

Ready to Live

Study 2: Being True and Right Matter

God's revelation is like military intelligence, setting out the parameters of the battle we are in.

- ▣ We are living in 'the heavenlies' (Eph. 6:10-13), and being opposed by Satan and his cronies.
- ▣ If we pretend the fight isn't happening, we pay an awful price.

In this battle, we need to 'wear' truth and righteousness (Eph. 6:14).

- ▣ Both of these are what we must be, and, what we can only be in Christ.
- ▣ The Lord knows we don't have the stomach for this battle.
- ▣ God clothes himself in righteousness and salvation (Isaiah 59:16-20). He *intervenes*.
- ▣ He comes to us in Christ wearing righteousness as a belt and faithfulness (or truth) around his waist (Isaiah 11:1-5). God must take up the fight or we are lost.

Our culture often assumes there's no ultimate truth except what is 'true for you'. It claims there's no ultimate right except what is expedient—what works for the majority of people.

- ▣ We can't afford to let these views infiltrate our thinking.

Being true

A recent editorial in *The Australian* claimed that lies are now a way of public life in Australia. Much of what we hear is carefully crafted (now a major industry), not to inform, but to exert power.

God's truth doesn't need 'massaging' but is announced with integrity (2 Cor. 4:2; 6:4-7; 10:4-5).

The truth we must have does not originate with us.

- ▣ Truth is Jesus himself (4:20-21). He's come to our world and said what is true.
- ▣ He's also lived it. His goodness is real. And his love is real.
- ▣ He towers over the make-believe, the ideologies, the excuses and straight out lies that make up so much of what we see and hear around us.
- ▣ He challenges people to prove him to be false—a bold public claim (John 8:46).
- ▣ He calls the devil the father of liars (John 8:44).
- ▣ He tells Pilate, in court, that he has come into the world to reveal the truth and that everyone who is true will come to him (John 18:37).

Many have given up believing in 'truth'. So, there's nothing that can tie us together as a community, and nothing that can lift us out of the world we've imagined. We need Christ!

Jesus exposes us all as sinners, loves us and brings us to God.

- ▣ This is not only the truth of Christ. It's now the truth about us as well (John 3:20-21).
- ▣ This ends our self-importance and self-justification.
- ▣ These are the things that stop us speaking the truth to each other. They make us unreal. They lead to conflict or withdrawal from meaningful relationships.

We can speak the truth to each other (4:15, 25).

- ▣ We don't need to massage the truth to make it palatable to our ego, or further our ambition,
- ▣ We can acknowledge we are unworthy sinners for whom Jesus has died.
- ▣ We don't need to be the one who is right, and can see and speak about things as they are.
- ▣ We're free to say we were wrong. We can enjoy what others are doing. We can disagree without ceasing to love. We can investigate something that is new. We are free—in the truth!

- ❑ Our truth telling can be gentle. It will build up another person, not tear them down (Colossians 4:5-6). It will create community, not serve a party interest.

Apart from Christ, our life is a lie, and Satan will use this to his own advantage. But if we receive Christ as our truth, and stand in him, and relate to others by him, Satan is foiled.

Being Right

We are made to be right or righteous (Eccl. 7:29) and are ill at ease if we can't justify our actions.

- ❑ We need to be right in God's eyes—that's what righteousness means.
- ❑ Without this, we fall into Satan's hands. Prominent examples abound.

First, we need *to know* that Christian living is something God makes.

- ❑ There's a new self to *put on* (same word as for the breastplate)—things like speaking truth instead of lies, working instead of stealing.
- ❑ This new self is created by God, *to be* 'like God in true righteousness and holiness' (4:24).
- ❑ These are the good works God prepares for us to walk in (2:8-10).
- ❑ What impresses God and deters Satan must have a 'made *by* God' label (Phil. 2:13).
- ❑ A new creation is someone reconciled to God and moved by love (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).
- ❑ Our actions express gratefulness. Outside of this we are making something of ourselves, and that's not righteousness!
- ❑ Our beginning and continuing are both God's creation (Colossians 3:10).

Second, we need *to think* in this new way.

- ❑ Paul calls this being 'renewed in the spirit of your minds' (4:23; also Romans 12:1-2).
- ❑ Our community is not asking us to think, but to agree.
- ❑ God doesn't want 'Yes' people. He wants us to understand what he says, love what he wants, and think of ways to share in his working.
- ❑ Our *teacher* about what is right is Jesus (4:20-21). We can't afford to trust our feelings or majority opinion.
- ❑ Our *curriculum* is Jesus. He is what is true, and he is what we need to be. It's his purity, and it's his kindness that are powerful to help us change.
- ❑ We are in his space! He is the ideal *environment* for learning. For example, we are to 'be kind to one another, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you' (4:32).

Third, we need *to change* how we live.

- ❑ A physiotherapist told me, 'the body is a cheat'. It finds the way of least effort to do what it needs to—even when it's damaging itself.
- ❑ The same is true with behaviour. The way we've always done things, or what comes naturally, seem preferable to change. But no change may mean death!
- ❑ There are things to 'put off'. We used to do whatever we felt like—without God, without shame and without limits (4:22). Satan walked all over us. We have to learn to say 'No!'
- ❑ There are things to 'put on' (4:24), like being self-sufficient and generous (4:28). We need to let the Holy Spirit fill up all our dark spaces with helpful conversation and kindness (4:29-31).
- ❑ Paul lists many ways we can imitate the God who is giving us new life (5:1-18).
- ❑ All this needs some enthusiasm and persistence. And some Christian friends (5:19-21).

Being true, and being right—in Christ, are needed if we are going to be strong, and if we are going to be protected from our enemy.