

# Declaring God's Truth in an Age of Misinformation

Leo A. Modica

*Christian communicator, author, and coach*

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Many Christians today are torn between the timeless truths of God's Word and the enlightened consensus of our modern age.<sup>[1][2]</sup> They are often dissuaded by mainstream agendas and ideologies espoused by leaders and the media. Daily, our culture echoes Pontius Pilate's retort "what is truth?" as it grapples with the nature and relevance of truth.

## A Crisis of Truth

In our technological age, we are bombarded with a torrent of information. Some of this information is true, and some is false. Discerning truth from falsehood is becoming increasingly more difficult.

Linguists have long studied the nature of language. What they have concluded is that the average person hears and reads an estimated 30,000 words per day.<sup>[3]</sup> This estimate is in stark contrast to the number of words the average Christian reads daily from God's Word. Unless Christians are discerning, their lives will be shaped in large measure by secular influences, not by God's Word.

What we are experiencing today is that information is no longer neutral or even factual, but biased. Many are claiming that information is being weaponized to advance a particular agenda or ideology, to divide and sort people into divergent groups.<sup>[4]</sup> As the church becomes entangled in these divergent causes, it risks being diverted from the primacy of the Gospel.

Pastor Ken Brown argues in a recent *Atlantic* article that the biggest challenge facing the evangelical church today is a crisis of discernment.<sup>[5]</sup> His observation is that Christians are having difficulty discerning truth from untruth. They have "come to value the ephemeral over the eternal."

Brown's observations are best understood in the context of modern life. Because of our fast-paced lifestyle, we often find ourselves pulled in many directions. This pace of life exerts a centrifugal force on our lives that pulls us away from the centrality of God's Word. Unless we are intentionally God-centered, we will succumb to the other voices that speak to us the

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<sup>1</sup> The End of Absolutes: America's New Moral Code, May 25, 2016, Barna Group.  
(<https://www.barna.com/research/the-end-of-absolutes-americas-new-moral-code>)

<sup>2</sup> The State of Theology 2022, Ligonier Ministries. (<https://thestateoftheology.com>)

<sup>3</sup> Listening Statistics: 23 Facts You Need to Hear, Rebecca Lake, September 17, 2015, CreditDonkey.com.  
(<https://www.creditdonkey.com/listening-statistics.html>)

<sup>4</sup> Maria Ressa's Dangerous Battle for the Truth, Oct. 9, 2021, New York Times.  
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/15/magazine/rappler-philippines-maria-ressa.html>)

<sup>5</sup> How Politics Poisoned the Evangelical Church, Tim Alberta, June 2022, The Atlantic.  
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/06/evangelical-church-pastors-political-radicalization/629631>)

loudest and most frequently, not the voice of God. For the Christian, succumbing to these other voices can be downright ruinous.

**All too often people are willing  
to settle for simple answers  
to life's most crucial questions  
from untrustworthy sources  
that speak the loudest and most frequently.**

These pressures of life often cause us to seek expedient or *microwaved* truth. Regrettably, this manner of inquiry short-circuits the normal processes of logic and reason, the due process of inquiry and discernment.

The invention of the Internet of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has reinforced this life-is-simple myth. High-tech, AI-powered browsers produce instant answers to any question in milliseconds. Social networks, in turn, affirm and propagate these simple answers. Crowd-sourced truth has fast become the consensus of the day for navigating life.

The toll this crisis of truth is taking on the evangelical church is unmistakable. According to a recent Barna Group survey, congregants are becoming less trusting of their pastors and the credibility of the Christian message.<sup>[6]</sup> Regrettably, these trends are causing an overwhelming number of pastors to question their God-ordained calling and leave the ministry.

## **The Church's Response**

How does the church navigate this morass of misinformation? How does the church withstand these secular pressures and remain committed to its God-ordained mission?

In the Pauline epistles, Paul urges churches to be on their guard against false teachers and doctrines. He urged them to hold fast to the teachings he established among them.

***Stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you,  
whether by word of mouth or by letter.***

2 Thessalonians 2:15 (NIV)

***Continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it.  
Don't drift away from the assurance you received  
when you heard the Good News.***

Colossians 1:23 (NLT)

***Be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every***

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<sup>6</sup> Pastors Share Top Reasons They've Considered Quitting Ministry in the Past Year, April 27, 2022, Barna Group.  
(<https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry>)

***wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.***

Ephesians 4:13-14 (NLT)

The apostle Paul clearly states in these passages, and many others, that godly churches are marked by maturity, conviction, and steadfastness.

Historically, the Christian church is no stranger to heretical teaching. Paul himself spoke out against heresies such as Gnosticism and other false teachings of his day. He viewed heresy as a cancer that would destroy the church if left unchecked.

In turn, the early church fathers spoke out against emergent heresies such as Marcionism (second century) and Arianism (third century), among others, to keep the church pure.

What are the scriptural principles and practices that strengthen churches in their resolve to carry out the mission God has called them to in this age of misinformation?

## **#1 Come Together**

In the final hours of his ministry, Jesus foresaw perhaps the most important challenge facing the church of his generation and generations to come. In his eleventh hour, Jesus prays to the Father that his followers would be “one” (John 17:20-21).

Jesus’ prayer of oneness or unity is echoed in Paul’s letters to the Ephesians (Ch. 4) and the Philippians (Ch. 2). In Philippians 2:2 (NLT), Paul exhorts the church in Philippi to “work together with one mind and purpose.” According to Paul, working together is achieved through a spirit of humility, not a spirit of haughtiness or self-centeredness. Later in Philippians 3 (NLT), Paul asserts that with one mind and purpose, the church must “press on” preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ in a resolute, unwavering manner.

**The church must respond to this torrent of misinformation  
with unity, focus, Biblical teaching, and  
reflecting God’s light in this dark world.**

While we are members of one spiritual body with different giftings and personalities, our mind and purpose in ministry must be singular. It must be focused on the Gospel and our mission to reach the lost with God’s message of salvation.

## **#2 Stay Focused**

In 2016, the Bain Research Group determined that the #1 contributor to effecting change in the marketplace and keeping employees inspired is *centeredness*.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Based on their

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<sup>7</sup> How Leaders Inspire: Cracking the Code, June 09, 2016, Bain Research Group. (<https://www.bain.com/insights/how-leaders-inspire-cracking-the-code>)

<sup>8</sup> The Science of Centeredness, July 25, 2016, Bain Research Group. (<https://www.bain.com/insights/the-science-of-centeredness>)

research, centeredness demonstrates a sense of commitment to a set of principles that drives an enterprise toward success.

As applied to the church, centeredness is the ability to rally congregants around a common set of objectives that inspire people toward godliness and mission.

Centeredness also demonstrates to the watching world the Church's undivided commitment to its founding principles. It serves as a witness to the unity of God's people versus the ever-increasing disunity of the world.

Here are five centers your church can adopt to inspire congregants toward godliness and mission.

- **God-Centered** calls the church to be rooted in the holiness of God and the pursuit of godliness.
- **Truth-Centered** calls the church to be rooted in God's revealed Word and the pursuit of His truth.
- **Gospel-Centered** calls the church to be rooted in the message of salvation through Jesus Christ and the pursuit of communicating the Gospel.
- **Kingdom-Centered** calls the church to be rooted in the rule of God and the pursuit of God's authority.
- **People-Centered** calls the church to be rooted in the love of God and the pursuit of serving people with unconditional love and grace.

Effectively, centers represent the shared, corporate values of the church. They guide church leaders in the selection of sermon topics, outreach endeavors, and Christian education.

### #3 Get Grounded

We are reminded by the writers of the New Testament that godly discernment is inextricably linked to knowing and experiencing the truth of God's Word. Therefore, it is imperative that we immerse our minds and hearts in Scripture regularly.

In Romans 12, Paul gets intensely practical in terms of how we should respond to the doctrinal teachings presented in the previous eleven chapters of Romans. His directive is to renew our minds and hearts as believers in Christ.

***Do not conform to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.  
Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is  
—his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Paul urges believers to replace their secular thinking with God's truth. Essentially, we renew our minds and hearts with Scripture. In so doing, we "test" God's principles and practices, and "approve" them trustworthy in our lives. Over time, these time-tested truths form a framework for godly thinking - for not only *what* to think, but *how* to think. This manner of

thinking enables us to discern falsehoods more reflexively as we guard our minds and hearts.

At the corporate level, Paul urges church leaders to proactively preach and teach God's Word to counteract the secularizing forces facing the church today. Congregants need to know with certainty that the truth claims of the Christian faith are true and defensible as they confront personal doubt and engage with people far from God.

According to Mainstream Apologetics<sup>[9]</sup>, the following fundamental doctrines and principles of the Christian faith need to be reinforced in the modern church.

- Existence and Nature of God
- Purposeful Creation of Life
- Nature of Mankind (Doctrine of Sin)
- Inerrant Revelation of God
- Divinity of Jesus
- Death and Resurrection of Jesus
- Sanctity of Life
- Sanctity of Marriage
- Biblical Principles for Christian Living

Preaching and teaching on these topics ensures that congregants are grounded and immovable in their faith. It enables congregants to step into their worlds with confidence as they engage with people far from God.

#### #4 Turn Up the Lights

While the worldly consensus on truth is celebrated for its progressiveness, it ultimately leads people to emptiness and often despair. It never satisfies.

Mercifully, God has called the church to bear witness to His truth, to be His light in this dark world. In so doing, we put our lives and churches on display for the watching world to observe and acknowledge God's saving, transformative power. As God the Holy Spirit renews our lives with His truth, we reflect this truth to the world around us (Matthew 5:14-16, Acts 1:8).

One of the amazing properties of light is that when emitted, even the faintest of light forcibly displaces darkness. The Apostle John states in the opening chapter of his Gospel that darkness cannot extinguish Jesus' light (John 1:5 NLT). Nor can the world extinguish our light.

We know from science that to maximize visibility, light must be elevated to eliminate any obstructions because light travels in a straight line. This is precisely why Jesus instructs us to put our lights on a lamp stand, or better yet, on a hill.

***<sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.***

***<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.***

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<sup>9</sup> Mainstream Apologetics ([mainstreamapologetics.org](http://mainstreamapologetics.org)).

Therefore, our response is simply turn up our lights and allow God the Holy Spirit to reflect His truth through us. This requires us to eliminate anything that would otherwise obstruct God's light. It requires us to prayerfully influence the worlds in which we live. And finally, it requires us to step into our dark world with boldness knowing that God goes before us to prepare the way.

## A Certain Hope

We need to be reminded that the Christian church has confronted heresies and false teachers throughout the ages. Repeatedly, the church has triumphed by God's providence and grace. Each time, it matures and becomes stronger.

As the Christian church of our day, we must continue to rely exclusively on the truth of God's Word and embrace the potency of the Holy Spirit to empower and guide the church into each new age!



Leo Modica is a member of Sawyer Highlands Church, a Converge church in Sawyer, MI. He is the author of Mainstream Apologetics, a website that trains leaders to know and articulate the truth claims of the Christian faith. Learn more about Leo and Mainstream Apologetics at [leomodica.com](http://leomodica.com) and [mainstreamapologetics.org](http://mainstreamapologetics.org).