

Cross Current



Volume 35, Number 9

February 28, 2010

Ain't It the Truth

You might say they were straining the truth.

Questioning a suspect who had more bravado than brains, police in Radnor, Pennsylvania put a metal vegetable strainer on his head and connected it by a wire to a photocopier. Inside the machine was a paper with the words, "He's lying." Every time the police thought the man



wasn't telling the truth, they hit the copy button. Convinced "the lie detector" was working, the crook confessed!

For centuries, society has used various techniques to separate the fibbers from the forthright. Ancient Arabs made suspects lick a red-hot poker, assuming only liars would burn their tongues. The Chinese forced suspected liars to chew rice powder then spit it out, believing that, if the rice was still dry, the person was guilty. In long-ago Britain, if someone couldn't swallow a "trial slice" of bread and cheese, he or she was presumed guilty. Ironically, those primitive tests may've had an element of truth because a dry mouth is often linked with the nervousness caused by lying.

Though the first modern lie detector was invented by an Italian criminologist in 1895, the device only measured changes in pulse and blood pressure. It wasn't until 1921 that American medical student John Larson devised a machine that also measured breathing rate and checked all three factors simultaneously. Today, high-tech detectors



To get somewhere spiritually, we must bear the stamp of Christ's image on our hearts.

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general nervousness ("What kind of car do you drive?"), key or guilty questions about details only the perpetrator would know, and the control questions that might make the innocent nervous but not faze the guilty who know those questions aren't connected to the crime.

Though polygraphs are sophisticated, they have the same fault as the ancient truth tests: not all liars show bodily symptoms of guilt or nervousness, such as sweatiness, a dry mouth, or a quickened pulse. Nor are most spiritual lies easy to spot.

Jesus didn't just tell the truth. He was the truth -- the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Not just an option, or an alternative, but the Only and the unequalled. He embodied the love of truth and the truth of love. He was the proof God could be trusted when he said he'd rescue us from sin and death.

"Don't be troubled," said Jesus. "You trust God, now trust in me... When everything's ready, I'll come and get you so you'll always be with me where I am." (v. 1,3) Until then, we have a Counsellor who'll never leave us. "He is the Holy Spirit who leads into all truth." (v.17) — the truth about God, ourselves, and our world.

And the truth is, we still sin repeatedly and on purpose. To deny it would make us more pathetic than that perp in Pennsylvania, and a lot worse off (1 John 1:8-10). Just as in ancient times, the truth is hard to swallow but, after everything Jesus has done for us, the last thing He wants us to do is let the enemy convince us that Christ couldn't possibly love us or save us the way we are.

In John 8:31,32, Jesus says, "You're truly my disciples if you keep on obeying my teachings. And you'll know the truth and the truth will set you free." I used to read those words and see only my sin — the truth about me. Truth that made me afraid, not free. But now I realize Jesus also meant we'd know the truth about him: his grace, forgiveness and no-cause, no-clause love.

When we finally get it through our heads that nothing can separate us from God's freedom and affection -- not even our sin -- our prayer will be a simple one: "Lord, I want to know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So, help me, God!"

Rick Gamble