

“Can We Handle the Truth?”

You may remember the 1992 film, “A Few Good Men,” in which a tense courtroom drama was exchanged between Tom Cruise, playing Lt. Daniel Kaffee, a Navy JAG attorney known for cutting plea deals and Jack Nicholson playing Col. Nathan Jessep, the hard-edged commander at Guantanamo Bay. In the film’s climactic moment, Lt. Kaffee demands, “I want the truth!” Col. Jessep explodes back, “You can’t handle the truth.”

It’s a powerful scene because it exposes a tension, we all feel. We say we want truth, but truth, real truth, often confronts us, challenges us, and forces us to choose. That same tension stands at the center of the most important courtroom scene in history, the trial of Jesus Christ.

The four accounts of the Gospel describe Jesus being brought before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The religious leaders accused Him of treason. They claimed He sought to overthrow Caesar. It was a false charge, but a politically dangerous one. Pilate questioned Jesus, trying to determine whether this quiet, unarmed rabbi could possibly be a threat to Rome.

Jesus answered Pilate with a statement that echoes through the centuries, “*For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.*” John 18:37. Truth. Not preference. Not political convenience. Not cultural consensus. Truth.

Pilate responds with a question that reveals both cynicism and confusion, “*What is truth?*” John 18:38. It is a question of every age. What is truth when cultures shift, when values change, when people disagree, when emotions override facts? What is truth when acknowledging it might cost us something? Pilate wasn’t searching for an answer. He was searching for an escape. Truth, for him, was inconvenient. It demanded courage he did not possess.

And yet, standing before him was Truth Himself. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had made a staggering claim, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*” John 14:6. He did not merely teach truth or point toward truth. He embodied it. Truth was not an idea, a philosophy, or a system. Truth was a person.

That means truth is not something we construct; it is something we receive. It is not something we negotiate; it is something we submit to. It is not something we bend to our preferences; it is something that bends us toward righteousness.

In *A Few Good Men*, Lt. Kaffee demanded the truth, and Col. Jessep resisted revealing it because truth would expose his guilt. In Pilate’s courtroom, the dynamic was reversed. Truth Himself stood ready to be revealed, but Pilate resisted because truth would require moral courage. Today, the issue remains the same. Will we embrace God’s truth even when it confronts us? Even when it challenges our assumptions, our habits, or our comfort. Jesus was falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and crucified not because He lacked evidence, but because the world could not “handle” the truth of who He was. Yet His resurrection vindicated every word He spoke. The truth that Pilate dismissed is the truth that still sets people free.

So, the question comes to us: Do we want the truth? Not the comfortable version, not the culturally approved version, not the version that asks nothing of us. But the truth that convicts, transforms, restores, and saves us. Pilate asked, “*What is truth?*” Jesus answered, “*I am the truth.*” One question. One declaration. One choice. And every generation must decide how it will respond.

~Ron Josselet (Assisted by CoPilot)