

Outline – Myths that Make You Miserable

1. Humor about Murphy's Law (a myth)

Murphy's Law and its many corollaries -- many of which I sure you are all-too-familiar with:

"Nothing is as easy as it looks; everything takes longer than you think; if anything can go wrong it will."

The other line always moves faster.

The chance of the bread falling with the peanut butter and jelly side down is directly proportional to the cost of the carpet.

Inside every large problem is a series of small ones struggling to get out.

No matter how long or hard you shop for an item, after you've bought it, it will be on sale somewhere cheaper.

The repairman will never have seen a model quite like yours before.

The light at the end of the tunnel is the headlights of an oncoming train

2. Myths – what are they? A popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone. An unfounded or untrue story with just enough truth in it to make it believable.

- a. Myths were told or written to answer some of the mysteries of life. -- Who are we? Where did we come from? Why do these things happen?
 - i. In ancient times, myths sometimes explained things that we now understand through science, like the movement of the stars and planets and the changing of the seasons.
- b. Talk Shows sell you their Myths (taken by a man who had to stay home for a week, and decided to see what message they were giving)
 - i. All your problems are somebody else's fault.
 - ii. This world owes you happiness.
 - iii. You'll be happy if you get whatever you want.
(That one is not true. I can tell you.)
 - iv. There is never any reason to feel guilty.
 - v. Man is basically good and unselfish.
 - vi. All beliefs are equally valid.
 - vii. Pornography and perversion are innocent.

- viii. You can have it all.
- ix. You shouldn't have to wait for anything.
- x. Because you're God, the answer lies within you

These beliefs are our new myths. The talk show guru's and high priests of the entertainment world would have us believe these things as true. They sell us myths and tell us they are true.

We have Urban Legends too. I heard a few the other day and so I decided to investigate them, especially since I never forward an email without verifying its truth:

- 1. Don't buy gas from certain gas companies b/c they import from middle eastern, terrorist countries. (www.snopes.com)
- 2. Pepsi is putting the ACLU pledge of allegiance on their cans devoid of the "under God" words. Coke also has been accused.
 - a. Truth: Dr. Pepper after 9/11 put out a can that said, "One Nation Indivisible" with the Statue of Liberty on it. Noone else has put out a can. Time Magazine put it on their cover with Bush on the cover, "One Nation Indivisible".

If we base our actions on things that we read as easily as from a forwarded email, then imagine what we believe and how we act on the messages we are more sublimely receiving via television, magazines and even family upbringing.

Lies are everywhere, and many of us have built parts of our lives upon them. Not only have we been told lies, but we tell ourselves lies every day to simply cope with life.

- c. *Talmud: We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are.*
 - i. ***Perception for each of us is reality***
 - ii. Events in your life are just the raw data from which you and I create our "stories." Our ability to interpret that data is limited by our perspective from which we view it. Therefore, our stories may not always line up with the facts
 - iii. Recall the illustration of the photo of the mansion I used last week.
 - iv. Have you ever noticed how a brother or sister or childhood friend remembers the same events differently from you?
 - v. We make up stories every day to "fit" our lives into; to give sense to our world and define our place within it...and then we act upon this reality we created...we make the world conform to our view of it.
 - vi. Stories become myths:
 - 1. Ancient civ: myths were the means to explain and interpret the natural world in which they lived.

- a. ie. evolution – a myth that explains our existence. There is some truth in the myth...and yet the lie changes the way we look at life.
 - 2. To the mythology civs, myths weren't just less than true, they were greater than truth.
 - a. And so it is with our story...***our myth becomes greater than truth because it is how we have learned to make sense of our lives.***
 - 3. Think about the myths we tell ourselves:
 - a. I am the way I am because my Mom was mean to me. (Don't forget last week's sermon).
 - b. I got fired from my last job because my Boss had it in for me. (who are we kidding?)
 - i. It is the way we deal with loss, pain or hurt. We cannot always deal with the truth..or we are unwilling to.
 - c. I never have enough money because my job doesn't pay enough (I have heard executives say this!) (and I have seen people making min. wage build savings accounts).
 - d. To please his father a freshman went out for track. He had no athletic ability, though the father had been a good miler in his day. His first race was a two-man race in which he ran against the school miler. He was badly beaten. Not wanting to disappoint his father, the boy wrote home as follows: "You will be happy to know that I ran against Bill Williams, the best miler in school. He came in next to last, while I came in second."
 - vii. If the story is yours, it seems like the truth. If it is not, it is a myth. That is why so many non-christians will classify the bible as myth. It is because it is not their story....yet.
3. Myths – Their power over us:
 - a. Negative stories can become such a part of our being that they can drive our behavior...that they (myths) take on a meaning more powerful than truth.
 - b. The Power of False Beliefs
 - i. A belief does not have to be true in order to affect us negatively. You can believe something that is not true and it will have a very negative effect upon you.
 - ii. There were seventy-three million baby boomers born from 1948 to 1964. Most of them were raised on a book written by a man by the name of Dr. Spock.
 - 1. A few years ago he gave a television interview and he said, "Oops! I made a mistake. That's not the way to raise children after all!" Great!
 - c. Why don't we give up our myths?:
 - i. ***We have an innate need to be right.*** Our myths are so powerful that we will do almost anything to prove them true.

1. *They (Myths) give us the illusion that we have some control over the world in which we live.*
2. And they give us an explanation for what we might not be able or willing to explain.
 - a. Recall the “why I got fired” example? It is hard to look in the mirror and see what is really there.
 - b. Truth can be hard to hear. It is a tough pill to swallow.

ii. ***Beliefs determine Behavior***

1. When we decide the world works a certain way, we BEHAVE in a certain way to ensure that the world will respond the way we assumed it would. But that is all illusion.
2. Myths become embedded in our subconsciousness that we lose sight of the fact that they are myths.
3. You might believe: “I am worthless. I am ugly.” Because someone significant in your life said it to you.
 - a. Michael Jackson is a great example of a myth being lived out. Told by his father that he was ugly and had a fat nose, he has spent his life changing it, because he believes the myth.
 - b. He cannot separate himself from the myth. It is his identity now.
4. Perspective: “I am worthless.”
 - a. The truth is you felt worthless at one point in your life.
 - b. But you project your past onto your future and it swallows your present.
 - c. *I felt worthless when I was 10 years old because...*” changes the perspective. Change the perspective and you are empowered to change your myth by subjecting it to the truth.

iii. We try to get other people to accept our myths as well...We impose our myths on others...

1. The carpool – one unhappy worker, one happy worker. The driver asked the happy worker, do you realize what you do? I make cars, the happy worker replied.
 - a. NO...you move pieces of metal from one place to another all day long. You don’t make cars, you move senseless, thoughtless pieces of metal from one place to the other, bolting them on and doing it all over again, all day long.
 - b. The unhappy worker succeeded in shattering the value and positive myth that the happy worker had.

- c. The happy worker had seen himself as part of something greater than himself, contributing to something. He lost his satisfaction when he traded one story for another.
 - d. Both were true in a sense, but one gave life and the other took it away.
2. The worse thing we can do is to destroy another person's healthy context? Mark Twain was married to a devout Christian with an abiding faith in God. But Mark Twain had a cynicism that was destructive. He admits in his autobiography that he regrets that had broken his wife's spirit through his life and example.

iv. From the beginning...

1. The *first quote* of Satan's words in the Bible needs to be read very carefully in order to understand its meaning: "*Did God really say you must not eat of any tree in the garden?*"

Of course God didn't say they couldn't eat from *any* tree. Satan *knew* what God had said but he was trying to *imply* that God is *not* what Eve *thought* He was. With this question Satan is planting the seeds of doubt in Eve's mind. "What is God *really* like anyway?" "What kind of God *creates* good things to eat then doesn't let you *eat* them?"

2. We begin to think that we deserve the one thing which is denied us. McDonald's capitalizes on this thought with their slogan "You *deserve* a break today!", Burger King says "Have it your way!"

Eve was in the *perfect* situation. She had everything her mind, heart, body, and soul needed, but Satan tricked her into thinking she deserved *more*. She thought she *deserved* to disobey God.

3. She believed a lie and then acted upon that belief. And then...she enticed her husband to believe it as well.
4. Myths will make you miserable because they are based upon a lie.

4. Some Myths we Struggle With:

a. *Life Should Be Easy (I'm a Christian, after all)*

- i. The result of believing this myth is that when the going gets tough, people Become Bitter.

- 1. Bitterness, anger, and resentment are natural responses from those who believe that they should be living on easy street. How dare this difficulty come into my life? How dare these problems disrupt my comfortable existence?
- 2. Mark Twain became bitter after the death of his daughter, his other daughter becoming diagnosed with epilepsy and his wife becoming an invalid. He turned

against God. He railed at God for the misery he suffered. It degenerated until he saw Satan as the hero in the garden and God as the bad guy.

3. In looking into my own heart, I see how often times I resent problems, instead of accept them as part of living in the fallen world. I realize how often I whine and complain whenever difficulties come my way. I throw an internal temper tantrum, becoming angry & bitter toward others, and sometimes toward God, for making my life so difficult.
 - ii. We apply this myth in the spiritual realm as well. We deceive ourselves with the Spiritual Lie which says, "Because I am a Christian God will protect me from pain and suffering." There can this mistaken notion that faith in God will, if not completely eliminate problems, will at least greatly diminish them from our lives.
 - iii. Life will get tough. If you have been a Christian very long, you know the truth, life will be tough. When you become a Christian, expect life to get tougher.
 - b. *There is No Such thing as Truth* or "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere."
 - i. Now that is the most dangerous myth of all
 - ii. A recent Barna Research Group survey on what Americans believe confirms what this brief scenario illustrates: we are in danger of becoming a nation of relativists.
 1. The Barna survey asked, "Is there absolute truth?"
 2. Amazingly, 66 percent of American adults responded that they believe that "there is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct."
 3. The figure rises to 72 percent when it comes to those between the ages of 18 and 25. Christianity Today, October 26, 1992, p. 30
 - iii. Modernism says there is no truth. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" when Jesus said He had come to testify to the truth.
 1. That was 2000 years ago and there is still the same struggle over what truth is.
 - iv. Here is the worst thing about this false belief.
 1. A false belief can lead you to a false security when it comes to your soul.
 2. There are millions and millions of people who are being led down a primrose path by the myths that are perpetrated today.
 3. **NARROW ROAD.**
 4. **23** "Lord," someone asked Him, "are there few being saved?" He said to them, **24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because I tell you, many will try to enter and won't be able (Luke 13:23-24)**
 5. "Enter through the narrow gate; because the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. **14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life; and few find it. (Mt 7:13-14)**
- c. *Your Conscience is your Guide (Pinocchio)*
 - i. Most people have heard that one. The conscience is a moral policeman, but you can train your conscience and you can train it the way you want to. You can sear your conscience with a hot iron so you're not even sensitive to it. It's just like burning your finger. "Let

your conscience be your guide." We will do things which will bear terrible consequences. Who can trust even their own conscience?

- ii. While at Nabisco, we had scales to check weights on all of our product. A box could be 3% underweight or up to 10% overweight without it being rejected and repacked. We would have to reset and recalibrate the scales on the line every time we switched products...wheat thins, better cheddars, ritz, etc, because the core weight of each brand was different. Sometimes someone would forget to check the scale or it would get dirty and come out of calibration, requiring an entire run to have to be hand weighed...imagine 4000 boxes of product being hand weighed and repacked?
- iii. Our conscience is like a sensitive scale, telling us when something out of balance is placed in our will. But our conscience can get out of calibration too. We cannot trust our conscience unless it is being calibrated (by the word of God regularly). WE might be using a MYTH to set our scales.

d. *Only Bad People go to Hell.*

- i. What is bad?
- ii. God's Standard – Perfection
- iii. Jesus paid the price. Jesus is Perfect.

5. John 8:31-36 "***The Truth shall set you Free***

- a. ³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then you are truly disciples of Mine;* ³² *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*" ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'" ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.* ³⁵ "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.
 - i. The myth that, because they were Abraham's seed, they were never in bondage to sin or anything or anybody has led them to close their minds to the truth of Jesus Christ.
- b. The gospel is the powerful truth that sets people free from the bondage to their myth.
 - i. Jesus is the Truth. (Jn 14:6) "I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except by me." He is the gospel. We don't try to imitate Christ. We allow Him to come into our lives and empower us with His very life. He TRANSFORMS us from the inside out!

6. Unmasking the Myths:

a. ***Look in the Mirror of the eternal:***

- i. Mirror, mirror on the wall...who is the fairest? (Snow White!)
 - 1. Does your mirror tell you the lies you want to hear?
 - 2. Do you break it when it tells you the truth that is hard to hear?

- ii. It is not when we gaze upon our own sinfulness that we see God, but rather, when we gaze upon God that we become aware of our sinfulness.
 - 1. To look AT ourselves will lead to delusion (ie the construction of myths because we will either see what we do not want to; or we will be so focused on our faults that we will learn to despise ourselves).
 - 2. When we look at God we see ourselves as we really are. (Isaiah 6 “Woe am I for I am undone”)
 - 3. God allows us to see ourselves when we see Him in His holiness.
 - 4. This again, is why worship is so vital to our daily lives and what we do here on Sunday Mornings.
 - 5. If you have an encounter with the Living, Holy God who created and redeemed you, you will not leave here the same.
 - a. You will be changed!
 - b. How much of the truth are we willing to hear?
 - c. How much of God's truth are we willing to see?
 - d. Our answer is directly proportional to our willingness to gaze at our own sinfulness. To gaze into the mirror of the Eternal means looking into God's eyes and seeing the truth of who we really are reflected there.
 - 6. To look at God will mirror back the truth about us. The truth God shows us is not one of condemnation, but of hope. Of our need for Him.
 - a. He shows us the lies we believe about ourselves.
 - b. Are you willing to look God in the face and see the truth about yourself?
- iii. God's word is that mirror. Begin looking there.
 - 1. *"Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?)Jer 23)*
 - 2. Word of God *"...is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).*
 - 3. Is there some sin in your life that you are trying to hide or excuse or justify? God has given you his Word so that you might use it to measure what is that you are thinking and saying about sin, and thereby know whether you are holding to a lie or to the truth.
 - 4. When you and I go to the doctor, we don't want him to lie to us. His failure to tell us we are sick doesn't make us better. Such action can only serve to delay the cure. It may well cost us our life. Only the truth can help us.
 - a. So it is with the Word.
 - b. In the hands of the Holy Spirit, our sin doctor, the Word is like a fire that burns through our lies.

- c. It's like a hammer that punches a hole in our excuses and lays bare what is really wrong with us-the truth that we are wretched sinners who can do nothing but throw ourselves at the mercy of our God.
 - d. The word of God dispels the myths and confronts us with the truth.
- b. ***Obedience is the key to knowing truth.*** Read what Jesus said in our passage of John 8:
 - i. read it very carefully to get the whole context.
 - ii. Look at verse 31. "If you abide in My word (if you live in obedience), you are My disciples indeed. And (as a result of obedience) you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - iii. That idea is that if I am going to know truth, I must obey Him.
 - 1. The more I obey Him, the more truth He discloses to me.
 - 2. The secret of knowing truth is to follow Jesus Christ with what you do know.
 - iv. You're not filled with the Spirit because you tithe, witness, or go to church. That's a myth:
 - 1. You're filled with the Spirit because you yield your whole life to the Father and He fills you.
 - 2. The result of His filling, because you don't harbor unconfessed sin or disobeyed commands, is that you go to church, not in order to be filled, but because you are filled.
- c. ***Allow the Son to Set You Free!*** The slave doesn't get the rights to the home, but the son does. And Jesus offers to set you free. Free from your myths.
 - i. AA – makes it clear that no-one overcomes an addiction in their own power.
 - ii. Jesus said it first. You cannot overcome your myths, you cannot change your life yourself.
 - iii. You need Jesus to set you free. Won't you take that first step today?