

Sermon Outline

“Truth is for God’s Glory, Not Ours” (*Humble Orthodoxy, Part 1*) **Numbers 20:1-13; Joshua 5:13-15 – Joshua Harris – June 26, 2011**

Main Idea: Truth matters, but so does our attitude.

Introduction

1. *Orthodoxy* means “right opinion.” In the context of Christian faith, orthodoxy is shorthand for getting your opinion or thoughts about God right and getting your teaching and beliefs based on the established, proven, cherished truths of the faith. These are truths that are clearly taught in Scripture and affirmed in the historic creeds of the Christian faith.
2. What is “humble orthodoxy”? Humble orthodoxy is deeply caring about truth and believing, defending and sharing this truth with compassion and humility.
3. Alternatives to “humble orthodoxy”:
 - a. Arrogant Orthodoxy – This term could be applied to the person who gets their doctrine right, but is unkind, unloving, self-righteous and spiteful in words and behavior.
 - b. Humble Heterodoxy – This term could be applied to the person who is really nice and can’t bear to offend unbelievers or culture. However, they have abandoned the historic Christian faith and embrace any teaching in the name of inclusion, kindness and open-mindedness.
4. Does any of this matter to God? Yes!
 - a. We must care deeply about sound doctrine and orthodoxy. Jude 3 exhorts us to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” God has, once for all delivered the saving message of the gospel to his people through his Word. We must be willing to struggle for and fight for its integrity and faithful transmission. In other words, we need to care about orthodoxy, the right thinking about God’s character and how he saves through Jesus Christ. *Orthodoxy matters.*
 - b. At the same time God’s Word calls us “love our neighbor as we love ourselves” (Matthew 22:39). Jesus even told us to “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44). 1 Peter 5: 5 says, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” In other words, genuine love and humility of heart before God and fellow man is essential. *Humility matters.*

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The Example of Moses (Numbers 20:1-13)

1. This is an incredible story. Moses, the man of God with whom God spoke face to face, fails to carry out God's orders precisely and is disciplined by not being allowed to enter the Promised Land. God told him to speak to the rock, but in his anger against the grumbling people of Israel, Moses *struck* the rock.
2. This seems like one instance where Moses should get a break, a pass. His seemingly minor trespass pales in comparison to the outrageous behavior of the people he leads—quarreling, grumbling, unbelief, rebellion and insubordination. And yet, even this kind of blatant, wicked rebellion does not justify the slightest disobedience on Moses' part. Here's the point: *The error and sin of others never gives us license to ignore the Word of God for ourselves.*
3. Even when people in our culture are sinning, slandering and tearing down truth, there is no excuse for us to ignore God's command in Micah 6:8, "to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." Their sin doesn't give us a pass to sin. Isn't that what this story from the life of Moses teaches us? It's possible to be right, to be God's man, to be the bearer of God's word and yet to act in a way that dishonors the God we claim to be serving.
4. Let's take warning from this story and be sobered. No matter how wrong someone else is, God is always also evaluating our heart. And if we regard him as holy, we will never lose sight of that. We can say that humble orthodoxy begins by seeing God and God alone as our greatest concern.

Joshua's Example (Joshua 5:13-15)

1. Joshua asked the man standing before him with a drawn sword, "Are you for us or our adversaries?" It was an understandable question, but ultimately, the wrong one. When it comes to matters of contention between different movements, denominations or theological camps, we all have a tendency to make truth more about us than about God.
2. We tell ourselves that we're fighting for orthodoxy and for biblical faithfulness, but in subtle ways our heart struggle becomes about our identity, our rightness, our purity, our orthodoxy. Because of our own sinful tendency to run after false gods, we often turn the knowledge of God into an idol that we worship instead of God.

*"If we get our very identity, our sense of worth, from our **[theological]** position, then **[theology]** is not really about God, it is about us. Through our cause we are getting a self, our worth. That means we must despise and demonize the opposition." – Tim Keller (modified by Josh Harris)*

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3. Knowledge about God that doesn't translate into exalting him in our words, thoughts and actions will soon become self-exaltation. And then we'll attack anyone who threatens our tiny Kingdom of Self. When we do this, we end up coming to God and with the question, "Are you for us? Are you on our side? Are you going to defend our kingdom?" And that's the wrong question.
4. When the Captain of the Lord's army answers Joshua's question, Joshua gets on his face and worships. That's the posture of humble orthodoxy—on your face before God, worshipping him for who he is. God and his truth aren't ours in the sense that they exist for building our kingdom. God's truth is his, and it is for his glory and his worship. He doesn't sign on to our agenda. We sign on to his. We bow to him.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a care group to read Numbers 20:1-13 and Joshua 5:13-15.
2. Josh taught us that, "Truth matters, but so does our attitude." Which do you tend to emphasize: contending for the truth or humble loving? Where do you desire to grow?
3. Can you remember a conversation in which you became defensive, unkind or self-righteous over doctrine? How might you respond kindly and humbly in future conversations?
4. In what ways or situations have you been tempted to water down a truth about God or His Word to avoid offending someone, believer or unbeliever?
5. Josh taught us that the error and sin of others never gives us license to ignore the Word of God for ourselves. How do you typically respond when others sin against you? How would you desire to grow?
6. Is your knowledge of God and His Word an idol from which you seek your identity rather than something that leads you to humble worship and adoration of God? In what ways?