

Truth: Does It Exist?

(John 18:37 NIV) "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

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

1) INTRODUCTION

a) When Jesus appeared before Pilate, the subject of truth was discussed...

i) Jesus claimed to bear witness to the truth - John 18:37

ii) Pilate raised the perennial question: "What is truth?" - John 18:38

b) Pilate asks the question to Jesus, "What is Truth?" Oddly Pilate goes out and states the truth that he can find nothing to condemn Jesus of. In fact, it would appear that he does not wait for an answer from Jesus.

2) TODAY, MANY PEOPLE SOUND A LOT LIKE PILATE...

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- a) A Barna Research Group¹ survey on what Americans believe asked the question, “Is there absolute Truth?”
- i) Sixty-six percent of adults responded that they believe that “there is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct”
 - ii) Seventy-two percent of those aged 18 to 25 expressed this belief
- b) In a series of more than twenty interviews conducted at random at a large university, people were asked if there was such a thing as absolute truth - truth that is true across all times and cultures for all people. All but one respondent answered along these lines:
- i) “Truth is whatever you believe”
 - ii) “There is no absolute truth”
 - iii) “If there were such a thing as absolute truth, how could we know what it is?”
 - iv) “People who believe in absolute truth are dangerous”
 - v) Info from <http://www.christianity.co.nz/truth1.htm>

3) MAJORITY OF AMERICANS BELIEVE:

- i) Truth is relative.
- ii) What is true for you may not be true for me!

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iii) All religions are true!

iv) How can this be?

4) WHY IS TRUTH IMPORTANT?

a) John 8 vs. 32, 34, and 36 tells what Jesus says about Truth. “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin ... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

5) WHAT IS TRUTH?

a) Truth is the opposite of false.

b) “Telling it like it is.”

i) (Rom 2:8 NIV) But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

c) Truth is that which corresponds to its object.

i) For example, the ball is red corresponds to a red ball.

ii) Someone might say that for someone who is colorblind the ball is gray. Red can be measured by the frequency of light reflected. It does not change simply because we cannot see it in the same way.

d) The Truth about TRUTH

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i) Truth is discovered, not invented.

(1) Newton and gravity.

ii) Truth is transcultural. If something is true, it is true for all places, all people and all times.

(1) $2+2=4$

iii) Truth is unchanging even though our beliefs about it change.

(1) World is flat vs. Round

iv) Beliefs cannot change truth, no matter how sincere the belief is held.

(1) Belief can make us mistaken, but truth cannot.

v) Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it.

(1) Arrogant person does not make the error he professes true. A humble person does not make the error he professes true.

vi) Contrary beliefs are possible but contrary truths are not. We can believe everything to be true, but we cannot make everything true.

6) HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THE ASSERTION THERE IS NOT TRUTH?

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- a) Chewy Script.
- b) Winston Churchill wrote:
 - i) “Men stumble over truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.”
 - ii) *A Few Good Men* – scene when Nicholson is cross examined.
- c) When asked from whom do you demand the truth, respondents stated in order highest to lowest:
 - i) Loved ones
 - ii) Doctors
 - iii) Clergy
 - iv) Stock Brokers
 - v) Courts
 - vi) Employers
 - vii) Airlines
 - viii) Mechanics
 - ix) Etc.
 - x) I think we have given up on politicians. They were not even in the top 100.

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d) Barna Institute: Majority of Americans reject the idea that religion can be true.

e) Response to Religious and Moral Truth:

i) Reject on volitional Grounds. (Emotional) as opposed to Intellectual grounds (Reason).

ii) Reject Truth because we do not want to be accountable.

f) Augustine: "We love truth when it enlightens us, but we hate it when it convicts us."

g) This is CULTURAL SCHIZOPHRENIA!

h) (John 8:32 NIV) Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

7) ALL TRUTH HAS THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS:

a) It is absolute.

i) (John 14:6 NIV) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

b) It is narrow.

i) (Rom 1:18 NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

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c) It is exclusive.

i) (Acts 20:30 NIV) Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

(1) Christian vs. Humanist

(a) Humanist Kolenda wrote a book entitled:
Religion Without God

(i) *States that Christians are narrow-minded people, they believe Christianity is true and that everything opposed to it is false.*

(b) Geisler

(i) *States that humanist are narrow minded people. They believe that humanism is true and that everything opposed to it is false.*

d) An example of a self defeating statement:

i) "No such thing as truth."

(1) Is this statement true? It contradicts itself.

e) If there are no absolutes, there is no right and wrong

i) I can

(1) kill you,

(2) steal from you,

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(3) lie to you,

(4) and you can't say it is wrong

ii) Because if I believe I should do such things, and succeed, then it works for me and it has become my personal truth (and who are you to judge me?)

f) "In the absence of truth, power is the only game in town." Richard John Neuhaus

g) Despite its absurdity, this view of truth has become the darling of all who want to be free to "do their own thing"

8) BIBLICAL WORDS FOR TRUTH...

a) True (alethes) - "unconcealed, manifest...actual, true to fact" Ref: Vine

b) True (alethinos) - "denotes 'true' in the sense of 'real, ideal, genuine;" - ibid.

c) Truth (aletheia)

i) "objectively, signifying 'the reality lying at the basis of an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter' (Cremer)" - ibid.

ii) "subjectively, 'truthfulness,' 'truth,' not merely verbal, but sincerity and integrity of character" - ibid.

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d) When the Bible speaks of truth, it describes that which corresponds to reality, what is factual and absolute, not relative

TRUTH VS. TOLERANCE

e) Most religions have some beliefs that are true, but not all can be true because they are mutually exclusive.

f) If Christianity is true, then it can be dangerous to your soul. If Islam is true, then it can be dangerous to your soul.

g) Definition of tolerance

i) Then

(1) Tolerance = to put up with something you believe to be false.

ii) Now

(1) Tolerance = to accept every belief as true
(Religious Pluralism)

iii) True Religious Tolerance is religious freedom in the expression of worship, within boundaries.

(1) Islamic Terrorists cannot worship god by blowing up a building and killing people.

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iv) Tolerance does not mean you cannot question. Rather it encourages questioning in seeking the truth.

(1) Columbus would never have sought the New World had he not questioned the religious views of the time.

v) Some say it is immoral to question another's faith.

(1) By what standard?

vi) Christians have a religious belief that they ARE to question religious beliefs. E.g. Deut. 13:1-5; 1 John 4:1; Gal. 1:8; 2 Cor. 11:13; etc.

vii) You ought not to judge.

(1) This is a judgment.

(2) But do not judge as a hypocrite.

9) 6 BLIND MEN AND AN ELEPHANT

a) Experience

i) Tusk = Spear

ii) Trunk = Snakes

iii) Leg = Tree

iv) Tail = Rope

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v) Ear = Fan

vi) Side = Wall

b) Blind men represent the various religions out there. Each has a partial truth.

c) Persuasive?

i) Someone missing, the one telling the parable.

(1) She has objective perspective.

(2) She sees the blind are mistaken.

(3) If only the blind could see objectively, then they would know the truth.

(4) I was once blind, but now I see.

10) CONCLUSION

a) Why is truth important?

i) John 8 vs. 32, 34, and 36 tells what Jesus says about Truth. "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin ... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

11) Call yourself what you may, but you cannot be a Christian unless...

a) You hold the correspondence view of truth

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- b) You believe in moral absolutes of right and wrong
- c) You accept Jesus and His Word as the ultimate source of truth, especially in regards to morality and salvation

¹ Barna Research Group is an organization serving the information needs of the church by offering statistics, resources, seminars and custom research on current cultural and spiritual trends. www.barna.org