

Belleville First Assembly of God

Defending Your Faith - 2017

Topic 1: What is Truth?

Class Goal: To equip the believer to respond to common challenges to Christianity, to evangelize the lost, and to disciple those with doubts.

Objectives for Meeting Our Goal: Upon completing this class, the believer should be able to...

1. Recognize common challenges to Christianity and categorize them
2. Prayerfully and gently respond to these challenges (2 Tim 2:23-26; 1 Peter 3:15)

Key Terms:

- Epistemology (The study of knowledge; how does one know something)¹
- Correspondence Theory of Truth (How a statement corresponds to reality)²
- Absolute Truth (fixed, invariable, unalterable facts)³
- Relative Truth (subjective value based on a person's unique perspective)⁴

1. Knowledge:

a. Definition: Most philosophers define "knowledge" as a belief that is both true and justifiable (also known as a justified, true belief (JTB)).⁵ If one does not believe a statement, then they cannot embrace it as a fact. If one embraces a falsity, then they really do not possess knowledge. Finally, if one cannot justify their belief, then it is a mere opinion, but not real knowledge. Therefore, all three elements are needed for one to possess real knowledge.

b. **Challenge:** "Faith is not a reliable source of knowledge because it lacks evidence by definition. So, people of faith live in fantasy, not fact" (Peter Boghossian, Professor of Philosophy, Portland State University; James A. Lindsay, philosopher of religion; and others). How would you respond? Does the Christian "faith" pass this definition of knowledge?

- A belief? Yes.
- True? Yes. The statements in the Bible are fact.
- Justifiable? Yes (which is the focus of this apologetics course)

Therefore, the believer is not embracing a fantasy or wishful thinking. We have real knowledge concerning the claims in the Bible.⁶

c. Potential sources of knowledge:⁷

- Philosophy (reason, logic)
- Science (natural philosophy)
- Testimony of others
- Personal experience, thought

Applicable domain:

- Physical and metaphysical
- Physical
- Physical and metaphysical
- Physical and metaphysical

¹ Moreland, J. P. and Craig, W. L., *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 71.

² Moreland and Craig, 130.

³ Moreland and Craig, 132.

⁴ Moreland and Craig, 132.

⁵ Moreland and Craig, 71.

⁶ Also see <https://www.thinkingchristian.net/posts/2014/01/is-faith-an-unreliable-epistemology/>.

⁷ In this class, we will explore each of these sources to see if Christianity is a sound JTB.

- d. **Challenge:** “Science is the only source of knowledge”⁸ How would you respond?
2. **Truth:** In John 18:38, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, “quid est veritas” (What is truth?)
- a. Definition: Most philosophers hold a “correspondence” theory of truth, where a statement is considered true or false based on how closely it corresponds to reality.⁹
- b. Forms of Truth:
- Absolute Truth (fixed, invariable, unalterable facts)
Examples:

 - Relative Truth (subjective value based on a person’s unique perspective)
Examples:
- c. **Challenge:** “When a Christian claims their faith as being ‘true’, surely they are referring to relative truth (it is right for them), and not absolutely true.” How would you respond?
- d. **Challenge:** “There is no such thing as absolutes.” How would you respond?
- e. **Challenge:** There is no such thing as truth.”¹⁰ How would you respond?

⁸ Claimed by Scientism, Moreland and Craig, 346-347.

⁹ Moreland and Craig, 130.

¹⁰ Claimed by Postmodernism, Moreland and Craig, 131.