

In Defense of Truth

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Well, this morning is a 60 minute introduction to a sermon series that I've been thinking about for a very long time, and so this isn't going to follow the normal format of an expositional treatment of a single text of Scripture but there is a reason for that. I'm starting a new series this morning that I've kind of been anticipating for over a decade and finally getting around to doing it. You know, when we first formed Truth Community Church back over 10 years ago and we were deciding on a name, we tried various different names that didn't work out too well, but we eventually landed on the name Truth Community Church, and why are we Truth Community Church? Why the name Truth in the name of our corporation and what sits on the sign out front? Why Truth Community Church? And that really is an entrance into the bigger question and the bigger issue. Is there even truth at all? Does truth even exist? You know as well as I do that you could talk to many people and you see it proclaimed on social media and in other formats of dissemination of information, that that is a hotly contested and vigorously denied concept that there even is truth.

It's interesting to me, looking back and sometimes I run across things on social media or reviews of our church, those are always interesting, people come one time and give the world an accurate description of your church, that's interesting to me. We have been accused of being arrogant in even having the name Truth Community Church. "Who are you to say that you have the truth?" And in some ways that's a legitimate question to ask, I suppose, and I just want to do a series of messages that I'm going to describe as we go along, to kind of deal with that matter. This is a series, it's going to be five or six messages titled "In Defense of Truth." Not Truth Community Church but in defense of truth itself, the very principle of truth. You see, the name Truth in our church name asserts that we believe in absolute truth contrary to the doctrines of a postmodern world, and we are going to do this critical series in order to defend that claim and we'll walk through some things here this morning.

What I want to do to start with is just start with a beginning principle here, the first point in today's message if you want to treat it that way, just simply a point called the centrality of truth. The centrality of truth. And speaking to an audience that is predominantly at least professing Christians, I want to help you understand. I'm preaching this predominantly to the professing Christian church and whatever spillover effect it might have with others who do not claim to be a part of the church of Jesus Christ will be incidental to my purpose. As I preached in my "Truth Matters" message this past

Tuesday, I am concerned that the church itself has lost sight of this critical issue, and I won't review all of the reasons why I believe that to be true but it is deeply apparent to me that the church itself, not just the church broadly although that is true, but it is also true within the body of Truth Community Church, we need to come back and understand these most fundamental basic elements of the nature of reality, and we need to understand that this principle of truth over against the idea that truth cannot be known, or that truth is simply a matter of personal opinion or how you feel on the inside after you've prayed about something, we need to address and assault those very ideas that have taken such deep root in the church of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, we must understand something really foundational: if there is no such thing as absolute truth, there is no such thing as salvation from sin, there is no such thing as a Bible that has authority because once you deny the principle of absolute truth, you have denied everything that Christ stands for, denied everything that Christ is, denied everything about his work and have just led yourself into complete and utter darkness where there are no answers to anything. And listen, I've stood by the deathbeds of enough people to know that truth matters. Truth is going to matter greatly and eternally when you are five breaths away from entering into the unknown realm of death, unknown if you don't believe truth. And so we must understand that this is no incidental message, this is no incidental series, this is everything. This is everything that we stand for and everything is built on the very foundation of truth.

So in this series that's going to take place through the month of June, give or take, I've planned and prepared five messages from key texts in the gospel of John, and I just want to introduce those texts to you now and then week by week we will treat them in individual messages. Here's the point for this morning: what you need to see is how central truth is to everything that we assert in the gospel, everything that we believe as Christians. Truth cannot be separated from the things that are most essential to the Christian faith. The very principle of truth, the very existence of truth must be defended, not simply teaching a passage but teaching that a passage has authority because it comes from the God of truth.

So I want to just show you some key passages from the gospel of John around which we're going to build this series. Look at the gospel of John 1 in verse 1. Let's start there. The gospel according to John, chapter 1, verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In that first verse we have been taken back before time began in order to see what was in existence at the moment God spoke creation into being, and we see that before time began "was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God." And you immediately are plunged into the depth of Trinitarian reality. This Word was God himself and yet he was somehow distinct from God because he was God and yet he was with God. There is a personal distinction in the Godhead and the language of the grammar there in verse 1 says that in the beginning the Word was already existing. The Word existed before time began and so there is this assertion of the preexistence of the Word, this compatibility or this companionship of the Word with God, and this essence of the Word that he himself was God.

Then you go down to verse 14 and you see, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and," what? "Truth." Truth being central to who the Word is and the Word being someone who was preexistent and with God and existing at the time of creation. This tells us that truth is eternal. Truth in the Word, this Word made flesh, has existed before time began. There was no beginning to it. Truth has always been because truth is found in this Word, truth found in the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. So as you talk about Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, God become man, the element of truth is central to that but that this is reality, this is the way that things really are, this is genuine, this is accurate that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate full of grace and truth. So you see truth and the Incarnation, the person of Jesus Christ, inextricably linked and wrapped around one another in the fact that you cannot see Christ without truth and you cannot see truth without Christ. They are indivisible. That's essential to understand.

Go to John 4:23. We see in verse 23 this statement from our Lord to the woman at the well. He says, "an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Worship must be true worship or it is a sin against God. Worship must be true worship or it is not worship at all. And so we're not free to simply make up our own rules and just make up our own approach to worship, as we'll see when we look at this passage in two weeks, true worship must be done according to the principles that God has revealed in his word and not go beyond them. And when you see and realize that the Bible says nothing about worshiping in drama and skits and things like that, you realize that churches in the name of Christ for decades have been practicing a false form of worship by pretending that that was actually worship toward God. Worship must be done in spirit and in truth.

So the reality of truth shapes and forms and informs everything that we do as we gather together as a body of Christ, and it shapes and forms and informs everything that you do when you worship in the privacy of your own prayer closet. You must worship in truth. You're not free to make up your own approach to it. God, who is holy, has the prerogative to establish the terms on which he will be approached by men if he will be approached at all, and so we must worship according to his dictates, not the dictates of what we prefer or what we like, or what, you know, what we think seems best.

Beloved, one of the things about the principle of truth is this, is that your opinion and mine when it comes to the realm of truth, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what your opinion is or what my opinion is, that does not change truth at all. The question is not what you feel like truth is, the question is what has truth always been, what was truth before you were born, what will truth be after you die. Those are the kinds of questions that we need to get to if we're going to deal rightly with an eternal God, if we're going to know and understand him; those are the kinds of questions that we need to be asking. You know, it's painful for me as a pastor and just as a Christian to realize the silly things that people use by which to determine what kind of church that they're going to go to, just matters of preference and, "Do I like the music or not?" Well, I always want to say in times like that, "What about the truth? Does this church," I'm not talking about our

church, just the concept of looking for a church, "what about the truth, does this church teach truth? Forget about whether the people are friendly enough to you the first time you've been there, forget about music styles, what about the truth? Is the truth central to why this church exists or is it simply a social club with a small little clique of you and me and another three?" You know, we need to get down to the principles that matter. God says that if he is to be truly worshiped, that it must be worship that is done in spirit and in truth. That means that we need to understand that our preferences are secondary to the principle of truth and what the content of truth is if we're going to rightly worship him. This would be revolutionary in the Christian community if people took this seriously but often they don't, right?

John 8, the third passage that we'll look at in this series. We've seen truth in the Incarnation, truth in worship. John 8:31 and 32, now we're just going to see truth in perseverance and continuing in the faith. John 8:31 and 32, "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'" Genuine salvation produces disciples who continue in the faith. That is not because they somehow contribute to their salvation with their good works but because God by the power of his Holy Spirit draws a man to the Lord Jesus Christ, makes him a new creation in Christ, gives him the ability to repent and believe, and the overflow of that is a changed transformed life. That is the mark of a true Christian, someone who believes in Christ and continues in Christ, not someone who prayed a prayer and then went on their own merry way and their life was never transformed. Jesus is saying here, as we'll see in three weeks, Jesus is saying that true salvation has a transforming effect and one of the ways that you recognize that is that the person is continuing in the truth. Well, if we're going to know what true salvation is and if you and I are truly saved or not, then we need to know what the truth is and we need to acknowledge and recognize that there is such a thing as truth itself. If you are to know the truth and it will make you free, then there must be such a thing as truth that transcends personal opinion or feelings.

Go on to John 14:6, and I just remind you this is an introduction, not a full exposition of anything here this morning, but in this familiar text in John 14:6 Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." To deny the principle of truth is to deny salvation itself. To deny the principle of truth is to deny and to close the doors to heaven and bolt and lock them shut from the outside to those who hear such monstrous lies that there is no such thing as truth, truth in salvation, truth in access to God, truth in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you start to see how in these most fundamental doctrines the principle of truth is so central to it? Do you start to see that if you abandon the principle of truth you have thrown the Bible away, you have denied God, you have accused God of lying himself for saying such a thing as there is truth when there is not truth if, in fact, our postmodern spirit is correct? The Bible is utterly incompatible with the spirit of our age. We must understand that. We are not going to be friends with this world, with our worldview. We cannot accommodate them. We cannot bring it into the church and try to make the two mix together. It's oil and water, there is always a separation between the two. It could be no other way.

One more verse, I've got a lot more to say about that but I guess I've got five messages to go so I don't have to say it all this morning, do I? John 17:17 where you see the doctrine of sanctification and the authority of Scripture side-by-side, wrapped around the idea, the principle of truth. John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." There is no sanctification, there is no progress in the Christian life apart from truth. God's word is truth. God's word is authoritative. Now listen, what you and I have to understand there are just such massive implications to this, we must understand that the principle of truth and truth as it is found in Christ is the foundation upon which everything else is built. There is no other foundation than that, and what this means, beloved, is this, is that if you are going to be a Christian, if you are going to continue as a Christian in light of these things, you must understand that that means that you are not going to be able to be friends with this world. You are not going to be able to be popular with people who hate the very principles upon which your salvation is built. That's not possible and we need to stop worrying about the fear of man and what men think of us as Christians from every level, from the man on the street whom we might have a conversation with Christ about, all the ways to the highest halls of Christian academia. We don't care what they think if they deny truth, if they're trying to accommodate themselves to the world. We don't care about that. We reject that. We separate ourselves from that because there is something more important than the approval of academics or the approval of the man on the street. Truth is more important than that. Christ is more important than that. And if Christ is the one who has truly loved you, if Christ is the one who has truly given himself up for you at the cross of Calvary and you say that you belong to him, then, beloved, the question of your loyalties and priorities has been settled in a way that makes you willing to accept rejection and abuse and hatred and rejection from the world because truth is more important than they are.

Jesus said in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also." So we affirm the centrality of truth, the centrality of truth in the understanding of basic reality, the centrality of truth and understanding Christian doctrine and salvation. You can't have doctrine or salvation without it, and also the centrality of truth in determining your priorities and your loyalties in the face of a hostile world. If the world hates us and rejects us and makes life very very difficult for us because it hates truth and rejects the principle of truth and we hold to it, then that's simply the consequence that we have of being blessedly chosen by Christ and saved by him as we walk through this world.

Scripture, Christ and salvation from sin, the concept of truth is foundational to each one and for those of you that are sitting on the fence about this, let me just give you some advice: don't trade your eternal soul for the sake of approval of people who deny the very principle of truth itself. Don't trade your soul for that. That's a bad bargain. That's not too swift to do something like that, and these are things that we need to think about individually and corporately and as the broad church of Christ, we need to think about

these things at a very deep and profound level and reexamine the foundations upon which we stand and decide for ourselves, "Am I going to be committed to this or not? Am I going to be committed to this enough to change the way my children are educated and to spend the time that is necessary to train them in the word of God because this is so important, and to guard and to protect them from a world that is trying to suck them away from that which I say is important?"

Just for example. The consequences of this go everywhere. The consequences of this go deep for church leaders. The consequences of this for church leaders mean that to lead a body that is devoted to truth means that you're willing to accept some people who reject you. Some come for a while, decide, "This isn't for me," and leave because they don't like the emphasis on Scripture or whatever, that's okay. Let them go. You let them go rather than changing your philosophy of ministry, fudging on the sharp edges of truth in order to keep someone. You don't do that. The priority for church leadership is determined by the concept of truth itself and being loyal and faithful to that. There's more that can be said about that, maybe later on I will, but all of these fundamental matters from what's deep in your heart, your loyalties and affections, all the way to the way that the broad church of Christ should function and the cultural collision of philosophies, all of that starts here. This is the foundation upon which everything is built.

Well, let's go on to a second point: the significance of truth. The significance of truth. The Greek word translated truth in English is *aletheia* and it occurs 27 times just in the gospel of John alone. It's obviously one of the key themes of his gospel and so it's important for us, since we're taking all of these texts out of the gospel of John, to just take a moment to consider what does this term mean? What does truth mean as it is presented to us in the gospel of John and in Scripture and as we consider it in a way that we just understand what the nature of reality is? What does truth mean?

Well, let's start with something simple. Here's something that a child can understand. Truth is simply that which is really so. It's that which is really so. It's the way things really are as opposed to that which is false or misleading. So we start from that principle, it is that which is really so, and from there you can work out different meanings that you can find in Scripture and in the lexicons. Truth, and I'm just going to give you a series of statements here to just kind of look at it from different perspectives. Truth is communication that does not deceive. Truth is communication that does not deceive. It is a representation of facts and reality that leads people to understand the way things really are and thus there is a fullness to truth. We all know that you can tell a partial truth in order to deceive someone; that is using truth to tell a lie. That's not true. You can tell the truth in order to deceive someone. Truth, by contrast, in its full-orbed reality is communication that does not deceive.

Here's another aspect of it, this goes to the heart of what we are clashing with our culture on this. Truth is reality which transcends individual experience. Truth is reality that transcends individual experience. It transcends your opinion. The fact that a transgender person says, "I feel like a girl in a man's body and therefore I'm a girl," that is not true. That does not make them into a girl because the truth of their existence transcends their

individual experience or their individual feelings about who they are. Truth is greater than what you feel inside, in other words.

Truth is reality which transcends individual experience. Another way to look at that is to repeat what I said earlier: truth is that which was real before you were born, which is true now, and will be true after you are born. The meaning of Scripture, you know, it doesn't matter what Scripture means to you, what we want to know is what Scripture meant before you were born and what it will mean after you die. That's a way of saying that truth is transcendent and goes beyond what any individual thinks. We have such high opinions of ourselves and we're so convinced that what we think is everything in the world, the concept of truth humbles that pride of man and says that truth is bigger than you are and you need to align with truth, not truth aligning with you.

Truth, you could say in another application of it, truth is personal integrity that keeps one's commitments. He's a truthful man is a way that could be used to say he's a man who keeps his word. Psalm 15 addresses that as one of the aspects of true godly character. Truth is personal integrity that keeps one's commitments.

Truth is character that acts with no hidden agenda, character that acts with no hidden agenda. You know people like that, you're always wondering what's really behind the words that they say, right? What are they really getting at? What did they mean by that thing that they said to me? Well, truth is character that acts without an agenda.

As we saw from John 8, truth is spiritual reality which sets one free. Truth is that which is genuine or accurate. Truth is reality in contrast to what the situation may seem to be on the surface. Okay, so there's just a lot of ways that this principle of truth works itself out but it's a transcendent reality that goes beyond individual experience, it goes and it has influence on human character, and it is that which is real, the way things really are.

Now with those simple principles stated, let's consider them in light of the very nature of God himself, shall we, because truth leads us to God and Christ. So turn in your Bibles to the book of Exodus 34 with me. Exodus 34. I'm not going to set the context for this verse; I've referred to it many times and done it there in past messages. But in Exodus 34:6 God is revealing the nature of his glory to Moses and he does so by declaring his attributes to Moses as he passes by, and in verse 6 you read this, "Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.'" As God is revealing his glory to Moses, one aspect of his glory, one of the radiating beams as the light hits the prism and shatters into the broad spectrum of color, one of the glories and one of the perfections of God is his truth, that he is truth himself, and you see that in that, a forerunner of Jesus Christ being full of grace and truth.

So God himself is defined in terms of truth. As you go on and we won't turn to these passages but Psalm 31:5 says that God is the God of truth. Christ himself is full of grace and truth, John 1:14 and 17. What about the Holy Spirit? Turn to the gospel of John 14.

Truth. Truth. Truth. Truth. Truth. John 14:16, we'll start there as Jesus speaks about the coming Holy Spirit. He says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." The Holy Spirit is known as, is identified by Christ himself as the Spirit of truth. You see that same language in chapter 15, verse 26, if you would turn there. John 15:26, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me." John 16:13 just across the page if your Bible is laid out like mine. "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative." And you can look at 1 John 4:6, it talks about the spirit of truth and the spirit of error and other places like that.

Beloved, here's the point, here's the point: you look at the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are identified in terms of truth. Sometimes I get frustrated with the limitations of human language and the inability of my own tongue to express the things that need to be said. This is one of those moments. This is one of those moments. The very nature of the eternal God is described and defined in terms of truth, truth revealed in Christ, Christ the actual revelation of God. Do you see what we're saying? Truth is fundamental to the eternal essence of the most holy, thrice holy, Triune God. God does not exist apart from truth. Truth is fundamental to his essence and so what you need to see and what we need to start grasping more fully is the spirit of the age in which we live is an attempt to assassinate God himself. If you deny truth, you have denied Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If you have denied truth, you have taken away the hymns that we sang earlier. There is no need to talk about holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty if he's not the God of truth. If it's just a matter of subjective experience and what one person thinks over against another, all of this collapses.

So if we are to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ, if we are to proclaim the true God out of Scripture, we must uphold the principle of truth and not bend, not yield an inch of ground on that territory no matter who hates us, no matter who abandons us, no matter who leaves. None of that matters compared to the transcendent importance of this principle of truth itself. You have no salvation without truth. You have no God without truth. You have no Bible without truth. Scripture does not permit it. And so the time comes for Christians, for the church of Jesus Christ to decide which side of this line it's going to stand on. Does truth exist or not? Is truth about your feelings or something greater than you? That's how central it is. That is how fundamental the significance of truth is.

That leads us to our third and final point here this morning. Again, this is just an introduction but we need to deal with the standard for truth. The standard for truth. If truth exists, and it does, then we must know where to go to find it. Where is the plumb line by which all other ideas and feelings are measured to know what is true or not? If truth is so fundamental it is important to know where and how to find it. And why are we Truth Community Church? Do you start to see the significance of the name on the sign out front? There's a reason that we call ourselves by this name. It's not that every church should be Truth Community Church, that would make it very confusing when you did a

Google search, right? When's their service? Ah, every church in the world is named Truth, that's a problem. I don't care what other churches call themselves, I'm just wanting you to understand why we identified ourselves in this way. It's because we are saying this is what we stand for. We stand for the very principle of truth and all of the implications that you find from that from Scripture, and we deny that that which contradicts Scripture has any possibility of being true. No wonder people take offense at the name of our church. If they disagree with Scripture we're saying they're lost in lies and telling lies. People don't like to hear that. I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that consequence, is what I mean.

So our church, Truth Community Church, affirms and practices, that's really an important combination there that's worthy of a sermon all of its own, Truth Community Church affirms and seeks to practice that the 66 books of the Bible are the only book of absolute truth. There is only one book in the world that tells you the truth without fail and without error and it is the Holy Bible, the 66 books of the English Bible based on the Hebrew and Greek and Aramaic originals. Not that the English is the only translation but you get what I'm saying. For us who are English speakers, we find it in the English Bible that we have in front of us.

So we see truth in Scripture, I'll expand on this in a moment. We also say that one of the aspects of truth is that there is only one way to God, that in Jesus Christ alone can salvation be found, and that every religion that changes and redefines Christ, that denies his deity, every religion that denies his humanity, every religion that says there are other ways to God apart from Christ, they are false, damnable, demonic, satanic, false religions that must be rejected and denounced for the sake of truth. Scripture and Christ, truth and truth. But beloved, what you have to understand is that as you're making those fundamental affirmations, it is essential to understand that the responsibility to affirm truth and to defend truth means that you must simultaneously make denials as well. And if you go to the best of the Confessions and Catechisms in the history of the church, you'll find that they affirm and deny, they affirm and deny. It's not enough to simply say we have a 10 point doctrinal statement that we affirm, what I want to know is what do you deny? If you're going to be so general about your affirmations, tell me what you deny, tell me what you think about Catholicism, tell me what you think about the pope, tell me what you think about Mormonism. Then we'll see whether we're on any agreement about truth or not because if your view of your little 10 point doctrinal statement accommodates Catholicism and Mormonism and you can call heretics and legalists like that Christians, we're not on the same page, we're talking a different language.

So we have to make denials. So we deny as we make these affirmations, we deny that any other religious book is true. We deny a satanic inspiration, the book of Mormon. We deny a satanic inspiration, the Koran. We deny any book that claims that it is on an equal footing with the 66 books of the Bible. We deny that. There is no other truth. Scripture stands alone. Sola Scriptura. Scripture is alone in its truth claims and anything, Catholic tradition, the authority of the pope that tries to put itself on a plane like that, they have just disqualified themselves as a religion. Not every Bible teacher will agree with what

I'm about to say but I'm going to say it. I said a week ago I've got things on my heart and I intend to say them and I'm going to say this. It is the same thing dealing with the Charismatic movement that tries to put their personal modern-day prophecies on the same level of Scripture. What you are saying is that you have another seat of authority and when Charismatics come and say, "God told me and therefore you must do this or that. God told me and here's what is true." We cannot talk that way and hold to Sola Scriptura. We cannot talk that way without deceiving people.

And so we deny that any other religious book is true, we deny that any other religion can lead to heaven. That's what we say about truth. That's what Scripture says about truth. Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone, not some modern-day prophet, not "God spoke to me," not "I prayed about it and I feel good about it and therefore this is true." None of that. None of that. All of those things are just compromise and dilute and distort the principle of truth and we can see from Scripture why that has to be and we'll do so in just a moment but understand as we are, I'm about to use a metaphor here, as we are fish swimming in water, our environment is all contrary to the affirmations that we are making here today. Post-modern thinking has no interest in the concept of truth, let alone the elements of truth. The spirit of our age is to deny that there is such a thing as absolute objective or universal truth. People seek truth based on their feelings, their visions, their inner voices, or their internal peace, or what's quickly becoming one of my favorites in more conservative Christian circles, "Hey, I've prayed about this and therefore it must be true. I've prayed about this and therefore my conduct is beyond accountability or correction." That's not true. That is not true and that is a reflection of post-modern thinking not biblical thought. One day I'll defend that statement in greater detail, people seeking truth on feelings, visions, internal peace, if it feels right it must be true. Beloved, I know we're used to hearing that and it's easy for many of us to slip into that kind of thinking ourselves, but we need to recognize it for what it is, when we find ourselves thinking that way or being sympathetic to that thought we need to recognize that as a temptation away from truth, a temptation to sin, and when we see that kind of thinking in our minds we need to denounce it and say, "No, that is not true. I reject that. That is not what I affirm and I am not going to allow my mind to think that way."

John MacArthur, have you guys heard of him? He's a pastor out in California. In his book "Why One Way?" said this. He said, "That is the one essential nonnegotiable demand that post-modernism makes of everyone, we are not supposed to think we know any objective truth. Post-modernists often suggest that every opinion should be shown equal respect and it all sounds very charitable and altruistic but what," I'm continuing the quote, "but what really underlies the post-modernists' belief system is an utter intolerance for every worldview that makes any universal truth claims, particularly biblical Christianity." Beloved, we are making universal truth claims in what we are saying today. That is what Christianity does. Christianity makes universal truth claims. That's what Jesus Christ did. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." That's a universal truth claim. If you exclude universal truth claims, you have denied Christ, you have denied the authority of Christ to make exclusive truth claims about himself. This is inescapable and you start to see the conundrum that this puts us in

in the society in which we live. We are utterly at odds with what is the accepted wisdom in the culture in which we live.

If the highest truth is found by what you think inside, then biblical truth from outside becomes irrelevant. We reject that and the prevailing cultural mindset is lethal. It is deadly. It is false. And there is no excuse, especially for anyone familiar with the Bible, there is no excuse for anyone who owns a Bible to fall prey to the world system in which we live. There's no excuse. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Proverbs 16:2 says, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives." Do you see, beloved, that what you think is not the final arbiter of what's true? The way that you feel, what your opinions are, that's not the final standard and that's the whole point of what we're talking about. What is the standard for truth? That's the third point, the standard for truth, it is not what a man feels inside or what a woman feels inside.

But we say more than just that. We not only deny that truth is found within, we deny even the possibility of finding truth within. Our world system, and many professing Christians, are so enamored with their inner being, so convinced that they can find truth in their own heart that they don't even recognize and what we need to say to them is that your mind and your feelings are utterly defiled and deceiving, far from being a source of truth. They are the path to deception for you. Don't go there. There is no truth within your heart, especially your unregenerate, unsaved, unredeemed, unrenewed heart. Your mind and your feelings do not and cannot guide you into truth. They lie to you. That's what Scripture says. Psalm 36:1, "Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes." Transgression, sin, iniquity, in other words. That's what's in your heart. Jeremiah 17:9, probably the clearest and most famous verse of these things on this point, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

Suppose, suppose that there was a way for us to put a man on trial and to prosecute him and to convict beyond a reasonable doubt that this man was a liar and everything that came out of his mouth was a falsehood. Suppose a hypothetical like that and that you knew that this man was constitutionally unable of telling you the truth. Would you go to him for investment advice? Would you go to him for counsel about who to marry or what to do with your chosen career path? Would you go to him to tell you an honest assessment of who you are if there was a man like that and would have been proven that he was false and that all he said was lies? You would never go to a man like that. You say, "He's known to be a liar. I can't trust him. I'm not going to listen to him. There have been too many contradictions over the course of his life, I know that you can't believe a thing he says." We have that experience with humans. We don't recognize, we don't understand that our heart is that man.

What other conclusion could we draw from Jesus' words in Matthew 15, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man." What other conclusion could we draw as Paul talks about the present wrath of God in Romans 1:28 when he says, "God gave them over

to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper"? What on earth makes anyone that is halfway minimally acquainted with Scripture think that they can find truth in their heart?

So we deny not only that the heart is a source of truth and that your opinions are a competing truth source, we deny even the possibility of it. It's one of the reasons that men need to be saved, that you need to be delivered, you need to be delivered because you have within you a mind that does not understand truth, that does not love truth, that rejects truth, and tells you lies apart from Scripture. Look, we're not being unloving when we tell people that, we're doing the most loving thing we can is to warn them about that and to pray that the Spirit of God would work and open their hearts and eyes and minds to understand that they might flee from this perverse generation, flee to Christ in order to be saved, and flee from their deceptive heart as the standard by which truth claims are made.

Everything depends on the things that we're talking about here today, beloved. The principle of truth, the glory of God, the glory of Christ, exclusive salvation and the state and condition and safety of your own soul. Everything depends on this. Proverbs 28:26 says, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." The heart of man is corrupt, evil and full of falsehood and so, beloved, there are consequences to that. That means that the feelings and opinion of men are irrelevant to assessing truth claims. What someone says that God spoke to them in their heart, you know, I get so sick of these kinds of things. The rage a few years ago, I don't know if it still is, is that there were supposedly a lot of Muslims that were seeing Jesus stand at the foot of their bed and supposedly Muslims are getting called and converted to Christ because they see a vision of Jesus at the foot of their bed and, you know, they supposedly turn to Christ out of that. This is just demonic deception is all that is because where does faith come from? What does Scripture say? Where does faith come from? Is it through visions? Not according to Colossians 2, "Don't believe a man who takes his stand on visions. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by," what? "The word of Christ." External to the man. External to his inner perceptions.

And Scripture asserts its own truthfulness and no higher authority exists, and anything that contradicts the higher authority is false by definition. Psalm 119:142, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth." Verse 151, "You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth." Verse 160, "The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting." John 17:17, "Your word is truth." Your word is truth. Your word. Your word. Your word. And in this way God is recognized as alone the authority as he's expressed it in his word and we don't come along with our petty, silly claims of visions and peace and all of those things and say that this is a standard by which I can determine truth.

All of that stuff, all of the post-modern thinking, all of the Charismatic nonsense, all of that stuff is an assault on the fortress of truth. It is the responsibility and the prerogative and the privilege of Bible-believing Christians to assert to the contrary. Indeed, it is our God-given commandment that we do so. Jesus said, "Go into all of the nations and teach them all that I commanded you." Our prerogative and our responsibility to say these

things and to assert these things is not found in whether the world gives us permission to do so. Whether the world likes it, whether people in the church want to hear it or not, our responsibility and prerogative and God-given duty comes from the great commission that Christ gave at the end of Matthew's gospel. It's because Christ told us to go out and say these things that we say them and no man has the authority to silence us because the authority that the church has to assert these things comes from Christ himself, and they must be asserted no matter who and how people respond.

So the word is the standard for truth. In like manner, truth is found only in Jesus Christ. Listen to these familiar passages. We've said John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. There is salvation in no one else," Acts 4:12, "for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and one Mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Not Mary. Not Mohammad. Not any other false teacher. It has nothing to do with Joseph Smith. 1 John 5:11-12, "the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Affirmation and denial. You have the Son, you have the life. You don't have the Son, you don't have the life. This is clear-cut.

And so, beloved, the standard for truth is the Bible alone. We've seen the significance, the centrality and the standard for truth and in our little local church, understand and now I speak especially to our members and those that are regularly associated with our church, not to the exclusion of our esteemed guests that we are so delighted to have with us, but for those of us that are associated with Truth Community Church, understand this: the name Truth Community Church is shorthand for our affirmation of all of these principles that we've been considering here today. It's a shorthand reference that we believe in the principle of truth itself, we reject post-modern claims, we say that truth is exclusive, truth is found in Scripture, truth is found in Christ. Not in us, not in our preacher, but in the things that we have been sent to proclaim. We make truth claims based on the word of God and it is upon that sure foundation that Truth Community Church exists.

Friends, what do you believe about the truth? What do you say about Jesus Christ? Does your mind follow truth as it is found in Scripture or do you follow the spirit of the age? Do you follow truth and let it contradict your feelings and opinions? Do you know something about conforming the way that you think to Scripture rather than saying Scripture must mean this because I feel this way about it? Answer the question well, beloved, there is so much at stake for you personally as you respond.

Let's pray together.

Gracious Father, we just pray in light of these things that You would bless Your truth as it goes forth, not just from this pulpit but from other pulpits that assert that truth as well. And we pray that as it goes forth, Father, that Christians would not be conformed to this world but that they would be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they might prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. And Father, as Your truth goes out from so many different places, Father, may You turn it

into cannonballs against the fortresses of post-modern thinking, cannonballs against the arrogant assertions of arrogant men who deny Christ, who deny Your word, who deny the inspiration and inerrancy of Your word in favor of their own latest academic opinions. Father, bring it all down so that Your truth might be elevated and might be glorified and might be honored, that souls might be saved, O God, from this perverse and crooked generation. O God, O God, where is the spirit that swept when Whitefield preached, when Edwards preached? Where's that spirit, Father, that came upon the preaching of great biblical Calvinistic truth? Father, wherever it is bring it back, bring it back as Your word is preached and proclaimed and may it have the same effect today as it did centuries ago for the sake and glory alone of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

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