



How to Know Truth & Evaluate Competing Worldviews

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(Part of an apologetics course designed to give roots to the faith of Christians, assist seekers in their quest for truth, and gently and respectfully challenge those who hold to competing worldviews)

For more information on the Richmond Center for Christian Study,
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Why should I care about truth?!

Truth is inherently valuable.

Often detrimental to be out of touch with reality.

Truth is accessible to the average Joe on the street.

How to know what's really true... three principles...

1) Reality Principle

2) Bias Principle

3) Certainty Principle

Reality Principle

1) The truth is really there.

2) It is really knowable.

To deny this principle is self-defeating...

To say "truth is not there" is to make a truth claim, which of course, undercuts the statement being made.

To say "truth is not knowable" is, again, to claim to know something true, which again undercuts the claim being made.

The moment you try to deny this principle, you affirm it.

Bias Principle

How we interpret the facts tends to be influenced by the perspective of the world we already have.

We must recognize our various biases (in all fields of life – science, culture, spiritual, etc.) and always be open to the facts as they present themselves to us and be willing to have our perspectives changed by them.

Certainty Principle

How certain do you have to be before you believe something to be true?

How knowledge works:

1) You can't know anything to be true with absolute certainty.

2) Absolute certainty is not required for you to know something to be true. Sufficient certainty is all that is required.

There comes a point where you're sure enough about something that you can rest in the knowledge that it is true and thus become responsible to act upon it.

So we can't wait until absolute proof is presented before we will believe something to be true, but must be willing to consider the facts and go where they reasonably seem to lead.

How to Test a Worldview

Cultural Context – many views of reality
(Humanism, Buddhism, Modernism, Christianity, etc.)

Cultural Drive – affirm all beliefs

Why this is impossible...

1) Various worldviews often contradict each other at the core.
So it is not possible that they could both be true.

2) Since there is only one reality, only the worldview that fits the reality we all live in can be true. All other worldviews would be painting a picture fundamentally different than that reality, and thus would be false.

Fundamental Question – “Is this worldview consistent with reality or not?”

Three Tests...

1) **Test of Logical Consistency** – Is it consistent with itself?

If this worldview represents reality, in order to be consistent with reality it has to be consistent with itself.

2) **Test of Historical Consistency** – Is it consistent with history?

History tells us what the world has been like up to this point, so if a worldview is going to fit reality, it will have to be consistent with history.

3) **Test of Experiential Consistency** – Is it consistent with life as it presents itself to us?

If a worldview is going to fit reality, it is going to have to fit the data that life lays out before us.

Postmodernism

Says “everybody decides for himself what is true and what is right.”

You hear Postmodernism when you hear people say things like...

“That’s true for you, but not for me” or “You have your truth, I have mine”
or “That’s just your personal belief.”

Core truth claim → There is no overarching truth that applies to everybody.

In claiming that there is no overarching truth that applies to everybody,
Postmodernism is making an overarching truth claim that applies to everybody.

So, Postmodernism fails the Test of Logical Consistency and fails to fit reality.

Naturalism

Says “matter and energy are all there is.”

You hear Naturalism when you hear people say things like...

“Everything has to have a ‘scientific’ explanation [which is often code for ‘Naturalistic’ explanation].”

Problem → Naturalism doesn’t fit our corporate experience of life.

Life presents itself as including relationships, commitment, love, hate, etc.

But Naturalism does not have room for these things.

(Atoms can’t love, energy can’t hate.)

So, Naturalism fails the Test of Experiential Consistency and fails to fit reality.

Islam

Depends on the notion that the Bible has been fundamentally corrupted.

Why does Islam depend on the Bible being corrupted?

- 1) Islam affirms that the Bible is the Word of God.
- 2) There are core contradictions b/t Islam and the Bible today.

So, when could the Bible have been fundamentally corrupted?

- 1) Before the Koran was written (7th cent.)?

The Koran itself refers to the Bible as a reliable document.

5:47 – “Let the People of the Gospel [Christians] judge by what God hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by the light of what God hath revealed, they are no better than those who rebel.”

5:68 – “Say: ‘O People of the Book [Jews and Christians]! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law [OT], the Gospel [NT], and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.’”

This option would lead to a fundamental contradiction, causing Islam to fail the Test of Logical Consistency.

- 2) After the 7th century?

We now have a massive amount of NT manuscripts dating as far back as the 2nd century and OT manuscripts dating back even earlier that are virtually identical with our Bibles today.

This option clashes with what we now know as a matter of history, causing Islam to fail the Test of Historical Consistency.

Since there is no time in which the Bible could have been fundamentally corrupted, which Islam depends on, Islam as a worldview cannot fit reality.

What About Tolerance?!

Modern understanding of tolerance

“You can’t say that someone else’s beliefs are wrong!
If you do, you are being intolerant!”

Historic understanding of tolerance

You should be willing to live peacefully and respectfully with those you believe, and even say, are wrong.

Modern understanding undercuts itself...

It says that it is wrong for you to say that someone else is wrong.
This, of course, fails the Test of Logical Consistency, and thus cannot be an approach that fits reality.

Historic understanding of tolerance is actually consistent with the teaching of Jesus, and is how we ought to approach others and their worldviews.

The Call of Jesus

John 1:17 – “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Grace and Truth must be held together when evaluating different worldviews, and when relating to the people that hold to them.

If we hold onto truth without grace, we beat people up with our words and we fail to follow Jesus who was called “the friend of sinners” and who humbled himself even to the point of death on a cross.

If we hold onto grace without truth, we find ourselves no longer in touch with reality, but rather blinded by a pretend world that doesn’t match the real world as it actually is.

1 Peter 3:15 – “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have [referring to Truth]... but [referring to Grace] do this with gentleness and respect.”

Resource Recommendations

Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*

Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*

Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*

Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?*

James Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*