

How Anyone Can Find and Know God's Truth

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Introduction: What does a genuine truth seeker “look like?”

A. Those who seek truth will find it! This involves a certain *kind of character or heart*.
(Ex 18:20-21; Deut 32:4-5)

B. Learning and applying these principles are at *the core of spiritual growth* (Heb 5:14)

1. Real growth involves discomfort and struggle!

2. A pure heart will discern truth and then make right choices. (Josh 24:14-15)

I. Only one who fears God and seeks a pure heart can overcome their prejudices.

A. How do we handle *the pain of inconsistency*? Consider the conscience.

"συνείδησις - **conscience** 1) the consciousness of anything 2) the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other.

2. The conscience is *a judge* based upon *previous training*. (Rom 2:14-15)

a. A good conscience can make you feel bad *by just thinking* of something!

b. A conscience *can be trained in a wrong way*. The world can make you feel guilty about what is good and right! (Isa 5:20; 2 Tim 1:8, 12)

c. Our purpose is to be trained by the perfect word of God and not by the “political morality” of the day. Paul’s conscience was changed. (Acts 23:1, 26:9)

3. Because I love God I will seek to grow and resolve inconsistencies! Many tend to turn away or give shallow justifications for their inconsistencies.

B. Consider the term “cognitive dissonance.”

Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive *to hold all our attitudes and behavior in harmony* and *avoid disharmony (or dissonance)*. ...When there is an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviors (dissonance), *something must change* to eliminate the dissonance.

Dissonance can be reduced in one of three ways: 1. *Change one or more of the attitudes*, behavior, beliefs, etc., to make the relationship between the two elements a consonant one. 2. *Acquire new information* that outweighs the dissonant beliefs. 3. *Reduce the importance of the cognitions* (i.e., beliefs, attitudes)

1. Biblically this called the conscience. How do we deal with guilt (dissonance)?

2. Are we letting *the Bible fully be our guide* and not “worldly morality?” (Lk 9:26)

C. It takes the powerful love of God to give us the strength to change.

1. Without God we tend to *take the course of least resistance* to reduce guilt. We prefer to keep doing what we have been doing.

2. Why do groups of people *see the same facts in very different ways*? (Acts 13:48-50)

We're all looking at the same events and interpreting them wildly differently. That's how *cognitive dissonance* and *confirmation bias* work. They work together to create *a spontaneous hallucination that gets reinforced over time*. That hallucination becomes your reality until something changes.

II. How do we resolve differences in understanding?

A. Carefully *define the issue* and *the words used* in the study.

1. Honest people seek to *accurately understand the differences to be resolved*. When an issue is properly defined *only then can we properly apply scripture*.

2. Dishonest or ill-informed people will *make use of “straw men.”* When a position sounds ridiculous please *take the time to be sure it is accurate!* (Mt 11:18-19)

3. How many of us want to be misrepresented? *Do not do this to another.* (Mt 7:12)

4. Many topics and words used by deceivers *are purposely vague*. This creates confusion and allows a deceiver to *raise the emotion level* and their use of deceptive devices. **(James 3:16-17)**
5. What happens when words are used *without proper definitions*? Please try to use *Bible words defined in Bible texts*! (Example: What does “legalism” mean?)
6. Be just and fair! This is how *we open hearts to God*. **(2 Tim 2:24-26)**



III. How do we deal with this culture on homosexuality?

A. What Bible passages are relevant? What terms need to be defined? What is (are) the specific question(s) to be addressed?

1. How does *the culture frame the issue*? How does the Bible address the issue?

- Four words I've grown to fear: "The Bible is clear" - Mike Cope

- **American Christianity**: Defend yourself, defend "biblical marriage", defend your faith, defend your borders. **Jesus Christianity**: Identify with those who suffer and LOVE them. Relinquish political control and care for the least of these.

- **Seth** - "From reading Facebook & Twitter today, you would think Obama just announced he is signing an order banning Christianity in America. Such hate from people who are called to love."

- **My Response**: - "...Seth, I am assuming we agree on the following question, but I would like to ask it for clarity in this discussion. What should the Christian's attitude be towards the practicing homosexual? Should we tell them to repent? *If so, what should he repent of?*"

2. Is the practice of homosexual sex a sin? **(1 Cor 6:9-11; Rom 1:24-28)**

3. What are some *common arguments made to justify this practice*?

B. "The Bible is *a reflection of the culture of that time*. Our culture is now different!"

1. What is "culture"? It is a system of values!

2. Did cultures in the 1st century accept homosexuality? Did that change the meaning of scripture? **(Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Pt 3:1-2)**

"God said it, I believe it, that settles it"...Uhhh...no...God said it, someone translated it into your language divorcing it from its own culture, you read it with a preconceived belief lens, then interpreted it and became convinced in your heart you knew what meant even though it bore no resemblance to the original audience or culture it was spoken into to begin with..."

3. Under the guise of “cultural context” many cast aside the apostle’s words.

C. "*Homosexuals are born this way*. They did not choose this lifestyle so it is not sin."

1. If that can be proved then the Bible would still *tell us to not practice this desire!*
The alcoholic desires to drink but is told to put this desire away and *not to act upon it*. **(Rom 8:13-14)**

2. There is no proof that homosexuality is inborn.

D. "If you deny practicing homosexuals membership in your church then *you are bigoted and hate-filled* just like those who hated blacks in the 1950's."

1. Political forces have adopted this approach. There is a storm coming our way!

2. We must wisely and lovingly seek to convert all. **(2 Tim 2:24-26)**

"The result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lies will now be accepted as truth, and the truth defamed as lies, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world — and the category of truth vs. falsehood is among the mental means to this end — is being destroyed." The possibilities for lying become boundless and frequently meet with little resistance. - Hannah Arendt