

I know we have many puzzlers here in at CIC – people who love to put jigsaw puzzles together.

Life is like a puzzle without a picture on the box. Each day adds new pieces, but we are left trying to assemble meaning without seeing the whole image.

- ‘Life makes no sense without some kind of unifying big picture.’¹
- As Christians we believe have that ‘unifying big picture:’
 - God is in control.
 - He is guiding our lives and guiding history towards its climax.
 - Yet for now we ‘see only a reflection as in a mirror (1Co 13:12 NIV).’
- Skeptics try to build the puzzle around other big pictures – government, science, secularism – or avoid the question altogether.

Therefore, today, let’s continue answering the questions and doubts that skeptics may have. Imagine this series as a skeptic’s guide to faith. The message will seem a little different for those who normally attend CIC.

- Jude instructs us to ‘Be merciful to those who doubt (Jd 22 NIV).’ Being merciful means to listen carefully and help doubters past their doubts.
- We will look at some Bible passages and ask the hard questions.
- I encourage you to bring your friends who doubt or who are skeptics.
- We are not going to be argumentative, but I hope to honestly wrestle with issues and provide solid answers. ‘Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1Pe 3:15 NIV).’
- We will keep it accessible to everyone, not just philosophy majors.

Last Sunday, we briefly looked at how we can trust the story of Jesus’ resurrection, which is central to the Christian faith.

1. We discovered that prophecy foretold many of the events in advance.
2. Then there are numerous witnesses.
 - These disciples became doubters when Jesus died, who then changed their mind after seeing the resurrected Jesus.
 - They were willing to die for what they saw.

¹ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 19.

- Their writings are numerous and very early.
- Also, there are secular historians who verify many parts of the story.

Today, we are going to examine truth. Today may not be for everyone – please pray.

Our culture demands truth from doctors, courts, and scientists – yet it rejects truth in the areas of morality and faith. We hear relativistic statements like ...

- ‘That’s true for you, not for me.’
- ‘There are no absolutes.’
- ‘All religions are equally true.’

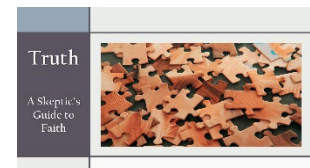
Today, we will see two things ...

1. Post-modern relativism collapses under its own logic.
2. God’s love is the truth that holds life together. God and His love for us is the unifying principle that makes life’s puzzle come together.

Truth

A Skeptic’s Guide to Faith

Let’s be honest, the idea of one exclusive religion makes people today uncomfortable. Our neighbors want to believe that no single religion is the truth.



Our culture imagines truth like the six blind men describing an elephant as ...

- Tusks - a spear
- Trunk - a snake
- Leg – a tree
- Tail – a rope
- Ear – a fan
- Side – a wall



Don’t despair, even though it seems that everything is relative – there are clear rights and wrongs – truth exists.

- Relative truth is like six blind men describing an elephant.
- Objective truth is proved by the perspective that sees six blind men and an elephant.

Very briefly, let’s look at how we got here.

1. Our Culture Today.

To understand, we need to understand the thinkers from the 1700's who shaped it.

- David Hume argued that truth must be verified by the five senses.
 - But this claim itself cannot be verified by the five senses — it defeats itself.
- Immanuel Kant argued that we cannot know the world as it truly is.
 - Yet he was certain about that claim — a self-defeating position.

These ideas helped create a culture where objective truth is doubted, and personal preference is elevated.

But relativism cannot sustain a worldview. It cannot explain reality, morality, or creation itself. It cannot assemble the puzzle.

God's love is the truth that holds life together.

Our culture believes that ...

There is no objective truth; everything is relative. This idea can be heard all around us.

Many of us have heard something like

- 'I am glad your religion works for you, but it's not for me.' That is either a lazy thinker, or someone who believes there is no objective truth.
- 'All religions are true.'

Let me show you how to deal with the relativism of today's culture. It's called the Road Runner Tactic. It's named after the Looney Tunes character, the Wile E. Coyote, who chases the road runner but often finds the ground underneath him missing.



The Road Runner Tactic ...

- Exposes a self-defeating statement that fails to meet its own standard.²
- It uses the law of noncontradiction: two contradictory claims cannot both be true at the same time. For example, God exists or he does not exist – both cannot be true.

Let me give you some examples using the principle:

Examples of self-defeating claims:

² Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 39.

- David Hume's idea was that 'truth can only be known through the five senses.' But that is a self-defeating statement; it is an idea and cannot be known through the five senses.
- Immanuel Kant was confident 'nothing can be known.' He was 100% sure certain.
- 'There are no absolute truths.' Is that an absolute truth? The position itself is a self-defeating viewpoint. They take the position of the man who sees six blind men at an elephant and says, 'I know for sure.'
- 'All truth is relative.' Is that a relative truth? If its relative, then it's not absolute – self-defeating.
- 'All religions are the same.' What if I say, 'I believe you are going to hell!'³ Is that true too? If they are honest, they will say, 'no' and reveal their bias. Religious pluralist thinks all non-pluralist beliefs are wrong – they stand in the position of the man looking at the six blind men.

We have arrived at a weird point in time when tolerance means you must 'accept every belief as true.'⁴ Our culture demands the exclusive belief that you believe everything.

Testimony Here.

Let's turn to looking at spiritual truth. Again, relativism fails to provide truth about reality or provide an overall picture of life's puzzle.

God's love is the truth that holds life together.

2. How can Spiritual Truths be Known?

If God is the organizing principle of truth, how can we know him?

It would be easy if we could see God. Let me give you two answers to think about:

- First, God is so wholly other that if we were able to see Him, His glory would override our freewill.
- Second, at the beginning of creation we could see God. But our rebellion caused all of creation to fall – time and dimensionality eliminated our intimate

³ Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 45.

⁴ Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 46.

understanding of God. It was like putting Vaseline over our glasses. Perhaps we will look at God's big story next week.

Scripture gives us two pathways to know spiritual truth.

1. By His Effects, Jn 9. Sometimes we can identify spiritual truth by its effects.

- Like the wind blowing in a particular direction, we cannot see it, but we can see the trees moving and the dust blowing.
- Jesus talked about seeing the effects of the Spirit: 'The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit (Jn 3:8 NIV).' We don't see the working of the Holy Spirit on people's lives, but we see the effects of it.

In John 9, Jesus mixed saliva and dirt to make mud. He then spread the mud over a blind man's eyes and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam (Jn 9:6). Why? Because God so loved the world that he sent Jesus. God's love is the truth that holds life together.

The blind man did it and was healed.

- His neighbors and others were astounded and asked, 'who healed you?' He told them about Jesus.
- They went to find him, but couldn't, so they took the formerly blind man to the Pharisees.
- It was the Sabbath, when no one should work (Jn 9:13-15).

The Pharisees deduced:

- Working on the Sabbath is a sin.
- Healing is work.
- Therefore 'this man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath (Jn 9:16 NLT).'

Some asked, 'how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs (Jn 9:16 NLT).'

- Remember that the Traditions of the Elders grew up to protect the Law. Jesus confronted it when he said, 'if a child or ox falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out (Lk 14:5 NIV).'
- They could not believe that this man was born blind. They asked his parents who tried to avoid trouble with the religious powers. He is our son. We don't know how he can now see. He is old enough, ask him (Jn 9:18-23).

A second time they investigate the man who was healed.

They assume: ‘We know this man is a sinner (Jn 9:24 NIV).’

- The formerly blind man states the reality of effects “‘I don’t know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see (Jn 9:25 NLT)!”’ In other words, the effect is clear. I was blind but now I see – Jesus brought the change.
- He then says ‘Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he couldn’t have done it (Jn 9:32-33 NLT).’
- He gets kicked out of the synagogue but can now see. Pretty good trade I believe.

God’s love is the truth that holds life together.

Another way we can know the truth about God is revelation.

1. By His Effects, Jn 9.
2. By Revelation, Ro 1:19-20.

Paul wrote, ‘They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God (Ro 1:19-20 NLT).’

How can we ‘clearly see his invisible qualities?’ And fearfully, we have no excuse for overlooking them.

I know some of you are thinking, this is all rather fuzzy and emotional. Yes ...

- The very capacity to know God and truth, I believe, was corrupted when humankind rebelled against God. The very organ of spiritual / truth receptivity is damaged in us.
- However, cognitive scientists are realizing that ‘emotions are at the core of effective rational thought.’⁵ Our emotions are like a gyroscope keeping our logic upright – they judge the rightness of a thought.

The healing point to seeing God’s invisible qualities is a measure of faith in God (He 11:6) – ‘that God exists.’

⁵ Josh Brahinsky, *Tongues of Fire: How Charismatic Prayer Changes Evangelical Brains and Inspires Spirit-Filled Activism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2026) 8. See also, Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, *Journal of Pentecostal theology* 1 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 132-36.

- God tries to get our attention, but we must have a measure of faith to receive His revelation (C.S. Lewis' Tao)⁶.
- God is constantly testing our heart for faith, for openness to Him.
- If you open your heart to Him a little, God will reveal Himself and truth to us. '
- Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³²And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (Jn 8:31-32 NLT)."
- We must take a step and say, 'Okay God, I am willing to listen. Show me if you exist and truth.'

I believe God reveals Himself through ...

- Dreams & visions
- A still small voice
- Through His prophets and the Bible
- Nature

Solomon affirms our life's situation so well: 'He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end (Ecc 3:11 NLT).' We cannot see the big overall picture of life.

Thomas was known for doubting the resurrection. He is like the patron saint of doubters and skeptics. He demanded to touch Jesus' hands and side. Before Jesus went to the cross he asked Jesus about the plan.

- "Lord ... how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (Jn 14:5-6 NLT).'
- Astounding. Truth is not merely a concept – it is a person.
- Jesus pointed Thomas to the effects. 'Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves (Jn 14:11 NLT).

We cannot see God because of our fallen state, but God extended His truth to us in the form of Jesus.

Our spiritual receptors are broken, so God moved closer to us so that we might understand.

- God's love is the truth that holds life together.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*.

Conclusion.

Let me show you how love and truth all fit together in life's big puzzle. John wrote, 'God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins (1Jn 4:9-10 NLT).'

- We don't need to see the whole puzzle.
- God's love is the truth that holds life together.
- We take a step of faith and simply trust the God who reveals Himself through Jesus.
- Then we see the effects: many in this room have had their lives changed because of Jesus' sacrifice.

Creation itself testifies to His love.

- God's invisible quality of love is seen in creation.
- Creation and the universe are not an accident, but a byproduct of God's love for us.



Astrophysicists can name twenty-five reasons why we live on a remarkable planet. Let me give you two. These point to a Creator, who made the world 'just right' for human life.⁷ This is called the 'Goldilocks Factor,' because we live in a 'just right' world.

Gravitational force constant.

- If larger ... stars would be too hot and burn up too quickly
- If smaller ... stars would remain so cool that nuclear fusion would never ignite, hence no heavy element production.

Expansion rate of the universe.

- If larger ... no galaxy formation.
- If smaller ... universe would collapse prior to star formation.

Our universe is finely tuned for human life – not by accident, but by affection.

The gravitational constant, the expansion rate of the universe — and dozens more — are set with breathtaking precision.

⁷ Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* (Colorado Springs, CO, 1993) 105-21.

Why? Because the Creator wanted a world where you could exist, know Him, and be loved by Him.

God's love is the truth that holds life together.

Prayer.