

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Many of us remember the question, but we may not remember where we heard or read it. It's in the Gospel of John ([18:38a](#)) when Pilate responded to Jesus' statement "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." (v. 38) Of course, we may not accept this definition because it is so dependent on who Jesus is. Truth comes from listening to Jesus. Do we really want to go there?

Many of us are satisfied with what we learned about truth as children. We are content to believe Truth means not lying. Not lying, in turn, requires revealing exactly what we know—no more and certainly no less. It also includes not making up stories about things that never happened.



As we get older we learn that "telling the truth" includes revealing whatever helps others to understand the true situation even when we are not directly asked about it. In courtrooms witnesses are asked if they will "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." We have politicians, among many other groups, who struggle to live by even the simplest requirements of telling the truth.

But before we launch an all-out attack on politicians and their infamous "Spin Doctors," let's be honest with each other.

The problem of not being willing to reveal "the rest of the story" as Paul Harvey used to say on his radio program, is not confined to specific groups of people. It is my problem. It is your problem. It is a human problem.

Where did I learn this lesson? I learned it gradually from people who didn't always have someone to whom they could share what they experienced as the "Truth." I learned most dramatically while officiating at a funeral many years ago. A young woman, perhaps 16-17 years old, listened to everyone describing how "wonderful" her deceased father was. When she stood up to share her story, however, she candidly revealed that her father was an abusive man who had abused her for years. You could have cut the silence in that room at that moment. No one, including me, expected this type of disclosure. Still, she had spoken the Truth in what was quite possibly the only place where she felt safe to reveal it, and I thanked her for sharing her experience. I've since heard many other people expose the truth of their suffering.

That brings me to asking, "Why don't we want to tell the truth? Also, "Why don't we want to hear the truth at times?" The answer is similar in both situations. It makes us uncomfortable. It reminds us that we have stories that we want untold.

Why do we conceal these stories? Perhaps it's because we fear being rejected by those we want to accept us. If they see past our façade they may be able to exploit the darkest parts of

our souls. It requires a lot of energy to conceal these darker dimensions of our lives, but we think it's a lot better than having to live with the embarrassment of being known as a flawed, if not broken, person.

To be as clear as I can, I need to share an experience when my inner darkness was, at least partially, revealed. Thinking that I was being a responsible father, I brought one of our then teenage children to a substance abuse counselor for all the reasons a good parent would. After interviewing this child, the substance abuse counselor said to me very explicitly: "Your (teenage child) is not an alcoholic. However, you need a group."

The impact on me went well beyond embarrassment. We usually recover from embarrassment given enough time. This time it was a revelation that I had never even imagined could be true. He didn't even imply that I was an alcoholic. What he was saying, however, was that my behavior was dysfunctional. I needed to discover why, if I could, but at the very least I needed to change.

That one statement by the substance abuse counselor spoke more Truth than I had ever been willing to accept. It took several years of participating in a group known as "Children of Alcoholics" for me to realize why I behaved and thought as I did. It was difficult but vital that I identify and deal with what went wrong in my life because it affected not only me but also those who loved and trusted me.

Change did and continues to come in my life. However, Pilate's question to Jesus is still relevant to us: "What about our beliefs, values and behaviors reveals the truth about us as well as the "Truth" within us? If we want to answer that question we could either go into therapy or, if it is more timely, a Twelve Step Group. I encourage you to consider what may become a lengthy commitment to your own healing. Journaling our behavior and "reasons" why we do what we do can provide a place to begin our long term change—if we tell ourselves the truth. Admittedly, it's a difficult process. In fact, it's just the beginning of a lifelong healing process.

If we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can turn to Jesus in prayer. Even if we do not believe in Jesus, we can still ask God or whatever Higher Power that we trust to reveal the "Truth" to us. Ultimately, we must answer the question, "How have we responded to the Truth of God's love in our lives?"

Feel free to [discuss it with me](#).

Rev. Larry LaPierre