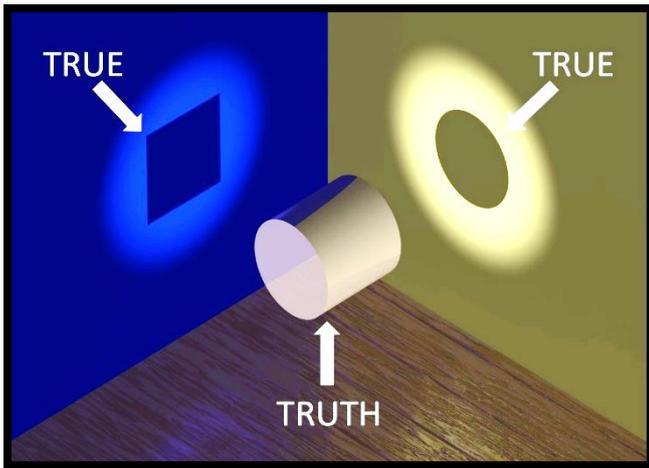


# Just a Minute..

Colossians 3:14 "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."



When is truth, truth and when is truth a perspective? Is there an absolute truth or is truth always subject to the 'owner'? Is all truth equal? Is it possible that the truth for one can be a lie for another? How do we find truth in an age of deceit and a manipulative media?

As Christians, we often live as if truth rules supreme. We neglect to engage in conversations because we think that we will compromise the truth by hearing the views of others. The reality is that our capacity to understand truth is more often than not filtered through our own cultural and personal biased lenses of prejudice and fear. Our truth is often limited by our perspectives.

In his book, "The sin of certainty", Peter Enns argues that:

*"In ways we do not even perceive, we all create God in our own image. We may mean well and we may be motivated by our devotion toward God. But even when these ideas about God have proven very helpful to us, they become a hindrance to growth when the cement dries. No one just 'follows' the Bible, we interpret it as people with a past and a present, and in community with others, within certain traditions, none of which is absolute. Many factors influence how we 'follow' the Bible."*

But this does not mean that truth cannot be absolute. **In our pursuit for truth it therefore becomes paramount to realise that perfect truth exists only in the perfect mind of God, as revealed through the perfect life of Christ.**

So, what did Jesus say about truth? Not much, actually. As a matter of fact, Jesus taught mainly about<sup>1</sup> the Kingdom of God (mentioned 101 times in the Gospels) and He had a lot more to say about love (mentioned 57 times), repentance (21 times), forgiveness (30 times), and deeds or works (46 times), than about truth, which is only recorded about 19 times in the Gospels. What Jesus did say was that truth is far more than just a set of moral values or a spiritual guide to righteousness. Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). He didn't say He came to reveal the truth or even to confirm, teach or model the truth. He **IS** the truth. Truth personified and perfectly executed. Jesus therefore became the embodiment and source of all truth. Truth is therefore not found in Scripture first and foremost, it is found in the life of Christ. Scripture just describes it. Truth is not something we own, it's someone we follow. His proclamation of the Kingdom, His interaction with sinners, His engagement of love, His heart of compassion, His life of reconciliation, His message of mercy, His commission to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19), was His reflection of truth, not His teaching of truth. This became the absolute truth, when the Word became flesh.

Sadly, this understanding of TRUTH, that it is a relationship and not a law, has been replaced by a lie of exclusion and dualism, us and them, judgement and condemnation. Truth became the measuring stick by which we judge people, their words and their actions while truth was intended to reveal God as embodied through Christ.

Truth revealed through judgement often uses the excuse that Christ was not afraid to speak up for the truth and neither should we be. We are reminded how He judged the Pharisees for their falseness and lies. The truth is He didn't judge the Pharisees because they neglected the truth, He judged them for proclaiming the truth without pointing people to a loving God. The 'SAY' of truth and the 'DO' of truth did not meet. According to Jesus, forgiveness, love,

<sup>1</sup> <http://len-seekingthelord.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-top-ten-things-jesus-taught.html?m=1>

grace and mercy seems to be at the top of the Christian hierarchy of great truths, and everything falls apart whenever mercy is displaced by anything else.

Please press the pause button for a moment and let this sink in...

In Colossians 3 Paul provides a comprehensive list of virtues that should be the adornments on the robe of every believer. "Clothe yourselves," he says, (vs 12) "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness." And once again, like in most of his letters, Paul ends with the one virtue that contains the whole of Christian perfection, and links all the parts of it together, and...surprise, surprise, it is not TRUTH, it is LOVE.

When Paul refers to the word 'bond' in "bond of perfectness" (KJV)<sup>2</sup> he uses the Greek word *SUNDESMOS*, which is also the word used for *LIGAMENT*. Love is therefore the ligament that binds all virtues into perfection. This is extremely significant and intentional. A ligament is a short band of tough, flexible, fibrous connective tissue which connects two bones or cartilages or holds together a joint. It is also a membranous fold that supports an organ and keeps it in position.

From a spiritual perspective, therefore, love is a tough but flexible virtue that links together all other virtues. It protects the body and keeps it in the right position before God, who is the Author and Perfecter of love. This does not minimise the importance of truth, or any other virtue for that matter, but it does emphasise the fact that love contains the ability to join together and unite, more than any virtue.

**In a sense, truth holds all virtues together, while love links all virtues together.**

The reason is simple. Truth cannot, and should not, be compromising or flexible. Truth is firm and has a firm foundation. But of equal importance is the fact that love cannot, and should not, be rigid and unbending. Paul explains in 1 Timothy 1:5 that "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Note that truth is not the goal, love is. Truth is the means. It is subordinate. Truth serves love. Education serves relationships — mainly the relationship between us and God, but also between Christian and Christian, and between us and unbelievers. **The "goal" of truth is ultimately to reveal the true nature of God - LOVE.**

This 'ligament' of Biblical virtue needs to be flexible and compassionate. Love does not rejoice *IN* truth but *WITH* truth<sup>3</sup>. Love shapes how we speak the truth<sup>4</sup> while truth shapes how we show love<sup>5</sup>.

In seasons of war and times of despair, may the Church be found to be bearers of truth, reflecting the Truth and using the truth as a way to life, not condemnation.

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<sup>2</sup> Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on charity (*love*), which is the bond of perfectness. (KJV)

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 4:15 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 5:2-3 *This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*