

## Lite-headedness

Ephesians 1:17-18; 4:22-24; 6:10-17; 1 Samuel 17:45-47; Rom. 12:1-2; Mt. 7:24-25

Six years ago, shortly after I retired from my first career,  
I worked for 18 months as a checker at Darrenkamp's Market in Elizabethtown.

I especially enjoyed interacting with people as they came through the line.  
I would look for cues in their words or manner and then prompt them to talk.  
When a husband was buying something for his wife, I would complement him.  
When a parent was interacting well with a child, I would affirm that.  
When people seemed despondent, I would encourage them.  
A few times I was able to pray with customers.  
I managed to care fairly well for people in those brief encounters.

But when they forgot to use their store card,  
I would forget to remind them; and they would miss out on discounts.  
When they came with coupons,  
I would muddle through processing their savings.  
And at the end of the shift, when I checked the amount in my money box,  
I would often be a few cents off—  
all because I was paying closer attention to *people* than to their *money*.  
Since then, Darrenkamps has closed all their stores,  
but, in my defense, I'm pretty sure Darrenkamps had bigger problems  
than my discrepancies of pennies!

In those 18 months at Darrenkamps,  
I did learn a lot about "lite" food and drinks.  
Low-fat milk was a frequent purchase.  
Diet sodas were common.  
And there were snacks marketed to protect the waistline:

Twinkies *Lights*

Klondike *Lite* ice cream bars

Orville Redenbacher's *Light* Microwave popcorn

For many people, less fat or salt or sugar or calories in food is appealing,  
no matter what other unpronounceable ingredients  
may be added to restore taste and color.

Sadly, some Christ-followers take this same approach to the Bible.  
They want a "lite" version of biblical truth.  
They want enough truth for the spiritual energy to survive,  
but not enough to be strong and courageous in the Lord.  
They have succumbed to the ailment of . . . "*Lite-headedness*."

If, at this point, you are tempted to feel guilty

because you don't you read or study your Bible enough,  
hit the "pause" button—  
Stop that tape from running through your mind.  
Listen to why biblical truth is important  
and to some manageable ways we can fill our minds with God's Word.  
Then if you want to feel guilty, fine; hit the "resume" button;  
or, better yet, decide on one or two ways to soak up more of God's Truth.

At this point, I want to take a moment  
to talk about this message series,  
that we started on March 7, the last time we met onsite at church,  
and are picking up today—called "**Affluenza and Other Ailments.**"

For the past month, and however long this lasts,  
we are rightly concerned about COVID-19;  
and we are taking great care to protect ourselves and others.

What happens when we are under pressure like this  
is that we are susceptible to spiritual ailments—  
such as grumps or anxiety or conflict.  
Often, when we deal with these spiritual ailments,  
we are in better shape to cope with external pressures like Coronavirus.  
This eight-week sermon series, mostly from *Ephesians*,  
offers biblical remedies for common spiritual ailments.  
My hope is that this message series will be timely and helpful for all of us.

Now, getting back to the ailment of lite-headedness . . .  
Jesus taught us to love the Lord our God  
with all our *heart* and *soul* and **mind** and *strength* (Mark 12:30)

The reason for this is that the renewal of our mind is essential  
to *understand*, *accept*, and *experience* the Good News of Christ crucified.

Throughout the book of *Ephesians*,  
Paul writes about revelation and knowledge and truth  
because understanding the mysteries of the Cross of Christ  
is the foundation of our salvation and transformation.

Here are four passages in *Ephesians* that emphasize the importance of God's truth.  
The first comes immediately in the opening poem of praise, *Ephesians* 1:7-9.

In [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our  
trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all  
wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will . . .

When the basic truths of the gospel are clear to us, we can be sure of our salvation; we can *know* that, by the riches of God's grace, we are forgiven!

Further, it is the knowledge of God in Christ, that activates our *hope* in the rich benefits of following Jesus. Paul prays in chapter 1, verses 17-18:

[I pray that God] . . . may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the *hope* to which he has called you, what are the *riches of his glorious inheritance* in the saints . . .

**And** when we are *made new in the attitude of our mind* we take an essential *step* in becoming like Jesus. In Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul writes:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; *to be made new in the attitude of your minds*; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

And in chapter 6, verses 10-17, to be safe when we encounter *temptation* and *attacks* by the devil, we must rely on the Truth of God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. . . Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth . . . In addition to all this, take up . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

*Not only* is there a *recurring emphasis* on truth in the book of Ephesians, *the whole book is structured* around the *essential connection* between gospel truth and living for Jesus.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul introduces the great truths that undergird our life in Christ, the foundational convictions that comprise the "good news" about Jesus. In the second half of the book, chapters 4-6, Paul describes what these truths mean for our conduct or lifestyle with a comprehensive description of a good, upright, moral, and fulfilling life.

*But* without the good news first half of the book, the second half is just *good advice*, one more self-help book among hundreds of others, available on Amazon, that suggest what we can do, on our own, to attain a good life.

In *Ephesians*, Paul is not offering *one more path to good behavior*. He is presenting the gospel, in chapters one to three, the Good News that enables us—by God’s *grace and power*—to live a *radically transformed lifestyle*, as described in chapters four to six.

## David

To illustrate the impact of truth on our day-to-day living, you may remember my message about David, back in November.

When Goliath challenged any warrior in the Israelite army to “single combat.” he was expecting hand-to-hand combat at close range, where he could stand, immobile, warding off blows with his state-of-the-art armor and defeating his adversary with mighty trusts of his spear.

David came with a slingshot, knowing he could put a stone into the pouch, swing it around in increasingly faster circles, and hurl the stone forward—from a distance!—at 75 miles per hour, roughly the force of a .45 caliber handgun.

From a *human* perspective, the decisive factor in David’s victory was a brilliant shift in strategy.

But the decisive factor, more important than speed and surprise was that David had a firm grasp on the truth about God.

The Israelite army, including King Saul, had a “lite” and inadequate understanding of God. They were intimidated by the towering giant because they thought they would be fighting Goliath in their own strength. *Only David*, among the thousands of soldiers on either side of the valley, Philistine or Israelite, understood the **nature** and **power** of the Lord God Almighty! Listen to what he said to Goliath, before the combat ever started:

“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not by sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord’s and he will give you into our hand.” (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

David’s sure and certain knowledge of the Lord gave him *faith* and *confidence* and *courage*. Yes, he was skilled and accurate with a slingshot.

Yes, he used the tactic of surprise and speed.  
 But he accepted the challenge of fighting Goliath *in the first place*  
 because he was *certain* of the outcome.  
 David knew the truth that the battle was the Lord's—  
 that the Lord God Almighty would defeat Goliath and the Philistines!

With all the ways that we benefit from knowing God's Truth,  
 how can we gain a fuller understanding of biblical truth for ourselves?  
 What are the meds for Bible "Lite"?  
 What is the remedy for "Lite-headedness"?

**First**, for a *weekly dose* of God's Word—as *strong medicine* for lite-headedness—we gather for worship on Sunday, whether onsite or by Zoom.

We come to hear preaching,  
 for creative presentations—like Zeke, the puppet—for our children,  
 and for practical teaching for our youth group.  
 Our aim is to offer a solid, balanced, nutritious diet of biblical truth for all ages.

**Second**, for a *time-release capsule* of truth, we can **read the Bible** regularly.

If you are already established in a good practice of personal devotions,  
 that is, if you have a normal time and place and pattern to read your Bible and pray,  
 don't change what you are doing.

But if you don't, let me suggest the *Moravian Daily Texts*.  
 This small book is probably the most widely-read devotional guide in the world.  
 Each day there are three manageable scripture readings:  
 one in the *psalms*, one in the *OT*, and one in the *NT*,  
 along with two verses, and a prayer.  
 The Bible readings move through the psalms in a year  
 and the rest of the Bible in *two years*—so the pace is manageable.

For the daily emails I was sending in the six weeks leading up to Easter,  
 I drew from several sources, but most days I took two verses from the *Daily Texts*.

**Third**, for a *steady regimen* of truth meds,  
 we can participate in a **small group**.  
 This could be a gathering of 6-12 persons, like our Connecting Groups.  
 a smaller group of three, a triad,  
 or a one-to-one accountability partner—whatever works best for you.  
 At this point I want to insert a word for introverts.  
 Churches tend to a comfortable place for extroverts,  
 because we do things together—in groups of various sizes.

Connie and I are both introverts;  
 our relational batteries are recharged by being alone or with one another.  
 For over 25 years our version of a small group  
 has been the smallest possible, another person as an accountability partner.  
 Last year, we moved outside our comfort zone  
 to host a small group that meets in our home twice a month;  
 and on Wednesday evenings, I began to meet with a group of five men.  
 To our surprise, we have been continually refreshed and renewed in these groups.

However we meet with other believers, in a *pair* or *triad* or *small group*,  
 Close-up interaction is an invaluable way to grow  
 in our understanding and experience of God's truth.

**Fourth**, for an *effective supplement* of truth, we can **study** the Bible.

Above and beyond what we learn at church,  
 in our growth group, and in our personal devotions,  
 we can read and study the Bible on our own.

One of many Bible study tools available  
 is a new online resource called the Bible Project.  
 with line drawings and videos and podcasts for in-depth Bible study.  
 It is a good resource for youth and adults alike.

In the email I sent this morning,  
 there are links to the resources I'm naming in this message.

**Fifth**, for a full *vaccination* of Truth, we can **memorize** portions of the Bible.

The week before Easter we had the opportunity  
 to watch an online drama by Piercing Word, called "*Passion, the Musical*"—  
 a dramatic and musical presentation memorized *word-for-word* from the Bible.

We have to work at memorization.  
 It takes time and repetition.  
 But once we have locked a portion of God's truth into our mind,  
 it becomes a belt of protection around our waist,  
 a shield to protect us from the darts of the devil  
 and a sword to defend ourselves when we are tempted.

To sum up,  
 a "lite" version of God's truth is not enough.  
 If we settle for Bible "lite," we can be afflicted by doubts, weakness, and fear.

The remedy is soak up the truth in God's Word.  
To do this, we come to worship on Sunday morning.  
We can we read the Bible;  
we can participate in a small group;  
we can study the Bible;  
and we can memorize portions of Scripture,  
In any or all of these ways, we can immerse ourselves in the Word of God.

This *establishes* us in the Good News of Christ crucified.  
*transforms* us by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1-2),  
*enables* us to *step out* in faith and courage like David.  
and *holds us steady* in our faith in Jesus.

Sure, all of us could do better.  
If you want to feel guilty, now is the time to hit the "resume" button.  
Better yet, decide on one or two manageable ways to absorb more of God's Truth.

When we hear the words of Jesus and put them into practice  
we are like a wise man who builds his house on the rock.  
The rain *will* come down, the streams will rise,  
the winds will blow and beat against our house (at times),  
but we will not fall apart . . . because our life is built on the *bedrock of truth!*  
(Matthew 7:24-25)

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April 19, 2020