

OBEY GOD-DEFY TYRANTS #21

“What is Truth?”

Part 2

I. Introduction

I want to continue our teaching with Part 2 of the answer to one of the great questions of life: ‘What is Truth?’

My title is taken from Pontius Pilate’s famous question to Christ at His trial.

John 18:38

What is truth?

His question was prompted by Jesus’ revelation of why He came into the earth:

John 18:37

For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

So some may say, “Why do a second message on the same subject?”
Because this is the primary point of the enemy’s attack upon our generation

Theme

The greatest threat to this generation is the systematic, satanic attack upon the truth.

We cannot defeat what we cannot define!

A Doctor must diagnose before he prescribes.

This is why, in times of national crisis, God will raise up a prophetic people who will know what to do because they understand the times, like the tribe of Issachar in the Old Testament...

1 Chronicles 12:22

The sons of Issachar understood the times, to know what Israel ought to do.

We won't know what to do until we 'understand the times' we live in.

Francis Schaeffer

The Christian must understand what confronts him antagonistically in his own moment in history. Otherwise, he simply becomes a useless museum piece and not a living warrior for Jesus Christ.

This reminds me of some famous phrases attributed to the great Reformer...

Martin Luther

Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

The satanic attack in Luther's day was over the doctrinal issue of justification by faith; about how we are saved. He could have centered his sermons on many subjects; but he went after where Satan was hitting the hardest...

Martin Luther

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not professing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ.

The devil has a genius for attacking different generations in different ways.

For example...

The Jesus Revolution Movie

This is a great movie about the Jesus movement we were alive to see back in the 60's; Satan was seducing the young people with sex, drugs, and rock and roll; but when the church opened its arms to the hippie culture with a message of love and grace, the revival touched the nation.

Time Magazine

**The impact on America was reflected in the covers of Time magazine; in 1966, they asked “Is God Dead”; in 1971, the cover story was “The Jesus Revolution”.
This wave swept us into the kingdom; we were saved in 1971!**

But that was a different day.

The devil still uses sex, drugs, and rock and roll; but we need to understand the times today, where the satanic strategy has shifted over into an attack on truth.

Theme

The cause of the crisis in contemporary American culture is not really political or economic; the crisis has come upon us because of our fundamental failure to faithfully speak up and stand up for the truth, as revealed in Christ and His word.

II. Understanding the Times/Knowing What to Do

A. The Generational Disconnection Is Over the Issue of Truth

Francis Schaeffer, “The God Who Is There”

“The present chasm between the generations has been brought about almost entirely by a change in the concept of truth....the way we come to knowledge about truth is the most crucial problem facing Christianity today”.

Dr. Donald T. Williams

The sticking point for our own time is the existence of objective truth, or, more subtly, the ability of human beings to know objective truth, and hence to be held responsible for knowing it and accountable to God for what they do about it.

1. One of the benefits of old age is living a life that spans the generations so that you see the shifts that take place.

a. Young people today have no idea the America they are living in is different from the America we grew up in. So what has happened?

2. There has been a fundamental shift in the way Americans think about 'truth'; in our generation pretty much everyone accepted the idea that truth existed; that truth was a real thing. But that has changed.

Francis Schaeffer, "The God Who Is There"

There was a time when everyone believed in truth—objective truth—and the debate was about what is true. Today the debate is about whether there is any such thing as objective truth.

3. Objective truth means truth that exists outside of us; that truth is a reality that cannot be invented, only discovered. No one believed that they could create truth based on their feelings or personal opinions. That has changed.

a. This generation believes it can create its own truth, which is causing the collapse of civilized society.

Francis Schaeffer, "The God Who Is There"

The tragedy of our situation today is that men and women are being fundamentally affected by the new way of looking at truth, and yet they have never even analyzed the drift which has taken place.

4. What does Schaeffer mean by 'the new way of looking at truth'? The old way of knowing truth as absolute has been replaced by relativism.

Christian Post, Claudia Kalmikov (Talbot Seminary)

Relativism is the idea that everyone is right, or that morality is subjective — a matter of personal taste, or preference. What's true for you is true for you, and not for me, and we shouldn't tell anyone that they are wrong because there is no right and wrong.

Claudia Kalmikov

Nor are there any objective rules. Anything goes, and nothing is either good or evil. In other words, "You do you." Morally, everything is permitted, and tolerance is the highest virtue.

Claudia Kalmikov

However, this expectation of tolerance is self-refuting. Why? Because if there are no rules, and no right or wrong, then how can there be a rule requiring tolerance?

- a. How can you ask me to tolerate something if everything is permitted?
- b. How can you ask me to submit to your rule of tolerance there are no rules?
- c. How can you demand that I tolerate gay marriage unless some established rule regarding marriage against it already exists?
- d. This generation believes there is no such thing as absolute truth. But:

The statement that 'there is no such thing as absolute truth' is self-contradictory, since the statement itself is presented as 'absolute truth'!

5. In the biblical worldview, absolute truth exists in Christ and His word and speaks with final authority on all things, including all issues of morality.

Psalm 119:151

You are near, O Lord, and all *Your commandments are truth.*

Psalm 119:160

The entirety of *Your word is truth*, and every one of *Your righteous judgments endures forever.*

- a. But this generation rejects the absolute truth of the 10 commandments.
- b. They say, those rules may be *your* truth, but they are not *my* truth.

6. The problem for them is that their denial of objective morality falls flat as soon as they experience a violation of God's law against their own personhood.

Claudia Kalmikov (Talbot Seminary)

We know that everyone believes in objective morality, not by seeing how they treat others, or by what they tell us, *but by watching how they want to be treated.* It then becomes plainly evident.

7. The Bible says stealing is a sin; they say that's just 'your truth' until someone steals from them.

a. The Bible says sex outside of marriage is a sin; they say that's just 'your truth'...until their spouse is sexually unfaithful to them.

8. In Romans 2, the Apostle Paul proves the objective truth of God's law, not just because it is written down, but because God has written a sense of His moral law into every human heart. Even those who've never read the Bible!

Romans 2:14-15

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them...

b. Murder is a crime, even in non-Christian countries; lying in court is a crime, even in non-Christian countries. The truth behind these laws did not originate when men wrote them down; they were objective truths written on their hearts by God Himself.

Claudia Kalmikov

We have the Lord's requirements written on our hearts, with our conscience bearing witness. What that is saying is that we know what is right and wrong because God made *everyone* that way. No amount of rationalizing can change what is objectively right and wrong.

9. Deep down inside the conscience of every human being, there is a sense that abortion is murder; men having sex with men or dressing like a woman is unnatural.

a. In Romans 1, the Apostle Paul tells us that those who do such things must 'suppress the truth' of what God has shown them.

Romans 1:18-20

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

a. The truth can be suppressed but it cannot be extinguished.

c. Nevertheless, the attack on the nature of truth itself is...

B. The Difficulty of Our Day: Recovering Truth in Our Generation

John 14:6
I am...the truth.

John Piper

There may have been a generation or a century when the simple implication of this text would not need to be stressed: that there is truth—truth outside of my own mind, truth that I don't create but discover, that I don't control but submit to. There may have been a time when we didn't have to proclaim this. But not today.

GotQuestions.org

At one time, the job of the Christian was to demonstrate the truthfulness of the biblical claims. Now, his job has been made more difficult because, before talking about the truth of the Bible, the Christian must often convince the listener that truth actually exists.

1. The modern attack on the truth began on the college campuses and was exposed in Alan Bloom's classic book, 'The Closing of the American Mind', 1987.

Alan Bloom, "The Closing of the American Mind" (1987)

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of today: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending.

a. Keep in mind that Professor Bloom was observing the generation that now controls the halls of congress and the corporate board room—and in some cases, Christian pulpits.

b. The seeds sown back then have spread throughout the culture.

GotQuestions.org

In recent years there has been an attack upon the very concept of objective truth. Things that were once deemed to be objective have been labeled subjective. For instance, the simple statement “God exists” was, in the past, recognized as an objective statement.

GotQuestions.org

People might agree or disagree, but everyone considered it an objective statement regarding external reality. Most people agreed with the statement, but even atheists who disagreed treated it objectively—the statement was either true or false.

GotQuestions.org

Within the past thirty years or so, a new response has become popular. Instead of treating the statement “God exists” as an objective statement, many began to treat it as subjective. Instead of agreeing or disagreeing, the response might be something like “That is your truth. God may exist for you, but He doesn’t exist for me.”

Got Questions

The focus has changed from objectivity (which seeks correspondence to objects in the real world) to subjectivity (which depends upon the subject who is making the statement). Today, we have seen subjective opinion elevated to the level of objective truth. If a person embraces “his truth” or “her truth,” then everyone else is supposed to embrace that as “truth” as well—at least in certain “politically correct” matters.

2. What is different about our day, and unique to our generation, is how objective truth is being attacked on issues never before called into question.

- a. For 1000’s of years, marriage was between a male and a female.
- b. For 1000’s of years, gender was considered an objective issue; male and female.
- c. But today, cultural forces are demanding a redefinition of truth based on personal opinion and preference.

3. No wonder our culture is in so much confusion!

George Barna, The American Worldview Inventory 2023

The ideological and philosophical confusion that characterizes America today is perhaps the biggest reflection of the nation's rejection of biblical principles and its decision to replace God's truth with 'personal truth'.

a. Barna tells us that this Christians are no immune from this contamination of our culture...

George Barna, The American Worldview Inventory 2023

58% of Americans do not believe in objective truth; 46% of evangelicals do not believe in objective truth. The number of born-again Christians who say God is the basis of all truth fell from 69% to 63% over the past 3 years.

b. The survey shows that most Americans and half the born-again Christians have abandoned a belief in objective truth. No wonder we've lost our witness.

David Kinnaman, Barna Research CEO

"The work of Christians is to embody Jesus — full of truth and grace — and reflect his image in all they say and do. This latest data shows they too often fall short."

4. We cannot even calculate the corruption in a culture where Christian young people go to college campuses that question the truth and end up leaving the faith.

Francis Schaeffer, "The God Who Is There"

Young people from Christian homes are brought up in the old framework of truth. Then they are subjected to the modern framework.

Francis Schaeffer

In time they become confused because they don't understand the alternatives with which they are being presented. Confusion becomes bewilderment and before long they are overwhelmed.

5. The modern American church has given ground on many issues; like politics, public schools, and entertainment. But the attack on truth is a war we must win.

Dr. Donald T. Williams

"If we compromise on the issue of absolute truth, then we betray the next generation to absolute darkness. If we do this, then may God have mercy on their souls—and, even more, on ours."

III. Close

A. Review: What Have We Said?

We must understand the times before we can know what we ought to do.

1 Chronicles 12:22

The sons of Issachar understood the times, to know what Israel ought to do.

We won't know what to do until we 'understand the times' we live in.

Francis Schaeffer

The Christian must understand what confronts him in his own moment in history. Otherwise, he simply becomes a useless museum piece and not a living warrior for Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul said he fought with certainty, not as one who beats the air.
(1 Corinthians 9:26)

The future of America faces many threats; but...

Theme

The greatest threat to this generation is the systematic, satanic attack upon the truth.

Almost every issue confronting us today can be traced to some attack on the truth
Can the church take up the challenge?

Francis Schaeffer

This is our moment of history and our responsibility: not just to write and talk of far-off ideals, but to struggle for Scriptural and practical means of doing what can be done in a fallen world to see people personally converted and also to see what our salt and light can bring forth in the personal, political and cultural life of this moment of history.

Closing Prayer

Title