

# The High Calling

a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society

## The Truth about Truth

By Stan Key

This issue of *The High Calling* is dedicated to the concept of truth. It seems that we are living in a time similar to that which Jeremiah the prophet knew some 2,500 years ago when he lamented, “truth has perished” (Jer 7:28). Personally, I can’t think of a topic that is more relevant, more important, or more practical than this. Discerning the truth about truth is the foundation for all rational thought and moral behavior. Indeed, it is impossible to know God and experience salvation if one can’t know the truth! Peter Kreeft was bold to assert that the issue of truth is “more deadly serious than a nuclear holocaust. For bombs can only destroy bodies, but philosophies can destroy souls.”†

† C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 160.



Nowhere is this question of truth asked with greater poignancy than during Jesus’s trial before Pilate (Jn 18:33–40). Asked to explain his actions, Jesus said, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice” (Jn 18:37 ESV). Pilate responded with a terse, “What is truth?”

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## Truth through All Generations

By John N. Oswalt



Dr. John Oswalt is both a preacher and a teacher. While his expertise and primary interest is in the Old Testament and in showing its relevance for contemporary Christians, he is also passionately concerned about Christian holiness and about the serious need for holy living among Christians today.

George Barna tells us that fewer than ten percent of those between the ages of 18 and 28 today believe there is such a thing as truth. Note carefully that they do not believe truth is relative. That was a characteristic of the late modern period. No, these young people do not believe truth exists; it is simply not a relevant concept to them.

We may find this shocking—and it is—but the reason for it is very simple. There is only one place in the world where the idea of truth has existed, and that is where the teachings of the Bible have been followed through with rigorous thought, i.e., Western Europe and North America. In short, the concept of truth can only exist where the Bible is taken seriously. Where the Bible has not been known, or has been treated as some sort of religious talisman, the concept of truth is not to be found.

So why has truth disappeared from among us in the West? Very simply, because the Bible has disappeared. We are far from that day when three out of five novel titles were either quotations of, or allusions to, Biblical words or phrases. Equally, we are far from the day when there was only one book in many American homes: the Bible. Now, even seminary students cannot name the books of the New Testament in order, let alone the books of the Old Testament. As for the content of the Bible, even the Bible stories that were once staple bedtime readings are unknown.

But why are the Bible and truth so inseparable, and why does the existence of the idea of truth depend so directly on the Bible? Again, very simply, it is because of the character of the God of the Bible, as laid down in the Old Testament. In those pages, several revolutionary ideas are to be found. Unfortunately, we, by and large, do not think of them as revolutionary because of the victory of Christian faith in the West in the first two millennia after Christ. This faith takes these ideas for granted.

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# People of the Lie

By M. Scott Peck, M.D. (1936–2005)



Though not typically recognized as a “Christian writer,” Peck’s books (*The Road Less Traveled*, etc.) have found a wide audience among followers of Christ. Peck, a psychiatrist, speaks to both mind and heart. When read with discernment, his teachings enable Christians to be more psychologically honest with themselves and with others. Few writers have spoken more powerfully in describing the essence of evil as being rooted in non-truth (lies). The following is a slightly edited excerpt taken from a chapter entitled “Toward a Psychology of Evil” from his best-selling book *People of the Lie* (Simon & Schuster, 1983, 69–77).

**T**he central defect of evil people is not sin but the refusal to acknowledge it. Evil people appear to be most ordinary. They may be rich or poor, educated or uneducated. There is little that is dramatic about them. More often than not they will be “solid citizens”—Sunday school teachers, policemen, or bankers, and active in the PTA.

Be perfectly honest with yourself, and you will realize that you sin. If you do not realize it, then you are not perfectly honest with yourself, which is itself a sin. It is inescapable: we are all sinners.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,” Jesus began when the time came for him to address the multitudes (Mt 5:3). What did he mean by this opener? What is so great about feeling down on yourself—about having this sense of personal sin? If you ask that, it might help to remember the Pharisees. They were the fat cats of Jesus’s day. They didn’t feel poor in spirit. They felt they had it all together, that they were the ones who knew the score, who deserved to be the culture leaders in Jerusalem and Palestine. And they were the ones who murdered Jesus.

The poor in spirit do not commit evil. Evil is not committed by people who feel uncertain about their righteousness, who question their own motives, who worry about betraying themselves. The evil in this world is committed by the spiritual fat cats, by the Pharisees of our own day, the self-righteous who think they are without sin because they are unwilling to suffer the discomfort of significant self-examination.

Unpleasant though it may be, the sense of personal sin is precisely that which keeps our sin from getting out of hand. It is quite painful at times, but it is a very great blessing because it is our one and only effective safeguard against our own proclivity for evil. Saint T r se of Lisieux put it so nicely in her gentle way: “If you are willing to serenely bear the trial of being displeasing to yourself, then you will be for Jesus a pleasant place of shelter.” All sins are reparable except the sin of believing one is without sin.



**“They intensely desire to appear good.”**

A predominant characteristic of the behavior of those I call evil is scapegoating. Because in their hearts they consider themselves above reproach, they must lash out at anyone who does reproach them. They sacrifice others to preserve their self-image of perfection. In other words, the evil attack others instead of

facing their own failures. Spiritual growth requires the acknowledgment of one’s need to grow. If we cannot make that acknowledgment, we have no option except to attempt to eradicate the evidence of our imperfection.

Utterly dedicated to preserving their self-image of perfection, evil people, as distinguished from just sinful people, are unceasingly engaged in the effort to maintain the appearance of moral purity. They worry about this a great deal. They are acutely sensitive to what others might think of them. The words “image” and “appearance” are crucial to understanding the morality of the evil. While they seem to lack any motivation to *be* good, they intensely desire to appear good. Their “goodness” is all on a level of pretense. It is, in effect, a lie. This is why they are the “people of the lie.” Actually,

**“A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.”**

**Charles Spurgeon**

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Though he had asked one of the most important questions in all of life, Pilate never even waited for an answer! As a politician, he was interested only in power, not truth. In dismissing the concept of truth, Pilate becomes the poster-child for postmodernism: *Truth? What's that? We all have our personal opinions and preferences. We even get to each create our own reality. But truth? I don't think so.*

Though Pilate wasn't interested in the answer to his question, the readers of John's Gospel are. In fact, John wrote his Gospel, at least in part, to answer this very question: what is truth? In John's Gospel, we discover five truths about truth.

### **One: Truth is Anchored in God's Word**

"Your word is truth," Jesus prayed (Jn 17:17 ESV). God speaks, and his words are recorded in a book. Furthermore, God speaks through the incarnate Word, which is his only Son, Jesus (Jn 1:14). Because God is righteous and good, we know that his word is always accurate; it is true. The Bible is not a collection of human words about God. It is, rather, God's revealed word about man, the human condition, and the way to salvation. The Scriptures are not something that man made up. They are something that God has sent down!

### **Two: Truth Is Narrow and Exclusive**

Perhaps the most offensive thing Jesus ever said was, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6 ESV). If only he had said, "I am a way, a truth, and a life; one of the ways to the Father is through me," postmodern men and women would have heard him gladly. But truth, by its very nature, is exclusive. If Jesus is the truth, then Buddha is not. If Jesus is the way to the Father, then Mohammed is not.

We understand the exclusive nature of truth in a math class. Though I might wish that two plus two equals 22, and though such a "truth claim" might bring me existential satisfaction and meaning, the truth is that 22 is *not* the answer. Neither is 7 or 3 or 236. There is one—and only one—correct answer: 4. And though some might want to protest the intolerance of such a narrow-minded reality, the facts just don't change. So it is with Jesus. When we humble ourselves and go through the narrow door he opens before us, far from becoming a narrow-minded bigot, we enter an amazing and beautiful universe where all truth is God's!

### **Three: Truth Is Personal**

While other religious leaders may say, "I will *show* you the truth," or, "I will *teach* you the truth," Jesus alone says, "I *am* the truth" (Jn 14:6). Truth is far more than

a set of propositions and facts. The Bible reveals that truth is a divine Person, and his name is Jesus. To know him is to know truth; and to know truth is to know him. The greatness of Christianity is not that it enables us to know *about* the living Lord but that it enables us to *know* him! As J. I. Packer famously said, "A little knowledge of God is worth more than a great deal of knowledge *about* him."<sup>\*</sup>

### **Four: Truth Sets One Free**

So far, we have seen what truth *is*, but a fourth truth about truth tells us what truth *does*. Jesus stated the matter succinctly; "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32 ESV). Bondage occurs when we believe something that just isn't so: lies about God, lies about salvation, lies about the future, lies about our origin, lies about our identity, etc. Satan is the father of lies and when we believe his untruths, we become his slaves. Putting our faith in the truth and the One who is the truth is the only path to true liberty.



### **Five: Truth Transforms**

In calling the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth," Jesus introduces us to a fifth, and final, truth about truth. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13 ESV). Jesus is talking about the purpose of Pentecost. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is about something much deeper than signs, wonders, and ecstatic experiences. The purpose of the Spirit's coming into our hearts is to transform us into truth-lovers, truth-seekers, truth-livers, and truth-teachers. Holiness of heart and life is simply impossible without such a Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit of Truth; neither is there any possibility for social transformation.

Our prayer for you as you read the articles about truth in this issue of *The High Calling* is that the Spirit of Truth will set you free to be and do all that Jesus redeemed you to be and do. Amen! ✨

<sup>\*</sup> *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 1973), 26.

# Sanctify Them in the Truth

By Matt Ayars



Matt is a full-time missionary with the One Mission Society serving as the Vice President of Theological Education as well as President of Emmaus Biblical Seminary in Haiti. Matt's passion is to cultivate biblical literacy and theological competency among leaders in the majority world. Matt and his wife, Stacey, have three daughters: Lily, Sofia, and Nora.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the death rate among birthing mothers in certain hospitals in Vienna was *five times* higher than that of those giving birth at home or in midwives' clinics. Something was killing these mothers but no one knew what. Wanting answers, a Hungarian physician named Ignaz Semmelweis (1818–1865) began investigating.

Semmelweis came to realize that the hospitals with higher death rates were also being used as medical research facilities. This meant that cadavers were in the building! Semmelweis discovered that *physicians delivering babies were also performing autopsies*. He wondered: is it possible that invisible particles are being carried from the cadavers to the women giving birth and in turn making them sick? To test his theory, he asked all medical staff to wash their hands and instruments in both soap and a chlorine solution before and after their medical activities. As soon as the new policy was implemented, the death rate among birthing mothers dropped *dramatically*. Semmelweis was right. His work was the precursor to germ theory that was later confirmed by Louis Pasteur. What the doctors didn't know was literally killing people. Semmelweis had uncovered the *truth*, and what a difference it made!

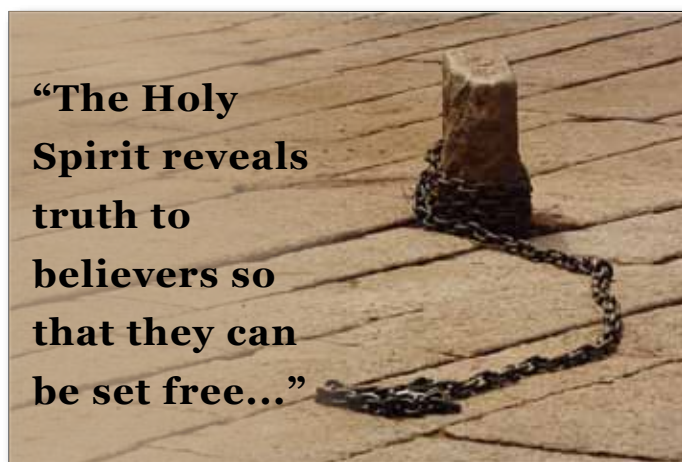
Knowing the truth is *liberating* (Jn 8:32). Though at first it may be painful, it is always liberating in the end. But just as knowing the truth is beneficial and good, so believing a lie is *dangerous and destructive*. Unfortunately, in this beautiful yet tragic world that we inhabit, truth is too often outnumbered by lies. They are everywhere and ever multiplying. When I look around the world and consider the state of affairs, it seems as if the single most important work of the Enemy is to shroud the truth in more and more lies and deception.

But this situation is not new! Lies reach back to the dawn of creation. In Genesis 3, the lie of the Serpent resulted in the corruption of God's magnificent and perfect cosmos.

Jesus was referring to this reality when he said to the religious leaders of his day, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44).

So, in this world of lies, is there any hope? Is there anyone who can help us to find the truth as we grope our way through this maze of deception?

Yes! Jesus called him the Helper and had this to say about his ministry: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will *guide you into all truth*" (Jn 16:13). Often referred to as fire in the Bible, the Holy Spirit both *protects* (Zech 2:5) and *illuminates* (Ps 119:105; Prov 20:27) God's people. The link between the protecting and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is *truth*.



**"The Holy Spirit reveals truth to believers so that they can be set free..."**

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The Holy Spirit illuminates the hearts and minds of believers to the truth of forgiveness and the power of Jesus to save to the uttermost. At the same time, he protects them from the life-threatening, sin-causing lies of the enemy. This is precisely why he is called the Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 16:13); he reveals the truth of God in both the Living (Jesus) and Written (Bible) Word. The result of such revelation is *protection* from

sin and lies and *illumination* of the path we are to follow. We are thus sanctified (made holy) by the Spirit of Truth.

One of the Enemy's greatest lies is to cause Christians to live in constant guilt and shame, believing they are nothing more than "filthy sinners." The Holy Spirit, however, can liberate us with this truth: "There is no now condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:1). *This is the truth*. This sets us free.

On his final night with his disciples, Jesus prayed that his Father in heaven would "sanctify them in the truth" (Jn 17:17). David Peterson comments, "The truth which Jesus imparts has the power to set people free from slavery to sin, to serve the living God." In other words, the Holy Spirit reveals truth to believers so that they can be set free from the destructive power of sin and the lies that give it life. The truth sets us free to be holy. ✨

# A Half Truth Is More Dangerous than a Lie

By Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)

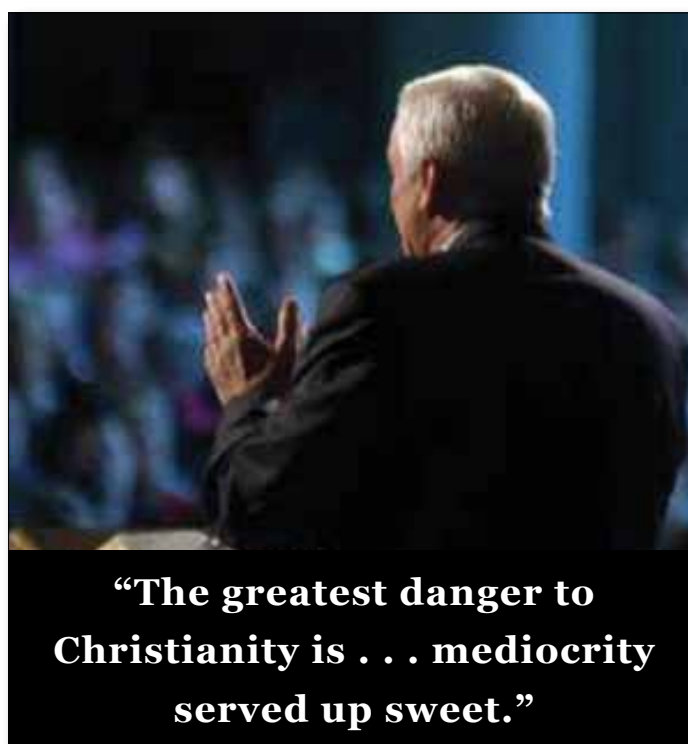


As a philosopher, theologian, and social critic, Kierkegaard was often the object of hatred and ridicule for the way he exposed the hypocrisy and heretical beliefs of the Danish Lutheran church. At the core of his critique was his belief that the institutional church was committed to a partial gospel. Kierkegaard rightly discerned that a half truth, even when it is wrapped in zealous piety, is more toxic than a lie! The following article is taken from *Provocations: The Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Plough Publishing, 1999, 16–18).

**I**magine a kind of medicine that possesses in full dosage a laxative effect but in a half dose a constipating effect. Suppose someone is suffering from constipation but, for some reason, he is given, with the best of intentions, a half dose. “After all, it is at least something.” What a tragedy!

So it is with today’s Christianity. As with everything that is either/or—the half has the very opposite effect from the whole. But we Christians go right on practicing this well-intentioned, half-hearted act from generation to generation. We produce Christians by the millions, are proud of it—yet have no inkling that we are doing just exactly the opposite of what we intended to do.

The greatest danger to Christianity is, I contend, not heresies, heterodoxies, not atheists, not profane secularism—but the kind of orthodoxy which is cordial drivel, mediocrity served up sweet. And yet this politeness is what our Christianity amounts to. But the very essence of Christianity is utterly



opposed to this mediocrity, in which it does not so much die as dwindle away.

Consider what Christ thinks about mediocrity! When the apostle Peter, for instance, with good intentions wanted to keep Christ from being crucified, Christ answered: “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me” (Mk 8:33).

In the world of mediocrity in which we live, it is assumed that only crackpots, fanatics, and the like should be deplored as offensive, as inspired by Satan, and that the middle way is the right way, the way that alone is exempted from any such charge. What nonsense! Christ

is of another mind: mediocrity is the worst offense, the most dangerous kind of demon possession, farthest removed from the possibility of being cured. To “have” religion on the level of mediocrity is the most unqualified form of perdition.

In genuine religion, it is a matter of either/or. Either you are in it with all your heart, all your mind, and all your strength, or not at all. Either all of God and all of you, or nothing at all! We clever humans, however, treat faith as if it were something for the betterment and enjoyment of temporal life. It is supposed to bring us meaning and

fulfillment, happiness and direction. This kind of religion is nothing but a deception. ✦

People of the Lie *continued from page 2*

the lie is designed not so much to deceive others as to deceive themselves. They cannot or will not tolerate the pain of self-reproach.

We come now to a sort of paradox. I have said that evil people feel themselves to be perfect. At the same time, however, I think they have an unacknowledged sense of their own evil nature. Indeed, it is this very sense from which they are frantically trying to flee. The essential component of evil is not the absence of a sense of sin or imperfection but the unwillingness to tolerate that sense. At one and the same time, the evil are aware of their evil and desperately trying to avoid the awareness.

Rather than blissfully lacking a sense of morality, like the psychopath, they are continually engaged in sweeping the evidence of their evil under the rug of their own consciousness.

We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves. Evil originates not in the absence of guilt but in the effort to escape it. Thus, the primary motive of evil people is disguise, which explains why one of the places such people are most likely to be found is within the church! What better way to conceal one’s evil from oneself, as well as from others, than to be a deacon or some other highly visible Christian? ✦

# Living in a Post-Truth World

By Os Guinness



Author, philosopher and social critic Os Guinness argues that the fundamental cause of the moral and political crisis in America today is that truth, as understood by the reigning postmodern philosophy, has died. In his book *Time for Truth: Living Free in a World of Lies, Hype, and Spin* (Baker Books, 2000), Guinness not only sets forth the problem but, more importantly, points us to the answer. The following excerpt is taken from the Introduction (11–13).

In both popular and elite circles in the West, the postmodern movement has given birth to a new way to think. Within this movement, truth is dead. Truth in any objective or absolute sense, truth that is independent of the mind of the knower, no longer exists. At best, truth is relative—it’s all a matter of interpretation and it all depends on the perspective. At worst, truth is “socially constructed”—merely a matter of human convention and a testament to the community that believes it and the power that established it.

A simple way to illustrate this lies in the story of the three baseball umpires debating their different philosophies of umpiring. “There’s balls and there’s strikes,” says the first, “and I call them the way they are.” “No!” exclaims the second umpire. “That’s arrogant. There’s balls and there’s strikes and I call them the way I see it.” “That’s no better,” says the third. “Why beat around the bush? Why not be realistic about what we do? There’s balls and there’s strikes and *they ain’t nothing till I call them.*”



The first umpire represents the traditional view of truth—objective, independent of the mind of the knower, and there to be discovered. The second umpire speaks for moderate relativism—truth “as each person sees it” according to his or her perspective and interpretation. And the third umpire bluntly expresses the radically relativist, or postmodern, position—“truth” is not there to be discovered; it is for each of us to create for ourselves.

Thus, in a postmodern world, the question is no longer, “Is it true?” but rather “Whose truth is it?” and “Which power stands to gain?” As Hitler’s propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels declared in a foretaste of postmodernism, “We do not talk to say something but to obtain a certain effect.”

Reality, then, is only a state of mind. “Truth” is created, not discovered, and to be correct we should say “truths,”

not truth. All cultures are equal, each in its own special way. Lying is no longer lying if you are “telling your own personal truth” or speaking for the “larger truth” of your group. No judgments can be made and there can be no “reform” or “moral progress” because that implies standards by which to judge the forward movement. As Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, “Truths

are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.” Not surprisingly, what remains in the West is a world of lies, hype, and spin. ✨

## Renewing the Covenant Fellowship

By Mike Powers, Director of Discipleship

The genius of John Wesley’s discipleship model of societies, class meetings, and bands is understood from his conviction of covenant relationships as the heart of Christian community. In the General Rules of 1743, Wesley described the Methodist societies as companies of men and women who “having the form, and seeking the power of godliness,” came together to pray, to receive the word of exhortation, and “to watch over one another in love that they may help each other work out their salvation.” To this end, the societies were divided into classes, each with an appointed leader “to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.”

The Francis Asbury Society continues the spirit and practice of Wesley’s devotion to covenant relationships by providing an identifiable community of men and women who are committed to holiness of heart and life, edifying relationships, and revival in the church and the nation. We would love to include you in the FAS Covenant Fellowship of mutual encouragement, prayer, and inspiration to living lives wholly devoted to God. For more information, contact me at [mike.powers@francisasburysociety.com](mailto:mike.powers@francisasburysociety.com). ✨

# Undiscovered Truth

By Dennis F. Kinlaw (1922–2017)



In his book *Lectures in Old Testament Theology* (Francis Asbury Society, 2010, 16–17) Dennis Kinlaw remembers an experience when he was a student at Princeton University, sitting in a classroom where “an old German professor” was lecturing. This was a defining moment that reshaped Kinlaw’s thinking and redirected his future ministry.

**I** think the most significant hour of all of the hours I have had in all of the years I went to school was in a New Testament theology course at Princeton University. It was under an old German professor by the name of Otto Piper. It was a course for which I was woefully unprepared. As a result, about sixty percent of the material floated right past me, for I had no categories in which to place it. The professor had been injured in World War I, and his face was half-paralyzed. It looked like a piece of stone; he had no facial expression at all. This was accompanied by a monotonous tone of voice. I would go to sleep and wake up and realize that I was hearing the richest stuff I had ever heard.

But one day in that class something happened that I will never get over. It must have been in late April or early May. On a Thursday, Dr. Piper would sit on the edge of the desk and answer anyone’s questions. One of the students in the class had been a chaplain in the Army and had come back to Princeton for graduate work. He later became a leader in the Presbyterian denomination and president of Grove City College. On this day, this fellow looked up and said, “Dr. Piper, many of us are going to be graduating in a few weeks. We will be going out into ministry. Is there a list of ‘must’ books for every pastor? Is there a list of books that every pastor should read?”

Well, I became rather interested at that point and looked up. Dr. Piper looked away and then looked back with that unmoving face of his and said, “I know of only one ‘must’ book.” I caught my breath. Otto Piper was, in my estimation, the greatest scholar I ever sat under. He was a brilliant man. But not only was he a brilliant man, he was also an humble man and incredibly broadly educated. And he looked at a bunch of us and said, “I know of only one ‘must’ book.”

Then he waited a moment and said, “You know, we make a mistake. Somehow in our Reformed tradition we think that Luther and Calvin produced the Reformation. What produced the Reformation was that Luther studied the Word of God. And as he studied, it began to explode inside him. And when it began to explode inside him, he didn’t know any better than to turn it loose on Germany. And it was the Word of God that transformed Germany. Now,” he said, “the same thing was true of Calvin. You knew what Calvin was going to preach on next Sunday. He would start with the verse after the one where he had stopped on the last Sunday, and he preached his way right through the Bible. Now, the tragedy of the Reformation was that when Luther and Calvin died, Melancthon and Beza edited their work. And so all the Lutherans began to read the Bible to find Luther, and



**“One day in that class something happened that I will never get over.”**

all the Calvinists began to read the Bible to find Calvin. And,” he said, “the great corruption was on its way.” He said, “Do you know there is enough undiscovered truth in the Scripture to produce a Reformation and an evangelical awakening in every generation if we would simply expose ourselves to it until it explodes within us and then we turn it loose?”

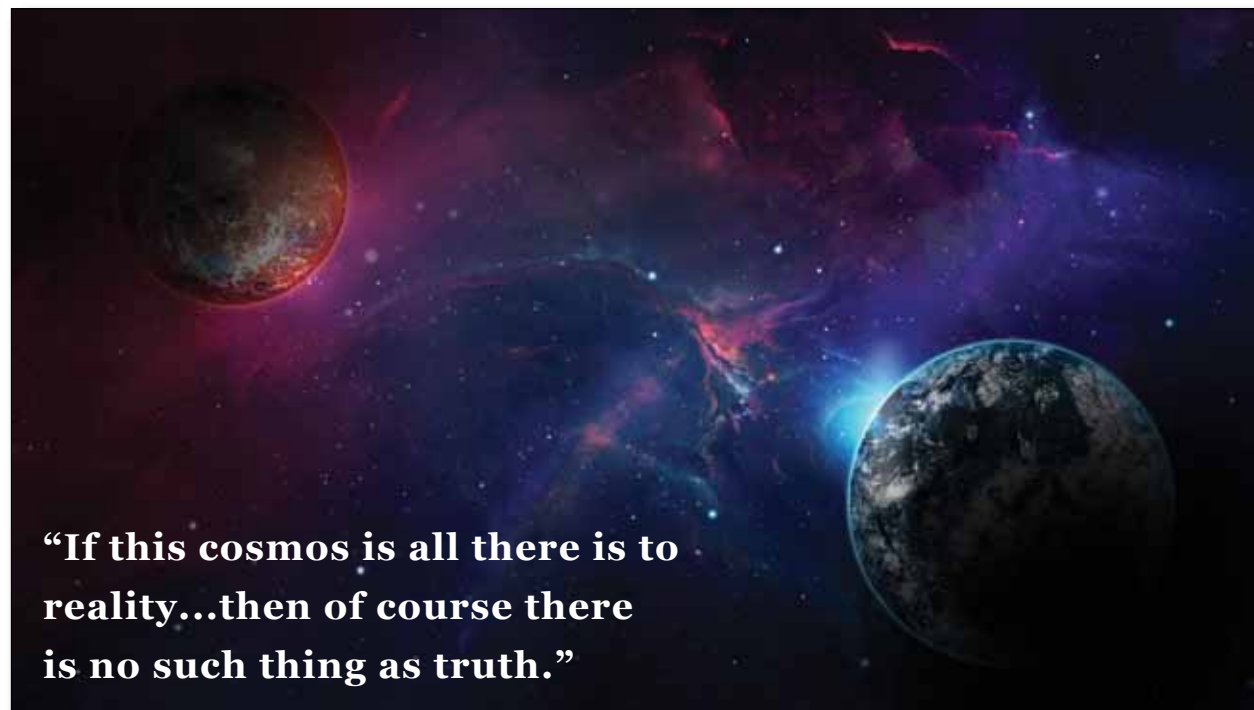
I have wished many times that I had a recording of those moments, because you would be awed by how monotonous that voice was. But you know, even though I was thirty years of age and working toward a degree in Philosophy of Religion for which Hebrew was not required, I went three weeks later, changed to Old Testament and signed up for beginning Hebrew. I’ve never had any regrets about that. We need our philosophers—I have no interest in doing away with them; we could not make it without them. But what our world needs is the Word of God. ✠

**“One word of truth outweighs the world.”**

**Alexander Solzhenitsyn**

What are some of them? First, Yahweh, the one whom the Jews called “Lord,” is not to be identified with this world or any part of it; he is absolutely Other (“Holy”). Second, he is the only God; there is no other. Third, he is the sole creator of all that exists, and all that exists reflects his glory alone. (The name by which he called himself, “I AM,” reflects this: he alone is self-existent; everything else derives its existence from him.) Fourth, unlike the gods, who are only reflections of humans, he is absolutely—utterly, completely—reliable. He is true!

Now, if you take these ideas together and think them through, certain inescapable implications arise. If he is not part of this world, and is thus not subject to it; if he is the sole creator of the universe; and if he is true in all his pronouncements and all his relationships, then it follows that there is that in his world that is true, absolutely so, whether I like it or not. But if this cosmos is all there is to reality, and if its conditions alone define reality, then of course there is no such thing as truth. My own, your own, perceptions determine what is real.



**“If this cosmos is all there is to reality...then of course there is no such thing as truth.”**

Those who think that we can separate science from Biblical truth, and still keep science alive, need to think this through very carefully. Today, we say that certain things are empirically proven to be so. For how long will we be able to say that once we all agree that there is no single standard defining reality outside of each individual’s experience?

Now, to be sure, neither Testament teaches the existence of objective truth as an axiom. No, what the Bible teaches is that the sole Creator of the universe is true, completely reliable. So, the Hebrew root *‘aman* is a verb, meaning “to prove oneself steady, reliable, faithful.” From this verbal root come two nouns: *‘emet* and *‘emuna*. The first is usually translated “truth,” and the second is either

translated “truth” or “faithfulness.” The interjection *‘amen* means “True!” So, when we read in our Bible “...his faithfulness continues through all generations” (Ps 100:5b NIV), we can correctly think “...his *truth* continues...” Yahweh will be true to us no matter what; he will be true in every situation. More than a hundred times, Yahweh is said to be true, faithful. Deuteronomy 7:9 is one good example, “Understand, therefore, that the LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands” (NLT).

I believe this is why adultery is chosen to represent all the sexual sins in the Ten Commandments. We might choose one of the grosser violations, but God did not. Why did he not? I think it is because the adulterer is “untrue”! He has not kept his promise; he has “broken faith.” He has done something our God would never—never—do. Thus, it is hardly surprising that our Enemy has targeted pastors to tempt them to adultery. We preach a God who

is true, while we ourselves give the lie to such an idea. Rather, our faithful (true) God wants to enable us to be faithful (true) as living examples of the unbelievable, yet true, truth: the sole Creator of the Universe is true and will be true to us no matter what.

Oh, that Yahweh would make us *true*—in our families, in our work, in our friendships, in all

we do and say, in order that even yet, there will be those who come to believe the truth: “For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his [truth] continues through all generations.” ✠

**“When we lie to ourselves, and believe our own lies, we become unable to recognize truth, either in ourselves or in anyone else.”**

**Fyodor Dostoyevsky**



## Truth: A Non-negotiable

By Steven R. Covey (1932–2012)



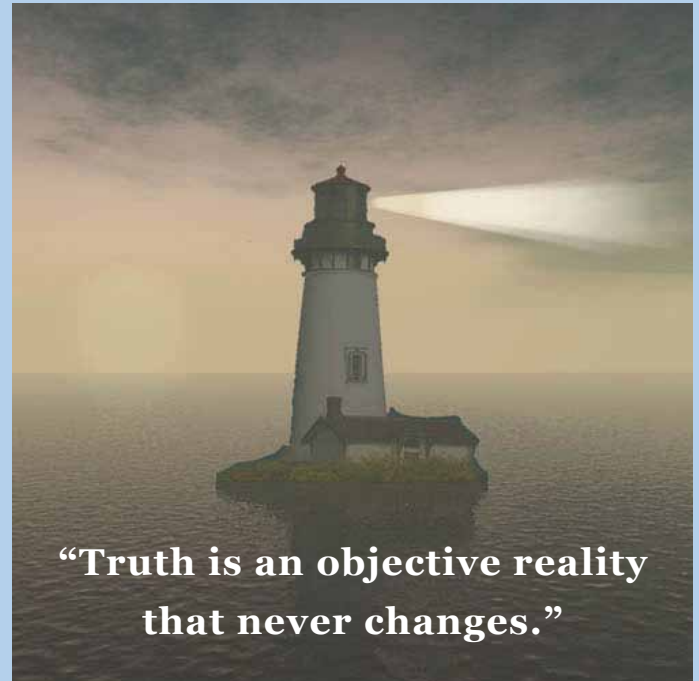
Truth is an objective reality that never changes. It doesn't matter how people feel about it or what the cultural consensus might say. Arguing against the truth makes as much sense as arguing against the law of gravity. In jumping off a building in defiance, one doesn't break the law of gravity, one illustrates it! In his classic book on leadership,

*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Simon & Schuster, 1989, 32–33), Stephen Covey relates a story told by Frank Koch in *Proceedings*, the magazine of the Naval Institute. The story gives an unforgettable illustration of the non-negotiable nature of truth.

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow." "Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out. The lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman. "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees." Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees."



The captain said, "Send, I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees." "I'm a seaman second class," came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees."

By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send, I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees." Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

We changed course. ✦

## The Heart Has Its Reasons

By Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) with commentary by Peter Kreeft



Commenting on one of Pascal's most famous "thoughts" (*pensées*), author and philosopher Peter Kreeft builds a powerful argument for the role of the heart, not just the mind, in

coming to a knowledge of the truth. The following article is taken from *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées* (Ignatius Press, 1993, 216–17) by Peter Kreeft.

*Truth is so obscured nowadays and lies are so well established that unless we love the truth we shall never recognize it. (Pensées #739 by Blaise Pascal)*

This is why the discovery of truth depends on the heart and will, not just the head and mind. This is why the prime requisite for finding any great truth (like God, or the meaning of life or death, or who we are and what we ought to do, or even finding the right mate and the right career) is love, passion, questing, and questioning. Once we pursue a question with our whole being, as Socrates pursued "know thyself," we will

find answers. Answers are not as hard to come by as we think; and questions, real questioning, is a lot more rare and precious than we think. Finding is not the problem, seeking is. For truth is hidden, ever since the Fall but especially "nowadays," now that our secular society no longer helps us to God, as traditional societies did. Lies are well established on the level of appearance (for example, movies); truth and reality are hidden, behind the lies. No one will find the truth today just by listening to the media, which are largely in the power of the Father of Lies. We have to ignore the pervasive chatter and seek the countercultural, unfashionable, media-scorned truth behind these obstacles.

If we do not love the truth, we will not seek it. If we do not seek it, we will not find it. If we do not find it, we will not know it. If we do not know it, we have failed our fundamental task in time, and quite likely also in eternity. ✦

# The Slippery Slope

By J. Budziszewski



Professor of government and philosophy at the University of Texas, J. Budziszewski graphically describes the downward descent that is set in motion when a culture begins to live with lies. Living-the-lie has tragic consequences, for everyone. The following article is a slightly edited abridgment taken from his book *What We Can't Not Know* (Spence Publishing, 2003, 195–197).

It's true; our politicians lie more today than they used to. Why? For the same reasons that most of us lie more. The more we lie the more easily we're taken in by their lies. There are seven degrees of descent on the downward staircase of honesty. Not all of us are at the bottom, but most of us are at a lower stair than we admit.

The first and topmost stair is simply *sin*. The greater our trespasses, the more we have to lie about. We lie about money, sex, and our children, because we sin about



**“The more we lie the more easily we're taken in by their lies.”**

money, sex, and our children. A turning point in both public and private life came in the early seventies, when we legalized the private use of lethal violence against babies yet unborn. The justification of such staggering betrayal takes more lies than there are words to tell them.

The second stair is *self-protection*. Lies are weaklings; they need bodyguards. Even the smallest prevarication needs a ring of perjuries to keep from being seen. But each new lie needs its own protective ring. Pretty soon the liar is smothered in layers of mendacity, as numerous as onion shells, as thick as flannel blankets.

Third down is *habituation*. We make habits of everything; it is part of our nature. Courage and magnanimity become habits, and so does the chewing of gum. In time, lying too becomes a habit. After you have lied awhile for need, you begin to lie without need. It

becomes second nature. You hardly notice that you do it. Asked why, you can give no reason. You have crossed the border between lying and being a liar.

Underneath the previous stair is *self-deception*, for beyond a certain point, a person starts losing track of truth. Your heart cannot bear to believe that you lie as hugely as you do, so to relieve the rubbing, itching, pricking needles of rue, you half-believe your own lies.

*Rationalization* follows next in order. As your grasp on the truth continues to weaken, you come to blame its weakness on truth itself. It's so slippery, so elusive, who can hold it? It changes shape, moves around, just won't sit still. But everything is shades of gray anyway. How silly to believe in absolutes. Truth is what we let each other get away with, that's all.

Sixth comes *technique*. Lying becomes a craft. For example, you discover that a great falsehood repeated over and over works even better than a small one. Nobody can believe that you would tell such a whopper; therefore, you have a motive to make every lie a whopper. This technique, called the Big Lie after a remark in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, is not a monopoly of dictators, or even of politicians; probably no one uses it in public life before he has practiced it in private. Our American variation on the Big Lie works by numbers instead of size. If you lie about everything, no matter how small, nobody can believe you would tell so *many* lies. The whistleblowers exhaust themselves trying to keep up with you, and eventually

they have blown their whistles so many times that people think *they* must be the liars. By the time a few of your lies are found out, the virtue of honesty has become so discredited that no one cares whether you are lying or not. “They all do it.”

The seventh and bottommost stair is that *duty turns upside-down*. Why does this happen? Because the moment lying is accepted instead of condemned, it has to be required. If it is just another way to win, then in refusing to lie for the cause or the company, you aren't doing your job.

This is where we are, and this is who we are becoming. The problem is not just in our politicians, for they came from us and we elected them. It is not just in the shock troops of evil, for we have made room in the big tent for them. ✱

# La La Land

By C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)

In the final volume of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis paints a powerful picture of what will happen to truth in the last days. An Ape named Shift promotes the idea that Aslan (the true God worshiped by the Narnians) and Tash (the evil god worshiped by the Calormenes) are really two ways of talking about the same deity (named Tashlan). The story related below tells of that moment when the Ape urged the Talking Beasts of Narnia to accept his teaching and join up with the Calormenes so that they can experience a new golden age. The slightly edited passage below is taken from *The Last Battle* (Harper, 1956, 37–40). In a postmodern world where many pretend that all religions worship the same deity, only by different names, Lewis's story is indeed prophetic of what happens when truth dies.

“What do you know about freedom?” asked the Ape. “You think freedom means doing what you like. Well, you’re wrong. That isn’t true freedom. True freedom means doing what I tell you.” “H-n-n-h,” grunted the Bear and scratched its head; it found this sort of thing hard to understand.

“Please, please,” said the high voice of a woolly lamb, who was so young that everyone was surprised he dared to speak at all.”

“What is it now?” said the Ape. “Be quick.”

“Please,” said the Lamb, “I can’t understand. What have we to do with the Calormenes? We belong to Aslan. They belong to a god called Tash who has four arms and

the head of a vulture. They kill men on his altar. I don’t believe there’s any such person as Tash. But if there was, how could Aslan be friends with him?”

All the animals cocked their heads sideways and all their bright eyes flashed toward the Ape. They knew it was the best question anyone had asked yet. The Ape jumped up and spat at the Lamb. “Baby!” he hissed. “Go home to your mother and drink milk. What do you understand

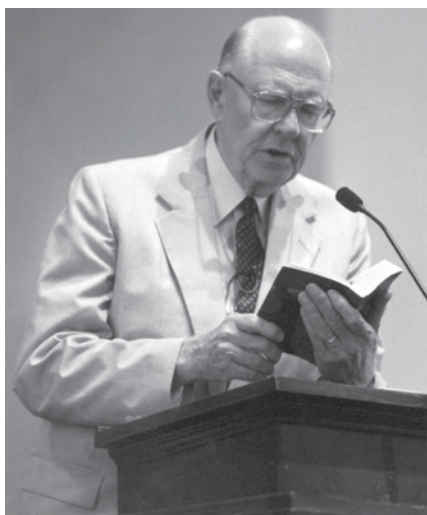


of such things? Tash is only another name for Aslan. All that old idea of us being right and the Calormenes wrong is silly. We know better now. The Calormenes use different words but we all mean the same thing. Tash and Aslan are only two different names for you know Who. That’s why there can never be any quarrel between them. Get that into your heads, you stupid brutes. Tash is Aslan: Aslan is Tash.”

You know how sad your own dog’s face can look sometimes. Think of that and then think of all the faces

of those Talking Beasts—all those honest, humble, bewildered Birds, Bears, Badgers, Rabbits, Moles, and Mice—all far sadder than that. Every tail was down, every whisker drooped. It would have broken your heart with very pity to see their faces....

Continued on page 12



## Taking the Long View

By Charlie Fiskeaux

When did you first meet Dr. Dennis Kinlaw? So, then, how long did you know him? I suspect that your acquaintance extended over many years, perhaps several decades. As we reflect on our friendship with Dr. Kinlaw, we can’t help but recall the richness of our various interactions with him, warmly personal and with consistent focus on being *wholly devoted to God*. The substance of his life focus is the *raison d’être* for the Francis Asbury Society (FAS). Just as one’s influence continues into the future, so Dr. Kinlaw’s ministry focus continues to motivate and energize the ministries of FAS; specifically, those of speaker-evangelists.

As you recall your past relationship with Dr. Kinlaw, we encourage you to *take the long view* into the future of many persons around the world being presented with the challenge of being *wholly devoted to God*. Consider making a commitment over the next three years, ending December 2020, that will make this gospel presentation possible.

Gifts of all types are appreciated, including present gifts of cash, investments, or tangible assets and deferred gifts through one’s estate or will. Persons interested in making non-cash or deferred gifts should contact President Stan Key. ✦

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La La Land *continued from page 11*


Up till now King Tirian had said nothing. But now, as Tirian looked round on the miserable faces of the Narnians and saw how they would all believe that Aslan and Tash were one and the same, he could bear it no longer. "Ape," he cried with a great voice, "you lie damnably. You lie like a Calormene. You lie like an Ape." He meant to go on and ask how the terrible god Tash who fed on the blood of his people could possibly be the same as the good Lion by whose blood all Narnia was saved. If he had been allowed to speak, the rule of the Ape might have ended that day; the Beasts might have seen the truth and thrown the Ape down. But before he could say another word two Calormenes struck him in the mouth with all their force, and a third, from behind, kicked his feet from under him. And as he fell, the Ape squealed in rage and terror. "Take him away. Take him away. Take him where he cannot hear us, nor we hear him...." ✦

The Francis Asbury Society

*Jesus*

THE ONE WHO SAVES US FROM OUR SINS

Featuring Dr. Chris Bounds



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**The High Calling—March–April 2018**

*The High Calling* is a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

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