



Can you look left while also looking right? Is the earth round or flat? Is baptism required for salvation or not? We live in a world filled with relativism and pluralism. It is common today to hear that there are no such things as absolutes. Truth is considered relative, and everything is situational and subjective. All ideas, all actions, no matter how different, must be accepted. Tolerance for all is a predominant theme in our culture today. However, as Christians we are called to think differently from the world around us (Rom 12:2; Col 3:2). We should be able to see how opposed this kind of thinking is towards those who believe in the inspiration of the Bible. As Christians we know that there is an absolute standard by

which the entire world will be judged by (Acts 17:30-31).

In Acts 17, we see several different attitudes towards this absolute standard. In the beginning of the chapter (vss 1- 8) we see the Jews, the majority of whom only wanted to hear what they had heard before and accused Paul and his companions of turning the world upside down (vs 6) because of what they were teaching. At the end of Acts 17 we see Paul speaking to the Athenians who were on the opposite end of the spectrum, in contrast to the Jews from before, they wanted to hear something new (vs 21).

While there are those who do not want to hear anything new, and those that only want to hear something new, somewhere in the middle of this chapter we read about those who wanted to know what was true. These people are the Bereans who examined everything that they heard to see if it was true. Acts 17 shows us that we shouldn't accept something old because it's old, or new because it's new. Instead, we should seek the truth because it's right. But what is truth?

**Truth is objective.** This means that it exists outside of ourselves. It is not something that is formed within us. Truth is truth regardless of whether or not we accept it. Paul's message to the Galatians shows us the objective nature of truth: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9). We see in this passage that Paul's message was the objective standard by which other teachings were to be examined, and anything that ran contrary to Paul's message was to be accursed.

Disclaimer: This does not mean whatever a preacher preaches is the truth. This means only what is written in the Bible is the truth. If a preacher teaches from the Bible only, then we can follow what he teaches, but be careful not to say you believe something because preacher X or preacher Y said it. Preachers should lead you to the truth but should not be the foundation of your beliefs.

**Truth is discoverable.** It can be searched for and found. Luke begins his Gospel by telling his readers that his intent was to find the truth: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4).

**Truth is attainable.** We understand that there can be truth that is undiscoverable to us. For example, there are aspects of God and His knowledge that we cannot attain (cf. Eph. 3:20). However, this does not mean that no truth can be attained. What we are discussing here is within our reach. Our search will not be in vain but will become an important part of who we are. This also means that truth is understandable. We can know it, be persuaded by it, and submit to it.

**Truth is unchangeable.** No matter how much time passes objective truth doesn't change. Of course, there are relative truths. For example, it's true that I like chocolate ice cream better than strawberry ice cream, and it's possible that my taste might change over time. However, we are not talking about personal preferences here. What we are talking about is objective truth. The thing about objective truth is that it remains the same regardless of our personal preferences.

**Truth is universal.** Two plus two will always equal four, regardless of who, where, or when you are. Similarly, God's will is universal. His desire is for all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (I Tim 2:4). Notice that His desire is for all people. God is not reaching out to a small, select group of individuals and offering them salvation from sin, but, instead, is reaching out to all people regardless of who, where, or when they are.

**Truth is foundational.** Just like a house must be built on a solid foundation, so also our worldview. If a worldview is going to be meaningful, truth must be at its foundation. If the foundation of a worldview is false, then that worldview will not stand as a sustainable option by which we ought to live our lives. This requires that truth be self-consistent. If we believe

something that is self-contradictory, then we know that it is not truth. For example, some will say, “There is no such thing as truth.” The nonsense of that statement is revealed by simply asking, “Is that true?” If it is true, then it is false, and if it is false, it cannot be true. A worldview based on a “no truth” foundation will fail. The only foundation that can stand ultimately will be based in truth.

When we compare the nature of truth to the nature of God, we see that the two are very similar. This should make sense because they are the same. Jesus tells us in John 14:6 that “I am the truth.” Looking at the nature of God we see that He is objective. He is discoverable. He is attainable. He is unchangeable. He is universal. He is foundational. Thus, God is the objective standard by which we should measure ourselves, our beliefs, and what we teach.

Paul tells both Timothy and Titus to teach the truth, or “sound doctrine” (II Tim



***“For I am the Lord,  
I do not change...”***

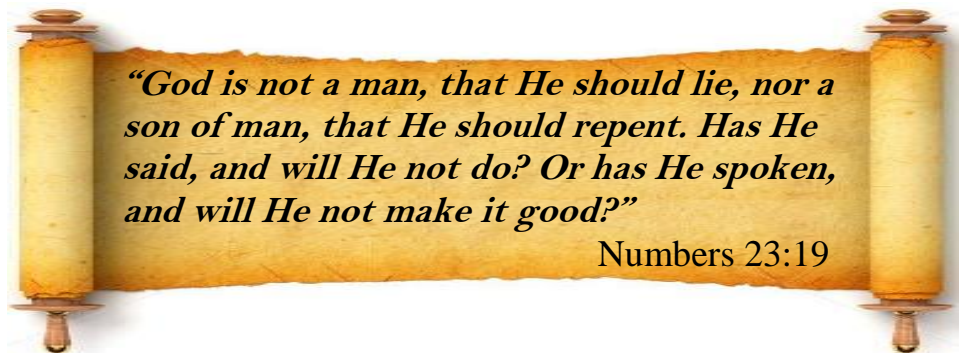
1:13; Tit 1:9). The same is important for us as well, but we must be careful to avoid being arrogant, thinking that we are perfect. We should always be open to further study, understanding, and changing when we see we must. At the same time, we should never diminish the importance of what scripture says about sound teaching.

It is possible that what we believe sound doctrine can be, in our minds, best maintained by adding rules and restrictions that scripture does not provide. In other words, we can bend over so far backwards that we end up outside of the sound doctrine that we were trying to guard. That is what the Pharisees were guilty of. They formed traditions to “protect” the law so that the people would not even come close to breaking it, but the traditions that they created, which were eventually published in the Mishna, were eventually considered on the same level if not higher than the law that God had delivered to them. This is not what God wanted, and we see Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for the emphasis that they put on maintaining the traditions that they had come up with and disregarding the law of God (Mat 23:27-28; Mark 7:13).

So how do we ensure that what we believe and teach is sound? Like the Bereans in Acts 17, we must examine everything using the standard that God has left for us, the Bible, His words (II Tim 3:16). Self-examination is a critical part in the life of a Christian. Paul instructs Christians to examine themselves before partaking of the Lord’s supper in I Corinthians 11:28, and again in II Corinthians 13:5, Paul instructs Christians to examine themselves to see whether they are “in the faith.” As we strive to up hold the truth it is important that we follow Paul’s example and not “to go beyond what is written,” (I Cor 4:6).

Are you seeking the truth, or are you simply following what you’ve always been told? Or perhaps, you’re seeking something new for the sake of being different.

There is only one way to know of something is true. It’s not by using the subjective standard of our emotions. It is only by using the objective standard of truth given to us by God that we will be able to discover truth. So, this week, let us each use God’s standard and examine ourselves and our beliefs to see if what we believe to be truth aligns with the objective truth of God.



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