

# BIBLICAL LOGIC

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**THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF TRUTH:** What is truth? When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king, Jesus responded, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice (John 18:37). Pilate gave the classic response of a skeptic: "What is truth?" The effects of human depravity on the mind are clearly seen. Pilate, an educated man, looked Truth Himself in the face and asked, "What is truth?" Truth may exist while people reject it; and people may in turn create all types of falsehoods and call them truth. Pride will move us to miss truth simply because we already dearly hold certain perceptions and will not open up to other possibilities. Proud Naaman almost missed being healed of leprosy because he did not like the way the truth came to him. Through the suggestion of a servant girl he traveled to Elisha's house. Instead of meeting the soldier directly, Elisha sent a messenger to tell him what to do: go dip in the muddy Jordan river. Naaman grew angry. "I thought the prophet would speak to important me directly! And why the Jordan? Why not one of the clean rivers in Syria?!" Were it not for the persuading efforts of his servants, he would have missed God's blessing (2Kings 5:1-14).

## THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF TRUTH:

1. Truth is revealed by God. It is not constructed or invented by individuals or communities.
2. Objective truth exists and is knowable.
3. Christian truth is absolute in nature.
4. Truth is universal.
5. The truth of God is eternally engaging and momentous, not trendy or superficial.
6. Truth is exclusive, specific and antithetical.
7. Truth, Christianly understood, is systematic and unified.
8. Christian truth is a end, not a means to a end.

**THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR LOGICAL THINKING:** Christians face countless attacks on and challenges to their faith, many of which attempt to undermine the whole counsel of God by subverting rhetoric and logic. Whether coming from skeptics, atheist, leftist, cults, or even other Christians, poor logic and dubious reasoning deserve exposure and correction. The last filter to your soul is your mind and your critical thinking ability.

**THE BIBLE AND LOGIC:** Logic is the science of human reasoning, or the study of rules, laws, means, and ways humans should think. The word "should" implies ethics, and this means that logic has a strong ethical basis. The ethical basis for all of logic is the ninth commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Ex. 20:16). Logic is the systematic study and practice of discerning and telling the truth. Other biblical teaching highlights both the simplicity and power of the ninth commandment as a basis for human thinking. Jesus taught, let your statement be "Yes, yes" or "No, no"; anything beyond these is evil (Matt 5:37). Jesus did not mean by this that we should never say anything but the words "yes" or "no", but rather that all that we say we should communicate in plain and simple terms faithful to the truth. Since Christ "completes us as believers, we should therefore strive to live according to the

image of this New Man. This includes the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2). We should obey God's revelation in all things including how we think and speak. The standard we pursue involves speaking the truth in love that we may grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:15). This includes that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Eph. 4:23-24). This renewed mind means corrected, righteous thinking, and will thus mean faithful, honest behavior: Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another (Eph. 4:25). For, Paul, truth telling ranks prominently on the list of behaviors involved in Christian life.

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# Notes for biblical logic

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What is obnoxious for professing Christians is the willful maintaining of preconceptions against the weight of evidence. Logic, facts, evidence and principles should be the driving force of our thinking, but many times it is an attitude that determines truth (some ism, some bent of mind, usually the spirit of the age). Moreover, these attitudes change collectively over time, becoming transient moods of a given era, rather than permanent attitudes, much less permanent principles.

The meaning of the Hebrew term *emet*, which is the root of the great majority of the Hebrew words related to truth, involves the ideas of "support" and "stability". From this root flows the twofold notion of truth as faithfulness and conformity to fact. (Ps 31:5 2Chron 15:3 Is 45:19 Ps 145:18) The New Testament word *aletheia* and its derivations retain the Hebrew idea of "conformity to fact and opposition to lies and errors". (Jn 17:17 2Cor 11:10 Jn 14:17 1Jn 5:6)

The Bible does not present truth as a cultural creation of the ancient Jews or the early Christians. They receive truth from the God who speaks truth to his creatures, and they were expected by this God to conform themselves to this truth. Paul's letter to the Romans, tells us that God has made His existence known through both creation and human conscience, so that all people are without excuse before their Creator and Lawgiver.

God is the source of objective truth about himself and his creation. Objective truth is truth that is not dependent on any creature's subjective feelings, desires or beliefs. God's truth is not dependent upon any individual's or group's experiences or interpretations, however strongly felt or culturally entrenched they may be. Truth is also objective because God is the final court of appeal, the source of all truth, by virtue of his nature and his will. One example I give is Phil. 4:8 which reads "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is and excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things". Paul does not say that we should reflect on what we think is true, or whatever we feel is right. We are to give sustained attention to whatever is objectively true and noble and right. (true 227 means conformed to the nature and reality of things, loving truth, true in conduct, sincere, upright Ant.: false, deceitful, one who leads astray, a mind deceiver ; pure 4586 venerable , reverend, reputable, dignified; right 1342 The word is used of dispositions, judgments, things to indicate their just, right, or conformable relation to justice or righteousness )

This means that God's truth is invariant. It is true without exception or exemption. Neither is God's truth relative, shifting or revisable. A classic text on the absoluteness of the truth is Jesus' uncompromising statement (John 14:6). The truth of the gospel is not subject to any human veto or democratic procedures. Jesus was not elected Lord by humans but was chosen by God; nor can he be dethroned by any human effort or opinion or insurrection. In George Barna's annual surveys he asks a random sample of adults their opinion on this statement: "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways, but both could still be correct." He found that the percentage of those who agree with this statement grew faster among Christians than non Christians.

To be universal means to apply everywhere, to engage everything and to exclude nothing. The gospel message and the moral law of God are not circumscribed or restricted by cultural conditions. (Acts 4:12) It expects men of all cultures and nations to comprehend its claims about God and insists that men everywhere ought to acknowledge and appropriate them.

God's truth is grounded in God's eternal being. It has no expiration date and needs no image makeovers. Moreover, it is a living, personal and dynamic truth, a truth that transcends the transient trivialities of our age and touches us at the deepest levels of our being by including us in a eternal drama.

For every theological yes, there are a million no's. What is true excludes all that opposes it. (Ex 20:3) Truth is exact and precise, and the slightest departure from the truth is the substitution of falsity for truth. (Mt 7:13) Exactitude in truth should be our goal, even if it is never our perfect achievement. (Examples of Paul's appeal to antithesis and exclusion Gal 1:7-12 Acts 9 Gal 3:1)

Something cannot be true in religion and false in science (or vice versa), or true in philosophy but false in theology (or vice versa). There is only one world, God's world; it is a uni-verse, not a multi-verse. All areas of thought and life should be brought under the cosmic Lordship of Christ. It is no use saying He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Lord of all things, if He is not Lord of my whole unified intellectual life. I am false or confused if I sing about Christ's Lordship and contrive to retain areas of my own life that are autonomous.

There is no subtler perversion of Christian Faith than to treat it as a mere means to a worldly end. The Christian Faith is important because it is true.

Conclusion: Those who follow Christ, who is the truth, must never take truth for granted, be satisfied with a meager helping of it, refuse to test their truth claims against objective reality or fail to work out the implications of their beliefs in all of life (Pro 23:23). This entails being countercultural for Christ, who commanded us to love Him with all of our minds (Mt 22:37-39).

Although he was an atheist who hated Christianity and a precursor of postmodernism, Friedrich Nietzsche's life can in some ways challenge or even shame intellectually slothful Christians. (quote from Bernard Ramm's) What is the devil's due Evangelicals can glean from Nietzsche? It is the willingness to be driven like Nietzsche. It is the willingness to spare no pains in the search for truth. It is the willingness to work into the late hours of the night or start in the earliest hours of the day; to pick up a new project as soon as we have finished an older one; to grow weary and exhausted in our quest for truth; to have our eyes watery from too much reading, our bodies bent over from long, weary hours at the study desk. No Evangelical whose reading habits are a disgrace to the seriousness of the Christian ministry, or who spends more time before a T.V. than he does in serious reading in his study has the right to damn Nietzsche to some gruesome place in the inferno.

Why is critical thinking necessary? (Ex 23:1-3) This verse is profound because it was given to the people of God in the camp of God. It has not been given to someone else to think for you.