

What is Truth?

Grace and Truth—part 3

April 23, 2023

Our study this week: On what basis does the bible claim absolute truth?

DAY 1: The strong and silent headwinds of “cultural truth”

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or anything in the world.... For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father but it from the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it, but the will of God abides forever.

1. Before we get into the bible’s teaching on truth, please remember the headwinds of our culture that continually blow in the face of today’s bible-believing Christian.
2. In 1939 American author T.S. Eliot gave three lectures at Corpus Christi University in England on the necessity of a Christian culture. It was crucial timing when contrasted against the rise of national socialism in Germany, and communism in Russia.
3. (We are) “becoming more and more de-Christianized by all sorts of unconscious pressure: paganism holds all the most valuable advertising space.” -T.S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society*
4. People assume that the culture around us is “normal”. We become so immersed in our ways of thinking and patterns of living that we can’t recognize what is abnormal. Culture shapes our perceptions of the real world and how life works.

Culture’s greatest influence is by what it implies as *normal*.

5. As C.S. Lewis said, “The most dangerous ideas in a society are not the ones that are being argued, but the ones that are assumed.”
6. What shapes people? Issues, ideas, habits, and influences. Secular people assume everything is “socially constructed.” Christians find our truest identity by God, fixed in our humanity. We are the apex of creation, made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-28).
7. Culture affects people simply by exposure to it. People become convinced that what we think, assume, and value is real and true. We then become committed to that vision of life. Culture is carried and deepened by songs, TV, movies, classes, etc. Then, institutions take over—schools, universities, family, church, government, media, etc.
8. As we look at God’s truth, remember the headwinds in our face.
Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good, pleasing and perfect.
9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Absolute truth for all of life

1. The bible's view of truth can be most simply summarized this way:

- All truth is God's truth.
- Truth is holistic, meaning it covers every facet of life.

2. God's truth is not just true for Christians. God's truth is objectively true. The scriptures are true the way gravity is true, whether or not you think it true. Scriptures give us the Larger Story of reality. –where we came from, why we're here, and where we're going.

3. "Christianity is not a series of truths in the plural, but rather truth spelled with a **capital "T."** Truth about total reality, not just about religious things. Biblical Christianity is Truth concerning total reality – and the intellectual holding of total Truth and then living in the light of the truth." Francis Schaeffer, 1981

4. Christianity has been shuffled off to the sidelines as a slice of orange instead of how to think and eat the whole orange. It has been marginalized. People may think of Christianity as a "heart" religion, but it is also a "brain" religion, how we think about the world, not just our religious practices.

*John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God and the **Word** was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him...*

5. Genesis tells us the real story of life. God brought everything into being with His word. The Greek word for "word" is *logos*. Greek philosophers used *logos* as the explanation, the reason, the rationale for life. There is an underlying structure to the universe which reflects the mind of God.

6. Under the following verses, jot down what strikes you about God's truth.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Psalms 25:5 Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Psalms 119:43 Never take your word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws.

Psalms 119:89 Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: General revelation

1. The bible points to five different lenses that a human being should be able to understand God's truth. The first is general revelation.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³ They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. ⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. ⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

2. What should we learn about God by observing the creation around us? (verse 1)

3. The physical world is personified by the writer as speaking. What strikes you from verses 2-4a?

4. As you read this psalm, remember it was originally written as a poem, and then as lyrics to be sung in worship. David uses richly poetic language and images to personify what God has created. What strikes you from verses 4b-6?

Romans 1:19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

5. The apostle Paul uses the same raw material of creation as the evidence, not only of God's existence but also something of His nature.

6. What two qualities of God should people be able to discern as they observe the world around them?

7. According to Paul, how persuasive should the evidence be of God's existence and creation?

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Truth is rooted in the character of God; principles of God's truth

The character of God is true

1 John 5:20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him who glories, glory in me, for I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these things, I delight," says the Lord.

Special revelation and God's law

1. God reveals Himself in history, in the bible, and in the community of His people.
2. Yesterday, we looked at the first half of Psalm 19, where God reveals himself in nature. David then moves to God revealing himself through the words of the bible.

Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

3. What four ways does David describe God's law?
4. What four effects of God's law are meant for us to experience?

¹⁰ They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. ¹¹ By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

5. What other benefits of God's law (truth) are meant for our benefit?
6. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33).
7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Jesus Christ, the embodiment of truth

1. The greatest revelation of the truth about God is found in Jesus Christ. At Christmas we remember the incarnation (Latin for “in the flesh”).

2. Jesus claimed to be the embodiment of truth.

John 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.

- It is not just that He knows the way. He is the way.
- It is not just that He knows the truth. He is the truth.
- It is not just that He knows the life. He is the life.

3. It's not just that He knows the truth and is the truth. We get to see truth lived out in a person, in His daily life personally, and in relationship.

4. What strikes you from John 14:6?

5. Under each of the following verses, jot down what strikes you about Jesus Christ.

*Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have **all his fullness dwell in him**, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Col. 2:3 In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?