



What is Truth?

Before Jesus was sentenced to death, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). People throughout the ages have sought answers to life’s existence and the cause behind everything. What is true and real? Which expert can you believe? What is right and wrong? The answers given affect a person’s viewpoint and choices in life. The crucial questions revolve around a person’s belief about God and the mystery of the spiritual which cannot be seen.

1. List several different approaches people take to discover truth.

[Watch scene: Darkness Sets In. Observe differing reactions to Jesus.]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you (to be considered later)?*

Why did People Follow Jesus?

When Jesus said, “Come, follow me,” Peter and the other disciples left everything behind and followed him. They were convinced he was the Messiah. Consider some of the credentials they saw in him:

- **Miracles performed:** *Mark 1:29-34; John 21:24-25*
- **Prophecies fulfilled:** *Luke 4:16-21; Matthew 11:2-6 (Isaiah 35:4-6; 61:1-3)*
- **Compassion displayed:** *Matthew 14:13-14; 15:29-32;*
- **References:** John the Baptist, “follow him” (*John 1:15-31*); God, “listen to him” (*Matthew 3:16-17; 17:5*)

Messiah

A promised and expected deliverer

Some followed for a while, but Jesus’ teachings were hard to accept. They were often radically different from what they grew up believing. But when Jesus asked Peter if he would turn away from him like others had, Peter answered, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God*” (John 6:60-69).

1. From what you know of Christ’s teachings, which might be refreshing for people and which might people stumble over because they are difficult to accept or understand?

Occasionally, Peter also strongly argued with Jesus because he viewed things from a human point of view. When Jesus started washing Peter’s feet, Peter told him “*No, you shall never wash my feet.*” When Jesus explained to his disciples how he would be captured and put to death, Peter rebuked him, saying “*Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you.*” When Jesus pointed out to Peter that he would deny him, Peter said, “*Even if everyone else falls away on account of you, I never will. Even if I have to die with you.*”

2. Determine what was behind Peter’s occasional disagreement with what Jesus said.
3. When do you find yourself disagreeing with what God says?

When Pious Standards and Religious Zeal Cause Spiritual Blindness

The world contains many concepts of god and many ideas of what is right. But Jesus said, *“wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life”* (Matthew 7:13-14).

Pharisees

What truths did they not want to hear?

Matthew 23

The top religious leaders of Jesus’ day felt they had the right road. Their teachings centered on countless lists of dos and don’ts. Rituals were more important than relationships, traditions more important than truth, and methods more important than the message. They were “self”-righteous. In their pride, they looked down on Jesus for associating with “sinners.” They saw themselves as holy. He called them hypocrites, blind guides, snakes, a brood of vipers.


4. Identify similarities between the zeal or perspectives of religious leaders in Jesus’ day and different religions (or cults) today.
5. evaluate how those perspectives affect a person’s response and relationship ...
 - to God ...
 - to others ...
 - to religion ...
6. Reflect on some ways Christians—possibly you—might unknowingly display those same characteristics. How does that affect the world’s impression of Christianity?

Too often people mold God into their own image, worshiping and loving the god they made up, seeking to establish their own righteousness. But the true God is not a matter of taste but of truth.

Seeing Jesus as the Truth

Jesus wants us to know him, so we can know his Father as well (John 14:6-21). He told the crowds he was the Light of the world. Those who follow him will not walk in darkness.


7. Listen to how John describes Jesus and why we should listen to him.

 **John 1:1-5, 14, 17-19** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 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.*

- Finish this sentence: Jesus has the authority to speak and claim truth because....


Who you see Jesus to be affects how willing you are to believe and follow what he says. The Jewish leaders despised Jesus because his actions and his teachings violated their belief system. What especially angered them was that “*he was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God*” (John 5:18).


8. After being challenged for healing someone on a Sabbath day, Jesus pointed out his authority and why they should pay close attention to him.


 **John 5:21-25** *For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²²Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.*


- Why is it important to listen to Jesus and believe him?

9. Look at the importance of knowing where to find truth.

 **John 5:37-46** *And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, ³⁸nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ³⁹You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life....⁴⁵“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. ⁴⁶If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.*

 **John 1:17** *For the law was given through Moses; grace and **truth** came through Jesus Christ*

 **John 17:6-8, 17** (Jesus prayer to his heavenly Father) *“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me....¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*

 **Hebrews 1:1-3** *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

- Explain why the Jewish leaders couldn’t accept the teaching of Jesus.
- Where can you find truth for your life?


Truth
has a FACE:
JESUS

Truth is understanding spiritual things that can only be truly comprehended through the work of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to send (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2).

A Central Truth

Truth is not determined by how zealous or passionate a person is. Neither is your relationship with God built on your own attempts to be righteousness. Jesus said, “*For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:20). Jesus told governor Pilate, “*You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the **truth**. Everyone on the side of **truth** listens to me*” (John 18:37).

10. Write in the margin central truths that set true Christianity apart from any other religion.

 **Romans 3:9-28** *Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. ¹⁰As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one ...¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” ... ¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. ²¹But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith... ²⁸For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. (See also Galatians 3:10-11)*

- How does this contradict the teachings of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day ... and almost every other world religion today?
- Why is it good news for you?

Truth would remain a mystery to us if God himself had not revealed it. God did that through the Scriptures but especially through his Son who walked this earth. Jesus told his followers, “*I am the Truth*” (John 14:6). “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples (followers). Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:31-32).

Put it into Practice:

Christianity is not essentially about how to live (although it will affect that). It isn’t about rules, organizations, and rituals (as healthy as they may be). Christianity is about the person Jesus and is built on our relationship to him. God had spoken through prophets but now his communication becomes personal as he steps into our world as “God among us.” Truth has taken on human form.

1. Are you a follower of Jesus? If so, how regularly are you listening to Jesus as Teacher and Lord? Revisit your time in the Scriptures and make regular communication from him a part of every day.
2. Gauge each day whether you are depending on God’s promises and putting his Word into practice. Pray for it at the beginning of the day; review it with Jesus at the end of the day.

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