

## TRUTH—HOT AND SCARY STUFF

On the university campus, the place for the pursuit of knowledge and truth, we find today a place that is rather skeptical about its own mission. Many academics today have bought into and now teach some interesting theories about truth. It is as if we have “educated ourselves into imbecility” in the academy. Today we will tackle some of the major myths about the search for knowledge you may encounter on the contemporary university campus. Budziszewski separates these myths into three major categories: General Myths (the ones you may hear from anyone), Skeptical Myths (the ones you’ll hear from those who despair of finding any truth at all), and Relativist Myths (the ones you’ll hear from people who believe that we all have truth, but yours might be different than mine). (Budziszewski page 67) **Be careful, you may actually believe some of these yourself!**

### GENERAL MYTHS

1

#### THINKING YOU KNOW THE TRUTH IS ARROGANT AND INTOLERANT.

Why is that some people will think it is intolerant if you claim to know the truth about life?

Some feel that it leads to persecution of others, but this need not be so. In fact the teaching of Jesus is to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

Can doubters of truth be just as arrogant and intolerant as those who think they know the truth? If yes, how so?

They are “intolerant” of those who think they might know something!

2

#### THE IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE ISN'T HAVING TRUTH, BUT SEARCHING FOR IT.

Why is the statement “The good life is a life spent seeking the good life” a circular statement?

If one defines (that means he knows what it is) the good life as seeking the good life he must already know what it is. But if he knows, then why do you still have to seek it out. On the other hand if he is still seeking it, then he doesn't know what it is...so why is he telling us that he knows this is the “good” life.

What is the difference between “t”ruth and “T”ruth

Little “t” truth is abstract knowledge and facts about reality, big “T” Truth is ultimate truth about reality itself and is satisfied by a personal, living knowledge of God.

3

#### FAITH HINDERS THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH BECAUSE IT GETS IN THE WAY OF REASONING.

In what ways does our reasoning depend on faith or trust?

First — our very ability to think and discuss things is based on a common trust that we can think and discuss things. Without this base level faith ALL COMMUNICATION would be simply impossible.

Second — We take many things by faith all the time. Many good examples in Budziszewski on page 71

## SKEPTICAL MYTHS

# 4

### THERE ISN'T ANY TRUTH

Why is the smokescreen statement "There isn't any truth" so easy to strike down?

Just ask "Oh, is that statement true?" then you have him. If he says his statement IS true then he refutes himself. If he says his statement isn't true, then again this implies there is truth.

What do people usually mean when they say this?

They are trying to say that life is without any ULTIMATE meaning or purpose.



IS THAT STATEMENT TRUE?



# 5

### MAYBE TRUTH EXISTS, BUT WE CAN'T FIND IT

Why is this myth self-refuting like myth #4?

If he claims his statement is TRUE, then he has obviously **found** something that is true. If he says he doesn't know if his statement is true, then he is at best agnostic to finding truth. Why should we think he is right?

It is true that someone can always doubt the truth of anything? Why is it important to know if doubts are "reasonable?"

You can doubt you are in Bible study right now, but this quickly disintegrates into making life absurd. Examples in Budziszewski on page 73.

Read John 8:31,32 — Did Jesus share this idea that truth cannot be found?

# 6

### MAYBE WE CAN FIND OUT SOME TRUTH, BUT NOT ABOUT THE BIGGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT THINGS.

Does the fact that many people believe different things about the big questions in life, give strength to this myth?

This is one of the reasons people buy into this one. This is related to myth #1 that it is REALLY intolerant to think you know some answers to life's big questions.

Read John 3:16-21 and 6:44,45

Why do some people see evidence for God so clearly but others do not?

Salvation is the gift of God. When people are lost they will sometimes refuse to look to the Lord. Jesus says that some people "will not" come to him.

"There's plenty of evidence about the big things. Skeptics just don't want to look"

*Budziszewski page 74*

## RELATIVIST MYTHS — HOW MANY DO YOU BELIEVE?



### TRUTH IS WHATEVER YOU SINCERELY BELIEVE.

How is this akin to saying a person has the magical power to shape reality?

Can someone really just believe something really hard and then it becomes true? Can we do this with God?

Can something be true for you, but not true for me?

Not about reality...people who say this about God are saying God is not REAL. We need to expose this as atheism or agnosticism at best. When we say we believe something about God, we mean a God who is real, a God who IS apart from our belief about Him.

What is someone really trying to say with the “true for you, not for me” statement?

Truth is based on whatever works for you or makes you happy. We'll see this later with myth #9



### TRUTH IS WHATEVER PEOPLE ACCEPT — OR WHATEVER YOU CAN GET THEM TO SWALLOW.

How is this belief stated in Political science, sociology, and philosophy?

““Communitarianism”, “social construction of reality”, and “consensus theory of truth” Truth is what is accepted and average...This is heard on TV news programs and in politics with the statement: “His/Her views are far from what ‘Mainstream America’ believes” No refutation of the actual beliefs, just an appeal to “the masses.” This belief about the nature of truth is why public opinion polls are all the rage today. Remember, opinions are like belly buttons, everyone has one, that doesn't mean all opinions are equally valid or true.

Why is this myth **sometimes** true, but at other times **completely false and even dangerous**?

Some things are conventions of society — driving on the right side of the road in America. But if truth is only based on what the majority of people believe, than at one time the earth was really flat, white Americans were superior to black Americans, Jews in Germany should have been killed, etc, etc. We cannot allow people to say that whatever the crowd believes is automatically correct without refutation. There is too much at stake.



### TRUTH IS WHATEVER WORKS

What is pragmatism and why is it so powerful among young people?

Whatever works is true—If it makes you happy, it must be true for you. Many young people are trying to live in a world today in which there is no ultimate meaning, no ultimate hope, no ultimate purpose. So what we do is just grab on to anything that will help us make it. We medicate life and become even more unfulfilled — entertainment, drugs, relationships...whatever floats your boat...to each his own.

Why is the statement “Hey, it works for me” not a way to find truth but a wall to keep it out?

“Jesus was right: The truth shall set you free. But the myth of “whatever works” can only keep you in chains”

**Budziszewski page 78**

SOME SATIRE TO EXPOSE THE MYTHS OF OUR TIME

We believe in Marxfreudanddarwin.  
 We believe everything is OK  
 as long as you don't hurt anyone,  
 to the best of your definition of hurt,  
 and to the best of your knowledge.

We believe in sex before, during, and  
 after marriage.  
 We believe in the therapy of sin.  
 We believe that adultery is fun.  
 We believe that sodomy's OK.  
 We believe that taboos are taboo.

We believe that everything's getting  
 better  
 despite evidence to the contrary.  
 The evidence must be investigated  
 And you can prove anything with  
 evidence.

We believe there's something in  
 horoscopes, UFO's and bent spoons;  
 Jesus was a good man just like Buddha,  
 Mohammed, and ourselves.  
 He was a good moral teacher  
 although we think His good morals were  
 bad.

We believe that all religions are basically  
 the same- at least the one that we read  
 was.  
 They all believe in love and goodness.  
 They only differ on matters of creation,  
 sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation.

We believe that after death comes the  
 Nothing  
 Because when you ask the dead what  
 happens they say nothing.  
 If death is not the end, if the dead have  
 lied, then it's compulsory heaven for all  
 except perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and  
 Genghis Khan.

We believe in Masters and Johnson.  
 What's selected is average.  
 What's average is normal.  
 What's normal is good.

We believe in total disarmament.  
 We believe there are direct links  
 between warfare and bloodshed.  
 Americans should beat their guns into  
 tractors  
 and the Russians would be sure to follow.

We believe that man is essentially good.  
 It's only his behavior that lets him down.  
 This is the fault of society.  
 Society is the fault of conditions.  
 Conditions are the fault of society.

We believe that each man must find the  
 truth that is right for him.  
 Reality will adapt accordingly.  
 The universe will readjust.  
 History will alter.  
 We believe that there is no absolute truth  
 except the truth that there is no absolute  
 truth.

We believe in the rejection of creeds,  
 and the flowering of individual thought.

**He then adds this postscript entitled  
 Chance:**

If chance be  
 the Father of all flesh,  
 Disaster is his rainbow in the sky,  
 And when you hear

State of Emergency!  
 Sniper Kills Ten!  
 Troops on Rampage!  
 Youths go Looting!  
 Bomb Blast School!

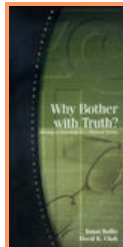
It is but the sound of man  
 worshipping his maker

Quoted by Ravi Zacharias in his book  
 "Can Man Live Without God" Word  
 Publishing 1994 pp 42-44

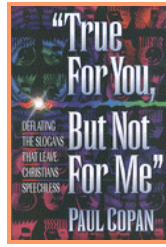
READ TOGETHER FROM PAGE 79 STARTING WITH THE PARAGRAPH WHICH BEGINS  
 "WHY MUST ALL THIS BE SO HARD?"

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

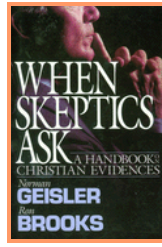
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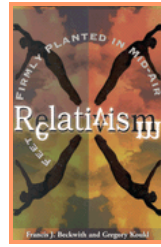
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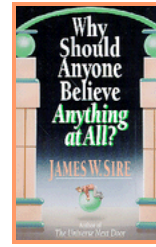
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4



5



1. Why bother with Truth? Arriving at Knowledge in a Skeptical Society by James Beilby and David Clark. Available through Ravi Zacharias International Ministries at [www.rzim.org](http://www.rzim.org)
2. True for You, But Not for Me by Paul Copan
3. When Skeptics Ask by Geisler and Brooks
4. Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air by Francis Beckwith and Gregory Kouss
5. Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All? by James Sire