

BIBLICAL COUNSELING IS TRUTH BASED

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“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” This question wasn’t asked by a parent of a child, a doctor of a patient, a teacher of a student, or a coach of a player. It was a question the apostle Paul asked the church in Galatia (Galatians 4:16). Paul had instructed them relative to the dangers of going back under the law of Moses for justification; to do so would cause them to *“fall from grace”* (Galatians 5:4). Sadly, not only do people in general sometimes get mad and resentful when the truth is shared, Christians in the Body of Christ also get mad and resentful. TRUTH MAKES ENEMIES!

From the beginning man has had a problem with accepting and sticking to the truth. Our greatest grandparents, Adam and Eve, started the march down the road of rejecting the truth. They were influenced by Satan, the father of lies, instead of the Father of truth. God’s truth to the first couple was they would die if they ate of the forbidden fruit. Satan approached Eve with an alternative choice; she could become a god too. Abandoning the truth and accepting Satan’s lie, our great grandmother launched a destiny for her offspring that has eternal consequences: heaven or hell.

In the movie trailer for the popular movie “A Few Good Men”, Lt. Kaffee is interrogating Col. Jessep about an order the base commander had given to soldiers under his command. In a fit of anger and resentment, the Colonel shouted, *“You can’t handle the truth!”* That was a prophetic truth for a lot of people. We read about this attitude in God’s counseling manual: the Holy Bible.

Down through history, God’s people have preferred lies instead of the truth.

1. **Isaiah 30:9, 10:** *That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.”*
2. **Jeremiah 23:14:** *Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem: They commit adultery and walk in lies; they also strengthen the hands of evil doers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them are like Sodom to Me, and he inhabitants like Gomorrah.*

3. **Jeremiah 28:15:** *Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, 'hear now, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, but you make these people trust in a lie.'*
4. **Jeremiah 9:5, 6:** *Everyone will deceive his neighbor, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongues to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity... Through deceit, they refuse to know Me.*

In his epistle to the Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul taught them that one of the reasons God give up the Gentiles was because of their rejection of the truth: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness... who exchange the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen (Romans 1:18, 25).*

You may be thinking, what does all of this have to do with counseling? Don't people, especially Christians, who seek counseling want to know the truth? The answer is No! Not everyone who seeks counseling, even biblical counseling, wants to know the truth, admit the truth, and adjust to obeying the truth. I know this seems too ironic to be true, but in all my years of counseling, I have seen it over and over. Some Christians don't want to hear, know, or obey the truth.

God's judgment is going to relate to how people treat the truth: *[A] ND with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12).*

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote that God gave the Gentle up because of how they treated the truth: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness... who exchange the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen (Romans 1:18, 25).*

WHAT IS TRUTH?

As Pilate was being urged to pass the death sentence on Christ, Jesus affirmed to him that *I have come to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice (John 18:37).* Pilate, who no doubt had been trained in the field of epistemology; the philosophy that

continually searched for the elusive answer to the question he asked Jesus, *What is truth?* (John 18:38). Men from the beginning have tried to dodge the truth by affirming that it can't be known: it is something we are always searching for, hoping to find an answer.

MAJOR THEORIES OF TRUTH:

In his quest for an answer to "What is truth?" Man has come up with several answers to the question. Here is a brief list of some of these theories:

- 1. The Correspondence** theory of truth. The premise of this theory is statements that are true correspond to the way the world actually is. So in order for the statement "I am 35 years old" to be true, I must in fact have been born 35 years ago. According to this theory a claim is true only if it corresponds to what is so: the "facts" or "reality,"; and false if it does not correspond to what is so. Many scientists and philosophers hold various versions of this theory.
- 2. The Coherence** theory of truth. The premise of this theory is statements that are true are those that cohere with the other justified beliefs we hold (i.e. Consistency). So in order for "I am 35 years old" to be true, I was born in 1980. A belief is false if it is inconsistent with (contradicts) other beliefs that are held to be true. Thus, we should doubt claims that are currently inconsistent with the rest of our beliefs.
- 3. The Pragmatic** theory of truth. The premise of this theory is statements that are true are those which work for our best interest and meet current needs better than their alternatives. According to this theory, a statement is true if it allows a person to interact effectively and efficiently with the rest of the world. The less a truth is, the less it promotes such interaction. Therefore, for "I am 35 years old" to be true, it must be useful for me to believe that—that is—this statement best justifies my actions or promotes things that are in my best interest. This theory promotes relativism; it promotes the belief that there are "degrees of truth."

These theories of truth are found in various approaches to counseling. This is only a brief summary of various theories of truth. I encourage you to explore "epistemology" in the field of philosophy for more information.

POSTMODERNISM

“Do you swear to tell the whole truth, nothing else but the truth, so help you God?” Years ago, there was little difficulty in respect and understanding what this oath taken in a court of law meant: truth could be known and testified to by a person. This is no longer the case. A new word describes what is happening today relative to the truth: POSTMODERNISM.

Postmodernism is the theory that there is no absolute truth. It affirms there is no single answer for anything and there is no single truth in this world. It breaks down belief, questioning everything, anything, and anyone. It is the philosophy of “You find your truth; I’ll find mine.” It is seen in the Bible where *“each man did that which was right in his own eyes.”*

This philosophy presently dominates the media, academia, social, political, and even religion (i.e. Church). Recent polls produce statistics that the majority of young people in the West accepts the following, so-called “truth”: ***There is no such thing as absolute truth.*** While it may be true that a thing is workable, acceptable, okay, or cool, but to affirm a thing is “true” implies something else is “false”, is a prejudices judgment that assumes an impeccable hierarchy of truth—which is not true.

Isn’t it amazing that if I affirm that there is no absolute truth, that I am affirming that my statement about absolute truth is not absolute; thus, useless.

WHAT IS TRUTH?:

Evidently there is a lot of interest in truth. I typed in “truth” on my computer search engine and 136,000,000 results came up (6-13-2014). What is truth? It should be clear that philosophical definitions of truth; perhaps the correspondence theory being the exception, will not produce a biblical approach to counseling that pleases God. The answer to this question brings us face-to-face with God and His word. The Dictionary gives us a practical and workable definition of truth:

Truth (n): “A verified or indisputable fact, proposition, principles; an actuality or actual existence, reality; the opposite of a lie or falsehood.”

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK ABOUT TRUTH:

Since we are promoting and advocating biblical counseling, it seems logical that it is essential that we let the Bible answer the question; WHAT IS TRUTH? What follows is some of what the Bible presents as answers:

1. **God is the essence of truth.** This essence is revealed in the person of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He is the truth: *Jesus said to him, 'I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. No one comes to the Father except through Me' (John 14:6).* Jesus goes on the state that there is more involved with Him being the truth. It involves KNOWING Him as truth: *If you had KNOWN Me, you would have KNOWN my Father also; and from now on, you KNOW Him and have seen Him (John 14:7).* Jesus makes it clear that there must be an intimate relationship between Him and His followers. The tie that binds is TRUTH (cf. Zech.8:8).
2. **It is impossible for God to lie.** This is how the Hebrews writer stated this truth: *"Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:17, 18).* When God is in the counseling session, only the truth prevails.
3. **God's word is truth.** In the first chapter of the Gospel of John we have a clear presentation of Jesus as the incarnate Word. He is the impeccable truth in the flesh. In 1:17 we read, *For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* Later in the Gospel we read, *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word was truth (17:17).* This is why real biblical counseling is grounded in the word of God—the TRUTH.
4. **Jesus affirmed that the truth is knowable.** To the Jews who thought they had a copyright on God and the truth contained only in the Law of Moses, Jesus told them they needed to KNOW the truth. *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall KNOW the TRUTH, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).* In John 8:36, John identifies Jesus as the liberating truth: *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.* This is why biblical counseling centers in God's word—the TRUTH.

5. **The truth (words) of Jesus will Judge us.** Jesus made it clear that it wasn't the Law of Moses, traditions, or any pragmatic philosophy that would be the standard of judgment. It would be the truth—His WORD: *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak (John 12:48-50).* When we are using God's word to counsel, it is God speaking through His word.
6. **The truth is the core of our thinking agenda.** The Bible affirms that we are what we think (Proverbs 23:7); God gives us the fruit of our thoughts (Jeremiah 6:19). The human mind is the battleground of where our thinking, beliefs, emotions, attitudes, and behavior stem from. Therefore, if change is to occur in a person's life he must control his thinking: *[A] need the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are TRUE, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of a good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—THINK (meditate) on these things (Philippians 4:7, 8).*
7. **The truth (word) must be practiced in order for it to liberate.** One man said, "I have been hearing and believing the truth for over thirty years, but practicing it for about a year." Yes, knowing and believing are essential in activating the power of truth in our lives, but it only becomes a reality when we *are the DOERS of the word and not just hearers (James 1:22-26).* In the introduction to the history of the first century church, Luke wrote this about Jesus: *The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all Jesus began to DO and teach (Acts 1:1).* In concluding his admonition to follow a God approved thinking agenda, Paul wrote: *The things which you have LEARNED and RECEIVED and HEARD and SAW in me, these DO and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:9).* Biblical counseling encourages people to be practitioners of God's word, not just auditors.

8. **The truth that is effectual, must produce fruit in our lives.** In the well-known Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:11-15), Jesus taught about the state of four hearts relative to how they do and do not receive and practice the word (truth). Only ONE of the four hearts make it. It is the one that *having heard the word with a noble and good heart, KEEP it and BEAR fruit (Luke 11:15)*. The fruit that must be produced in a Christian's life, is the *fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26)*. Biblical counseling helps the counselee develop a specific plan for producing this fruit. Again, the DOER aspect of the word.
9. **The truth with all its power must be spoken in love.** Knowing the truth, believing the truth, and doing the truth are essential elements in biblical counseling, but both the counselor and counselee must also *speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)*. One person is reported to have said, *If you tell me I am going to hell, you need to have tear in your eyes because that place is terrible.*
10. **The truth is a weapon we must use to protect ourselves against evil forces.** In giving instruction to the church in Ephesus, Paul told them how to dress in order to win the war. Among the pieces of armor to be worn and used is truth: *Stand therefore, having girded your waist with TRUTH, having put on the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6:14)*. When tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, Jesus used the word to defeat His enemy: *But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3)*.

TRUTH IN COUNSELING SESSIONS

These are only ten of the numerous references in the Bible relative to the place of truth—God's word—in biblical counseling or counseling that is called Christian Counseling. In order for biblical truth to do the work God intended (His word will not return void), it must not be diluted or mixed with any other substance, such as humanism and other isms. This leads us to several essential that must be used in order for the truth to work effectively.

1. The person seeking help or counseling must state the truth relative to the real issues involved, his or her role in it, what they want to do about it.
2. The person seeking help or counseling must affirm commitment to wanting to know what the Bible says about the issue.

3. The person seeking counseling or help must believe he/she has the ability to make choices that affect changes in beliefs, attitudes, feeling, and outcome based on applying what the Bible teaches.
4. The person seeking help or counseling must commit to a homework plan that involves practicing specific Bible verses.
5. The person seeking counseling or help must affirm a willingness to be held accountable for how he/she is working with the counselor.
6. The person seeking help or counseling must acknowledge that biblical counseling is not secular, humanistic, or a blending of human philosophy. It is based on the Holy Bible—66 books: Old and New Testaments.
7. The person seeking help or counseling must be aware that the counselor honors the Lordship of Christ over his/her life. He/she is seeking to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1), and to have the attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:4-9).

Without God as THE truth, the word being truth, and believing, obeying, and doing the truth, there is no biblical counseling. This is why we must, *Buy the truth and sell it not*” (Proverbs 23:23).

APPLICATION EXERCISE

1. Why do people, even Christians, reject the truth, or the “whole truth”?
2. Write an essay discussion the various theories of truth:
3. Why is Bible truth essential for biblical counseling?
4. Prepare an interview intake to be used in counseling others.
5. What additional observations do you have?