

Seven Progressions of Truth

by Chip Brogden

The sermon outlines the seven stages of spiritual growth, from being hungry for Truth to living the Truth, and emphasizes the importance of demonstrating the preeminence of Christ in our lives.

Scripture: Matthew 7:6, John 6:35, John 8:32, John 14:6, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 3:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

Chip Brogden preaches about the seven stages of awareness that Christians must pass through to move from bondage to the fullness of Truth and become Overcomers. These stages include being Hungry For Truth, Seeking For Truth, Choosing The Truth, Accepting The Truth, Knowing The Truth, Believing The Truth, and Living The Truth. Each stage represents a progression in spiritual growth, from recognizing a need for Truth to fully embodying and demonstrating the Truth in one's life.

Transcript

There are seven stages of awareness through which we must pass through in order to bring ourselves out of bondage towards the fullness of Truth and into the life of an Overcomer. This describes the spiritual growth of the Christian from sinner, to seeker, to believer, to disciple, and to overcomer.

I. Hungry For Truth

II. Seeking For Truth

III. Choosing The Truth

IV. Accepting The Truth

V. Knowing The Truth

VI. Believing The Truth

VII. Living The Truth

I. Hungry For Truth

Theologians describe it as a God-shaped vacuum in our heart. However you choose to describe it, there is a capacity for God within every man and woman. Some seek to fill the void with other things, but man is

never truly satisfied until he finds communion with His Creator. Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled." The most amoral people in the world are the ones who have no hunger for Truth. They are the ones who love Darkness more than Light.

It is better to give food to a hungry man than to force-feed people who are not hungry. This is one of the failures of evangelicalism. People have not been taught to tell the difference between a hungry person and a person who is full, so they indiscriminately cast their pearls before swine. Jesus did not reveal Himself to everyone, nor did He minister to everyone He encountered. He qualified them on the basis of their spiritual appetite.

Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What does it all mean? It is not so much our seeking the Truth as the Truth drawing us to Himself. That drawing us to Himself is interpreted by our soul as spiritual hunger. Without this we cannot come to Truth.

II. Seeking For Truth

Christ has come to seek and to save the Lost. He tells His disciples that they have not chosen Him, but He has chosen them. The ones who seek Him discover that they are sought out by Him. The paradox of the situation is that the Lord will only reveal Himself to those who seek Him, but when they begin to seek Him, He searches for them in order to make Himself known.

There are those who are hungry for Truth, and then there are those who do something to satisfy their hunger. They know something is not right, something is lacking, and they set out to find answers to their questions. Unfortunately for some, the quest for Truth becomes more important than Truth itself. People who do not pass through this stage, but remain too long here, are those who are "ever learning, but never coming to the full-knowledge (epignosis) of Truth." They can quote the sayings of Jesus, Mohammed, or Buddha, but they can never get beyond a mental apprehension of what they say they believe. Either they have never been forced to make a decision for Truth, or they have decided the cost is too great, and they are content to settle back into meaningless philosophical exercises.

III. Choosing The Truth

There is always a moment of decision in which we can choose to remain where we are or we can go deeper. We cannot understand all the implications of the decision, but we know it will cost us something. "There is no turning back." We will be held accountable for the Truth we have. To whom much is given, much is required. Some are unwilling to pay the price. But the ones who do are given no guarantees except one: they will know the Truth.

Most people will say, "My mind is made up, so don't confuse me with the Truth." To choose the Truth is to want the Truth at all costs, even if it means sacrificing everything I have believed up until now, challenging all my paradigms, questioning all my teachers, examining everything I have ever experienced.

Of course our first decision about Truth is based upon Who Jesus is. With that question settled many Christians are content, but Truth is living. Truth will continue to reveal Himself to us and around us for as long as we will allow it. What, after all, is Wisdom? Wisdom is the ability to see things from heaven's, and thus God's, perspective. Daily we must choose between ignorant bliss or seeing things as God sees them. It is a daily choice. You cannot be told, you have to see it for yourself.

IV. Accepting The Truth

We are often unprepared for Truth, which is why Truth is revealed to us progressively. We must "grow up into Him" - we could not handle it otherwise. Even the little bit of Truth which is revealed to us often upsets us at our deepest foundations. We must be willing to live with the uncertainty and pain which Truth brings. Here again is another point in which many people turn back. People prefer ignorant bliss to uncomfortable Truth. Now that they have been given the Truth, it is too painful or inconvenient to deal with. They either fall back into their former ignorance or they rationalize or dilute the Truth until it is no longer Truth. They turn it into something which is more palatable and easily digested.

But if we accept the Truth, and totally give ourselves to it, it will begin to change us. We will begin to be conformed to it, and it will become less painful. I am convinced that if we refuse to accept the Truth we have been given then we will eventually lose it. Jesus concludes His parable of the talents by saying, "The one that has will have more added to him, and the one who does not have will have what little he has taken away." The one who buries the Truth in the ground for safekeeping will lose it, while the one who does something with the Truth will receive more Truth. This is why some grow spiritually and some do not. Even though they may acknowledge the same Truth, they may not be willing to accept the consequences of being transformed by that Truth, thus what little they have soon becomes dead manna.

V. Knowing The Truth

Once we have accepted the Truth we must brace ourselves to explore and deal with the consequences of the Truth. For instance, if I am one day confronted with the fact that X is true, and Y contradicts X, then Y is no longer true, even if I have believed in Y my whole life. If my whole life is based on Y being true, then my whole life is going to change. The more I experience X, the more things about Y I discover to be wrong.

We should use the word "know" in its original sense: intimate experience and oneness. "Adam knew his wife Eve", meaning they had intercourse with one another. It is not a mental assent or head knowledge, i.e. "Oh I know that." It is a coming into union with Truth experientially and existentially. The Truth is there for us to know, but we cannot know the Truth until we accept it. The prophet does not (or should not) just bring a message, the prophet IS the message. If the message has not changed the messenger then it is nothing but empty words. Once we accept it we will be changed by it. Truth is not Truth if it has not changed you. If it is an ethereal thing out in space that you can just pontificate about then it is not Truth.

When we know the Truth, that is, when we are one with Truth so that it is ours experientially and not just theoretically, then the Truth will make us free. Talking about Truth will not make us free, but knowing it will. How do we know it? Through experience. I daresay we do not know the Truth through study. Oh, we can learn about it through study, but we cannot know it through study. To know it is to live it. To live it is to know it. What are you doing with it? Has it changed you? That is what makes it Truth.

Not once have I talked about understanding the Truth, and there is a reason. We cannot seek understanding as a thing in itself. If we know the Truth then understanding will follow, but knowing is never the result of understanding. Indeed, we often mistake understanding for knowing, at our peril. If our understanding does not flow out of our knowing, then our understanding will eventually be revealed as misunderstanding.

VI. Believing The Truth

I doubt there are any Christians who do not know that Jesus is the Way. But translating what you know into an actual belief is two different things. We can know Christ, know the Church, know God's plan for us, know His Will, but that does not necessarily mean that we will walk in what we know. There is a straight gate as well as a narrow path. Those who favor the straight gate believe once you pass through the gate that's all there is to it. But beyond the gate is a narrow path which leads to Life, and only a few find it. There is a gate and a path, and we cannot have one without the other.

Believing is the transition between Knowing and Living. Some confuse the two and treat them as one and the same, but they are not. For instance, a lot of Christians know that Jesus has defeated the devil, but most of them do not believe it, because if they did they would live their lives differently. They would pray differently, they would talk differently, they would be different. Many people are mistakenly called "Believers" when they do not believe at all. We might call them "Assenters".

Do you know that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places? You should know it, for it is found in Ephesians 2. But do you believe it? You may say you believe it, but if that is the case, you will live differently than you did before. If you believe you are seated with Christ in the heavenlies then you cannot continue living as an earthly person. In a thousand such examples we can see evidence of knowing and not believing.

If I have already seen the last five minutes of a football game and I know my team wins, I don't have to be concerned with anything else that may happen during the course of the game. Only people who have not seen the end will be worried, afraid, upset, or nervous. If I say, "I know my team will win" because I have already seen the end, then my knowing is translated into believing and I begin to live in what I know. I should behave differently than the ones around me who are still concerned as to the outcome. The slightest bit of hesitation or anxiety on my part only demonstrates that I do not in fact believe in what I say I know.

Why do so many know the Truth but do not live according to what they know? Because they mistake knowing for believing. It seems hard to describe the difference in words, but in real life experience the difference is easily demonstratable. Do you know the battle is already won and that Jesus is Lord? Oh yes, we know that. But do you believe it? You say you believe it, but if you aren't living it, then you don't believe it, whether you know it or not.

VII. Living The Truth

When we truly believe what we say we know then we cannot but live according to the Truth of it. This is the goal of growth, to demonstrate Truth. We can hunger for it, seek it, choose it, accept it, know it, and believe it, but until we demonstrate it we have fallen short. Everything is geared towards this end.

Why does God save sinners, call disciples, establish the Church, and raise up overcomers? To demonstrate the preeminence of Christ over all, beginning with each disciple, then the Church corporately, and all creation collectively. We see this happening with the early Church in the Book of Acts. Gradually the Church was brought to such a low state that the Lord had to call upon Overcomers to stand on behalf of the Church. Even so, God is steadily and progressively working all things together for good, bringing us to the full-knowledge of Truth (Christ). What is the purpose of this fullness? It is not so we can be a walking spiritual encyclopedia. His desire is to demonstrate the Truth in us. What Truth? That He overcomes sin, self, and satan. That in Him is Life, and Life abundant. That He is All in All, and we are complete in Him. That we, in Him, overcome just as He overcame.

His Kingdom, His Reality, transcends the earthly realm in which we live. It is more real than this world. We need vision in order see beyond the earthly and into the heavenly - beyond the natural and into the supernatural. When we see as He sees, we will see how finite this world is, how limited, how temporal. We will see ourselves in Him, and we will begin to demonstrate His preeminence here and now: "as in heaven, so in earth."

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