

What is Truth?
(Tidings Article – June Issue)
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Public Witness and Social Concerns, CABC/CBM
April 26, 2003

I have always been fascinated by the concept of truth. No matter where I am, whether in a church setting, at a movie theatre, reading a novel or scripture, references to truth leap off the page and capture my attention. I have, for as long as I can remember, been motivated, inspired, even driven, by a search for truth.

Actually, I think that God created humanity with an insatiable appetite for truth. Satan understood this when he tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God in the Garden of Eden. He enticed them to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by promising them that they would be like God, having both knowledge and wisdom. Ironically, when they tried to grasp these qualities, they eluded them and they were left, not only empty-handed, but deprived of innocence and estranged from their Creator.

When Jesus was brought for questioning to Pilate, the Roman governor, Jesus said: “for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37). Pilate, perhaps reflecting the cynicism of secular authority, posed a question which is still being asked by secular authorities today: “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Unfortunately, neither Pilate nor secular authorities today seem to be free to honestly seek the answer to that question.

As He was teaching His disciples, Jesus told them: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 13:6a). He also said: “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Free from what? What is it that holds us captive?

Most Christians agree that there is a truth which transcends human authority – an absolute basis for determining what is right and wrong. We generally agree that Scripture is the written account of God’s truth – the record of the Word become flesh – the all sufficient basis of our faith and practice. We diligently search for truth – carefully comparing translations and cross references – joining the dots as we wind our way through our favorite texts. But just when we are sure that we have captured truth and have it firmly within our grasp, a different perspective or new evidence challenges our thinking. We discover that having faith in Christ is not the end of the search for truth but the entry point of a journey as we grow in our knowledge and love for Him.

There is absolute truth. It is found in Jesus and through walking with Him day by day. To the extent that we know Him, we know truth. But knowing who Jesus is, knowing about Jesus, even knowing and accepting His sacrifice for our sins – these are but baby steps in our journey. The disciples walked with Jesus, face to face, for three years – they watched Him perform miracles and live and die according to God’s plan. But it wasn’t until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of truth! - that they really understood who Jesus is. What about us?

Sometimes I think I have it figured out. I have a moment when I feel that I am seeing clearly. It’s a great feeling. But then reality intrudes and I realize that I must continue seeking.

Do you remember the Rubix cube? It was a popular 3-D puzzle back in the ‘80s (or was it the ‘70s?). The Rubix cube is a multi-colored cube with 9 small squares on each side. The challenge is to get the same color squares lined up on each side. I don’t know anyone who could solve the Rubix cube simply by trial and error. As I recall, it was pretty easy to get one side lined up correctly, maybe even two or three

sides. But getting all six sides lined up at the same time – that was virtually impossible without the formula.

Here's the thing – as we develop and express biblical positions on social and moral issues, we need to recognize that our ability to grasp truth on all sides simultaneously is limited – it develops with spiritual maturity but is not absolute. Maybe this is what so frustrated the religious leaders as they followed Jesus around the Judean countryside. He seemed to uphold their teachings in some areas but violated them in others. They found Jesus inconsistent and therefore irritating. The Jewish law prescribed stoning of the woman caught in adultery – it seemed pretty straightforward - but He refused to enact the punishment. Why? It seems there were other issues and other principles which did not line up. Truth is very complex.

When God created the earth and humanity, all of the sides of the cube were lined up, perfectly balanced. Then, when sin entered the world and corrupted human thought and behavior, the cube became confused, a mosaic of disjointed color. The church and individual Christians in society today long to see the cube solved – to return to the perfect, balanced state God intended. We pray earnestly and even wistfully, “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”.

As we seek to be instruments of God's righteousness, may we be conscious that the truth Jesus embodies is both absolute and, from our earthly human vantage point, sometimes absolutely confusing!