Fighting The Evil of Truth Distortion

Scripture: Ps 144:1-8, 1 Tim 1:18-19 Sunday, October 8, 2017

Last week we had the worst mass shooting in US history. And the President of the US called it an act of pure evil. Now who can disagree with that, right? Anybody can see that pumping bullets into a group of innocent people, killing 58 and injuring over 500 is an act of pure evil. What really takes effort is to figure out what you are going to do about it. Well, this is where the rubber meets the road. Bill OReilly called this kind of massacre, the price we pay for the freedom we have in this country. Freedom to buy as many guns of whatever kind as you want. And one of the things this administration did early on is to remove a restriction for people with mental health issues from buying guns. The justification is that just because someone is mentally ill, you cannot deny them their constitutional right to guns! Then just this week they were about to pass another big gun bill that removes restrictions on having silencers on guns. Think about this, if you have an active shooter situation, and the shooter is far away or hiding inside buildings like they usually do, the way the swat team figures out where the shooter is, is by using special technology called the Gun Shot Detection System. This system uses a number of microphones and other sensors to analyze the sound and other cues coming from the gun fire to triangulate the position of the shooter. So using silencers on the guns will make locating the shooter in these situations that much more difficult. But in this country, we have forces of evil that place protect guns and gun accessory sales so much above human life that it has made mass shooting like Las Vegas the 273th mass shooting event of this year, and we still have a quarter of the year left. I think that freedom that has no limits or boundaries is stupid and destructive. We do not practice such boundary less freedom in any other aspect of our life. Boundary less freedom is not Biblical by any stretch of the imagination. In fact I will go on to say that people and organizations who support this kind on unrestricted access to lethal weapons are pure evil and you can quote me on that.

But today, I am not going to be talking specifically about gun legislation. I want to address a broader issue. If we are surrounded by so much evil, how should we battle it? How do we train our hands for this war as David cries out to God is Ps 144? You see as Christ followers we are called to be Christ’s foot soldiers in this battle against evil. And if we are going to be in battle we need to be clued into our enemies tactics. Apostle Paul in 2 Cor 2:11 puts it this way, “so that Satan should not outsmart us. Because we are aware of his schemes”. So we need to be aware of Satan’s schemes so as not to be outsmarted. One of those schemes that is very prevalent in this country is truth distortion. In the battle that David is in, he too is dealing with an enemy who is full of lies. “Rescue me”, Davis is crying, “from deep waters,
    from the power of my enemies.
**8**Their mouths are full of lies;
    they swear to tell the truth, but they lie instead”. The battle against truth distortion is what I am going to focus on today.

The first thing to remember is that Satan is the father of lies, or to put it in present day lingo, Satan is the father of fake news! Now when I will a kid, I have always wondered by the Bible makes such a big deal about lying. Isin’t it one of the most minor sins you can ever commit? And it seems that lying does not harm anybody, especially if it just a small white lie. So what’s the big deal, right? Well, you know when the Bible says that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, well how does he do it? He does it by speaking. Gen 1:3 says, Then God said, *Let there be light and there was light*. And it goes on to describe how God speaks and layer by layer the universe as we know it comes into being. In other words, you see all of the reality around you my friends? Well what Genesis 1 is telling us is that behind all this reality is the blue print of God’s Word. And that blueprint had to be so perfect, that it is part of the being of God himself. That is the meaning of John 1:1 which says, “*In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God*”. In other words the power and integrity of God’s word is a defining character trait of God himself. And so every lie that is uttered in this world is for God, like a nail being scratched on the blackboard of the universe. It is so jarring. Every lie grates against the pure reality of this world created from the very being of God.

Now Satan on the other hand is just the opposite. Satan thrives on deception and twisting the truth or hiding it. Since we are talking about gun violence today, did you know that the NRA lobbies the US Congress to block all funding for research into Gun injury prevention research? You can be sure that the NRA does not want you to find out the truth about what guns are doing to this country. But even the NRA cannot hide the basic statistics on gun violence. Did you know that every year 31,000 people die of gun injuries in this country? Lets put that in context. Do you know how many people died on 911? Under 3000 people. But those 3000 deaths caused the US to start two wars, one in Iraq and the other in Afganisthan. The one in Afganisthan is still being fought after 15 years. Yet the gun violence that is killing 10 times more people than 911 every year, and all our government usually offers is “thoughts and prayers”. You know something else? Every time there is a mass shooting in this country the stock price of the gun companies goes up because for some reason every time there is a mass shooting people go out and buy more guns. So the gun companies profit from these mass shootings. Is there anything more evil than making money from violence. And the NRA’s stance is this. Gun ownership is a fundamental right in this country. And any controls on gun ownership, even suggesting the most basic common sense controls and the NRA starts a fear campaign that the government is coming for your guns. So the NRA sells fear through lies and as long as people are fearful of something, they will keep buying guns. The NRA will never tell you that people who have guns are most likely to shoot themselves or their loved ones with it. No they will hide that truth and instill fear by telling you that the government is trying to take your guns away, so you should defend your rights by buying more guns. That is how evil forces use lies, to distort the truth and deceive the simple. Why? Because Satan is the Father of lies. John 8:44 says this about Satan. “When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” In fact he has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. Only falsehood and deception.

So the question is, if you know that one of the basic tactics of evil forces is truth distortion then how do you combat it. You combat truth distortion by a test. TEST is an acronym for Think, Expose Evil, Stand up for the truth and Train your mind with scripture. Four ways to counter this information deception. Let’s start with the first T, Think.

**T-Think**

Think through the information coming to you. Don’t be simple-minded and believe everything you hear. Proverbs 14:15 says, The simple-minded believe everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. When you receive information, you have to analyze the information for consistency and credibility. Does the information make sense? Is it consistent with what I know for a fact. John 4: 1 says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. If it is to do with a principle or question of right or wrong, go to the Bible and see what the Bible says about the issue. Paul in the New Testament commended the Bereans in Acts 17:11, because they tested the truth of everything they heard even Paul’s own sermons. They went back and looked and scripture themselves. So question what you hear, even what I am preaching to you. Go examine it against what Scripture says. And remember to use the proper rules of interpreting Scripture that I talked about two Sundays ago. If the information is about something you won’t find in the Bible you can still think it though and check reliable sources.

So when someone tells you, don’t let the government put any rules around guns because their real aim is to take away all guns from the people, just think to yourself, does that make sense? Is setting limits the same as taking away someones rights? If you cannot control someones use of a lethal weapon, then what about the right to life of the 31,000 people who are being killed every year, in the greatest nation on earth? Don’t those people have rights too? What about their right to live? What happens when one persons rights steps over someone elses rights? Is the right to have a powerful gun a greater priority then someone elses right to live? Think. The simple-minded believe anything but the prudent give thought to his steps.

**Now E is for Expose evil**

Ephesians 5:11-12 says, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret”. Evil loves to hide and make itself invisible. In fact evil knows many ways to make itself invisible. Abusers induce fear in their victims to maintain secrecy. They tell their victims that if they tell anybody they or someone they love will be in danger. And with the cover of secrecy, they can continue their abuse and sometimes both the secret and the abuse is passed on for generations. The only way to stop it is to overcome an associated fears and to bring the pattern to light. Another technique is hide evil is to justify it under some pretense. A great example is the NRA justifying making money off peoples’ fears and mass shootings by calling it protection of the Second Amendment. Isaiah 5:20 says, Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. We, my friends are called to be societies whistle blowers. In the New York subway they have this catch-phrase which says, “if you see something, say something”. If a person or organization is cheating or deceiving, then we need to be the whistleblowers. Of course people will always threaten you and call you a snitch etc. But what people in general say is not important compared to what Scripture says. And Scripture says, “woe to those who call evil good and good evil.” Never be afraid to be a whistle blower, because Eph 5:11 is very clear we need to expose evil and not cover it up, even if it is our own. Remember evil deserves no secrecy. In fact evil needs to be exposed to the light, because when it is brought to the light, it gets extinguished.

**S-Stand up for the truth**

Stand up for the truth, no matter what the cost. Psalm 94:16 says, “Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will stand for me against those who practice iniquity? God expects his people to stand up and say something when what is happening is a violation of God’s law or falsehood is being propagated. In Israel there were two kinds of prophets. The first kind was prophets who would always convey the truth no matter what the cost and the second kind was on the payroll of the king. They had a very comfortable existence living in the palace and enjoying the food and perks of the kings court, but when the king would consult them about God’s will in a particular situation they were experts in knowing what the king wanted to hear and they would tell the king exactly that. Prophets like Elijah and Jeremiah were always telling their kings the hard truth and they faced a lot of flak for it. In the spirit of this message, I will go out on the limb myself and say that a significant portion of the evangelicals in this country have become beholden to the current administration. They receive perks from the executive office like access to the president and laws according to their liking and they in turn tell the president what he wants to hear. This is a pattern that is many millenia old. Going against the majority or someone in power comes at a price. And you can only do it if the truth and your love for God is higher than any other element in your life. So the third element of the battle against truth distortion is Standing up for the truth, even when there is a price to pay.

The final element in this battle is the last T of TEST. This T stands for training your mind with scripture.

**T-Train your mind with scripture**

Ps 119 vs 105 is something kids learn in Sunday School. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. So God’s Word the Bible is saying can illuminate your path in life, how, by illuminating your mind. How does the Word of God illuminate your mind? I am going to start with the words of Proverbs 8:5-7, You simple people, use good judgment.
    You foolish people, show some understanding.
**6**Listen to me! For I have important things to tell you.
    Everything I say is right,
**7**for I speak the truth
    and detest every kind of deception.

So if you want to know what good judgment looks like and if you want to tune your mind to the truth, the Bible is the book to absorb. There is another verse that is repeated many times in the Bible. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom right? But what does that mean? It means this, if you train your brain to fear only the God of the Bible then you will have the basis of all decision making you ever need for this life. Isin’t that incredible? Just train your brain to fear only the God of the Bible and you will have the ability to make the best decisions for your life no matter what your life situation is. Train your minds with the help of God’s Word my friends and you will never fall for what is fake.

Four elements to help you fight truth distortion. T.E.S.T

The first T is Think. When you hear something think critically about that information. Ask intelligent questions, don’t just take the information given to you at face value. E is for Expose Evil. Evil loves to lurk in the shadows. Pretend it does not exist. To combat truth distortion you have to be willing to expose evil wherever it exists. S stands for Standing up for the truth. God expects us to do this and not just go along with fake news. We have to be willing to speak truth to power. And the final T- Train your brain on scripture. Train your brain to fear the God of the Bible and that will make you fearless to deal with any distortions of truth out there and give you the wisdom to navigate life no matter how distorted the information coming as you.

Let us pray.