

Words Of Truth

Memory Text: “Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?” (Proverbs 22:20, 21)

Setting The Stage: Whether a person lives in Africa, Asia, Australia, or the America’s, truth is always truth. If it weren’t, then it wouldn’t be truth. Truth is defined as “conformity to fact or actuality; a statement proven to be or accepted as true.” Some people say that there is no true reality, only perceptions and opinions. Everything then is relative to something else, and therefore there can be no actual reality. Because of that, there are ultimately no moral absolutes, no authority for deciding if an action is positive or negative, right or wrong.

If there is no right or wrong, then whatever feels or seems right at the time and in that situation is right. This is situational ethics and it leads to a subjective, “whatever feels good” mentality and lifestyle, which has a devastating effect on society and individuals. This is postmodernism, creating a society that regards all values, beliefs, lifestyles, and truth claims as equally valid.

Others argue that there must be some absolute reality or truth. This means actions can be determined to be either right or wrong by how they measure up to those absolute standards. If there are no absolutes, no reality, chaos ensues. Take the law of gravity, for instance. If it were not an absolute, we could not be certain we could stand or sit in one place until we decided to move. Or if two plus two did not always equal four, the effects on civilization would be disastrous. Laws of science and physics would be irrelevant, and commerce would be impossible. Thankfully, two plus two does equal four.

When asked what are some universal truths those who weighed in gave the following responses: “death & taxes,” “some things just take time,” “pop-tarts; you just can’t eat one,” “truth is always true even if no one believes it to be,” “ketchup makes everything taste better,” “your friends lunch is always more appealing than yours,” “a bachelor is an unmarried male,” “anything that can go wrong will go wrong,” “you can’t plan to be spontaneous,” “you cannot make everyone happy at the same time,” “men will be men,” “My name is Chris.”

In the chapters we’ll be looking at in Proverbs (22-24), the wise man provides certain universal absolutes that we ought to give serious consideration to. Before we do, let’s consider how truth should impact our lives.

Sunday – The Knowledge Of Truth

Proverbs 22:17, 18; John 17:3; Proverbs 22:19-21

It’s not always easy being confronted with the truth. However it beats the alternative - being lied to. Someone once said, “I’m not upset that you lied to me, I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe you.” Lies create distrust and ruin relationships. The Bible tells us that God is the embodiment of truth – truth personified. Speaking of Himself, Jesus said, “I Am the...Truth.” (John 14:6). God desires for us to know the truth.

What is the best way to approach truth? Read Proverb 22:17, 18a. First, “incline” – bow or bend down in humility, pay attention, focus! Second, “hear” – to comprehend, or understand. Third, “apply your heart” – cause to occur, or do the things you’ve heard though faith, love, and consideration. Some people have more facts about faith than faith, more knowledge about truth than knowing Truth (see John 17:3). Fourth, “within you” – digested, assimilated, and become a part of us. Many know the right thing but don’t do it.

What will truth do for us? Read Proverbs 22:18b-21. “Fixed upon lips” – securely placed or fastened that we might be fitted to share it with others. “Trust in the Lord” – the goal of knowing truth isn’t knowledge only, but in knowing and trusting (putting full weight upon) the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33 – “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”). “Excellent things” – not trivial, not for amusement, but for the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of His people, and the welfare of mankind. “Certainty” – We know all about the desire for certainty and the need to know why we believe what we believe. “Answer” – To share with others the “words of truth.” Knowing truth brings with it the responsibility to tell others. Others must be able to light their candle at our lamps (cp. 1 Pet. 3:15).

Monday – Robbing The Poor

Proverbs 22:22, 23; 23:10

Universal Truth #1 – God is a defender of the helpless. **Read Proverbs 22:22, 23; 23:10.** “Poor” – the helpless, powerless. Poverty is debilitating and can lead to crime, high death rate (health, poor structures, etc.), trafficking of children, etc. Stealing is always wrong but to rob from the poor to make them poorer, and from one who cannot defend themselves is especially heinous, and only a coward would perpetrate that foolishness.

“Afflicted at the gate” – The gate of a city was where the judges of the city often sat and where somebody could find protection from wrong and have justice done to those who oppressed them. The warning here is against judges who, under the color of the law, oppress the poor for personal gain. To patronize those who take advantage of the less fortunate is as bad as if we took advantage of them ourselves.

“Remove the landmarks” – Boundaries lines use to be marked with little piles of stones or larger pillars when they were available (today we use GPS coordinates). Without accurate surveying methods it was easy to remove landmarks and defraud the one defrauded to prove that it had been moved. It was evidently a problem

considering the number of warnings given against doing it (Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 23:10).

“The LORD will plead their cause” - If there is something that will face the retribution of God it is a greedy man who takes advantage of the defenseless. *David, Uriah, Bethsheba* (2 Sam. 12:1-15). Living with the knowledge of God and His justice has a put a check on many a man’s perverse plans (Gal. 6:7; Rom. 12:19 – Is this why people don’t want to believe in God?). There is a better way to live than to take advantage of others.

Job 31:16-21: “If I have kept the poor from *their* desire, or caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or eaten my morsel by myself, so that the fatherless could not eat of it (but from my youth I reared him as a father, and from my mother’s womb I guided *the widow*); if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or any poor man without covering; if his heart has not blessed me, and *if* he was *not* warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, when I saw I had help in the gate; *then* let my arm fall from my shoulder, let my arm be torn from the socket. For destruction *from* God *is* a terror to me, and because of His magnificence I cannot endure.”

Zechariah 7:9, 10: “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.’”

Tuesday – Being Jealous Of The Wicked

Proverbs 23:17; 24:1, 2; Philippians 4:11

Universal Truth #2 – Envy never did anyone any good. Envy is defined as “a grudging regard for the advantages seen to be enjoyed by others.” It carries with it the idea of “looking closely” and to “look with maliciousness.” Envy is like standing

in a long line at a theme park, waiting for a very short and disappointing ride. Envy of those who appear to get away with murder is just as pointless. **Read Proverbs 23:17; 24:1, 2; 19, 20.**

Yet there is a tendency and temptation to envy evil men and women, not because of the evil they commit, but because they seem to live a happy and carefree life. Line that up next to what often felt to be the strict and disciplined life (knife to throat – v. 2, rod on back – v. 14, reins for lips – v. 16) of a follower of Jesus and envy often finds its place in the heart of the believer.

I wonder though whether there ought to be more room for pity for the sinner than envy. **Read Psalm 37:1-11.** Sooner or later sin catches up with everyone. Followers of Christ always keep the big picture in mind. It's the solution to any envy problem (see Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6).

Wednesday – What We Put In Our Mouths

Proverbs 23:1-8, 29-35

Universal Truth #3 – Lifestyle choices affect our health. **Read Proverbs 23:1-3; 6-8.** According to these verses, why should we watch what we eat? We should do so in order to promote good health and not be led to imbibing things not fit for human consumption.

“Knife to the throat” – to kill the greed not yourself, or you will end up killing yourself! “Given to appetite” – We all need food, but if we can't control the appetite we'll find it a hard thing to control other areas of our life. “An intemperate man is an impatient man.” Our first parents succumbed to appetite, but thank the Lord that where they failed Jesus overcame (Matt. 4:4), and so can we!

Why is God so concerned with our health? Does it affect my salvation? Living well is an act of spiritual worship. While it doesn't save us (because only Jesus can do

that), it is the fruit born out of love for God and a desire to do those things that please Him. It is no secret that what we put in our stomachs affects our minds and if our minds are affected then that has potential to quiet God's voice (as the mind is the avenue through which God talks to us). So while eating right and healthy living shouldn't become our religion, we need to understand that it goes a long way to clearing the channels for God to communicate with us, and therefore is important.

Q. How does one reconcile Prov. 23:1, 3, 6 where the wise man admonishes us to be careful of what eat with Luke 10:8 where Jesus tells His disciples to eat whatever is put in front of them? There's no contradiction. "Such things" is encouragement to not ask for more than is given to you when visiting in someone's home. It actually falls into line with the counsel given in Prov. 23:2 – don't be greedy. Jesus isn't suggesting to accept and eat anything offered you as that would be contrary to the advice He's given elsewhere, such as in Proverbs. It may also help to remember that when Jesus sent out the seventy He sent them to Jerusalem and Samaria where the people obeyed the strict dietary laws given by God in the OT (Lev. 11 & Deut 14).

"His heart is not with you" – The world has different priorities than the Christian. Food marketed today is in a large way food that is prepared lacking a lot of nutritional value (think Fruit Loops, hotdogs, donuts, etc.) and for profit. Daniel and his three friends recognized this when they were taken as captives to Babylon. Everything done or given to them was calculated to undo their religious convictions and make them Babylonian. Let's no succumb to the diet and lifestyle practices of the world around us!

"Wine" (Prov. 23:29-35). Alcohol shouldn't even touch the lips of God's professed people. Would you drink something that is responsible for about 50% of all homicides in North America, nearly 50% of all deaths taking place on the highways, nearly 50% of people admitted to hospitals, 50% of people incarcerated in jail, 50% of people involved in domestic violence, and 50% of the nations birth defects? No,

neither would I. The Bible warned us long ago that we should be stay as far away from alcohol as we possibly can. Even though it's legal in this and many countries, God has outlawed it for the Christian.

Thursday – Our Responsibilities

Proverbs 24:11, 12, 23-28; Ezekiel 33:8

Universal Truth #4 – God has a special message to be proclaimed to the entire world! **Read Proverbs 24:11, 12.** What important message is here for us? In essence, Christian's have a duty to uphold justice and speak out and protect the helpless against injustices where and whenever they can. Primarily, we are called to warn the sinner of his/her ways and point them to a Savior who can deliver them from eternal ruin.

Everyone knows the story of Kitty Genovese, the young woman who in 1964 was murdered in a New York City residential section while at least 38 neighbors watched from their windows. During the course of the 30-minute assault, no one telephoned the police. Inaction in a time of crisis is unforgiveable. Could we say they were as guilty of her death as much as the man who committed the horrific act? Would that be too harsh?

Ezekiel 33:8: “When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked *man*, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.”

“In the great Judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves, will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.”

(Desire of Ages, p. 641)

While we have been given this awesome responsibility we must keep in mind that you are not asked to warn everyone, you are not asked to be rude, or to panic, or to be careless in how you deal with other minds. The warning is to those who have been afforded the opportunity to help and yet have turned a deaf ear to the cry of the needy.

Where are we to give our attention? Are Seventh-day Adventists to wage an all out war on poverty, hunger, war, injustice of every kind, racism, or economic oppression? *Story of two brothers and the sharing of the inheritance* (Luke 12:13, 14).

“Christ virtually said, It is not My work to settle controversies of this kind. He came for another purpose, to preach the gospel, and thus to arouse men to a sense of eternal realities. In Christ’s treatment of this case is a lesson for all who minister in His name. When He sent forth the twelve, He said, “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:7, 8. They were not to settle the temporal affairs of the people. Their work was to persuade men to be reconciled to God. In this work lay their power to bless humanity. The only remedy for the sins and sorrows of men is Christ.

“The gospel of His grace alone can cure the evils that curse society. The injustice of the rich toward the poor, the hatred of the poor toward the rich, alike have their root in selfishness, and this can be eradicated only through submission to Christ. He alone, for the selfish heart of sin, gives the new heart of love. Let the servants of Christ preach the gospel with the Spirit sent down from heaven, and work as He did for the benefit of men. Then such results will be manifest in the blessing and uplifting of mankind as are wholly impossible of accomplishment by human power.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 254)

“The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses, - extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Savior attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures.

“To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart. Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13).’ (Desire of Ages, p. 509)

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.” (Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 9, p. 19)

We have our priorities. Everything we do must be done with this in mind – sharing the everlasting gospel, the real cure to this world’s ills. Ultimately everyone will make up their minds, whether they will serve God or themselves. And then the end will come and Jesus will ultimately make all things new.

Appeal: Truth is the surest and the simplest way to live your life. God recognizes and blesses those who live truthfully and tell the truth. Lies and liars always lose.