

Responding to Truth

Jesus has a lot to say about His truth. We can know it (John 8:32); His truth can set us free (same verse); God's word is truth (John 17:17); and truth can also make enemies (Galatians 4:16). For believers these things are pretty basic and well believed. But there is another side of the story, even for believers.

That challenge could be summed up in the question, "How do you respond to God's truth?" That challenge is at least as daunting as believing in the existence of truth. If we believe truth is, indeed, truth (and we do), then it would be natural to believe that we should respond to it clearly, carefully and deeply.

But that is often not the case. In a culture more interested in emotions than truth, we are challenged to take great care not to become more like the culture than like Jesus. Without great care and strong convictions, we will begin to respond more warmly to emotions than to God's truths.

This brings us to a specific problem I want to address: the challenge to believe that genuine agape love means agreement. Or to state the converse: agreement means love and disagreement means lack of love. Truth and love are the muscular siblings of genuine faith in God – genuine Christianity. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write of the prominent position of love in I Corinthians 13. Jesus spoke of the prominent position of truth as that which can set us free from sin.

But the culture (and occasionally Christians) sometimes responds to God's truths as though they were mean-spirited or unloving. And the attitude can pour over onto those who share God's truths with those who need to hear them. Paul addressed that specific situation in Galatians 4:16 wherein he asks the Christians in Galatia, "Am I your enemy because I tell you the truth?" *The assumption in the question is "Yes, Paul is the enemy of some because he shared with them God's truths in areas that specifically applied to them, personally!"*

Truth is dangerous ground to those who share it without discrimination. Truth can bring negative reactions from those dealing with guilt. Truth can make you free from sin, but it can also bring deeply negative responses from those who would rather have *agreement* than *truth!*

When truth falls on the truly tender heart, it creates repentance, thankfulness and spirituality. When truth falls on a heart that is merely sensitive, but not tender toward God, it usually creates anger, pain and rejection. Why? Because hearts that are sensitive to pain (the pain of truth) but not tender toward God's truths, usually respond to their own pain rather than to God's truths.

Think about it. Consider your own heart. What creates strong responses, the pain of guilt, or the love of God's truths and those who share them with you? Are you more sensitive to God's loving truths or to your own emotions?

-Ray Wallace