

Truthfulness—UUFVB Covenant Groups—November 2020

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: What is most on your mind today?

Opening Readings

“Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth.” (*Gautama Buddha, founder of Buddhism*)

“To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as night the day, that thou canst not then be false to any man.” (*William Shakespeare, British playwright*)

“The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.” (*Winston Churchill, British statesman, former Prime Minister*)

Topic Exploration

Society, especially Western society, places a high value on truth. Truth is the foundation for a fair and just society. In court, we require witnesses to swear to tell ‘*the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth*’, because only that way can justice be delivered. But is truthfulness an outdated principle in modern times, or does it still have value?

There are two aspects of truthfulness: being true to yourself, and being true to others.

The two are not quite the same thing, although they are closely linked. Truthful people will:

- Know themselves--their own strengths and weaknesses. They will not delude themselves about their successes or failures, nor misrepresent themselves to others;
- Meet any commitments or promises that they make;
- Understand that truthfulness creates social bonds and societal cohesiveness, and lying and hypocrisy break both.

Is it ever right to NOT tell the truth? There are two possible ways to not tell the truth: withhold information, or provide false information. Most of us know that you do not need to tell everyone everything. Context is all-important, and you have to consider whether people need and/or want to know something. Further, you may possess confidential information that you have promised not to share. Is it right to provide false information or lie? Truthfulness is important, but so is not hurting or endangering others. Truthfulness and tact must go hand in hand, because otherwise the truth may be unacceptable or hurtful to those who hear it. This is where you exercise your personal conscience. However, it is never acceptable to lie in order to make yourself look better, or to avoid trouble that you have brought upon yourself. If you lie about yourself, or to avoid trouble, and people find out, they are unlikely to trust you again. (*Excerpts from www.SkillsYouNeed/personal skills/Truthfulness*)

Questions / Sharing

1. Do you find yourself puzzling about how much information to share, and are you hesitant to be truthful about your personal life if asked specific questions?
2. Do you agree with the statement that it's unacceptable to lie to make yourself look better, or to avoid trouble you brought upon yourself? Do you know people who have done that, or have you been tempted to do so? What are the likely ramifications of such behavior?
3. Can you share instances in which you told "a little white lie" and it came back to haunt you, or led to guilt and discomfort?
4. Do you expect different levels of truthfulness from spouses or families, than from sources in the outside world? If so, why?
5. Sometimes you may think you are being truthful, but your information is faulty, so it's not really true. Have you had experiences where you thought you told the truth, but later realized you didn't? How did you make amends, and how often do you make an effort to take corrective action?
6. Have you been lied to about a significant matter, and how did that affect your relationship with the one who told the lie?
7. Do you believe that truth is Incontrovertible, as Winston Churchill said? Or do you believe truth depends on context and source and other variables?
8. If you say what you believe is true, and someone else says what they believe to be true, but the two truths differ, what do you do?
9. In what circumstances would you have no hesitation to lie, or withhold the truth?
10. Please give your reactions to the closing readings.

Closing Readings

"Humans believe so many lies because we aren't aware. We ignore the truth or we just don't see the truth. When we are educated, we accumulate a lot of knowledge, and all that knowledge is just like a wall of fog that doesn't allow us to perceive the truth, what really is.

"Be Impeccable with your word. Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love." (*Don Miguel Ruiz, Mexican psychologist*)

"All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth." (*Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher*)

Check-out and reflections on today's session: Please express any closing thoughts on the content or process of today's session.

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
these we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping