

How Do I Know What the Truth Is?

When NASA launched the Mars Climate Orbiter in 1998, it was a big day. A \$327 million big day. This fancy schmancy orbiter would tell scientists loads about planetary science. What it told them instead was to check and double-check their assumptions.

When the orbiter came into Mars' orbit, it lost radio contact. Then it got too close to the surface of Mars, closer than it was supposed to, and that's when NASA determined the orbiter was destroyed in the atmosphere. In scientific terms, it went ka-blooley.

The engineers designing the orbiter were working with the metric system. However, one piece of software was provided by an outside contractor that didn't use the metric system. No one bothered to check, so NASA made a lot of assumptions—a lot of false assumptions—which made their plans go awry, the orbiter fly too close to Mars, and ka-blooley.

We do the same thing. We make assumptions about what is true, which is OK if our assumptions turn out to be right. But many times, our assumptions are wrong. That's not too bad if it just means we missed our exit on the Interstate (*"I thought it was the next exit."*), but when it comes to matters of ethics, morals, spirituality, and the bigger issues of life, bad assumptions can go ka-blooley.

We act upon what we believe is true. But where do we get this "truth?" Far too many of us based truth on what we want to believe. Instead of grounding our behavior in some objective truth, we build our idea of truth on how we want to behave. We see this mostly in matters of morals and ethics. Those in the LGBTQ+ community either throw God out of the picture or define God as one who endorses any and all sexual lifestyles.

Truth is not what you make it. If your truth is totally opposite of my truth, then they can't both be truths. One of us is wrong. It's easy to see the absurdity of two opposing truths in science and math.

- A drug-induced belief in one's ability to fly will not supersede the truth of gravity.

- I was lousy in algebra. Actually, I was lousy in any discipline that involved numbers. (Still am.) But I knew better than to try convincing my ninth-grade algebra teacher that 6 was the correct answer, when the whole mathematic community said the answer was 437x.

The issue before us is knowing what is true and what is not. To quote Pilate as he interrogated Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). I've only found one answer.

Truth is what conforms to reality.

This is a deeper matter than can be adequately addressed in a blog, but I'm fascinated with other world religions and worldviews. Yet as I look at their histories, their beliefs, and their worldviews, I keep coming back to Christianity. A biblical worldview is the only that conforms to truth, the way the world really works. A biblical worldview is the only one that explains why we humans act the way we do. A biblical worldview is the only one that reveals a God who is consistent with what we know of the universe.

I have found in Jesus the truth. He doesn't simply teach the truth; He is the truth. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). His truth is that which most conforms to reality. Through Him, I best understand who God is, who I am, and why the world is in the mess it is. In Jesus, I have embraced the truth that:

- I am wicked and sinful.
- I am so sinful I can do nothing to save myself.
- God loves us, and in His love, He sent Jesus to die in order to remove my sin.
- Jesus rose again, conquering death and giving me a new life.
- I am most "myself" when I live in trust and obedience to Him.
- I am free.

"If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

And that's the truth.