

# The Basics of Christianity

## Does Absolute Truth Exist?

Romans 1:19-25 (NASB)

### INTRODUCTION:

**Romans 1:19-25 (NASB)**

### BODY:

I. What is Truth?

II. Challenges to Truth.

**John 3:19 (NASB)**

**Romans 1:21-22 (NASB)**

III. The Offensive Nature of Truth.

IV. Why Truth Is Important?

V. Is There Any Evidence for the Existence of Absolute Truth?

**Romans 2:14-16 (NASB)**

### CONCLUSION:

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## Does Absolute Truth Exist?

### Romans 1:19-25 (NASB)

#### INTRODUCTION:

Postmodernism claims that absolute truth does not exist especially in religion. But I would suggest that it is in religion that absolute truth is most important. If any of the teachings within a religion contradicts itself or can be proven untrue, how can one trust anything else that it is teaching? If two religions disagree, only one, if any, can be correct.

In our increasingly postmodern culture, a number of voices argue there is no such thing as objective right or wrong or absolute truth of any kind. So the question arises "**Is there such a thing as absolute truth?**"

There are only two possible answers to this question—yes or no. There either is absolute truth, something that is true at all times and places, or there is not. To argue with certainty that there is no such thing as absolute truth is to make an absolute truth claim, and is thus self-refuting. Therefore, the only option remaining is that absolute truth does exist.

Philosophically, people may disagree on what is moral or ethical, yet virtually all people agree on some system of right and wrong. Therefore, the natural question arises, "**Upon what do we base our moral standards?**"

Christianity claims to be absolutely true, that meaningful distinctions in matters of right/wrong (as well as spiritual truth and falsehood) exist, and that to be correct in its claims about God any contrary claims from competing religions must be incorrect. Such a stance provokes cries of “arrogance” and “intolerance” from postmodernism. However, truth is not a matter of attitude or preference, and when closely examined, the foundations of postmodernism quickly crumble, revealing Christianity’s claims to be both plausible and compelling.

The Bible makes it clear that God wants us to look for truth, because He knows the search leads to Him. God actually *requires* us to make an honest attempt to know what is true.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

#### **Romans 1:19-25 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes, that is*, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, **but they became futile in their reasonings, and their**

**senseless hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible mankind, of birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures.**

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up to vile impurity in the lusts of their hearts, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. <sup>25</sup> For they exchanged the truth of God for falsehood, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

## Prayer

### BODY:

#### I. What is Truth?

In a postmodern world that denies that truth can be known, the question is more important than ever to answer. **What is truth?**

##### **A Proposed Definition of Truth**

In defining truth, it is first helpful to note what truth is not:

- Truth is *not* simply whatever works. This is the philosophy of pragmatism. This is the idea that the end justifies the means approach. Thus it is lie in order to achieve the desired end result. In reality, lies can appear to “work,” but they are still lies and not the truth.
- Truth is *not* simply what is coherent or understandable. A group of people can get together and form a conspiracy based on a set of falsehoods where they all agree to tell the same false story, but it does not make their presentation true.
- Truth is *not* what makes people feel good. Unfortunately, bad news can be true.
- Truth is *not* what the majority says is true. Fifty-one percent of a group can reach a wrong conclusion. Just because something is declared as "politically correct", does not necessarily make it true.
- Truth is *not* what is comprehensive. A lengthy, detailed presentation can still result in a false conclusion.
- Truth is *not* defined by what is intended. Good intentions can still be wrong.
- Truth is *not* simply what is believed. A lie believed is still a lie.

Absolute truth is defined as that which matches reality. Some say there is no such thing as absolute truth, but taking such a position becomes self-defeating. **For example, the relativist says, “All truth is relative,” yet one must ask: is that statement absolutely true? If so, then absolute truth exists; if not, then why consider it?** Postmodernism affirms no truth, yet it affirms at least one absolute truth: postmodernism is true. In the end, absolute truth becomes undeniable.

From a philosophical perspective, there are three simple ways to define truth:

1. Truth is that which corresponds to reality.

2. Truth is that which matches its object.

3. Truth is simply telling it like it is.

First, truth corresponds to reality or “what is.” It is real. Truth is also correspondent in nature. In other words, it matches its **object** and is known by its **referent**. For example, a teacher facing a class may say, “Now the only exit to this room is on the right.” For the class that may be facing the teacher, the exit door may be on their left, but it’s absolutely true that the door, for the professor, who is the **referent**, it is on the right.

Truth also matches its **object**. It may be absolutely true that a certain person may need so many milligrams of a certain medication, but another person may need more or less of the same medication to produce the desired effect. This is not relative truth, but just an example of how truth must match its object. It would be wrong (and potentially dangerous) for a patient to request that their doctor give them an inappropriate amount of a particular medication, or to say that any medicine for their specific ailment will do.

In short, truth is simply telling it like it is; it is the way things really are, and any other viewpoint is wrong.

## II. Challenges to Truth.

Making distinctions seems to be out of fashion in a postmodern era of relativism. It is acceptable today to say, “This is true,” as long as it is not followed by, “and therefore that is false.” This is especially noticeable in matters of faith and religion where every belief system is supposed to be on equal footing where truth is concerned.

There are a number of philosophies and worldviews that challenge the concept of truth, yet, when each is critically examined it turns out to be self-defeating in nature.

The philosophy of relativism says that all truth is relative and that there is no such thing as absolute truth. **But one has to ask: is the claim “all truth is relative” a relative truth or an absolute truth? If it is a relative truth, then it really is meaningless; how do we know when and where it applies? If it is an absolute truth, then absolute truth exists.** Moreover, the relativist betrays his own position when he states that the position of the absolutist is wrong—why can’t those who say absolute truth exists be correct too?

**In essence, when the relativist says, “There is no truth,” he is asking you not to believe him, and the best thing to do is follow his advice!**

A popular worldview is pluralism, which says that all truth claims are equally valid. Of course, this is impossible. Pluralism unravels at the feet of the law of non-contradiction, which says that something cannot be both “A” and “Non-A” at the same time and in the same sense. As one philosopher stated, [anyone who believes that the law of non-contradiction is not true \(and, by default, pluralism is true\) should be beaten and burned until they admit that to be beaten and burned is not the same thing as to not be beaten and burned.](#) Also, note that pluralism says that it is true and anything opposed to it is false, which is a claim that denies its own foundational beliefs.

The spirit behind pluralism is an open-armed attitude of tolerance. However, **pluralism confuses the idea of everyone having equal value with every truth claim being**

**equally valid.** More simply, all people may be equal, but not all truth claims are. Pluralism fails to understand the difference between opinion and truth.

Tolerance has become the one cardinal virtue of the postmodern society, the one absolute, and, therefore, intolerance is the only evil. **Any dogmatic belief—especially a belief in absolute truth—is viewed as intolerance, which is the ultimate sin.** Those who deny absolute truth will often say that it is all right to believe what you want, as long as you do not try to impose your beliefs on others. But this view itself is a belief about what is right and wrong, and those who hold this view most definitely do try to impose it on others. They set up a standard of behavior which they insist others follow, thereby violating the very thing they claim to uphold—**another self-contradicting position.** Those who hold such a belief simply do not want to be accountable for their actions.

### **John 3:19 (NASB)**

**<sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil.**

If there is absolute truth, then there are absolute standards of right and wrong, and we are accountable to those standards. This accountability is what people are really rejecting when they reject absolute truth.

The denial of absolute truth/universal truth and the cultural relativism that comes with it are the logical result of a society that has embraced the theory of evolution as the explanation for life. If naturalistic evolution is true, then life has no meaning, we have no purpose, and there cannot be any absolute right or wrong. Man is then free to live as he pleases and is accountable to no one for his actions.

Yet no matter how much sinful men deny the existence of God and absolute truth, they still will someday stand before Him in judgment.

### **Romans 1:21-22 (NASB)**

**<sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools,**

## **III. The Offensive Nature of Truth.**

One common complaint against anyone claiming to have absolute truth in matters of faith and religion is that such a stance is “narrow-minded”. However, the critic fails to understand that, by nature, **truth is narrow.** Is a math teacher narrow-minded for holding to the belief that  $2 + 2$  only equals 4?

Another objection to truth is that it is arrogant to claim that someone is right and another person is wrong. However, returning to the above example with mathematics, is it arrogant for a math teacher to insist on only one right answer to an arithmetic problem?

A third charge against those holding to absolute truth in matters of faith and religion is that such a position excludes people, rather than being inclusive. But such a complaint fails to understand that truth, by nature, excludes its opposite. All answers other than 4 are excluded from the reality of what  $2 + 2$  truly equals.

Yet another protest against truth is that it is offensive and divisive to claim one has the truth. Instead, the critic argues, all that matters is sincerity. **The problem with this**

**position is that truth is immune to belief, sincerity, and desire.** It doesn't matter how much one sincerely **believes** a wrong key will fit a door; the key still won't go in and the lock won't be opened. Truth is also unaffected by sincerity. Someone who picks up a bottle of poison and **sincerely** believes it is lemonade will still suffer the unfortunate effects of the poison. Finally, truth is impervious to desire. A person may strongly **desire** that their car has not run out of gas, but if the gauge says the tank is empty and the car will not run any farther, then no desire in the world will miraculously cause the car to keep going.

#### IV. Why Truth Is Important?

Why is it so important to understand and embrace the concept of absolute truth in all areas of life including faith and religion? Simply because life has consequences for being wrong. Giving someone the wrong amount of a medication can kill them; having an investment manager make the wrong monetary decisions can impoverish a family; boarding the wrong plane will take you where you do not wish to go; and dealing with an unfaithful marriage partner can result in the destruction of a family. Nowhere are the consequences more important than in the area of faith and religion. **The eternity that we are facing is an awfully long time to be wrong!**

To make the statement that there is no absolute truth is illogical. Yet, today, many people are embracing a cultural relativism that denies any type of absolute truth. A good question to ask people who say, **"There is no absolute truth" is this: "Are you absolutely sure of that?" If they say "yes," they have made an absolute statement—**which itself implies the existence of absolutes. They are saying that the very fact there is no absolute truth is the one and only absolute truth.

Beside the problem of self-contradiction, there are several other logical problems one must overcome to believe that there are no absolute or universal truths. One is that all humans have limited knowledge and finite minds and, therefore, cannot logically make absolute **negative** statements. A person cannot logically say, "There is no God" (even though many do so), because, in order to make such a statement, he would need to have absolute knowledge of the entire universe from beginning to end. Since that is impossible, the most anyone can logically say is "With the limited knowledge I have, I do not believe there is a God."

Another problem with the denial of absolute truth/universal truth is that it fails to live up to what we know to be true in our own consciences, our own experiences, and what we see in the real world. If there is no such thing as absolute truth, then there is nothing ultimately right or wrong about anything. What might be "right" for you does not mean it is "right" for me. While on the surface this type of relativism seems to be appealing, what it means is that everybody sets his own rules to live by and does what he thinks is right. Inevitably, one person's sense of right will soon clash with another's. **What happens if it is "right" for me to ignore traffic lights, even when they are red? I put many lives at risk. Or I might think it is right to steal from you, and you might think it is not right. Clearly, our standards of right and wrong are in conflict. If there is no absolute truth, no standard of right and wrong that we are all accountable to, then we can never be sure of anything. People would be free to do whatever they want—murder, rape, steal, lie, cheat, etc., and no one could say those things would be wrong. There could be no government, no laws, and no justice, because one could not even say that the majority of the people have the right to make and enforce standards upon the minority. A world without absolutes would be the most horrible world imaginable.**

## V. Is There Any Evidence for the Existence of Absolute Truth?

Yes!

**First**, there is the human **conscience**, that certain “something” within us that tells us the world should be a certain way, that some things are right and some are wrong. Our conscience convinces us there is something wrong with suffering, starvation, rape, pain, and evil, and it makes us aware that love, generosity, compassion, and peace are positive things for which we should strive. This is universally true in all cultures in all times. The Bible describes the role of the human conscience.

### **Romans 2:14-16 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles who do not have the Law instinctively perform the *requirements* of the Law, these, though not having the Law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their **conscience** testifying and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, <sup>16</sup> on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of mankind through Christ Jesus.

The **second** evidence for the existence of absolute truth is **science**. Science is simply the pursuit of knowledge, the study of what we know and the quest to know more. Therefore, all scientific study must by necessity be founded upon the belief that there are objective realities existing in the world and these realities can be discovered and proven. Without absolutes, what would there be to study? How could one know that the findings of science are real? In fact, the very laws of science are founded on the existence of absolute truth.

The **third** evidence for the existence of absolute truth/universal truth is **religion**. All the religions of the world attempt to give meaning and definition to life. They are born out of mankind’s desire for something more than simple existence. Through religion, humans seek God, hope for the future, forgiveness of sins, peace in the midst of struggle, and answers to our deepest questions. Religion is really evidence that mankind is more than just a highly evolved animal. It is evidence of a higher purpose and of the existence of a personal and purposeful Creator who implanted in man the desire to know Him. And if there is indeed a Creator, then He becomes the standard for absolute truth, and it is His authority that establishes that truth.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Fortunately, there is such a Creator, and He has revealed His truth to us through His Word, the Bible. Knowing absolute truth/universal truth is only possible through a personal relationship with the One who claims to be the Truth—Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed to be the only way, the only truth, the only life and the only path to God.

The fact that absolute truth does exist points us to the truth that there is a sovereign God who created the heavens and the earth and who has revealed Himself to us in order that we might know Him personally through His Son Jesus Christ who died on a cross for our sins and miraculously rose from the grave on the third day to prove that all of His claims were true. That is the absolute truth!

**He Is Lord!**