



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Date: June 12, 1960

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a baccalaureate service at Upper St. Clair High School on June 12, 1960. Notes indicate it was also presented at the University School Commencement.

To complete the lesson, review the outline and reflect on how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

The scripture reading that evening was Proverbs 3:13-26. While not directly related to Dr. Galbreath's message, it is worth reviewing. Questions are provided for that passage as well.

In addition to Dr. Galbreath's participation, prayers were given by Reverend R. Russell Riethmiller of Faith Lutheran Church and the Reverend Douglas W. Hill of South Hills Baptist Church.

I. Introduction

A. Today you receive your diploma

1. But it is probably the least valuable item that the school produces.
2. A friend of mine sells platinum -- but the stuff you have been handling is of far more value.
3. Another friend sells atomic power plants -- yet more important than atomic energy is the truth that determines how that energy will be used.
4. Precious stuff, this -- whether you found it in history, mathematics, literature
5. More important than the truth you have found is the fact that you are given tools to unearth deeper truths.
 - a) *Not so much the accumulated facts, but the tools to discover more.*
 - b) *This is truly a commence--ment.*

II. Truth and Consequences

A. As a youngster, "Truth or consequences" was a game I played. Now it is a program my kids watch."

B. It is a misnomer -- should be "Truth and consequences."

1. Truth without consequence is like a battery without any connection of the poles.
 - a) *There is no electricity in a battery until it is used.*
 - b) *Truth does not become really true, until its consequences begin.*

C. The truth is our greatest weapon.

1. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
 - a) *Truth is our greatest weapon against communism.*

- (1) Lenin -- "Why should freedom of speech and press be allowed? Ideas are more fatal than guns."
- (2) Our information program has been a great source of irritation to USSR.
- (3) The danger of the opening of the Iron Curtain is not that we will see their arms, but that they will see our ideas.
- (4) The truths we live, not the truths we say are our greatest weapon.
- (5) Our greatest danger is the sabotage of ideas by freedom of acts that deny it.

b) Truth is not merely a brick-bat against dictators -- as effective as that may be.

- (1) Truth is the means for the higher good -- the freedom which is still the unattained dream of this world.
- (2) Wherever truth is compromised, freedom is lost.
 - (a) *Have you been annoyed by the note that "The platters used by this disc jockey are furnished by the manufacturer."*

Mightier than an army is the power of an idea whose time is come.

III. Falsehood and Consequences

A. Germany had a great secret weapon in WWI.

1. It was not the "Big Bertha" cannon.
2. It was placed in a sealed, secret train and taken to the Russian frontier -- an idea incarnate in a man, Lenin.
 - a) *What the Kaiser's armies could not do, Lenin did -- he stopped the war with Russia.*
 - b) *For a thousand years, the world had not seen a man so possessed of an idea.*

(1) He lived, slept, worshipped his idea.

B. While Lenin and his disciples were implementing their idea with the slaughter in the Ukraine, another man had an idea -- a paper-hanger named "Shickelgruber."

1. In 1939, I saw in the hostels, the results of a man with an idea -- young men who sang hymns to his praise, who said, "All I am, I am through you. All you are, you are through me."
2. And the belching fires of Dachau were stoked with the bodies of men, and the Stukas sent their tragic messengers of death upon Rotterdam.

IV. Incarnating the Truth

A. Not only evil men have found the power of an idea.

1. Gandhi left a very lucrative practice in Johannesburg with an idea.
 - a) *The power of the British Empire was broken by that idea.*

B. Truth is elusive -- we do not appreciate the prof who said, "I am frequently in error, but never in doubt."

1. Doubt is the price of truth.

V. Conclusion

You have received many ideas -- but I hope among them you have found a great truth which you are willing to embody.

Unamono, a great Spanish thinker of our century said, "Find a great idea, marry it, found a home with it, and raise a family." "You make a great idea the mistress of a night, when you should make it the wedded wife of a lifetime.

God grant that if not already you may soon find such an idea to which you may devote your life, for only in such a devotion does our world have hope.

In the battle for ideas, there is no question as to which side has the better idea -- but to which side has the strongest convictions.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Proverbs 3:13-26

Proverbs 3:13 and 18 say: ¹³ Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, ¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

- Why do you think this passage describes wisdom and understanding as more valuable than silver and gold?
- Why do you think the passage then refers to material things we desire?
- Do you think wisdom alone leads to peace? What about understanding?

Proverbs 3:19 and 20 say: ¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; ²⁰ by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

- Have you ever thought about God's creation as a result of his wisdom? How would you have described it?

Proverbs 3:21 and 22 say: ²¹ My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; ²² they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck.

- The verse suggests that judgment is an "ornament." In what ways can you display your judgment so that others can see the ornament?

Proverbs 3:23 through 26 say: ²³ Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble; ²⁴ when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, ²⁶ for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.

- Have there ever been times when you have felt clearly that you put your confidence in the Lord and you were spared from snares and disaster?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

This was preached at a baccalaureate in 1960. How would you describe the world into which high school graduates were walking in that year? What was the world like? What was the church like?

I.A. To you, what is the most valuable item that school produces today?

I.A.5. In what ways can the tools provided in schools help young people on their faith journeys?

II.B. Do you believe there can be truth *without* consequences?

II.C. Have you ever used the truth as a weapon? Was it always for good?

II.C.a.1 Do you agree with Lenin?

II.C.a.3. Now that the Iron Curtain is long gone, what impact do you think our ideas had on breaking it down? Do you think in today's internet and social media world an Iron Curtain could ever be created again?

II.C.A.4. How does the truth you live compare to the truths you say?

II.C.b. Where would you say freedom is still an unattained dream in today's world? Are there places in our own community where that is true? What would you say in praying for freedom for those areas?

Mightier than an army is the power of an idea whose time is come. This Bible study entry is being completed on the day that Egypt's president resigned after 30 years in power. At the time you read this, what have been the results of the peaceful actions that led to his resignation?

II.B. Do you think the ideas of Hitler and Stalin would be able to get a foothold in today's world? What role should the church play in making sure they can never take hold again? How can interfaith dialogue support those efforts?

II.B. Who since 1960 would you add to the list of fanatics with dangerous ideas?

IV.A. If Gandhi is the first entry in a list of those with positive ideas, who else would you place on that list?

IV.B.1. How do doubt and truth relate to each other when it comes to matters of faith?

V. If someone wanted to quote the truth *you* embody, what would you like them to say?