

John 18:37-38 “The Truth About Truth”

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Intro. One of the many qualities that I love about Millennials and Gen-next-Zs is their passion for right and wrong. Nevertheless, they may lack a sure moral compass. In effect, moral decisions are based on the feelings of the culture or sub-culture as a standard. Is there truth about God and thus a true moral reality? Or is it merely a matter of subjective opinions? Are all religions the same? What difference does it make? Instead of insisting on freedom to create “spiritual reality” shouldn’t we seek to discover whether spiritual truth exists and then live according to it? Honest questions about the Christian worldview deserve thoughtful, respectful, intellectually robust answers. So, what’s the truth about truth and Jesus?

Subject: The Truth About Truth and Jesus

Object: Learn, love and live truth.

“Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say *rightly* that I am a king. 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.”

³⁸ Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all” [John 18:37-38].

1. Does it really matter what you believe about religion and morality?

Morality is the standard of what is right or wrong. Christianity asserts absolute moral truth that transcends cultural standards. Can there be just one true religions?

The Bible declares that Jesus manifests transcendent truth [John 18:37]:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” [John 1:14].

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” [John 14:6].

Any claim to transcendent truth will clash with a culture which changes values through the ages. The gospel is no mere preference it is either true or it isn't. So, let's consider objections to the gospel and whether alternative views are intellectually viable.

Moral relativism asserts that right and wrong are relative to cultural standards: our culture asserts all are free to choose right vs. wrong as long as it doesn't hurt others; and don't impose your moral values upon others. The mantra is tolerance of other views (apparently unless it is the Christian worldview). Moral relativism generally holds that all values, lifestyles and truth claims are equally valid.

Some dangers of moral relativism:

First, it is self-contradictory in that it claims an absolute [i.e. that there is no absolute truth] which negates itself. Second, we can't live per moral relativism, because we constantly judge attitudes and behaviors we feel are in conflict with our view. As soon as you ask, "How should I live?" you assert a standard of right and wrong. Similarly, as soon as you declare, "I have a right to do as I please ..." you're asserting a right while denying moral reality. Third, if there is no God or truth then there is no basis for morality, human rights, love, and all moral statements become arbitrary and subjective. Fourth, if heaven and hell are real then the quest for moral truth is the ultimate matter. The relativistic culture has no objection to a generic god of love that supports you regardless of how you live, but objects to the concept of God who punishes people for sincerely held mistaken beliefs (i.e. a loving God would not allow hell). Why not be offended by a forgiving God? C.S. Lewis observed,

“Man’s rebellion to God is ‘leave me alone’ hell is getting your wish; it is the greatest monument to human freedom” [Romans 1:24].

Thus, freedom is not the absence of boundaries but finding the right ones; and yes, it really does matter what you believe about religion and morality.

2. What about the conflicts created by claiming a moral perspective?

Each philosophy informs its followers they have truth and that creates conflicts with other views. Even if you assert there are multiple paths to truth, that is a truth statement that encourages devotion to a belief system that will conflict with other beliefs.

Christians are also guilty of wrongs in regard to trying to advance truth. We should acknowledge the wrongs of the Church specifically and religion generally through the ages, and seek forgiveness. Jesus rebukes “religion” that misrepresents God [Matthew 5-7]. Nevertheless, the existence of wrongs shows there is right and wrong.

You cannot escape the philosophical influence of morality and inherent conflict(s). Outlawing religion leads to abuse of morality (and historically has led to the spread of Christianity).

All religions can't be equally true and valid: Hinduism believes in multiple gods, Buddhism denies a personal god, Islam's Allah is not the same as the Judeo-Christian God (YHWH).

It's no more arrogant or narrow to assert one view is right than to assert that all are equal.

You simply cannot keep religion private. All public policy decisions regarding the environment, the poor, marriage, divorce, abortion, assisted suicide are framed by worldview, religion and moral reasoning.

3. Why is the Christian message different?

The gospel is different, because Jesus came as Savior and teacher. In contrast, all other religious leaders are teachers only (I.e. do this and find the divine). Jesus did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Jesus doesn't tell us how to live to earn salvation but gives His life for us as a sacrifice to provide a means to be forgiven and reconciled to a perfect holy God.

Justice always requires a penalty to be paid to forgive a wrong. Because of God's love for you, He paid the penalty that you deserve, and that you could never pay.

Gospel: God accepts you because of faith in what Jesus has done (grace); obedience is motivated because you have been accepted.

Religion: God accepts you because of your efforts; and obedience is the means to earn acceptance.

Christianity is the only truly global religion, because it addresses every culture's meta-narrative, unlike other faiths, philosophies, and religions.

4. How you can know that Jesus' words, works and gospel are true:

In this Apologetics series, we've discovered that God exists, and considered the evidence for the resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, and the support for Creation vs. evolution.

There is evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that there is truth about God, and moral truth generally, and it is revealed in the words, works and gospel of Jesus. Instead of insisting on freedom to create "spiritual reality" shouldn't you live according to the truth about truth?

5. How to learn, love, and live truth [John 18:37-38]

Jesus came to reveal the truth about God. Jesus declared that everyone who is of the truth hears His voice. Those who realize and recognize that Jesus is the truth respond by yielding to Him, continuing

to learn of and from Him, and follow Him. Study the Bible, and ask God to reveal His truth to you.

Become part of community of faith with others seeking to learn, love and live the truth. “But if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” [1 Timothy 3:15].

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Have you ever had a conversation with someone who believed in moral relativism? What was it like?

Q2. Was there ever a time in your life that you believed in moral relativism? What was/is it like? If your views have changed, describe how and why?

Q3. How did you discover the Christian message to be different and true?

Q4. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to know how to learn, love, and live truth?

Digging Deeper

1. Do a search of the phrase, “the existence of moral truth.” What did you discover?
2. How does the gospel’s particularism/exclusivity (i.e. Jesus is the only way to God and heaven) conflict with the culture’s view (pluralism)?

Neighboring Idea:

Pray and ask God to provide an opportunity this week to have a spiritual conversation. As you are led by God, engage a neighbor where you live, work, study, or play in a spiritual conversation where you purpose to listen and seek to understand their worldview.