

You Can't Handle the Truth

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Identity, Purpose, Belonging / Truth / Matthew 16:13–18; John 17:7; John 14:5–7; John 6:25–66

You want the truth? You can't handle the truth (seen from the movie)

Pg. 155 WHO Am I Lord? quote on truth

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Notes

<https://www.lakecitiesumc.org/pastors-blog/you-want-the-truth>

<https://www.blufftontoday.com/story/opinion/2013/09/01/you-cant-handle-truth/14033957007/>

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/you-can-t-handle-the-truth-pat-cook-sermon-on-faith-81524>

<https://explorethebible.lifeway.com/blog/adults/3-types-who-cant-handle-the-truth-session-1-1-cor-110-25/>

I enjoy a good movie, but ask my kids or Mark, I don't do well with watching movies. I wish I could blame it on the concussions lately, but really I didn't do well before them. Many times when I sit down to watch one, my brain relaxes, stops going through my list of things to accomplish and then..... I fall asleep, often within the first 20 minutes or so. The kids now know there's no sense in waking me up, they wait until the movie is over and then we all go to bed. That aside, there are a few movies I enjoy a lot and have watched them numerous times, and while I love a good tear jerker like The Notebook, I also love a good legal or crime drama such as Shawshank Redemption or A Few Good Men.

If you have seen A Few Good Men you will know it is full of A-list celebrities such as Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson, Kevin Bacon, Demi Moore and Kiefer Sutherland to name a few and was put out in 1992. And it is known for one iconic scene. But if you don't know the movie I'll try to explain a bit just so you know what happens to get to this moment. In A Few Good Men, Tom Cruise plays Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee, a Navy lawyer, who is assigned to defend two marines who carried out an order that led to someone's death. As a lawyer he is questioning Colonel Nathan Jessup in court, played by Jack Nicholson, as to whether or not he gave the two marines he's defending the order which led to another marines death, the code red as they say. Colonel Jessup on the stand asks Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee if he wants the truth. Lieutenant Kaffee says that he does, to which Colonel Jessup replies with the famous line from the movie, "You can't handle the truth!"

Colonel Jessup believed the order, even though it led to someone's death, was necessary. Why did he think Lieutenant Kaffee couldn't handle the truth? Well because he believed if the truth were known the entire system would come into question and it would mess up order and even national security. One of the objectives of the movie by the end is that truth is important even if it were to destroy a system.

The passage for today comes from John 6:25-66.

We all know what it's like to be hungry. From the moment we emerged from our mothers' wombs, we've wanted to eat. In fact, that's why Madi was so sick within the first few days of her birth. I remember her screaming in agony and we didn't know why. When the nurse came over the day after we got home she said, something's wrong, you need to take her back to the hospital, so there I went returning back to find out why my baby was so unsettled. Why? Because she wasn't getting enough nourishment. At 11 and 1/2 pounds at birth, and throwing up most of what she was eating, she was practically starving herself.

Today there are many days in my household at least when someone says, "I'm so hungry." God created our bodies to run on food, and hunger is the warning system telling us we're getting low. We feel the hunger. We hear the growling, and it causes us to think, I need to eat. That's what keeps us alive. We're also spiritually hungry. There's a growling of the soul that indicates emptiness inside. We were made to live on some sort of fuel, but we're not sure where to find it. We feel hungry, so we look for something to fill the emptiness inside us—something to quiet the hunger pangs in our hearts.

Earlier in this chapter of John Jesus has fed the five thousand. A crowd has now gone searching for Jesus in Capernaum. Once they find him they ask him, Rabbi, when did you get here? They had a desire to follow him, or

maybe at least that's what it seemed like at first until you keep reading. They had their fill physically in food but failed to recognize the truth in Jesus.

Jesus responds, I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, such as when the five thousand were fed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Jesus didn't respond to their initial question but instead went to the much deeper issue, the truth. He was criticizing some of them who followed him because they were only interested in the physical and temporal benefits he offered and not the satisfying of their spiritual hunger. Just as some people today can still use religion for the wrong reason - to feel better about themselves, gain prestige, political votes, etc. self-centered motives. True believers follow Jesus simply because they know he is the truth and the key to life's ultimate purpose and meaning.

Jesus reminds them of what or whom they should be following. Similar to the Israelites in the desert who complained to Moses and Aaron, in Exodus 16:3 ““If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger,”” this group in Jesus' time is only thinking of themselves and their appetite for food, not for what he has to offer. They failed to recognize the truth in who Jesus was.

When the crowd asked what they needed to do to do the works God requires, Jesus responds with believe in the one he has sent, they needed to believe in Him. Many people would love to know what God wants them to do. The religions of the world stem from people's attempts to answer this question. But Jesus' reply is brief and simple: We must believe in him whom God has sent. Pleasing God doesn't come from the work we do but from whom we believe. We have plenty to do to serve him, but the first step involved accepting that Jesus' claims are true. Then we can build our spiritual lives on this foundational affirmation. Declare to Jesus as Simon Peter does in Matthew 16:16 "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and embark on a life of belief that is satisfying to your creator and incredible fulfilling to you.

Jesus challenged the crowd because they had misread Scripture. While the crowd was alluding to the fact that Moses was the provider of bread in the wilderness, Jesus tells them the subject of that text was not Moses but the Lord. The Jews thought that since under Moses God brought down manna from the heavens, the true Messiah would have to do more than he did. The Jewish leaders considered that the feeding of the thousands was not even on a par with what Moses was able to accomplish and that the Messiah would have to be greater than Moses. But Jesus points out that Moses was not the provider of bread,

God was. Moses did not perform the miracle, God did. And that the Bread which He now gives is the true bread. The true bread goes beyond the manna, which sustained life for a few Israelites in the wilderness, this bread gives eternal life to the world. Jesus turned their statement around and announced that the Father was active now, not merely in the past with Moses but was in their midst giving them in Him the true bread from heaven.

God sent the Israelites bread for multiple reasons. 1. They were hungry, traveling across the wilderness they didn't have a way to gather enough food to sustain a nation. 2. He loved them and wanted them to know he would provide for them. The manna was a picture of what was to come. Just as God sent his people bread when they were physically hungry, he had sent them bread to quench their spiritual hunger in Jesus. As Jesus says in John 6:35–36 “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.”

Sometimes we think too much about our physical needs. Think about how much time, effort, or energy you put into things for your body's physical hunger. Thinking of what you're going to eat, grocery shopping, making it. Compare that to how much time, effort, or energy you put into your spiritual hunger. If what you're doing in life is working to

meet your physical needs - needs that never end, it can feel restless. Pursuing something that cannot be satisfied: another promotion at work, another vacation away, another fancy meal. As C. S. Lewis put it: “I cannot find a cup of tea which is big enough or a book that is long enough.”

What we think gives our lives so much meaning is never quite enough. We always are striving for more, but once we get there we realize more won't do it. We think a certain event or goal achieved will make life worth living, and often we keep striving for the next bigger and better thing, but even those who reach their goals still die. Eventually, food won't keep us alive. Neither will medicine or money or friendship or family. Jesus is the bread of life; he's the only one who can fill the emptiness inside us. A full life is a life spent in pursuit of Jesus. A life spent any other way will feel barren and unfulfilled.

Jesus is the bread that gives life that never ends, and the life Jesus promises has two dimensions. First, it makes a person alive spiritually right now. Jesus brings you into a life-giving relationship with the God of the universe. His life flows through you, and you are able to relate to him. Where before your sin had cut you off from him, Jesus has now brought you into a relationship with the living God. Second, it means that after you die physically, you will be resurrected to live with Jesus forever. Merely seeing Jesus

did not guarantee believing. To believe is to internalize the truth about Jesus. It's to receive him into your soul. And to believe means to continue to believe. We do not believe merely once; we keep on believing in and trusting Jesus, following him as our Lord and Savior day by day.

Jesus knew that for them to really hear the truth they needed repetition, and so don't give up on telling the truth. Once the Jews realize what Jesus is claiming they begin to murmur. They knew his parents, how could He make such a claim? But Jesus doesn't backtrack, but instead continues to push the point and truth. Unless God draws them, nobody can come to Him. That drawing is through the Scriptures. It is written in the prophets. One is taught by God. Is it by these same prophets that God teaches, because there is no special revelation from God to man. Jesus drives home the point that God teaches through His Word.

This was a man named Charles who went from relative anonymity to great notoriety in a short time. His name was unfamiliar to those living in Boston in 1920, but like a shooting star this millionaire burst on the local scene. Charles made his millions by encouraging others to invest their money with him. He began a company called the "Securities Exchange Company" that promised 50 percent interest on investments in forty-five days or a full 100 percent in ninety days. In just a few months forty thousand

people handed him nearly fifteen million dollars. Some even mortgaged their homes and emptied their life savings to invest their money with Charles. In August of that year, Charles Ponzi was arrested and charged with multiple counts of fraud and larceny. Since that time the name Ponzi has become synonymous with fraudulent investment.

Sometimes the difference between true and false can be difficult to know. As humans we can be masters at pawning the false off as true, but we're not always that great at spotting the difference. While it might not be such a big deal to know the difference between leather or pleather or ham and Spam, there are certain times when knowing the difference between the real and fake matters.

Sadly the crowd predominantly chose to reject Jesus, the bread of life. They made excuses, and said it was too hard to believe. They grumbled about what Jesus said, just as the Israelites did in the wilderness about the manna. They couldn't handle the truth.

In John 6 we discover the difference between real and fake. The issue in question has consequences that extend beyond investment accounts and life savings. The issue at stake is eternal life and salvation.

All of the teaching from the passage today was done in a synagoge in Capernaum. Jesus didn't hesitate to say things

in a context that would upset the status quo. He proclaimed truth and let the chips fall where they may. The line “You can’t handle the truth!” in the movie, *A Few Good Men*, is true in this context for so many in the crowd. They couldn’t handle the truth Jesus was saying, how it was destroying the systems of beliefs of their time, and so the response of many disciples was to walk away. Eventually, this would lead some of them to plot Jesus’ death.

Revealing the true and false disciples of Jesus. Sometimes we don’t want to hear the truth, we’d rather instead hear things that confirm our own thoughts and ideas, or keep things the way we’re used to doing, than push the boundaries into a new way of being. Jesus invites you to a new way of being, which sometimes destroys the systems of belief, or the status quo. We need to say to Jesus, “I cannot do it on my own. I cannot make it on my own. I will die apart from Jesus. Jesus, save me! Jesus, forgive me! Jesus, give me life!” It’s not easy, but it’s true. All spiritual renewal begins and ends with God. He reveals truth to us, lives within us, and then enables us to respond to that truth.

God is the one who designed us and the only one who knows his plans for our lives. As such, we cannot fully know ourselves without first knowing him. In the words of Saint John Paul II, “God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth --- in a word, to know himself --- so that,

by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.” As Jesus says to the Jews who believed in him in John 8:31–32 “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.””

To eat living bread means to accept Christ into our lives and become united with him. We are united with him in two ways: 1) by believing in his death (the sacrifice of his body or flesh) and resurrection and 2) by devoting ourselves to living as he requires, depending on his teaching for guidance and trusting in the Holy Spirit for power. Jesus was saying to the crowd as he says to us today that his life had to become their/our own. Remember this as we come to the table.