

Lesson 5 – What is Truth? (Exodus 20:16)

[The ninth commandment prohibits swearing falsely against your neighbor in matters of law and civil proceedings, but, on a deeper level, it implicitly indicates the responsibility to be a witness of the *truth* at all times. Note that the Hebrew word for “truth” (*emet*) is composed from the first, the middle, and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, thus indicating that it encompasses the first things, the last things, and everything in between. Thus, in relation to our neighbor (who is really everyone), we are to be truthful and bear witness to the truth in all our moments of life. **By lying, by bearing false testimony, we effectively deny the relationship to the One who said, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life.” “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor”**— Ex. 20:16] [<http://www.levitt.com/hebrew/commandments.html>]

From the reference above, it is clear that God has intended for his people to be people of truth. This characteristic is an attribute of our Creator as much as it should be for those whom he created. John wastes no time in his gospel account to identify Jesus as possessing this quality (John 1:14). Jesus was the true light (John 1:9) which revealed the life and the light of men (v 4). Moses was the lawgiver, but from Jesus came grace and truth (v 17). We may understand the rules and policy of an organization, but it is something else to understand the nature and character of the owners. Jesus reveals more than Moses did through the law, he demonstrates the mercy and true nature of God himself (v 18).

Truth is something that can be known and understood (John 8:31, 32). It possesses the power in and of itself to liberate us from bondage (John 8:32). The quality of truth can differentiate us from others. (John 17:17). Everyone who possesses this special quality of truth has a common source, Jesus (John 18:37). Everyone is not capable of discerning the divine quality of truth (John 14: 16, 17). But, some choose to live by the truth and do not fear exposure (John 3:21). It is a quality for true worshippers of God to possess (John 4:24). Truth is something that we can confirm (John 5:33). Our motivation to possess this quality, even though it is not our idea, is honorable (John 7:18). Truth is not something everyone wants to hear or accept (John 8:40, 45).

The writer of this gospel is enamored by truth. From Jesus’ mouth alone, the statement is made “I tell you the truth” more than twenty times. As cited earlier, Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He attributes truth to the words of his Father, in John 17:17. The words that Jesus learned and spoke from the Father are the words of authority and judgment (John 12:48, 49). Jesus’ purpose in coming to the world was to testify to the truth (John 18:38). So, what is the answer to Pilate’s question, “***What is truth?***”

In summation, John states in the next to last verse of his account that all he had written about Jesus was reliable. It was true (John 21:24). The story that is woven from the apostle’s hand is a story that began in the beginning, with God and was itself, God. Therefore, the origin of the Word of God is divine and eternal (John 1:1, 2). The truth, which Jesus reveals, transcends time and place. It is not something that originates through man nor is it of man. The blind man knew the answer to Pilate’s question. “*Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. . .if this man was not from God, he could do nothing.*” (John 9:30-33).

Questions:

1. What overall truth is John's gospel meant to convey? (John 20: 30, 31)

2. The specific statements of Jesus, "I tell you the truth", are prolific throughout the gospel of John. Why are these statements important from the reader's perspective? (John 18:19-23)

3. The gospel of John contains many personal dialogues between Jesus and individuals. None is more meaningful than Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John Chapter 3. Explain the source of Jesus' knowledge and the uniqueness of his and John the Baptist's message (John 3:10-15).

4. The opening prologue to John's gospel reveals an origin to the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1-14). John's prayer to the Father in Chapter 17 is personal and specific. Jesus had given his disciples the word of God (v 14) and the result was hatred towards them from the world. Jesus' appeal to the Father is for sanctification for his disciples through the truth (v 17). Jesus is committed to sanctification for himself so that his disciples may be truly sanctified (v 19). Explain the truth that Jesus is discussing in this passage.
