

'TRUE FOR YOU, BUT NOT FOR ME'?**By Fritz Klumpp**

“True for you, but not for me”? I was stunned that the fellow airline pilot I was speaking with could possibly believe that truth was subjective, simply based upon what one feels is right. How could an airline captain make such a statement, knowing his life as well as the lives of his passengers were dependent on his ability to make correct decisions based on absolute truth?

Often, as when dealing with an in-flight emergency or when flying on instruments during a low-visibility approach, there is absolutely no room for error. Nonetheless, I have found people like that commercial pilot are not the exception. We live in a world where more people than not believe there are no absolute truths, that everything is relative and subject to individual interpretation.

Years ago, my friend, Col. Nimrod McNair, said: “Fritz, the principles of business the Harvard Graduate School of Business teaches that actually work are scripturally based,” teachings we find in the Bible. He went on to explain that it did not necessarily mean the administrators and faculty of the Harvard Graduate School understood that. Nimrod also noted that they teach many principles that do not work.

Nonetheless, Nimrod said, “truth is truth, no matter where you find it,” and if anyone applies those principles, they should expect certain results. I have never forgotten my friend’s words – and over the years, by observation, I have put his premise to the test.

For 30 years I worked for a company that I believed had been blessed with good management. In time, I realized their success could be attributed to the fact they operated on three basic principles; stay out of debt; take care of your people; and take care of your customer. Whether they knew it or not, each one of these principles is biblical.

For instance, Proverbs 22:7 in the Bible’s Old Testament states, “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” If you avoid debt, individually or corporately, you have the freedom to use your financial resources in the best ways possible, without being restricted by a creditor.

Another passage from Proverbs observes, “Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds, for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations.... [If you take care of them] you will have plenty of goats’ milk to feed you and your family and to nourish your servant girls” (Proverbs 27:23-27). The principle here is that if you take proper care of your people, they will take care of you.

Unfortunately, the last CEO before my retirement changed course. As he systematically abandoned these principles, the fortunes of the company fell, eventually leading the company into bankruptcy.

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When asked by Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, if He was a king, Jesus of Nazareth replied, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." Sadly, to this Pilate simply replied, "What is truth?" (John 18:37-38).

Once again, "Truth is truth, no matter where you find it." I can honestly say most of the failures and grief I have experienced in business and my personal life can be attributed to violating principles and precepts that are either clearly stated or taught by example from the Scriptures.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you respond to someone who said, "That may be true for you, but not for me"? Do you agree with the concept that truth is subjective, dependent upon an individual's own perspectives and convictions? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever considered the importance and impact of believing there is absolute truth when determining whether something is true or not? What reference do you use in defining what is true?
3. What would be your reaction if you encountered a professional whose work is dependent upon precision, such as an airline pilot, a construction engineer or a brain surgeon, who did not believe in the existence of absolute truth?
4. Applying the concept of absolute, non-subjective truth to matters of faith, how do you think we should respond to the truths presented in the Bible? Is there room for subjective interpretation and application? Explain your answer.

Challenge for This Week

This week might be a good time for revisiting your attitude toward truth, especially as it relates to how you conduct your everyday life. Do you adjust your perception of truth depending on the circumstances of the moment, which has sometimes been called "situational ethics"?

It might be interesting to engage with another person at work, or a small group that you're a part of, to get their perspectives on what they believe about truth and how they go about determining what is true.

NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:
Psalm 51:6, 119:43-45; John 8:31-32, 14:15-17, 16:13; 2 Corinthians 1:12-13

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