

The Gospel Truth: "The Truth Shall Set You Free"

Taking John 8:32 as a starting point, this plenary talk affirms the centrality of truth, Scripture and discipleship, individually as well as in relation to the vision of the European Leadership Forum. As people united in confessing the Gospel as Truth, we need a rich concept of truth when faced with today's "crisis of truth" in Europe. Scripture claims that "the Gospel Truth" changes and transforms people, is a consistent and coherent worldview, and corresponds to the fundamental reality. Therefore, the Truth of the Gospel shall set us free.

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I. Introduction: The Gospel Truth as central to the vision of the Forum

- a. Focus on *the vision* of the Forum – "identify, unite, mentor and resource" evangelical leaders in European contexts characterized by "crisis of truth"
- b. Focus on *John 8:32* – truth, Scripture and discipleship as key elements at the Forum
- c. Focus on *The Gospel Truth* – Jesus as "The Way, The Truth and The Life" (John 14:6) as the defining centre at the Forum
- d. Focus on *a holistic view of truth* – combining 'pre-modern', 'modern' and 'postmodern' perspectives when faced with "crisis of truth"

II. The Gospel Truth – what do we mean?

- a. "Jesus Christ is the truth of the universe. Because Jesus *is* truth, truth in Christ is (i) personal as well as propositional; (ii) universal as well as contextual; (iii) ultimate as well as present." (*The Cape Town Commitment*)
 - i. *Personal truth*: Christ offers us an intimate personal relationship with God our Father because of Christ's atoning death.

ii. *Propositional truth*: Christ offers us the authoritative Word of God as “a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105)

b. As people of the Gospel Truth, we need to continuously *affirm* this Truth, *proclaim* it and *live* by it.

III. The Gospel Truth – changes and transforms people, nations and cultures

a. The Gospel of Christ *changes people* – through justification, forgiveness, eternal life (Rom 1:16)

i. The Reformation heritage: We affirm ‘Scripture alone’, ‘Christ alone’, ‘faith alone’

b. The Gospel Truth *changes nations* – through the fruits of the Gospel

i. Case studies: Hans Nielsen Hauge (Norway) and William Wilberforce (UK)

c. We are *transformed* by the Gospel Truth – as individuals and as Christian communities. Therefore we are *called to transform* our cultures (cf. def. of ‘calling’)

IV. The Gospel Truth – is a consistent and coherent worldview

a. We live in *pluralistic contexts* of competing secular and religious worldviews

b. The Reformation heritage: We affirm the clarity of *Scripture* (‘the written Word’) and the centrality of *Christ* (‘the living Word’)

- c. The biblical panoramic worldview makes sense as *a consistent and coherent story*
 - i. The story of God's salvation is the basis for the biblical worldview
 - ii. We affirm the Christian mind – as relevant also in today's secular world (i.e. the academy, the business, the media and the government)
 - iii. Case study: Engaging the media
- d. We need to *communicate* the Christian faith in *the context* of a holistic biblical worldview
 - i. The need for 'worldview evangelism'
 - ii. The need for 'worldview preaching'

V. The Gospel Truth – corresponds to reality

- a. We live in pluralistic contexts of *competing truth-claims* – where we can affirm (1) other beliefs as 'half-truths' and (2) God as Creator, Sustainer and Lord as an ontological reality (cf. Acts 17)
- b. Our belief in Christ is based on *the fact of the Resurrection* (1 Cor. 15)
 - i. We affirm the credibility of Christ and the Gospel, therefore: 'Hope'
 - ii. Case study: Facing death – a personal story

- c. We can *apply the biblical view of humanity* to our everyday lives in today's world.
 - i. We affirm its explanatory power ('created', 'fallen', 'redeemed', 'called to serve', 'with hope'); therefore: 'Meaning'
 - ii. Case study: Personal identity – a key contemporary issue

VI. Conclusion: The Gospel Truth "shall set you free"

- a. *A reflection:* It is the Lord Himself who transforms us through His Truth...*A challenge:* Are we willing to stand up for God's Gospel Truth – over against modern positivism, postmodern relativism and pluralistic syncretism?
- b. *A prayer:* "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." (Ps. 25:5)

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