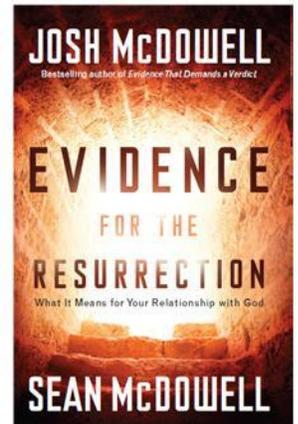


RECLAIMING EASTER

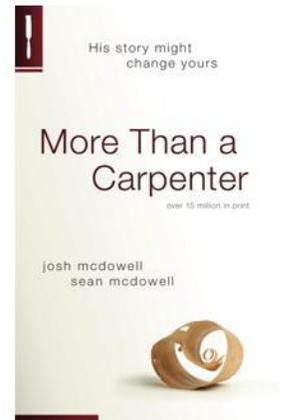
3 TEACHING OUTLINES

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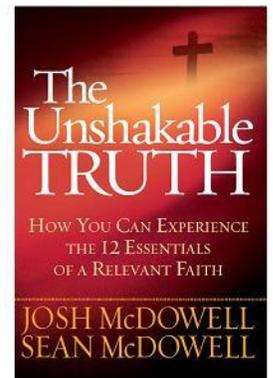
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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TRUTH INTERRUPTS YOUR LIFE?

By: Mark Fitter

A. Introduction

1. A story is told of a pastor was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, all of them between 10 and 12 years of age. The group surrounded a dog. Concerned lest the boys were hurting the dog, he went over and asked, "What are you boys doing with that dog?"

One of the boys replied, "This dog is just an old neighborhood stray. We all want him, but only one of us can take him home. So we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to keep the dog."

Of course the pastor was scandalized. "You boys shouldn't be having a contest telling lies!" he exclaimed. He then launched into a ten-minute sermon against lying beginning, "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie," and ending with, "Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie."

There was dead silence for about a minute. Just as the pastor began to think he'd really gotten through to them, the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, "All right, give him the dog."

2. What is truth?

- a. Dictionary: conformity with fact or reality
- b. How important is truth to you?

Ask for show of hands: On a scale of 1-10-...raise your hand if it is a 10, raise your hand if it is a 9 etc.

Q. What are the areas of your life where determining truth is important to you?

Solicit verbal responses from the congregation

Possible answers:

(Feel free to elaborate on the humor of not getting the truth on the following items.)

- 1) Dating (Is the person really who they say they are?)
- 2) Test results from your doctor (what would happen if you got someone else's?)
- 3) Pregnancy test

3. How do you determine what is true, especially when it comes to important things?

- a. Minor things there is not much to lose so you can afford to be a little lax or cavalier – But what about the significant things; and what about the most significant thing in life? God – and where you will spend eternity?
- b. Which of these methods most closely describes your process of determining truth when it comes to God and where you will spend your eternity?
 - 1) Accept and practice the religion I was brought up with
 - 2) Had a need and joined the religion that helped to meet my need
 - 3) Joined the popular religion or church in my community
 - 4) Peer pressure – compromising for acceptance and success
 - 5) Explore the facts and exercised faith where God asked me to

4. A Man in the Bible in Search of Truth

a. Dialogue With Pilate

The Bible records the account of a very important man who wrestled with this very question: “What is truth?”

John 18:

²⁸Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

²⁹Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

³⁰They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you."

³¹So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death,"

³²to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

³³Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

³⁴Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

³⁵Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?"

³⁶Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

³⁷Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king for this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

³⁸Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.

³⁹"But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

⁴⁰So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

John 19

¹Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him.

²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him;

³and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face.

⁴Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

⁵Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

⁶So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

⁷The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

⁸Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid;

⁹and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

¹⁰So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

¹¹Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

¹²As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

¹³Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

¹⁴Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour and he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"

¹⁵So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

¹⁶So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

b. About Pontius Pilate:

The Roman ruler of Judea who served from AD 26 – AD 36. He had a tenuous relationship with the Jews of his day. He had offended them many times, not the least of which was by moving his headquarters from Caesarea to Jerusalem. This brought many soldiers along with their immoral practices. He was not the most successful politician either. He eventually was called to Rome to answer to the emperor for his political mishaps. Eusibius tells us that “wearied from all he had been through” Pilate eventually killed himself.

5. How peer pressure affects the search for truth

This helps us understand the tension Pilate was facing when the Jewish Rulers presented Jesus to him for condemnation. Pilate was wrestling with his disdain for the Jews, his fear of Rome, his own conscience and advice from his wife who told him: "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." Matthew 27:19

Pilate felt an enormous amount of peer pressure and political pressure. Seemingly struggling with a desire to do the right thing and release Jesus (I find no guilt in him), but confronted by unhappy Jewish Rulers who threaten him with insubordination to Caesar. The Rulers even went so far as to say

that “they have no king but Caesar.” We know that they did not really believe that, but used it to exert pressure on Pilate to get their way and have Jesus crucified.

Matthew 27:24

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."

Due to peer pressure, Pilate compromised for acceptance and success

He determined what was true and right based on political pressure and what the popular thing was to do.

How do you determine truth?

Remember we said that there were five ways of determining what is true regarding God and where you will spend eternity:

1. Tradition: Accept and practice the religion I was brought up with
2. Satisfaction: Had a need & joined the religion that helped to meet it
3. Popular opinion: Joined the popular religion or church in my community
4. Peer pressure: Compromising for acceptance and success
5. Factual: Explore the facts & exercised faith where God requests

When it came to determining what is true regarding God and where he would spend eternity, Pilate determined truth by popular opinion.

6. How do you determine truth?

a. Hopefully it is:

Explore the facts and exercised faith where God asked me to

Let's try that. Let's see if we can prove, based on the facts, that Jesus is our God and Messiah.

b. Types of proof:

- 1) Scientific proof: Must be able to repeat in a “test tube” repeatedly with the identical result.

Science is friend not enemy of Christianity

- 2) Legal proof: Burden of evidence – This is how we function on a daily basis.

Following are some great legal proofs for the existence of God, the deity of Christ and the resurrection:

- a) The cosmological argument tells us that God is the only uncaused cause. It proves that God exists because all things have causes. There cannot be an infinite regress of causes; therefore, there must be an uncaused cause: That is God.
- b) Teleological argument – Proves that God’s exists based upon the premise that the universe is designed and therefore needs a designer.
- c) Psalm 19:1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Creation itself tells you there is a God.
- d) The math: The odds of the simplest living cell’s ability to rebuild itself by chance:
- e) 10^{-2,000,000,000} Molecular Biophysicist Harold Morowitz. That is a 10 followed by 2 billion zeros.FYI: 1 to the 20th would be one chance in one thousand thousand trillion.
- f) Irreducible complexity tells us that macro evolution is impossible. Therefore there must be a God.
- g) The Cambrian Explosion tells us that basically all life forms known to man came on the scene at about the same time, which is the exact antithesis of Darwin’s theory of evolution.

h) The Bible tells us that Jesus is our God and creator:

John 1:1-3

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

i) The testimonies of the apostles:

a) Remember: 2,000 years ago, there was not a group of Jewish people walking around saying “ boy, do we want to be deceived.” Let’s find some poor guy, say he's our Messiah, have him killed, steal the body, say he was risen from the grave (having raised Himself), forget about our Jewish faith, turn away from our families, be imprisoned, beaten, robbed and killed... for something we know is a lie and we are against anyway...

b) The early church was a Jewish church. The mass did not accept Him, the Rulers did not accept Him, and even His own disciples questioned his messiahship.

c) Point of law: No one in their right mind would ever testify to the veracity of a lie whose end would be harmful to their person.

j) The change in the Apostles, especially Peter is undeniable evidence for the veracity of Jesus and the scriptures. Matthew 26:74-75, Acts 4:19-2. The evidence of the Apostles’ changed lives and their martyrdom. They suffered in fact (having seen the resurrected Christ) as compared to us who die totally in faith.

k) The Bible is full of prophecy about the coming Messiah. Perhaps one of the most touching prophecies is Psalm 22. This psalm prophesied the type of execution the messiah would suffer some 800 years before.

On the cross, Jesus played the cantor (Jewish worship leader). The cantor would typically start singing a Psalm and then the congregation would join in. So the people witnessing the crucifixion would have been singing the prophetic Psalm about that very event. Can you imagine the impact?

7. Martin Luther: There is a God shaped vacuum in every person's heart"

Are you ready to fill that vacuum with Christ today?

Jesus said:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. John 14:6

8. What are you going to do with the truth of the resurrection today?

- a) The Bible records that on the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus rose from the grave.

FYI: Some people question whether Jesus rose on the 2nd day or the 3rd day. Since in some people's mind, Friday to Sunday is two days. This is true for today and definitely a product of our culture and western mindset. However, we need to be careful not to impose our customs of today with those of a Jewish culture two thousand years ago. For the Jewish culture of that day, if an event touched any part of a day, it was considered to encompass and include the entire day. So if an event touched even a moment of Friday, Saturday and Sunday, it would indeed be accurate to call it a three day event. Anything else would be inaccurate for that time.

- b) Mark 16:

¹When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him.

²Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

³They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large.

⁵Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.

⁶And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.

⁷"But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

⁸They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

⁹[Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.

¹⁰She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping.

¹¹When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.

¹²After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country.

¹³They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

¹⁴Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. Will you:

c) What are you going to do with the truth of the resurrection today?

Continue to accept and practice the religion you were brought up with?

Participate in a religion just because they helped you?

Just go to the popular religion or church in your community?

Compromise the truth for acceptance and success?

Make a decision based on the facts & exercise faith where God requests

And the facts are clear:

There is a God, He sent His only Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. He was crucified and resurrected the third day and desires to forgive you and have a relationship with you.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

9. Invitation