

# The Whole Truth

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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Some years past, on a trip to Portland, Oregon, I sat next to a lady attorney on the airplane. She had left the legal profession and entered the restaurant business, and as I sold to restaurants, we had common ground to carry on a conversation.

I brought up the phrase, "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Though I cannot recall all that we spoke about, I do remember that she felt that many times the entire truth never comes out.

One of the reasons is that we want to appear good, so we make a truthful statement that does not reveal the *whole* truth. We picked up this trait from our ultimate grandparents. Adam said to God: "This woman You gave me made me eat the forbidden fruit" (Genesis 3:12). However, the truth was, "I knew better, but went ahead and did it anyway to please my wife." For her part, Eve told God: "It wasn't my fault. That tricky serpent deceived me into eating it" (verse 13). Again, the truth was, "I really wanted to be made wise and have my mind opened. I wanted it, and I took it."

The world we live in suffers greatly because it lacks the truth. Perhaps it would be more complete to say that the world suffers because, even though the truth is available, most will not accept it.

In American culture, movies, television, books, and magazines tell us that premarital or extramarital sex is exciting and feels good. That is **the truth**—but not **the whole truth**. It leaves out the guilt that one feels for having broken God's seventh commandment, as well as the stress and harm that frequently follow in unwanted pregnancy or sexual disease that result from this sin.

**Nothing but the truth** spells out that penalties will follow the committing of sin. Moreover, the penalties may not end with "just" stress and harm. Certainly, suffering and death can come from sexual disease. An unwanted pregnancy could end in abortion. A person could even become addicted to illicit sex, ruining any chance for a proper marriage, family, home, and a happy future.

It is easy to see that avoiding the whole truth can have far-reaching consequences!

## Paying Later

"Buy now and pay later" is common sales approach in our society, and Americans have bought it wholesale. As of September 2001, according to the Federal Reserve Bank, consumer- credit debt in this nation is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1.6 trillion, roughly \$5,600 per man, woman, and child.

We can see how this works to our detriment if we apply "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" to this sales ploy:

***The truth*** : A person can have his heart's desire and enjoy it immediately.

***The whole truth*** : He will pay for it at high interest rates over a long period.

***Nothing but the truth*** : By making this expensive purchase, he will pay far more for it than it is worth. He will also reduce the money available to his family for more important things. In addition, he could develop a habit of spending more than he has, leading to possible future financial difficulties.

"Take out a second mortgage and pay off all the bills" is another common scheme to talk someone into borrowing money. "Why not?" most people think. "I will never pay off my mortgage anyway."

***The truth*** : One can pay off all his credit card bills.

***The whole truth*** : People rarely learn their lessons in financial matters. Because of now being debt-free, they feel they can go out and spend, landing themselves in debt once again. Sadly, even our senior citizens make this mistake, as 37% of retirees spend their entire retirement in two years.

***Nothing but the truth*** : By loading their homes with additional debt, not only do people feel a false security to spend freely, but they also jeopardize their future solvency. It is important that a person's residence be paid off completely before old age saps one's earning power.

God wants us to do our best to understand the "nothing but the truth" side of every matter. It is wisdom to see the whole picture before making a decision. Unfortunately, the world we live in reels from bad decisions based, not on truth, but on greed, superstition, fear, and the desire for power and control. The called must work from truth in making evaluations and in living their lives—despite past bad habits and an ungodly environment.

## **What Is Truth?**

It is important to establish a proper definition of truth, and John 17:17 gives the most basic biblical definition of it: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." *Sanctify* means "to render or set apart as pure," and when we obey God's Word, we are set apart and purified. Jesus confirms here that everything that God originally authorized to appear in the Bible is truth.

This means that every law, statute, illustration, example, and principle is good for us, helping us to have a better life now by building godly character in us.

Jesus reiterates an Old Testament principle from Deuteronomy 8:3 in Matthew 4:4: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." To live by the truth—the Word of God—demands that we first study the Bible to find out what His truth is. Once we understand what God expects of us, we have to meditate on its every aspect and begin to put it into practice. God desires that we consider more than just the law or principle by itself: He wants us to learn to apply it.

What is the truth of fearing God, anger, godly love, forgiveness, patience, temperance, service, and so forth? What are God's teachings intended to produce in our lives? God's very nature!

He wants us to consider the results of our actions, both good and bad. We must ask ourselves, "What are the consequences of what I'm thinking of doing? What are the consequences of how I'm currently living my life, and what of God's truth can I apply to improve?"

When we work to understand the depth of the truth, it causes us to change for the good. We see what God is after and can learn to apply it in our conduct. We will also begin to understand how obedience to God's truth produces great benefits.

Notice Peter's contribution to the subject:

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. (I Peter 1:22-23)

Peter echoes Jesus' words in John 17:17. When we yield our wills to the truth of God, we are purified. What happens is that, when we allow God's Word to have its effect on our mind, we change, and this change produces sanctification. We become different, and are thus set apart from those in the world.

### **Submitting to Truth**

However, this purification or sanctification does not come without great cost. God's Holy Spirit does not make us *do* anything. It guides us, or reminds us of the truth, but taking the stand to apply it in our lives is up to us. God may place us in similar situations repeatedly until we finally grasp the fact that we need to change, but eventually *we* have to submit to the truth.

Often, what God thinks is necessary is not what we want to do, and a struggle is born. We may not care about going into debt for something we really lust for, and then we read Proverbs 22:7: "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."

Consider also the principle in Proverbs 17:18: "A man void of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, and becomes surety for his friend." *The Living Bible* renders it: "It is poor judgment to countersign another's note, to become responsible for his debts."

With this information, we can consider how best to apply the principle by asking ourselves the following questions: Can I save my money and pay cash for my desired item? Can I do without it? Do I really need to have it for my family or business? Is it proper to purchase it at this time?

In other words, God's truth in these two proverbs should cause us to consider if we are conducting ourselves frivolously or appropriately. We can then make the most prudent decision possible.

We should apply this principle of measuring what we want to do next to God's instruction on the subject in all we do, whether it is in dating, marriage, other relationships, child-rearing, finances, work, government, and so forth. However, nowhere is truth more important than in truly understanding how to worship God.

The world has its gods and its way of worshipping them. Some state that all one has to do is to be a good person, forgetting that God Himself defines what is good. The churches of the world worship their god by means of ritual and customs, some of which have their basis in the Bible, but others do not.

The Bible reveals God's feasts, the holy days (Leviticus 23), and because of them, we understand the plan of God. We keep the Sabbath and the other Ten Commandments, but worship of God is much more than that. Proper worship of God is changing our lives to live as He lives in every facet of life. Beyond that, working to reflect His character in all we do brings Him great honor, so our study to learn and apply His truth means a great deal to Him.

Proverbs 3:3-8:

Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

Practically, truth is shutting out all deliberate falsehood and all hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious. Not only are we to shun all falseness that is presented to us, but we are also to reflect truth in all our dealings with others. Truth builds and encourages; falsehood tears down faith and trust.

Verse 6 admonishes us to acknowledge God in all our ways, that is, in all our endeavors. God and His truth are needed, not just in times of crisis or want, but in everyday living, and if we study and learn to do things God's way, it will not be long before God's way *is* our way. In so doing, we will be worshipping God in Spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Solomon shows in Proverbs 3:7 that the great hindrance to all wisdom is the thought that we have already attained it. If we have the proper fear of God—if we understand our place before Him and act accordingly—we will gain a heart of true wisdom (Psalm 90:12). As we do this, healing and strengthening begin to take place in our lives (Proverbs 3:8).

Jesus Christ tells us in John 8:31-32, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We will be free from superstitions, from wrong ways of living, and from the ungodly way this world does things, and in the process, we will be made fit for the Kingdom of God. This should be ample motivation for us to seek and apply truth in our lives.