

What is Truth? By Pastor Bill Hekman

Truth is thought to be found in Religion. Religion supposed to be based on truth. But which religion is truth? The search for truth has always been crucial and tiring. Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, devoted his life to the task of showing that he, Aristotle, could point the way to final truth.

Plato, another famous Greek Philosopher said "For I assume that by knowing the truth you mean knowing things as they really are." When you read the quotes from Plato, you will also find Plato's ideas to be very simple. "Without truth, there can be no wisdom Reason tells me that Reality has been discovered, that the source of all truth and wisdom has finally been found. And in our currently troubled times there is no more important knowledge than true knowledge of reality - of what it truly means to '**Know Thyself**' as the foundation for living wisely and ensuring survival.

Socrates, another Greek Philosopher declared that 'Only Absolute Truth is that there are No Absolute Truths'. He further stated 'Wars, factions, and fighting, have no other origin than this same body and its lusts. ... We must set the soul free from it; we must behold things as they are. And having thus got rid of the foolishness of the body, we shall be pure and hold converse with the pure, and shall in our own selves have complete knowledge of the Incorruptible which is, I take it, no other than the very truth.'

So Plato states that truth is to "Know Thyself" and Socrates says that the very truth is the death of the body. We see that the most brilliant thinkers and the world's greatest philosophers could not agree as to what is truth. The same is true of the world's religions.

Last week Friday (April 4, 2008) I read an interesting article about Rethinking true religion in the Jakarta Post by journalist L. Murbandono of Hilversum, Netherlands.

It is customary for me to extensively quote from God's Word in my messages and not quote other authors. However this article by L. Murbandodo is one of the best discourses I have read on true religion in a secular newspaper and I like to share it with you in this message.

What is true religion? Who can answer it? Murbandono is quoting a certain Dr. David B. Barrett who has written two large volumes, running 1,699 pages, of the World Christian Encyclopedia, published by Oxford University Press. Since adding a religion doctorate from Columbia University to his technical background with Britain's Royal Aircraft Establishment assigned to design to missiles and warheads in 1952; he has spent 40 years systematizing information on world religions, a calling he discovered while assigned as an Anglican missionary in Africa.

Today, Barrett and his tiny staff work in a Presbyterian church basement in Richmond, Virginia. A one-time nonbeliever, Barrett made a born-again Christian commitment as a Cambridge University undergraduate.

A year later, he says, "I woke up in the middle of the night and became convinced that Christ was present. I can't explain it. I heard Christ say, 'You ought to go to the ends of the world.' " His ordination after years in science let him respond to this dramatic missionary call. Barrett was assigned to Kenya to conduct a field survey of Africans' complex church affiliations. That research was the start of his lifelong specialization, and of the global counts in the first edition of his encyclopedia.

His global accounting of faiths and the faithful -- trends, details and his best estimated count of believers of all religions in each of 238 nations and territories.

According to David B. Barret there are a total of about 10,000 distinct religions, of which 150 have 1 million or more followers. Within Christianity, he counts 33,830 denominations, sects and individual unaffiliated groups. All 33,830 denominations claim to teach the truth. True religion is not determined by popular opinion or measured by strong powers in which darkness, fear, ignorance and sorcery always go hand in hand.

True religion is a light where the all-time exposé and revealer of truth and knowledge brings freedom and peace. Therefore, in dealing with the controversy, it is a must to review and rethink true religion in its basic principles. Based from wisdom from many wise men in the history of humanity we have four indications of true religion.

First, true religion is reasonable. It can be argued and defended. It is absolute and unchanging. It exposes everything for what it is. It conquers by the power of truth and liberates the soul, never using swords, and not forcing its converts. It brings peace, happiness, love, hope and contentment.

Second, true religion is not fabricated by deceit and false visions. It uses no mask. Like gold, it can be judged, critiqued, examined, tested, proved, tried and found to be exactly what it claims to be, but it can calmly stand all interrogation and will remain. The very fact that there are fabrications and false religions is all evidence that there is something so real and so valuable and so enduring that it is heavily counterfeited by frauds and by threats.

Third, true religion is NOT reserved for one day of the week, (be it Friday, Saturday or Sunday), but it influences every aspect of life – political, economical, social, intellectual, and technological. False religions harm all these areas of life. When countries are governed by fabrications and false religions, they suffer in politics, economics, society, education, arts and technology

Fourth, true religion is not about possessing the truth. No religion does that. It is rather an invitation into a journey that leads one toward the mystery of God. Idolatry is religion pretending it has all the answers.

Now a short summary of these quotations:

- True religion is a Light
- True religion is reasonable
- True religion is absolute and unchanging

- True religion exposes everything for what it is.
- True religion conquers by the power of truth
- True religion liberates the soul
- True religion never using swords and not forcing its converts.
- True religion brings peace, happiness, love, hope and contentment.
- True religion contains nothing false or deceit
- True religion is like gold, it can be judged, critiqued, examined, tested, proved, tried and found to be exactly what it claims to be
- True religion is not practiced once a week but influences every aspect of life
- True religion is a journey that leads to God

I know of no religion of the 10,000 mentioned by Dr. Barrett which is 100% absolute truth.

I went to the Google Search in the Internet and typed in "I Am The Truth". I found 21,400,000 entries! **The very first one is a quotation of Jesus Christ from John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

The truth is not a religion but Truth is a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said 78 times "I tell you the truth"

He also said, "I am able" Nothing is impossible with Him

"I am humble and gentle in heart"

"I am generous"

"I am the Son of God"

"I am with you always"

"I am Christ, the Son of the blessed One"

"I am the bread of life"

"I am the bread that came down from heaven."

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven"

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"

"You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world"

"I am not seeking glory for myself"

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

"I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep"

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me"

"I am God's Son"

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself"

“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you”

“I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me”

“I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you”

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener”

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”

“I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God ”

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting”

All amazing statements from the Lord Jesus Christ. He proved all these statements to be truth when He rose from the dead! He indeed is the Absolute Truth.

Conclusion:

Jesus is truth. We are to follow Jesus and walk in truth. He therefore will set us free from the bondage of sin and we will no longer desire evil. He has provided us with the ability to live as He did, all we need to do is accept His offer of the Holy Spirit and be clothed with the power to live our lives in truth.

Application:

I will accept Jesus as Truth and live each day with the confidence that His word is true. Knowing that He is Truth, I will trust in Him, even though I may not always understand. I will believe His word and as I live my life in Him, I can be certain that His truth will be seen through me. Amen.