

## Truth in Christ-Centered Counseling

Theme: Exchanged Life counseling is an application of biblical truth by the Spirit of Truth.

"Buy the truth, and do not sell it,  
Also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Prov 23:23).

### 1. Clarifications

- True doctrine is foundational to victorious living. (Eph. 1-3/4-6; Col. 1-2/3)
- Pontius Pilate asked, "What is 'truth'?"

"Truth is what corresponds to  
God's being,  
God's revelation,  
and God's created order."  
(theological, biblical, and ontological aspects)

- Although no one has knowledge of *all* truth (omniscience), or exhaustively understand a truth, God has made us able to "know" truth and absolutes. We may not be able to *comprehend* reality, but *was* can *apprehend* knowledge. (2 Tim. 1:12)
- Essential doctrine should be differentiated from "distinctive" doctrine. Essentials/fundamentals are necessary for salvation and orthodoxy; "distinctives" are not (e.g. mode of baptism, church government, spiritual gifts...)
- The unity Christ prayed for has to do with the mutual acceptance and cooperation of true believers, not an ecumenical movement that compromises essential biblical truth.
- Contend for truth without being proud, fleshly, or "contentious." (James 1:19)

## 2. The importance of truth in personal ministry

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you *to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*" Jude 1:3

### A. The Ultimate Counselor is true.

God is true. (Deut. 32:4; Titus 1:2)

Jesus is true (John 1:14,17; 14:6; 17:8)  
and spoke truth (John 8:45)

The Holy Spirit is True. (John 14:17; 16:3)

God's written Word is true. (John 10:32; 17:17,19)

B. You (the human counselor) need to believe and practice truth.  
(1 Sam. 12:24; 1 Kings 2:4; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph 5:9; 2 Cor. 6:7,8)

Speak the truth. (Rom. 9:1; Gal. 4:16; Eph 4:25)

Meditate on the truth. (Phil 4:8)

Arm yourself with truth. (Eph. 6:14)

Correct falsehood with truth. (Gal. 3:1)

Interpret God's Word of truth accurately. (2 Tim. 2:15)

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16, 17

C. Counselees are hindered by deception. (Gen. 3:4,5; John 8:32,44; 1 John 1:10; 5:10)

## 3. Biblical truth and its application is being attacked today from all sides

### A. Attacks from *outside* of "Christendom"

False religions 1 Tim. 4:1-3

The occult (the quest for spiritual knowledge and power apart from God)  
Philosophy (Col. 2:8)

## B. The attack from *within* "Christendom"

### Roman Catholicism

Ultimate authority? Pope and tradition vs. the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16)  
Salvation through faith? Faith and meritorious works vs. grace through faith alone (Eph. 2:2-10)  
Salvation by grace? Grace via Roman sacraments vs. grace through Christ (1 Tim. 2:5)

Liberalism: a form of church without loyalty to the gospel or Scripture

Neoorthodoxy: "The Bible may become the Word of God subjectively, but it is not objectively inspired and infallible."

## C. The attack from *within* "Evangelicalism" -Postmodernism's influence

### Emergent Village (leaders in the "emerging church" movement)

- The process of "doing theology" replacing fidelity to biblical doctrine
- This attitude of uncertainty interpreted as a helpful way of relating to the culture
- A zeal to be acceptable to unchurched people at the expense of Truth
- Eroding of biblical absolutes is rapidly spreading.

Correction: The biblical pattern is to *contextualize* the communication to the culture *without compromising* the unchanging truth of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:19-23; Gal. 1:7-10). *Understanding the culture* is valuable. But conforming to postmodernism at the expense of loyalty to God's Word is to deprive this generation of the clear, unchanging proclamation of Christ (Col. 1:28).

"And so we have *the prophetic word confirmed*, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, *that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:19-21)

D. From within the Exchanged Life movement: imbalance or false doctrine

- Minimizing God's holiness and justice in favor of His love: "The Holy Spirit no longer convicts the believer of sin."
- God's prohibition of sin is based on its harmful effects on people.

Correction: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28, 29).

- Distorting theology by a 'grace contest'
  - Criticizing character development (2 Pet. 1:5-9)
  - Criticizing the role of conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16)
  - Criticizing repentance and confession (Rev. 2,3)
  - Criticizing the legal meaning of Christ's atonement (Rom. 3:19-26)

Warning to us: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1).

- Minimizing the importance of Bible study to avoid "legalism" (Rev. 1:3; Matt. 4:4)
- De-emphasizing the written Word of God in favor of an inner witness

Correction:

"I will ... praise Your name

For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;

For You have magnified Your word above all Your name"(Psalm 138:2).

- Man-centered ministry instead of God-centered ministry (Col. 1:17,18)
- Document circulated: "The AELM and the Emerging Culture" referring favorably to Brian McLaren (of Emergent Village)

## Conclusion

"Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11).

"For the LORD is good;  
His mercy is everlasting,  
And His truth endures to all generations" (Ps 100:5).

- John Woodward

## Sources

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