

Truth Rx

Accepting the Pain of Change

July 24, 2022



Today, we're learning to take the *truth* that kills the *sin* that lives in *us*. But before we get there, I gotta ask, **can you handle the truth?** Because, like a lot of medicine, it *can* be hard to swallow. But we need every last drop the doctor *orders*, if we want to be *cured*.



Now, *last week* we talked about how we tend to *restrain, reject, or replace* truth – both in *this world* and in *God's Word*. Well, if *avoiding* truth is our *condition*, *accepting* it is our *cure*. And that means **we must find a way to make the medicine go down, even though real truth's not real popular these days**. Because to *some* people, for *some* reason, the *truth* can feel *frightening*. But we've *all* been there at *some* point – even *Jesus' boys*! Remember the rough boat ride to the *Gadarene*?



The disciples woke [Jesus] and said to Him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to His disciples, "**Why are you so afraid?** Do you still have no faith?" **They were terrified.** [of Him!] – Mark 4:37-41 NIV



And remember right *after* that, the *reaction* to Jesus casting the demons *into* the pigs.

The people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, *sitting there, dressed* and in his *right mind*; and **they were afraid**. [But then] Those who had seen it *told* the people [the truth about] what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told [the truth] about the pigs as well. *Then* the people began to *plead* with Jesus to leave their region. **the** – Mark 5:14-17 NIV

Why so scared? In *both* these stories, a powerful truth about Jesus' identity was revealed in *positive* ways; *calming concerns* by quieting the storm and *neutralizing threats* by cleansing the land. So why all the *fear*? Well, **a demonstration of truth's power forces us to change what we think of our power**. And *that's* our real problem – **truth presents the threat of change**. Cuz it's not really the *truth* that hurts, it's the *change* it *brings*. If you're *in step* with truth, it's actually quite *affirming* and *comforting*. We only *fight* it when we see it as a *threat*.

And **truth is only seen as a threat when it jeopardizes something we love, like comfort or control**. Because we don't want *those* things *changed*. We *love 'em* just the way they *are!* *Comfortable* and *controllable!* And if some *truth* comes in here and tells me I have to *reconsider* what I *believe* about the things I *like* to believe – well, *them's* *fightin' words!* And our *instinct* is to go after whoever's behind that *uncomfortable* and *unwelcome info!* Paul knows how this goes:

Have I now become your *enemy* by telling you the *truth*? – Galatians 4:16 NIV

And with the *storm* and the *demons* – did you notice just how *sensitive* we can be? **Jesus didn't do anything to them. He was just being Himself around them.** The ones who got scared were actually triggered by their *own* recognition of a truth that might somehow disrupt something they didn't *want* changed. They knew that the *presence* of truth *alone* might change *them* the way *light* obliterates *dark* by just *existing*. It's like when Coke and Mentos find themselves in the same bottle – the chaos is just the result of their *proximity*. So *similarly*, wherever *God's truth* meets *our sin*, we get *anxious* cuz we're *compelled* to consider the painful *prospect* of *change*.



For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, *to suit their own desires*, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears *want* to hear. They will turn their ears *away from the truth* ... But *you*, keep your head in all situations, *endure hardship*, do the *work*. – 2 Timothy 4:3-5 NIV

You get that? To *stick* with the truth we're gonna need to "*endure hardship*" and "*work*"! Because **to reveal our heart's condition, He's got to make us sweat! He's come to diagnose, treat, and ultimately cure His kids of untruth. By truth.** How? By just *being* truth in *our* sinful lives. Nothing *cruel* about this, it's just a way for Him *and us* to see how *we're* getting along with truth. Like when your doc makes you get on a treadmill to see how you're getting along with *exercise*.

So understand that Jesus just offers truth – the pain is the result of our human reaction. And by coming *to us*, He's just trying to teach us *how we hurt ourselves*. This is *how* He brings judgment. He's like, "I don't have to *discipline* you; **I can just bless you and let you discipline yourself with the consequences of your behavior.**"

Free will sure is a sticky wicket. Because it offers us both perfection *and* pain, depending on our choices. And God *knew* our sin nature was going to mean choices that'd make His presence and truth *painful*. So **when we only see Jesus as our Healer, we're only half right.**

For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves [to kill our complacency, confront our self-sufficiency, and turn us from outright rebellion].... Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, [because sadly, that's what it takes. But then] He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they [the troubled] are glad because they [the waves] are quiet [appreciating the calm they would've ignored before the storm, and now] ... they will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. – Psalm 107:20, 25, 27-30, 43 NKJ

Now, *at first*, **that might seem like a bad God; but it's a good Doctor.** Because, it's exactly what it *takes* and exactly what we *need!* When I was 14, you know how the doctor knew my appendix was about to burst? By jamming her thumb right *into it* and making me curse in front of my mom!

Well, **the pain in our life reveals where we're spiritually weak.** Wherever *life* hurts, is right where Jesus is sticking *His* thumb to let you know where *you* need a dose of truth. Whether you're living in contradiction with *God, others*, or your own true *self*, that pain ain't going away 'til you let truth *change* you. Because if *you're* manipulating the *meaning* in His Word or the *matters* of this world:

Blessed is the one whom God *corrects*; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. [Instead, *accept the painful process of change*] For *He wounds, but He also binds up; He injures, but His hands also heal.* – Job 5:17-18 NIV

Because like a good Doctor, His *wounds* and *injuries* have good *purpose*. **That's the change truth brings. Healing.** We just have to remember; **truth can't kill our pain until it kills our sin.** And in the same way we psych ourselves up and follow our pre-op instructions, if we want to *persevere* through *God's* procedure, we gotta *prepare*. And here's how:



First, **we need to receive our diagnosis.** And that means we need to see where we went *wrong*. Healing is only a *change* for those who admit something's *broken*. With God, you don't have to drop your pants – but you *do* have to drop your defenses and let Him have a good look at you or He *can't* prescribe any remedy. Like Jesus said:



It is not the *healthy* who need a doctor, but the *sick*. I have not come to call the righteous, but *sinners*. – Mark 2:17 NIV



We need to thoroughly *examine* every inch of ourselves to check for the *untruth* of *sin*, so the Doctor can prepare the right dose. And that means asking *others* also. Because there are places on ourselves that we *can't* quite see. And our spiritual diagnostic should include *truth-testing* questions like:

Do you struggle with anger or use *unloving* or *harsh* language? **Do you worry**, *judge*, or make *rash statements* without good reason? **Do you admit when you're wrong** or do you get *defensive* and *stubborn*? **Do you serve well**, or do you *abuse* power or *manipulate* people? **Do you have integrity** or do you *lie*, *gossip* or *compare yourself* to others?

This step is *key*. Because God *can't* proceed without honest answers on the questionnaire. And *that* means *we've* gotta *prepare* to be *embarrassed* and *convicted* by our list of sinful symptoms.

[Jesus Himself said] The *reason* I was born and came into the world is to *testify* to the *truth*. Everyone on the side of *truth* *listens* to Me. – John 18:37 NIV

[So] If you hold to *My* teaching ...Then *you* will *know* the *truth*, and the *truth* will set you free [in an uncomfortable process of *change*]. – John 8:31-32 NIV

Yet *because* I tell the *truth*, you do *not* believe Me! – John 8:45 NIV

Yup, we *restrain*, *reject*, or *replace* it! But for healing change to *happen*, **we need to take our medicine.** If a doctor prescribes pills and you *accept* 'em but don't *take* 'em – you don't *believe* 'em. *Believing* means making room for your treatment *every* day. **Our whole lives need to be built around our daily doses of truth.** *Devotionals*, *small groups*, *servicing*, and solo *Scripture* time should become part of your *routine* to accommodate and advance the *effect* of *truth* on your life.

[And Jesus prescribed truth] Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth. – John 17:17 NIV

[So] Test all things [by His Word and]; hold fast what is good. – 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJ

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. – Romans 12:2 NIV



And it takes *effort* to keep the pattern of this world from *interrupting* our treatments, because old habits die hard and **we've been conditioned to live with lies as a chronic condition**. And after listing out all our sin, it's *easy* to feel *hopeless* and start skipping doses.



But each day, we can transform our mind when we re-center our thoughts on *one* truth: **God's got a plan. He doesn't feel hopeless or ashamed about you** any more than a potty-training *parent*. He's seen you at your worst and *wants* to help because He *loves* you; *in spite of your potty-mouth!* And getting cured by taking your medicine is the most rewarding *thanks* you can offer a doctor. But that *doesn't* mean it was *pleasant* for Him. The *opposite*. It was painful *work* that He put in *because of you*, and you need to *understand* that, *not* to feel *guilty*, but *grateful*. Because **only true gratitude will compel you to consistently swallow the tough truths that bring healing change**.



And *lastly*, once we've rooted out the *sin* and *taken* in the *truth*, **we need to trust the treatment**. So let's say you're just *filled* with truth – *well great!* But *now* it's time to *use* it! Because **we take truth not just to kill off our sin but to live out our faith!** And yet, it can be hard – even for disciples *overdosed* with truth. But Jesus *knows* that, remember:

"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" [Well...] They were terrified [So, I guess that's a yes.] – Mark 4:41 NIV

Why were *they* still *afraid* of truth? Well, **they hadn't practiced standing on it**. We all know truth needs to move from your *head* to your *heart*, but that's not the end of the journey! Y'know where it goes from there? **Real truth moves from our head to our heart to our hands**. Because real *change* happens *inside* and *out*.

So we need to anticipate being a little gun-shy as we learn to lean on God's truth. Athletes always talk about how hard it is to *trust* their knee after a big surgery, but they *do* – if they want to get in the game! *Do you?* You ready to handle the truth?

If you're still afraid that letting go of your present understanding of this world *AND* God's Word would mean a life of *uncertainty*, *ignorance*, and *insecurity* – *don't worry!* It does! But it doesn't sting very long. Because **we can seek in uncertainty, ask in ignorance and knock with insecurity and still know that God is God**. And we can *trust* Him to deliver the *total truth* in the *right* daily dose to *heal* us as it *changes* us from *sick* and *scared* to *righteous* and *ready*. Fearing *nothing* when God changes *everything!*