

Focus on the Family, James Dobson introduces Del Tackett on the Truth Project
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September 2006

Dear Friends:

I want to share something with you today that is a source of excitement for the entire staff here at Focus on the Family. Our enthusiasm is centered on a new \$2 million DVD production featuring the work and teachings of Dr. Del Tackett, president of our Focus on the Family Institute. This 12-part series, titled *Focus on the Family's The Truth Project™*, opens and explains the Scriptures in a way rarely equaled. Since I had little to do with its creation, I can tell you with complete candor that God's ordination appears to be on this production. I was literally in tears this morning as Shirley and I watched the DVDs and heard Dr. Tackett talk passionately about the eternal verities found in the Word. He went on to illustrate how they provide ultimate answers to every question posed by the great philosophers of history. I'm confident that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will come alive for you, as well, as Del weaves together the central theme of "Truth" throughout the series.

The primary purpose of this study, which Del has been preparing for many years now (including teaching it in a seminary setting), is to facilitate transformation among those who are exposed to it. That inevitably occurs when a person comes face-to-face with God Himself. It happened to Isaiah when he had such an encounter. The prophet described it this way:

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. . . . 'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.' Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:1; 5-8; NIV)

We in our day call that transformation!

Let me pass the pen over now to my colleague at Focus on the Family, Dr. Del Tackett, and ask him to tell you more about *The Truth Project*. I believe you will find it even more inspirational than my words have described.

What a great privilege it is for me to temporarily pick up the pen that has blessed so many people for so long! My admiration for Dr. Dobson began years before 1999, when I had the honor of joining him here at Focus on the Family as one of his executive vice presidents. That admiration has only grown as I have worked closely with him and observed him over these past seven years. There is no disparity between what you see in public and who he is in real life. That is the definition of integrity, and Dr. Dobson lives it every day.

The fight to save the family, which Dr. Dobson was initially called to years ago, is really part of a larger battle—an overarching struggle that has raged from the very beginning—and one that confronts us from every quarter today.

It is the fundamental battle. Let me frame it for you.

When God created the cosmos, He called it all “good”—a statement that is both ethical and pragmatic. That is, God’s creative work was both ethically “good” (consistent with His character and nature) and qualitatively and practically “good” (it was exquisite and it worked perfectly). This included, of course, the most marvelous and unique creation of all—man. Up to this point in the story, there was no conflict and no battle.

However, all of that changed—and changed drastically, with the entrance of an enemy—an adversary who was determined to turn the story upside down and destroy the “goodness” of God’s creation. But, it was the ethical aspect of the “good” that this enemy hated the most—anything that reflected and bore the image of God.

Jesus called this villain no less than “the father of lies.” Listen to His description:

“He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44, ESV).

That’s not a pretty dossier for the serpent, alias *Satan* or the *devil*.

Now, I am not a person who sees a demon behind every bush. But I spent more than 20 years in the United States Air Force, and one thing that I clearly learned about military tactics is that you must understand who your enemy is. In 2 Corinthians 2:11, Paul makes an interesting statement: “We are not unaware of Satan’s schemes.” I am afraid that the vast majority of God’s people in our culture today *are* unaware of our enemy’s schemes. That is why we are not faring well in the battle.

In a recent survey, George Barna found that a scant 9 percent of “born-again” Americans hold a biblical worldview, and that only 27 percent of self-identified Christians even believe Satan exists. If the “roaring lion” who prowls about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8) can convince his prey to believe that he doesn’t exist or to remain ignorant of his schemes, then there will be many who will find themselves in grievous turmoil and unaware as to why.

Let me give you a practical example. Let’s visit the bedside of a young woman who has wasted away to skin and bones, barely weighing 70 pounds. Is it cancer? Is it some rare disease that has brought her to this point? No. It is bulimia. It is a deeply held belief in the lie that no matter how thin she gets, she still perceives herself as fat. And if she is fat, she is unacceptable and without significance in a world that promises her love and affection if she would just lose a few more pounds.

This is the battle—the cosmic battle between truth and lies.

Do you want to peek into the home of a broken man who is experiencing the devastating consequences of an addiction to the lies of pornography? How

about peering into another home, where a young father is struggling to raise two kids alone because his wife believed the lies that motherhood is a worthless task and that real significance comes from the corporate world? Would you like to slip into a child's bedroom at night and listen to her silent cries because her parents believed a host of the world's lies and are going through a bitter divorce? Would you like to follow me into a small room in an abortion clinic and watch the horror that results as a young woman acts out her belief in a lie? Should we speak of spousal abuse? Child abuse? Rampant sexually-transmitted disease? Gambling addictions? Drug addictions? Homosexuality? The attack against marriage? Which direction would you like to turn? The weeping and the wailing are everywhere, testifying that believing lies results in heartbreaking calamities.

In the garden, Satan countered God's Word—His Truth—with the only thing that Satan is good at: lies. He laid before Eve his counterfeit truth claims and, unfortunately, she and Adam bought them. The resulting consequences, which God had warned them about, came to pass. The nature of man became sinful, and he "died" according to the Word of the Lord. The promise of Satan ("You will not surely die!") proved to be a lie, as his promises always do.

The rest is history, recorded not only in the Scriptures but everywhere the actions of man have been chronicled. Sin and evil are a present reality.

This is the basis for viewing the world in terms of a fierce battle. The conflict between good and evil is not only real, but it is up-close and personal to every one of us. Listen to how God describes the internal battle as He speaks through Paul in Galatians 5:16-17:

"Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."

When we piece together the overwhelming evidence from Scripture concerning this conflict, it is clear that we are indeed dealing with a struggle between truth and lies. Sin is often referred to as “deceitfulness.” In stark contrast, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth who will guide us into all Truth; the Word of God is described as Truth; Christ proclaims that it is Truth that sets us free; Scripture proclaims that we are sanctified by the Truth; and Jesus confessed before Pilate that the reason He came into the world was to testify to the Truth.

This is the “cosmic battle.” Unfortunately, in our culture, the lies of the world, the flesh and the devil bombard us from every quarter. And, when we fail to recognize them as lies and instead accept them as true, the consequences are significant . . . and devastating.

Sadly, the vast majority of believers in our culture are ill-prepared to fight in this battle. We suffer from the same pathologies the world does and, statistically, at roughly the same levels: divorce, sexual addictions, eating disorders, depression, worry, apathy, discontent, anger, abortion, poor media viewing habits, pornography . . . and so on.

How can this be? Quite simply, we are falling for the counterfeits.

I know of only one way to change this. Romans 12:2 (NIV) points to the solution:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Is this a hollow promise from God? Can “renewing of the mind” really bring about a true transformation that will keep us from conforming to the world?

I believe it can. I have seen it happen over and over again. Every semester, 88 top-notch college students come to Focus on the Family for its semester-long Institute program. God deeply transforms them here. I have seen it

happen to my seminary students. I have seen it happen in Egypt, where I taught not long ago. I have seen it happen to high school kids and retirees, black and white, rich and poor. But the numbers are too small to have the pervasive impact that we need.

Dr. Dobson asked me to tell you about *Focus on the Family's The Truth Project™*. Well, I just did—at least the heart of it. We are in a battle for Truth. The consequences of following the lies of this world are wreaking havoc upon God's people and our culture. Focus on the Family has made a high-stakes commitment to do something about it. We have taken key elements from the more than 300 hours of material that I have been teaching to students at the Focus on the Family Institute and New Geneva Theological Seminary, and have created a DVD-based, small-group curriculum that is designed to build a comprehensive, systematic, biblical worldview within those who participate.

If this sounds like a sales pitch, it isn't. That is because you can't call Focus to purchase the DVDs! We aren't openly distributing *The Truth Project* curriculum at this time. Allow me to explain why.

We are convinced that the cultural transformation we seek will not come as the result of a neat product. It must come through a deep work of God. I pray for each of my students by name. Why? Because I know that transformation does not come from me, but from God. And that is why we are implementing *The Truth Project* in small groups where the hosts will be praying for each of the people in their homes—praying not only that individual hearts will be transformed, but that some of their guests will stand and commit to open their homes for others in a small-group setting. In this way, we hope that the message will multiply and reach thousands, maybe millions.

So, you can't call us to request a copy of *The Truth Project* DVDs. Instead, we are holding short conferences around the country to train those who

want to host a small group. We have held four such gatherings so far—in Charlotte, Rockford, Colorado Springs, and Seattle—where it has been clear that God is blessing our efforts. There has been a “buzz” in each crowd, and I have spoken with many who felt “compelled” to be there. In Seattle, people flew in from all over—from as far away as Florida, Canada and even Shanghai, China. Our challenge to each person is to consider opening their home to lead just one small group and to dedicate themselves to praying for their guests by name.

That’s the deal. This is really a partnership between Focus and you. The rest is just a matter of trusting God for the results. We have a full schedule of conferences in the fall: Boston; Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis; Atlanta; Orlando; and Anchorage. If the Lord is tugging at you to be a part of this exciting adventure, please join us.

There is one central theme running through *The Truth Project*: the Truth that we seek—and the Truth that stands directly opposed to the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil—is found ultimately in the character and being of God Himself. That is why, over and over again, the DVD curriculum begins and ends with Him.

Let me give you an example of how this works and, in so doing, shed some light on one of the prevalent lies that has infected many believers in our culture today. To do so, we need to go back in time about 3,500 years or so ...

Twelve men had been selected, one from each of the tribes of Israel. When they departed the camp, I suspect there might have been no shortage of butterflies in their stomachs. Sent out as spies, they were to capture a first look at the land the Lord had promised to them—a land flowing with milk and honey. Their mission represented a significant chapter of an amazing story that stretched all the way back to the days of Abraham and before. Now, the

land of promise lay before them, and these 12 men had been tasked with spying it out.

This secret mission promised to be one of the more climactic in Israel's history. Behind them lay a pathway filled with dramatic episodes. The rescue from Egyptian slavery must have seemed like a lifetime ago. The realities of the locusts, the Nile becoming blood, the frogs and the Angel of Death may have seemed like distant dreams to them. Yet, since that time, they had witnessed a myriad of the most notable moments: the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of fire, the tablets of stone, the manna and the water from the rock. It was all there: memorial stone after memorial stone. Confirmation after confirmation that the Lord was their God, going before them in might and power.

Now, they were finally at the end of their long journey; one step away from much awaited Canaan, the land of promise. No doubt, many a fireside conversation in the desert had turned to it. How often had children snuggled close to their parents, asking for yet another bedtime story about the "land flowing with milk and honey"? Now they were on the doorstep, and these 12 leaders had been chosen to take the first peek at this hidden treasure.

But something terrible happened. Something changed the picture. Something dimmed the gleam in the eyes of the Israelites and doused their giddy expectations. You can read about it in Numbers 13 and 14. It's not a pretty story.

The men spied out the land according to plan. All 12 of them saw the same things. But although they each shared the same experience, their reactions were very different. Ten men returned to the camp in fear and trepidation, while only two returned emboldened. Ten recommended that Israel abstain from the battle, while two advised that it advance. Why the disparity? How did this happen?

There was no question that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey—the men had even returned with a cluster of grapes so large that it had to be carried on a pole. But there were giants in Canaan, too. Ten of the spies saw the giants from man’s perspective—too big, too strong and too frightening. They returned to camp uttering words of fear to the whole congregation. The other two spies, however, saw the challenges in Canaan from God’s perspective. The giants were big, to be sure, but their God was bigger than a million giants.

How can 12 men, all seeing the same thing, return with such contrasting perspectives? The answer to this question is of the utmost importance to us today, because it speaks to the heart of almost every reason why some Christians shrink back in fear while others march forward in boldness. It has nothing to do with a good or poor self-image, or whether or not someone has achieved “self-actualization.” It has everything to do with our beliefs about God and our thoughts on who He really is.

Ten Israelite spies thought victory was impossible because they believed success was dependent upon their own strength. They thought that the giants were too big, too strong and too many, and that the consequences of fighting the giants would be worse than the consequences of treating God with contempt.

The other two spies believed victory was possible because they knew success was dependent upon God, not themselves. They were convinced God was greater than an entire universe of giants. These two men feared the consequences of disobeying God more than they feared the giants in the land. They put their faith fully in the Lord, and He blessed them for it. In stark contrast, the ten spies wandered 40 more years in the desert because of their lack of trust in God. They died in exile and never entered into the land flowing with milk and honey.

Where do we stand today? Do we side with the ten, or with the two?

When you look at our culture, what do you see? Do you see unconquerable giants? Do you see impossible odds? Do you see a myriad of reasons to become fearful?

Without a doubt, there are giants threatening us, in spades. But we need to see them from God's perspective, not ours.

Slavery was a huge giant in the late 1700s, when William Wilberforce became a Christian and began to see it for the evil that it was. He was a sickly man, yet he persisted in coming before the British Parliament year after year to deliver eloquent speeches in opposition to slavery. He labored for 46 years, in the face of threats and slander; but a few days before his death, he saw the great British Empire vote to abolish slavery. One man, one giant, one mighty God.

I believe the scroll of Hebrews 11, the Hall of Faith, continues to be unrolled and new names continually added to it . . . names of those whose hope and trust rest in God, His truth and His promises.

Yes, we live in a land filled with giants: judicial tyranny, homosexual activism, terrorism that could strike at any minute, a liberal media that seems to spin and distort everything into ugliness, rampant immorality and so on. If you see these from man's perspective, they are certainly enough to make you want to run away, disengage or sit on the sideline. Unfortunately, many of us have done just that. Many have listened to a subtle voice that whispers: "Give up! You've lost. The forces against you are too great!" That is not the voice of God, but a deceiving message from the world, the flesh and the devil.

We, however, are not those who side with the ten. By embracing the reality of who God is and His Truth claims for all of life, we can stand up against

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every giant that threatens us. Our all-powerful God has promised us, through the prophet Isaiah, that “no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you” (Isaiah 54:17). Our prayer is that *The Truth Project* will provide you with the knowledge and insight you need in order to be a vessel for change in our fallen world.

Oh, that God would grant us a vision of Him! That is the desperate need of this hour. Take hope, my friends.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9).

Those were the writings of my colleague, Dr. Del Tackett. I hope that his comments have given you just a small taste of the compelling and potentially life-changing material found in *The Truth Project*. To read about it simply doesn't do the curriculum justice, though. You need to experience it for yourself. If you're interested in learning more about this exciting endeavor, including how to host a small group in your area, please log on to our Web site at thetruthproject.org. Don't miss looking at the fascinating interactive lesson guide or viewing some of the 30-plus video clips posted there. If nothing else, I hope you will pray with us that the Lord will bless this initiative throughout the world. We honestly believe that *The Truth Project* holds as much potential to advance the Kingdom as any project we've undertaken in the history of the ministry.

God's richest blessings to you and your loved ones as you endeavor to defend His Truth within your own circles of influence in the coming days. See you in October!

Sincerely,

James C. Dobson, Ph.D.
Founder and Chairman

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