you stretch the truth a bit to make yourself look better or worse than you really are. There are so-called *white lies*, little untruths that supposedly don't hurt anyone. A pastor whose family couldn't stand fruitcake told the lady who gave them one, "Fruitcake like that doesn't last long around our house!" There are *lies to cover for someone else*, perhaps your boss or an alcoholic family member.

As Christians, we easily fall into lies of *hypocrisy*, where we try to make others think that we are more spiritual than we really are. Then there are *silent lies*, where someone says something complimentary about you that isn't true, but you let it go by without correcting it. There are *evasive lies*, where you change the subject without answering the question, but you leave a false impression.

ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS?

The entire Bible makes it plain that we must be truthful. But that doesn't mean we must share all of our

thoughts or be brutally honest. We must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8), which implies that we should not broadcast everything we know about someone.

And, the Bible acknowledges that there are rare ethical dilemmas, such as the Hebrew midwives lying to protect the Hebrew baby boys from Pharaoh's murderous edict (Exodus 1:15–22), or Rahab lying to protect the Hebrew spies (Joshua 2:4–6). When the Lord told Samuel to anoint David as king, Samuel was afraid that King Saul would kill him. So the Lord told Samuel to tell David's family that he had come to offer a sacrifice, which he did, although it wasn't his real reason for coming (1 Samuel 16:1–5). But those kinds of situations are infrequent.

What Paul says hits us all: "Do not lie to one another." We should not dodge the plain application of that! Our God is the God of truth; as His people, we must speak the truth in love, and be honest before God in all our behavior.

WHY SHOULD I BE TRUTHFUL?

Christians must be truthful to be like our Savior, who is the truth. If we're in Him, members of His body, then we must represent Him by being truthful. In Colossians 3, Paul went on to tell his readers, "you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self" (Colossians 3:9–10). The picture Paul uses is that we have laid aside this old man as you would take off dirty clothes, and we have put on the new man, which refers to all that we now are in Christ.

The new man which we have put on "is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:10). Paul is referring to Genesis 1:27, where God created

Adam and Eve in His own image. But that image was marred by their fall into sin. But Christ is the new Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45–49), creating a new people through the new birth (John 1:12–13). As Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:6–7), “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” The flesh has no ability to resurrect itself from spiritual death. The Spirit of God must cause us to be born again (1 Peter 1:3).

HOW CAN I BE TRUTHFUL?

Becoming a Christian and living as a Christian is not a moral improvement project, where you resolve to turn over a new leaf. It requires nothing less than God powerfully imparting new life to you. Without that new life, you are in the flesh (or the old man), and Paul says (Romans 8:8), “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” So if you have never repented of your sins and trusted in Christ and His death on the cross to save you, you must begin there. To put it another way, a life of truthfulness is not the result of determining to become truthful; it is the fruit of the new man. This “new man” is renewed day by day as we engage with God’s word, which is the truth (John 17:17). His word sanctifies and revives us (Psalm 19:7–14). It takes time to grow the fruit of righteousness, which includes truthfulness. But it won’t happen if you’re not feeding on God’s word.

All relationships depend on the truth. You can’t know God and be rightly related to Him if you ignore the truth about who He is or the truth about who you are, as revealed in His word. He is holy and we all have sinned. But He offers forgiveness of

all our sins when we trust in Christ (Colossians 1:14; 2:13). When you come to know and believe the truth about God, you enter into a personal relationship with Him.

So I ask, “Are you walking truthfully before God?” He knows everything about you, of course. But you must walk in the light with Him, opening all of your life to Him. You have to open all your dirty closets to Him for cleaning! Hiding your sin from God is a sure way to drift away from Him. And I ask, “Are you walking truthfully with your family and with the family of God?” It’s easier to be superficial and hide behind a mask. It’s easier not to clear up relational problems by going to the person and speaking the truth in love. But if we don’t make the effort to relate truthfully, we don’t reflect the new man which we’ve put on in Christ. —Steven J. Cole, condensed

OBEYING THE TRUTH

“You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Galatians 5:7)

I don’t know if you’ve thought of it this way, but the gospel is a command. It is not a suggestion, it is not God sharing with you, it is God commanding you. The gospel calls for obedience.

In the sixth chapter of Acts we see an illustration of this: “The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). An act of confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is an act of obedience to the gospel.

This kind of language continues in the book of Romans. Those who are ungodly “do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness” (Romans 2:8).

But when speaking of believers, Paul says: “thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed” (Romans 6:17).

We also read that judgment will fall on the disobedient: “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–8). God is seeking the obedience of faith, obedience to the truth, obedience to the gospel.

In 2 Corinthians 10 it says essentially that when we come to preach the gospel to those that are held captive by Satan, the goal is to set them free from their old life and bring every thought captive to Christ. We are calling people to obedience, because obedience to the truth leads to spiritual blessing. Peter wrote that believers have “purified your souls by your obedience to the truth” (1 Peter 1:22).

—John MacArthur, adapted

WAY, TRUTH, LIFE

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’” (John 14:6).

CHRIST AS THE WAY

The idea of life being a journey is as old as human speech. In the fifth chapter of our Bibles we are told that “Enoch walked with God” (Genesis 5:22). The long and winding path of the Israelites through the desert created an enduring metaphor for the Christian’s experience from the cross to the promised rest. Isaiah anticipated the building of a highway which would be called the way of holiness, reserved solely for the ransomed of

the Lord on their way to Zion (Isaiah 35:8–10). But the prophet never dreamed that God Himself would stoop to become the path.

CHRIST AS THE TRUTH

Christ is more than a teacher, He is the Truth of God. All truth is embodied in Him. All the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. To know Christ is to know the truth in its most complete, most convenient, and most accessible form. If you know Christ intimately and fully, even if you know nothing else, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

Many true things may be said about Christ, but we are not saved by truths *about* Him, but by *Christ Himself*, who is the Truth—

- Not the *fact* that Jesus died, but the *Person* of Him who died for our sins.
- Not the *fact* that Jesus lay in the grave, but the blessed *Man* Himself, who lay there for me.
- Not the *facts* of His resurrection and ascension, but the *One* who has achieved a victory which sets me free from sin and death.

You may accept truths about Christ, as you would any well-authenticated historical facts, but you will not be benefited or saved until you have come to rest your trust in the Savior Himself.

CHRIST AS THE LIFE

Knowing Christ leads to life: “This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). It was into a world of death that the Son of God came. Even the best of mankind was dead in trespasses and sins. Then the Son of God brought life from the Eternal Throne. His words were spirit and life: He was Himself the Resurrection and the Life. “My

sheep hear My voice,” He said, and “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish” (John 10:27–28).

If you are wanting life, and life more abundantly, you must have Christ. Do not seek *it*, but *Him*—not the stream, but the fountain; not the word, but the speaker; not the fruit, but the tree. If you have Christ, you have life. “Whoever has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12).

—F. B. Meyer, adapted

THE COST OF TRUTH

“Buy truth, and do not sell it” (Proverbs 23:23).

To buy the truth implies that there is a price we must pay. What sort of things must we be willing to give up?

PRIDE

To buy the truth often means admitting that we were wrong. Therefore, we need humility when we engage in a study of the Scriptures. James said that we are supposed to receive the word “with meekness” (James 1:21). But not only must we not take pride in our own limited understanding, we are not to take pride in traditions, preachers, churches, etc. It could be that the traditions in which we take pride are contrary to God’s word and render our worship vain (Matthew 15:6–9). It might be that the preachers in which we place our trust are in error and need to be corrected (Acts 18:24–26; Galatians 2:11–14). Or perhaps the church with which we worship has “the reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). In every way, we must humbly submit to the will of God and conform our beliefs, teachings, and practices to the truth that we find in the Scriptures.

TIME AND EFFORT

While God’s word is understandable (Ephesians 3:4), we are not born

with an understanding of it. We must *study* so that we are “rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). This must be a continual process in which we grow and mature in our understanding of the will of God. We must “give attention to reading” (1 Timothy 4:13, NKJV) so that we might “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). As the noble-minded Bereans, we should study the Scriptures daily so that we might develop an understanding of God’s word (Acts 17:11). We must be willing to devote the time and effort necessary to learn the truth.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Sadly, buying the truth often puts one at odds with others who refuse to accept the truth themselves. Jesus warned His apostles that the world would hate them (John 15:18–19). Peter warned Christians to “not be surprised at the fiery trial” which was going to come upon them (1 Peter 4:12). This trouble to which he referred was not the general hardships of life that all people must endure. Instead, they were going to suffer “as a Christian” (1 Peter 4:16). Jesus even warned that the opposition we face for following Him will sometimes come from those who are closest to us. “A person’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matthew 10:36). We may have to sacrifice certain relationships in this life for the sake of the truth.

DO NOT SELL THE TRUTH

To sell the truth is to compromise it or even abandon it altogether. Why do some choose to do this? Jesus gives us an answer in the following passage: “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For

the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matthew 7:13–14).

Jesus says that the way of error is *easier* and *more popular* than the way of truth. Sadly, many are short-sighted and choose the ease and popularity of the broad way. Peter said that one who does not continue to grow as they should is “so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins” (2 Peter 1:9). We must not sell the truth—either through compromise or outright abandonment of it.

Only the truth found in the Scriptures is able to provide us with “wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23) in things pertaining to God. Let us always remember the value of truth and be committed to doing what is necessary in order to obtain it.

—Andy Sochor

TRUTH AND LOVE

“*Speaking the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15).

Thank God there are those in the contemporary church who are determined at all costs to defend and uphold God’s revealed truth. But sometimes they are conspicuously lacking in love. When they think they smell heresy, their nose begins to twitch, their muscles ripple, and the light of battle enters their eye. They seem to enjoy nothing more than a fight.

Others make the opposite mistake. They are determined at all costs to maintain and exhibit brotherly love, but in order to do so are prepared even to sacrifice the central truths of revelation. Both these tendencies are unbalanced and unbiblical. Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth. The apostle calls us to hold the two together,

which should not be difficult for Spirit-filled believers, since the Holy Spirit is Himself “the Spirit of truth” (John 15:26) and His firstfruit is “love” (Galatians 5:22). There is no other route than this to a fully mature Christian unity.

—John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*

TRUTH IS LIBERATING

“*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32).

A Christian friend shared several problems with me over the phone. He was particularly concerned about his frustration and anger. But talking seemed to help. The next day he sent this message to me: “After our talk, I read my Bible notes and found several pages that spoke to me. But what helped me most was the realization that Christianity really is the truth. I suppose that for a Christian this should be obvious. But for me it was a fresh revelation that Jesus in fact is the Son of God and He loves me.” He added, “Just knowing the truth was very liberating. Suddenly, all the frustration and anger left me.”

Writer Os Guinness tells about a young, searching Christian who exclaimed, “I always knew the Christian faith was true, but I never realized it was *this* true!”

As these believers searched for greater understanding of the gospel, they rediscovered what Jesus promised: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Do you need a fresh realization of truth in your life? Then spend time searching the Scriptures (the written truth), and earnestly seek Jesus Christ (the living truth). Soon the old, familiar truth of Jesus and His love will become refreshingly new to you and will make you free indeed.

—Joanie Yoder, *Our Daily Bread*