

Vital Supplement for Spiritual Vitality

ARE YOU A LOVER OF TRUTH OR A PRODUCT OF INDOCTRINATION?

I recently had lunch with a person who admitted that he realized that there were two types of Christians: “*trained*” and “*well learned*.” He confessed that he was “*trained*” and not “*well learned*.” As a result, he often found himself struggling with and negatively reacting to ideas, positions, terms, and words that were counter to, never addressed, or ridiculed by his former pastor. The reason why he believed what he believed was because he had embraced, for the most part, the worldview of his former pastor, a man he sat under for many, many years. In essence, his basic problem was that he was not a lover of truth, but a lover of his pastor’s instruction. While I empathized with his struggle of indoctrination, I tried to motivate him to become a lover of truth. Because his pastor taught him what to believe, he not only habitually observed and judged all things from this indoctrinated mindset, but has become identified or characterized as a follower of his pastor.

A person who loves truth will pursue truth no matter where it is found or who proclaims it. In fact, the disposition of a lover of truth is one of honest inquiry, investigation, and rational discourse—no matter if the person holds different theological beliefs, shares foreign or unfamiliar ideas, or even communicates or expresses himself differently. See, the person who loves truth realizes that one should not merely seek instruction but truth. The only acceptable instruction is that which is true. The importance of this factor cannot be over estimated because:

"What our mind LINGERS on will INFLAME our emotions which will slowly CAPTIVATE our will & eventually CONTROL our life [Romans 12:1-2]."

Quite frankly, indoctrination is all too commonplace in our academic settings and in our churches. As Christians we must recapture the wonder and pursuit of truth, not indoctrination. Indoctrination is imbuing or saturating another with instruction to the extent that this teaching becomes a habituated way of “*seeing*” and “*doing*.” We must be characterized with honest inquiry and possess a teachable disposition, ever delighting in “*true-truth*” rather than habitually distrusting, alienating or even mocking those whose ideas or expressions are unfamiliar or different. We must be bearers of truth and Christ-like love rather than people who obstruct, ridicule, and reject those who think and communicate differently. If truth is not harmonized with love and love is not harmonized with truth, then the indoctrinated Christian is not reflecting Jesus Christ, no matter how well intended he or she may be.

How do you know if you are a product of indoctrination? Consider the following indicators. If these sixteen “*road signs*” are true in your life, then you are perhaps a product of indoctrination:

1. You only represent what you have been taught. As a result you do not seriously consider any other possible viewpoint.
2. You *habitually* see and interpret all other views through your instructor’s teachings. In fact, it is *difficult for you even to trust any other source or authority*.
3. Your conversation and studies are spent articulating, discussing, instructing, programming, and re-hashing what you have been taught. As a result you honestly refuse to thoughtfully inquire into any other source or consider any other teaching even though they may be within the range of biblical orthodoxy.
4. You seem to only know and contemplate what you have been taught by your instructor. Thus, it is very difficult for you to think outside or beyond your instructor’s teaching. Any other category of thought or method is foreign to you. As a result, any other word, term, or idea used is an intellectual and emotional struggle; you are unable to wrap your mind around it. So, you tend to ignore or reject what you cannot understand rather than seriously work through it.
5. You identify yourself (or others fairly identify you) with the source of or beliefs of that indoctrination. Thus, you are known as a committed follower of _____ rather than Jesus Christ.
6. You *readily dismiss* any other presentation without honest intellectual inquiry. As a result, for example, you stay home when someone else fills the lectern or the pulpit; you refuse to listen to another, especially one who is not familiar or even rejects your instructor’s teaching.
7. If anyone disagrees with you, you take it personally and reject them.
8. You do not question your instructor’s truth claims. Rather, you readily accept it as being true without critically examining his or her justifications. His or her opinions become doctrine to you.
9. You are *unsupportive* of those who think differently than you.
10. You *tend* to misrepresent, mock, and ridicule other views and those that believe or proclaim them.
11. You only intimately associate with those who believe what you believe.
12. If you are honest with yourself, you are fearful to investigate what lies beyond what you have been taught to believe. *Thus, you cloak*

your fear with dogmatism.

13. You tend to *alienate* those you know and or love even if they themselves have been hurt or damaged by either the source of or the implications that flow from that indoctrination.
14. Cult-like symptoms tend to surface. For example, you only promote and proclaim your instructor's lessons and literature. All other materials are unacceptable or are held with suspicion. Or you refuse to quote any other source other than what your instructor has produced. Or even your instructor refuses to quote any other source other than him or herself.
15. Even when your instructor has moved on, become discredited, or passed away, you tend to live in and glory in the past with nostalgic sentiments while opportunities and possibilities slip away from you.
16. You equate intellectual or spiritual maturity with the amount of saturation of your instructor's teaching.

Rather than being a product of indoctrination, be a pursuer of truth and as you conform yourself to truth in the way you live, you will go beyond what you ever thought possible-for people are longing for truth, for something to believe in that is true and trustworthy. If you seek to know, practice, and protect the truth, then you will bear the following characteristics:

1. **Truth** rather than personality.
2. **Intellectually honesty** rather than closed thinking.
3. **Broad education**-for you will go beyond the beliefs and personalities of your sub-culture.
4. **Surprising insights** as you discover truth in extraordinary ways.
5. **A life established on truth** rather than indoctrination.
6. **Attractiveness** because you are able to offer truth that goes beyond programmed instruction and propaganda.
7. **Characteristically point people to God** and not your instructor by words and works.
8. **Adventure**-because your pursuit of truth enlightens you in ways you never considered.

9. **Competence and creative insight** as you engage others rather than simply repeating what you have been taught to believe.
10. **Scope of relationships continually enlarges** as you engage others who compliment and add to your understanding, practice, and protection of the truth.
11. **Practice truth and love and love and truth** because you recognize that both are inseparable [2 John].
12. **Better equipped to recognize what really is false teaching.**
13. **Better equipped to recognize viable, reasonable options within the range of orthodoxy; you resist dogmatism when dogmatism is not necessary.**
14. **You avoid presumptuous, premature thinking.**
15. **You can refute** lies with truth, not indoctrination.
16. **Promote personal and social charity**, not unnecessary criticism.
17. **Habitually ask questions to any truth claim that is made:** What? Why? Where? How? When? Therefore? In other words, you ask questions such as: (a) What is the justification for this view?; (b) Why is this the case? (c) Did they ever consider this...? (d) What are the implications if this is true?
18. **You pursue truth no matter the source.**
19. **Worship...** you realize that truth points you to the ultimate source of truth: the God of Truth, the God of the Bible. Therefore, the pursuit of truth is not merely an intellectual inquiry, but an opportunity of worship.
20. **You experience the joy of personal discovery of truth rather than relying upon another's interpretation of it.**
21. **You fervently avoid the vices of ignorance, apathy, agnosticism, and relativism.**

“May the mind of the Master be the master of your mind!”