

## Teen Winter Retreat—Message One—What is Truth?

**Introduction**

- *Step 1:* Have the teens guess how many M&Ms are in the jar. Reveal the number and ask who was the closest to that number.
- *Step 2:* Pass out Starburst and ask which flavor is right? This is a matter of personal preference and opinion.
- *Ask:* Is the resurrection of Christ like the number of M&Ms in the jar or the Starburst?
- While tastes in candy are certainly a matter of personal preference, that does not mean that questions about truth can be determined in the same way. Truth is either objectively true and conforms to reality, or it is simply not truth.
- John 18:38—What is truth?
- Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Yes the belief in absolutes is the only position that is not self-defeating. A self-defeating statement is one that does not meet its own standard.
- Despite the absurdity of believing that absolute truth does not exist the culture has embraced the view that something is not true until they choose to believe it. They believe that the act of believing makes things true.
- In a survey conducted of Christian young people in 2006 81% said they believed that all truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances. As a result, 70% of the Christian young people surveyed believed there is no absolute truth.
- Seven truths about truth.
  1. Truth is discovered, not invented. It exists independent of anyone's knowledge of it. (Gravity existed prior to Newton)
  2. Truth is transcultural; if something is true, it is true for all people, in all places, at all times. (2+2=4)
  3. Truth is unchanging even though our beliefs about truth change. (The earth is round)
  4. Beliefs cannot change a fact, no matter how sincerely they are held.
  5. Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it.
  6. All truths are absolute truths. Even truths that appear relative are really absolute.
  7. Truth is that which corresponds to its referent.

- In short, contrary beliefs are possible, but contrary truths are not possible. We can believe everything is true, but we cannot make everything true.
- While most religions have some beliefs that are true, not all religions beliefs can be true because they teach opposites.
- John 17:17—The word of God is truth
- Psalm 119:142
- II Timothy 2:15—The truth needs to be rightly divided

### **What is Apologetics?**

- I Peter 3:15—Apologetics is derived from the Greek word apologia which literally means to give a defense.
- Apologetics is the branch of Christian theology which answers the question, Is Christianity rationally defensible? In other words, can Christianity be defended (and therefore substantiated) by using the same procedures reasonable people everywhere use to determine the truthfulness of anything—whether it be scientific, historical, legal, philosophical, or religious?
- Jude 3—They were to contend for the faith.

### **Paul the Apologist**

- Of the seven times the Greek word apologia is used in the New Testament 6 of the occurrences were either written by Paul or recorded as having been spoken by Paul.
- Philippians 1:7, 17
- Acts 22:1
- Acts 25:16
- I Corinthians 9:3
- Acts 17:21-34—We see Paul in action. He used his knowledge of philosophy to exhort and convince the gainsayers (Titus 1:9).

### **Is Evidence Necessary for Belief?**

- Paul is very clear in his epistles that it is only faith in the objective facts of the gospel that save the sinner from eternal punishment and separation from him.

- It is our responsibility as believers to answers the questions of the lost so that they can take a step of faith in the light of the evidence, rather than to leap into the dark.
- Evidence of truth should precede faith. No reasonable person steps into a elevator without some reason to believe it will hold him up. No reasonable person gets on an airplane that is missing part of one wing and smells of smoke in the cabin.
- People deal in two dimensions of belief: *belief that* and *belief in*. *Belief that* gives the evidence and rational basis for confidence needed to establish *belief in*. Once *belief that* is established, one can place *faith in* it.
- Thus, the rational person wants evidence that God exists before he places faith in God. Rational unbelievers want evidence that Jesus is the Son of God before they place their trust in him.
- Four reasons why Apologetics is useful:
  1. Exonerates Christianity
  2. Strengthens Believers
  3. Makes Christianity Relevant
  4. Aids in Evangelizing the Lost

<b>Faith</b>	<b>Reason</b>
God the Source Act of Will Believes Truth Involves Trust Founded on Fact Rejects Contradictions Consistent with Reason End of Reason Guides Reason	God the Source Act of Mind Knows Truth Involves Logic and Evidence Deals with Facts Exposes Contradictions Consistent with Faith Beginning of Faith Affirms Faith

- Bottom Line: Absolute Truth does exist and the Bible claims to be God’s source for knowing truth about God.
- Christianity is not a mystical religion, such as many Eastern religions and their New Age clones. Neither is it a mythical religion with idols and man-made gods. Nor is Christianity a misinformed religion, such as the various cults. Rather, Christianity is an historic religion and its truth-claims are grounded on objective, historical facts.
- My goal with you this weekend is that you leave more equipped to given an answer and defend your faith in this present evil world.