

## Steward the Truth as the Greatest Good

### Genesis 1:31—2:3

<sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. There was evening and there was morning—the sixth day. <sup>1</sup> The heavens and the earth were finished, along with everything in them. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God had finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had been doing. <sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and set it apart as holy, because on it he rested from all his work of creation that he had done.

What is truth? A man named Pontius Pilate defiantly once asked that question of Jesus. In asking you today, I'm being sincere. What is truth?

It's a reasonable question to ask as we start out a series all about *stewarding* truth. To steward or care for truth, it helps to know what we mean by truth. So let's start with a simple definition from the dictionary. Truth is "the quality of being true." That's not too helpful. Here's a second definition: truth is "the real facts about a situation, event, or person."

That sounds about right. But if only it were so simple. Most people would agree that truth has to do with what's real. How people *experience* or *encounter* truth – especially in our culture today – is another question entirely. For example, many people consider truth to be something primarily subjective. It's something that is real for that specific person. And so people will speak of "my truth" or "your truth" or "their truth." That truth is not so much *fact* as it is personal experience or judgment. On the other end of the spectrum are all the seemingly objective truth claims that are out there. Scientific discoveries claim to unlock the secrets of the universe. Medical advancements promise better treatments for illnesses. Social media influencers share the hidden truth about processed foods and diet fads and exercise routines. And then you add in the ever-present political spin—the rise of fake news. You see, there is more to our experience of truth than simply what is factual, what is real.

*Especially when truths collide.* With all the different ideas of truth out there, it's no surprise that the battle over what is true characterizes our culture today. You see this playing out often in the social and political realm. The truth claims of Fox News stand opposed to the truth claims of CNN, and vice versa. You find it in the comments section of online articles. There readers exchange argument and counter argument. They gather select facts (and sometimes outright lies) to support their positions. You engage with it on Facebook, Tik Tok, or Instagram, as people assert what they know to be true and then staunchly defend it against anyone who would disagree.

In other words, you see truth being used as a weapon. Truth is something that builds up self at the expense of another. Truth is something that proves one is right and the other is wrong. And that's consistent with truth being about what's real and factual. But would you believe that misses the point of *Christian* truth?

Certainly, truth in Scripture has to do with what's real and factual and genuine. But there's much more to it as well. Throughout the Old Testament truth is tied closely to concepts like *love* and *saving* and *wholeness*. When God appears to Moses in Exodus 34, he describes himself as abounding in love and *faithfulness* (34:6). That word faithfulness is the Hebrew word for truth. (34:6) In the psalms, David prays for God to guide him in *truth* because he is the God who saves him (25:5). Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promises to bring his Old Testament people peace, and *truth* (33:6). The same thing happens in the New Testament. John speaks of grace – God's saving love – and *truth* coming through Jesus (1:14, 17). The Lord himself revealed to his disciples, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6) Paul wrote to Timothy

how God wants all people to be saved “*and to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:4) Truth in Scripture *is* about what is real. But it’s more than that too.

And this is something we observe right from the very beginning, from creation itself. Genesis 1:31 brings us to the final day of creation. We see God’s observation, simple yet uplifting: “*God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.*” Let’s be sure to understand what God is revealing to us here. Six other times in the days of creation, God had looked at what he made and called it good. When he’d created light, God called it good. When he separated the waters and brought about dry ground, he called it good. When he created vegetation for food and the sun, moon, and stars to mark the passage of time and the creatures of the sea and the creatures on land, God called all of that good. It was good not just in the sense that he did a good job (which of course he did, he’s God). It was good not *only* in the sense of being free from evil. It was especially good in the sense that God was bringing his creation, step by intentional step, to a point of *completeness* and *wholeness* and *flourishing*. That is why on the last day – after God had brought into the world the crown of his creation, human beings – then God says of everything: *it is very good*. That is, it’s done. It’s complete. God has prepared the world as a place for the flourishing of all that has the breath of life. Especially for human beings, created in his image, created for communion with him. Scripture reveals this as the truth of our beginning. It was very *good*.

Because truth in Scripture isn’t just about what is real and right; it’s about what is really, truly, genuinely *good*.

If we are to be stewards of Christian truth, we dare not lose sight of this. We know that our fallen human nature tends to use truth in self-interest. This is why we argue the way we do. We arrange facts to prove ourselves right and others wrong. But when it comes to stewarding Christian truth, we cannot afford to engage like this.

And especially so today. The world we live in is very different than even 20 years ago. In his book *Life in the Negative World*, author Aaron Renn argues that “*For the first time in the four-hundred year history of this country, society now disfavors Christianity.*” It’s obvious that being a Christian in our nation today incurs greater costs than it once did. Prominent Christians who are open about their faith are commonly ridiculed, shut down, cancelled. Moral consensus is aligning more and more with personal choice and self-expression. Science is increasingly looked to for the answer to humanity’s problems. The idea of a creator is increasingly dismissed.

In such an environment, we must hold to Scripture’s truth. It can be very easy to go to battle against those who disagree with us. It can be easy to dismiss them, or worse, target them as the enemy. It can be easy to wield Christian truth as a weapon. We can easily tear down any who doubt or deny God. They may promote an offensive morality. They may argue for a worldview that is contrary to our own. But is that stewarding God’s truth? Are we stewarding the truth when our goal is to win an argument rather than win a soul? Are we stewarding the truth when, with careless or hostile words, we misrepresent Christianity? Are we stewarding the truth when we fail to show, in what we say and do, a truth that is above all really, truly, genuinely *good* – a beautiful truth?

This isn’t to say that the fallen world as a whole will ever accept Christ’s message. But friends, we stumble in our stewardship if we fail to see and share God’s truth for what it is: the *greatest good*.

That’s the story of God’s truth that unfolds before us on the pages of Scripture. There we see a God who created humanity for goodness, for blessedness and wholeness in relationship with

him. We also see a God who has worked in history to restore such goodness for his fallen creatures. From the moment our first parents stained themselves with sin, God showered this world with mercy. He promised to restore the perfect goodness and rest of that seventh day. In time he accomplished it with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Think about how our Savior spoke and what he did in his ministry! Those who were weary and burdened by sin and its curse, he invited them to come to him for rest. Those who were tossed about on waves of deception, he went after them to bring them into the safe harbor of the truth. He revealed himself as the one who came to bring life – and life to the full! That's the life that God intended for people. It's the life of the seventh day. It's the life of completeness and wholeness and goodness in relationship with one another and with God. Yes, Jesus most certainly confronted falsehood and evil without compromise. What was always his goal, as he stewarded the truth the Father gave him, was nothing short of seeking and saving the lost. He revealed himself as the way and the truth and the resurrection and the life. He brought us rest. He's the *greatest good* for all.

He's the greatest good for you. Brothers and sisters in Christ, allow me to be a faithful steward in service to you: God's truth is your greatest good. God has revealed to you the truth of your sin. But he has shown you the greater truth of his grace in Jesus Christ. He has restored that seventh day goodness and blessedness and wholeness to you.

Now he calls you to steward the gift of truth in the same spirit. As Christians, we believe and confess that God's revelation in Scripture is true and real. It is authentic testimony of where we came from. It expresses God's will for our lives. For us to be faithful stewards of that truth, it is essential that we remember that it all centers in Christ. That God's truth is, in Christ, a redeeming truth. That's God's purpose in revealing truth to us. He wishes to restore the *very good* he spoke at creation over us, that humanity lost in sin.

To help us embrace such stewardship, we're going to try an exercise. Think about someone in your life who doesn't agree with your Christian faith. Maybe this person has embraced evolution. They see humanity as the impressive output of natural selection, but nothing more. Maybe they see their body as a playground for pleasure, to be employed in the satisfaction of desire. Perhaps this person defines themselves by their accomplishments or their family or their fortune. Maybe they disregard the unborn or devalue the elderly. Perhaps this person is a brother or sister, a son or a daughter, family or friend.

You, dear Christian, have been entrusted with the truth. You've been shown what is real; and you've been shown what is really *good*. You have a good, beautiful truth to share with people.

Will you steward the truth so that the one who attributes our humanity to fortune and chance would instead find far greater dignity as the very good work of the Creator? Will you steward the truth so that the one who seeks pleasure above all else will realize the emptiness of such a life? God-willing they will see their body as a temple, a gift first and foremost for a relationship with the one who created it? Will you steward the truth so those who treasure what they've accomplished or their family or the power of money might leave all that behind to gain Christ? Will you steward the truth so that the one who devalues others might grasp, in the God-man's great sacrifice, the value of every human life?

Friends, we are stewards of God's truth – for ourselves, for one another, and for all. Embrace this truth for yourself. Hold it out for all to see. Steward the truth for what it is in Christ: God's greatest good for you and for all.