

What is Truth?

And does it really matter anymore?

Selected Scriptures
8/7/2013

Introduction: John 8:30-32

Definition of "Truth": Truth describes that which conforms to fact or reality.

1. **Without Truth, anything goes** (there are no rights & wrongs, no ethics & morals)
2. **Without Truth, there is no way of knowing anything for sure**
   "Absolute truth is the fundamental moral category in the universe. Without it people perish" (Proverbs 29:18)
   - Truth is not determined by popular opinion.
   - Truth is not determined by the five senses.
   - Truth is not relative but absolute
   - Truth does not change with time.
   - Truth does not change with culture or custom
   - Truth is not invented; it is discovered

*** In these days of lies and deception, we need to know what the TRUTH is.**

I. Truth is embodied in God

1. God the Father is the truth. John 5:32

2. Jesus Christ is the truth. John 14:6

3. The Holy Spirit is the truth John 14:17, 15:26

II. Truth is knowable John 17:17; Isaiah 8:20

III. Truth is the basis for morality Psalm 119:142; 1 John 1:8

IV. Truth is available to all Romans 1:18-20; *Romans 10:18*; *Psalm 100:5*

V. Truth is not for sale Proverbs 23:23

VI. Truth must be proclaimed with conviction *2 Timothy 4:2-5*

VII. Truth shall set you Free! John 8:30-32

***"the" truth -	Truth is exclusive
***"shall make you" -	Truth is powerful
***"shall make you free -	Truth is liberating

There is one main truth for all. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

John 8:36 - If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.



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"Absolute truth is the fundamental moral category in the universe. Without it people perish" (Proverbs 29:18)

- Truth is not determined by _____.
- Truth is not determined by the _____.
- Truth is not _____
- Truth does not change with _____.
- Truth does not change with _____
- Truth is _____; it is _____

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- Lack of truthfulness is a chief characteristic of these evil days in which we live.
- In the business world, the phrase, "You have my word on it" is meaningless.
- In the social world, fidelity between friends is hard to find.
- In the domestic world, faithfulness to marriage vows is a rarity.
- In the ecclesiastical world, "thousands who have solemnly covenanted to preach the truth make no scruple to attack and deny it" (Pink, p. 52)
- It seems that just when you thought someone told you the truth, you realize it was a lie. When you thought they were sincere, you find out it was just a cover-up. Where is truth to be found?

In a day in which lies prevailed Pilate asked Jesus Christ the question, <u>What</u> <u>is</u> <u>truth</u>? (John 18:38)

God's Word has much to say on the topic of "truth." The word occurs 342 times in the KJV translation of the Holy Bible. (truth = 224; true = 77; truly = 41).

Definition of "Truth": Truth describes that which conforms to fact or reality. Truth is fact and reality. A "Truth" then is a fundamental law, statement, object, or event or action that matches with ultimate reality. Truth describes actuality; realness; authenticity; & genuineness.

Related terms of truth:
"Faithful" – something for someone you can place full faith in; reliable; dependable. Worthy of trust.
"Sincere" – Realness or genuineness in action, utterance, or character.

Opposite of Truth: Falsehood; lies, distortion or misrepresentation of facts.

Today we live in an anti-truth world.

2 Tim. 3:7-8
Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

"I believe it is proper to say that the story of this tragic 20th century is the story of the battle for truth. The chronicling of its history is the chronicling of its truth-journey. Others have documented this battle and defined this journey as unfolding in three steps:

1. There was the *traditional era* where truth was mediated to the culture by the preacher out of the Bible.
2. There was the *modern era* where truth was mediated to the culture by scientific naturalists in their laboratory and by rationalistic philosophers in their logic.
3. Finally there came the *postmodern era* where truth is now mediated to the culture by rock musicians and where the MTV world-view reigns supreme.

First there was truth as defined by God – "true truth"; then there was truth as defined by man – temporal truth; and finally there was no truth – non-reason, nihilism, despair, the tragic loss of truth. This is a microcosm of the 20th century's philosophical and spiritual journey. In this kind of world, where truth is anything anybody wants it to be, passionate truth bases are absolutely indispensable. To me, that is what historic, biblical fundamentalist churches and agencies have always been." (Doug McLachlan, Fundamentalism – What's in a Name?)

Hosea 4:1

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Is there a <u>true</u> way …

- For husbands & wives to relate to each other in marriage? (Are there roles & responsibilities for the home?)
- Of rearing children? ("train up a child in the way he should go…" Which way is that?)
- To organize a church, evangelize, or make disciples? (Who qualifies for church leadership?)
- What about sex? Are there defined boundaries as to when, where and with whom such activity is to occur?
- To enter Heaven or Eternal Life? Is Jesus Christ really the only way? If so why?

Are we bigoted or chauvinistic to insist that there is one true Faith? Or to believe that Christianity is superior to all other religions?

While we certainly believe and most of us would die for the right of everyone to have freedom of choice as to which god they will follow or which faith they will believe, we believe and have the God-given right to believe that Jesus Christ is the Truth and the only Savior of mankind.

1. Without Truth, anything goes (there are no rights & wrongs, no ethics & morals)

Pr 29:18 "Where *there is* no vision, the people perish" This means: "where there is no revelation from God the people go unrestrained" Where there is no truth, the people go off the deep end.

America's general rejection of God (He is no longer allowed in our public schools or public life) has become the catalyst behind much of the chaos, confusion, disorders we find today in family life, education, the legal system (court system etc.), etc.

- If there is no God (and we are a product of chance or evolutionary cause, as Darwinism)
- Then there is no Lawgiver to whom we are accountable.
- If there is no Lawgiver then there is no law or standard by which to measure right & wrong.
- If there is no Law or standard by which to measure right & wrong, there is no absolute truth.
- And if there is no absolute truth, there is no basis for morality.
- Each person can determine the "rules for life" and man can be his own god.

The problem with this is this: If everyone can make his own rules for life, then when my rules and your rules conflict, there is no structure to society to determine how to resolve the issue.

Each will be out for what he wants at the expense of anyone else's property or life. There is no basis for common law, if there is no basis for truth. If God is "dead" or non-existent then everything becomes permissible.

Interestingly enough, God said "lawlessness" would mark the last days, prior to Christ's return. And the Antichrist will be called the "lawless" one as he will embody the lawless spirit that will engulf the world in the end times. (2 Th. 2:8 – "Wicked one" = anomos; lit. without law). The stage is being set today for his arrival.

Our culture is committed to attaining it's vision of radical liberation from all authority. Authorities are viewed by many as the enemy of individual freedom. There is an underlying current today, to do away with all authority structures. Whether it be authority in the home, church, or government. Authority is a bad word today. It flies in the face of humanism (man being the measure of all things) and relativism (anything goes). Therefore any Authority, such as a supreme God or The Bible must be eradicated from society.

"Preachers are tolerated so long as they stick to therapeutic messages of enhanced self-esteem, and resisted whenever they inject divine authority or universal, absolute truth claims in their sermons." (Burggraff, p.7)

2. Without Truth, there is no way of knowing anything for sure

"Absolute truth is the fundamental moral category in the universe. Without it people perish (Proverbs 29:18 – where "vision" is "revelatory vision" or truth from God). Individuals, cultures and entire civilizations unravel at the seams when they are subjected to a truth-deprivation." (Doug McLachlan)

Beliefs directly affect morals. What you believe determines how you behave.

When you believe a Lie, you will live a lie and tell a lie. Those of false religions are prone to telling lies because they are believing a lie. Lies beget lies. Satan is the father of such lies (John 8:44).

John 8:44
Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

- Truth is not determined by <u>popular opinion</u>. (There was a time when the majority of the world believed that the earth was flat; they were wrong)

- Truth is not determined by the <u>five senses</u>. (Our sense of sight for example might mistake a mirage for water) Truth is not apparent reality (what seems to be real), but reality itself.

- Truth is not <u>relative but absolute</u> (It is often said "what is true to you may not be true to me"; But we are not the measuring stick by which truth is determined);

  It must be recognized that we live in a pluralistic society. "Pluralism is simply recognition that different cultures believe different things. But pluralism is also the harmful ideology that heralds the message that all truth is relative and all religious beliefs -- even those that flatly contradict each other – deserve equal respect. Pluralism is best distilled in the popular mantra: "that may be *your* truth, but it's not *my* truth." (David Burggraff)

  There exist many enemies of those who hold to absolute truth. Though they believe in no absolutes, they are absolutely sure that those who believe in absolutes are absolutely wrong for doing so. Radical relativism is a direct challenge to the Christian Gospel.

  Enemy # 1 to many people are those who hold to a "one way" to God belief system.

- Truth does not change with <u>time</u>. (As a Fundamental Law, what was true 2,000 years ago remains true today)

- Truth does not change with culture or custom (What is true in Africa is true in America).
  Lying is wrong in any culture; the same goes for stealing; committing adultery etc.

- Truth is not invented it is discovered (Man cannot create truth, he can only discover truth; Man can discover truth whether that truth is locked away in something in the physical universe or whether it is a law or principle that God uncovers for man to comprehend, as Christians believe He has done for us in the Bible)

*** In these days of lies and deception, we need to know what the TRUTH is.**

I. Truth is embodied in God

All truth must be tested by a standard, and there is no standard beyond God. He is the perfect and ultimate source and standard of truth.

--Truth is not invented by man.

--Truth does not evolve from society's mores.

God not only tells the truth, He is the truth. Truth is part of the essence of God.

1. God the Father is the truth.

Jn. 5:32
Jesus said of the Father: "He that sent me is true" (Jn. 7:28; 8:26.
Jesus came that we might know the "only true God" (Jn. 17:3; cp. I Jn. 5:20).
The Thessalonians turned from idols to serve the living and true God (I Thes. 1:9).

2. Jesus Christ is the truth.

EX: John 14:6 - "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

It is said of Jesus that He was "full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14); "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17).

Pilate didn't realize it, but when he stood before Jesus Christ, he was staring truth in the face--yet he said, "What is truth" (Jn. 18:38).

The Bible says that: "The truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21).
Jesus is so true, He is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. 3:14).
Jesus called true - Rev. 19:11 - "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

3. The Holy Spirit is the truth.

Jn. 14:17, 15:26 - He is called the "Spirit of truth."

Because the Holy Spirit is truth, He never guides anyone into error, but only in the truth (Jn. 16:13 - "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

The Holy Spirit's job is to tell the truth about Christ - "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth" (I Jn. 5:6).

God's essence is truth - in contrast to false gods (idols which cannot think, act, etc.).

Absolute truth corresponds to the Divine Nature of God. This nature of Truth has been revealed to man in Christ (the living Word), and specifically though His Written Word.

II. Truth is knowable

"Absolute truth is marked by objectivity and know-ability. We are neither agnostics nor Athenians. The Athenians, according to Luke, built an altar to "the unknown God" (Acts 17:22, 23). But the God of truth is not unknown or unknowable, because He has revealed Himself to us. And this is a revelation which is both objective – personified in Jesus (who has now gone to heaven) and deposited in Scripture (which we hold in our hands) – and knowable – through the quickening and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-16) and the accurate exegesis of a text (2 Timothy 2:15)." (Doug McLachlan)

In this postmodern day, truth is viewed as inaccessible. "As postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty asserts, truth is made rather than found; all truth is socially constructed. That is, social groups (such as Christians, for example) construct their own "truth" in order to serve their own interests. Thus, the role of the intellectual is to "deconstruct" truth claims in order to liberate society. (cited by David Burggraff)

God has revealed the truth (He has made it known and knowable)
Ask God t reveal His truth to you.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: John 17:17
Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Accept the Bible as God's Word and you will know the truth

John 8:31-32 - Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Whether you are aware of it or not there is an agenda to “deconstruct” the literal or normal meaning of significant texts of Law and Literature.

“This new hermeneutical method explains much of the current debate in literature, politics, law, and theology. All texts—whether the Holy Scripture, the United States Constitution, or the works of Mark Twain – are subjected to criticism and dissection, all in the name of liberation.

Therefore, the Bible is subjected to radical reinterpretation, often with little or no regard for the plain meaning of the text or the clear intention of the human author. Texts which are not pleasing to the postmodern mind are rejected as oppressive, patriarchal, heterosexist, homophobic, or deformed by some other political or ideological bias.

While we claim that the Bible is not the mere words of men, but the Word of God, our claim to divine revelation is written off by the postmodernist as only one more projection of oppressive power.” (David Burggraff)

Everyday there is less and less respect given to the Bible or to any written Law for that matter.

Isaiah 8:20
To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

“Nobody can know truth about God, or "do theology" as God ordained, apart from confidence in and meticulous attention to God’s own revelation of Himself in the text of Scripture. Even God’s revelation of Himself in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth is of little help to us now, since He has ascended back to heaven. But the text of Scripture is something we hold in our hand and can hide in our mind and heart.” (Doug McLachlan, p.6)

III. Truth is the basis for morality

Psalm 119:142
Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.
1 John 1:8
If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Why would truth be discarded? The answer is simply this: John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

One reason why men do not believe the truth is because they love their sin.

II Thes. 2:12 - "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Cp. II Tim. 3:7, 8 - "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."

People dodge truth to preserve their sin. Mankind's basic self-centered nature will very often ignore truth, deny truth, or even fight the truth in order to gain or maintain some pleasure or selfish ambition.
The question lurking in most hearts today is not: "What is True?" but "What makes me feel good?" The issue for most people in our society today is not: "What is right", but "I want my rights."

"The "feel good" religions are replacing the "negativity" of offensive biblical texts, and thus the Bible is dispensed altogether." (David Burggraff, p.6)

IV. Truth is available to all

God has revealed some aspects of Himself via creation
(many suppress “hold down” that truth in unrighteousness; Romans 1:18-20
“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; [19] Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. [20] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:”

God has sent His Gospel throughout the world
Romans 10:18 - But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Psalm 100:5
For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

John 17:17
Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

V. Truth is not for sale

Truth must be held to with tenacity. Truth is not for sale no matter how high the price!

“Solomon was right to say: "Buy the truth and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). We need a whole new generation of believers who refuse to sell the truth, whomever the highest bidder may be. Whatever kingdom, empire or salary, whatever name or fame may be offered, we are responsible to affirm that truth is not for sale, and make certain that we hold tenaciously to it whatever the cost may be.” (Doug McLachlan)

VI. Truth must be proclaimed with conviction

All truth must be shared courageously and compassionately.

Today, is no day for wimps. If you hold to truth, then it is “over your dead body” that you move from that truth.

2 Timothy 4:2-5 - Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

“Absolute truth matters profoundly to serious-minded, deeply-committed Christians. Such Christians pay attention to the epistolary mandates – all those commands in the New Testament epistles which require that we guard the gospel, hold fast the faithful word, continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and contend earnestly for the "once-for-all" delivered faith. More than that, serious-minded Christians are prepared to draw lines, set limits, erect boundaries and refuse concessions based solely on obedience to biblical absolutes.” (Doug McLachlan)

When it comes to preaching God’s Word, we need to deliver a precise, unexaggerated, unembellished reflection of the passage we are preaching. We don’t add or take away from what God said and what He meant by what He said. The precept, principle or message we deliver from God’s Word must follow the discipline of hermeneutical law and conform to the context of the passage. Our preachment should be an accurate reflection of the grammar and syntax of the passage we are proclaiming.

VII. Truth shall set you Free!

See: John 8:30-32

"As he spake these words" – While Jesus taught about His equality with God the Father and the Father's authentication of His Son, many of the Jews believed in Him. They came to trust His Person while they listened to His words.

This is exactly how "faith" comes into a person's life – by their hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). You cannot have faith in Christ apart from the Word of God. Faith and the Word cannot be separated. To have faith apart from God's Word is to have a faith without a solid foundation.

Therefore, whenever you witness, always give the Word of God.

At the very least these people made an outward profession of faith (Rienecker, citing Morris & Schnackenburg).

There is a belief which is not a true saving faith (Acts 8:13-24; Ja. 2:19; 1 Cor. 15:2).

The "belief" was perhaps "nominally at any rate, as in John 2:23" (Robertson Word Pictures V, p. 148).

"Many believed. Yet before long they were picking up stones to cast at him (8:59). It is the old story of pseudo faith" (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Peiffer & Harrison, Moody Press, p. 1091).

v. 31
Some might profess to be believers (or true disciples) but the real test is whether or not they remain committed to the Word of Christ.

Jesus now singles out those whose faith has been ignited upon hearing His Words.

"Continue" = to <u>remain</u> or <u>abide</u> in the Word of Christ

The grand mark of a true disciple of Christ is <u>continuity</u> in His Gospel message.

A true disciple is one who holds on to the truth and never lets go. There is <u>no</u> apostasy for a true disciple; there are no defectors from genuine Christianity; there is no true child of God who will ever abandon his/her faith in the word of Christ.

"Then <u>are</u> ye" – Jesus uses His words carefully. He does <u>not</u> say "then <u>will ye</u> be."

He is not saying that continuing in His Word will <u>make</u> you a disciple, but rather that continuing in His Word <u>reveals</u> that you "<u>are</u>" a true disciple.

"My disciples indeed" – A disciple is one who has come under the spiritual teachings and disciplines of His master (the word discipline and disciple are related terms).

The word "disciple" refers to one who has been trained in such a way that he mimics, imitates, or copies the lessons and lifestyle of his teacher.

That is why the first-century Antiochian believers were called "Christians," because others noticed how much they resembled Christ (in their actions and reactions, in their attitudes and motivations).

"Disciples <u>indeed</u>" – the word "indeed" means truly. It is the same word as the word "truth" in v. 32.

A disciple "indeed" refers to a true, bonefied, real or genuine disciple. The statement then does <u>not</u> refer to a good disciple or a better disciple (as if some might assume that Jesus is implying that one might be a disciple but not a good one, unless He continues in His Word).

Here, Jesus is referring to a real discip0le (is a real Christian) as opposed to a false one.

Jesus is saying: "Your future loyalty to My teaching will prove the reality of your present profession. . . continuance in the word (teaching) proves the sincerity or insincerity of the profession. It is the acid test of life" (R.W.P. p. 149).

True Spiritual Freedom can be yours, if you go to the right place to get it!

> **"Ye shall know the truth" –** Here, the term "<u>truth</u>" is linked to the term "<u>word</u>" in v. 31. It is interesting that Christ, who is the living "word" (*logos* – Jn. 1:1, 14) and who is the living "truth" (Jn. 14:6), is the one who gave us His written word which is written truth (Jn. 17:17 – "Thy word is truth").
>
> "Knowing the truth" is inseparably connected to continuing in Christ's Word (v. 31). Therefore, your relationship with God's Word will determine your knowledge of the <u>truth</u> which will in turn determine whether or not you are **<u>"free"</u>** from sin.
>
> Question: How much time have you spent in God's Word this week?
>
> Truth is the engine or driving force of the Christian's life.
>
> Apart from the truth we dwell in the realm of lies, deceit, darkness, and death!
>
> A good definition of truth: Truth (*aletheian*) is <u>reality</u>; it comes to us as reality that has been revealed, unveiled, unsealed, or opened up. When God's revelation opens up before our eyes, we come to see and know reality. The fog and mist of Satan's lies is lifted and the reality of Jesus Christ and His will becomes clear to us.

He is the truth (Jn. 14:6) because He not only tells us reality, but He is reality. He is really God. He is in fact God in visible form. He is the personification of everything that is real.

"**You will know" –** future middle – meaning: you will come to know for yourself. You will be personally enlightened or illuminated to the truth.

'The truth shall make you free" –

***"the" truth -
Truth is exclusive (truth is not relative; ex. What is true for you may not be true for me)
Truth is not optional, where you can pick any set of beliefs and turn out okay

***"shall make you"
Truth is powerful

***"shall make you free" –
Truth is liberating

The word "free" means to be released from enslavements; to be unshackled from that which held you captive.

"Free" – free from what?

Free from enslavement of sin (v. 34)

Free from the lies of Satan (v. 44-45)

"Freedom *intellectual, moral, spiritual) is only attainable when we are set free from darkness, sin, ignorance, superstition and let the light of the world shine on us and in us" (RWP, p. 149).

The precious theme of freedom from condemnation of the Law and from the enslavement of sin is found in verses such as:
Romans 6:18
Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Romans 8:2
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

2 Cor. 3:17
Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Galatians 5:1
Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

1 Peter 2:16
As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Knowing the truth about . . .

- God sets you free from the lie and enslavement of idolatry
- Man sets you free from the lie and enslavement of humanism
- Creation sets you free from the lie and enslavement of evolution
- Salvation sets you free from the lie and enslavement of false religion
- Love sets you free from the lie and enslavement of self-centeredness
- Marriage sets you free from the lie and enslavement of divorce and adultery
- Church sets you free from the lie and enslavement of the cults

There is one main truth for all. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

John 8:36 - If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Conclusion:

Because God is truth. We must:

1. Love the truth -
   Prov. 8:7 - "For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abonomination to my lips."
   We are to "buy the truth and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23); we are to "love the truth" (Zech. 8:19).

2. Always tell the truth -
   Eph. 4:15 - "Speak the truth in love."
   God's truthfulness never ends (Ps. 11:5, 117:2); neither should ours.

3. Tell the truth, no matter what the cost -
   EX: Peter's lying in his denial - Mt. 26:69-74.
   God hates lying - Zech. 8:16, 17.

4. Tell the truth, even when others do not want to hear it -
   Gal. 4:16 - "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

5. Tell the truth to your children -
   Is. 38:19 - "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth."

6. Live your life according to the truth - Ps. 86:11
   "I will walk in thy truth" -- II Jn. 4; III Jn. 4.

7. Keep your word -
   Do what you say you will do.

8. Be sincere (genuine, not a hypocrite)
   Josh. 24:14 - "Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth."

   I Sam. 12:24 - Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you."
   Ps. 51:6 - "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts."
   Jn. 4:24 - Worship in "spirit and in truth."

9. Our church must uphold the truth.
   We are the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15).

10. Come to the Truth – Jesus Christ
    John 14:6
    Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Appendix

Keeping Ourselves Theologically Literate
Dr. Douglas R. McLachlan

Gary L. W. Johnson, in an essay entitled: "Does Theology Still Matter" indicts the evangelical world for its "astounding degree of theological illiteracy" and its "growing bias against theology." (*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, p. 58). He cites a 1994 survey in *Christianity Today* which demonstrates clearly that theology really does not matter to either the people in the pew or the pastors in their pulpits. The way the magazine interpreted the data gleaned from the survey was especially disconcerting to Johnson:

Because seminary professors put a high priority on theological knowledge, they were considered out of touch with reality and did not have "a good understanding of the needs of local churches or the culture". The article concludes with this ominous remark: "Something's got to happen. The church is not going to wait. If the seminaries don't wake up and come along, they will be left in the dust." Wake up to what? . . . The article implied that less theology (or maybe *no* theology) in the seminary curriculum is the direction needed. (*Crisis*, pp 59, 60)

David Wells is perhaps the most prophetic voice speaking to the tragic loss of theology in the Christian community. In the introduction to his most recent book, *Losing Our Virtue*, he says the following:

I should say straight away that what I have done in this book will be irritating to those who do not wish to hear theological truth, and many in the evangelical world do not. They have already washed their hands of it. As little as I wish to wave red rags before bulls and further provoke those who took offense at my earlier books, the fact is that the enculturation of the evangelical world and its self-betrayal through its theologically emptied-out faith is the reason why the Church has no answer to the national crisis of character. It is also the reason why the postmodern world is not hearing, as it should, a Word from God. For this is what theology is really about. I am understanding theology, then, as the work of bringing the truth of God's Word into lively intersection with the life of the Church, as it exists in its own culture, with the intention of seeing Christian understanding, character, and behavior made more authentic. (*Virtue,* pp 1, 2)

On account of our abandoning the work of doing theology, Wells says, "the seeds are now being abundantly sown out of which a new liberalism is already arising that will be as destructive to biblical faith as was the older liberalism." (*Virtue*, p 2) In addition, he says:

There has . . . come a hollowing out of evangelical conviction, a loss of the biblical Word in its authoritative function, and an erosion of character to the point that today, no discernible ethical differences are evident in behavior when those claiming to have been reborn and secularists are compared. When evangelicals were small in number in the immediate postwar years, it seems that they were larger in stature, but now that they have become large in number they have been diminished in stature. (*Virtue*, p 3)

Wells laments this transition in his lifetime when he says:

Twenty-five years ago, I am quite certain, I could have cheerfully used the word *theology* without having to reach for the smelling salts. For then I was a young professor, a sapling in an evangelical world filled with large trees. It was a time when evangelical beliefs were more certain than they are now, theology was a more honorable word, and there was a sense of mission that was infectious. That was the day when the trees that stood so tall in this world were usually made so by their theological conviction and not simply by their money, the size of their church, or the expansiveness of their organization. Then, the leaders in evangelicalism were often its pastors and biblical scholars; today its leaders are its entrepreneurs and managers, and an increasing number of its pastors are indistinguishable from business people whose skills in finding market niches have been honed to a fine edge. (*Virtue*, pp 2, 3).

What all of this means is that for huge segments of evangelicalism, and in many cases, fundamentalism, the maintenance of theological literacy is passé. But for people who are committed to biblical faith, who are anchored to Biblicism and not pragmatism, theological literacy is of monumental importance. It *rescues* us from the tragic loss of truth, *delivers* us from the terrible erosion of Christian character and moral behavior and *protects* us from the defiling slide into the abyss of raw pragmatism – all of which seem to penetrate much of contemporary evangelicalism. I think David Wells says it best in another of his essays entitled, "The Word In The World":

In the Old and New Testaments, the moments of great impact in the world were never those in which the people of God became indistinguishable from those in their world. When this happened it was a moment of spiritual debauchery. In order to influence the world, the people of God have to be quite *different* from it cognitively and morally. The irony is that to be relevant the church has to be otherworldly; and when this spiritual otherness is extinguished by the ache for this-worldly acceptance, it loses the thing that it wants above all else – relevance. The church eventually discovers, to its great dismay, that it has lost its voice and no longer has anything left to say. That is the discovery that now seems to be looming ahead of the evangelical world. It is the iceberg that awaits the *Titanic* as those on board persuade themselves of their invincibility and pass the days in partying. (*The Compromised Church*, pp 32, 33)

Theology matters profoundly. So what tasks must we fulfill to keep ourselves theologically literate?

1. Develop A Passion For God

The fundamental engine driving the pursuit of God in theology is a passion for God in our hearts. The question is: "How can we grow a passion for God?" I would suggest *three biblical strategies:*

- ***a. Be Enamored With Christ (Philippians 3:1-10).*** There is a whole lot of passion in this passage, and it is all sourced in Paul's utter infatuation with Jesus Christ. Paul counts all things "loss" and all things "rubbish" in order that he might "know" Jesus Christ personally and intimately by faith (3:7-10). He dispenses with everything which previously had value to him in order that he might connect with Christ. Most scholars believe that a part of the "loss" Paul suffered was that of being disinherited by his Judaistic parents. For Paul, there was nothing in the material world which could compare at all with the joyful privilege of knowing Christ personally. Get to know Christ! Your passion for God will grow!
- ***b. Be Saturated With Truth.*** Biblical passion is not mindless. It is defined, shaped and bounded by the truth of God's Word. As the disciples on the road to Emmaus said following their post-resurrection interview with Jesus: "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us" (Luke 24:32). An in-depth knowledge of the Word sets our hearts aflame for God. In getting to know God's truth we get to know the true God, and the passion grows.
- c. ***Be Surrendered To The Holy Spirit.*** The Spirit, too, sets our hearts aflame. Why else would Paul say: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19)? We are not to extinguish the flame which He kindled when He entered our lives. In the 17th century the Puritan preacher, John Owen wrote prolifically on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In plain terms, Owens tells us that if the sin of Old Testament times was the rejection of God the Father, and the sin of New Testament times was the rejection of God the Son, then the sin of our times is the rejection of God the Holy Spirit. Stephen Olford, in his book, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, tells us that our rejection of the Holy Spirit happens in two ways – and both our sins. There is the sin of *escapism*. Some preachers rarely mention the Holy Spirit for fear of being labeled. Their pulpits are virtually silent on the subject. At the other end of the spectrum is the sin of *extremism*. While we tend to be somewhat apathetic about the Spirit, others are somewhere out in the ozone layer! The shallow ministry, the subtle manipulations and the senseless manifestations that are so prevalent today do not square with the Word of God or the glory of God. What we need of the Spirit is neither escapism or extremism, neither apathy or the ozone layer. We need "the radical center" (Gordon Fee), which means giving the Holy Spirit His place and His due in our lives, but making absolutely certain that it squares with God's Word and ends in God's glory.

The first task essential to keeping ourselves theologically literate is growing our passion for God. The only way I know to do this is to be enamored with Christ, saturated with truth and surrendered to the Holy Spirit. When these components are in place we will be driven to learn more theologically of the God we know personally, intimately and passionately.

2. **Connect With The Discovery Process**

Authentic students of theology are exegetes of the text of Scripture. They don't *invent* their ideas out of their own minds, they *discover* them in the Word of God. Yet, this is not merely an academic exercise. There is a spiritual dimension suffusing the whole of it. I hope to make this clear as I define what I believe to be the *essential steps* in the discovery process:

a. ***A God-Commitment (John 7:16, 17; Psalm 111:10).*** All knowing begins in commitment. That is what the Old Testament psalmist meant when he said: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A *good understanding* have all those who do (His commandments)" (Psalm 111:10). That is what Jesus meant when He said" ". . . my doctrine is not mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone *wills to do* His will, he *shall know* concerning the doctrine . . ." (John 7:16, 17). Those who are deeply committed to doing God's will can expect to be guided by God in their understanding and comprehension of His truth. The pursuit of truth is not a mere academic exercise, it is a spiritual journey which begins with a deep-seated God-commitment.

b. ***A Devotional Immersion In Scripture (1 Timothy 4:15; Psalm 1:2; 119:11; Luke 2:19; Colossians 3:16)*** It is possible for long-time well-trained servants of God to develop the kind of professional mindset that renders unnecessary the spiritual discipline of a devotional journey with God and His Word. In my mind, this is a position where great jeopardy lurks. It is still true that, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Stephen Olford suggests several *procedural movements* in this devotional connection with Scripture:

1. **Wait** – This is centering on God as we clear away the clutter of the time-space-matter continuum. We wait momentarily in order to sense His presence, seek His purpose and ultimately see His power in our lives.
2. **Read** – Get acquainted with the text – its flow, its development, its sense. Approach it reverently and expectantly and read it generally, carefully and meditatively. System and sequence are vital. Therefore, plan your reading passage by passage. Olford suggests that a short passage well read is better than a chapter or more superficially skimmed.
3. **Think** – In your devotional journey ask your text several crucial questions: Is there a promise to claim; a lesson to learn; a blessing to enjoy; a command to obey; a sin to avoid; a new revelation of God in Christ or the Holy Spirit; a new theological insight. This kind of thoughtful reflection rarely fails to reveal a word from the Lord.
4. **Write** – There is no lasting impression without personal expression. Chronicling our devotional journey gives us the opportunity to test and confirm God-given impressions on paper. Briefly recording the thought you glean in a devotional form can aid in personal appropriation and practical application.
5. **Pray** – There is great value in turning the meditation into prayer and praying back to God what He speaks to us out of the text of Scripture. In this way we are refusing to change the subject. What He says to us, we pray back to Him. This gives us the opportunity to adjust our will to His will.
6. **Share** – Sharing the good we gain from these quiet moments with God cements the truths we learn in our hearts and minds. We can do it through humble conversation with God's people, wise witness in personal evangelism or in personal correspondence with others.

It is this devotional discipline, sourced in our love for God, our passion to know Him, that prepares our mind and heart for the exegetical, theological journey into literacy.

c. A Dependence Upon The Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

This is what theologians call illumination. Illumination is the quickening of our cognitive powers by the Holy Spirit so that we can understand the already revealed Word of God. With the psalmist we pray: "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law" (Psalm 119:18). Illumination does not mean that we know everything (Deuteronomy 29:29); that there is no need for teachers (Ephesians 4:11-12); or that understanding comes easily without significant expenditure of mental energy (2 Timothy 2:15). Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit should be trusted to lead us to an authentic understanding of the text when we approach it and Him humbly and transparently. He is the key to overcoming the liabilities of hermeneutical horizons, distanciation and our cultural predispositions. Whatever baggage we may bring with us to the text, we can expect Him to overcome it, as we humbly acknowledge our need and fully depend upon Him to perform His illuminative tasks!

d. A Dialogue With The Interpretive Community (Proverbs 27:17, 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 15).

Nobody stands alone in the interpretive process All of us stand on the shoulders of others. We stand in the mainstream of a rich theological tradition. And we ignore it only to our hurt. Connecting with people in the interpretive community who share our loyalty to Scripture is a major means of knowing and growing in truth. There is a whole lot of dialogue going on in 2 Timothy 2:2. Look at the ever widening set of concentric circles of interaction: Paul; Timothy; multiple witnesses; faithful men; others also. The dynamics of this kind of interaction serve us very well in our pursuit of the truth about God. In Acts 15, in what has often been called the Jerusalem Council, the believers engaged in great dialogue, under the umbrella of absolute truth (the old revelation of the Old Testament, and the new revelation of the Apostles), in order to resolve the monumental issue of the conflict between law and grace. These are models which should be imitated by ourselves as we struggle to know the truth authentically.

e. ***A Skill In Critical Exegesis (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:17).***

We cannot believe the text naively. A warm, fuzzy feeling without the critical tools of exegesis will lead to imprecision in our comprehension of truth and confusion in our theology. All of us, I think, know that the term "critical exegesis" does not mean that we have critical attitudes in life, or that we set in judgment of Scripture. It simply means that we lay hold of the necessary exegetical tools so that we can affirm sound reasons for the opinions we hold, the belief-system we embrace. David Alan Black has done as well as anybody in defining the processes involved in critical exegesis (Using New Testament Greek In Ministry, Baker, 1993). He shows us how to answer the three exegetically crucial questions in any probing of a text of Scripture. Those three questions are:

1. Do I know where my text fits biblically? Here we are honoring *context*.
2. Am I really certain about what the text is saying? Here we are discovering *meaning*.
3. Could anyone benefit from what I have to say about the text? Here we are defining *significance*.

In his book, Black helps us to master the exegetical steps that are essential to answering each of these three crucial questions. If we are to believe the text more than naively, our colleges and seminaries are going to have to crank out a whole new generation of critical exegetes who *know* the text accurately, *obey* the text completely and *proclaim* the text passionately and relevantly. Then our churches will know not only the Word of God but the God of the Word.

f. ***A God-Centered Telic Point (James 1:21-25; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 3:10).***

In defining the essential steps in the discovery process, we end where we began – with God and our relationship to Him. In our ignorance we commit ourselves to Him and in our growing knowledge we do the very same thing. The goal toward which we move is not the mere acquisition of factual data about God; it is personal, intimate acquaintance with Him. We want to know *Him*, not just facts about Him. With Paul our hearts cry out: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10). Clearly that is the God-ordained end of the fulfillment of our task as teaching-shepherds – that our people would know and love God and His church more (Ephesians 4:11-16). And that same end is defined by James as the goal of our own personal study of God's Word (James 1:21-25). We are called to be "doers" not just "knowers" of God's truth.

3. Anchor To Absolute Truth

The only legitimate source-material for accurate and rich theological understandings is the absolute truth of the Word of God. In a postmodern world of anti-truth this is no time for any of us to go soft on absolutes. Albert Mohler has rightly said: "To identify with truth is to place oneself in the heart of a storm from which there is no escape until death." The shape that storm takes is a violent assault on the very category of truth. We expect this in the secular academy but what saddens us is to face it even in the evangelical community. Roger E. Olson, who teaches at Bethel College and Seminary, favors broadening the sources of theology to include culture and experience. He rejects propositional inerrancy in favor of narrative theology and dismisses the idea of any epistemological certainties based on universal or absolute truth. (In *Christianity Century*, May 3, 1995: "Postconservative Evangelicals Greet The Postmodern Age"). This is the shape the storm takes!

Conversely, people who take the concept of divine revelation seriously believe that absolute truth is both *objective* (standing outside the "I" / anchored to a breathed-out, written-down document called the Bible) and *knowable* (through the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit and the accurate exegesis of a text). Nobody can know truth about God, or "do theology" as God ordained, apart from confidence in and meticulous attention to God's own revelation of Himself in the text of Scripture. Even God's revelation of Himself in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth is of little help to us now, since He has ascended back to heaven. But the text of Scripture is something we hold in our hand and can hide in our mind and heart. So we must "do theology," as David Wells defines it, by "bringing the truth of God into lively intersection with the life of the Church, as it exists in its own culture, with the intention of seeing Christian understanding, character, and behavior made more authentic." (*Losing Our Virtue*, p 2)

So if we are to be theologically literate, we shall have to anchor to the absolute truth of Scripture, exegeting out of the text its theological understandings, axioms and equations, and applying them to our personal, spiritual journey.

4. Practice A Disciplined And Discriminating Regimen of Reading

I make only two simple suggestions:

a. ***Read Widely*** – I mean here that we should read selections from multiple disciplines, while focusing primarily on the areas which relate most closely to our specific calling in life. The shape this regimen could take would include exposure of our minds to data which is theological, missional, devotional, historical, exegetical and homiletical.

b. ***Read Wisely*** – In the simplest sense this means, *first*, do not allow yourself to become the prisoner of your most recent book. Be so anchored to the absolutes of Scripture that you filter everything you read through its theological grid. *Second*, this means that we will be selective in our reading. The overwhelming abundance of information demands that we do this. In the passage of time, we become acquainted with authors and publishers who focus on the various disciplines I mentioned a moment ago. It is best to connect with those in whom we have confidence, and who for the most part, share our loyalty to Scripture. If our motive is more missionally and spiritually driven than merely academically driven, we should not find this kind of selectivity difficult to embrace.

For me this is the pathway to theological literacy:

1. Develop A Passion For God.
2. Connect With the Discovery Process.
3. Anchor To Absolute Truth.
4. Practice A Disciplined and Discriminating Regimen of Reading.

Fundamentalism - What's in a Name?
Dr. Douglas R. McLachlan

As a young boy in Michigan, I grew up the son of a bartender, the grandson of a gangster. Not exactly what one would identify as a rich theological heritage.

God's plan for reaching someone like me included the church-planting efforts of an independent, fundamental Baptist pastor and his family who felt led of God to plant a Baptist church in my hometown. Through the loving and biblical outreach of that family and church, I came to personal faith in Christ as a 16-year old boy. I have been grateful for my fundamental Baptist roots ever since.

Recently, I was asked to speak on the subject, *"Fundamentalism: What's In A Name?"* As I reflected on that subject, several *key ideas* began to take shape in my mind:

First, *The Critical Components*. For me, the mainstream of historic, biblical fundamentalism has always been marked by certain critical components. Each of them has ignited in me a desire to remain loyal to my fundamentalist roots.

1. **Prophetic In Character.** Fundamentalism has always been "prophet-like". In biblical times, prophets of God were charactered and courageous individuals who fearlessly proclaimed God's Word. It might take the shape of a Nathan the prophet who could stand before David, the adulterous king and say: "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). Or it might take the shape of a John the Baptist who could stand before Herod the king who had entered into an incestuous marriage with Herodias, and say: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mark 6:18) – even if it cost him his freedom in Herod's prison and his head on Herodias' platter. That is what prophetic ministry looks like – like Nathan, like John the Baptist. It courageously, fearlessly, uncompromisingly proclaims truth, no matter what the cost or danger. In its best moments, that is the shape historic, biblical fundamentalism has taken.

2. **Apostolic In Belief.** An authentic kind of fundamentalism is loyal to the prototypical model of the faith fleshed-out in the first church (Acts 2:40-47). The shape that first church took has always stimulated me (vv 42 & 47):
    - It was *committed to theology* – "the apostles' doctrine" (Truth Mattered).
    - It *celebrated community* – "fellowship" (Family Mattered).
    - It *cherished Deity* – "in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (God Mattered).
    - It *connected with humanity* – people "were being saved" (The Lost Mattered).

    The heart of a genuine fundamentalist has always resonated with this model.

3. **Christo-Centric In Spirit.** Jesus was moral, merciful and missional in all that He did. In holy-love He connected with unholy and unlovable sinners with a view to rescuing and transforming them. It is an incredible balance and a phenomenal model, and it is something to which authentic fundamentalists have always aspired.

These are the critical components of historic, biblical fundamentalism which have ignited my soul and drawn me to it. They shaped the ministry which birthed me as a boy and they help to define the shape of our rich heritage and our current ministry at Central Seminary and Fourth Baptist Church.

Second, *The Definitional Ingredient*. According to Webster's, whatever is "fundamental" is basic, essential, foundational or visceral – deeply rooted in a person or thing. In terms of pure, dictionary definition the word "fundamental" describes a passionate loyalty to foundational and essential matters. Obviously, there is nothing at all wrong with the term itself.

The unfortunate reality is that in some ways the term has been tarnished, whether by the secular media with its broad-brushing tactic of lumping us together with radical Islamic fundamentalism, or by

splintering groups within fundamentalism who have added all kinds of "qualifiers" to the name which were not originally there. But this is not unlike the terrible abuse which the name "Christian" has suffered. To me this is not a reason to discard rich biblical and theological verbiage. Rather, it is a reason to carefully define such terms and then lovingly and biblically model their content before the watching world.

The attachment of a theological connotation to the English word "fundamental" probably grows out of the publication of *The Fundamentals* in the early part of the 20th century. These essays, which defended the absolutes of Scripture against liberal assault and unbelief were written by world-class intellectuals who were experts in their respective fields of thought. They wrote with a beautiful combination of grit, grace and scholarship. They spoke with grit because they were not about to take the trashing of the Bible by the hubris of the age lying down. They spoke with grace because there was no ugliness of disposition in their presentation of data. And they spoke with scholarship because it was the weight of their argument not the heat of the rhetoric which defined the discourse. Their words were doctrinally sound and dispositionally gracious. Both the truth and the love of the Holy Spirit shone through. This is a model which Spirit-filled fundamentalists should not find difficult to imitate since the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13) and His first fruit is "love" (Galatians 5:22).

Third, *The Foundational Element*. For a few moments, I want to park by the element which I believe is most foundational to fundamentalism – the element of *absolute truth*. In the secular academy, in mainline Protestantism and in much of concessive evangelicalism, there is no unified or coherent view of truth. In the most basic sense, "truth" is that which corresponds to the divine nature, especially as that is revealed in the person of Christ and the full content of Scripture.

I believe it is proper to say that the story of this tragic 20th century is the story of the battle for truth. The chronicling of its history is the chronicling of its truth-journey. Others have documented this battle and defined this journey as unfolding in three steps:

4. There was the *traditional era* where truth was mediated to the culture by the preacher out of the Bible.
5. There was the *modern era* where truth was mediated to the culture by scientific naturalists in their laboratory and by rationalistic philosophers in their logic.
6. Finally there came the *postmodern era* where truth is now mediated to the culture by rock musicians and where the MTV world-view reigns supreme.

First there was truth as defined by God – "true truth"; then there was truth as defined by man – temporal truth; and finally there was no truth – non-reason, nihilism, despair, the tragic loss of truth. This is a microcosm of the 20th century's philosophical and spiritual journey. In this kind of world, where truth is anything anybody wants it to be, passionate truth bases are absolutely indispensable. To me, that is what historic, biblical fundamentalist churches and agencies have always been.

Whenever I speak of "truth", I always affirm several critical axioms which relate to it:

1. *Absolute truth is the fundamental moral category in the universe*. Without it people perish (Proverbs 29:18 – where "vision" is "revelatory vision" or truth from God). Individuals, cultures and entire civilizations unravel at the seams when they are subjected to a truth-deprivation.
2. *Absolute truth is marked by objectivity and knowability*. We are neither agnostics nor Athenians. The Athenians, according to Luke, built an altar to "the unknown God" (Acts 17:22, 23). But the God of truth is not unknown or unknowable, because He has revealed Himself to us. And this is a revelation which is both *objective* – personified in Jesus (who has now gone to heaven) and deposited in Scripture (which we hold in our hands) – and *knowable* – through the quickening and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-16) and the accurate exegesis of a text (2 Timothy 2:15).
3. *Absolute truth matters profoundly to serious-minded, deeply-committed Christians*. Such Christians pay attention to the epistolary mandates – all those commands in the New Testament epistles which require that we guard the gospel, hold fast the faithful word, continue steadfastly in

the apostles' doctrine and contend earnestly for the "once-for-all" delivered faith. More than that, serious-minded Christians are prepared to draw lines, set limits, erect boundaries and refuse concessions based solely on obedience to biblical absolutes.

And there, perhaps, is one of those unique responses which distinguishes fundamentalists from evangelicals, viz., separatism sourced in absolutes! In evangelicalism you often find belief in the fundamentals of the faith (i.e., its abstract doctrinal tenets), but it is generally unsupported by separatism. In historic, biblical fundamentalism you find not only belief in the fundamentals of the faith, but you find a readiness to support those fundamentals by a form of biblical separatism.

In the simplest sense separatism means the willingness and the moral courage to draw a line or set a limit beyond which we will not go based solely on a carefully defined, critically exegeted Bible absolute. While this is a teaching which should be warmly supported by the people of God, it has lost some of its luster in this part of the 20th century due to a couple of responses which have served to tarnish it:

1. **Dispositional Offensiveness.** Unless we are extremely cautious, it is easy for us to take the shape of assaulting everybody who disagrees with us with the result that we end up projecting a very ugly disposition. Too often this looks much more like "the works of the flesh" than "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:19-23). It is something which grieves the Holy Spirit.
2. **Defective Lines.** Unless we are committed to critical exegesis of the text of Scripture in its context, it becomes very easy for us to draw lines that are not anchored to Bible absolutes but personal preferences. New "qualifiers" which were not originally a part of the equation, and which are not sourced in Scripture, begin to reshape our definition of fundamentalism and unnecessarily alienate people from it.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that absolute truth matters deeply to committed and serious Christians, and they are prepared to draw lines and set limits on the basis of it. The biblical teaching on separatism is something which must be recovered and practiced in this generation or fundamentalists, too, will fall prey to the thinning of theology and the marginalizing of truth which is now well documented in huge segments of evangelicalism.

Of course, there is much more that could be said on this issue, but at rock-bottom historic, biblical fundamentalism is all about *absolute loyalty to absolute truth*. And that is why I celebrate and embrace it. For all its faults, the mainstream of historic biblical fundamentalism has struggled to honor, defend and proclaim truth. A fundamentalist church or school is a passionate truth base where God's absolutes provide the rudder for life and ministry. Nothing is more important than that in a postmodern, anti-truth world.

Solomon was right to say: "Buy the truth and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). We need a whole new generation of believers who refuse to sell the truth, whomever the highest bidder may be. Whatever kingdom, empire or salary, whatever name or fame may be offered, we are responsible to affirm that truth is not for sale, and make certain that we hold tenaciously to it whatever the cost may be.

At Central Seminary our signature verse is Isaiah 8:20. It was selected by our founder and first president, Dr. Richard V. Clearwaters: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Our goal as a ministry is to "speak according to this word", and not only to speak it but to be absolutely loyal to it. Our hearts resonate with the need for truth and light in a deceived and darkened world. For us, the best place to do that is within the framework of historic, biblical fundamentalism.