

Heartburn  
January 6, 2013

Have you seen the commercial where the man and woman are talking on the sidewalk about what smart phone apps are available from his insurance company. She says, "I heard they didn't have any apps." He asks, "Where'd you hear that?" She answers, "The internet. They can't put anything on the internet that isn't true." He asks, "Where'd you hear that?" She answers, "The internet."

This little fiction points to a problem in our modern world. There is too much information and too little truth. While there is a lot of information in the world, much of it is opinions, not facts. Much of what we read on the internet is just opinions. Even newspaper and magazine articles, while purporting to be news about facts, is often mixed with a lot of opinions about those facts. The writers don't differentiate between the facts and their opinions. They don't start opinion statements by writing, "I can't prove this, but this is what I believe." Instead, they present their beliefs, their opinions, as facts.

One of the problems of modern life is deciding what is true. Having newspapers, TV, and the internet haven't made us more informed about truth. We're just more informed about opinions of truth. We need to keep that in mind as we read these things. Opinions are easy to come by. Finding truth is a lot harder.

We need truth in order to live our lives successfully. We need truth to build our lives on. We need truth as we set life goals for our future. We need truth to decide what to do today to get where we want to be tomorrow.

For example, what is the best diet for losing weight? Some people say to eat mainly carbs. Some say to quit eating white foods. Some say to eat mainly meats and fats. Some say not to eat meats at all. You can find people who argue passionately for each option, and against the others.

Why are opinions so varied about truth? One reason is that most of us decide what to believe based on things other than facts. As you dig into where people's opinions come from, you will find, I believe, that many are based, not on facts, but on things that include that person's personal experiences, other beliefs they hold, their values, their prejudices, what they heard said by people they respect, and more.

For example, in the recent elections there were six people running for president. All of them talked about making different changes in order to fix the country. The changes they wanted to make depended on their view of what the government should be and do.

One person believes in small government. So his solutions involved making the government smaller.

Another's highest ideal is that the government should meet the social needs of our day. This would require a large social services organization in the government, so he proposed making the federal government bigger and spending more money.

Another candidate stands on the Constitution. He proposed cutting the federal government back to doing only what is mentioned for it in the Constitution. This would mean having the government cease doing some of the things it does now.

The candidate's opinions about what choices to make depended, in part, on their view of role of the federal government. All make some sense. But which one is best?

We face the same kind of dilemma when it comes to religion, even one particular religion, say, Christianity. Take any basic Christian teaching and you will find more than one interpretation of its meaning. You will find people who hold to each interpretation.

Take baptism for instance. Baptists hold to believers baptism, which rules out infant baptism. But there are many genuine Christians who hold to infant baptism.

So, how do we decide what is true? Even when it comes to interpreting what is in the Bible, how do we decide which interpretation of a passage or teaching is correct?

First, let me warn you not to accept as truth what I or some other preacher says, simply because we preach it. A preacher may sound genuinely sincere and passionate about what he believes, but that doesn't make him right. Passion can be genuine, but the belief be wrong. Passion can also be faked.

Nor should you accept as truth what someone famous says about God. People like Billy Graham, John Piper, Page Patterson, Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and others can be wrong. No one has all the answers. I believe that everybody is wrong some of the time.

Nor should you simply accept as truth what your parents, grandparents, or someone else you respect has to say. That person may walk closely with God, but that does not mean they are infallible in what they believe.

Nor should you simply accept as truth what comes out of the denomination, or a denominational publishing house. It has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo interpretations.

So where should you turn to learn what is true? Who should you listen to in order to decide what to believe? What help is there in discovering truth about God and how He wants us to live?

I encourage you to look to God Himself. Our passage this morning is in Luke 24. This takes place on Easter Sunday, the day that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to some of His followers.

**Luke 24:13-32 (NIV)** Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Now that is the kind of heartburn I want. I have had that heartburn on many occasions. It is a joyful experience. It is an experience with the living God. It confirms my connection with Him. And it points me to the righteous life He wants me to live with Him.

This experience of spiritual heartburn is what I seek for you. I want you to know the joy of this heartburn as God reveals spiritual truth to your heart and mind.

I urge you to seek to know the truth in all matters that pertain to your life with God in Jesus Christ. I urge you to **Seek the heartburn of God-revealed truth.**

This heartburn experience is the revealing and convicting work of the Holy Spirit. This is part of what the Spirit is put in you to do. And as with most things of the Spirit, it occurs most often in those quiet moments of prayer.

I spend time each morning in prayer and Bible reading. I urge you to adopt such an appointment with God each day. First thing in the morning works best for me. Maybe another time of day would work best for you. But I urge you to establish this habit in your life. It is the one of the chief things God has used to grow me as a Christian. This experience with God is the most important part of my day. It is also the most enjoyable.

In my morning prayer time I read the Bible and pray. I am working my way through the Bible, a bit each day. Much of what I read is clear. Its meaning is clear and straightforward. But some passages I puzzle over because its meaning is unclear. This is when I need further help from God. So I'll ask God to reveal its meaning.

Sometimes He speaks its meaning that day, as I ponder and mull over the questions. Suddenly its meaning comes into my mind. Its meaning is clear. I have a sense in my

heart that this understanding is true. That inner conviction of truth by the Holy Spirit is the heartburn the two men spoke of. They heard passages they were familiar with, but heard an interpretation that finally made sense of all the passages about the Messiah. This excited them and brought them joy. They described this experience as "our hearts burned within us."

Other times when I ask for an explanation, I don't get one right away. That question goes on the back burner. God will answer in His time.

For example, I have read various interpretations over the years of John 15, where Jesus says He is the vine. But none of the interpretations I had encountered made sense of the entire passage. You may be familiar with that passage. In it Jesus says that unfruitful branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned. That statement never fit with any of the interpretations I had heard or read about the meaning of that passage. I know of no other passage in the Bible that speaks of genuine disciples being thrown away or destroyed by God.

Then one day about two years ago God showed me what the passage was truly about. That day I experienced the spiritual heartburn that opened this passage up to my understanding. It is a puzzle to me no longer.

Some of my questions have not been answered yet. But I trust that God will explain when His time is right. God will answer your questions, but in His own good time.

Seek the heartburn of God-revealed truth. Expect that God will reveal truth about Himself and His will for you to live.

**Seek this heartburn with humility.** You need to lay before God every value, prejudice, belief, and desire. You must give these up to God. Otherwise they may prevent you from hearing or accepting the truth.

**Seek this heartburn ready to obey Him.** God reveals truth to those ready to live it out. If you are simply curious about truth, why should God reveal it? God reveals truth to those who are ready to live it out.

Give yourself completely to the LORD Jesus Christ, and expect that He will reveal how you are to live.

Invitation

There are many religions in the world. There are good people who are a part of all these religions. Those are facts. Based on those facts, you could draw the conclusion that there must be many paths to God.

But you could also look at the facts of many religions and many good people in those religions and come to a different conclusion. You could conclude that there is much confusion about the one way to the one God. You could conclude that many people are on the wrong path. If the Muslim religion is right, all the others are wrong. If the Hindu religion is right, all the others are wrong. If Judaism all the others are wrong. If Christianity is right, all the others are wrong. If any one religion is right then there is only

ONE way to God. And many have come to that conclusion, despite all the good people in so many religions of the world.

How do you decide which conclusion is right? Let me offer this solution. Ask God to show you the truth. Let me suggest a prayer for you to pray.

***“God, if You are real, please reveal the truth of You to me. I want to know the truth of you. I’m going to pray. I’m going to read. I’m willing to do whatever You want me to do and follow whatever path You show me. But You have to show me which path is the right one.”***

Start praying that prayer. Pray it until God answers. God created you to know Him. Ask Him to show you how to know Him. I am confident that He will do just that.