

Text: John 8:31-40

Title: "Truth or Consequences"

Introduction: Happy New Year Everyone! **Let's Pray!**

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will see our Scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline with fill-in-the-blanks. This will help us follow our learning for today and get us ready for the entire series ... "Squint". When you get home refrigerate this and keep learning from it this week. For those of you who are listening on-line or Ipodding, you too can download the outline from our website and fill in the blanks as well. We are glad you are with us.

Our Purpose here at BMZ = to create a place where over-churched, de-churched and unchurched can become deeply committed Christians. In other words, it doesn't matter where you've been or what your past is like, we are here to invite you into the Good News that God cares way more about your future than your history. We are here to help people become DEEPLY COMMITTED CHRISTIANS. What does a Deeply Committed Christians look like? A Deeply Committed Christian is one who consistently: 1) Knows God, 2) Loves People, and 3) Serves the World for the Kingdom.

This series that we are starting at the beginning of 2010 is to help us to "Know God".

I. Defining Moments

Defining Moments ... those moments in our lives when we meet up with a *Truth* that comes front and center and our lives are transformed forever ... we now have a new lens to view life. Our view of God, relationships, life, etc. is transformed forever when we have those moments.

We would love to ignore this truth, but now we can't anymore. This truth probably got in the way of what we thought we wanted or needed in our life plans, our relationships, our finances, etc. From that defining moment on, we will never view life or different areas of our lives in the same way. Sometimes it's a truth we learned from someone else and as soon as they said it, we had to agree and say, "That's true! That's a truth that I will not forget from this moment on." Maybe life just got too busy and we missed it because of day-to-day life being so hectic, but for whatever reason, we have not given time or attention to certain things that are true...

Then there is a life moment or a tragedy or something that puts it right in our faces and we cannot ignore it. That's truth; and I have to, from now on, live according to that truth!

I was 30 years old when I received the call from my Dad that my Mom had an aggressive form of brain cancer. I got that call in May. My parents were living in Florida and Sarah and I were in Chili. I finally went down to visit Mom at the end of July, two months after I found out. When I got there on Tuesday, my Mom was still able to talk and laugh and sort of feed herself (her right side leg and arm were useless). On Thursday night I went into my Mom's room and sat on her bedside like she did for me so many times when I was a kid. I asked for her to pray before we went to sleep like she used to

do. She said, of course, “I’m not sure if I can, but I’ll try.” She went on to pray a powerful prayer that was not about her, but about me. She prayed that I would serve God’s Kingdom well as a pastor and that lives would be changed because of me. The next day, my Mom went into a coma. On Sunday morning she passed away.

TRUTH = Life is short ... life is fragile. We only have so much time to invite our friends and family to the next life! I live my life differently now than I did then. I am so much more focused on doing everything that I can to help other people meet Jesus Christ ... God’s back yard. There were a whole bunch of things that I thought might be priorities in my life that weren’t anymore. That was a defining moment for me. My life will never be the same as it was before my Mom prayed with me that last time, slipped into a coma and left to pick up her promotion!

II. Don’t Tell Me

PROBLEM: There are some truths that we just don’t want to know ...

Our children = As parents we don’t want to find out that our children are not as perfect as we thought they were. I don’t want to take the call from the other parent or the teacher or the principal and find out anything that will lower my view of my child. Please don’t tell me the truth! Leave me with the illusion that they are perfect.

Our spouse = We want to believe the best about our spouses. Don’t tell me that he or she was acting like that or said that or hurt someone else... Leave me with the illusion that they are wonderful. Sometimes we have to tell ourselves that they are perfect and ignore what they’ve done to US!

Our girl/boyfriend ... We don’t want to hear if our boyfriend or girlfriend or fiancée are acting anything besides wonderful and perfect. We don’t really want to know the truth about how they’ve acted in the past and that there are remnants of that behavior still lingering. Information starts to come in from their family or their friends and you don’t want to have a defining moment, so, you turn aside so you don’t have to see it ... we don’t have to see the Truth!

If I know the truth, it might screw up *my plan* for *my life*! So, I’m not going to find out the truth ... I just want to believe that things are just great and wonderful.

It happens in my life as part of this church. I want to believe that everything here is just wonderful and there are not any problems. If I just ignore the truth and facts long enough, maybe they won’t be the truth and the facts.

This is one reason we avoid going to the doctor. It’s not rational, but we often approach life this way. We know that in order to live life well, we *need* to have all the cards on the table, but we don’t *want* to. There’s something in you and me that we think that if we ignore the truth long enough, it won’t be the truth anymore...

Married Couples = saw the warning signs about how it was going to go, but ignored them. Now, two weeks, two months, two years into the marriage, we have to admit that what we thought about our spouse before we married was true... we ignored the truth about that person then, but we can’t anymore.

Large companies = celebrating and giving each other bonuses, because they were ignoring the truth about what was really going on.

It's not rational, right? But it's something that's inside of us, isn't it? If we ignore the facts, maybe they will go away. Maybe if we try to believe something else to be true, it will become true.

Just as it is not a good idea to ignore the truth in our marriages, families, businesses, etc. In the same way, it's not a good idea to ignore the Truths of our Heavenly Father either. Ignoring the truth in our faith, will send us in bad directions too...

You and I have something in common. We have ways that we want God to be. I have ways that I want God to be! If we are uncomfortable with what God says is True, we try to ignore it.

"If I trust that teaching of God, it's going to wreck my plans for my life."

"If I believe *that* teaching of God, I'm going to have to change my ways and probably have to apologize to a few people."

"I'm not going to believe that teaching of God, because then I will have to give up control of my life... It's not rational."

It's not based on Scripture or facts, but we sometimes decide not to believe whatever has been said about God because it will mess up MY life!

So, we have certain things that we believe to be true of God, because it will make sense for our lives, our agendas, our deals...

III. My God

MY GOD: #1 = physically protect my family (God's #1 priority is to take care of my family)

#2 = protect my family financially (we tithe / I'm one of His best investors!)

#3 = God will not let my children be in bad relationships ... we have prayed for them since before they were born to have great spouses, etc. (we pray for them!) ...

#4 = God is intensely interested in Boscobel Girls Basketball and the Green Bay Packers (it's important to me)

#5 = I like to believe that my sins are *not that big of a deal to God* because they are not as bad as SOME people's sins! You believe that about your sins too, right? That's why we keep doing them...

#6 = Hell = everyone goes to heaven (there was a loophole and God's grace really kicks in at the end), except a couple of categories of people who deserve an eternal lake of fire – and God agrees with MY list for eternity.

So, there are certain things that we do not want to believe are true ... it's not rational, but if I believe those teachings of God, something is going to have to change. So, I do not want to believe that that teaching of God is true.

IV. Truth or Consequences

Every distortion of TRUTH about God that we have has a corresponding consequence ... there is a consequence if we don't understand TRUTH (who God is and who God wants us to be). If we are wrong about a belief about God, we will pay a price in some arena of our life. Ignorance is bliss, but it's not an excuse! Every time we are wrong and refuse to face the Truth about God, there will be a corresponding consequence in some arena of our life. That's why this worship series is important. We have to KNOW GOD!

Here are a few beliefs and consequences that go with them...

1. My routine = I'm okay with God. "I pray once in awhile. I go to church every Sunday and I sing the songs and I try to give money when we are helping people." If you think that God responds with, "Oh, well, I can't fault so-and-so, they are sticking to their routine", then you will never have a relationship with God.
2. If you believe that every time something bad happens to you, that is God punishing you, you will never have a relationship with your Heavenly Father.
3. Answer all my questions = then I'll believe. "I have had 12 questions answered and when I get these last 10 answered and the mystery of God is gone and I can understand everything, then I will believe in God." If that is you, it's never going to happen. You cannot understand enough about God. God is not about our human logic. God is about God's logic, which is a mystery to us. If this is you, you will never experience all that God wants you to experience in this life or the next. You will never have a Personal Relationship with God. It's a faith!
4. God heals all illnesses for those who believe or those who are "good" = You will have great disappointment and disillusionment throughout your life, because that's not how God works.
5. If you think that you can get to heaven by your own works or plans, you will find out later that it's not true. If you think you can earn your way into heaven, you will miss out on God's incredible love for each of us in giving His own Son to die on a cross. "Eternity in God's Paradise is a gift, not a reward!"
6. If you think that your past is so bad that God could not possibly forgive you and use you to build His Kingdom, you will never find forgiveness and the peace that comes with it.

As long as we keep living out life not really wanting to know Who God is and seek the Truth of God, we will not ever experience what God wants for us in this life or the next. As long as we keep putting our truths over top of God's Truths, we will continue to suffer the consequences...

This is just like the scene that Jesus walked into when He came into the world. God sent Himself so that people could actually understand God! Jesus expressed, especially in the Book of John that "One of the reasons I am here is to explain God to you, because obviously you are not getting it!" The Good News is that God did not send another prophet, or a tablet of stone, or a talking donkey, God sent himself in the flesh! Jesus said that, "if you get to know me and my teachings, you will get to know God and God's teachings." In John 14, Jesus told the disciples that if they know *Him*, they know the Father God.

If we are going to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we have to KNOW GOD for WHO HE REALLY IS! Jesus did the same for those 1st Century Jews and Gentiles that he worked with. Did you know that those people back then had some distorted truths about Who God was?!?

Here's some of the things they believed about God:

1. They believed that if you were rich, you were blessed by God and because you were of God, you could do no wrong. But, if you were poor, you were cursed by God.
2. They believed that if you were sick, especially as a child, it was because your parents had sinned.
3. Jesus came into an environment where they believed that God was a racist. If you were not Jewish, God did not care for you.
4. Jesus did ministry in a world that the religious leaders and the people believed that God was so far removed from the people that you certainly would not call God “Father”. God was so far above and beyond the people that they did not dare mention God’s name ... punishable by death.

Into that mess, Jesus came and claimed to be “...the Light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” (John 8:12)

And Jesus started teaching ... and people could not help but listen and believe and be amazed, even though what Jesus said was not what their parents had taught them, was not what the religious leaders of the day had taught them, even though it was extremely uncomfortable for them ... some listened. Even though what Jesus taught was not reasonable or logical or even attainable (they thought), some listened and followed and stayed close to Jesus. Jesus was teaching TRUTHS that they were not used to...

Our Scripture for today is the launching point of this series ... it holds in it a great quote that we hear used often, but usually out of context. Many people do not know where it comes from or who said it...

READ JOHN 8:31-40 NOW!

I just love this Scripture. What a great example of what Jesus was dealing with ... people who refused to listen to the TRUTH! Let’s start with the quote...

“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings.”

Now, remember that Jesus is the Light of the world. Well, sometimes that light is too bright for us to handle. There are times that, as we go through this series, we are going to see Jesus say things to individuals and groups of people that are TRUTH, but that Truth is so harsh and so bright, that the people want to run away from it! And you and I might want to too.

Like I said about the bright days when it would be so much easier to go back inside where the light is filtered ... where we can see clearly and we know our way around. That’s the kind of light that came with the TRUTH that Jesus was dealing.

Jesus says here that “if you remain faithful...” If you “remain”, dwell, abide, stay, “faithful to my teachings”; THEN, “you will know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH will set you free”! The problem is that sometimes it’s just too bright ... it’s hard to stay there. BUT, IF we will stay in that light and keep being faithful to Jesus’ teachings (even when they don’t make sense to us, even when they don’t agree with what our parents taught us, even when they don’t agree with what our professor taught us, even if they don’t agree with what our culture and society tell us) ... If we stay in that light ... remain, abide, dwell ... there, after awhile our eyes will start to adjust and eventually, we will experience a freedom in that area of our lives ... peace.

So, here's the first one of the series ... oh, in this series we are going to spend some time with "Nick at Night", some men doing card tricks and slight of hand, a guy who just wants to party but can't, a thirsty woman who has been married – a lot! And a very powerful man who realized that he had no control... BUT, HERE'S THE FIRST!

Now, I know that there are some incredible lessons in this Scripture about being slaves to evil and not servants of God. I know what Jesus is trying to get across to them, but they aren't getting it. Let's just keep it simple today and talk about the simple answers.

Jesus is talking to a bunch of Jewish people ... and he says, "You will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free." And there were Jewish men there that responded by saying, "TRUTH? What is truth? We have to follow YOUR teachings to experience freedom?!? We're not even sure we like your teachings, and besides "we are descendants of Abraham. We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean, 'You will be set free?'"

V. **We Are Not Slaves**

- A. Can you even imagine what Jesus was thinking? These people are ... **BLIND!**
 1. "Not Slaves? Ever heard of the ... ROMANS?"
 2. "Never been slaves? Ever heard of a little country called 'Egypt'? Remember a guy named 'Moses' ... 9 plagues ... Red Sea ... brought you out of (wait for it...) SLAVERY?"
 3. "Never been slaves? What about 40 years in exile to the Babylonians and being their ... slaves?"
 4. "Never been slaves? What about 400 years of the Persians and the Babylonians and the Romans marching up and down Palestine and overrunning the Jewish people and trading off who is going to be the new mayor in town ... because it's not going to be the Jews ..."
- B. Do you know what those Jewish people were saying? They were saying, (FLOOD LIGHTS ON!) "It's too bright! It might be the truth, but I'm going back inside where I can believe what I want to believe and if I believe it long enough, it just might become true! ... Slaves?!? Yeah, right!" (FLOOD LIGHTS OFF!)
- C. Those Jewish people retreated ... they ran away from the truth and they did not get to experience the freedom and peace that Jesus desired for them in this life AND the next!
- D. Here's my challenge to you during this series ... don't run, don't hide, don't just push back at what Jesus has to say to us ... "SQUINT" if you need to, but 'remain', 'abide', 'dwell', in what Jesus is teaching us as TRUTH. If we do, then we can experience freedom and ...peace. I desire for all of us to KNOW GOD more!

Let's Pray!