

Bible and the Headlines: Defining Truth

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With Christmas fast approaching, many folks are conducting a frantic search for the perfect gift. A frenetic search of a different kind is being chronicled in the headlines. The object of this search is 'truth.' If it could be gift-wrapped and left under the tree it would be the best present for the people in these stories.

The Times of Israel on December 5th featured, "Truth Is Lost. We Must Find It to Survive." The blogger who contributed the piece was reacting to deceptive social media reports claiming to originate from Gaza but created half a world away. These false statements then get reprinted by small media outlets and, "Once they reach the New York Times, CNN, and the BBC under the familiar disclaimer 'sources in Gaza say...' the lie had already been laundered into legitimacy." The writer believes this subterfuge, "... is not journalism but social engineering."

Savannah's NBC-affiliate WSAV on December 7th announced, "Family Heartbroken, Searching For Truth In Brother's Death." The article recounts the mysterious death of a Mexican national who resided in Georgia. The man disappeared while celebrating Thanksgiving. His body was found behind a bar near his home. According to his family, "[D]etectives mentioned hypothermia and drowning as possible causes, but the brothers find that hard to believe." His siblings hope autopsy results will reveal the truth about their brother's demise.

On December 8th, New York public radio station WAMC broadcast, "A Word that Sets Apart Propagandists from Truth-Tellers." This opinion piece is built around the word 'ultracrepidarian' which is defined as, "A person who expresses opinions on matters outside the scope of their knowledge or expertise." Journalists holding opposing political views from the author are labeled 'ultracrepidarian,' while reporters sympathetic to the commentator are 'truth-tellers.' Despite the highly partisan nature of the article it does contain a valid assertion, "There is an essential humility in good reporting, revealed in the struggle to find what's true, rather than what's simply sensational or popular." If only the author had applied the principle to himself.

The search for truth is a constant theme in the Bible. Psalm 25 implores God, "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior" (v.5). When Jesus was on trial for his life, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:8). Sadly Pilate then leaves Jesus and is swayed by public opinion (John 19:15-16). As the writer for WAMC in the previous paragraph insinuated and Pilate demonstrated, public opinion (popularity) leads to the death of truth. Too bad for Jesus that He once said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Public opinion had Truth crucified.

Before he died, Jesus promised to give the gift of truth to his followers. Jesus told them, "When he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). This is a better gift than anything Santa Claus could bring.