

Palisades Community Bible Church  
Online Sunday School

## What I learned from the first presidential debate of 2020

October 4, 2020

OOPS!! OH! .....OH, MY!

Touchy subject! Do I risk violating the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment; “Thou shalt not discuss politics”?

Well, we’re no longer in first grade, gluing cotton ball clouds onto construction paper. We are adults, and we can handle adult topics. If you’re exceptionally frail, you may want to clear a path to your “safe space” before we continue. But first, an illustration.

Let’s get an image in our minds with a mental puzzle: Imagine you are put into an empty cell with only two exits. If you walk through one door, you will live. If you walk through the other door, you will die. Neither exit is marked.

Standing by each door is one person. One will only lie to you. The other will only tell you the truth. You don’t know which is which. You have but ONE question you may ask of one of the doormen in order to know which door leads to life. What question will you ask?

You don’t know which exit is which, and you don’t know the liar from the honest person. You get one question. Think of it and test it.

Don’t read on until you have given this some serious thought.

Can someone hum the Jeopardy clock song for us? Doo, doo, doo, doo....

The dilemma in this riddle; you need to ask one question that, no matter which person answers, you’ll have certainty of knowing which door is which. So, what is the only question that, when answered, will give you this certainty? Do you have your answer?

Ready?

Go up to either person (it doesn't matter which) and ask: "What will the other person say is the door to life?" Then, do the opposite.

See, the honest person will tell you what the liar will say. The liar will tell you a lie! In both situations, you will be certain of hearing the lie, then you can, with confidence, do the opposite.

Knowing truth and knowing lies is important. The famous Chinese general, Sun Tsu said that, if we know ourselves AND know our enemy, we will win all our battles. We NEED NOT FEAR LIES if we know the difference. And, the greatest, most dangerous lies are those that feel really good to us! When making decisions, both truths and lies can be equally valuable. The KEY is discerning truth from lies. Consider King Solomon's famous decision:

**1Kings 3: 16 One day two women[a] came to King Solomon,  
17 and one of them said: Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house. Not long ago my baby was born at home,  
18 and three days later her baby was born. Nobody else was there with us.  
19 One night while we were all asleep, she rolled over on her baby, and he died.  
20 Then while I was still asleep, she got up and took my son out of my bed. She put him in her bed, then she put her dead baby next to me.  
21 In the morning when I got up to feed my son, I saw that he was dead. But when I looked at him in the light, I knew he wasn't my son.  
22 "No!" the other woman shouted. "He was your son. My baby is alive!" "The dead baby is yours," the first woman yelled. "Mine is alive!" They argued back and forth in front of Solomon,  
23 until finally he said, "Both of you say this live baby is yours.  
24 Someone bring me a sword." A sword was brought, and Solomon ordered,  
25 "Cut the baby in half! That way each of you can have part of him."  
26 "Please don't kill my son," the baby's mother screamed. "Your Majesty, I love him very much, but give him to her. Just don't kill him." The other woman shouted, "Go ahead and cut him in half. Then neither of us will have the baby."  
27 Solomon said, "Don't kill the baby." Then he pointed to the first woman, "She is his real mother. Give the baby to her."  
28 Everyone in Israel was amazed when they heard how Solomon had made his decision. They realized that God had given him wisdom to judge fairly.**

Bear in mind that neither the truth, nor the lie, affected the King's approach to judging fairly. He simply tested both women equally and both the lie and the truth emerged. It's not much different from our riddle; the solution is found in treating both the liar and the honest person fairly until the truth can be found. In the case of our riddle, we had to have a way of detecting the lie 100% of the time.

Now, to the debate. Did you watch it? I did. Maybe you started watching and gave up? Maybe you prefer to rely on someone else's interpretation? Maybe your mind was already made up and nothing will alter it, so you did not bother? Maybe you clung to every word and made notes as they went?

Whatever your view of the debate, the number one public commentary has been that it was "chaotic."

Why "chaotic?" Is it because the candidates talked over one another? Is it that they did not hold to the agreed upon rules? Perhaps it's because they disregarded the moderator's efforts to maintain order?

I was not surprised. I cannot remember the last political debate in which each person speaking was allowed his/her time uninterrupted. So, like most arguments, each was trying to make his own points at the expense of the other. Manners aside, you could still gather the information through good listening.

Let's take an entirely NON-POLITICAL look at the presidential debate and, **without naming names**, come to an understanding about what happened, and why....and why it matters to Christians.

First, there were two candidates. One has 47 years political experience. The other has less than 4 years political experience. The ground rules to which each candidate agreed were:

1. The moderator would pose a question to one candidate, then the other, alternatively.
2. Each candidate would be allowed 2 min. to respond without interruption by the other.
3. There would be time for 'discussion' after the candidates had used their 2 minutes.
4. If an important point was made by one candidate, the other would be given time to respond to it.

OK, seems like a good plan, but what ground rule was missing? If you watched the debate, what rule was NOT mentioned? Let's think about every court drama we've ever seen on TV, or if you were ever in a courtroom, what is the number one rule of every person that takes the witness stand? TO TELL THE TRUTH! Were not these candidates standing as 'witnesses' of a sort? Were they not testifying? Were they not telling of their analysis of events, and laying out their approach to addressing them? ....and TRUTH was not a condition.....not an expectation.....not a rule??? ....millions of people watching....???

Gosh! What a simple rule to overlook in a debate between two people who are vying for the highest elected office in our land! There was **zero expectation** set for the candidates to tell the truth. It seems those who planned this event just assumed that truth plays no role.....the last thing on their minds.....not an issue.

Is truth important for you? It certainly is for ME! I expect that, when a person in our government talks, writes, interview, debates, etc., that there will be truth forthcoming. I demand truth, as a voter. Whether I get it is another issue.

How do you think Jesus felt when he was falsely accused, then crucified? How about Stephen who was falsely stoned? How about Paul who was imprisoned multiple times? Truth mattered to them!

**1 John 4: 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

**2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,**

**3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**

So, what happened during the debate? The moderator would pose a question and, as the answer was being given, the other candidate would openly disagree. The interruptions were "not allowed" so the moderator strove to remind them of the rules....to no avail. Thus, the two argued as the moderator blubbered.

OK, so what was really going on? It is simple; the same thing was happening as in our riddle, and in King Solomon's court happened, that's what! It's called the "Law of Non-Contradiction." This law states that a thing cannot be, and not be, at

the same time. Read it over until you get that. A statement cannot be true, and untrue, at the same time. An answer cannot be factual and false at the same time. Suppose you were at a PTA meeting and a teacher introduced a new way of teaching children's math with an equation like: "**2 + 2 = 4 and whatever you want.**"

Two cannot disagree on a topic and BOTH be right. Either one is wrong, or both are wrong. In King Solomon's case, either one woman was lying, or both were lying. In the case of the political debate, either one was telling the truth, and the other was lying, or both were lying. They clearly disagreed on every point, so which was right and which was wrong?

They could not BOTH be speaking truth AND be in disagreement. And, YES, professor, there is such a thing as absolute truth! (Absolute: independent, apart from arbitrary standards.) The Fed Funds rate is 0-0.25%. It is not both 0-0.25% ... and whatever you say it is.

At no time did either of them say; "You're entitled to your opinion" because the questions were not about arbitrary opinions. (Arbitrary: determined by individual preference). They were about factual issues of national and global importance.

If an observer was not knowledgeable (or not interested) in fact vs fiction, the debate just seemed like a nasty squabble; a verbal brawl. If one knew which was the lie and which was the truth, it was a far clearer debate. One candidate was focused on truth. The other was not.

For several years, a baker had purchased butter by the pound from a dairy farmer. He traded 1 lb. loaves for the same number of 1 lb. blocks of butter. One day, the baker placed a block of butter on his own scale and saw that the butter was 1 oz. light. He figured that, over the years, the farmer had shorted him 20 lbs. of butter, and took him to the judge. The judge heard the charge and asked the farmer to explain. The farmer said that he did not have a proper scale, so he would place the baker's 1 lb. loaf on one side of a balance and add butter to the other side until it balanced evenly.

God has no respect for arbitrary "facts" or deception. **Deuteronomy 25: 13 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. 14 You shall not**

**have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. 15 You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. 16 For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord your God.**

One of the candidates was using just measures. One was not. Otherwise, they would have been in agreement. Since there was complete disagreement on each issue, one was using unjust measures. The key is the disagreement.

The critical lesson for the Christian is that we must discern both truth and lie. We dare not trust in emotion or feeling. And, we doubly dare not trust in sources that are not truthful.

**Proverbs 5: My son, pay attention to my wisdom; Lend your ear to my understanding,**

**2 That you may preserve discretion, And your lips may keep knowledge.**

**3 For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil;**

**4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.**

A group of moms got together to make several batches of brownies for the church bake sale. As they were assembling their bowls, pans and ingredients, Gladys produced a big jar of dried grasshoppers. “EEEWWW!” said the others. Undeterred, Gladys insisted that they include grasshoppers in the recipe. An argument ensued and Gladys accused the other women of being prejudiced, ignorant, unyielding and closed minded.

Well, none of them wanted to SEEM to be those unflattering things, so a few sided with Gladys in her effort to include the insects in the brownies (just a few bugs would not be noticed). Soon, there was a definite division; those who wanted zero grasshoppers and those who wanted the grasshoppers used. More arguing than baking was going on and Gladys finally offered: “OK, we’ll compromise. We’ll only put HALF the grasshoppers in than I originally proposed.”

That was still unacceptable and tempers flared between the no grasshoppers and the pro grasshoppers.

Gladys said; “Why can’t YOU no GH people be willing to compromise? I have clearly compromised 50%. Can’t you be at least that decent and civilized? Can’t you put partisanship aside and learn to cooperate? Why are you so filled with hate?”

Finally, the no-grasshopper group, not wanting to be labeled uncivilized, prejudiced, and unwilling to work together, stipulated to one fourth of the grasshoppers being used in the batter.

Who won?

Well, that’s now the question of the debate, which was riddled with disagreement and arguments between the candidates: “Who won?”

There is an adolescent prank in which a paper bag of manure is placed in front of the entry door of a house. The prankster lights the bag on fire, rings the doorbell and dashes behind the bushes to watch. The homeowner opens the door and reflexively stomps out the fire, splattering poo all over the place. There are those who do this with their words.

For those who disengaged, who do not attempt to discern truth from lies, who are offended by the verbal combat, and who label politics as “everyone is corrupt and nothing good comes from it”, there is a strong message: Unlike the governments throughout human history, the US government is the first and only that is structured to be “of the people, for the people and by the people.”

Americans have had the most powerful political system on the planet since 1776. In most countries, the exchange of leadership is everything EXCEPT the peoples’ choice. It is an advantage for the liars in our own government to make the political process seem muddy, confusing, complicated, and corrupt. Liars create confusion and division, then capitalize on it while their opponents are stomping the flaming bag of poo. They seek to convince you that they will solve the very problems for you they have created.....

Jesus speaking: **John 8: 37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.**

**38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.”**

**39 They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them,**

**“If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.**

**40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.**

**41 You do the deeds of your father.” Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.”**

**42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.**

**43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.**

**44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.**

**46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore, you do not hear, because you are not of God.”**

Because America has a system of voting in, and voting out, government leaders, we are unique in human history. For the first century Jews voting for, or against a public official meant risking the cross. In this nation, “we the people” direct our government’s path. This is why election years are so contentious...and seem to last all year long! Yes, it’s tiring. Yes, it’s combative. Yes, it’s confusing.

Yes, it’s necessary! It’s our job. Yes, we must do our own homework. No, you are not alone in this!

Honest and dishonest people are vying for your approval, which is expressed in the voting booth. As an American, you SHOULD care enough to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, evil and righteous. Then, you vote righteously.

As a Christian, you SHOULD discern between good and bad, right and wrong, evil and righteous in your everyday walk. Whether at work, within the family, between neighbors, etc., Christians should not only model truth, but discern between truth and lies. And, as a Christian, you should be a citizen. You should take part in the important responsibilities of citizenship.

Don't fear lies if you know the difference. Fear the person who cannot/will not discern!

We need not fear a bad leader. Our founders gave us the voting booth. We do need to fear those who continue to give power to the evil.

**Proverbs 29: 2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.**

**Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.**

Let's go back to our puzzle at the beginning. Americans are in a room with only two ways to go; one path to life and one to destruction. We must discern the truth, and that may involve finding out the lie, first. It doesn't matter if the guards by the two doors are pleasant, or if they are nasty, brawling, rude and vile. You need to make a righteous decision. This decision is of paramount importance!

Next week, we will continue with last week's theme: "Imagine there's no Heaven. It's easy if you try."

**Jesus, you are the Son of God, come in the flesh.**

**You went to the cross to make a way for men to have communion with God.**

**There is no other way.**

**This is the truth. May we always value the truth!**

**Amen**