

The Truth Will Set Us Free From Sin

Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (**John 8:31-32**, ESV).

I have a tendency to think of this only in terms of doctrinal truth. If I know the doctrinal truth about baptism, the work of the church, or how right or wrong something is, it will set me free from sin. However, I've come to learn that Jesus' statement is far broader than this. Far too often we know the doctrinal truth about something but accept emotional lies which lead us to sin.

Consider the very first sin. Did Eve know the doctrinal truth about the tree of knowledge of good and evil? Of course she did. She stated in **Genesis 3:2-3**, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (ESV). Yet, she still ate the fruit. Why? Because of Satan's lie to her. He didn't challenge the doctrine of God. He didn't tell her she misunderstood God's doctrine on the matter. He told her God was lying. He told her if she ate from that tree she would gain wisdom making her like God. Because she bought his lie, she went against the doctrine she knew.

Satan is a liar and the father of lies (**John 8:44**). He fills our heart with lies. When we start repeating them, we start believing them. Have you ever heard someone say something like, "I know the Bible says such and such, but I believe God wants me to be happy"? This is someone who very specifically has accepted a lie. By the way, the lie is not that God wants us to be happy. While I certainly think it is true that God wants us to be holy more than He wants us to be happy, I can't deny that the number of times the Bible talks about who the truly blessed and happy person is (e.g. **Psalms 1:1**; **Matthew 5:3-11**; **Revelations 14:13** et al) shows God does want us to be happy. The lie too many tell themselves is that doing what the Bible says will not make them happy. We need to tell ourselves the truth. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who meekly surrender to God, are the ones who will ultimately be happy. We need to tell ourselves that truth over and over again so that we believe it. Then when Satan tells us a sin will make us happy, we know he is lying, and we will be set free from his sin.

Let's make this a little more specific. How many Christian young men know that looking at internet pornography is wrong? Almost all of them. How many of them want to look at pornography? I think it is actually very few of them. Most of them feel a lot of shame and guilt at the thought of it. And yet many of them check it out and keep looking even despite their guilt and shame. Why? Because of Satan's lies. Here's the scene. They are over at a friend's house who says, "Check out this website my older brother showed me." Or someone at school shows them a magazine picture. Or someone tells them about a movie that has a sex scene. They know the doctrinal truth, but subconsciously, or maybe even consciously, they say to themselves, "If I don't look, my friends will think I'm gay. They'll think I'm weird. It would be absolutely awful if my friends thought these things about me." Or they may tell themselves, "I am curious about women and sex, what better way for me to learn. After all, I can't ask my parents about it. That would be gross and weird." Or they tell themselves, "If I don't know as much about this as my friends, I may get married and have no idea how to do it. Then I'd really be embarrassed and my wife wouldn't love me." These are all lies. Spending time in God's Word lets us know that it really isn't awful for people to think we are strange or to tell lies about us. In **Matthew 11:19**, people told lies about Jesus, calling Him a glutton and a drunkard. Was He able to endure that? Of course. Is looking at pictures of people who don't understand that sexuality is for marriage (cf. **Hebrews 13:4**) really the best place to learn about it? Of course not. In all honesty, do you think your future wife will find it easier to love you because you know so much about sexuality because of your experiences with other women, or because you have waited to find out about it with her?

Consider the other side of this. How many Christian young ladies want to be sexually active before marriage? I think very few of them actually want to be promiscuous. Additionally, I think almost all of them know it is doctrinally wrong, and most of them want to live up to that standard. What happens to so many? They hear the lies of Satan and start repeating them to themselves. "My life is hardly worth living if a boy doesn't like me." Or maybe they are enmeshed with a certain boy, "My life would be over if such and such boy decided he didn't like me and didn't want to be with me." Then they tell themselves, "If I do something sexual with him, he'll like me. I won't actually go all the way. I'll stop if it goes too far, but I can't tell him no when he asks for such and such sexual activity. He'd think I was a prude. Besides, I know other girls will do that for him and he'll leave me to go out with them. If he left me, I would be so lonely." These are all lies from the devil. Would it really be awful if a certain boy didn't like you? Would your life really be over? Could you survive if your boyfriend left you over this issue of sex? In **1 Corinthians 7:15**, Paul talked about a woman who was married and her husband abandoned her because he was an unbeliever. Didn't he point out it was possible to survive in that situation? How much more when it is just a

boyfriend? And don't forget the truth Jesus conveyed in **Luke 18:29-30**. If you lose loved ones because of your stand for God's will, you will gain more loved ones in the family of God. You don't have to be alone; you can turn to God's family.

You will only know these and other freedom procuring truths if you dig into God's Word. If you just spend time abiding in television, movies, radio, magazines, and popular books, you'll hear all the lies. If you are in God's Word, you'll hear the truth. That truth will set you free. Where are you spending your time?

—Edwin L. Crozier