

3 Pendulums

Grace and Truth—part 1

April 9, 2023

*John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ.*

DAY 1: 3 Pendulums

1. For all of human history, the great philosophical questions have always been asked. Who are we? How did we get here? Is there a God? What is the purpose of life? Is there meaning in life?

2. In today's culture its much more basic. Is there truth about anything?

3. We live in a divided country. Democrats vs Republicans? Politics? Abortion or pro-life? Vax and masks? What is justice? What is social justice? Are police needed? Socialism vs. Capitalism? What is marriage? What is gender? Do children belong to the state, the local school board or parents? Pick the topic and you will have a heap of opinions on your hands.

4. And there's the rub. **Opinions**. Who knows the truth about these things? Is there truth about these things?

*1 Chrn. 12:32...from Issachar, **men who understood the times** and knew what Israel should do...*

5. In this series, we are setting out to “understand the times” and “know what to do.”

6. What is being lived out right in front of us are three very different ways of seeing life. Each one can be thought of as a pendulum.

a. Pendulum #1: What kind of world do we live in? Do we live in a GOD-CENTERED world or a MAN-CENTERED world?

b. Pendulum #2: Is truth GOD-CENTERED or MAN-CENTERED?

Examples of God-centered truth: truth that is absolute, eternal, for everyone, reflects the divine design of life and reality, and reflects the character of God.

Examples of men-centered truth: Truth is relative, truths have to pass the feelings test, considers what man thinks more than what God thinks, there is no real truth, or truth is simply personal and is like a preference.

What makes this even more confusing in our culture is that we use the term “truth” in very different ways. Our culture prefaces “truth” with adjectives, like absolute truth, relative truth, personal truth. Our culture also prefaces “truth” with pronouns, like your truth and my truth.

c. Pendulum #3: Grace – On what basis is mankind accepted? Is it by DIVINE GRACE: God's gracious gift to accept people who come to Him in simple repentance? His stunning response to undeserving people like us? Or, is it HUMAN ACCEPTANCE, where virtually any behavior in the moral realm is to be accepted, praised, and cheered?

7. Our verse at the beginning of this page indicates how Jesus would describe each pendulum.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: “Cultural truth”

1. But there is another adjective that rules the cultural landscape. You likely have never heard this term, but we live in a world that advocates for this kind of truth—every day, in almost every field, in high schools, universities, businesses, Hollywood, TV, movies, the news media, etc. Here’s the term: “**cultural truth**.”

2. Cultural truth can be understood as “that which ‘everyone’ now assumes is true or legitimate.” Of course, the “everyone” involves the messages sent by Hollywood, the news media, university professors, and politicians from the president all the way down to school boards, and your peers and friends. There is a pressure in the air to just accept what “everyone” accepts.

3. This is very similar to what happens to teenagers. The power of acceptance is so strong that many teenagers will “go with the crowd” in order to “go with the crowd.”

4. How many mothers have said to their teenagers, “If your friends were going to jump off a cliff would you jump, too?”

5. Jesus addresses this human phenomenon.

*John 5:44 “I do not accept glory from human beings,⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.⁴³ I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.⁴⁴ **How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?***

6. Peer pressure and fear pressure are strong cultural pulls on us. Ever since we were little kids, there is a great fear of being left out, being thought as the odd ball, being criticized, or even ostracized.

7. As adults, we now live with an even greater fear—cancel culture. Being on the “wrong side” of an issue can cost you your job, your reputation, your finances, and even your career.

8. In what ways do you sense peer pressure or fear pressure?

9. Although we like to think of ourselves as open-minded and rational thinking, we cannot escape the social aspect just described. It is a powerful pull away from truth.

10. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Understanding the times

What is truth?

1. After Jesus was arrested and interrogated by the Jewish religious authorities, Jesus was interrogated by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Jerusalem. Here is an excerpt from that dialogue.

John 18:36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

2. Jesus tells Pilate that Jesus is no ordinary man. Jesus hints at His divinity personally, to His origins, and His purpose.

³⁷ *"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.*

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

3. Jesus makes three bold statements. Jot down your thoughts about what Jesus said about:

a. His purpose: _____

b. Truth: _____

c. Human beings and truth: _____

John 18:38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate.

4. What was Pilate's response?

5. Pilate was just as confused about truth as our secular world is today. Three philosophical movements have changed the cultural landscape regarding truth. The first is materialism (only what is material matters. Religion, spirituality, etc. are worthless). Modernism and post-modernism, combined with materialism, tell us because there is no God, then there is no meaning to life, no purpose outside ourselves, no real metric for morals and ethics. There is no such thing as truth in the philosophical and moral sense.

6. In the Old Testament book of Judges, the most damning statement made about God's people was this. "Each man did what was right in his own eyes."

7. Whereas that was a damning statement about the people 3,000 years ago, it is the height of celebratory statements in our secular world. Truth is no longer real. Truth is now just a matter of preference. The eventual consequences for modern man will be just as empty and miserable as the consequences back then.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Grace and truth

1. Today, we look at one of the most famous incidents in the ministry of Jesus.

John 8:1 but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

2. In our secular society, in some circles, adultery is not thought of as that big a deal. For the vast majority of people, adultery is a huge problem. Adultery involves the rejection and trading of one man or woman for another. It is an act of brazen selfishness, and cruelty. If there are children involved, they are affected even more profoundly. The feelings of betrayal are strong, as well as a feeling of abandonment by the adulterer, no matter how the adulterer tries to spin this.

3. The Jewish leaders were just using this woman as a pretext to publicly trap Jesus. They believed that if Jesus didn’t condemn her adultery, then He could not be the Messiah. But, if He did condemn her for her adultery, then the people would turn against Him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

4. Jesus does two things simultaneously. He both upholds moral **truth** (adultery is evil), and upholds the potential for **grace** and non-condemnation.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

5. The older men realized first that they had been adulterers, either physically, or mentally (Matt. 5:28). Eventually, every man leaves the scene.

¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you.” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

6. Jesus again does two things simultaneously. He upholds truth—adultery is wrong, a sin. He tells her to leave her life of sin. Truth matters. But, He also extends grace to her. He senses her remorse and repentance. She is floored by Him “standing with her, not in her sin, but as a human being who knows she sinned but is repentant. It is then that she experiences His astounding grace. It was given at great cost, as it would draw and deepen the ire of the religious leaders to eventually condemn Him to death.

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: Truth, and the resurrection

1. When Jesus ministered to people He claimed not just to know the truth, and teach the truth. He claimed to be the truth, itself.

John 14:12 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

2. Anyone can make a truth claim. The hard thing is to prove a truth claim.

3. On multiple occasions, Jesus made the following prophetic words.

Mark 8:31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

4. Anyone can claim to be arrested in the future. Anyone can claim to be rejected by the authorities. Anyone can claim that he will be killed. What anyone cannot do is not only predict His own resurrection, but the precise day of His resurrection.

5. If you had been watching Jesus' ministry, you might have scoffed at His audacity. You might have thought Him crazy or deceived to make such a wild statement. You might have written Him off as making statements like this just to gain followers.

6. Jesus was arrested, flogged, and killed on a cross. What happened after He died?

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

⁹ Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹ But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

¹² After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³ And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.

7. Jesus did prove His truth claim. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?