

You Can't Handle The Truth!

By David Lee Burris

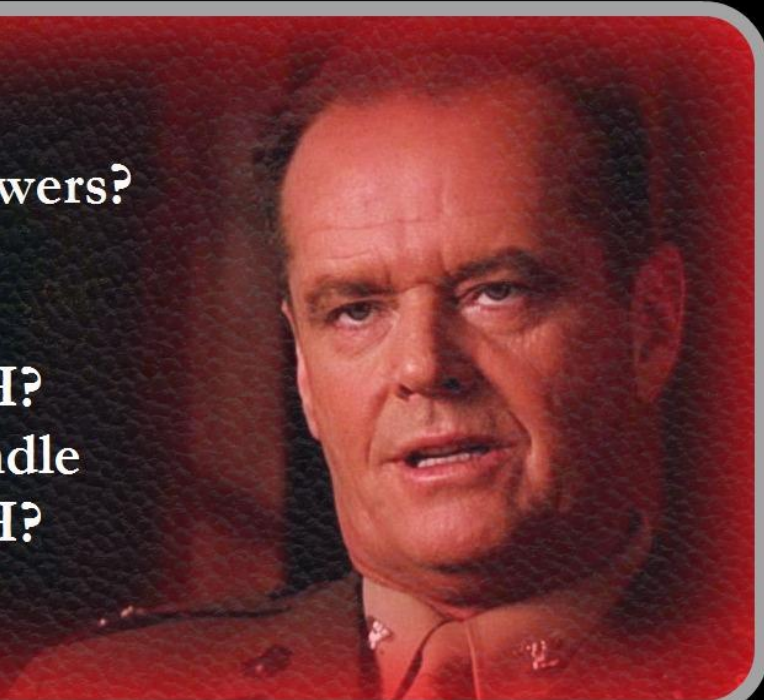
The Truth?



The truth, indeed, is something that mankind, for some mysterious reason, instinctively dislikes. Every man who tries to tell it is unpopular, and even when, by the sheer strength of his case, he prevails, he is put down as a scoundrel.
- H.L. Mencken.

facebook.com/atheistsVSreligion

You want answers?
The Truth?
You want
THE TRUTH?
You can't handle
THE TRUTH?



Can We Handle the Truth?

“Men stumble over the truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.”

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

IN THE MOVIE *A Few Good Men*, Tom Cruise plays a Navy lawyer who questions a Marine colonel, played by Jack Nicholson, about the murder of one of Nicholson’s men. The dramatic courtroom scene turns into a shouting match as Cruise accuses Nicholson of being complicit in the murder:

Cruise: “Colonel, did you order the Code Red!”
Judge: “You don’t have to answer that question!”
Nicholson: “I’ll answer the question ... you want answers?”
Cruise: “I think I’m entitled to them.”
Nicholson: “You want answers!”
Cruise: “I want the truth!”
Nicholson: “You can’t handle the truth!”

Nicholson might as well have been yelling at all of America rather than Cruise because it seems that many in our country can’t handle the truth. On one hand, we demand truth in virtually every area of our lives. For example; we demand the truth from:

- loved ones (no one wants lies from a spouse or a child)
- doctors (we want the right medicine prescribed and the right operations performed)
- stock brokers (we demand that they tell us the truth about companies they recommend)
- courts (we want them to convict only the truly guilty)
- employers (we want them to tell us the truth and pay us fairly)
- airlines (we demand truly safe planes and truly sober pilots)

We also expect to be told the truth when we pick up a reference book, read an article, or watch a news story; we want the truth from advertisers, teachers, and politicians; we assume road signs, medicine bottles, and food labels reveal the truth. In fact, we demand the truth for almost every facet of life that affects our money, relationships, safety, or health.

On the other hand, despite our unwavering demands for truth in those areas, many of us say we aren’t interested in truth when it comes to morality or religion. In fact, many downright reject the idea that any religion can be true.

As we’re sure you’ve noticed, there’s a huge contradiction here. Why do we demand truth in everything but morality and religion? Why do we say, “That’s true for you but not for me,” when we’re talking about morality or religion, but we never even think of such nonsense when we’re talking to a stock broker about our money or a doctor about our health?

Although few would admit it, our rejection of religious and moral truth is often on volitional rather than intellectual grounds—we just don't *want* to be held accountable to any moral standards or religious doctrine. So, we blindly accept the self-defeating truth claims of politically correct intellectuals who tell us that truth does not exist; everything is relative; there are no absolutes; it's all a matter of opinion; you ought not judge; religion is about faith, not facts! Perhaps Augustine was right when he said that we love the truth when it enlightens us, but we hate it when it convicts us. Maybe we can't handle the truth.

In order to resolve our cultural schizophrenia, we need to address four questions concerning truth:

1. What is truth?
2. Can truth be known?
3. Can truths about God be known?
4. So what? Who cares about truth?

WHAT IS TRUTH? THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

What is truth? Very simply, truth is "telling it like it is." When the Roman governor Pilate asked Jesus "What is truth?" nearly 2,000 years ago, he didn't wait for Jesus to respond. Instead, Pilate immediately acted as if he knew at least some truth. Concerning Jesus, he declared, "I find no fault in this man" (see John 18:38). By exonerating Jesus, Pilate was "telling it like it is."

Truth can also be defined as "that which corresponds to its object" or "that which describes an actual state of affairs." Pilate's judgment was true because it matched its object; it described an accurate state of affairs. Jesus really was innocent.

Contrary to what is being taught in many public schools, truth is not relative but absolute. If something is true, it's true for all people, at all times, in all places. All truth claims are absolute, narrow, and exclusive. Just think about the claim "everything is true." That's an absolute, narrow, and exclusive claim. It excludes its opposite (i.e., it claims that the statement "everything is *not* true" is wrong). In fact, all truths exclude their opposites. Even religious truths.

There are many other truths about truth. Here are some of them:

- Truth is discovered, not invented. It exists independent of anyone's knowledge of it. (Gravity existed prior to Newton.)
- Truth is transcultural; if something is true, it is true for all people, in all places, at all times (2+2=4 for everyone, everywhere, at every time).
- Truth is unchanging even though our *beliefs* about truth change. (When we began to believe the earth was round instead of flat, the *truth* about the earth didn't change, only our *belief* about the earth changed.)
- Beliefs cannot change a fact, no matter how sincerely they are held. (Someone can sincerely believe the world is flat, but that only makes that person sincerely mistaken.)
- Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it. (An arrogant person does not make the truth he professes false. A humble person does not make the error he professes true.)

- All truths are absolute truths. Even truths that appear to be relative are really absolute. (For example, “I, Frank Turek, feel warm on November 20, 2003” may appear to be a relative truth, but it is actually absolutely true for everyone, everywhere that Frank Turek had the sensation of warmth on that day.)

In short, contrary *beliefs* are possible, but contrary *truths* are not possible. We can *believe* everything is true, but we cannot *make* everything true.

The Road Runner Tactic

Self-defeating statements are made routinely in our postmodern culture, and once you sharpen your ability to detect them, you’ll become an absolutely fearless defender of truth. No doubt you’ve heard people say things like, “All truth is relative!” and are no absolutes!” Now you’ll be armed to refute such silly statements by simply revealing that they don’t meet their own criteria. In other words, by turning a self-defeating statement on itself, you can expose it for the nonsense it is.

We call this process of turning a self-defeating statement on itself the “Road Runner” tactic because it reminds us of the cartoon characters Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote. As you may remember from Saturday morning cartoons, the Coyote’s one and only quest is to chase down the speedy Road Runner and make him his evening meal. But the Road Runner is simply too fast and too smart. Just when the Coyote is gaining ground, the Road Runner stops short at the cliff’s edge leaving the passing Coyote momentarily suspended in midair, supported by nothing. As soon as the Coyote realizes he has no ground to stand on, he plummets to the valley floor and crashes in a heap.

Well, that’s exactly what the Road Runner tactic can do to the relativists and postmodernists of our day. It helps them realize that their arguments cannot sustain their own weight. Consequently, they crash to the ground in a heap. This makes you look like a super genius! Let’s take the Road Runner tactic to college to show you what we mean.

Ideas have consequences. Good ideas have good consequences, and bad ideas have bad consequences. Indeed, many students realize the implications of these bad postmodern ideas and behave accordingly.

C. S. Lewis revealed the absurdity of expecting virtue from people who are taught that no virtue exists: “In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”

The truth of the matter is this: **false ideas about truth lead to false ideas about life.** In many cases, these false ideas give apparent justification for what is really immoral behavior. For if you can kill the concept of truth, then you can kill the concept of any true religion or any true morality. Many in our culture have been attempting to do this, and the past forty years of religious and moral decline trumpet their success. Unfortunately, the devastating consequences of their efforts are not just true for them—they are also true for all of us.

CAN ALL RELIGIONS BE TRUE?

So we've established that truth can be known. In fact, it's undeniable. But so what? Can't all religions be true? Unfortunately, it's not just the secular world that's confused about this question.

Religious beliefs cannot all be true, because many religious beliefs are contradictory—they teach opposites. For example, conservative Christians believe that those who haven't accepted Christ have chosen hell as their ultimate destination. It's often overlooked, but many Muslims believe the same about non-Muslims—they're headed for hell as well. And Hindus generally believe that everyone, regardless of beliefs, is caught in an indefinite cycle of reincarnation. These contradictory beliefs can't all be true.

In fact, world religions have more contradictory beliefs than complementary ones. The notion that all religions teach basically the same thing—that we ought to love one another—demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of world religions. While most religions have some kind of similar moral code because God has implanted right and wrong on our consciences, they disagree on virtually every major issue, including the nature of God, the nature of man, sin, salvation, heaven, hell, and creation!

Think about it: *the nature of God, the nature of man, sin, salvation, heaven, hell, and creation.* Those are the biggies! Here are a few of those big differences:

- Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe in different versions of a theistic God, while most Hindus and New Agers believe that everything that exists is part of an impersonal, pantheistic force they call God.
- Many Hindus believe that evil is a complete illusion, while Christians, Muslims, and Jews believe that evil is real.
- Christians believe that people are saved by grace while all other religions, if they believe in salvation at all, teach some kind of salvation by good works (the definition of "good" and what one is saved from varies greatly).

These are just a few of the many essential differences. So much for the idea that all religions teach basically the same things!

Once I Was Blind but Now I See

What does the vast plurality of religious beliefs tell us about truth in religion? At first glance, it might appear that the existence of so many contradictory beliefs just reinforces the elephant parable we mentioned—namely, that truth in religion cannot be known. But exactly the opposite is the case. To refresh your memory, in this parable an elephant is being examined by six blind men. Each man feels a different part of the elephant and thus reaches a different conclusion about the object in front of him. One grabs the tusk and says, "This is a spear!" Another holds the trunk and says, "This is a snake!" The one hugging the leg claims, "This is a tree!" The blind man holding the tail thinks, "I have a rope!" The one feeling the ear believes, "This is a fan!" And the one leaning on the elephant's side is certain, "This is a wall!" These blind men are said to represent world religions, because they each come to a different conclusion about what they are sensing. Like each blind man, we are told, no one religion has *the* truth. Religious truth is relative to the individual. It is subjective, not objective.

This may seem persuasive until you ask yourself one question: “What’s the perspective of the one telling the parable?” Hmmmm, let’s see, the one telling the parable.... He appears to have an *objective* perspective of the entire proceeding because he can see that the blind men are mistaken. Exactly! In fact, he wouldn’t know that the blind men were wrong unless he had an objective perspective of what was right!

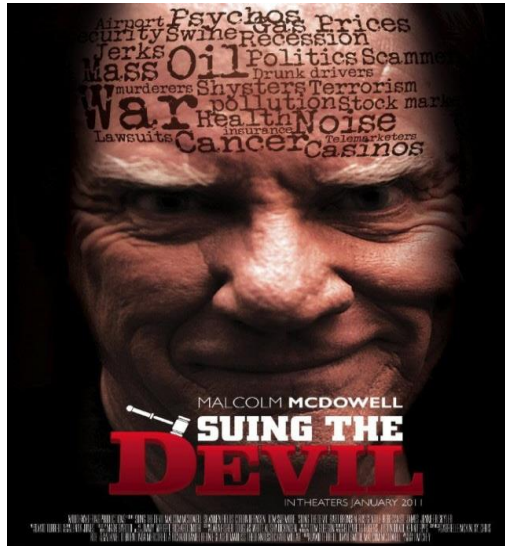
So, if the person telling the parable can have an objective perspective, why can’t the blind men? They could—if the blind men suddenly could see, they too would realize that they were originally mistaken. That’s really an elephant in front of them and not a wall, fan, or rope.

We too can see the truth in religion. Unfortunately, many of us who deny there’s truth in religion are not *actually* blind but only *willfully* blind. We may not want to admit that there’s truth in religion because that truth will convict us. But if we open our eyes and stop hiding behind the self-defeating nonsense that truth cannot be known, then we’ll be able to see the truth as well. And not just truth in the areas where we demand it—money, relationships, health, law, etc.—but truth in religion as well. As the blind man healed by Jesus said, “Once I was blind, but now I see.”

SUMMARY

1. Despite the relativism that emanates from our culture, truth is absolute, exclusive, and knowable. To deny absolute truth and its knowability is self-defeating.
2. The “Road Runner” tactic turns a statement on itself and helps expose the self-defeating (and thus false) statements that are so common today. These include statements such as, “There is no truth!” (Is *that* true?); “All truth is relative!” (Is *that* a relative truth?); and “You can’t know truth!” (Then how do you know *that*?). Basically, any statement that is unaffirmable (because it contradicts itself) must be false. Relativists are defeated by their own logic.
3. Truth is not dependent on our feelings or preferences. Something is true whether we like it or not.
4. Contrary to popular opinion, major world religions do not “all teach the same things.” They have essential differences and only superficial agreements. All religions cannot be true, because they teach opposites.
5. Since, logically, all religions cannot be true, we cannot subscribe to the new definition of tolerance that demands that we accept the impossible idea that all religious beliefs are true. We are to respect the beliefs of others, but lovingly tell them the truth. After all, if you truly love and respect people, you will tactfully tell them the truth about information that may have eternal consequences.¹

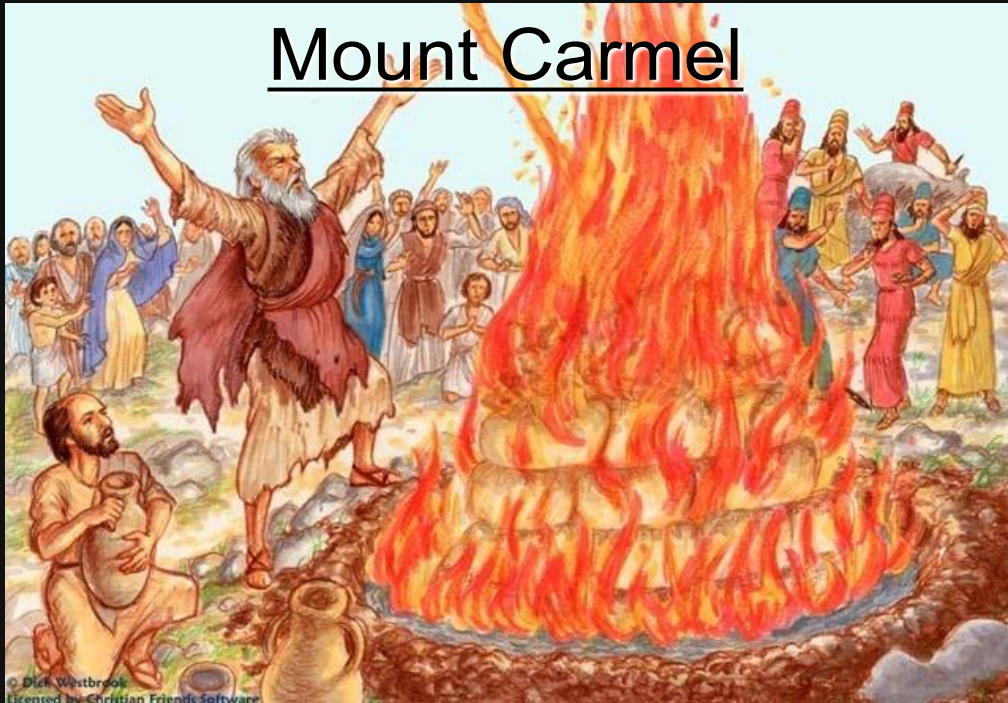
¹ Geisler, N. L., & Turek, F. (2004). [*I don’t have enough faith to be an atheist*](#) (pp. 34–50). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.



“The story took a trip into la-la land when the Aussie movie’s main character had a telepathic moment with Satan and a church group, as angels and as demons. They even went to... ‘YOU WANT THE TRUTH, YOU CAN’T HANDLE THE TRUTH’ on the witness stand.” *Christian Movie Review*

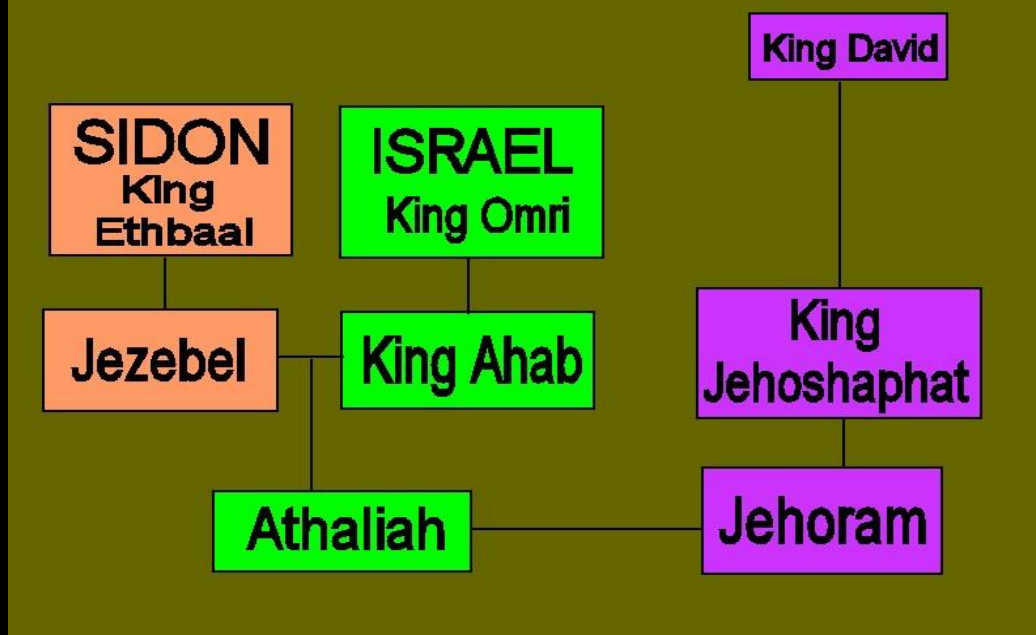
O.T. Battles For Truth

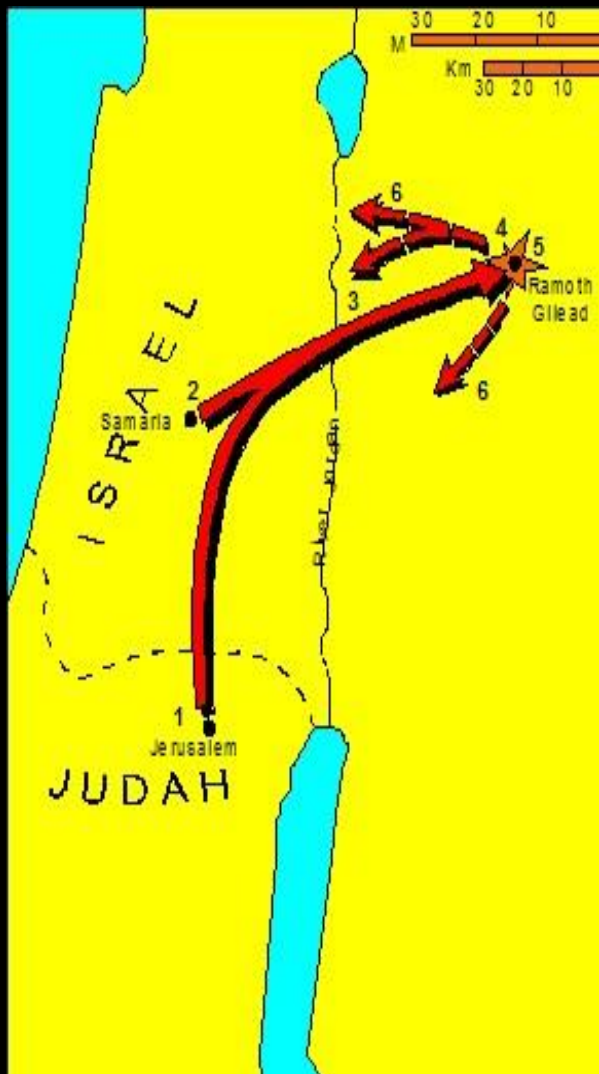
Mount Carmel



four attitudes towards truth

Watch those family connections!





1. When Jehoshaphat of Judah goes to Samaria. Ahab of Israel urges him to join him in attacking the Syrians at Ramoth Gilead.
2. Ahab consults his court prophets. All predict success, except for Micaiah, who has a reputation for bad news. He tells Ahab that his army will soon be scattered, without a leader.
3. Ahab throws Micaiah into prison until his safe return, and then heads for battle alongside Jehoshaphat.
4. During the battle, 32 chariots have orders to seek out and kill Ahab. They fail to find him, but a stray arrow finds a gap in Ahab's armor and fatally wounds him.
5. Ahab pulls back from the front line. But he stays in the battle, to reassure his soldiers.
6. At sunset, Ahab dies and his army is scattered, as predicted by Micaiah.

AHAB HATED THE TRUTH

- **He decided what he wanted to do before he even consulted truth - (1 Kings 22: 3)**
- **He gathered the prophets together who would approve what he already decided - (1 Kings Chapter 22: Verse 6)**
- **He did not want to consult Micaiah, because he knew that the prophet would not tell him what he desired so to hear- (1 Kings Chapter 22: Verse 8)**

- He had rejected the truth when Micaiah gave it to him, because it wasn't what he wanted to hear - (1 Kings 22: 17 - 18)
- He soothed his bad conscience by getting rid of the messenger of truth - (1 Kings 22: 26, 27)

PROPHETS WILLINGLY PERVERTED THE TRUTH

- **Zedekiah and the other prophets were willing to tell the king what he wanted to hear to gain his favor(1 Ki. 22:6, 11-12).**
- **The messenger who went to summon Micaiah pleaded with him to confirm the words of the other prophets, because he was more concerned about pleasing the king than telling the truth (1 Ki. 22:13).**

JEHOSHAPHAT WANTED THE TRUTH ON HIS SIDE

- **Unlike Old Ahab, Jehoshaphat did want to consult and consider the truth (Ch 22: 5, 7); but Jehoshaphat was only interested in truth if it supported what he already wanted to do.**
- **Jehoshaphat had already determined what he was going to do before suggesting that they inquire for the word of the Lord [v. 4].**

MICAIAH WANTED TO BE ON SAME SIDE AS THE TRUTHS

- **“It is one thing to wish to have truth on our side, and another to wish sincerely to be on the side of truth.”** - Richard Whately

MICAIAH WANTED TO BE ON SAME SIDE AS THE TRUTHS

- Micaiah loved the truth, and he was willing to speak the truth regardless of the sacrifice, or the pain it caused, or the real consequences—
Chapter 22: Verse 14
- Plus, he had to pay a price for loving the truth.
 - Zedekiah struck him and mocked him [v. 24]
 - He was imprisoned - {1 Kings 22: 26 – 27}

Can You Handle the Truth?

by Bruce Gore

“You can’t handle the truth!” is more than a line from a movie. Too many say they want the truth, but then ignore it. Can you handle the truth God reveals?



[From the January/February 2014 issue of [Discern](#).]

The truth is not always pleasant or easy. Sometimes we are tempted to ignore it or reject it rather than accept what it reveals about us or the tough changes it demands of us.

There are several revealing stories in the Bible about what happens when someone can’t handle the truth. First, let’s look at the account of an ancient king that has important implications for us today.

To understand this story, it’s helpful to consider some background context. Following the death of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split into two separate kingdoms, becoming the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. One of the most righteous kings of Judah was Jehoshaphat. He lived around the close of the 10th century B.C. into the beginning of the 9th century.

Around the same time, a notoriously unrighteous king by the name of Ahab ruled in Israel.

A king who couldn't handle the truth

One of Israel's cities, Ramoth Gilead, had fallen into the hands of the king of Syria, and Ahab wanted to take it back from him. He asked righteous King Jehoshaphat to join him in a military assault to recover the city. This incident is found in 2 Chronicles 18.

Jehoshaphat was concerned whether this venture would be blessed by God or not, so he asked Ahab to inquire of the Eternal God about it. Ahab went to his personal (false) prophets, who assured him that the Lord would give them victory (2 Chronicles 18:5). These prophets were not servants of the true God, but instead were worshippers of idols. King Ahab and those prophets had rejected God and His laws.

Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with the source or answer, so he asked if there was not a prophet of the Eternal God available (verse 6). Ahab reluctantly admitted there was one, but he made it clear that he usually had a great dislike for what the true prophet said. He said that this prophet of the Lord, Micaiah, always prophesied bad things for the king (verse 7). The bigger picture is that, since Ahab was not obedient to God, the king did not receive God's blessings. The prophet only delivered the message; he did not cause what happened to Ahab!

Jehoshaphat insisted that they consult with Micaiah, so Ahab's men sought him out, coaching him to say encouraging things to the kings. Micaiah knew they didn't want to hear the truth; and surprisingly, at first, he told them everything would go well in the battle. But Ahab knew the prophet was not telling them the whole story, so Ahab insisted on Micaiah speaking the truth.

He rejected truth that came directly from God

So, Micaiah told them the truth that God had revealed to him. "Then he said, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, "These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace"' (2 Chronicles 18:16).

Micaiah was shown that Israel's army would be scattered and defeated, and its king would die in the battle!

King Ahab had insisted he needed the truth. But Ahab couldn't handle the truth!

Instead of asking what he could do to change the outcome of this prophecy against him, Ahab became angry at the one who had told him the truth. The king literally sent the prophet to prison and put him on a ration of bread and water (2 Chronicles 18:25-26)!

It was the truth, but it was not what Ahab wanted to hear. He couldn't handle the truth and **turned against the messenger** who brought it.

A New Testament official who couldn't handle the truth

There is a similar example in the New Testament. Some Jews had brought false charges against the apostle Paul, and Paul asked to have those charges resolved before Caesar. While Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea, Felix, the governor of Judea, ordered Paul to appear before him and his wife, Drusilla. Felix had heard of Paul and the Christians, and he wished to learn more about them.

But when Paul got to the heart of the truth, the governor couldn't handle it!

“And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you’” (Acts 24:24-25).

Sadly, most people can't handle the truth. They aren't willing to accept it. They would rather go on believing the things they have heard from others, things that have been passed on from previous generations, but that do not accurately reflect the Bible's teachings. Felix and his wife did not want to hear the truth about *righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come*—the heart and core of God's way of life. One reason for Felix's reluctance was the fact that Drusilla was his third wife; and contrary to God's law, he had taken her from her former husband. Responding to the truths Paul taught would interfere with Felix's way of life; he was in no way ready to change.

“You can't handle the truth”

“You can't handle the truth” is *not* true of some people!

Sadly, most people can't handle the truth. They aren't willing to accept it. They would rather go on believing the things they have heard from others, things that have been passed on from previous generations, but that do not accurately reflect the Bible's teachings.

When Christ told people in His time that many of their religious beliefs were based on the traditions of men as opposed to the truth of God's Word, they couldn't handle it. “He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition’” (Mark 7:9).

His hearers often reacted with such anger that they tried to silence Him by stoning Him to death—that is, they were willing to *kill Him* for telling them the truth. **That's the same spirit ancient King Ahab had**—slay the one who brings a message you do not like!

People who traded truth for lies

Paul spoke of those who “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). Human nature, which has been influenced by the devil, has always been the same. Most would rather believe they do not have to live by the righteous laws of God, so they accept the lie that there is no God. Or they accept the more subtle lie that God does not hold us accountable for our actions. (Adam and Eve fell for Satan’s reasoning—see Genesis 3:1-6.)

“The time will come when people will not listen to sound doctrine, but will follow their own desires. ... They will turn away from listening to the truth” (2nd Timothy 4: 3-4).

Some learn to reject untruths

Another true prophet of God, Jeremiah, spoke of people finally learning that there is no benefit in listening to or following false teachings. Only following the true teachings of the Holy Bible will bear the fruit of a better life now and, ultimately, eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

In that day people all over the earth will turn to God to find the hope of life based on truth. “O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things’” (Jeremiah 16:19).

The benefits of accepting and responding to the truth

When we come to understand that all decisions and choices have consequences; when we are willing to look honestly at the wrong decisions we have made and turn our life around, making wise decisions—then we can avoid the pain and difficulties that befall those who can’t handle the truth.

God’s laws were given to help mankind enjoy lasting marriages, families and lives. King David came to understand that and prayed, “Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me” (Psalm 40:11).

David understood that the truth could always be found in the Holy Scriptures inspired by God’s Spirit working in those servants He used to write the Bible.

3 TYPES WHO CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH (SESSION 1; 1 COR. 1:10-25)

February 26, 2018 by David Briscoe



In the 1992 film *A Few Good Men*, Colonel Nathan R. Jessep, the character played by Jack Nicholson, delivers what is likely the most memorable line in the movie. In a pivotal scene near the end of the movie, the colonel was being interrogated as a witness in the court-martial of two young marines under his command. The defense attorney pressed Jessep to admit whether he had issued a “code red” command that tragically ended another young marine’s life. In response to the attorney’s fierce demand to hear the truth, an outraged Jessep finally blurted out, “You can’t handle the truth!”

I have thought deeply about Jessep’s statement since I first watched that movie. It is true that sometimes we just don’t want to hear the truth. We would rather hear words that confirm our own ideas or wishes. This is what the apostle Paul said when he wrote to Timothy, “For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Paul’s message to Timothy was not the first time the apostle spoke about people who didn’t want to embrace the truth. In the first chapter of the book of 1st Corinthians, Paul identified three types of people who weren’t really interested in hearing the truth.

Dividers can't handle the truth. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, Paul addressed the problem of rivalry and division in the church at Corinth. Believers were forming factions based on their preferred spiritual hero. Some claimed to prefer Paul. Others circled around the gifted preacher Apollos. Still others claimed an alignment with Cephas (Simon Peter). And, of course, there were some who boasted of being true Christ-people. Paul wanted nothing to do with such divisions, because the gospel is a unifying truth. Paul prayed that all believers would “be united with the same understanding and the same conviction” (1:10).

Prove-it-to-me people can't handle the truth. The Greeks of Paul's day were well-known for human logic and worldly wisdom. Think Plato and Aristotle, for example. Therefore, when Paul proclaimed the gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected for the forgiveness of our sins, many Greeks could not handle the truth. They couldn't wrap their heads around such a message. In all honesty, the influence of Greek worldly wisdom still echoes today, causing many to reject the gospel simply because it doesn't fit their worldview. Paul declared, however, that “God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached” (1:21).

Show-me-a-sign people can't handle the truth. Where the Greeks of Paul's day required worldly wisdom, the Jews of that time demanded to see miracles, especially deliverance miracles. There were plenty of stories in the Old Testament of how God worked mighty miracles to protect & deliver His covenant people. Thus, they expected of the coming Messiah to be the Master Miracle-Worker. John 6:30 tells of a time when some Jews asked Jesus, “What sign, then, are you going to do so we may see and believe you? Jesus refused their demand. For the Jewish people, therefore, the gospel of grace through faith in the crucified and resurrected Messiah was not the kind of sign they wanted. They stumbled over the gospel.

“Picture first that court martial scene in *A Few Good Men* as Tom Cruise relentlessly demands truth from the infuriated Jack Nicholson, who finally barks back that famous line, ‘You can’t *handle* the truth!’

Although stated with an entirely different tone to make an entirely different point, Jesus said essentially the same thing to his followers just before his arrest and trial.

Picture now the last supper scene in John’s Gospel as the disciples question where Jesus is going and how they’ll be able to follow him (John 14). Jesus gently, perhaps wistfully, responds: ‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now’ (John 15:12). In other words: ‘*You can’t handle the truth; you can’t take in the ‘whole truth and nothing but the truth’.*

Then he adds, ‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come’ (John 15:13).

I wonder how often there’s more truth available to me — were I just prepared to handle it. But receiving truth in small doses is, I suppose, a blessing. How comforting to know that Jesus felt compassion for his followers who weren’t ready to hear the fullness of his truth. How hopeful to hear a promise that more was/is yet to come from the Spirit of Truth.

There have been times when I protected myself from more difficult questions for fear my worldview would change too much, for fear I would have to delve deeper in my own emotional life than I was prepared to go, for fear I would leave my old self behind and never find my way back to that me, for fear I might discover a God bigger than I could handle.

At other times I have simply been so weighted with my own needs that I’ve missed transformative experiences with others that could have deepened my spirit. I was too distracted by my hurts, preoccupations, or prejudices to listen deeply to someone else’s truth. I’ve not always welcomed new truth.” – *Anonymous*



