

Simple Solutions to Complex Problems

As we meet here together today, we are a long way from being clones. Some of us are taller; some are shorter. We like different foods and recreations, and we have different skills. Some have many children, and some have no children. One of the things we all have in common, however, is the fact that we all have problems. One housewife said, "I have so many problems that if something terrible happened to me it would be at least two weeks before I could get around to worrying about it."

It's not just the number of problems that we have. It is the complexity of those problems and of the lives that we live that makes things more difficult. We live in an increasingly complex world, but the answers to our problems, from a spiritual perspective, are usually simple.

We saw last week that if I am going to be an overcomer in life, I must first of all belong to the right family. I must choose to belong to the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Second, I must sow the right seeds in my life because we live in a cause and effect world. That means my life will be the result of the choices that I make. In biblical terminology, whatever I sow, I will reap. The third and last thing we saw last week was the fact that I must be consistent in what I do. It is not enough that I take my spiritual life seriously for a week or for a month, it is a lifetime commitment.

These are not hard things, and in the light of the sometimes overwhelming problems we face, these things don't seem like they would make the difference we need, but they do. The reason they do is this is God's world, and it operates on spiritual laws. When I follow those things, things work. Today, I want to give you another simple truth that will help you to overcome the complex problems in your life. I must be a person who knows and lives by God's truth.

WHAT IS TRUTH

The belief in truth is an admission of the existence of God. If there is no God, then maybe there is no truth. That's because none of us is perfect, so how can we say your idea is better than my idea or that my idea is better than your idea? But if there is a God who created all things and all people, then He becomes the one and only source of all truth. Truth is reality as God declares it and not what it seems to be or what we make it. John Calvin said of God that "not a particle of light, or wisdom, or justice, or power, or rectitude, or genuine truth, will anywhere be found, which does not flow from him, and of which he is not the cause."

Moses described God as "a God of truth" (Deuteronomy 32:4). If we think that we can seek Him and love Him without seeking and loving truth, we are very mistaken. We can't have a relationship with God except on the basis of the truth about Him.

WHAT IS TRUTH LIKE?

1. TRUTH IS UNCHANGING

Truth is that which, when you stop believing in it, it doesn't go away. You can say it is not there, but it is there. You can say it might be there or that it is sometimes there, but in actuality, it is always there. You can't wish it away or philosophize it away. It just is.

There are many physical laws that we would all agree upon is being truth. For example, we all know that human beings are born, and human beings die. We may not like that, but that is truth, and it does not change. What we have to understand is the fact that moral and spiritual truth is just as unchanging as physical truth. All truth by its nature is unchanging.

2. TRUTH IS ABSOLUTE

Previous generations have argued as to what the truth is. As strange as it is, we now live in a time when many people argue that there is no truth. Relativism tells us that what is truth for you may not be truth for me and vice versa. That may be an interesting philosophy to spend your time thinking about, but it does not work. Is it okay for terrorists around the world to murder people in the name of their cause? If relativism is correct, then maybe it is okay for them to murder the innocent. How can I say that it is not if there is no absolute basis for truth?

The city of Moralville once had a great football team called the Absolutes. The Absolutes were known for their precision, adherence to the rules, and rigorous work to achieve peak performance. The people of Moralville loved their famous team and cheered them on at every turn.

Over the years, however, the people of Moralville began to have a change of heart. They started questioning Coach Correct's decisions. "He's too black and white" they would complain. Soon the questioning turned to public disapproval. The sports writers of the local paper featured politically-correct editorials on "*Playing by Your Own Rules*". The public became outraged and, after much pressure, Coach Correct resigned. One day an outsider visited. He was a new man with fresh ideas and up-to-date training. It was not long before this outsider, Mr. Nocertain, was hired as the coach.

Coach Nocertain proposed a list of changes that would bring the Absolute franchise up to speed with the modern times. First, he suggested a change in the names and uniforms. Instead of the Absolutes, the team was to be called the Relatives, and, instead of the traditional black and white jerseys, they were to wear a variety of colors and designs. The biggest suggested change was to scrap the old Rule Book and instead allow the players to show their personality on the field without being hindered by Somebody else's rules.

The next game was a memorable one. Coach Nocertain immediately employed his new offensive strategy. The team lined up in what seemed to be a circle near the ball, because the players were allowed to line up however they felt led. One man in a blue and plaid jersey was on the other side of the line of scrimmage, so the refs blew a whistle. The team looked at the coach, who had a rather blank look on his face. "What does this mean?" he wondered. "Was it time for lunch? Why was this striped guy on the field anyway, and with a whistle?"

Well, they ironed out the mishap and hiked the ball. The offensive lineman stepped aside when he saw the defenders charging at him. Who wants to get hit by a 300 pound mass anyway? The quarterback was pounded into the dirt and carried away on a stretcher.

The second string quarterback was put in the game. The ball was hiked, and the ball was miraculously caught just a few yards from the end zone. The players rejoiced and demanded that points be added to the scoreboard. The officials reminded them that no points could be awarded until they entered the end zone. At this, Coach Nocertain started to get fumed, "Who are you guys anyway? What right do you have to tell my team where the end zone is? Just because your end zone is over there doesn't mean that's true for everybody!"

The Relatives huddled up. "OK, guys. Everybody know what you want to do? Let's go!" The visitors hiked the ball again and as they did so the Relatives began running in every direction. Some jumped into the stands to find their families who had come to watch the game. Some took off their shirts and laid down on the 50 yard line. A few devoted players chased the ball around the field until they were tired out. The game turned to utter chaos. And that is what you have when there are no absolutes-chaos.

In contrast, the Bible is a book of absolutes. When God speaks, what He says is not optional-it is law.

Psalm 33:6-9, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."

WHAT WILL TRUTH DO?

1. TRUTH WILL GUIDE YOUR LIFE

Psalm 119: 133 Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

Psalm 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding

Every day we are faced with decisions, some which can affect us for the rest of our lives. How can we know we are making the right ones? You need a map to direct you. Suppose we are trying to find our way to Minute Maid Park down town Houston, but the map we have is actually one of Dallas. If the map we have is the wrong map, we will experience great frustration trying to get there. After having wandered around for about 3 hours, someone may tell us what we need is to have a positive attitude. The problem is that without the right map, you are never make it to Minute Maid Park, no matter how good your attitude is. We may drive around the rest of the day and night with a smile on our face, but we are not going to get to the park. The same is true in life. Having a good attitude is important, but if we do not have the proper map, we're not going to get where we need to go. The Bible is our map. It doesn't just show us the way to heaven, it shows us how to live while we are on our way to heaven.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

2. TRUTH WILL PROTECT ME FROM HARM

Judges 21:25 says, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

That's the way it is when there is no objective standard. BELIEF DETERMINES BEHAVIOR. For example, one study was done on Christian young people to determine the effects o relativism on their lives. The study indicated that when the youth do not accept an objective standard of truth, they become

- _ 36 percent more likely to lie to their parents;
- _ 48 percent more likely to cheat on an exam;
- _ 200 percent more likely to try to physically hurt someone;
- _ 200 percent more likely to watch a pornographic film;
- _ 200 percent more likely to get drunk;
- _ 225 percent more likely to steal;
- _ 300 percent more likely to use illegal drugs;
- _ 600 percent more likely to attempt suicide!

Relativistic morality is a morality based upon majority opinion. It is a morality based upon what "seems right" to the most people. BUT God says:

*"There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof leads to... death."
(Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25)*

3. TRUTH WILL GIVE FREEDOM TO MY LIFE

John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Truth is often compared to light. There are many things you can do in the light that you would not be able to do in the darkness. A flashlight can give you a lot of freedom when you are walking through a dark house. Head lights on your car will give you a lot of freedom when you are driving down a dark road. If you want to be free in life, you have to know the truth of God's Word. That makes sense when you understand that the problems in this world are the result of untruths. It all began in the garden when Satan told the first couple a lie, and they believed it. If untruth is the problem, then truth is the answer. God wants you to know the truth about yourself, about others and about himself. And when you know those truths and live by them, they set you free.

4. TRUTH WILL GIVE YOU A PASSION FOR LIFE

A passion for life in any area comes because you really believe something to be true. If you watch people who are working in political campaigns in order to elect their candidate, they are usually very passionate about their cause. They are people who sacrifice long hours, money and energy and wish they could do more. Why? Because they really believe their candidate will make a difference, and what they believe is translated into passion.

If that is true of people working in the political world, how much more true should be of us who know the truth of God's Word. The message in Scripture is the best news the world has ever known because it is God's news. As you read the record of the early church, you find people whose hearts are burning with passion because they believed that Jesus was the Christ. If the truth that you hear at church week after week goes beyond your intellect and hits your heart, the result will be passion. Instead of going through monotonous, routine days, your life will be filled with meaning as you wait in expectation for what God is going to do for you and through you.

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO THE TRUTH?

1. Give priority time to learning the truth

How important the truth is to you will not be proven by what you say about it. How important the truth is to you will be proven by what you do with it. If you seldom or never have time to read and study the truth of the Word of God, it is because other things are more important. It can't be any other way because you only have so much time in your life, and you choose to leave out that which is least important to you.

2. Never become comfortable in living by untruths

To 1 degree or another, we all grew up in environments that were flawed. Changing your life's style from what you know and have grown up with is not an easy thing. It takes determination and a great deal of dependence upon God to do through you what you can not do yourself. It is a lot easier just to go with the flow of what you know. Many people are illustrated by a song sung by Peter Pan.

Peter Pan's song goes like this: "I won't grow up. Not a penny will I pinch. I will never grow a mustache or a fraction of an inch. 'Cause growing up is awfuller than all the awful things that ever were. I will never grow up, never grow up, never grow up, not me!"

For some of us, that is our song because we do not want to face the next stage of spiritual growth in life. We are comfortable where we are. There was a group of Peter Pans in the New Testament. Listen to how the author of the Letter to the Hebrews feels about growing up in Christ, or more accurately, the lack of growing up in faith.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil". -- Hebrews 5:12-14

You will never grow in the truth until you commit yourself to obeying it. The Peter Pan mentality will not get you where you need to be spiritually. You have to obey the truth. Obey it when you understand it, and obey it when you do not. Just obey.

3. Meditate on the application of the truth

As you prayerfully meditate on the truth, the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart and that experience of God speaking to you should be the most precious thing in your life. More than anything else in your life, you should long for a message from God.

Most of us have seen a maze that has all kinds of turns, new beginnings and ends. Sometimes it seems as though we are living in one of those mazes. About the time things seem to be working out, we come to another dead end, and we don't know which way to turn. Should we go right, or should we go left? The truth of God's Word will guide you through all of those difficult choices you have to make. It provides simple answers to complex problems.