

John 18:37 9/29/13 (Red Letters #3) **LETTERS OF TRUTH**

Some of you may remember from the Truth Project material, Del Tackett started out his series of talks with this text and with the dialogue between Jesus and Pontius Pilate when Jesus was on trial before Him.

**Slide:** Pilate and Jesus pic

And basically, Del simply put the verse up on the screen this way.

**Slide:** “For this reason I was born and for this I came into the world\_\_\_\_\_”

And then he lets his class sweat it out. Because these are some pretty key **Red Letters**, aren't they? Jesus is literally telling us what He came to this earth to do. Don't you think that would be important? Don't you think we should pay attention to what He says next? I think we should.

And this is it:

**Slide:** “To Testify to the Truth”

Of course we know Pilate's cynical answer to that great testimony:

**Slide:** “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” (John 18:38 NIV)

What is truth? Apparently that was already a figure of speech to the Romans, who questioned that there could be any absolute truth. Nevertheless, there was something about Jesus and His presence that affected Pilate, so he went out “again” to the Jews... in fact John records that he said this numerous times: “I find no basis for a charge against Him.”

Now, we've talked many times here about Truth. In fact, of all the Red Letter categories I've put together, I would guess that I've spoken more about truth in the last 10 years especially, than any of the others. And we've documented many times that this Post-Modern generation no longer believes in Absolute Truth. 70% on average and 80% of our teens no longer think there is such a thing. We've talked about it and how to fight that, but for whatever reason, I really haven't given much thought to **why** that's happening. So let's just think about it visually for a minute. For instance, check out this great catch:

**Slide:** Amazing Baseball catch

Almost a little too great, isn't it? And of course with today's movies and special effects it's almost impossible to tell what's real and what's fake

**Slide:** Matrix – bullets

That's long been true of our Politicians

**Slide:** Nixon: “I am not a crook”

Sometimes our singers... some of us remember having to suffer the indignity of

**Slide:** Milli Vanilli ( a lip-synching fake combination of singers and dancers)

Then there's the prosperity theologians – who promise you health and wealth if you just contribute a seed-offering to their ministry

**Slide:** Benny Hinn pic

Not to mention advertising promises and Facebook fakes. If you think about it, our whole lives we've grown up around lies and fakes and phonies. It's no wonder people have trouble believing the Truth.

**Slide:** House pic “Everybody lies”

In so many ways we've been taught to doubt anything or anyone that claims to have the Truth.

And in the midst of this pool of doubt, comes Jesus saying in **BIG Red Letters**,

**Slide:** “For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the **truth.**” (John 18:37 NIV)

Not just the little truths, but the big Truth. The truth about Life, the truth about the reason for living. Now, there are other Red Letter statements that Jesus makes about why He came into this world, but they all fit under that Big umbrella...

**Slide:** “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10 NIV)

**Slide:** 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18–19 NIV)

**Slide:** “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17 NIV)

**Slide:** “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10 NIV)

**Slide:** “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” (John 12:46 NIV)

That is why He came, and all of it falls under the Truth with a capital T.

Unfortunately, many who have encountered Christ over the years, have deliberately chosen to stay in darkness rather than live in the Light and in the Truth. That certainly what was behind the long argument Jesus had with the Jews in the John 8 reading. Jesus told them:

**Slide:** “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32 NIV)

Right? Free from doubts, free from deception, free from despair. But of course, they didn’t like that statement. They answered Him:

**Slide:** “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say we shall be set free?” (John 8:33 NIV)

Now folks, was that true – in any way, shape or form? In fact, the Jews had spent more time in captivity than they had being free, and they were at that time being ruled by the Roman Empire. But we like to believe what we like to believe – still today, right? Michael Lewis in his book, *Lying and Deception in Everyday Life*, states that, by the age of 3, two-thirds of American kids have **learned to lie**. By age 7, about 98% lie. This information has led him to the hypothesis that “Lying in America ... **appears to be a survival mechanism programmed in the genes.**” Which has become sort of an in vogue theory now for all kinds of human behavior that we used to call sin. “It’s not our fault - evolution just made us this way.” But in that John 8 conversation, Jesus says “No. Sin made you that way – and choosing to speak the language of the devil makes you that way.” And Jesus goes after the Jewish leaders here. He says:

**Slide:** 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44 NIV)

Folks, how does that make you feel about lying? Is it a harmless activity to speak the language of the devil? Not at all. And all of us have engaged in that. We talked about it recently under the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment, giving false testimony. It’s not innocent at all – little white lies, medium sized gray ones or Big Black ones – they are all sins and they all separate us

from God. That's why all of us need the beautiful **Red Letters** that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but shall have eternal life." (John 3:16) That's the Gospel, the good news that even though we by our sin and rebellion against God, deserve to be separated from Him forever, His love kept Jesus on that road to the cross. It kept Jesus from saying just the right things to Pilate to worm His way out of the crucifixion, because that's why He came, to die in our place, to be punished for our sins so that the justice of God against sin would be satisfied and we could be forgiven of all we've done wrong and all we've failed to do right. That's the truth. That's the truth that changes everything for us and against which the world is raging.

Now, Jesus came to testify to the truth. What do you think he wants **you** to do as his disciple - As His witness? We have that same purpose, do we not? "**You will be my witnesses**", said Jesus. So if we are His witnesses and we are called to testify to the truth, then we had better do everything in our power to know the truth.

In the Truth Project, Del Tackett introduces us to three giants of the faith that help us to understand how important the question of truth really is:

**Slide:** The Big Three clip

Folks, the fact is that God in love, has always allowed men to walk away from the truth if they choose to do so. And many do. They follow Pilate's lead. We think Postmodernism is so new. It's not new. The Bible says that people deliberately "exchanged the truth of God for a lie" many years ago, but that's really what's at stake here – that was what was going on in this trial of Jesus. Truth was on trial. Jesus said, "**everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**" Folks, what does that statement imply? ... It implies that there are sides right? And there are. Folks, there is a cosmic battle between world views that is being played out every day in your life.

The Truth of Jesus is battling against false religions, secular humanism, post modernism, pagan mysticism, evolutionary theory and so on. And you need to understand that behind of all of that is the devil who is "a liar and the father of lies" He doesn't fight fair. So if you try to fight him with your own strength you will fail. You need Jesus. Hence this series on the Red Letters. We need His Word to guide us and to strengthen us in the fight. And that's what we're going to hear. We're going to listen to the **Red Letters** of Jesus Who 75 times told us "I tell you the truth"

**Slide:** "I Tell you the Truth"

and Who came to Testify to the Truth. Let's listen to everything He has to say to us in this Red Letter series. And if you have a friend, neighbor, relative, co-worker who's curious about Jesus and wants to know Him better, invite him. Bring him – from now until Christmas – because everything we're talking about when we read the Red Letters is going to be the Truth, not your version or my version, The Truth straight from the mouth of our Lord.

And folks, when it comes to the truth, here's a great one for us to close on. // God can handle the truth about you. He doesn't need you to present a better front. He knows exactly what you're like, inside and outside – and loves you nonetheless. That's why Jesus came into this world. That's why Jesus was willing to put himself into the most unfair position of all time – to speak the truth in the face of lies – to go to the cross and suffer and die, the righteous for the unrighteous – to bring you to God. That's the love He has for you.

Dear Lord Jesus,

We thank and praise You that at some point in our lives someone loved us enough to share with us the fact that You are the Way, the Truth and the Life. That's why we're here today. But Lord, because of the lies and whispers of Satan through our society today, we've been led to believe that we should for some reason, keep the truth to ourselves and live out a very quiet and private Christian faith. Forgive us for buying that lie, Lord. You tell us in Your Word to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have (in You). Lord, use this series, use the words of Jesus to help us do just that, so that we may be Your faithful witnesses and testify to the Truth to our world today. Amen.