



What is truth?

Listen! A wolf, a knife, and eighty below zero.

Question: Is this true?

Bigger Question: What is truth?

“What is truth?” Pontius Pilate in John 18:37, 38.

- The Context: Jesus makes a “truth claim” by saying, “I am a King.”
- The Possibilities: Jesus’ claim either matches reality or it does not match reality.
- The Truth: Jesus is a King and His testimony exactly depicts reality.
- The Further Truth: People of truth accept this “truth claim” by Jesus that He is King.

Some Definitions:

- Reality:
- Truth:
- Evidence:
- Truth Claim:
- Falsehood:
- Partial Truth:
- Facts:
- Knowledge:
- Reason:
- Wisdom:
- Principle:
- Presupposition:
- Worldview:
- Faith:
- Epistemology:

Idea: Truth is that which accurately portrays reality, that which exactly matches reality, that which exactly and accurately represents that which actually exists.

- **Critical Truth:** Reality simply is. What is real simply exists.
- **Critical Issue:** We do not create reality by what we believe. We do not change reality by what we believe.
 - **Example:** “I do not believe in Mars.” Mars either exists or it does not exist. Mars does not care and is not impacted by what I believe about its existence. I cannot make Mars exist by believing it does and I cannot make Mars cease to exist by believing that it doesn’t.

- **Question:** What does this reality say about the existence of God? (“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” Psalm 14:1)
 - **Example/Absurdity:** “...each of you call on God as you perceive Him, Her, or It to be.” Oprah Winfrey.
 - **Another Example/Absurdity:** What if Oprah Winfrey had said, “Each of you get a polio shot as you perceive it to be.”
 - Can I prevent polio in myself by drinking a chocolate milk shake as long as I believe that it truly is a polio vaccination? ...kissing a rock? ...reading a cereal box? ...smoking a salmon? ...writing a poem?
 - Can I make God into my personal definition of reality as long as I truly believe that “He, She, or It” exists as I believe “Him, Her, or It” to be.
- **Critical Idea Again:** Truth is that which matches reality and I do not create reality by what I believe—I can only discover reality.

For Instance—these statements either exactly explain reality or they do not:

- “The Titanic is an unsinkable ship.”
- “Mars exists.”
- “Man can never get to the moon.”
- “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”
- “God exists.”
- “Dave Gibson is the most handsome man who ever walked the plant.”
- “God is dead.”
- “It is impossible to run a four-minute mile.”
- “The mafia had JFK assassinated.”
- “The GNP of Switzerland is greater than the GNP of Texas.”
- “LSU is the best college football team in America.”
- “Joy is better than happiness.”

Massive Issue: My great personal task or quest in life is not to define reality but to discover reality. I cannot make Mars or God exist or not exist. I can only discover whether Mars or God exist or do not exist.

Our decision—embracing or rejecting a truth claim:

- “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:6
- Or, “I am the One Who accurately defines, matches, and depicts what actually exists.”
- Your decision about this truth claim: ___ True. ___ False.

Walking Papers

Practical helps for walking with Christ and pursuing God through obedience, reflective living, and community.

Critical Idea Again: Truth is that which matches reality and I do not create reality by what I believe—I can only discover reality, examine the reality based on available evidence, and decide upon my acceptance of the reality.

Please take some time each day this week for "spiritual recalibration" by thinking through the following ideas and questions related to having "eternity in our hearts:"

- **Today:** What is the evidence for your own existence? Please list. Do you believe in your own existence?
- **Monday:** What is the evidence for God's existence? Please list. Do you believe in God's existence? Do you think you can change His existence or non-existence by what you believe? Do you think God believes in your existence?
- **Tuesday:** What is the evidence for Jesus' existence? Please list. Do you believe in Jesus' existence?
- **Wednesday:** What is the evidence for Jesus' claims to be the Son of God and to have died for our sins and to have the right to offer us forgiveness based on trusting Him? Please list.
- **Thursday:** Please explain the absurdity of "Call on God as you perceive Him, Her, or It to be." Or, "Get a polio vaccination as you perceive that to be." Or, "Interact with gravity as you perceive it to be."
- **Friday:** What evidence did Pilate have that Jesus was a King? Did he embrace it?
- **Saturday:** How many "truths" exist? Why do you give the answer you give?
- **Bonus Question at no additional charge:** Why is a person's epistemology so crucial to his or her life?

Definitions Relating to Truth

Referenced in Message of January 13, 2008
“Finding Truth in a Deceptive World: What is truth?”

- **Reality:** that which is, that which actually exists. Reality just is—we do not make it so. Mars is a reality. I cannot make Mars exist and I cannot make Mars cease to exist. It either exists or it doesn't—completely apart from what I believe or want or think or say.
- **Truth:** that statement which accurately portrays reality, which exactly matches reality, which exactly and accurately represents or describes what actually exists. Truth: Mars exists. Non-truth: Mars does not exist.
- **Evidence:** supporting facts, data, observations, experiences, or details which point to a given conclusion or worldview or belief. Mars is visible in a telescope.
- **Conclusion:** a belief or statement or claim that is drawn from pieces of evidence. I conclude that Mars exists based on the evidence that it can be seen with a telescope.
- **Truth Claim:** a declarative statement about reality. A claim that something is a true and accurate description of reality. Truth claim: “I am the Way, the Truth, and Life.” Jesus.
- **Falsehood:** that which inaccurately describes reality, that which wrongly portrays what actually exists or actually happened. Falsehood is generally attributed to an honest mistake or misunderstanding of reality rather than to an intentional deception.
- **Lies:** the intentional invention of an inaccurate description of reality, an intentional fabrication for the purpose of deception. Truth just is. Lies must be invented.
- **Partial Truth:** that which is only a partially accurate description of reality. Mars exists as the most distant planet from the sun.
- **Facts:** individual pieces of reality, those details or pieces of data that accurately represent reality.
- **Knowledge:** the ability to express things as they actually are on the basis of thought and experience and an interactive relationship between a person and another person, or between a person and a portion of reality, in which the relationship reaches the level of genuine intimacy. (Dr. Dallas Willard) “Adam knew Eve” means that they had sexual intercourse—an interactive relationship that reached a level of genuine intimacy. “Dr. Jones knows calculus” means that he or she has a level of interactive relationship with calculus that has reached a level of working intimacy—a level of understanding that enables the skillful use of calculus and the ability to explain the working of calculus to another person—at least to a person with greater mathematical aptitude than Dave Gibson!
- **Reason:** the God-given ability to see logical connections between things and to incorporate those connections into mechanisms (like slide rules, charts, computers, lists, and formulas) and to extend that power to indefinite lengths. (Dr. Dallas Willard)
- **Wisdom:** the ability to apply knowledge to practical living, taking what is true (accurately describes reality) and acting in alignment with that truth so as to live life skillfully and experience the blessings that derive from skillful living.
- **Principle:** the statement of the interactive relationship between two entities or truths. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Mt 5:8. Jesus describes the relationship between one reality (being pure in heart) and a second reality (seeing God) and declares that the state of being pure in heart enables the state of seeing God.

- **Presupposition:** something that a person assumes to be true, ahead of time, when coming to a discussion or a belief or a statement or an examination of something. Most people who promote abortion presuppose that people have evolved from lower life forms and are not special creations of God.
- **Worldview:** the collective assumptions about reality that a person holds and uses to define existence. The set of beliefs that a person uses to interpret reality and happenings and to make sense of or interpret what they experience in the world. For example: atheism says there is no God, theism says there is a God, polytheism says there are many gods, pantheism says that all is god, deism says that there is a God but He is not involved with the world.
- **Faith:** the investing of belief or trust in something, believing that it is true, even though it cannot be seen or necessarily “proven” in the scientific method. While unseen it is nevertheless supported, to one degree or another, by evidence.
- **Epistemology:** the method that a person uses to arrive at their knowledge and the study of the methods of gaining knowledge. These may include revelation or the scientific method or palm reading or astrology or reason or feelings.