

T.E.A.C.H.

Christian
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Department

Confusion or Completion?

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In our postmodern age truth is consistently and wrongly defined as a matter of one's personal preference or perspective. Relativism suggests that truth is determined for oneself and is therefore unique and different for each individual. This line of thought is drawing a very pronounced chasm between those who hold to a convictional belief of absolute truth and those who are champions of relativism.

A century ago the church had the public's trust and admiration. It was allowed to speak with an agreed upon authority. Even if it did not convert every unbeliever, the church exercised a formidable influence on morals with a clear delineation of right and wrong. Today the world has joined Pilate, maybe the first postmodernist, in asking: "*Truth, what is truth?*"

The postmodern world we are a part of is flooded with doubt and skepticism. People resist absolute claims from any source. In his book, *Losing Our Virtue*, David Wells writes, "*This is the first time a civilization has existed that, to a significant extent, does*

not believe in objective right and wrong."

Since the Fall of Adam and Eve mankind has struggled to grasp and maintain an accurate perception of reality. The guilt and condemnation experienced as a result of their disobedience caused Adam and Eve to try to hide from God. It is obvious that after the Fall their entire perception of reality had drastically changed. When Adam and Eve sinned, their minds were robbed of the true knowledge of God.

They had known God by being with Him. They understood truth by being in the presence of Truth Himself. When they sinned and were banished from the garden, Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God and the knowledge of truth which was so intrinsic to that relationship.

The truth is that only when we see things in the light of God, do we see things accurately, as they actually are. It is only when we see things in the light of God that we see what is really important and what isn't. Ambition, pres-

Special points of interest:

- *Without a solid grasp on the truth, men, women, boys and girls are vulnerable to all sorts of deceptions, fabrications and distortions of reality.*
- *Most people struggle with trying to control their actions which is often fruitless.*
- *When you believe something other than the truth your behavior will always be faulty.*

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tige, and money all have their devotees but they are woefully inadequate to build a life upon. The Bible reveals that authentic relationships with God and people are the only things with the strength of eternity under girding them.

Take Through

When absolute truth is abandoned people don't know where to look or what to trust in so their skepticism, by default, leaves them trusting nothing. This is fueling an enormous and pervasive heart hunger that has found people frantically looking for something that will truly satisfy their hearts and complete their lives. Our postmodern world is tired of debates, empty words, and endless searches. They want a spiritual encounter that is so transcendent, so real, so genuine, so life changing and heart satisfying that it leaves them with a deep, settled peace that they have in fact finally experienced the Truth firsthand.

The church today is surrounded with people who want to experience God, who want to believe deeply, freshly, and personally the Truth. This is a world longing for the Word to be made flesh. The world is asking the church for living proof that the message we preach and teach is real. They want to know where is the love of God we talk about? The changed lives? The selfless giving? The good works?

Real living is convincing. That must be why God sent His only begotten Son to be His love letter to a lost world. "The Word"—logos in the Greek—"became flesh" (John 1:14). Through the incarnation God was announcing to the world that the true knowledge of God, which can only be discovered in an intimate relationship with Him, is now available through God in the flesh—Jesus. Jesus was shown to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life the world longed for.

Will they see Jesus revealed in your heart and life? Will they hear about Him through your witness? Will they become convinced that He is real because you are real? If we represent well Truth incarnate, (if Jesus is alive in and through us), the world will come to know the Truth and He will set them free to live lives of wholeness and satisfaction for His glory.

Without Him, confusion will reign but with Him the completion our hearts long for will be experienced.

Resources for Sunday School Superintendents

Mike Holbrook



"Where can I find resources as a Sunday School Superintendent?" It is a good question because for many years it did seem that there wasn't new material coming out to help in the leadership of the Sunday School. However, it seems that in recent years and months the Sunday School has become more of a hot item and finally some great materials are out there for us to use. I would like to share some of those materials with you and trust you can get your hands on some of them.

First let me remind you that you always have the C.E. Lending Library provided by our Christian Education Department. This is one of the most powerful tools available to you and I encourage you to tap into this wonderful provision. You can contact Karen Hughes at 937-695-0025 to find out and order these many resources. Following will be a list of some of the helps I have passed on to our Superintendent.

1. **Reach Everyone You Teach**
By: Rosann Englebretson and Marlene LeFever
2. **Becoming A Treasured Teacher**
By: Jody Capchart
3. **Sunday School Ministry**
By: Evangelical Training Association
4. **How To Have A Great Sunday School**
By: Wes and, Shirley Haystead
5. **Sunday School Smart Pages**
By: Wes & Shirley Haystead
6. **Sunday School Promo Pages**
By: Wes & Shirley Haystead
7. **Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything At Church and How to Fix It**
By Thom & Joani Schutz
8. **Teaching To Influence Lives** By Stan Toler and Elmer Towns (This is a package program of cassette tapes and workbooks with overhead and PowerPoint provided. This is provided by the Church Growth Institute and the C.E. Lending Library also has it.

I trust these few resources will help us to promote the Sunday School and allow us to extend our outreach and grow to the glory of God. If I can be of service to you please call at 740-474-2250 or write to Mike Holbrook 436 E. Ohio Street, Circleville, Ohio 43113. My e-mail is holbie@dragonbbs.com. Know we are praying for you and the success of your Sunday School. May God bless you as we continue to build the Kingdom of God together.

Mike Holbrook

What is Truth?

Jim Pollard

John 8:38 records Pilates poignant question, "What is truth?", as Jesus speaks of kingdom business and the fact that He is come to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel. The heart of the matter for a disciple or learner of Christ is that we can be a life-long learner through our successes and our failures.



David C. McCasland tells about the Senior Professional Golfers Association being the "second chance tour". Sportswriter Jack Cavanaugh says, "In no other sport does and athlete who never made it to world-class status in his prime get a second chance in middle age to prove himself and amass riches that he could only dream of in his 20's, 30's or 40's." (Our Daily Bread, Mar., Apr., May 2001).

The prepositional question is, "Are you looking for the truth of a second chance"? Coming on the heels of this question is a reactive myth that if you once miss "God's Best" or fail for the Lord in some way, you can never render gold medal service to God. What a trap of despair to believe there is no healing, reclamation, reconciliation or learning for us after we have failed or felt to let down after some great success. We would do well to consult I Kings 19:1-8 to see how Elijah worked through his despair after great success.

Hebrews 11 gives us a second chance Hall of Fame of individuals who failed or overcame great obstacles to come back strong for God. These champions of faith exhibited God's grace and the epitome of "Principled Love and Truth."

In Theology and Experience: A Reappraisal of John Wesley's Theology. William James Stuart notes "there appears to be three coinciding and well marked periods in the religious development of Wesley. These three "States" look like this:

| | | |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| The Natural Man | "The natural man has neither faith nor love; one that is awakened, fear with love." | Birth to 1725 |
| The Legal Man- | "...a babe in Christ, love and fear- | 1725 to 1738, Age 22. |
| The Evangelical Man | "...a father in Christ, love without fear." | 1738 on, age 34 yrs. and 11 mths. |

The categories natural, legal and evangelical man form the main themes in Wesley's 1739 sermon, "On the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption." The descriptions of the categories are from his comments on I John 4:18 in his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament, published in 1754. In those comments, Wesley uses the language of Johannes A. Bengel, "No faith, fear, fear and faith, and love without fear." But the progressive steps from natural to awakened, then babe, then father, appear to be Wesley's own language.

The implication of these truths is that God the Holy Spirit works with us and in us in progressive and continuous way saving, sanctifying and continually developing us for His glory and honor.

Have you experienced a failure or a success lately? Please know that the grace of Jesus Christ is working in you to perfect a life-long learning experience.

Jim Pollard



The Complete Guide to Starting and Evaluating a Children's Ministry

This resource consists of a notebook, cassette tapes, planning, teaching helps, and forms/samples. by Herb Owen



New Community Willow Creek Small Group Bible Studies

- Live Wisely*—James - Six Lessons
- Discover the New You* - Colossians - Six Lessons
- Journey toward God* - Exodus - Six Lessons
- Stand Strong* - 1 Peter - Six Lessons
- Build Community* - Acts - Six Lessons
- Find Freedom* - Romans - Six Lessons
- Love each Other* - 1 John - Six Lessons
- Run the Race* - Philippians - Six Les

The Power of Truth in an Unbelieving Age



Christian parents, teachers, and preachers know that it is tough to teach truth in a world that no longer grasps such a concept. For increasing numbers of people truth determined by one one's individual background, life experiences, personality, and opinion. In other words, truth has become a very subjective thing. We often hear preachers and theologians lamenting that truth is no longer objective (based on something or someone outside us) and absolute (true for everyone, everywhere, and every time). Each person decides for themselves what is true. Truths are chosen from a smorgasbord of ideas like favorite snacks at a party, all on the basis of personal taste. This is indeed a frustrating and even frightening matter for us.

Perhaps all is not lost nor is it hopeless for the Christian. Remember that both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) reflect that God's people have long been surrounded by pluralism and uncertainty, yet have tenaciously maintained their declarations (of, Thus saith the Lord. . .) and their families (of, I believe in). We still have a firm grip on truths based on what the Bible says. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures has preserved them and providentially overseen the passing on of their claims. We are now a part of that task, to pass them on to the next generation with clarity and confidence. Here are a couple of suggestions as we fill this critical role.

1. Truth comes as (and is centered in) a Person. The OT reveals truth about God and His work in this world. He is different than those gods worshipped by Israel's neighbors. He is unique because He is true. In the OT the statement, "God is true" refers to his reliability and trustworthiness. He can be counted on. It is not too difficult to see how we move from the idea that the Person is true to the idea that what He says is true. The truthfulness of a statement is first based on the character of the One who said it. Since He is trustworthy then His word is true. In fact, the Bible says, "Let God be true and every man a liar." Obviously He alone determines what is true and what is not true.

As the biblical story unfolds we find that ultimately Jesus, the Son of God is the climax of truth. In Him alone there is truth enough to redeem the whole world for His is "the way, the truth, and the life" indeed! Yes, truth centers in Him for all other biblical truth that precedes or follows His earthly coming, explains it's meaning and expounds it's significance for us.

2. With this in mind, learn to appreciate the surprising unity of the Bible's message. Often this is missed because of the large volume of Scripture and the lengthy period of time covered within it but these features should actually confirm it are maintained throughout and are a part of the grand finale of God's purposes. Also, at the climax of the unfolding drama of the Bible is the record of the death of Christ on a cross, and both the Gospel writers and Epistle writers claim that this death of Christ is for our sins. This event is followed three days later with the declaration that Jesus rose bodily from the grave. (Let me remind you that the Scriptures clearly suggest that these claims of creation, crucifixion for sins, and bodily resurrection are true and are to be believed! It sort-of gives you an idea of what it means to be a believer—one who embraces God's truth-claims). I know that many people say it isn't true. It can't be true. It doesn't make sense. I have come to the conclusion that apart from the Bible's truth (especially the core Christ's crucifixion and resurrection for our salvation) nothing else makes sense! Not our origin nor our destiny and not anything in between the joy and sadness, the laughter and tears, the hope and the disappointment, the accomplishments and the failures, it all makes no sense without the part that really matters.

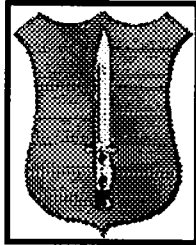


If the Bible were not true, then we would be victims of the uncertainty and confusion of the world around us. But we have truth, truth to hear, believe, apply and share. Truth that exists not only as facts and information but as a living and personal Christ. What a privilege to know and to share it in some fashion! Doesn't it make sense that in a world like ours a clear and confident voice of truth will come like refreshing water to weary hearts and minds? To those who teach our children (both young and old) you have some solid convictions about the basic truth-claims of Scripture. You are critical to the advance of the rule of God in the individual lives of people of all ages.

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

David Faust, Editor of THE LOOKOUT

"For the word is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).



I got a paper cut the other day. Nothing particularly unusual-except ironically I cut my hand while opening a box of bandages! Things turned out pretty well, actually. The remedy was at hand as soon as the hurt occurred. Did you ever open the Bible expecting to find a bandage, and instead you discovered its cutting edge? You came expecting comfort, and you found conviction? You came seeking a soothing salve, and instead found a sword? The Bible isn't a tame, passive book full of benign, fine-sounding platitudes. It's sharp, alive, edgy. It pokes, prods, and penetrates. And like a surgeon's scalpel, it hurts in order to heal.

That's why it sounds a bit strange when Christians talk about "doing devotions"- as if Bible study could be reduced to a safe, controlled formula. I have never found any Bible verses that tell us to "do devotions." Now, don't misunderstand. The Bible does urge us to fill our minds with God's Word and to pray without ceasing. Countless believers find great value in systematic daily Bible reading and prayer. We need the discipline. Daily devotions nourish us with vital spiritual food. But my point is simply this: while it's good to "have devotions, it's even better to "be devoted."

Late in King David's life, he called together the leaders of Israel and exhorted them to be faithful to God. He said, "Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God" (1 Chronicles 22:19). Then he turned to his son Solomon, the heir-apparent to the throne, and urged "A the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

Members of the early church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" Acts 2:42). Paul wrote, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10). He urged Timothy, "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13), and he told Titus, "Our people must learn to devote themselves to going what is good" (Titus 3:14).

How devoted are we? Walk into any Christian bookstore

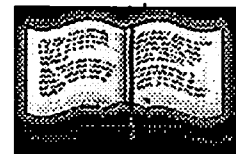
and you can find a wide variety of Bibles for sale, so many that it's hard to decide which one to buy. (When is the last time you thanked God for the availability of his Word in your own language?) Yet with all our Bibles, America continues to stumble down a dangerous path toward biblical illiteracy. It isn't enough just to own a Bible, even a thick one with lots of study helps. We need to read, absorb, and live it, letting the Word do its spiritual surgery in us.

Could there even be a certain danger in the proliferation of study bibles? Why reflect on how a passage of Scripture applies to your life if someone else-a scholar, no less-already one it for you? And does the niche-marketing of devotional Bibles tend to tailor the Bible to fit us, instead of compelling us to tailor ourselves to the Bible.

Devotion to God isn't just something we do 15 minutes a day. It should describe who we are. Because the best Bible translation is the one that translates it into action.

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Saturated with the Word of God



Under his mother's guidance, Harry Ironside began to memorize Scripture when he was three. By age fourteen, he had read the Bible fourteen times, "once for each year." During the rest of his life he read the Bible through at least once a year. A pastor recalled a Bible conference at which he and Ironside were two of the speakers. During the conference the speakers discussed their approaches to personal devotions. Each man shared what he had heard from the Word that morning. When it was Ironside's turn, he hesitated, then said, "I read the book of Isaiah." He was saturated with the Word of God.

Warren Wiershe, *Listening
to the World of Giants (Grand
Rapids Mich: Balker 1900), 198*

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Peace at Last

In summing up the superiority of the Christian life over all other ways of living we cannot overlook the advantage that the Christian will have for all eternity. Job said, "*If a man die, shall he live again?*" (Job 14:14). He answered his own question when he said, "*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*" (Job 19:25).

What a prospect! What a future! What a hope! What a life! I would not change places with the wealthiest and most influential person in the world. I would rather be a child of the King, a member of the Royal Family of heaven!



I know where I've come from, I know why I'm here, I know where I'm going—and I have peace in my heart

The storm is raging. The sea was beating against the rocks in huge, dashing waves. The lightning was flashing, the thunder was roaring, the wind was blowing; but the little bird was asleep in the crevice of the rock, its head serenely under its wing, sound asleep. That is peace: to be able to rest serenely in the storm!

In Christ we are relaxed and at peace in the midst of the confusions, bewilderments, and perplexities of this life. The storm rages, but our hearts are at rest. We have found peace-at last!

-Billy Graham