

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

November 17, 2020

“Just the Facts, Ma’am.”

“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”

Proverbs 18:2

Jesus was recognized, among other things, for his stubborn adherence to truth. Even the Pharisees and Herodians could see that. *“Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God.”* (Mark 12:14).

Some of us — dare I say, “old-timers”? — remember the popular TV show, “Dragnet.” It featured Jack Webb as a detective who was famous for his abrupt style and his down-to-business attitude. His famous statement, *“Just the facts, Ma’am,”* became an oft-quoted idiom.

We could use a huge dose of “just the facts” right now because we are suffering from information overload on almost every important topic in our time. There are lots of opinions, but very little actual “news.”

People have little confidence that the information presented as “news” is factual. Information on Covid and the election or just about any other cultural issue today wants to make you scream: “who has the truth?!” In one study, the share of Americans who trust news media most of the time is a mere 29%. In a Gallup poll on the American public’s trust in various institutions both Congress and the President are more popular than the media, and that’s not saying much at all.

This is a crisis. I grew up in an era when facts mattered. It’s hard to believe in today’s climate but a news anchor, Walter Cronkite, was “the most trusted man in America” for many years. He reported the news, but if a report came in with no facts to back it up, it wasn’t “news.” And he didn’t make himself the center of attention, like so many of the “news” anchors today, who make statements without even attempting to offer evidence in support of what they are saying.

The proverb quoted above fits these talking heads well. The proverb calls them “fools.” A fool is someone who lacks sense and if he doesn’t learn to listen, he is not likely to ever become sensible. We should never state something as a fact without offering evidence to support the claim. If it’s opinion, we should call it opinion. For example, the blanket statement, “all Christians are homophobic,” is a foolish opinion with no facts to back it up. Yet, there are large percentage of people who believe it.

When we are dealing in the realm of facts and truth, we may disagree about the quality of the data that is presented — it may

be based on a faulty premise or the sample size may be too small — but we are looking for facts and searching for truth. These days, people just say stuff and find many who are willing to believe them and even quote them as “experts.”

They are being duped. A refusal to think critically is at least partially responsible for this. For example, an article appeared on the ChristianLeaders website entitled, “Mental Health and Covid-19.”

The author summed it up by saying this:

“One in five people who contract COVID-19 are diagnosed with mental illness within the three months following their positive test for the virus, a new study indicates. Among the mental illnesses being diagnosed are anxiety, depression, insomnia, and dementia.” The study analyzed the health records of 69 million people in the United States, including the records of 62,354 people who had been diagnosed with COVID-19 between January 20, 2020 and August 1, 2020. The study results were published in The Lancet Psychiatry journal.

Later in the article they include Attention Deficit Disorder among the mental health issues. This article tests your critical thinking skills. Think about it: First, for the 20% figure to be meaningful, you need to know the percentage of people who were already diagnosed with mental illness before contracting Covid. Second, you need to ask a question: “how do you know whether those in the 20% had mental disease before contracting Covid if they had not been diagnosed?” Third, was the mental illness caused by the disease or by the collateral damage of Covid lockdowns? Usually we can only be cognizant of effects; causes have to be ascertained by looking at evidence.

The cause of mental illness *could* be the disease. But it could also stem from weeks or months of isolation from family and friends, the sight of health workers coming into your hospital room with PPE, people treating you as if you are a leper, or the extreme fear-mongering in the media and from politicians.

The article implies that the disease itself caused the mental illness. That’s a frightening thought if true, yet there is no proof of that in the data presented. So, it amounts to mere speculation, and what good is that?

Let’s stick to the facts, sir and ma’am.

JUST THE FACTS.

