

TRUTH

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Defining Truth

Defining truth is something that people have great difficulty with in this day and age. Someone might say, "Some things are true and some things are false." I think that statement is reasonable but there are many people who evidently do not believe it. The mindset of the present age seems to be that some things are either true or false according to the point of view from which you look at them. Black is white and white is black, according to circumstances; and it does not particularly matter which you call it.

Subjective and Objective

The failure to make the distinction between the subjective (how a thing appears to me) and the objective (what a thing is in itself) is one of the greatest issues facing truth in our day. The subjective-objective distinction is the definitive issue that transcends all other inquiries in the pursuit of the way in which we know truth and govern ourselves. In ethics, it accounts for the distinction between absolutism (acceptance of absolute principles) and relativism (that which is considered in relation to something else, *not determined by absolutes*). One of these systems (but not both) is viable for drawing a distinction for a reasonable definition of truth.

The failure to make the objective-subjective distinction obstructs rational thinking. Morality becomes relative, truth becomes relative, even reality becomes relative. The fundamental problem in the Western culture is that we are unable to distinguish between objective and subjective truth.

Two Theories

We are battling with two theories of truth. First there is the Correspondence theory of truth, which states that when a statement is true, it corresponds to what really is. Or, as Aristotle said of truth: "If you say "It is," and it is, or "It is not," and it is not, then you speak truth. If you say "It is," and it is not, or "It is not," and it is, then you do not speak truth."¹ This is the theory of truth the Christian world desperately needs to hold onto but unfortunately is quickly abandoning.

Secondly there is the Coherence theory of truth, which is an attempt to form an internally consistent system of belief within a closed system, with no regard to the way the world may actually be apart from subjective beliefs about itself. There is often an utter disregard for what may be "objective," or at worst, an outright denial of the possibility of it. The

result is that everything becomes subjective and therefore we are left with a volatile system of relativism.

A Dangerous Shift in the West

In the West there has been a shift; from the cultural consensus that truth is and can be objective, to our present consensus that all truth is always subjective. For the most part, the West has entirely lost the ability to appeal to and live by transcendent norms, and as a result, our actions demonstrate that we believe truth to be politically, socially, and personally relative.

This mindset of truth has greatly affected Christianity for the worse. Christians have bought into this foolish way of thinking that truth is how a thing appears to me, instead of truth be what it is, in and within itself. There are no longer any absolutes as to how I should live my life. There are no longer any absolutes as to what is right and what is wrong. Worst of all, this mindset of truth attacks the authority of the Word of God.

The Word of God - The True Truth

As Christians the Word of God is our source of truth. Unfortunately since the mindset of truth has changed amongst many Christians the Word of God is no longer looked to as a source of truth. Truth is now based upon what I think is true not what God has declared to be true through the Bible.

The result of this is that the Word of God has been abandoned. Ministers are no longer teaching it, Christians are no longer studying it, and the Church is practicing exactly what the Word of God says not to. As Christians we must come back to a right understanding of truth and then live our lives based on the truths presented to us in the Word of God.

Charles Spurgeon said,

There is something definite in the Bible. It is not quite a lump of wax to be shaped at our will, or a role of cloth to be cut according to the prevailing fashion. Your great thinkers evidently look upon the Scriptures as a box of letters for them to play with, and make what they like of it. There is something told me in the Bible-told me for certain-not put before me with a "but" and a "perhaps," and an "if," and a "maybe," so that really the long and short of it is, that it may not be so at all; but revealed to me as infallible truth which must be believed, the opposite of which is deadly error, and comes from the father of lies.²

Conclusion

As Christians we must have a strong foundation in the truth of Gods Word. In Jesus prayer in John 17, He asked the Father to sanctify the disciples by the truth, Your Word is truth. I would say that one of the great weaknesses of the church today is the lack of a strong foundation in the truth of Gods Word. I challenge you not to be swayed into the foolish mindset of truth the world is presenting to you. We have an absolute truth in the Word of God. I challenge you to study that truth and live that truth.

¹ Clifford, W. K., *The Ethics of Belief*, p134, 1879, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan

² Spurgeon, C. H., *Lectures to My Students*, p.220, 1954, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan