



Truth is Personal, Not Merely a Concept

The word truth and its associated concepts are used throughout the world, which would seem to indicate that the definition of truth is well known and globally accepted. As we will see, such is not the case.

The primary Old Testament word for truth (transliterated as ‘emeth and pronounced eh’-meth) is the basis for our word “Amen.” This word is translated in many ways and, according to the context, means firm, sure, reliable, verifiable, steadfast, certain, faithful, established, trustworthy, indisputable, lasting (eternal), or unchangeable. Truth often has “belief” associated with it in such a manner that related action is the inevitable result. In this dimension, truth’s “words” correspond exactly to truth’s “actions.”

Truth is in direct contrast to concealment, delusion, confusion, lying or falsehood (cheating, trickery, deception, fraud, vanity, betrayal). When truth describes God acting on the basis of His promise and character, the word for truth is often translated “faithfulness.” In this context, truth is often joined with “mercy” as in Psalm 85:10, “Love (mercy) and faithfulness (truth) meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.”

In the New Testament, there is a word (transliterated and pronounced as *lanthano*) that means “to be hidden or to be a secret, to be unaware or ignorant, or to escape notice.” The New Testament word for truth (transliterated as *aletheia* and pronounced as al-ay’-thi-a) is understood to be the exact opposite of the word *lanthano*.

New Testament truth emphasizes the concept of “bringing to light.” As a result, truth in the New Testament means “without pretence, without deception, an open and verifiable certainty, excellent, real, devoid of falsehood, completely faithful, sincerity and integrity of character (not merely verbal), honest, without corruption, unconcealed, constant, upright, righteous, and based on fact.”

Truth often is related more to “doing” than mere intellectual attainment and is in contrast to deception, concealment, or idolatry. Truth can also reveal the substance over its shadow (greater over the lesser), specifically when both aspects of truth were ordained by God – for example, the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ (the substance) compared to the Old Testament sacrificial system (the shadow). Truth also refers to the body of Christian teaching, the Gospel message, as well as to all of Scripture.

Word studies for the above summaries were derived from:

Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, Walter Elwell (editor), Baker Books, 1996
Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3, Colin Brown (editor), Zondervan, 1982
International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database, BibleSoft, 1996
Synonyms of the New Testament, Richard C. Trench, Eerdmans, 1975
Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 1, Gerhard Kittel (editor), Eerdmans, 1979
Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, W. E. Vine, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.

From an individual perspective, some aspects of truth can be objectified by our five senses. Other dimensions of truth are realized through experiences or by careful observations and inquiries. On the other hand, many claims of “truth” are actually false and can be communicated widely by words, both verbally and in print.

It should be evident that all dimensions of authentic truth must be grounded in foundational principles that are not self-contradictory and are applicable worldwide. For example, the basic rules of mathematics must be the same wherever math is used. Similarly, each sport must have the same set of rules if national teams are to compete against each other effectively. In chemistry, the chart of basic elements must be identical in every educational and scientific setting that focuses on that subject. Even though people throughout the world accept foundational principles specific to math, sports, and chemistry, they do not have common, foundational truth related to spiritual and relational aspects of life.

As a result, contradictory beliefs occur, and adherents of each viewpoint believe they are following the “truth.” Yet, if two viewpoints contradict each other, both are not truth. Two contradictory viewpoints could both be in error, or one viewpoint could be correct and the other wrong; but both cannot be truth. This is why “all roads” do not lead to heaven, since these various “roads” contradict each other.

With regard to spiritual and relational issues of life, it is vital to know the foundation of truth that relates specifically to matters of life and eternity. The foundation of truth in this regard is God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, and God’s Word. The following Bible verses point to that reality.

Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord, the **God of truth**. –Psalm 31:5

Jesus answered, “I am the way and **the truth** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” –John 14:6

But when the **Spirit of truth** comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. –John 16:13

“Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth**.” –John 17:17

Truth revealed through these Divine Sources is completely sufficient to deal with ALL spiritual and relational matters with no reference to or reliance on any other perceived authority. These Sources do not contradict one another. Truth, as revealed in Jesus, defined in Scripture, and lived out by spiritually empowered followers of Christ, can be variously expressed in word and deed so that God receives glory and others receive benefits. Divine truth is the standard by which every aspect of life and relationships must be measured.

See the article “Truth” in the *Studies to Help You Grow* section of the *WordTruth* website for a more complete study on this subject.