

## HOW DO WE DISCOVER TRUTH?

Today we are concluding this short series Reframing Your Worldview by continuing on with the sermon I started last week. I want to talk today about truth. As I preparing the sermon last week “what is truth” I wanted to end by talking about how we discover truth but knew it would be too long.

Before a pastor began to preach one Sunday morning he thought he should explain why he had a Band-Aid on his chin. "As I was shaving this morning I was thinking about today's sermon when I lost my concentration and accidentally cut my chin with the razor." He then went on to preach the longest message of his life. After the service one of the teens greeted the pastor and said, "Pastor, next week instead of thinking about the sermon and cutting your face, why don't you think about your face and cut the sermon."

Last week we talked about the problems that happen in our culture when we sacrifice truth on the altar of tolerance. Today we look at the solution. How do we find truth?

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me -- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Postmodernism says, “can we really know truth? Is there a way to know the truth?” The answer is “Absolutely.” Truth is knowable. How do we discover the truth? In 5 ways;

### 1. CREATION

We learn a lot about God, a lot about truth, just by looking at nature. This is why science is so important. It helps us understand how things work. I am glad for my science background in university because it helps me understand truth. It helps us understand God and His universe.

Romans 1:19-20 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

What can we know about God from creation? The first thing I can figure out real quickly is God likes variety. God is creative, He loves diversity. Have you noticed that? Just look at the people sitting around you. There's not anybody like you in the world. God doesn't want us all alike. Do you know that when God created beetles He created over 60,000 different varieties of beetles. Think about that! Sixty thousand different kinds of beetles in the world. You would have thought four or five hundred varieties would be enough. No! God wanted 60,000 different varieties of beetles. God is creative.

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

I know God is powerful just by looking at nature. The vastness of the universe. The power in a volcano, or earthquake or tornado. God is BIG and powerful.

I know God is organized. Nature shows that to us. The whole earth is an ecosystem. It's all delicately balanced. Things that we didn't even know related to each other we now know are highly organized. When I look at things like the angle of the earth's axis as it is tilted that it is just the right angle to support human life, just the right distance from the sun (any closer we would burn up, any further and we would freeze), just the right size moon etc. There is no way all this came about by accident.

Even the elements that make up life show us how amazing God is. Sodium is an essential element for all animal life (including human) and for some plant species. It is a soft, silvery-white metal that is highly reactive. At room temperature, sodium metal is soft enough that it can be cut with a knife. In air, the bright silvery luster of freshly exposed sodium will rapidly tarnish. Sodium reacts violently with water, so it is usually stored in a jar of oil. Small pieces bounce along the surface of water, big pieces explode! I remember in chemistry class in high school that someone threw a big chunk into water – not a good idea!

Chlorine is a gas and is highly toxic. The German Army first used chlorine gas cylinders in April 1915 against the French Army at Ypres, Belgium. Chlorine destroys the lungs leading to a slow death by asphyxiation – the lack of oxygen. Yet when chlorine picks up one other molecule, it becomes chloride, which is a chemical the human body needs for metabolism (the process of turning food into energy). The amount of chloride in the blood is carefully controlled by the kidneys. So how do we take those two essential elements – sodium and chloride - into our bodies? We do it every day, because when these two dangerous elements sodium and chloride combined they become table salt.

Here's another. Ordinarily a liquid is heavier than a gas, and a solid heavier than a liquid. If you melt a piece of lead it is a liquid. If you then add a piece of solid lead it will sink to the bottom because it is heavier. That is what solids normally do.

Moisture in the air (a gas) that is cooled and condensed into a liquid will fall as rain. The colder water gets, the more dense and heavy it becomes until it freezes. As soon as water freezes it expands and become lighter so it will float on the top. So water is one of the few substances where the solid is lighter than the liquid. It doesn't follow the rules. Why? Because God needs it to be that way and made it that way. Otherwise in winter the ice on the pond would freeze and sink to the bottom. When that happened enough times, there would be no water left where the fish could live.

## 2. CONSCIENCE

There are some things that are hard wired into us by God that we know that are always right and always wrong no matter what anybody else says. Our conscience tells us this.

Romans 2:14-15 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

Say you are standing on a corner in New York City, in Times Square, and you asked the person standing beside you a moral question. You point to a little old lady who is 92. She is blind and is walking with a walker. She needs to cross one of the busiest intersections in New York City. Tell me which of these three options is morally right. One, you can ignore her and just let her go off on her own. Two, you could help the blind lady cross the street.

Three, you could push her into oncoming traffic. We instinctively know there's a right thing to do. You don't have to be a Christian or Jew or Muslim or Hindu or Sikh or even a spiritual person. Inside you know the right thing to do.

That's the way God wired our conscience. I like the way The Message translates this;

Romans 2:14-15 When outsiders who have never heard of God's law follow it more or less by instinct, they confirm its truth by their obedience. 15 They show that God's law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is something deep within them that echoes God's yes and no, right and wrong.

The problem with conscience is that it is the least reliable way of finding truth because the Bible teaches us that our conscious can be weakened. It can be warped, hardened, perverted and even killed. The more you violate your conscious, the more out of whack it gets. It just gets easier and easier to do the wrong thing.

The point I'm making is there are some things that are hard wired in us around the world that says that we know what is right and what's wrong.

### 3. CONSIDERATION

Truth is knowable. You can test it. You can experiment with it. You can prove it. Truth is intelligent. It's rational. You can observe it. You can test it. You can examine the evidence.

Years ago I bought a GPS for my car. Over the years I have used it many times. Through experience I have found it to be reliable. I trust it. When I ask it to take me to Mississauga, it has never once yet tried to take me to Mississippi. The maps on it are accurate.

For forty plus years I have been following this map called the Bible. I have found it to be true. It always takes me where it says it is going to take me. It is not always the easiest road. There are times when I did not like the journey. However, it has always taken me to where it says it is going to take me. I have tested and seen that it is true. The bible works.

A psychiatrist once unknowingly referred to the bible, remarking, "The greatest secret of mental health comes down to us in the words, 'Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will save it.'" He added, "I forget who said that, but it is a great truth." The bible works.

God gave you a brain and He expects you to use it. He wants us to use our intellect. He wants us to test and see what truth is. Many people never slow down long enough for consideration. They just drift through life, never asking where they are headed. Where am I going? What am I doing with my life? The Bible tells us over and over to be careful how we live. Don't just drift through life. Spend some time in consideration, in observation. Am I on a true path? Check it out.

Proverbs 14:15 A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.

If you've got serious questions about the Bible and about God, I highly encourage you that it is OK to check things out. It is ok to be skeptical. There's nothing wrong with that at all. Seek answers to your questions.

I said a few moments ago that one of the reasons I believe the bible is because it works. One of the ways we seek truth is by examining the lifestyles of those who claim to know it. Do they walk the talk? Does their life match what they say they believe? Now I understand that no one is perfect, as sinful people we all make mistakes. However, you should never study a philosopher without knowing their biography. Never study a thinker without knowing what that philosophy did to their lives.

For instance Nietzsche who was a guy who said, God is dead. Nietzsche went insane. Sigmund Freud studied the work of Nietzsche and eventually committed suicide. He hated his father and all of his life resented and rejected him. In fact a few years ago a professor named Paul Vitz wrote a book called Faith and the Fatherless. He studied the 100 most famous atheists in history to see if there was anything in common. You know what the one hundred famous atheists in history had in common? They all hated their fathers. They were either abandoned by their father, ridiculed by their father, rejected by their father, their father died at an early age – they hated their father.

Matthew 7:15-20 Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

#### 4. COMMANDMENTS

Someone may argue that just because the bible works for me does not mean it is true. The issue is not whether it is true for me but is it true for everyone? How do I know the Bible is true?

The Scottish pastor and writer Thomas Cuthrie said, "The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Is there objective evidence that shows me that the Bible is true? The answer is YES. There is both external and internal evidence for the reliability of the bible.

External evidence includes things like historical reliability. That is what historians look for to see if a book is accurate and true. For instance a book like Homer's Iliad. There's about 600 copies of that and no one doubts the authenticity of it. Then you have a book like Julius Caesar's Gaelic Wars which has about 10 copies, the earliest dating from 1000 years after it was supposed to be written. Again, historians do not doubt it.

How about the New Testament of the Bible? There are more than 5000 copies with the earliest dating from just a few years after it was written.

F.J.A. Haught, one of the greatest textual critics who ever lived, said this: 'In the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone amongst ancient prose writings' - and no secular historian would disagree with that conclusion.

External evidence also includes archeology. Are the cities and places that the Bible talks about really there or were they just made up. There has been many times in history when historians have said that the Bible was wrong. That the things it said were not accurate. However, the Bible has proved itself to be true and the historians wrong.

There was a long period of time when historians agreed that there was no such thing as a tribe called the Hittites in ancient history because there was no record of them ever existing. They said the Bible was in error. About a hundred years ago a man named Hugo Winkler discovered a place with ten thousand clay tables at the Hittite capital. Now everybody accepts it as a part of history.

Historians used to say that when the Bible talked about Solomon having all these horses and that was wrong. But then they dug up a place called Megiddo and guess what they found? Thousands of horse stables. Again the Bible has proved itself again and again to be true.

There is the external evidence in history that the Bible is true, but then there is also internal evidence. For example, one of the evidences that people look for in deciding whether or not something is true is eyewitness accounts. If something is second hand or third hand it should not be trusted. In a court of law, if a prosecutor has two or three eyewitness accounts on something he has a pretty good chance of making his case.

The Bible is filled with eyewitness accounts. People who witnessed the Red Sea split. People who saw the walls of Jericho fall. People who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. People who met the resurrected Jesus after his death. The Bible is filled with eyewitness accounts. The writers of the Bible never claimed to be simply speaking the truth. They wrote what they saw and heard with their own eyes. The Apostles were willing to die horrible deaths for what they believed. I could go on and on, but let me move on to my last point.

## 5. CHRIST

The fifth and highest way we know the truth is through Christ. God came to earth in human form to personify truth. The Bible says that Jesus was full of grace and truth. He incarnated truth. He personalized truth. Truth is not a principle. Truth is a person. Truth is relational. Truth is someone you can relate to. Truth is Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Notice that Jesus said I. It is not about religion. It is not about rituals or rules or regulations. Truth is a person. Jesus said I AM. He did not say I might be or I hope to be or I wish I could be or would like to be. Jesus said I AM the way, the truth and the life.

Jesus did not say He was simply speaking the truth. He was not just a part of the truth. He said He is THE truth. This by the way is what separates Jesus Christ from every other person on the planet. Every other leader, every other faith.

Mohammed said he spoke the truth. Buddha said he was searching for the truth. Hindus say you have to seek the truth because it is very illusive. Jesus said He IS the truth.

That statement, that Jesus is the “way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” is an absolute and divisive statement. It is either right or it is wrong. In this postmodern age it flies against everything the world is trying to tell you.

"Absolute truth" is defined as inflexible reality: fixed, invariable, unalterable facts. For example, it is a fixed, invariable, unalterable fact that there are absolutely no square circles and there are absolutely no round squares.

R. C. Sproul: "Truth is that which accurately describes reality."

Creation shows us that God exists. Our conscience tells us that there is absolute right and wrong. Consideration leads us to seek and test truth. God’s commandments (the Bible) tell us the truth and provide a roadmap of how we should live, but Jesus embodies truth. Ultimately, that means that the closer you get to Jesus the closer you get to the truth. The more you live like Jesus the more you live the truth. The more we seek to be like Jesus, the more people will see the truth in us.

Two older couples were enjoying friendly conversation when one of the men asked the other, "So Fred, how was the memory clinic you went to last month?" "Outstanding," Fred replied. "They taught us all the latest memory techniques, such as visualization and name association. It was great. I haven’t had a problem since." "Sounds like something I could use. What was the name of the clinic?" Fred went blank. He thought and thought, but couldn’t remember. Then a smile broke across his face and he asked, "What do you call that flower with the long stem and thorns?" "You mean a rose?" "Yes, that’s it!" He turned to his wife, "Hey Rose, what was the name of that memory clinic?"

Memory is an organism’s ability to store, retain, and recall information and experiences. In the Bible, the Greek word to remember is ALETHEIA. Aletheia literally means to "not forget." And in the Bible the word aletheia is also translated as “truth.” So truth, in the Bible, literally means to not forget. To know the truth means to remember what the bible says and to put it into practice.

Ultimately, knowing the truth means knowing Jesus and having a personal relationship with Him. Maybe you are here today and you are seeking the truth. What you are really seeking today is a relationship with Jesus. You can do that by inviting Jesus to come into your life today.