**Truth Currents** **7-10-20**

 One of the favorite pastimes in modern American life is a hobby that I like to call the “*Conspiracy Theory*.” I was thinking about conspiracy theories of my lifetime in the last few days and a number of them came to mind. There are people who believe that we have evidence of extra-terrestrials that are hidden in Area 51 in Nevada. People believe that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was done by Cuban rebels or the Mafia or even the CIA. The moon landing was supposedly filmed in a Hollywood sound stage. I’ve heard people talk about a 33-acre property in the mountains of Alaska that has a mind control lab that works around the world. The bunkers that are supposedly hidden under Denver International Airport are seen as the world headquarters of the Illuminati, an organization that has existed supposedly for a thousand years in an attempt to control global economy and power. My favorite one says that Paul McCartney is dead but Elvis is alive.

More recently, we have people who tell us that 5G networks either damage human brains or are somehow mysteriously responsible for the spread of COVID-19. Speaking of COVID-19, I’ve read recently of theories that COVID-19 is a ruse by pharmaceutical companies to increase profits of drug sales. I’ve heard that the virus is a plot by the “Deep State” to steal our human and civil rights. I’ve even heard that COVID-19 doesn’t exist at all.

What are we to think of these conspiracy theories? And more importantly, what are we to think about the way we spend our time chasing them down?

It’s not very difficult to look up something on YouTube and then find yourself falling into a rabbit hole chasing this video, which leads to that video, which leads to that video. And three hours later we’ve discovered that our day is gone because we have been filling our minds with all kinds of things. I’ve always been curious about how super-secret conspiracies can be discovered by watching YouTube videos. Well, I think conspiracy theories are little more than evidence of the universal appeal to human nature to have secret inside knowledge.

This is not anything new. In the ancient church, one of the great challenges to the faith was a school of thought called “*Gnosticism*.” Gnosticism comes from the Greek word “*knosis*” or “to know.” It’s the base of the word “knowledge.” And the Gnostics would follow Christian teachers around. They would come into churches and they would say, “Paul was here and he gave you a gospel. But Paul’s gospel is incomplete. If you’ll just pay us something, we can initiate you into the higher levels of insight. We’ll tell you the rest of the story that Paul didn’t let you know.”

I see this today when people say, “Oh, the Bible, the Bible speaks in code. And you need to know the key in order to understand the deeper messages of scripture.”

Listen, let me just be real honest with you. It’s not the parts of the Bible I don’t understand that bother me. It’s the parts of the Bible I do understand that pull me up short.

The reality is, that the greatest challenge to a Pastor in 2020 America is the challenge to help God’s people break their voluntary addiction to toxic misinformation. We act a certain way, we hold certain positions, we believe certain things because we have swallowed certain ideas.

A conspiracy theory takes two separate events and it attempts to fill in the gaps. And when we don’t know what fills in those gaps, we listen to things and say, “Well, you know that does sound reasonable.”

Let me suggest another way. In **Ephesians 6:12-13** it says this.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil spiritual *forces* of in the heavens*.* For this reason, take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.”

 Maybe an even better representation comes from **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**. Paul says,

“For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. *We* demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we* take every thought captive to obey Christ,”

 One of the forgotten aspects of following Jesus, of discipleship is discipline in our thought lives, “*taking every thought captive*” for Jesus Christ. The real you is dominated by what you think about.

 In **Philippians 4:8**, we find Paul giving instructions to the Philippian church and he says this in this simple verse.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any moral excellence and if anything praise worthy, dwell on these things.”

 In other words, he’s giving us a menu, a recipe if you will, of the things we should be putting in our minds. And by implication that cuts out a whole lot of other things that we should not be putting in our minds.

 Let me suggest that instead of chasing down conspiracy theories, trying to ….

Here’s how we do battle in the flesh. I’m 58 years old. And every American Presidential election in my lifetime I have been told, “This is a crucial moment. The future of America is at stake. Everything hinges on this election.” Listen, I’ve voted in every election since Ronald Reagan was elected the first time in 1980. And every election I was told, “This is the breaking point. We have to do this. We have to get Supreme Court Justices. We have to get the right President.” All I know is I’ve been voting for 40 years and it doesn’t seem like any vote that I’ve made has fundamentally improved anything. Why? – Because that’s not the battlefield. That’s the distraction. That’s the illusion.

 We need to put into our minds things that make us captive to Christ even in our thoughts. Let me suggest this. How about if you put yourself on an intellectual diet where you have less main stream media and more Bible study. And, I would say, more great literature. It doesn’t have to be religious. Great literature captures truth. It communicates what is noble and honorable. – *More Bible study, more literature*. How about this, less social media and more actual hospitality and fellowship with real live people. Less YouTube and more “practical love in action.”

 You say, “Well, Pastor I’m watching your video on YouTube.” Yeah, I get that, ironic isn’t it? But here’s what I want you to do. I want you to finish watching Truth Currents then I want you to get off of YouTube and go do something that makes a difference in the lives of other people; something that builds you up, something that builds them up. Take every thought captive for Christ.

 1 Timothy in the first chapter: This is how I know that this challenge for Pastors has always been the same challenge. In **1 Timothy 1:3-5**, Paul says, “*As I urged you when I went to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people*.” He’s talking to Timothy. “*so that you may instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies.*” In other words, Conspiracy Theories. “*These promote empty speculations rather than God's plan, which operates by faith. Now the goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.”*

 How about if we get off our computers and quit trying to figure out the inner secret workings of the “Deep State” and the “Illuminati.” What if instead we spend today developing a “*pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith*.”

 Conspiracy theories are like rocking chairs. They give us something to do but they don’t get us anywhere.