

7A WHAT IS TRUTH?

Truth is essential to our knowledge of God, to all our relationships, to business, to science, and to ethics.

Engineering depends upon some fixed laws, agreement on what the problem to be solved entails, agreement on what the words themselves mean, and ability to trust others for agreed-upon work and for agreed-upon pay.

“What is truth?” Pilate asked, probably sarcastically. (John 18:38)

In practice, there are at least eight concepts of truth:

1. Agnostic – Truth (at least as it pertains to big questions) is unknowable
2. Pragmatic- Truth is whatever works.
3. Hegelian (Based on philosopher Georg Hegel) - truth is always in flux.
4. Relativistic- Truth is whatever someone says or thinks it is.
5. Subjective –Truth is how I feel about something.
6. Consensus- Truth is what most people in a culture think. “Wikipedia theory of truth” [1]
7. Postmodern- There is no external truth. [2]
8. Correspondence- Truth is real and corresponds to reality.

“What is truth? By definition, truth is an expression, symbol or statement that matches or corresponds to its object or referent (i.e., that to which it refers, whether it is an abstract idea or a concrete thing).”[3]

Truth is an essential part of the Christian message (and an essential part of engineering.) The idea that something could be “true for you, but not for me” destroys the very nature of truth. A statement that is true corresponds to reality, to what is really there.

Truth by its very nature is:

- *Noncontradictory – it does not violate the basic laws of logic.*
- *Absolute – it does not depend upon any time, place, or conditions.*
- *Discovered – it exists independently of our minds; we do not create it.*
- *Descriptive – it is the agreement of the mind with reality (correspondence).*
- *Inescapable – to deny its existence is to affirm it (we are bound by it).*
- *Unchanging – it is the firm standard by which truth claims are measured. [4]*

Peter Bocchino discusses three barriers to truth: [5]

1. Agnosticism- We can't know anything about ultimate truth. (But how do we know that?)
2. Skepticism- All truth claims are uncertain. (Are we sure?)
3. Relativism- All truth is subjective and personal. (Is that concept only true for you?)

These tests for truth are inadequate: [6]

1. Rationalism- Truth is based on human reason alone.
2. Evidentialism – Truth is based on facts alone.
3. Fideism- Truth is based on faith alone.
4. Experientialism – Truth is determined by experience.
5. Emotionalism- Truth is based on feelings.
6. Pragmatism – Truth is whatever works.
7. Consent – Truth is based on majority opinion.

Different disciplines apply different methods to reach their conclusions: [7]

- Science- applies experimental tests
- History- looks at evidence and testimony
- Law –looks at principles of jurisprudence
- Mathematics- looks at mathematical proofs
- Philosophy –uses formal logic

Ultimately, the issue of truth depends on the existence and nature of God:

God is a God of truth. He is the true Creator of all. His nature is truth. He is the Author of truth. He alone has always spoken truth to mankind.

Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6) Jesus is the embodiment of truth, the Truth of God incarnated.

God's revealed name indicates truth: I AM THAT I AM, the God who is real, the God who is there.

Consequently, God's people must be people of truth. We must avoid both deception and being deceived. Our spiritual enemy is called “the father of lies”.

- Speak the truth in love. (Eph. 4:15)

- “You shall not bear false witness.” (Ex. 20:16)
- “Let your yes be yes and your no be no.” (Mt. 5:37)

The concept of truth is essential to Christian faith (Are we believing falsehoods and fantasies or divine truth?), to ethics (Do we issue truthful statements to the public, the clients, and the employees?), to science (Are experimental findings truthfully represented?), to engineering (Can we trust the equations and the component data sheets?), and to business (Can we trust the promises of the company?)

Philosophers have found it a stumbling block that we can't know an infinite and invisible God by human reason and sensations, which is a valid problem. In the Bible, however, we find that God has revealed Himself, His nature, and His purposes. If God is there, revelation becomes a valid and significant source of truth.

References

1. Challies, T., *The Next Story*, Zondervan, 2011.
2. Copan, P., *True For You But Not For Me*, Bethany House, 1998.
3. Geisler, N., and Bocchino, P., *Unshakable Foundations*, Bethany House, 2001, p.52.
4. Ibid.
5. Bocchino, P., Apologetics seminar, LeTourneau University, c.1987.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.