

MEDICATION AND THE ALTERNATIVE REALITY

By Steve Stutzman

Sometimes in our lives, we end up in positions where we just don't like the way things are. There are too many scenarios for me to even begin to name them all, but you know what I mean: hurting marriages, loneliness, sickness, rejection, addictions, church struggles, abandonment, relational difficulties, abuse, shame..... And the list goes on. Finding ourselves trapped in these situations can be very unnerving, and not knowing what to do, sometimes we make choices that we wish later we had not made. There are no easy solutions to all of life's curves, and the only thing we can know for sure about them, is that Jesus Christ is the answer to them all, and that walking with Him is the best thing we can do.

One of the most basic things about Jesus is that He IS Truth. He does not just speak it, He is Truth. Among all other doctrinal things that may conjure up for you, remember this: the most central tenet of truth is reality. Nothing can be more real than it is truth, and nothing can be more truth than it is real. If you want to be like Christ, start by being real.

I see Christ, betrayed... but never lowering His gaze. I see Him in front of Pilate, calmly assuring Pilate that he is not in control. I see Him stripped naked, His body contorting with pain as the whip descends, tearing away the flesh.... But never once losing sight of the truth. The TRUTH is, you see, that He was the Son of God. The Truth is, God's Life cannot die, death cannot hold it, the grave cannot keep it. The truth is, salvation for all man was at hand. That truth stood before Him, in Him, of Him, and could not be separated from Him. They went on to crucify Him. They mocked, and said, "Create an alternative reality, and we will believe". They even offered him some medication for the human pain, which He rejected. He preferred reality, truth, to any other reality, whether created, projected, or perceived.

One thief had a reality check. Crucified beside Christ, he suddenly saw a glimpse of time, life, and Eternity as God sees them. With few words, he accepted that reality as ultimate truth. In that acceptance, He accepted Jesus as Christ, and Jesus turned His head, acknowledging the acceptance of reality as the road to Paradise.

Then I look at my own life, and the lives around me. I wonder how many times we do not like reality the way it is, so we create another one. We have a headache, and we take an aspirin. We do not try to find out WHY this reality of a headache exists, we just create an alternative reality. We feel lonely, and we medicate away that reality with FB and Novels. We feel like we don't matter and we medicate that away with some video or video games. We get depressed and make no effort to find out why, we just want to change the reality we feel...create an alternative reality. We were abused, but we hide it and deny it to everyone, even ourselves, and create some fairy-tale where we are the wonderful princess. Our marriage is a sham, but we go to church and smile, and coo at one another, to hide from others the awful REALITY. Folks come by and we want to slap them, but we gush over them instead, to hide the reality we cannot stand, and cannot face inside of ourselves. We look in the mirror and hate what we see, and the feelings that wash over us, so we set about to change.... Not the reality, but an alternative one. Slather on enough paint and perhaps we have an alternative reality we can project to others, and hide behind, to keep us in a position of control. (did somebody just say, "control"?)

Since when is reality an enemy to be hidden from? Has truth become our enemy, only because it hurts? What kind of answers, exactly, do we hope to find in alternative reality? Wasn't it Lucifer who first said, ' I don't like my position and I will create an alternative one'? (paraphrase) How do we hope to walk with Christ and reject reality? Jesus said, "... Ye shall know the **TRUTH**, and the **TRUTH** will set you free." (Jn 8) Any other freedom is no freedom

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at all, just an alternative bondage until there is a return to the reality we are medicating ourselves away from. It simply cannot happen.

I sat with a struggling soul, barely in control of her own faculties, and asked for a confession of the immorality she had been involved in. She eyed the shame which threatened to wash away her identity. She glanced at the humiliation, waiting to whack her on the head. Then she said to me, "Can't you just make the bad stuff go away?" And I say, **HOW?** The only answer I know is Jesus Christ.... And He is the **TRUTH**. I have no other answer than a return to reality.

I hear it a thousand times, different words, but the same chorus. "Can't we keep our own alternative reality, and still walk with Jesus in freedom?"

Some of my recent heroes are those who found themselves in very harsh circumstances, but refused to deny them, and walked straight forward without batting an eye to the right or left. They refused to fight and claw for some alternative reality. I believe the world is dying for want of such men and women, who become so fascinated with the truth of God that they won't take another way out even if it is offered to them to save their own life. They truly love the **TRUTH**, and scoff at the price tag on it. (see also 2 Tim 2:10-12)

The first Book written in the NT (Galatians) has the word 'witchcraft' in it, the only place in the NT that it appears. The Greek word is pharmakeia, and the primary meaning of the word is, "medications". It appears in a list of the works of the flesh that Paul says will prohibit inheritance. I wonder how many folks today are sacrificing all inheritance in the Kingdom because we insist on a reality WE can control, a medication we prefer, a fairy tale, a myth, a mind-numbing something that is other than truth.

I need to be very, very clear here. I am not standing and condemning someone for taking a pill out of a bottle. I am not suggesting that if you want to follow Jesus you throw the bottle away and die, or that you are somehow inferior for having a physical ailment. I used a physical example of an emotional and spiritual truth. Please accept it that way. I do not believe that God intended for His people to be dependent on drugs as a lifestyle..... but I am open to the idea that we live in a twisted world, and eat engineered food, and end up with consequences of drug dependent exceptions. You may be one of those.

What I am begging for is a return to truth, an acceptance of reality, an honesty about where we are currently that is so real it hurts, a consideration of others and where they are that invites them to the reality of the Gospel that God speaks about them, to them, and into them. The church must lead the way back into reality. Live so real that an alternative reality repulses you. Love the truth.

Politics is full of projected realities that lack any substantive meaning, and are devoid of truth. Hollywood projects an air-brushed glamour that has no connection to the reality God sees. Madison Ave invites you to pretend to project to others that you are someone God never saw when He made you. The world is full of pretense, and absolutely hates truth. (Jn14:17)

The Spirit of Holiness we long for, is first of all a Spirit of **TRUTH**. That means, He is fascinated with, and will produce, wherever He goes, an alignment with reality. Will you dare to be one of those who steps out of the comfortable box of our own control, rejects the made up reality we have embraced, and steps into the **TRUTH**?