SCRIPTURE:
Jesus Before Pilate

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. (John 18:33–38, NIV)

MEDITATION:
In this excerpt from Jesus's trial, we see a Roman governor asking a question that seems just as relevant for our situation as it was for his, "What is truth?"

As scientists, engineers, or mathematicians, we are asked to have skeptical minds and to see evidence for what we deem to be true. As Christians, we should expect no less for our faith.

Mastering science, engineering, or math is not easy. It requires years of rigorous effort just to acquire the basics. It requires a lifetime of learning, thinking, and application to retain and expand on them.

Once we accept the reality and force of our sin nature and the reality and sin-cleansing force of Christ's atoning blood for us on the cross, the "easy" part of being a Christian is behind us. After that, as our Lord begins to grow us in him, we begin the difficult part. We must learn how to listen to the Holy Spirit who teaches, informs, and leads us to do the Father's will—following Jesus is not easy.

Unfortunately, out of laziness or fear, some Christians stop after the "easy" part and allow their pastors or other leaders to learn, think, and work for them. Thus, if even one pastor or leader goes astray or focuses on one side of God's truth while ignoring all other relevant sides that bring balance to the equation, many will be led astray. This latter problem seems to be particularly prevalent now.

REFLECTION:
How should we interact with fellow Christians when they fail to see their oversight? How should we interact with skeptics when they fail to see the science in what we as professionals proclaim? Or how should we interact with nonbelievers when we want to share our faith with them?

Here are six thoughts that may help answer these questions.

1. Follow the example of supreme love and forgiveness exhibited by the Father through Christ and his death on the cross.
2. Don't forget what we have in common. Perhaps that is our belief and trust in Christ; perhaps it is our being relatives or friends; perhaps it is being fellow Americans or fellow
travelers on this globe; or perhaps it is just one aspect of the truth you are trying to convey.

3. Recognize that, short of a miracle, you will not be able to persuade them to the truth in one encounter; the process may take time.

4. Do, in the meantime, as my first adult Sunday school teacher taught, "Agree to disagree agreeably." That is where the second thought can be applied, especially if we are fellow Christians. As long as we are agreed that we have the same now-and-forever relationship with the Lord God Almighty, Creator of the universe, then any disagreement we have pales in comparison.

5. Concede ignorance when you encounter an unfamiliar argument or claimed fact. If it is important enough to warrant verification and further discussion, promise to return to it at a later time and do so.

6. Stay on point. Don't be distracted from the main discussion.

Sometimes, even these six are not enough to crack open the doors of possible acceptance of truth. They remain steadfastly shut. In that case, there is a seventh and final thought: Move on.

PRAYER:
King Jesus, as we engage others in discussions of the truth, keep us focused on you and your love for them. Holy Spirit, remind us that we have more in common with them than we have differences. Father God, give us the patience we need to return to the discussion as often as is needed and the wisdom to know when to do that. Lord Jesus, give us your heart to see how we can extend understanding and compassion to agree to disagree agreeably. Holy Spirit, take away our pride so we can concede ignorance when it exists. Heavenly Father, keep us focused on what counts and prevent us from being sidetracked. Triune God, make it clear when the time has come, to move on, so we do not waste time fighting a hopeless battle. Help us defend your truth always.

Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
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Carlos is the husband of his childhood sweetheart, Christine. They are the parents of three sons and grandparents of seven grandchildren. Chris and Carl attend the Green Mountain Community Alliance Church in Duxbury, Vermont, where he leads the men's Bible study. He has authored a book on the Trinity.