

When Truth Falls

Truth is not a vague, abstract concept for philosophers to argue over. Rather, it is essential to human flourishing. When we jettison truth in our lives, we all suffer.

“Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey” (Isa. 59:14-15).

“They have bent their tongues for lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. For they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me,” says the Lord” (Jer. 9:3).



Truth is defined as “that which is in accordance with fact or reality” (Oxford Dictionary). By definition, truth is a state of meaning that exists independent of ourselves. “Truth” is true whether we like it or not.

The implications of this principle extend deep into human life. All human relationships, for example, are based on truth. Only when we believe that others are being truthful with us can we trust them with our money, our emotions, our lives. In the legal arena, people want to be treated with fairness; but that can only happen when everyone agrees to let the facts speak for themselves, whatever the outcome. On an individual level, each one of us must learn how to “speak truth in his heart” (Psa. 15:2), because only by being honest with ourselves can we make progress toward self-improvement. That’s why self-deception is the cruelest lie of all.

But under the influence of postmodern philosophy, our culture has come to embrace a belief that there is no such thing as objective truth. In this new paradigm, truth is whatever we want it to be. This “my truth / your truth” formulation removes any external criteria from our decision making, freeing us to manipulate or reconstruct “truth” according to our personal wishes.

This thinking has unleashed a torrent of dysfunctional behaviors in our society. Political corruption, sexual license, abortion, transgenderism, the rewriting of history, and now vicious attacks on free speech, are all rooted in some variation of the belief that reality can be pushed aside and replaced by personal feelings.

This collapse of truth has infected our national institutions. Politics, media, education, business, law, entertainment, sports—even science and medicine—have all been contaminated by the idea that “truth” is an invention that can be exploited for personal advantage. And our society is paying a steep price for this fantasy. Justice is no longer a pursuit of civic order, but a contest in who can hire the best lawyers. “Seeking the common good” has been exchanged for “seeking power.” In this environment, the good man “makes himself a prey”; that is, those who play by the rules are targets who can be taken advantage of by their devious neighbors. When “truth falls in the street,” society collapses with it.

Not all politicians are sleazy crooks. Not every news outlet is in the business of peddling fake news. Not every university professor is an amoral relativist seeking to recruit young people to their destructive philosophy. But there are enough of these types out there to inflict serious injury on integrity in the public square. As more and more people begin to construct their own personal reality based on lies, the consequences will begin to pile up. Social cohesion will be destroyed. And the lives of each one of us will be harmed because of it.

Why do people abandon truth? Speaking through Jeremiah, God says it’s because “they do not know Me.” When we lose faith in a transcendent, all-seeing Deity to whom we must someday answer, it’s easy to jettison truth in our daily calculations. But know this for sure: God is keeping an accurate set of books, and someday we will come face-to-face with the external truth that we tried so hard to ignore. In the end, reality will not be denied.

— David King