

## "Seeing Truth Clearly"

### 2 Timothy 4:1-8

- I. Introduction
  - A. The measurement doctors use to indicate normal vision is 20/20, but our vision typically changes as we age
  - B. Spiritual vision can also change
    1. Truths that once seemed black and white become hazy over time
    2. Life experiences and sin can cause this haziness
  - C. 2 Peter 1:8-9, NLT
  - D. The religious leaders of Jesus' day claimed they had 20/20 spiritual vision, but they were blind because of their pride (see John 9:39-41)
    1. Spiritual blindness is a metaphor for the unwillingness or inability to see spiritual truth
    2. Spiritual acuity belongs to those who go to Jesus for help
  - E. Our culture is in crisis as cynical people question truth, as Pilate did (see John 18:38)
  - F. Most people believe that it's impossible to actually know what truth is
  - G. In 2 Timothy, Paul directed Timothy on how to combat apostasy in the church—falling away from the truth
    1. "A lie can travel halfway around the world while truth is still lacing up her boots" — Mark Twain
    2. Satan traffics in lies; Jesus called him the father of lies (see John 8:44)
    3. He has always used non-truth as a tactic (see Genesis 3:1), because it works
  - H. Let's look at three steps that will help us see truth clearly
- II. Be Concerned about Knowing the Truth (vv. 1-2)
  - A. In verses 1-5, Paul called Timothy to teach the Word, which is sound doctrine (see v. 3) and the truth (see v. 4)
  - B. The context for this is 2 Timothy 3:14
  - C. Paul mentioned truth eleven times in 1 and 2 Timothy and forty-nine times in all his writings
  - D. Christians are people of the truth, because Jesus is "the truth" (John 14:6) and the Bible is "the Scripture of Truth" (Daniel 10:21)
    1. Truth is tied to doctrine, which in its simplest form means strong biblical teaching
      - a. *Doctrine* in Greek is *didaskalia*, which means teaching or instruction
      - b. Paul used the term nineteen times in his writings
    2. Many Christians don't like the word *doctrine*
    3. Many treat their Bibles like their car's owner's manual, overlooked and unconsulted
    4. Many believe preaching is about what you feel rather than what is true
  - E. The Bible emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine—good, solid teaching of the truth

1. Hosea 4:6
  2. Acts 2:42
  3. I Timothy 4:13
  4. Titus 2:1
- F. "We do not have a strong church today, nor do we have many strong Christians. We can trace the cause to an acute lack of sound, spiritual knowledge. Ask an average Christian to talk about God. After getting past the expected answers, you will find that his God is a little God of vacillating sentiments" —James Montgomery Boice
- G. Ignorance is not bliss; we are accountable to know the truth
- III. Be Cautious about Neglecting the Truth (vv. 3-4)
- A. Our culture has largely rejected truth
1. Sensationalism is more important than fact
  2. Reporting is highly politicized and editorialized
- B. Epistemology is the study of how we know something is true and can justify belief in it
- C. Many consider truth personal and subjective, not objective
1. Personal truth can shift depending on each situation
  2. The prevailing belief is that there's no such thing as absolute truth
  3. Gallup poll: only 24 percent of Americans believe the Bible is the Word of God
  4. But "there's no absolute truth" is an absolute statement, a self-contradictory and self-defeating declaration
- D. This passage in Timothy was not a warning for unbelievers but for believers
1. Pew Research: 25 percent of American Christians believe God is a higher power but not necessarily all-loving, omniscient, and omnipotent as Scripture reveals
  2. 45 percent of American evangelicals say that many religions can lead to eternal life
  3. Barna Research Group: only 51 percent of American Protestant pastors have a biblical worldview
- E. Christianity is always one generation from extinction
1. It starts in the pulpit when pastors who don't believe in God don't preach the full truth of God's Word
  2. The emergent church: a recent movement led by a group of liberal pastors who claimed that the Bible isn't true and can't be trusted
  3. This is the kind of problem that leads to "itching ears" (v. 3)
  4. "People will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy" (v. 3, MSG)
  5. When Paul visited the Areopagus in Acts 17, he found that everyone there just wanted "to hear some new thing" (v. 21)
    - a. Preachers feed the desire for novelty over a need for truth
    - b. God's people are starving because pastors are pandering to itching ears
- IV. Be Careful about Nurturing the Truth (vv. 5-8)
- A. Paul called Timothy to hold to truth and doctrine, feed on it for himself, then share it

1. Paul was a prime example to Timothy
  2. He had fulfilled his ministry, kept the faith, and run his race
  3. He was ready for his reward, the crown of righteousness
- B. Paul directed Timothy to "preach the word" (v. 2)
1. *Preach* (*kérussó* in Greek) means to publicly proclaim
    - a. Refers to an imperial messenger who would make a proclamation with authority
    - b. Powerful orators in Timothy's town, Ephesus, could skillfully twist the truth
  2. Timothy's mission was to preach the truth of the true King—Jesus
- C. We should not be preaching our opinions, politics, or culture
1. The Greek word for *sound* (*hugiainó*) is related to *hygiene*
    - a. It's healthy to hear good, biblical teaching
    - b. True teaching promotes life, healing, and health
  2. "The best way to show a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or spend time denouncing it but to lay a straight stick alongside it" —Dwight L. Moody
  3. This is our calling as Christians: believe the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, teach the truth, and live the truth

**Figures referenced:** James Montgomery Boice, Tony Jones, Brian McLaren, Dwight L. Moody, Mark Twain

**Greek words:** didaskalia, hugiainó, kérussó

**Cross references:** Genesis 3:1; Daniel 10:21; Hosea 4:6; John 8:44; 9:39-41; 14:6; 18:38; Acts 2:42; 17:21; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:14; Titus 2:1; 2 Peter 1:8-9

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