

FOCUS ON FAITH

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TRUTH REVISITED

It was back in 2003 that I wrote a Focus on Faith article about truth. It was just as Lord Hutton was starting his investigation into the leaking of the dossier on the Iraq crisis which led to David Kelly's suicide.

At the time I wrote, *"The Bible encourages us to be trustworthy, honest and people of integrity."* I also referred to the ninth of the Ten Commandments which specifically instructs us not to tell lies – **"Don't bear false witness"**.

Sad to say, but in 6 years not a lot has changed in many aspects of our society.

- As I write this article Parliament is once more under scrutiny due to the way MPs reclaim expenses. It appears none of the political parties is exempt from sleaze – variously defined as "corruption, dishonesty, or scandal, especially among public figures". And with elections looming next month, who do we believe we can believe?

Standing up for the truth is difficult . . . but nevertheless it is the best way to live

- We find it difficult on occasions to trust what we read, see and hear in the media. I'm not minimising the potential dangers or the distress and anxiety caused to people who have been affected but a month ago Swine 'Flu was going to be a pandemic that would cause millions of deaths. Today it isn't even headline news although we know it could yet come back in another variant and wreak havoc.
- Sportspeople cheat, dive and try and con the referee or intimidate and harangue the match officials after a decision doesn't go their way.
- It used to be said that *"the camera doesn't lie"* but with the development of digital cameras, the creative juxtaposition and use of clever software can make an innocent meeting of friends into lurid speculation. And with the judicious use of an air-brush, even I can look slimmer, younger and healthier in a photo than I am in real life!

During May the composers of each 'Prayer for the Week' are concentrating on aspects of what the Bible says about truth.

- God promises to be close to everyone who calls upon him sincerely and truthfully (Psalm 145: 18). After all what's the point of pretending with God? If He is all powerful and has all knowledge then He knows what

you and I are like anyway so we aren't going to pull the wool over His eyes. But when we truthfully acknowledge our need of Him without pretence, then His commitment is that He will come alongside us.

- Acting and speaking truthfully sets us free (John 8: 32). From what? Having a guilty conscience for a start. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has ever experienced that gut-wrenching feeling inside when you know you've either lied to save your embarrassment or covered something up in the hope that it will never come to light again.
- In the famous passage often quoted at weddings real love is focused on equality, justice, integrity and truth (1Corinthians 13: 6) and elsewhere the Bible encourages us to **"speak the truth in love"** (Ephesians 4:15).

But you may be thinking, *"Everybody does it – it's an accepted part of the way we live"*. Sure – but that that doesn't mean it's either good for us or that it has to remain that way forever.

Some people may fiddle their tax returns or over-estimate their business mileage or other expenses. It may not even be what we say but what we avoid saying that enables us to *"economical with the truth"*. Withholding relevant information on which someone relies is just as damaging as overtly misleading them. Your boss may even ask you to tell someone who is calling on the telephone that he or she is out of the office when they are sitting right in front of you. But remember if someone asks you to lie **for** them it's a reasonable bet to assume they will lie **to** you.

Standing up for the truth is difficult, it may even be costly in some circumstances but nevertheless it is the best way to live.

In Psalm 86: 11 King David asked God to: **"Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth"**.

That's a great starting point – when we know God personally it will change the way we live and help us to live in the truth.

If you'd like to find out more information on local Churches together with contact details, plus information on activities and other Christian resources, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.