

# Renewing Our Thirst for Truth in 2017

BY DAVID POSEY

I can't think of a more important goal for this new year than to renew our love and thirst for the truth. Our influence as Christians in our society depends on that.

When Christie and I watch TV, we prefer to watch programs or movies that take place in earlier times — the genre called “historical fiction,” often based on true stories. For one thing, you get a glimpse of earlier times and, if the program is based on true events and is presented accurately, it's an educational experience wrapped in an entertainment package.

But the thing that draws us to those programs is that, if the show is true to its times, truth is something taken for granted and, generally, that truth comes from the Bible. There is an old-fashioned moral sense that permeates these programs; the attire is modest and if someone violates that socially-accepted principle, the community is shocked (can you imagine?).

And there is no question, at least in the programs that are set in the early 20th century or earlier, that there is a God who created the world and that Scripture is to be honored. That doesn't mean that everyone honored it, of course, but there was an assumption that they should. Unless the producers try to rewrite history, people in the West shared, generally, a biblical worldview.

In other words, to be accurate, the producers have to assume that most people believed in the Bible. It's fun and instructive to see dramas where the truth is alive and well and where there is a basis for judging what was right and wrong. When the foundation is there, the debates over how the rest of the building should look is less frustrating.

For example, in one episode of a program we watched recently that takes place in the early 20th century, a woman was actually stigmatized because she had an affair. The truth of adultery was taken seriously back then. But so was the truth of forgiveness. So, despite clear confession and repentance by the wife, the husband refused even to treat her kindly. He divorced her, with malice. And he was a villain. Why? That, too, was a clear violation of an assumed truth. And where does that truth come from?

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Mt. 6:14

## **The Age of Pilate**

But today, we live in the Age of Pilate. Remember him? He famously said, while standing faceto-face in the presence of Truth, “what is truth?” And he didn't even wait for the answer.

Truth is just as elusive to many in our day, apparently and it's hard to find people who are looking for an answer.

"Fake news," political rhetoric and constant stretching and concealing of the facts is what we now expect. Remember, the word of the year, according to the publishers of the Oxford Dictionary, is "post-truth." If we really live in a "post-truth" era, it means that we live in a time when there is no accepted "truth" — everything is relative.

As Christians, we know better. Sinclair Ferguson said, "To the unregenerate, God's will is inevitably unpleasant, simply because it is his will and not their will." Just replace "God's will" with "truth" and you get the idea. Truth is inconvenient; truth gets in the way of what we want to do; truth *convicts*. When Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit to his disciples, he said:

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-8)

Who wants to be "convicted" these days? Judging is uncool and cruel. It's not strange to hear, "I'm OK, you're OK," "don't preach to me," or "I'll do my own thing, leave me alone." And God allows people to go their own way, if they insist on it. "Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone" (*Hosea 4:17*).

### **This Is Not New**

This minimizing of truth is not a new thing.

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) said many years ago:

Truth is so obscured nowadays... that unless we love the truth we shall never recognize it.

How can people recognize the truth if they never look for it? They don't even know where to look — but that's not the problem. The problem is that they can't find the truth for the same reason a shoplifter can't find a security guard. And even if they did find it, to borrow a famous line, they can't handle the truth.

Look no further than some of the crazy stuff going on in our world, that many take for granted. For example:

1. The truth is that there are just two genders: male and female. The University of Kansas disagrees and offers buttons so students can make their preferred gender pronouns known. Why? "Because gender is, itself, fluid and up to the individual..." Are you kidding me?? (Genesis 1:27).
2. Similarly, the truth is that marriage was, is and always will be between a male and a female, a man (*ish*) and a woman (*isha*). Society can't change that truth — that truth (from God) is immutable.
3. The truth tells us that God created the world (Genesis 1:1, etc.). There is nothing that can disprove that truth; theories are not truth. They are opinions, nothing more.

Feeling over Facts Today, how one "feels" about something becomes his or her "truth." If the whole world operated on that principle, where would it take us?

If there is no absolute truth,\* then anything is permissible. In the 60s, the saying was “if it feels good, do it.” Words mean things and that generation was really good at questioning authority and dismissing truth.

Feelings are important and valuable, but only when governed by the truth. There’s a little poem that says it well:

Three men were walking on a wall Feeling, Faith and Fact;  
Feeling got an awful fall  
And Faith was taken back;  
Faith was so close to Feeling,  
He Fell, too;  
But Fact remained and pulled Faith up,  
And that brought Feeling, too!

### **Let’s Emulate Jesus!**

The Pharisees sent a delegation to Jesus. They said to him,

Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. *Matthew 22:16*

This is one of the few things in the gospels that the Pharisees got right. Jesus was not swayed by conventional wisdom or consensus. He was not influenced by opinions or by superficial arguments and appearances.

If we want to emulate Jesus — and that’s our calling — then people need to say the same thing about us.

When we post on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, our comments should always reflect a knowledge of God’s word. And I don’t mean by posting holier-than-thou comments or using jargon (“Christianese”) that only other Christians understand. But I do mean that we weigh what we are going to say on a scale that has God’s word to balance it.

That means we apply I Peter 4:11 (“if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God”) and that we live in the word so that John 8:31-32 is true for us:

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

It’s not that hard to be people of truth; we just need to be people of the book, “captives of the word,” dedicated to knowing the truth and, even more important, loving the truth.