What is truth?

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[0:00] Good evening. Some of you are sitting in the same place.

I don't think you moved all day, did you? Well, hopefully you got something to eat. Let's pray.
Lord, it's your anointing that breaks the yoke and your anointing that gives life. And I pray that you'd anoint not just the word, but you'd anoint every heart to receive that specific word you have for each one.
That each of us will go home tonight with something special to build us up, a treasure from your kingdom. And we thank you for this time.
Thank you for the privilege of being here. I bless this people, Lord God. And I thank you for the incredible work you have for them in the days ahead. And we bless you for this in Jesus' name.
[1:07] Amen. When Jesus was on trial before Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked him, So you are a king? Jesus responded, You say I am a king.

Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.
What is truth? Pilate asked. A friend at university had the same attitude when I was trying to share Jesus with him. He got into a philosophical debate about everything being relative.
I accept that we all have relatives, but truth is absolute. Winston Churchill said, Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.
I know you ladies probably find that out at times. The truth can be both awful and wonderful at the same time, can it? Awful as it may expose something we wanted to hide, reveal something we're afraid of, or remind us of something we wanted to forget.
[2:23] But truth can also be wonderful because of what Jesus told his disciples in John 8, 31 and 32. And one of our brothers in the prayer time prayed out my message tonight.

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
Some of Jesus' listeners, if you read that section of scripture, argued that they were already free as they were descendants of Abraham, conveniently forgetting that the Romans were ruling Israel at the time.
But Jesus wasn't talking about political freedom. He was declaring that it had nothing to do with what the Romans were up to, but everything to do with who ruled our life, whether it be God or sin. If God, freedom. If sin, bondage. But the truth would set them free. Being hit with the truth can be quite shocking, humiliating, or painful.
[3:31] At the same time, however, it allows us to act, do something about a situation that maybe you were either ignorant of or tried to cover up. The truth enables us to do something constructive, even if only in our attitude.

And so tonight, I want to talk about know the truth. Where am I going with this? God wants us completely free, and only the truth will do it.
And this is something dealing, as a minister, and I know people that, those that were in business, Stuart was mentioning about how he retired. I had to wait until I was 66, and then I was all worn out, and he retired 11 years ago.
But I'm sure in his business, there were, one of the things that he probably had to watch out for were those that wanted to do business, but they weren't truthful.
And I think every one of us have found that, haven't we? Every once in a while, we have a, you know, somebody will try to sell you something, but then you have to be discerning. Are they telling the truth?

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[4:42] Because, you know, people, I'm a little wary of salesmen, because their motivation is to make money, right? So they could say all kinds of things in order to, to get a sale.

Our house is on the market, and one of the things that my wife and I have both been very clear about, we, we tell people everything. We show them everything, we don't hide anything, well, we don't show them our underwear drawer or anything, but, but we tell them the truth about the house. Because we thought, if people are going to buy it, one thing I don't want to know, I don't want to happen, is somebody to buy the house, and later on you hear, oh, you didn't tell us about that. So we tell them everything.
And, and if they still want it, which they haven't yet, but they will. And, you know, there are people that really like it, but their house is on the market as well.
But it's, it's so important to know the truth, because when you know the truth, then there's freedom. You know what you're dealing with. God wants us completely free, and only the truth will do it.
[5:56] He promised to send his Holy Spirit specifically to lead us into all truth. And as Paul writes in Galatians chapter one, or Galatians five, verse one, it says, it was for freedom that Christ set us free.

Therefore, keep standing firm, and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. It's in this freedom that we have fulfillment, joy, and victory. It's where we're most effective in serving the Lord.
Yet, in spite of many Galatians having come to the Lord, that after they had come to faith in the Lord, they had listened to the gospel, they had changed, and then some religious teachers came along and say, well, actually, you really need to go back and fulfill the law as well.
But see, that wasn't the truth, was it? And they got confused, and got mixed up. So one of them were becoming legalistic, and going back, trying to serve the law.
And other ones of them had gone off into error in grace. And so they thought, well, there's grace, so I can do anything.
[7:04] And they had gotten involved in sin. And so what Paul had come along to speak the truth, to line them back up, so that they were living by grace, and not by legalism, and not by sin.

He confronted the Galatians for throwing away what they had only just received by faith. And he challenged them from trying to live up to the law instead of receiving salvation by grace.
And he said, the truth will set us free. When I came back to the Lord at university, I became ravenous for God's word.
And God led me to a quality church. And it's a long story, but there, when they preached the word, which I'm very grateful for, but also, I went to every meeting, every meeting I could, everything that was advertised, I went to, to home groups, to every church meeting, every Bible study.
And then if there were special meetings, and during those days, there were lots of Christian meetings all over the city. And plus, I got into the word. And I couldn't get enough of the word of God.
[8:17] And I probably mentioned this before. A New Zealand pastor had come and was preaching the word. And one of the things that he suggested was that, is reading the proverb that corresponds with a day.

And I may have mentioned this here before. And so May 1975, I started doing that. So every day I read Proverbs. So today was the fourth I read Proverbs 4.
So every month I go through Proverbs. And then in my Bible reading list, I read Proverbs as part of reading the whole Bible. So 13 times a year, I go through Proverbs and read the Bible every year as well.
Just to get the word in me. And as I was reading it, the truth began to speak to me. It began to reveal areas of my mind that I was thinking wrong.
It began to reveal areas of my life where I was in sin. And even before the pastor. So I wasn't hearing it from the church. I was hearing it from the truth.
[9:25] And pretty soon I began to change because it began as I embraced the truth, even though sometimes it was very uncomfortable. especially if you read through Proverbs.

It talks a lot about the foolish man. And I thought, and I thought, God, I really fit this. So for years, I was, you know, I was convicted every time I read the Proverbs because it spoke about me, about foolish thinking, about wrong attitudes and all kinds of things.
But when that truth began to shine into the darkness of my heart, and I began to embrace the truth, it began to break off things in my life. And I came into a freedom that I'd never known before in my

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whole life.
The truth began to set me free. God revealed at this time that while I should also allow the truth to convict, and this is something that's so important, and our sister read it out before the prayer meeting.
Well, she was, had started the prayer meeting, but nobody else had come yet. So, but when I came in, she had read it out. That while it's important we allow God to convict us, we should never accept condemnation.
[10:52] Condemnation is not from God. It's from the enemy. Conviction is from God, and we need to embrace it. And so while God was really working in me, and shining his truth into my life, and convicting me, and sometimes it really was very uncomfortable being convicted by the truth, at the same time, he says, do not let condemnation come in.

Because if you let condemnation come in, then you become bound again, don't you? Then you lose your freedom. Because then you're bound by guilt, and shame, and condemnation, and that's not God.
He sends the truth, not to put us down, but to build us up, and encourage us, and to draw us closer to himself. At the same time, I wasn't to make excuses for my life.
I don't know if you're like that, but I've met people at times, you know, that this particular, I, usually I don't have a problem with anger, and I might be tested this week on it.
Except if I'm driving, and there's a taxi driver in front of me. So hopefully there's no taxi drivers here. That, but I had to work on my, I don't say bad words.
[12:12] I never, I've never liked to say bad words. Growing up, even though in my family they did, I just, I've always hated that. So I would never say bad words, but my attitude wasn't really Christian, when taxi drivers would be in front of me, and pulling off and such.

And, and my attitude might have been, oh, those, you know, those taxi drivers are making me angry, and God says, no, you're angry, because you let yourself get angry.
It's not them, it's you. And somebody had given the illustration one time, that if you throw a jar of honey against the wall, what comes out?
Honey. If you throw a jar of acid against the wall, what comes out? What comes out is what's inside. So we can't blame somebody else.
And one of the truths that helped me was I, was not to make excuses for my life. When God would begin to speak to me in dealing with attitudes, it wasn't somebody else that may be sinned, and the devil can never make us sin, can he?
[13:22] He can't make us sin. We sin because we choose to sin. Now, we may be tempted, and we are tempted, and there's people that get up our noses at times, and aggravate us, but the thing is that we don't have to let them, do we?

The truth is that we are responsible for our lives, and not to make excuses. I'm still tempted at times, but the Lord won't let me get away with it.
I wasn't to blame the devil or somebody else for making me say something, or break the speed limit, or lose my temper. No one, not even the devil, can make us sin. We are responsible for our life.
There's no excuses. But when we take responsibility, this brings great freedom, because we're free from guilt, and our flesh can't boss us around. Being responsible enables us to grow in maturity, and experience God's grace, whatever we face.
And this freedom of character is wonderful, isn't it? We have freedom when we abide in his word, and it protects us from deception and bondage, and prepares us for eternal life with God.
[14:35] Throughout history, so-called theologians and other experts have denied or twisted God's word to mean something different than what God intended. Jesus confronted some of these when he had John write to the seven churches in Revelation.

And if you read the first couple of chapters of Revelation, where he wrote to the seven churches, that some of the things that he confronted them on were they had let people come in to speak error. And Jesus was confronting them to deal with that. Today, there are Christian leaders, including some well-known evangelicals, leading people into bondage by teaching that God didn't really mean what is written about salvation, about the resurrection, about homosexuality, or other important teachings.

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By denying the truth to those in error or flirting with sin, they are keeping them enslaved and leading them to hell. There are some well-known evangelical leaders that are teaching things that are not biblical.
And it's important that we know what the truth is so that we can speak people the truth and set them free. The thing is that when God spoke about, and this thing is a heavy thing, you know, this whole gay marriage, homosexuality, it's not from God.
[16:02] When God spoke about moral principles, he meant it at the beginning, and he meant for us to keep it. Because error is coming into the church.

And, I mean, I know personally, because two of my, two of the young people that I've known since little children have come out recently about, and they have their relationships.
And I told them, I said, that's not God. One of them said, well, that's my opinion. I said, no, it isn't. It's the word. And I told him, I said, we're not going to reject you, but the thing is that you're wrong. And we told him he could no longer be a member. He could come. We didn't publicly shame him, but we told him that his membership, he was no longer a member of the fellowship, and he could no longer be in any ministry.
And he came along for a long time. He still sees my daughters at times, but we made it very clear that the Bible says, what it says, God meant it.
[17:18] Because I don't want his blood on my hands. Every day I pray for him that he will wake up and come to faith. It's so easy to, because maybe we're close to somebody, we think, oh, well, maybe it's okay.

Well, it isn't okay. You know, sin is sin. And if we agree with them because we're afraid of being called a bigot or something else, then we're allowing them to head long to hell.
I would rather be called a bigot, which I have been called. Narrow-minded bigot, and I thought, well, I don't mind. I'm going to keep speaking the truth.
But the thing is that we need to do it in love, don't we? We need to be willing to lay down our lives for those people in sin that they might be set free.
Because we need to do it with compassion and with love. But they can't be free unless we tell them the truth. God revealed his word to give us abundant life.
[18:25] He wants us to know him and receive his incredible promises, including eternal life. Along with this, his word gives counsel. We all know this, don't we?

For marriage, raising children, prospering in business, overcoming temptation, setting the captives free, and so much more. You know that if people would only get into the word of God, there is so much in there that can transform their lives, can give them hope.
When we fill ourselves with God's word and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, we become free. And then the truth will do what Psalm 23 declares.
And I want to read Psalm 23. I know you all know it, but I was thinking about the truth and what it does for us. And then this is really what it does. The Lord is my shepherd.
I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows. He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.
[19:36] Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect me and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life. And I will live in the house of the Lord forever. At different times when in my Christian walk as a pastor, when challenges come up, you know, the enemy would come up and try to tear me down and speak lies. But then I thought, no, the truth is that God is with me. God is with me. That it's going to be okay. It may be challenging. And each of us are going to face challenges in the days ahead, aren't we? And some of them aren't very nice. But the truth is that God is bigger than our problem.
[20:45] That God has gone through Jesus Christ to prepare a place for us. And even if this life, the rest of it is miserable, we have a place that's waiting for us.

Without sin, without sickness, without shame. Being in God's presence forever. Psalm 23 reveals what freedom looks like when we embrace God's truth.
We can have peace and joy even in the midst of challenging circumstances because of the freedom God gives us. Some people, though, don't want the truth.

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Some, no matter how miserable they are in their bondage, would rather have the familiar. I found that. And any of you that have done any counseling know that, don't you? You can tell somebody they're miserable, they come to you, they call you up late at night, and my marriage is a terrible situation, or this is happening, and you try to counsel them, but then they, the next time they call, they say the same thing.
And I said, well, did you do what you were counseled to do? And you know they didn't because they're familiar. They don't want the truth.
[21:58] What they do is want sympathy or pity. But it was only the truth that would set them free. When people accept the truth, then the freedom will come.

When we live and speak the truth that would set them free, they take it as condemning them instead of changing their lifestyle. And I found that I've lost friends at times and others because they didn't like the truth.
Jesus said in the last days he would bring division even within families. Some would refuse the truth. Our choice is whose side we will be on.
How much do we want true freedom for ourselves and others? Are we willing to pay the cost of embracing the truth to come into the freedom God offers? You know, God isn't calling us to deliberately stir up division, is he?
And there's some people that, you know, that they anoint themselves as the truth bearers. But actually what they are is they just want to expose people.
[23:05] That isn't God, okay? So I'm not saying, well, if you find out about something about somebody that isn't quite right, and he says, whoa, the truth will set you free and go tell everybody.

That's gossip, isn't it? Because somebody has said, if you're not part of the problem, or if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem. The thing is that when we speak the truth in love, it should be because we want to restore people, not to expose them to humiliation.
And does this make sense? I'm not saying we then go around and tell everybody how they should run their life. but when God puts us in circumstances where we should speak the truth, we may be the one that helps them set them free.
We are called to be ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ, not religious trouble causers. We're called to speak the truth in love, not with harshness or legalism, but neither are we to shy away from telling the truth because someone may feel offended by what we say.
Jesus declares in John 4, 24 that God is spirit, so those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. We cannot live for worship God or serve him if we're not walking in the truth because as Jesus declares in John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life and no one can come to the Father except through me.
[24:46] You know, we're living in very challenging times and this is when we need to know the truth and to live it out. We need to be living it ourselves and abiding in the truth so that people will see that reality in us.

You know, there's some churches that are now basically dropping anything that makes people feel bad. But then, why don't they just go to the pub?
You know, if we don't have anything to offer people, then why ask them to come in here? You know, stay home and watch Poldark. Well, you'll get home to watch it anyway.
You see what I'm saying? Why ask people to come someplace if you don't offer them anything that's going to transform their life? Now, you're here because I know you speak the truth and because you want people to come to faith.
But there's some churches that are offering nothing. I mean, I don't like going to pubs, so I wouldn't go to a pub, but I wouldn't want to go to a place like that.
[25:54] I went to church because I wanted God and I wanted to change because I was a mess. And because I went there and they spoke the truth through the pulpit and they spoke it individually, it challenged me and the word of God challenged me and set me free.

We're living in challenging times. We need to be people of the truth. They're offended by anyone telling them that maybe their actions are wrong.
And whereas in the past, even non-Christians respected the Bible as truth, today, even some Christian leaders don't accept it, that it is. Still, Jesus declares, you are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

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And I have four thoughts to leave with you regarding freedom. One is to remain faithful to the truth, God's word. This is the truth.
This will set us free. We need to be in it every day to study it, to read it, to memorize it, to abide in it.
The second thing is embrace the truth and allow it to transform you.
[27:18] This means being ruthlessly honest with yourself, God and others, not making excuses for your life. There were different times in my life that I knew I needed to deal with something and God says, Steve, you need to be ruthlessly honest with yourself.

You're a mess in that area. So I dealt with it. I didn't try to cover it up. I was honest with God and myself and I embraced the truth.
And some of it was painful. You know, it's painful if you've been in darkness and all of a sudden this big light shines on you and you realize you're completely naked spiritually.
But when we embrace it, it makes us whole. The third one is to live out the truth. You know, you may know the truth, but if you don't live it out, if you don't let it shine out so other people can see that you're living the truth, then how can they be set free?
But when we live out the truth, we walk what we believe. We don't do it to show off and we don't do it to make offense, but we just live it out. Then for some people that really are hungry and want to be free, they will see that reality of Jesus and they will come looking for us.
[28:48] And the fourth one is share the truth in love. Not to be afraid. If somebody asks something or you are in a situation where you can speak into somebody's life, don't be afraid to share the truth.

They may get offended. They may call you names. But you may be, you speaking that truth in love may set them free. Jesus did this with a Samaritan woman at the well.
He did it to his disciples when they made stupid suggestions. He was honest with each one, but he never condemned them. In the Samaritan woman's case, his compassionate truth not only brought her to salvation, but won a whole town to faith.
Jesus promises in John 16, 13 that when the spirit of truth comes, he will guide us into all truth. He will not speak on his own, but will tell you what he has heard.
He will tell you about the future. We have a future and a hope because Jesus offers us the truth.
May we allow God's Holy Spirit to guide us into his word so the truth will set us free.
[30:05] From our freedom, he will empower us to share the truth with others. Then at least some will receive the truth and the truth will set them free.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you that when you spoke the truth to me, even though you knew it would hurt for a while, that it changed my life.
It brought me into your salvation. It set me free from those things that bound me. I thank you for the truth. I thank you for your word. And I thank you for each one here who longs for the fullness of you, Lord.
I pray you'd bless each one that we would be a people of the truth, that we would fill ourselves with your word and we would embrace that which you speak to us so that we can be transformed from one measure of glory to another to become like Jesus.
And that then our lives would shine so brilliantly that our lives would be so salty that many people will hunger what we have in you. And we thank you, Lord, that can only happen as you release your Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us and empower us.
[31:27] And we thank you for this in Jesus' name. Amen. This finished...

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