

Life's Big Questions Study Two
"How do you know if something is true?"

सत्य 真相 Truth حقیقة Verdad

The quality or state of being in accordance with fact or reality

The ancient Greeks used to say that truth is "remembering something forgotten." While the truth can be forgotten, it cannot be erased. Even if we don't know the truth, it is still there. Even if we don't *want to know* the truth, it is still there!

Truth is inescapable, yet just because it is inescapable, it does not mean that truth is easy to find. In fact, with so many ideas in the world, truth sometimes seems like the hardest thing to find. Especially when so many ideas seem true, how can we really know what is true and what is not?

While we can never know that something is true with absolute certainty, we can try to answer as many questions as we can so that we can be more certain. Three questions people can ask to find the truth are:

Does it claim to be true?

Does it seem to be true?

And do you experience it to be true?

Does it claim to be true?

If something claims to be true, that doesn't prove that it is true, but it is helpful. With so many ideas in the world, it makes sense to explore ideas that claim to be true before ideas that do not claim to be true. For example, if you are trying to

find the world's best ice cream flavor, you may feel overwhelmed because there are thousands of flavors of ice cream in the world.

However, if some of the ice cream flavors had signs claiming to be the best flavor, it would make sense to try those flavors first, wouldn't it? It is important that we never assume something is true simply because it claims to be though. There are many lies in the world that claim to be true.

In 1919 in Europe, a man named Adolf Hitler began to claim that the Germans were a superior race and that the Jews were an evil and inferior race. By 1933, Hitler had convinced many people that this was true, and between 1933 and 1945 over six million people were killed because of Hitler's lies.

So something claiming to be true is helpful since we can choose to examine those ideas first, but we cannot dangerously assume something is true just because it claims to be.

Many people who begin to explore Christianity do so because it claims to be true. Jesus said this about Himself:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life"

It may sound very bold (perhaps unbelievable), but Jesus claims to be the truth. If this is true, this is amazing news! Truth is no longer *something* we find. Truth is *someone* who finds us!

Does it seem to be true?

Have you ever heard something that sounds true, but you don't know why? This is what it means for something to "seem to be true."

My physics professor gave my class some very useful advice that applies to more than just physics problems. He always told us to use "intuition" when solving our physics problems, especially when evaluating our answers.

His advice was very helpful. There were many times when I would follow the right process, do my calculations correctly, but get an answer that did not make sense. Either a force was going in an unexpected direction, or its magnitude seemed too small or too large.

Often, I had made a wrong assumption or a simple mistake, but I never would have found the correct answer if I didn't stop and ask myself, "Does my answer seem to be true?"

We can follow all the right steps and still get the wrong answer to some of the most important questions in life if we make a wrong assumption! While something isn't true simply because it seems to be (or untrue simply because it doesn't seem to be), it is always important to ask this question.

Do you experience it to be true?

The last question people can ask to find the truth is "does it prove to be true?" The greatest proof we can have is experience. If we experience something, we are far more likely to believe it.

How do I know my father loves me? He tells me he does, but he also proves his love for me through his actions. I experience his love through him raising me, providing for me, and him wanting to spend time with me.

Experience isn't always reliable though. Sometimes, we may misinterpret our experiences. For example, a friend of mine would eat chicken every day, and he began to think that he was developing an allergy to chicken. In reality, his pot was very old and was beginning to decay into his food and make him sick.

The main point is that we can try our best to be sure of our answers to life's big questions, but we can never know anything with certainty. We will always need to have faith (or trust) in something.

Some people put their faith in what their family tells them. Others trust their friends most. Some people trust books, articles, and videos most of all. Many people put their faith in themselves above everything else.

Christians are people who put their faith in Jesus above everything else. It doesn't mean that Christians don't trust their families, friends, and the internet, but it means that they trust Jesus more than all these things. Jesus once said,

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

How do we know if something is true? The truth is, we can never know for certain. We can take many steps to be more certain of our answers, but we all need to put faith in something. What is your faith in?

Life's Big Questions Study Two - Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you believe in absolute truth? In other words, do you believe that there are things which are true at all times and in all places?
2. Do you approach life's big questions in the same way you would approach a scientific question? In other words, do you invest time, follow a process, and examine the evidence to answer these kinds of questions?
3. Is truth the most important thing to you? If not, what is?
4. Where do you go to answer life's big questions?
5. Where do you put your faith?