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Walking with our Neighbors in Truth and Love

“Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it.

God’s saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us. The merciful commitment strengthens us to see the truth about ourselves and repent. The conviction and repentance moves us to cling to and rest in God’s mercy and grace.” –Tim Keller

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What will this series look like?

We will want to remember: “The best lies always have a bit of truth in them.”

Diagnosis: What is being believed about this topic?

Listen and suspend judgement: What gave rise to this belief in our culture? On what level does it make sense and potentially even “work” according to the human intellect, experience, and emotions?

Rapport’s Rules: What can we learn? Can we establish any common ground?

Where do these ideas potentially lead to?

Counter Catechesis: What are the spiritual issues going on? What do the scriptures say? How can we offer helpful truth and hope into the topic?

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It’s my Life; I’ll Live it My Way

- “The human will; that force unseen, The offspring of a deathless soul, can hew a way to any goal, though walls of granite intervene.”-James Allen 1903
- “A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances.”
- Additional related sentiments:
 - You can do anything you set your mind to....
 - Follow your heart.....
 - You’re the captain of your own ship.....
- “I guess you’ll have to find your way like the rest of us Sonny, that’s what it means to be free” –Will Smith in I, Robot.

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What gave rise to this belief in our culture?

- First, it's not new. This is something that is as ancient as Eden.
- In America we have grown to develop endless opportunities for work, meaning, and personal success. Increasing the desire of personal power to chart the course.
- The rise of capitalism. Having many freedoms to pursue dreams that bring about mass accumulation which in past history was uncommon.
- Individualism coupled with the foundational declaration of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness being the chief aim of society.
- The Rise of French Philosophies. "Truth is a thing of this world. It is produced by multiple forms of constraint and that includes the regular effects of power" –Michael Foucault 1977
Power/Knowledge
- Western Assumptions: Personal Rights, Division between private and public morality, and the sanctity of personal choice.
- The fabric of pluralism and a definition of freedom that gives us a way to forge our own paths.

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The Rise of Poiesis and the decline of Mimesis

- Mimesis: Regards the world as having a given order and a given meaning and thus sees human beings as required to discover that meaning and conform themselves to it.
 - Poiesis: Sees the world as raw material out of which meaning and purpose can be created and forged by the individual.
- AKA: Life is what you make out of it....
- Few know about Nietzsche, but the majority are his ambassadors.
 - We are self-creators, the inventors, not the discoverers of meaning.

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Why is this sensible, powerful, and profound?

- It feels good to believe that we are in control.
- It feels secure to know that we can determine our destinies.
- It helps us cope with failure, feelings of helplessness, shame, and low self-esteem.
- Generally speaking; In America it works. Just don't cross certain boundaries, or don't get caught outside the law, do your own thing.
- It is empowering to feel that we contain our best intentions; we know better, we are exercising real freedom.
- We see people in power, we hear success stories, and we see their process of getting there and we admire it. Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, they did it their way....

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What can we learn? Any common ground?

- It is impressive and exciting to see what people can achieve.
- Stories of rising out of poverty, charting our own courses, discovery and creating new things can be inspiring, helpful, and encouraging.
- We all experience a yearning to live our own way.
- We can celebrate living in a country where many opportunities to use our abilities await us.

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Where could these ideas lead?

- Optimism: A safe and productive society where everyone's views work together for a common good that benefits the whole.
- Or: A prideful and entitled group of people that constantly undermine one another to advantage themselves and their own ways of living.
 - - Where competing definitions of the "good life" fight against each other in an endless cycle of power games. Youth who are thoroughly confused about their own limitations, constantly let down by reality, and unable to cultivate any enduring meaning about life, work, and where all reality is leading.

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What spiritual issues are going on?

- Idolatry-A refusal to let God be God and conform our lives to His Will.
- Disillusionment- Did you choose to become born? Does your life belong to you? Are you in control of your expiration date?
- Pride- Are you sure you don't have limits and can do whatever you set your mind to? Are you sure you know what's best for you? How reliable has your heart been in the past?
- What do you think of your ten year old self? What about twenty years ago self? Five years ago? What will you say about yourself ten years from now?

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What do the Scriptures say?

- “Freedom , then, is not the absence of limitations and constraints but it is finding the right ones, those that endure and liberate us.” –T.K.
- “When I came to Christianity; I realized that it did have a rule and order, but the chief aim of this rule and order was to let good and beautiful things run wild”-G.K. Chesterton.
- Galatians 5:1
- John 8:34-38
- Romans 6:15-19 AND 12:1-2
- What is the Christian definition of freedom and the way to life?
- What is so good about this news and hope?

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Recommended Resources

- The Freedom of the Christian- Essay by Martin Luther
- The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness + Making Sense of God-Timothy Keller
- Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self- Carl Trueman
- Live No Lies-John Mark Comer
- Misreading the Scriptures with Individualist Eyes- Randolph Richards

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