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TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

“What is truth?”
(John 18:38, NIV).

Pilate’s question to Jesus deals with a crucial topic of universal interest. Scripture teaches six truths about Truth.

Truth No. 1: Truth exists.

The Bible calls God “the God of truth” (Ps. 31:5, NIV), and says that Jesus came to this Earth “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NIV).

Since truth is an essential part of God’s nature, since Jesus is said to be full of truth, and since Jesus came to reveal truth to us, we can be certain that truth exists. Several decades ago, this point would not have needed to be made. The existence of absolute

truth was simply assumed. We live now at a time, however, when many people believe that everything is relative and that there are no moral absolutes. Their moral principles are very malleable, and they maintain that what is truth for one person might not be truth for another. But this is not the biblical perspective! The Bible teaches that absolute truths exist and continue to be true whether one agrees with them or not.

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Once I asked a group of college students to close their eyes and point toward what they thought was North. Then I asked them to keep pointing while they opened their eyes. This exercise demonstrated that not everyone had a good grasp of which direction was where. Some were pointing East. Some pointed South, and some West. Maybe some were even pointing up. (After all, North is always up on maps!) And some had it right and had a finger pointing northward. But whichever way they were pointing, it didn't change where North really was.

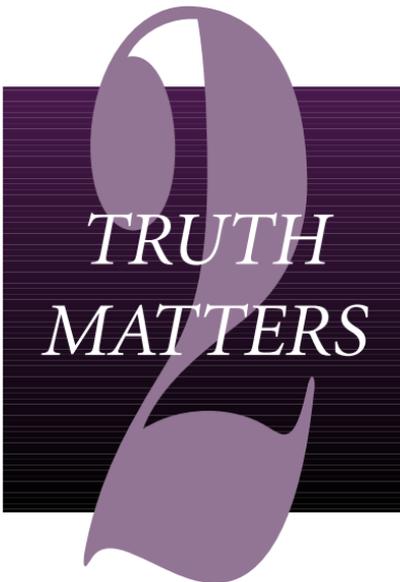
A flight center director once told me that it is possible for pilots, while flying, to lose track of which way the ground is. In other words, they don't

know which way is up and which way is down! This condition is called spatial disorientation or vertigo. Obviously this would be a dangerous situation for a pilot. If pilots think they are ascending when in actuality they are about to plow a furrow in the ground, the plane is in grave danger.

This deadly condition that pilots sometimes experience is a metaphor for the contemporary world. The world in which we live is experiencing moral vertigo. Many people think down is up, and up is down. And we see the results around us in the disintegration of our families and our society. We hear about horrifying stories and unspeakable atrocities all around us. We seem to be living again in the days of ancient Israel: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25, NKJV).

I am told that a pilot needs the horizon as a reference point, or if the horizon is not visible, the pilot should consult the aircraft instruments, such as the attitude indicator or the altimeter to head off this vertigo. And likewise, Christians need the reference points of the Word of God, a life of prayer, and the counsel and companionship of Christian friends to live out the truth in their lives.

Whatever the contemporary world might say, truth does exist.



There is an objective reality. There are moral absolutes. There are eternal truths: The truth that Jesus died for your sins and mine. The truth that He is coming again. The truth that He has a plan for each life. The truth that God wants each of us to be part of His family, the church, and to help those in need. Truth does exist.

Truth No. 2: Truth matters.

Truth not only exists, it matters. In other words, it is important. It is vital. It is significant.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul declares, “God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth” (NIV). Also, 3 John 1:4 states, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (NIV). Since it is through belief in the truth that we are saved, because it brings God joy when we walk in the truth, it is evident that truth matters.

Sometimes we become confused about what really matters in life. We get distracted by sports events, movies, business, or politics. But how we respond to the truth of God matters more than anything else. Truth matters!

Have you noticed that when you realize something affects you, personally and individually, how important it suddenly seems? Suppose you are traveling out of town and

you hear on the radio that a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a tornado, has struck your home town. You are suddenly all ears. You want to find out everything you can about the extent of the disaster. Why? Because it affects you. And that is why truth matters so much. It involves everyone.

How we respond to God’s truth affects the quality of our lives on this earth. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10, NIV). The happiest, most fulfilled, most satisfying life that one can live is a life that is committed to truth. And of course, how we respond to truth affects us not only now, but also for eternity. Our response to the One who is the embodiment of truth



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determines whether we will be able to live forever.

Sometimes when a big sporting event is about to begin, as the camera focuses on the festive environment and all the spectators preparing to cheer for their favorite teams, the commentator says, "It doesn't get any better than this!" As if to suggest that this game that is about to be played is the most important thing on the face of the planet.

With due appreciation for sport commentators and fans, it does get better, a lot better than this. When you live in a relationship with Jesus Christ, when you have the full assurance of His love, when you are looking forward to His return, when you are married to the spouse God has led you to, when you hold your child in your arms, this is when you can truly say, "It doesn't get any better than this." Truth matters!

Truth No. 3: Truth must be sought.

The Bible underscores that truth must be sought. That is, we must

seek for it and inquire after it. Since truth is so important, it might be nice if we possessed it innately, if it were intrinsic to humans. As if the knowledge of truth could be as natural and automatic for humans as the ability to swim is for ducks.

But truth is not inherently ours, nor is it dropped in our laps. God wants us to search diligently and earnestly for truth. The Lord declares, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13, NIV). And what this verse states about finding God is also the case for discovering truth, one of His foremost qualities. In other words, we find truth when we search for it with all our hearts.

Someone might ask, "What does it mean to really seek after truth, to truly seek it with all my heart and soul?" I was speaking at a camp meeting several years ago, and I did something I shouldn't have done. My wife and I had finished eating at the dining area and were engaged in conversation with some other

Simply put, a Christian is a follower of Christ.

An Adventist Christian is a follower of Christ who is looking forward to His soon return. And a Seventh-day Adventist Christian is a follower of Jesus who is so deeply in love with Jesus that he or she has a foretaste of heaven every Sabbath while awaiting His soon return.

adults. My young son was restless, so I told him he could go back to our room at the lodge. It was just a block away, but it required him to go over a main road in an area crawling with tourists. After my wife and I finished our visit and arrived back at the lodge, we could not see our son anywhere. We searched and called, but he was nowhere to be found. So we began looking for him frantically, searching at the lodge, then running back to the campground, doing everything we could to find our son. Every ounce of energy we had was focused on that search. That's what it means to seek for something with all one's heart! And what an incredible joy it was to find our son!

Each of us needs to examine our own heart. What are we seeking in life? What are we really focused on in our education or profession? God calls us to do more than just prepare for or succeed in a career. He wants us to be committed to seeking truth.

Truth No. 4: Truth is in a person.

The fourth truth that the Bible states about truth is this: Truth is wrapped up in and flows out of a person. To elaborate, truth is not just a set of principles, nor is it merely certain doctrines of Scripture. Rather, truth is found in a Person. Notice John 14:6: "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (NIV).

Occasionally, I do a bit of premarital counseling. Sometimes couples will want to make sure that all the details of their new life together are arranged prior to marriage—that they are financially secure, have good jobs, and a place to live. And though all these things have some significance and it is helpful to have cared for them, they aren't nearly as important as knowing that marriage is primarily about being in a permanent relationship with another person, about being attuned to the other person's needs, and taking time to listen to and care for one's

spouse.

Simply put, a Christian is a follower of Christ. An Adventist Christian is a follower of Christ who is looking forward to His soon return. And a Seventh-day Adventist Christian is a follower of Jesus who is so deeply in love with Jesus that he or she has a foretaste of heaven every Sabbath while awaiting His soon return.

The fact that truth is wrapped up in a Person doesn't diminish the importance of the teachings of Scripture. It doesn't minimize doctrine. To the contrary, it shows that all biblical truths radiate out of the One who declared Himself the way, the truth, and the life.

Truth No. 5: Truth requires us to take a stand.

The Bible emphasizes that truth requires us to take a stand. In other words, many times it's not easy to live for truth. Sometimes it requires courage and bravery.

In a stirring passage, Paul exhorted the believers at Ephesus, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. . . . so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist" (Eph. 6:10-14, NIV).

Four times in this brief passage Paul uses the word *stand*. He challenges us to stand firm. And having done all else, to stand.

Sometimes when we think about standing for truth, we think about those heroes of the Bible. People like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who defied the king's order to fall down and worship the image when the music played. They could have tried to rationalize kneeling down. They could have reasoned, *How can we serve the Lord if we are executed?* They could have said to themselves, *Yes, we will kneel down, but we will pray to the true God in our hearts. What is wrong with that?* But they didn't engage in any soph-



isticated compromises. They stood for truth. They stood straight and tall. And because of this, when they stood in the furnace, they didn't stand alone.

We think of Stephen, who prayed for the forgiveness of his killers even as rocks rained down on him, and we think of Peter who said, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29, NIV). These stories are wonderful and inspiring, but people are still standing for truth today.

I think of an Adventist young man who graduated from law school and was applying for a job with a prestigious law firm. It so happened this particular firm was representing the tobacco industry. He was asked how he felt about working for this industry. He could have shaded his views about cigarettes in order to get the job, but he didn't. No, he didn't get the job, but he had the satisfaction of standing for truth.

How is it with each of us? When accosted by sexual temptation, when enticed by alcohol, when invited to do anything that would compromise our commitment to Jesus Christ, how do we respond? The only truth worth having is a truth that requires us to stand.

Truth No. 6: Truth sets us free.

As John 8:32 proclaims, "You will

know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (NIV).

I remember an important moment in my own emancipation. It happened in a dormitory prayer group at Georgia-Cumberland Academy in October 1975. As I knelt there with some of my friends, as we shared and prayed together, I opened my heart to the Lord in a new and meaningful way, and the peace and love of Jesus came flooding over me. I sensed God's presence in a way that I had not sensed it before.

If someone should ask, Can you describe this moment of conversion in an analytical and dispassionate way? the answer would be No. It would be like asking someone to describe in an equation what it is like to be in love.

While I have had many sensations in the days and years that have followed that encounter with my Lord, one of the most profound is freedom. Freedom from the burden of sin. Freedom from habits and passions that would enslave me. Freedom to become the person God meant for me to be. Freedom to live a life in relationship with my Creator and Redeemer.

And the same experience is available for all. As Jesus declared, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. □

