

What Is Truth?

Psalm 119:160: (NLT) *The very essence of your words is truth; all Your just regulations will stand forever.*



We all would agree that truth is important. Legally we know it is critical. When we are pressed to speak the truth under oath in the United States, we are asked, "Do you solemnly swear/affirm that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God/or under pains and penalties of perjury?" As important as this sounds, we human beings are often lazy about truth and even afraid of it. Winston Churchill once said, "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened." So, what is truth? Are there absolute truths?

How can we know which truths are reliable and which ones are merely situational?

To begin our discussion of truth, let's look at the context of Pilate's famous "What is truth" question.

Jesus had just gone through a sleepless night of harsh, illegal and corrupt treatment by the Pharisees. They had only one objective – to be rid of him before he took away their power and influence. After three nighttime and predawn trials, the Pharisees dragged Jesus before their Governor, Pilate, and vehemently accused him.



Pilate questioned him but found no guilt! The Pharisees complained, so Pilate summoned Jesus into the praetorium for a private conversation.

This conversation would tell the story of two men and the search for truth. One man, Pilate, was overwhelmed with difficult questions and pressure as he sought out truth. Though accused, the other man, Jesus, was calm and stood strong in the truth that he spoke and truth that he lived.

In Roman history, a praetorium was the headquarters or residence of a Roman official, governor or military commander.



Let's look at this account as an overview of our question about truth:

John 18:33-34: (NASB) ³³Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? ³⁴Jesus answered, Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about me?

Even though Jesus was the defendant, he questioned Pilate as to Pilate's own knowledge and findings. That was not supposed to happen. Pilate just wanted an honest answer. He was not used to being questioned, as not many people would have had the courage to stand up to him. Pilate was looking for truth.

FINDING TRUTH



**REQUIRES HAVING A CLEAR MIND
AND ACTING ON THAT CLARITY.**

Pilate was attempting to gain clarity, but he was impatient and needed answers, so he directly asked Jesus to explain himself:

John 18:35: (NASB) *Pilate answered, I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you to me; what have you done?*

Pilate was saying: "You better defend yourself. This is serious." Again, Pilate was trying to find out the truth - he was heading down the right path by asking the right questions.

FINDING TRUTH



REQUIRES ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

While Jesus' answer was directed towards Pilate's first question, he assured Pilate that he was not a political rebel:

John 18:36: (NASB) *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, my kingdom is not of this realm.*

Jesus still did not answer Pilate's question, but instead he told Pilate that he was no threat to Rome. He gave Pilate information that was important to him in his seeking of the truth. We are following Pilate's lead - it is unusual to consider following Pilate - but he was logically and carefully approaching this problem of finding the truth.

FINDING TRUTH



**REQUIRES LISTENING CAREFULLY TO
THE DETAILS.**

John 18:37: (NASB) *Therefore Pilate said to him, So you are a king? Jesus answered, You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.*

Pilate said: "You ARE a king, but you are not a threat to Rome." This is very different from the Pharisees' accusations. Pilate followed Jesus' statements, locating what the truth was by asking direct questions and by actually listening.

FINDING TRUTH



**REQUIRES PROCESSING THOSE DETAILS
WITH INTEGRITY AND WISDOM.**

Jesus said some things in his last answer - *Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice* - this caused Pilate to question further.

John 18:38: (NASB) *Pilate said to him, What is truth?*

For this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.



Pilate asks, "What is Truth?"



FINDING TRUTH



**REQUIRES ACCEPTING THE CLEAR FACTS
AND ACTING ON THEM IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

At the end of the conversation, Pilate is a little confused. This is why he asks, *What is truth?* Some commentators say this was a sarcastic reply. But we think he was saying: "This is a hard position I am in. You say that people who follow truth, follow you. But those men out there who are supposed to be upstanding citizens are trying to have me take you off the scene!"

Pilate was in a difficult position, but he still tried to **track down truth** rather than making a summary judgment based on the accusations of the Pharisees.



Most journeys towards truth are a search riddled with preconceived ideas and expectations. Finding truth in this way easily results in watering down what we find to suit what we prefer. **Let our searching for truth be based not on compromise, but on humility and integrity.**

It is easy to try to “find truth” when we are just filling in the gaps of our preconceived ideas. By doing this we do not find truth; we find comfort in confirming our expectations. That is not what this is all about.

With this said, the word translated from Greek to English as *truth* is a general and broadly-used word:

Truth: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #225 *aletheia*; truth

Lexicon definitions are long and varied - **see the Bonus Material!**

Truth: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon #227 *alethes*; true (as not concealing)

Truth simply means “truth.” Something is opened or revealed. It has a broad application. We are going to look at examples of ways *truth* is used in the New Testament to get a sense of how it is applied in different circumstances. The context helps us to understand what specific meaning to use.

Truth, as in telling the whole factual story:

Mark 5:31-34: (NASB) ³¹And his disciples said to him, you see the crowd pressing in on you, and you say, who touched me? ³²And he looked around to see the woman who had done this. ³³But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before him and told him the whole **truth <225>**. ³⁴And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.

Her faith told her that if she touched just the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed. He called her out on her action with great compassion. She told the whole truth because she was afraid.



This reminds me of raising our three children. Kids have all kinds of issues and get themselves into various troubles. Then they have to decide what to tell mom and dad and what not to. When the kids were younger, we really worked on the “Rule of Truth.” The rule basically said, things happen in life. If you tell us the truth, we will not be angry no matter what it is that happened. We will deal with it and the necessary consequences, but we will not be angry. But if you lie to us and we find out the truth later - that might be a different story. The point was to draw the truth out, not just for that one circumstance, but to create a habit of putting the truth first. When we are looking at finding truth, telling the whole story is a good example of that.



This next scripture takes place when Peter was sent to Cornelius and his family to proclaim the good news of the gospel message to the Gentiles.

Truth, as in a foundational precept that can be confidently built upon:

Acts 10:34: (KJV) Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of (upon) a **truth <225>** I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:



This is an odd phrasing - *upon a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons*. In other words, I have it now demonstrated before my eyes that God is not limiting the gospel to the Jewish nation. There is something here far bigger than I ever thought possible! Peter recognized this truth. "It is upon this truth - this foundational precept - that I have seen with my own eyes." Peter was given the keys to the kingdom in this way. He opened the door for the Gentiles by being given that vision, that foundational precept of the truth of God's grace available to them.

Truth, as in something greater and more comprehensive than the Law of Moses:

John 1:17: (KJV) *For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and **truth <225>** came by Jesus Christ.*



This is not saying that the Law of Moses was not true; it is saying that grace and the comprehensive truth was given by Jesus Christ. It was built upon the Law, and showed us something much more significant - a height and strength that went beyond the Law.

Truth, as in genuine and pure:

Ephesians 4:24: (KJV) *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and **true <225>** holiness.*

This is *true holiness*, genuine and pure versus pseudo or partial holiness. This is comprehensive and not concealed. It is open to everyone who encounters it.

Truth, as in the full integrity of the pure message:

Galatians 2:14: (KJV) *But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the **truth <225>** of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

Paul was questioning Peter and telling him not to be hypocritical. Peter and some of the other Jewish Christians changed their ways when visiting Jewish Christians who still followed the Law. Peter had been eating and fellowshiping with the Gentile Christians prior to the visit, but then acted more "Jewish" around the stricter Jewish visitors, separating from his Gentile Christian friends. *They walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel* - according to the full integrity and purity of the message. The gospel would not have them acting in a hypocritical manner.

Truth, as in the length, breadth, height and depth of God's will and word:

John 8:32: (KJV) *And ye shall know the **truth <225>**, and the **truth <225>** shall make you free.*



Scripturally pinpointing the extent and reach of Jesus' ransom

For almost 25 years, Christian Questions has shared the good news for all based on the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. There is freedom knowing God has everyone's best interest in mind. There is no fear attached to God's truth.

With all that we have already seen, one thing is obvious. We need to set ourselves on a path of seeking truth - even if at our own expense.

**If truth should be of such high value,
how do we handle it when so many of us are focusing on "MY" truth?**

This is a massive issue, especially as the idea that each of us can create, adopt and proclaim our own irrefutable truth has become mainstream. Instead of exchanging thoughts, experiences, ideas and deeply-held beliefs, we now announce OUR truth and expect respect and unequivocal acceptance. This not only breaks our ability to communicate, it severs us from seeking and holding higher truth. This has a lot to do with something called "situation ethics."

Webster's New World College Dictionary

situation ethics: noun

a theory of ethics according to which moral rules are not absolutely binding but may be modified in the light of specific situations

 **MY truth or THE truth, *There Is No Such Thing as Your Truth, Prager U***

- Increasingly, people speak of "MY" truth or say, "It's true for me" or "your reality," as though truth is merely a matter of opinion or perspective. At the 2018 Golden Globe Awards, Oprah Winfrey famously said that, "Speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have." Now, you can have your experience or your perspective, but there's no such thing as YOUR truth or MY truth. There's only THE truth - that which is true for everyone. As Wall Street Journal writer Byron Tau noted, "Oprah employed a phrase that I've noticed a lot of other celebrities using these days. 'YOUR truth instead of THE truth.'" But, he added, "YOUR truth undermines the idea of shared common facts." And here's another problem with your truth: if YOUR truth is truth, anyone who doesn't hold that truth must be wrong. This sounds a lot like narcissism, and it's intellectual bullying. Believe MY truth...or else!



There are some powerful thoughts here. The idea of *shared common facts* are now thrown out the window when one person declares THEIR truth. What is meant by this is that this person has a deeply-held belief. There is a big difference between expressing a deeply-held belief and demanding people hear and acknowledge MY truth. It stops discussion because it eliminates any sense of common ground. This sounds like a new phenomenon, but it is not. This has been around for a long time.

Let's look at two pointed examples of the Pharisees looking to claim THEIR truth at the expense of THE truth.



Using the title of teaching and adhering to truth as bait for deception:

Matthew 22:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap him in what he said. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that you are **truthful <227>** and teach the way of God in **truth <225>**, and defer to no one; for you are not partial to any. ¹⁷Tell us then, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?

Think about the way these scriptures are written: *the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap him. They were only pretending to respect Jesus as a teacher. They thought to lull him into condemning himself by using the bait of saying they knew he was truthful and taught in truth.*

What was THEIR truth? They were threatened and laid a trap to ease that threat. "We need to push this guy aside and play on his ego (of course, Jesus did not have an ego) so we can get rid of him."

How did Jesus respond?

Matthew 22:18-22: (NASB) ¹⁸*But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the poll-tax. And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And he said to them, whose likeness and inscription is this? ²¹They said to him, Caesar's. Then he said to them, Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's. ²²And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving him, they went away.*



- Jesus called them out.
- He answered so thoroughly that they were stunned. They never saw that answer coming!

What was THEIR truth? They had no answer, but they also did NOT alter THEIR truth! They were like little children with fingers in their ears saying, Nope, I'm not listening. You cannot contradict MY truth! We will think of another way to get you.

THEIR truth was that even though they had no answer, they did not alter their pattern of thinking. They left to regroup and plot how to come after Jesus in another way. Their thinking was not based in truth; it was based in evil, pride and selfishness.



Soon after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead by the power of God's spirit, the situation the Pharisees faced brought their ethics, THEIR truth, to a dramatic point:

John 11:47-51,53: (NASB) ⁴⁷*Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, what are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him go on like this, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.*

Jesus performed an amazing miracle. In response, they revealed evil and selfish motives. This does not make sense!

What was THEIR truth? They had to stop Jesus.

They ignored the bigger picture because it interfered with their agenda:

⁴⁹*But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish. ⁵¹Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation...*

(Source: Biblical Commentary by Albert Barnes) Verse 51 - *Not of himself.* Though he uttered what proved to be a true prophecy, yet it was accomplished in a way which he did not intend. He had a wicked design. He was plotting murder and crime. Yet, wicked as he was, and little as he intended it, God so ordered it that he delivered a most precious truth respecting the atonement.



God can allow evil for good. Caiaphas did not have good intentions with this prophecy; he was the high priest and wanted Jesus removed. What was the result of this conversation between the chief priests and the Pharisees?



⁵³So from that day on they planned together to kill him.

What was THEIR truth? Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days. These men wanted to take the life of this life-restorer. There is no way to get further from THE truth! Their truth had degraded them to the point of plotting the murder of an innocent man.

Absolute truth versus values, Reasonable Answers to Your Truth is Not My Truth, Evangelism Explosion

- Well, first let me define a few terms: 1. absolute truth and 2. values. Absolute truth is something that exists without being dependent upon anything else - things like good and evil. We do not need to believe in absolute truth for it to be true. Conversely, values deal with the importance, worth or usefulness placed on something - things like creativity, helpfulness and beauty. Values exist inside of a culture, while truth exists apart from it. The problem comes when we replace absolute truth with values.

Values are a construct from within us or within a culture. Absolute truth is from the outside, from beyond us - it is bigger than we are, existing before we were and after we are. It is there even if we do not acknowledge it.

People seem to deny the existence of absolute truth, as that denial seems to give them freedom to think, say or do whatever they might feel or personally believe. However, by denying that absolute truth exists, are they not proclaiming what they believe to be an absolute truth?

By defending our truth, we are saying that absolute truth exists. By denying it, we are saying that the absolute truth is that there is NO absolute truth.

Absolute truth is unchangeable and it exists above the fray of everyday life. We believe that God is THE source of absolute truth:

John 17:15-19: (NASB) ¹⁵I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the **truth <225>**; Your word is **truth <225>**. ¹⁸As You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in **truth <225>**.

"Sanctified" means to be set apart for a holy purpose which is based on God's word.



Defining and describing justification and sanctification

BECAUSE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS UNCHANGEABLE, ITS LACK OF VARIATION BRINGS TREMENDOUS SECURITY!

Everyone craves security. Let's think of the sun as an example of an enduring absolute truth. From a human perspective, we know its schedule down to the millisecond.



It is as reliable as anything we can see regarding earth. It is a truth we have faith in and a reliability we trust. Even though the sun varies in distance from the earth, its unchangeable nature literally drives the comings and goings of our lives. It is steady - we know it. We can compare God's unchangeableness to this reliability of the sun, but His reliability goes far beyond that of our sun.

According to livescience.com, the earth moves further away from the sun every year. If I wanted to build MY truth, I can use this information to spread panic about having to do something to fix this problem. However, we must remember that God's got this. While the earth and sun are moving apart, it is only 2.36 inches per year. Given that the variation in the distance from earth to sun is three million miles, depending on where we are in our orbit, 2.36 inches does not cause problems.

If you were to run a one-mile race, 30 million years of the earth moving away from the sun would be the equivalent of moving your foot 1.5 inches at the starting line.



Sometimes we look at truth and build a problem that does not exist.

God's unchangeableness can be compared to this, but His reliability goes beyond the sun's reliability:

James 1:17-18: (KJV) ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no **variableness <3883>**, neither shadow of turning.

Variableness: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3883 *parallage*; transmutation (of phase or orbit), i.e. (figuratively) fickleness

God is beyond the shadows cast by the sun. He is beyond the variableness or fluctuation in our planet's orbit. He is steadier than the sun which is the steadiest influence on earth!

¹⁸Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

What a privilege! We are the first to understand pure truth from God's word, but let's not let it go to our heads. If there are *firstfruits*, there are "after fruits," meaning truth for others later in God's future kingdom.

Lamentations 3:22-26: (NASB) ²²The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. ²³They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴The LORD is my portion, says my soul, Therefore I have hope in Him. ²⁵The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. ²⁶It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the LORD.



It is easy to create what we think is our own truth because our social order encourages such things. We simply need to understand that what I might consider to be MY truth is simply my thoughts and emotions coming together and forming a set of personal values.

These values may or may not harmonize with absolute truth, so I must be willing to grow out of them if I want to be closer to God and have REAL truth in my life.



We live on such a slippery slope when it comes to defining how we think our world should be. Let's focus on God's way, not our own way.

God is absolute truth, and we know He wants us to follow Him, so how did He tell this to the human race?

God's messages to us have been many, and they have been consistent:

- He started with rules of obedience and blessings to Adam and Eve.
- He continued with guiding and directing individuals as the general population of the world began creating their own truths.
- God then delivered the Mosaic Law to Israel. This Law was written evidence of God's truth and humanity's role in it.

While the development of God's truth started with Adam and Eve, we are going to drop in at the point of the Law.

The Apostle Paul sums up God's plan and His truth:

Romans 5:12-14: (NASB) ¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned ¹³for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of him who was to come.



The Law was provided to be a measuring stick to learn what sin looks like.



Universal Truth: Death reigned because of disobedience, but God's truth is bigger than any circumstance:

Galatians 3:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. ²⁰Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. ²¹Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.



Universal Truth: Sinful humanity is not capable of living in harmony with God.

The Law was given but we could not live up to it. God *could* have said, at this point, this is it. It was a bad ending, but He did what He could. But God's truth is bigger than any circumstance.

We appreciate the way our theme text sounds in the New Living Translation:



Psalm 119:160: (NLT) *The very essence of your words is truth; all Your just regulations will stand forever.*

Just regulations, right regulations, proper regulations will stand forever. This is powerful! An everlasting truth! This is talking about the "spirit" of the truth - the absolute truth of God that was revealed to humanity in stages.

There are MANY examples of how humanity has fallen short. Israel's first king shows us how easy it was then to create your own truth.



Saul had defeated the Amalekites but did NOT follow through with the strict instructions he was given and saved the choice cattle and even the leader of the Amalekites.

See Bonus Material for more.

Samuel saw Saul's situational ethics at play and called him out:

1 Samuel 15:21-23: (NASB) ²¹But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal. ²²Samuel said, Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. ²³For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.

The sin of rebellion was as the *sin of divination*. Saul was saying, I am doing it my way. I am the king! I can justify my position by blaming others. Speaking of divination - King Saul actually did sin the *sin of divination* when he wanted advice from the witch from Endor. His life went from bad to worse.



Universal Truth: Our personal "truth" is likely in reality a sin against God. Truth comes from above and not from within!

Returning to Galatians, we see THE truth - the answer for our shortcomings:

Galatians 3:22-24: (NASB) ²²But the scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

We have had several Universal Truths that have labeled difficulty, challenge, sadness, rejection and brokenness. Here is another:



Universal Truth: The ONLY way for humanity to be in harmony with God is through the just sacrifice of Jesus.

God did not give up on humanity and end it. He began truth's reign through the sacrifice of Jesus. He made it understandable in a small way that would expand as time went on.

Jesus is the gatekeeper to God and truth:

John 14:6: (NKJV) ...I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.

Justification by faith in this age only comes when we have been ransomed and given God's spirit:

John 16:13: (Concordant Version) Yet whenever that may be coming—the spirit of **truth** <225> it will be guiding you into all the **truth** <225>, for it will not be speaking from itself, but whatsoever it should be hearing will it be speaking, and of what is coming will it be informing you.



Having God's spirit is a key to abandoning our own truth to find and follow God's truth. His spirit is our guide so that we can see truth - not OUR truth or somebody else's truth, not the traditional truth - but THE truth of Scripture.

Saul of Tarsus comes to mind. His truth was to persecute Christians for God, but when Jesus confronted him in the bright light on the road to Damascus, Jesus said: "Why are you doing this?" Saul turned completely around and went from teaching the truth of the Pharisees to teaching God's absolute truth.



Check out our CQ Kids videos:
WHAT HAPPENED ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS?
christianquestions.com/youtube



2 Timothy 2:14-18: (NASB) ¹⁴Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.

Why would we do this? Perhaps we might be confusing OUR truth with God's truth. We need to be careful.

¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of **truth <225>**. ¹⁶But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, ¹⁷and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸men who have gone astray from the **truth <225>** saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

We are assigned to accurately handle the word of truth. This is not easy to do - we have to rise up to a level from which we can do that. We are tasked with keeping God's word of truth sacred and separate from our own thinking, not allowing the two to mix.



Moral law above values, Reasonable Answers to Your Truth is Not My Truth, Evangelism Explosion

- *At the end of World War II, the Nazis were put on trial for their crimes against humanity. The defense they used to justify their actions was that they were just following the German law of the land. Jews had no value. They were not considered persons under the law, and therefore the taking of a Jewish life was not a crime. Now, what did the prosecution use to combat this defense? They appealed to a natural law - a moral law - that all people have the right to life. They appealed to a truth that is universal, cross-cultural, that exists outside of whatever laws society may create. History shows us that when values replace truth and those values are taken to their end, mankind suffers horrific atrocities. So, if it was a moral law that convicted the Nazis, there must be a moral law Giver.*

This is such a powerful reasoning for us to consider.



Universal Truth: Humility is required every step of our Christian walk:

Psalms 25:4-7: (NASB) ⁴Make me know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. ⁵Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day. ⁶Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses, For they have been from of old. ⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your lovingkindness remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O LORD.

In other words, I want God's truth to guide my every step. Humility is required if we are going to follow God through Christ. If we say, *Make me know Your ways...teach me Your paths*, we do not mean to hang onto our own way of



thinking. The last audio clip's reasoning is a warning to "Let go, and let God." Let's rise higher than the things our world is tied up in.



As Christians, if we focus on that which comes from God as being higher than us, we will be better enabled to dismantle our own "MY truth walls of self-promotion" and **embrace God's absolute truths of life and peace.** Such a transformation away from these walls we build is not easy because it takes brutal honesty and spiritual courage. **God's blessings will support us in this decision.**

God's truth is broad and life-changing, while MY truth is narrow and self-preserving. This sounds like an easy decision!

So, obedience, God's Law and Jesus' ransom are fundamental, absolute truths. Where does this all lead us to?

The beauty of seeing all of these details from our vantage point is remarkable. As Christians, we are living thousands of years after the Bible was written. With the help of God's spirit, we can see how all of these things fit into the larger picture. Let's simply let God's word of truth speak for itself and show us where His plan and truth are bringing us.

What is truth? Let's look at just one account in which the Apostle Paul lays out several thrilling details of the truth which is found in God and expressed through His plan. As we go through these scriptures, we will see the details of God's plan and track truth.



Tracking Truth: The present spiritual blessings of true Christians are gracious gifts from God Himself given through Jesus:

Ephesians 1:3: (WEY) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has crowned us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ;*

We start with, *Blessed be...God.* Then it talks about our Lord Jesus. In our ridiculous little physical human life, *God has crowned us with every spiritual blessing* - how can that be? This is a wonderful opportunity! *Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus...*



Tracking Truth: These loving and gracious gifts were all part of a master plan God had in place from a time before time.

God through Jesus had counteracted Satan's evil power and opened up the opportunity for a glorious sonship:

Ephesians 1:4-6: (WEY) *⁴even as, in His love, He chose us as His own in Christ before the creation of the world, that we might be holy and without blemish in His presence. ⁵For He predestined us to be adopted by Himself as sons through Jesus Christ - such being His gracious will and pleasure - ⁶to the praise of the splendour of His grace with which He has enriched us in the beloved one.*

The Weymouth translation is beautifully descriptive. *He chose us as His own in Christ* - God chose the true church to exist in His mind. *He adopted us by Himself as sons through Jesus* - to become sons of God! We could not get any

higher, and these are absolute truths. *Such being His gracious will and pleasure -because God pours out His will to the praise of the splendor of His grace. This is breathtaking and gets even bigger.*



Tracking Truth: God's grand, grace-driven plan was all possible because Jesus freely gave himself as a ransom. This plan was not one known by everyone - just by a select few:

Ephesians 1:7-9: (WEY) ⁷*It is in him, and through the shedding of his blood, that we have our deliverance - the forgiveness of our offences - so abundant was God's grace, ⁸the grace which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, ⁹when He made known to us the secret of His will. And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose.*

God's absolute truth deserves our attention and loyalty.



Tracking Truth: In due time, this plan would be known by everyone:

Ephesians 1:10: (WEY) ¹⁰*for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it - the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things on earth, to find their one head in him.*

At the right time, the governments of the world will see Jesus as the head - there will be worldwide redemption.

This translation adds the phrase, *the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind*. While the Greek words do not directly support this translation, we see it as an appropriate added thought based on the previous verses. God lavished upon us an understanding of an age-long secret that was fundamental in bringing His plan to fruition! This reiterates the beauty and magnificence of God's plan - the resurrected population will see Jesus as their head.



Tracking Truth: This amazing plan gave favor to the Jewish nation first and those of that nation were first privileged to have the lineage and anticipation of Christ with them even before he came:

Ephesians 1:11-12: (WEY) ¹¹*In Him we Jews have been made heirs, having been chosen beforehand in accordance with the intention of Him whose might carries out in everything the design of His own will, ¹²so that we should be devoted to the extolling of His glorious attributes - we who were the first to fix our hopes on Christ.*

The Jewish people were the first to be called.



Tracking Truth: Again by grace, this amazing plan would open the door for people of all nations to have the privilege of God's own influence working in them:

Ephesians 1:13: (WEY) ¹³*And in him you Gentiles also, after listening to the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation - having believed in him - were sealed with the promised holy spirit;*

The Gentiles were no longer on the outside. They were given, by God's grace and His absolute truth, the opportunity of being equal in opportunity to the Jewish nation for this heavenly calling. It says they *were sealed with the promised holy spirit*. When a king seals something, it is final. When we look at God's absolute truth versus the little truths we attempt to protect ourselves with by building walls around us, we have to laugh at ourselves for being so far off. We need to take the walls down and let God's absolute truth help us to cope with all aspects of our lives.



Tracking Truth: God's own influence in the individual lives of Christians was and is the guarantee of a heavenly inheritance for the purpose of glorifying God Himself:

Ephesians 1:14: (WEY) *¹⁴that spirit being a pledge and foretaste of our inheritance, in anticipation of its full redemption - the inheritance which he has purchased to be specially his for the extolling of His glory.*

What an amazing plan! Think of the picture of the bridegroom and his bride, the true church. The holy spirit is like the "engagement ring" Jesus gives to the church. This is his promise of "I will not forsake you," to his bride. This is the absolute truth of God's plan. Whatever truth we think we have, it cannot hold a candle to the burning flame of the light we see here.

Going back to where we started, Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom was *not of this world*, meaning, not in Pilate's time. Jesus knew the truth of God's ultimate plan was for a future new "heavens" - a new system of governing - and a new "earth," a renewed environment for humanity.

Jesus is given dominion over that world:

Daniel 7:13-14: (NASB) *¹³I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. ¹⁴And to him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.*

His kingdom will not be destroyed - this is absolute truth! Compared to ourselves, we see how God's plan, truth, way, will, power and wisdom are all bigger than we are.



Let us let go of all forms of MY truth and instead choose to cling to only God's absolute truth found in the Bible. **Salvation for all, coupled with eternal peace and harmony, are big truths to bank on!** Anything less than God's truth is not only temporary, but also incomplete and destined to disappoint.

"And you shall know the truth and the truth SHALL set you free!"

Not "MY truth will set me free" - God's truth will set us free if we are willing to put God's truth before us - no matter what.

We are stuck in this fiction of having our own truths, banking on them and demanding respect. Rather, we should say that these are beliefs. Let's look higher, outside of ourselves. God's truth comes down from above and will bless all of mankind. We cannot get a better absolute truth than that!

**So, what is truth?
For Jonathan, Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Bonus Material and Study Questions

John 4:7-26: (NASB) ⁷There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. ⁸For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹Therefore the Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. ¹¹She said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do you get that living water? ¹²You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle? ¹³Jesus answered and said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. ¹⁵The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw. ¹⁶He said to her, Go, call your husband and come here. ¹⁷The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said to her, you have correctly said, I have no husband; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly. ¹⁹The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. ²¹Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. ²⁵The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when that one comes, he will declare all things to us. ²⁶Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he.

Truth: Thayer's Greek English Lexicon: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #225 *aletheia*;

1) objectively 1a) what is true in any matter under consideration

1a1) truly, in truth, according to truth 1a2) of a truth, in reality, in fact, certainly

1b) what is true in things appertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth

1b1) in the greatest latitude 1b2) the true notions of God which are open to human reason

without his supernatural intervention 1c) the truth as taught in the Christian religion,

respecting God and the execution of his purposes through Christ, and respecting the duties of man, opposing alike to the superstitions of the Gentiles and the inventions of the Jews, and the

corrupt opinions and precepts of false teachers even among Christians 2) subjectively

2a) truth as a personal excellence 2a1) that candor of mind which is free from affection, pretense, simulation, falsehood, deceit

More on the Amalekites:

Amalek was an actual person who later became the leader of a clan, which became a nation of the same name. Jewish tradition has it that he was raised in the tents of Esau, listening to his grandfather complain about how Jacob had stolen his birthright in Genesis 25. Amalek absorbed Esau's hatred of the children of Jacob, and it later became the nature of the nation of Amalek to hate the Jews.

Israel had a Law from God, and yet God commands them to wipe out an entire people:

1 Samuel 15:1-3: (NASB) ¹Then Samuel said to Saul...²Thus says the LORD of hosts, I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. ³Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.



This was horrible! Why would God tell them not to leave one living thing? This is part of the difficult process of learning. The Law was put in place because sin entered, and it was based on justice.

In the context of several reminders to be completely just in how people are treated, we see this:

Deuteronomy 25:17-19: (NASB) *¹⁷Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, ¹⁸how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.*

When Israel was wandering defenseless in the wilderness, Amalek mauled and killed the oldest and weakest who were straggling at the rear. Perhaps there was even an outward mocking of God as he slaughtered these innocent people.

Remember, the Old Testament Law was about justice:

¹⁹Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

Israel was commanded under Saul to wipe out the Amalekites as just retribution. We are not advocating eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth now, but then it was the Law. Saul did not fully complete this task, and over a thousand years later, a direct descendant of Amalek named Haman tried to destroy Israel.

If it was not for Queen Esther, he would have succeeded. The Amalekites were known for their love of self and reliance on violence to prove their superiority. Their ideology was "might makes right." They insisted God was absent in the world and everything happened by chance. This is CONTRARY to what the Jews believe and what the book of Esther teaches - the many "coincidences" and reversals in the book were overruled by God. Haman is called an Agagite. Agag was the name of a specific king that the prophet Samuel killed. It also refers to the title of the Amalekite kings, so Haman comes from this royal line.

Parents and Bible class teachers:



Search for these 2 minute, animated kids videos at ChristianQuestions.com/youtube:

- Who Was King Saul? (Parts 1 and 2)
- What is Sin and What Can We Do About It?

Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and Study Questions

Text
CQREWIND
to **22828** to get started.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1267: What Is Truth?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1267-truth/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. Describe the scene in which Pilate questions Jesus just before Jesus' death. (John 18:33-38)
 - a. What surprised and confused Pilate when he first started questioning Jesus? (vs. 33-34)
 - b. What did Pilate do next to gain clarity? (vs. 35)
 - c. What information did Jesus give Pilate that helped Pilate get perspective? (vs. 36)
 - d. How did Pilate process Jesus' information which contradicted the Pharisees? (vs. 37)
 - e. Did Pilate act honorably on Jesus' words at this time? What was his famous question? (vs. 38)
2. What is the definition of the word translated "truth"? Explain how each of the following scriptures apply the word "truth." (See Mark 5:31-34, Acts 10:34, John 1:14, Ephesians 4:24, Galatians 2:14, John 8:32)
3. What are "situational ethics"? What is the difference between expressing a deeply held belief and demanding people hear YOUR truth? Where is the danger in declaring your truth in a discussion with someone? Give two examples of the Pharisees holding to their truth and bias despite being shown they were wrong. Why do you think this happened? How did Caiaphas inadvertently prophecy the truth? (See Matthew 22:15-22, John 11:47-53)
4. What are the definitions of "values" versus "absolute truth"? Who is the source of absolute truth? How does this give us security? How do your personal values harmonize with God's truth? (See John 17:15-19, James 1:17-18, Lamentations 3:22-26)
5. What was the result of Adam's sin? Why did God give Israel the Law? What did it show about humanity? How was King Saul an example of situational ethics? What is the only way for humanity to be in harmony with God? How was Saul of Tarsus an example of following God's truth? (See Romans 5:12-14, Galatians 3:19-24, 1 Samuel 15:21-23, John 14:6,16:13, 2 Timothy 2:14-18)
6. What did the Psalmist pray for in Psalms 25:4-7? How do we have to walk to achieve this? Explain the difference between God's truth and our personal truth.
7. Explain the details of God's truth found in Ephesians 3:3-14:
 - a. Who is the giver of these gracious gifts? What are these gifts? (vs. 3)
 - b. When did God make His master plan for all of man, but especially for sons through Jesus? (vs 4-6)
 - c. During the present time, who recognizes God's plan? How was this plan made possible? (vs. 7-9)
 - d. In the future kingdom, who will acknowledge Jesus as the head of worldwide redemption? (vs. 10)
 - e. Who were the first to be called to this privilege? (vs. 11-12)
 - f. Who has the privilege of God's influence in their lives and of a heavenly home? (vs. 13)
 - g. What is given us as a pledge of heavenly inheritance? (vs. 14)
8. Rather than our own disappointing, incomplete truths, what are the big truths God gives us to cling to? How can you reorder your values to fit better into God's truth? (See Daniel 7:13-14)