

## Truth We Cannot Handle

John 6:4-15

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### Prayer

Father, it feels like we live in a world just packed with broken hearts. It's a prison. Sometimes, Lord God, it feels like we're rotting here and so we want to be free. We want you to free us, and so Lord God would you send your Spirit and would you help us to preach? Set us free Lord God, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Clip from *A Few Good Men*

Kaffee: Colonel? Lieutenant Kendrick ordered the Code Red, didn't he? Because *that's* what you told Lieutenant Kendrick to do.  
Ross: Object!  
Kaffee: And when it went bad...  
Judge: [*interrupting*] That'll be all councilor.  
Kaffee: [*finishing*] ...you cut these guys loose!  
Ross: [*interrupting*] Your Honor!  
Judge: [*interrupting*] Councilor, I'll hold you in contempt!  
Kaffee: You had Markinson sign a phony transfer order.  
Ross: [*interrupting*] You Honor!  
Kaffee: ...and you doctored the log books.  
Ross: Damn it, Kaffee!  
Kaffee: And now I'm asking you!  
Judge: Consider yourself in contempt!  
Kaffee: Colonel Jessep, did you order the Code Red?!  
Judge: You don't have to answer that question!  
Jessep: I'll answer the question. You want answers?  
Kaffee: I think I'm entitled.  
Jessep: *You want answers?!*  
Kaffee: *I want the truth!*  
Jessep: *YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!* Son, we live in a world that has walls, and those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who's gonna do it? *You? You*, Lieutenant Weinberg? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom! You weep for Santiago and you curse the Marines. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know: that Santiago's death, while tragic, probably saved lives. And my existence, while *grotesque* and *incomprehensible* to you, *saves lives!* You don't want the truth because deep down in places you don't talk about at parties, you *want* me on that wall! You *need* me on that wall! *YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!*

"You can't handle the truth!" That's Jack Nicolson playing Colonel Jessep in *A Few Good Men*, and he thinks he's saving lives. The lawyer, played by Tom Cruise, thinks he is saving lives. At a certain point in the trial, Colonel Jessep just yells, "You can't handle the truth." In a minute, he won't be able to handle the truth. Perhaps none of us can handle the truth. It's an iconic line, and I kept thinking about it this week. It turns out that Jesus said it first.

John 16:12

*"I still have many things to say to you," says Jesus, "but you cannot bear them now."* Then He starts talking about the Spirit of Truth. What are the things that they could not bear? What is the truth that we cannot handle?

It's Mother's Day and Jesus addressed the disciples as little children. So, what do mothers not tell little children because it's just too much for them to bear?

Number one, bad things, right? We don't let the kids watch scary movies or the 10 o'clock news. Little children just cannot bear the knowledge of evil, and sometimes the knowledge of good. That's number two.

Susan and I often didn't tell our children good things like: "On Monday we're going to the zoo." Or "When spring comes we're taking you to Disney World. They wouldn't be able to go to sleep, and they'd go insane with longing.

Some news was just too good to bear.  
Some gifts were just too good to handle.

I discovered this amazing reality: the better the gifts on Christmas morning, the worse the fighting all day. We have four children, and the greater the gifts, the greater the insecurity: "Do mom and dad love me most or them most?"

Sometimes we got them just one big present, like a punching bag or a trampoline—one big gift to share, perhaps a ball, or a game to share and that was a crisis, because each wanted to possess the game, but unless you share the game, the game's no fun because that's the name of the game—playing with someone.

Last time we talked about the name of the game, and I suggested that maybe it's not beating your neighbor but loving your neighbor. Vince Lombardi said that's what makes a great football team—guys that love each other.

So one guy's strength complements another guy's weakness and vice versa, and in the process, you sometimes beat a common foe and humanity has a common foe, not flesh and blood, but evil.

I used to play games in the basement with my kids. We'd play foursquare, basketball, or just pass the ball. Well, we'd be having fun and someone would pass the ball to Coleman—he's my youngest, and he would get so excited that he had the ball that he'd keep it, and run away with it, and sit in a corner. If we took it from him, he'd get mad or cry so sometimes we'd just let him have it and we'd do something else. He'd run to his corner and sit there with the ball. What seemed like ecstasy only a few minutes earlier turned into of boring piece of plastic a few minutes later. The joy isn't in the ball. But passing the ball, that's the name of the game—Love.

Well what if your house is like that ball? What if your house, your car, your income, your skills, your talents, your gifts, your life, your knowledge, your goodness, even your faith—what if it's all like that plastic ball? Your gifts and strengths are meant to complement another's weaknesses, and if you hang onto them, it's death. But if you

share them, if you pass them, you begin to experience life, even ecstasy, and I mean ecstasy.

We were talking about truth that we cannot handle, and parents usually guard little children from, the knowledge of

1. The really bad things
2. The really good things
3. Sex, which can be bad or really good—ecstatic sex...

Where two bodies are bound in a sacrament guarded by a covenant,  
Where two become one flesh,  
Where a fullness fills an emptiness and an emptiness invites a fullness,  
Where difference isn't a threat or a curse but a promise and a blessing,  
Where life is made, fruit is born, communion in a temple.

That's a truth that we cannot bear when we're four years old.

Our bodies, minds, and hearts, our temples have not yet been prepared for such communion.

Maybe we're born again as children, but being prepared in this world for a communion—a communion greater than our wildest imaginations.

John 6:15: It's Jesus' last night with His disciples, and He says:

*"I did not say these things to you (remember we talked about it last week, about being hated by the world) I did not say them to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away."*

Remember, He goes away to prepare a place that turns out to be us.  
We are His temple.

*"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."*

"The Helper."

God said to Adam, *"I will make a helper fit for you."*

Well, it turns out we, all of us, are the Bride and Jesus is the *Eschatos* Adam, the Bridegroom, the Helper fit for us. Jesus is our Helper. And in the last chapter, He said He's gonna send another Helper, His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit.

Now when I say "Holy Spirit," I've found that people start to freak out and get all insecure. They think about people shakin', and TV preachers, and people getting all worked up about gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes that the one Spirit gave different gifts to each member of the body to complement and complete the rest. And yet no sooner than the Spirit gives them, that we tend to want to possess them. We start fighting over them and form denominations around each one of them. It's like we can't handle the gifts of the Spirit.

But let me ask you this question: What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Makin' people shake, doing cool tricks on TV shows etc.? The Spirit *can* do and *does* do all of that, but what's the work of the Holy Spirit?

In John 16:7-13, Jesus says,

*If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict (Convict can also be translated convict or even expose) the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged (present tense, is judged). I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (You cannot "handle the truth now.") When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth (or all the truth).*

What's the truth we can't handle? Well He says, *"The Spirit of Truth will convict (or convince) the world, the world concerning sin."*

Maybe that's a truth that we really can't handle. We block it out—the reality of evil.



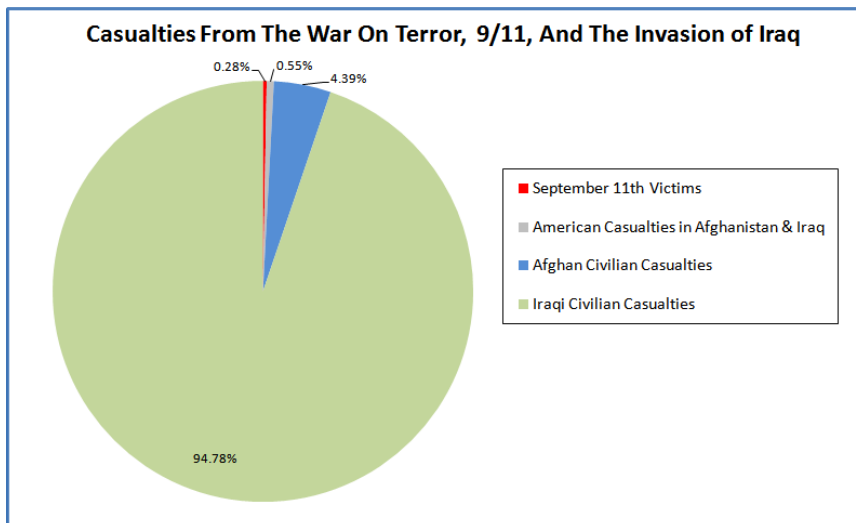
Osama Bin Laden murdered 2,977 civilians on September 11, 2001, and we now know that he was plotting the death of many, many, many more. I'm glad that he's dead. And something in us tells us that he should be dead, he must be dead. That evil should be utterly, completely annihilated and destroyed.

This is the cover of the New York Daily News last week. “Rot in Hell.” I was listening to a New York City policeman or fireman being interviewed on the radio. He said something like: “We hope he rots in hell.” I get that. Bin Laden broke that man’s heart, and now he wants to tear Bin Laden’s world apart: “Rot in Hell.” And I suspect that he is rotting in Sheol, Hades, Tehom, the Deep, because that’s where the Navy dumped his body, into the deep. He’s literally rotting in the deep.

You see? Hell is an English word, which really has no biblical equivalent. But according to Scripture, it’s likely that Osama Bin Laden is rotting in Hades. And one day he will be exposed to the Eternal, Consuming Fire, the Judgment of God, the slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. What exactly happens then is a bit beyond us, but you can rest assured in this: All evil will be utterly, completely, absolutely destroyed by our God.

What is evil? It is *not* Love, *not* feeling for another, a lack of compassion, a lack of passion for another.

Check this out:



This is a graph showing the relative number of civilian casualties in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the U.S. since the morning of September 11, 2001.

Now you should research this; the statistics vary between something like a couple one hundred thousand to 2 million. This graph uses a figure of a little over 1 million civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11.

- The green and blue represent the number of civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan due to our “War on Terror.”
- The red represents the 2,977 civilians who died on 9/11.
- The number represented by the green and blue is over three hundred times the number represented by the red.

Please hear me: I do not know what earthly governments should do. I don't. And you can debate the statistics, the numbers, but no matter what statistics you use, I find this to be a truth rather hard to handle.

You might say, "Al Qaeda started it with the death of 3,000 innocent civilians." They might say, "No! Israel, Britain, and the United States started it with the death and exile of millions of innocent Palestinians." Israel would say, "We didn't start it, Germany started it with the death of 6 million innocent Jews." And Germany might say, "Well, I'm sorry, but we lost 2.5 million innocent civilians in World War I, and you all shafted us at the Treaty of Versailles."

And we could just keep going back and back and back through history doing the same thing until you arrived at two brothers, Cain and Abel. And you know who they'd blame? Their mom! Happy Mother's Day, Eve!

With one noteworthy exception, it turns out that there are no innocent victims and that's why we will all die and should die. And it's not just the extent of evil, but the quality of evil.

Over the last several years, I have really been utterly traumatized, praying for three or four women I know that were raised in systems or families, covens of satanic ritual abuse. Time and time again I've complained to God about these families and covens and systems saying, "God, why didn't you just kill them all?" And often, as you know, in the Old Testament, He did. Whole societies saturated with demonic oppression, rape, child sacrifice were "devoted to destruction." But the greatest mystery is why all were not devoted to destruction? Why not destroy all?

You know I've listened to demons manifest and speak lies, and then in horror realize that I've lived my life by some of those very same lies. And like those evil men in those places, I'm trapped in that same body of flesh. You see, my flesh feels only its own its own passions—pain and pleasures. My flesh literally feeds on the failure of others. My flesh must be destroyed. Saint Paul wrote, "*Flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*" All the prophets agree, it will be destroyed and the earth consumed by fire. The knowledge of evil, that we are totally depraved, that we are bad, that's just a truth very hard to handle.

But Jesus says, "*The Spirit will convince the world concerning sin that they do not believe in me and concerning righteousness because I go to the Father.*"

We see the bad in us when we see the good that is Jesus. And when we see Jesus, the Good, the righteousness of Christ is just overwhelming.

Jesus is so good that  
On the cross He makes Himself last so that we would be first.  
On His tree, He bears the sins of the entire world.  
On the tree, He chooses to feel every sorrow ever born,  
                                bear every wound ever inflicted,  
                                suffer every punishment ever earned by every sin ever committed.  
On the tree, He chooses to love, absolutely, it's His passion.

It's the righteousness of Christ, the offering accepted by the Father, so the Father raised Him from the dead.

1. How bad we are. 2. How good Jesus is.

That's a truth, we just can't handle.

1. How bad we are. 2. How good Jesus is. 3. How great is the Judgment of God.

John has revealed that Jesus Christ and Him crucified *is* the Judgment of this world, which casts out the ruler of the world. The Judgment—that is the slaughtered Lamb, standing on the throne.

Jesus is the sin offering.

He's the sin offering, He's the scapegoat that takes away the sins of the world.  
Jesus is the spotless Lamb.  
He's the perfect offering,  
and He gives His righteousness to you,  
which is your offering to the Father.  
He takes your evil and He gives to you His good.

That's His Judgment, which destroys the evil and replaces it with good.

So...

In the very place of Simon the coward, Jesus creates Peter the rock.  
In the very place of Saul, the Pharisee, Jesus creates Paul, the apostle of Christ.”  
And he writes, *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”*

Now, if you had been tortured or imprisoned by Saul, if your family was murdered by Saul, I'm sure this would be a truth very hard to handle: God's Judgment of Grace that destroys the "*works of the devil.*" Jesus "*came to destroy the works of the devil,*" says John, not preserve the works of the devil in some kind of underground torture chamber. No, He destroys the work of the devil at His cross.

George McDonald wrote this, “Annihilation itself is no death to evil. Only good where evil was, is evil dead. An evil thing must live with its evil until it chooses to be good. That alone is the slaying of evil.” ...When it chooses to be good.

Well, how can we, who are evil, choose to be good? Jesus just said, *"You didn't choose me, I chose you to bear fruit."* That is make good choices: faith, hope, and love.

On the cross, He delivers up His Spirit, which is sent into your heart, crying, *“Abba, Father.”* That’s the good choice. Paul writes, “As two become one flesh, we become one spirit with Christ.”

Listen to this again: The Spirit will convince the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. If you’re convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, you’re saved. Saved by *“grace through faith and this faith not of yourselves. It’s the gift of God.”* God is salvation. The name of Jesus literally means, “God is salvation.” God is salvation. That’s a truth we just can’t seem to handle, but maybe it can handle us. Maybe it is handling us. In fact, that’s the work of the Holy Spirit—convincing the world to believe the truth.

That’s the Spirit’s work and not our work. As soon as we think it’s our work, we produce an inquisition or a crusade or an Osama Bin Laden or a Saul of Tarsus. See, I testify to the truth. I testify to the truth, but the truth does the saving. When we control the truth, when we handle the truth, we end up crucifying the truth, just like the Pharisees. Just like those Roman centurions. So, the truth is hard to bear.

But check this out: The truth bears us.

The truth bears all things, believes all things.

I don’t think a lie is a thing.

The truth bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things,

endures all things,

And Jesus is the Truth. And he bears me.

God is salvation and not just my salvation or our salvation, and I suspect that this is what the disciples just could not bear to hear that night. That night when the Pharisees plotted against Jesus and the Roman centurions sharpened their spears and cut wood for crosses Jesus said (vs 12), *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”*

Yet Jesus just said, *“All that I’ve heard from my Father, I’ve made known to you.”* So see, He’s told them this stuff, it just hasn’t sunk in. The Spirit of Truth will make it sink in. Actually, we have a record of it sinking in. It’s called the Book of Acts.

In Acts 2, the Spirit falls on the church and all these foreigners are just amazed that they hear the gospel spoken in their own language. Then Peter stands up and quotes the prophet Joel as if the last day is happening. He says, “God is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh”—ALL flesh!

In Acts 8, Peter is shocked that the Spirit falls on Samaritans. Do you remember the Samaritans? Remember Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.

In Acts 9, A sinner, a sinner worse than Osama Bin Laden, the “chief of sinners,” is converted and filled with the Spirit. The church can’t even believe it without miraculous help from the Holy Spirit. The man was a Pharisee of Pharisees who literally terrorized the early church with persecution and death. His name was Saul, but you know him as Paul, the guy who wrote the Bible.



Acts 10 and 11, the Spirit forces Peter to then go to Caesarea (that literally means Caesar Town), and there he witnesses the Holy Spirit fall on a Roman Centurion and all his household, before they're even baptized, before they even said the sinner's prayer, before they even signed up for Sunday school. A Roman Centurion...Now remember, Peter had seen these guys rape his country, crucify his best friend, and probably crucify scores of others that he loved. And a voice says, "*Peter, what God has cleansed you must not call common.*"

In Acts 15, the early church holds the Jerusalem Council because they are trying to figure out what to do with all these heathen Gentiles that are becoming Christ followers. And James stands up and he quotes Amos: "*It is written I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David.*" That's Jesus and us, His body. "*I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord.*"

In John 16:12 Jesus says,

*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

"*All that the Father has is mine.*" The Spirit will take what is mine (which is all that the Father has) and declare it to you. Did you hear that? I read a bunch of commentaries this week, and all of them just kinda glossed over these verses like they just couldn't bear it. God has all things and He gives them to Jesus and the Spirit declares them to us.

Paul writes to the Corinthians telling them to stop fighting over spiritual gifts and their separate little factions: "*Let no one boast of men, for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or the present, or the future. All are yours. And you are Christ's and Christ is God's.*"

See? The Spirit is revealing the truth: "*All things are yours.*" That's hard for us to handle because we get one little gift and like Coleman, sittin' in the corner with his little ball, we take it to the corner and we turn it into hell, because we haven't learned "The name of the game"—Love.

Perhaps a person could receive all things and enjoy no thing because they haven't learned the name of the game—Love—that is Grace.

Perhaps the Spirit comes to give us the capacity to enjoy all things, gives us faith in grace. And so yeah, the Spirit gives gifts but the greatest gift is Jesus—God is salvation.

But Jesus is not a gift I can simply keep to myself while still enjoying the game. The joy is in giving Christ and receiving Christ—offering Grace and receiving Grace like body parts constantly offer blood and receive blood, one from another—offer life and receive life.

Paul writes, *"We are the Body of Christ and individual members thereof."* Each part owns the whole. Each part feels the pain of all. And each part feels the pleasure of all. Yet a healthy body feels no pain, only pleasure because it's one.

On the cross, Jesus bore the pain of every broken and severed member of His body. And then delivered up His Spirit, which makes us one, which makes us healthy and whole. My flesh feels only its own pain, and my flesh only feels its own pleasure, but in heaven just maybe, perhaps, I'll feel your pleasure and all pleasure. Can you imagine?

The sheer pleasure of tasting, like, eight billion cheeseburgers all at once. Wow! Awesome!! Or the joy of experiencing four billion honeymoons all at once. The joy of every bride surrendered to her groom. The joy of every sinner believing Grace, the ecstasy of every empty longing filled with Love.

You know the Bible ends with this incredible picture that is way more than a picture. It's the bride at her wedding banquet, ready for her groom. We are the Bride and Jesus is the Groom. And that's a truth that the immature find rather hard to handle.

Well anyway Jesus says, *"All the Father has is mine."* In the next chapter, in John 17:2, Jesus prays, *"Father, you have given me authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given me."* And Jesus just said, *"All that the father has is mine."*

Do you realize that all those people in the Old Testament that were *"devoted to destruction"* (*choram*) were in fact offered to God as a burnt sacrifice sacred and holy to Him. That's what the word *choram* means. They were offered to God and so they're God's and then according to this Scripture, they are given to Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life.

The prophets say, *"God will destroy all and remake all."* (See Zephaniah 3 and Isaiah 66) It happens on the *"Day of the Lord."* It happens at the cross.

One day, every person must face Jesus and His cross.

Every person must face the tree...

Where evil is destroyed.

Where Good is given us as a gift.

Where we come to know the Judgment of God—Grace.

*"All that the Father has is mine. The Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

Would that include Osama Bin Laden?

That may be a truth we just can't handle right now. You know, if it does include Osama Bin Laden, he won't be the same. He'll have a new heart, and a new spirit, and he won't be able to stop talking about Jesus—God is Salvation.

*"All that the Father has"...*

Would that include Osama Bin Laden?



And yeah, one last little thing, Jesus said, *"The measure you give is the measure you receive."* That maybe is why some of us feel sometimes like we're kinda just rotting in hell. Well, here's the good news: *"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."*

### **Communion**

For on the night that the Truth was delivered up by us, Jesus from the bosom of the Father—the very heart of God, took bread and He broke it saying, *"This is my body broken for you. Take and eat and do it in remembrance of me."* And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and said, *"This cup is the New Covenant, the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me."*

In the morning, He would be enthroned.

In the morning, He would be lifted up on His cross...

Where He would cry out *"It is Finished!"*

And then He would breathe His last.

And as John puts it: "deliver up His Spirit"—His Spirit...

Which would descend into His people, crying: *"Abba Father"*—the good choice.

In Jesus' Name believe the gospel and live.

Dark cups are wine, light cups are juice. They are both the love of God poured out for you. We invite you to come forward, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup, and as you do, would you pray this prayer? Let's just pray it together. If you can with a mustard seed of faith. We're gonna ask the Spirit of truth to fill us:

*"In the Name of Jesus, Spirit of Truth, fall on us, fill us, in Jesus' Name Amen."*

And so that is our prayer. Spirit of Truth, fall afresh on us. Jesus you are the Truth. Holy Spirit you are the Spirit of Truth, and we are your sanctuary. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

### **Benediction**

So let me sum up. Old Testament—You can't handle the truth.

New Testament, The Truth is handling you.

You will know the Truth.

And the Truth will set you free.

And the Spirit of truth will declare all things to you.

So you see, the Truth is your friend. I know it hurts sometimes, but the Truth is your friend. So, that means everyday maybe you ought to surrender yourself to the Truth. Expose yourself to the Truth and just say, "God, I'm just not very good. I'm bad. Oh, but Jesus you're good and so judge me, save me, redeem me. Cut out the bad and fill it with the Good and create me in your image—the image of Truth."

In Jesus' name, believe the gospel, invite the gospel, and live the gospel! Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*