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"Fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"



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Truth Irrefutable

"The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is". –Winston Churchill

Truth is absolute and no circumstances can change it because God is truth (Jesus said, 'I am the truth') and truth is the standard set for human life. Truth is at stake when it is attacked by lies or half-truths or twisted truths. In the Bible, truth was first attacked by the evil one who twisted the words and presented it attractive. Often, it's hard to distinguish when it's closer to the truth yet not the truth. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God **really** say, 'You must not eat from **any tree** in the garden?'" "You will **not certainly** die" (Gen. 3:1)". The challenge is to recognize the subtle ways falsehood creeps in, and the need is to discern and defend the truth.

It is said, 'The truth is still the truth even if no one believes it. A lie is still a lie, even if everyone believes it'. We are called to share the truth and not to alter it or dilute it to suit the hearers. "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" 2 Tim. 4:3.

"Truthing in love" is vital to present the historical faith which is foundational for our belief system. John Stott said, 'Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth'. We see Universities and campuses with various theories and ideologies which can shake our belief system. For many, truth is subjective and experiential, and it keeps changing according to the currents of the day. In such a context, displaying truth in its entirety is the need of the hour. "Buy the truth and do not sell it— wisdom, instruction, and insight as well". Pro. 23:23 NIV

I invite you to explore more on the theme as you unfold the pages.



Jessy Jacob
+91-7603 953 274
campus.link@uesi.in

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Hon. Editor

Athma Soruban

Editing by

Jessy Jacob

Sunny Pradeep

Smitha George

Deborah Joel

Cover design & Lay-out

Prince Edwin. P

E-mail: campus.link@uesi.in

Website:

www.CampusLinklive.org

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Recently at a grand event, a world leader announced, "The truth is on our side and truth is strength!". Understandably, many found that statement bizarre.

Perspectives matter

How is it that common people support and get behind this propaganda and even justify such comments? Well, one reason for such a blatant following could be 'perspective'. It is not only what people see that matters, but also, how people see what they see. So, someone who considers a certain culture as oppressive would view their actions through that prejudiced lens. In the yester-decades, a typical understanding of India in the West was: a land of snake charmers and magicians. Thanks to Hollywood, someone from the Middle East may view West as a culture of loose morals. There

are reasons how people develop these assumptions, which could be partly true or fully false. These assumptions significantly weigh in on how we interpret things around us. As much as wearing a pair of pink glasses makes everything around us appear pink, our worldview colors what we see.

Here is a helpful illustration; years ago, a prominent bank had a series of culture-specific advertisements. In one visual, they show a picture of a baby and a laptop. The words that describe the baby and the laptop are 'play' and 'work' respectively. The pictures are repeated and the descriptions are reversed. The baby is described as 'work' and the laptop, as 'play'. After all, if the baby is your own child, you would also know the hard work associated with bringing up a baby. Needless to add, if you used your laptop for

Lead

watching movies or playing games, you would describe it as 'play'. Now the tagline for this portrayal goes this way: 'A different point of view is simply the view from a place where you are not'. Considering that we are finite humans forced to have 'a' perspective, and not entitled to an objective view of the world, how could anyone or a culture claim absolute truth? Does that not amount to bigotry and arrogance?

Is there Absolute truth?

So, if perspectives influence one's understanding of truth, is there absolute truth? Well, there is a clue embedded in the bank's advertisement. The above-mentioned bank was called, 'The World's local bank'. So, these ads portray cultural diversity in the world. But a closer examination shows they are not as 'broad-minded' as they appear at first glance. A truly open-minded bank's ad should have read: 'Folks, there are diverse banking needs in this world, feel free to explore any from the following list and offer a catalogue of Nationalized and private banks. On the contrary, this bank was projecting itself as the 'World's local bank'. As one can notice, as much as some people project themselves as broad-minded, there are no true pluralists.¹

1. Those who hold that all approaches are valid.

So, it does make sense to present Christ as true for all. Here is another compelling argument from an unexpected source, the late Stephen Hawking, an avowed atheist, who relentlessly sought the 'Theory of everything'. He eventually came around and admitted in a speech² that we are unlike angels who would have an objective view of the universe. And because we are part of the universe that is being described, our theories are 'self-referencing' and likely to be 'incomplete or inconsistent'. He was spot on. It is unjustified for finite humans with a limited perspective to claim absolute truth.³ In the Christian worldview though, the Infinite One has spoken. "God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . ." (Hebrews 1: 1). Since the Infinite One has disclosed Himself, ordinary mortals could get a handle on Truth.

Sharing the gospel

The methods of engagement are understandably diverse in different periods in history. The Modern era saw a justification of the use of rationality as a supreme principle.

2. that was put out as a blog in his website.

3. This would discredit the atheist claim for truth. The ancient Indian sage was happy to settle for a safe agnosticism.

But today, it is mostly accepted that rationalities are not 'absolute' and they also come to us through a mediation of tradition [including, Science]. The postmodern world in a reaction to modernism fought tooth and nail against absolute truth claims. Though Postmodernism brought in helpful perspectives, it was an over-ambitious initiative. In promoting relativism, its own posture was relativized. As hard as one tries, 'every time we shut the door on reality, it jumps in through the window' as a wise man quipped. The Oxford word of the year for 2016 was 'post-truth' which was defined as: '...relating to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs, rather than one based on facts.' Well, moods and fads do change and the Church in every generation seeks out to incarnate the message of the gospel.

The ABC of what Apologetics is not!

An evangelism that is sensitive to the hearer and their concerns and objections is crucial. A key verse on apologetics comes from Peter, "But in your hearts set Christ apart as Lord. Always be ready to give a defense (apologia) to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance that is within you, yet with gentleness and respect". (1 Peter 3: 15) A look

at the literary context opens up many helpful aspects in sharing the gospel.

Not just ANSWERS, but questions:

What do we defend? We share with people about our hope in Christ (1 Peter 3: 15), which makes the apologetic grounded, authentic, and modest. The Bible is open to investigation and we walk alongside a seeker in helping them figure out the truths of Scripture and to make an informed decision about Christ. But, as we explain the gospel, clarify the concepts, and respond to their objections - this communication should be two-way. This also means that in the exchange of ideas, we not only provide answers to people's questions, but we also question the assumptions and validity in the questioner's worldview. Christian apologetics is not just about giving answers, but also raising critical questions.

Not just BELIEF, but behavior:

Further, Peter's instruction in this verse chronologically begins with a lifestyle that carries 'hope' which facilitates the possibility of a question from the onlooker in that community. To which Peter says, 'be ready with an apologetic'. A witnessing lifestyle leads the way for the verbal apologetic.



Lead

Not just CEREBRAL, but spiritual:

Peter motivates believers to be sober-minded, to put away malice and deceit, to stay focused in the midst of trials etc. Further, 'Set apart Christ as Lord' writes Peter. Now, clearly there is a spiritual component that one cannot miss.

An Invitation to 'see' Christ for who He is

The Christian worldview incorporates all of life. This view helps broaden the base to engage with a godless world. We invite people to look at the world through the 'Christian' lens as it were to discover the beauty, the goodness and the truth⁴ of the gospel. This provides one with more points of contact for engagement, creativity in expressing the beauty of Christ, and a life of Biblical values.

Content & Communication: Jesus' style:

(a) Jesus creatively used various literary devices to get His message across. Interestingly, when Jesus talked about the kingdom, He illustrated it for them - 'The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, like a farmer . . . ' and does not use abstract statements.

4. The 3 transcendentals since the time of Aristotle; and they deal with Arts, Morals, and Sciences respectively

(b) His use of Socratic method to deal with questions proved to be an effective way to engage with the real issues. Someone observed that 9 out of 10 times, Jesus responded to a question with another question.

(c) A parable was not just meant to illustrate truth in a simpler way, but rather to invite the listener to a deeper truth, it separates the genuine seeker from a casual onlooker. The seeker is invited to engage deeper to discover the real meaning. Quoting Isaiah, Jesus reiterated: "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding..." (Mark 4: 11, 12).

(d) Jesus' reaching out to people was revolutionary to say the least. He broke many human-made barriers to relate with the so-called dregs and outcasts of society. For example, the Samaritan woman was surprised that Jesus asked her for a drink. The disciples who were away exhibit astonishment that He was speaking to her - while Jesus comfortably transcended a gender barrier, a racial barrier, and the fact that she was an immoral woman. No wonder, John records in his

gospel, that Jesus was full of grace and truth.

Presenting Christ in a pluralistic world

In a world of diverse cultures, traditions, and beliefs, a Christian, just like a brand ambassador for the bank holds out the 'World's local Saviour'. We respect different points of view. This further calls for crucial identifiers, social markers etc. as we make Christ known. For example, a mission that reaches out to 'pagans', 'unbelievers' while not meant to be offensive might unintentionally build walls between communities, rather than bridges. A people that are made in the image of God warrant dignity and in the words of

Peter - 'do this with gentleness and respect'.

To reach out to diverse communities, a helpful picture emerges in the concept of perichoresis⁵ (in the Trinity) where diverse members are not seen as 'one and the many', but rather as 'relationality' and 'particularity' (Colin Gunton). There is a solidarity with the rest of creation that we share and there is more dynamism in the perichoretic model. While the Church upholds salvation in the exclusive claims of Jesus, she is inclusive in her reach to all the peoples in the world.

5. *The dynamism within the Being of God as perceived by the Cappadocian Fathers in the Eastern Church, which is more dynamic, than a Western description of one 'substance'.*



Neil Vimalkumar is Speaker & Ministry Director with Life Focus Society. He and his wife Henrietta are blessed with two young children and they make their home in Chennai

Error Regretted

Our sincere apologies for a mistake in the Sept-Oct issue article on FOMO: The Joy Stealer, page 20, which was authored by Robin Mathew, Mumbai, not Yohan Varghese

Navigating in a Post-Truth World



We live in what is known as a post-truth era. This means that the present generation no longer believes that there are absolute truths. For them, all truth is relative, situational and subjective. Let us try to clear some clouds surrounding the topic and think through some of the issues that are at stake.

Truth and Reality

Our first task is to answer the question, 'what is truth?'. This was the question that Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor asked when he conducted the trial of Jesus (John 18:38). Interestingly, Pilate had no patience to listen to or see the Truth who was standing before him!

A very simple yet profound definition of truth is: *'Truth is what corresponds to reality'*. This answer immediately raises another question – *what then is reality?*

Reality is 'what is' independent of opinions. I can make a statement "*It is now raining outside*". The statement can be true or false depending on whether it is really raining. What emerges is very interesting. While reality remains, a statement made about reality can either be true or false. To cite another example, a teacher asks how much is 2+2 to a group of students. Let us imagine all the students give answers like say 3, 5 etc. We say these answers are false because it does not correspond to reality (which is 4). Four (4) is the right answer because it corresponds to reality. I also need to add here incidentally that reality can be more complex than this as 4 can be 5 minus 1 also which opens up various dimensions of the same reality.

To sum up, reality remains out there objectively like a solid rock independent of perceptions and

opinions. One can make statements or truth claims about reality. These statements can either be true or false. Truth is tested with propositions (statements) about reality. It is also another matter that truth can also be tasted (experienced)! Some years back a thief broke into our house in Kerala in the wee hours. In the morning we all could make a 'truth claim' that there was a theft in the house last night. Evidences showed that the above statement corresponds to reality and therefore it was true. We also 'experienced' the truth as certain valuables were missing and the doors that were latched the previous night were lying open! Evidences play an important role in establishing whether a truth claim corresponds to reality or not.

Is truth relative or absolute?

This is one of the most vexing questions when it comes to the nature of truth. To grasp the difference between the two possibilities of relative and absolute, imagine a husband making two statements about his wife:

Statement #1: My wife is five feet four inches tall

Statement#2: My wife is the best cook in the whole world.

The first statement must be absolute as it is objective – measurable

by anyone and it *excludes* all other answers than the height measurement mentioned. This truth has to be absolute and cannot be relative – changing from place to place or time to time. An important concept emerges- when the truth claims are 'mutually exclusive' truth has to be absolute.

The second statement obviously is very subjective like beauty which is in the eye of the beholder. Others need not agree with this statement. And we cannot verify if this statement conforms to reality. Truth in this sense can be relative.

Jesus made the statement – *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14: 6). Just think for a moment to which category does his statement belong? I am sure it is very obvious to us that he was making an absolute truth claim. See the exclusivity introduced by the definite article '*The*' – *The* truth, *The* way and *The* Life and also *the* Father.

Options are very few!

When it comes to truth, we have very few options! For a moment let us examine the statement '*There is no truth*'. This statement self-destructs if we ask a simple question to that 'truth claim'(statement about reality) – Is that true? If the truth



claim is right, the statement also is not true. This is an example of a self-contradicting statement. In fact there are only three options when it comes to truth claims about reality:

Option #1: *All views about reality are true.* The problem with this view is that one of the views possible is that this view is false. That view also needs to be true as *all* views are true! This view about reality destructs itself.

Option #2: *All views about reality are false:* The problem with this view is that this view also needs to be necessarily false as *all* views are false! This view about reality also self-destructs.

Option #3: *Some view(s) about reality are true and some are false.* It emerges that this is the only option available. Now, how to decide which view is true and which ones are false, one needs to examine which claims correspond to reality. Logic (the science of right thinking) and epistemology (the science of right knowing) can be of immense help here. These are two major branches of philosophy.

Nonsense and probabilities

I am coming back to the question how does one establish if a truth claim is true or false. Two answers can be given. First the truth claim cannot defy logic. Secondly the

evidences associated with the truth claim should point to high probabilities. Let me explain. Imagine a vertical scale with markings 0 to 5. Each of the number corresponds to the following:

0-Nonsense

1-Possible but very Low Probability

2-Low probability

3-Medium Probability

4- High Probability

5- Very High probability

To cite an example on the low end of the scale, the famous question 'Can God create a stone which He cannot lift?' falls to the category of nonsense as the expectation is that God can perform acts that are logically contradictory. Nonsense will remain nonsense even if God is the subject!

Now coming to the higher ends of the scale, a good point to start is the question of the origin of the universe. Either the universe is spontaneously self-generated or it is a result of design by an intelligent agent. Both are possibilities. Both are equally valid truth claims. But where does the evidence take us? A strong case can be made for intelligent design to demonstrate that the universe is a result of intelligent design and belongs to the category of 'very high

probability'. Similarly the claim that God does not exist (Atheism) or God exists (Theism) are truth claims about ultimate reality. Both are valid possibilities. Both cannot be proved through empirical research. But collecting the evidence (forensic method) we are able to establish which statement is highly probable. More the evidence, the claim moves up on the scale from possibilities to probabilities. Obviously, we need to put our trust(faith) in what belongs to high probabilities.

Deception and counterfeiting

The discussion on truth and falsehood will not be complete unless we also look at counterfeiting. Error and Evil are the two realities which we need to confront in this world. God's word offers both revelation (against our ignorance and errors) and redemption (against our fallenness and evil). The evil one is a master of deception where we see falsehood masquerading as truth. This process is achieved by counterfeiting. He takes what is truth and distorts it into error.

And this error passes as truth. We, in the process get deceived. That which is truth gets counterfeited. We need discernment in processing the original (the version of truth) and the counterfeit (the version of error).

Wrap-Up

In the final analysis, the Christian claim is that ultimately reality is God, an all-personal, all-loving, wholly divine holy trinity. Therefore, truth about this reality will be like a multi-faceted diamond of great beauty. The Bible is a fairly exhaustive dose of reality emanating through its truth claims. The claims about this reality are absolute and objective when it comes to exclusive claims.

There can be relativeness when it comes to subjective experiences of God's people. This powerful combination of objectivity and subjectivity, absolute (prescriptions) and relative (description) truths makes the biblical revelation both mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive for salvation. Jesus said: "...you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32)!



Biju George hails from Nilambur, Kerala. After his engineering studies at Palakkad and IIT, Kharagpur he joined Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd for which he is the Director now. He was a member of Palakkad EU and his wife Molly was a member of Kothamangalam EU. Their daughter Sarah is doing her postgraduation at Vellore Institute of Technology. They live in Navi Mumbai. Biju is involved in the church and UESI as a Bible teacher and mentor.





Let us Shine as Lights, Holding Fast the Word of Life

Some years ago, in an Indian University, a Professor in a class of 30 Post Graduate Co-Ed students drew two circles on the floor; and he asked those who considered homosexuality right to stand in one circle and those who considered it wrong to stand in another circle. Except one student, all the others including the Professor himself grouped themselves among those who considered homosexuality to be right. The only student who publicly proclaimed it wrong was a Christian!

It is a tragedy that most of the population especially young people have rejected absolute truth and embraced relative truth.

Necessity for Absolute truth.

Let me illustrate the necessity and importance of absolute truth

What is absolute truth? That which is true for all people, across all times, and at all places. Relative truth meanwhile means that it can be true for one person and not for another. The word of God is absolute truth and Jesus is the Truth. Jesus said: "God's word is truth" and I am the Truth" (John 17:17; 14:6)

through the necessity of standard unit of measurement (S.I.). Suppose if there is no S.I. imagine what kind of confusion it would bring within trade and scientific research, throughout the world. Different nations would set diverse standard units for measurement and there will be utter chaos.

So the Standard unit of measurement furnishes a reference point by which weight, length or capacity of anything can be described. Standard units are used

all over the world for determining a particular quantity that does not change with space and time. It does not change from person to person. It helps to make our judgment more reliable and accurate. It also allows scientists to correlate data and interact with each other about their findings.

Likewise, the Creator God has set a standard of commandments to judge the people of the whole world, in the form of His written word, the Bible. The wisest King Solomon closes his God-breathed sermon: Fear God and obey His commands, for this is everyone's duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. Jesus said, all who reject me and my message will be judged on the Day of Judgment by the truth I have spoken. ((Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 / John 12:48 NLT)

Popular adversaries to the Truth:

1. **Religious pluralism:** Religious pluralism accepts many ways to God. According to this belief, all religions are equally valid. Pluralism is more than agreeing on some social issues. For example, Christians and people of other faiths agree and join together in helping the needy ones and fighting against social

issues such as corruption and injustice. But their beliefs about God and salvation differ and are often irreconcilable.

2. **Postmodernism:** Postmodernism has resulted in relativism, the notion that all truth is relative. It means what is right or wrong for one group is not automatically right or wrong for all. Tragically the Postmodernism's renunciation of absolute truth (the Bible) influenced young people to reject the authenticity and authority of the Bible and led to abominable sins like adultery, fornication and same-sex relationship.

3. **Inclusivism:** It is the belief that people can attain God's gift of salvation only because of Jesus Christ's redemptive work on the cross but also the followers of other faiths and even atheists can be saved by responding to God's revelation in creation or through the fragments of truth contained in their own non-Christian religion.

4. **Darwinism:** Peter Singer, one of the most famous bioethicists in the world today, argues that Darwinism undermines the Judeo-Christian sanctity-of-life ethic, which has been the main deterrent to abortion and euthanasia. Ian Dowbiggin and other historians claim that



Darwinism played a central role in changing people's attitudes about human life. (<https://stanfordreview.org/impact-darwinism/>)

According to Weikart, Darwinian evolution crucially influenced Hitler and the Nazis, and the Nazis zealously propagated evolutionary theory during the Third Reich. The Nazis viewed the "Nordic race" as superior to other races and set about advancing human evolution by ridding the world of "inferior" races and individuals. (<https://www.discovery.org/b/darwinian-racism/>)

What should be the response of those who shine as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of life? (Philippians 2: 15, 16 NKJV)

We should share the Living Word with gentleness and respect, with those whose minds are blinded by the god of this world - Satan, that God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Peter 3:15 / 2 Corinthians 4:4 / 2 Timothy 2:25)

We need not be ashamed of **the gospel of Christ as it is the power of God** to save anyone who believes the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16).

The message of the cross is the power of God for those who

are being saved even though it is foolishness to those who are perishing. (1 Corinthians 1:18).

For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; **but we preach Christ crucified**, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. (1 Corinthians 1:21-24)

Let me quote C. H. Spurgeon from his sermon called "Christ and His Co-Workers": "The best "apology" for the gospel is to let the gospel out . . . preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let the Lion out, and see who will dare to approach Him. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will soon drive away all His adversaries"

Helpful Bible verses to lead people to Christ Jesus:

God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36)

Jesus said: "I am **the** way, **the** truth, and **the** life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14: 6).

Jesus is the only one who can save people. His name is the only power in the world that has been given to save anyone. We must be saved through him! (Acts 4:12 ERV)

For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:12)

Lord Jesus will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8 NLT)

Let us sow the Seed-the eternal, Living Word of God with prayer and lead as many people into the kingdom of God as possible. (Luke 8:11 / Hebrews 4:12 / 1 Peter 1:23)

Helpful resources to scientifically prove that God's creation account in the Bible is a Fact:

<https://www.icr.org/>
<https://answersingenesis.org/>
<https://creation.com/>

We should know that the main reason for the disaster of replacing the Absolute truth with relative truth is the failure to make Bible doctrine and Bible knowledge a high priority in our families and churches.

Cult expert Anthony Hoekema has convincingly pointed out that when cults raise their own books or sets of books to the level of Scripture, "God is no longer allowed to speak as He does in the Bible; He may now speak only as the sect deems proper. Thus the Word of God is brought under the yoke of man." (*The Four Major Cults* P 379). This is definitely the case with most of the cults.

Walter Martin rightly said that the rise of the cults is "directly proportional to the fluctuating emphasis which the Christian church has placed on the teaching of biblical doctrine to Christian laymen." (*The Rise of the Cults* P 24)

Responsibility of Christian Parents and Spiritual Leaders:

We should teach the infallibility of the Bible and its basic doctrines to our children and the precious souls under our care.



Jebaveeran is a cross-cultural witness for Christ, based in a North Indian city, serving young people including University students. Contact: jebaveeranbaby@gmail.com





Two elementary school girls were seen quarreling with each other during lunch break. They were sitting on one bench but were not on the same page. One of them shouted, "That's not true. You don't have proof. There is no God". The other kid was equally smart, she replied gently, "Well, I don't believe you. Can you prove that?"

How do you know something is true? Or is there an objective truth beyond and above all the subjective opinions? If so, how do we arrive at it after all? These are the questions that have troubled the so-called 'wise men' since the time of Socrates and continue to inspire research papers to this very day.

An objection to objectivity

Everybody knows the age-old story the Jains use to disseminate their doctrine of the many-ness of reality (Anekantavada): 6 blind men describing an elephant as a

pillar, rope, wall, snake, fan, and tree. They want us to believe that reality is multi-faceted and that there is no such thing as objective truth. But the fact is that there are a lot of problems with the story. None of the blind men depicts the truth. All of the false claims about the parts can never be put together to form a truthful whole. Tim Keller beautifully sums up the contradiction in this narrative: "How could you know that each blind man only sees part of the elephant unless you claim to be able to see the whole elephant?. . . How could you possibly know that no religion can see the whole truth unless you have the superior, comprehensive knowledge of spiritual reality you just claimed that none of the religions have?"

The reason why contemporary western philosophy and postmodernism in particular have an incredulity towards metanarratives is

that for the truth to be objective, there needs to be an ultimate parameter to judge what is true and what is false. Only the Bible can provide such a consistent and coherent metanarrative by which we can test and approve of anything in the world.

Validity of knowledge sources

All the valid types of knowledge can be classified and belong to either one of the three: Sensation, Revelation, and Intuition.

Sensation:

The things we see with our eyes, touch with our hands, smell with our nose, and hear with our ears... These could be called objects of sensory knowledge. The question is whether or not we can trust our senses. Well, a lot of philosophers point out that they can at a lot of times be deceiving.

The 8th-century Indian Philosopher Shankaracharya, inspired by the Upanishads, went to the extreme point of saying that everything that we experience through our sense organs is unreal when compared to the ultimate standpoint (level of Paramarthika). Indian Philosophy says that it is Brahman who deceives the people through Maya, which is the unreal projection of the external empirical world. Shankara better explains this through the analogy

of the rope-snake illusion where a man who gropes in the dark, comes across a rope, mistakes it for a snake, and escapes in fear. It is called the level of Prathibhasika or the dream state where the mind creates for itself unreal projections and believes them to be true. Shankara says that one is to gain liberation in this life (jivanmukthi) by attaining knowledge of the reality of the oneness of everything i.e. we are one with the Brahman. His school of Non-Dualism (Advaita) is one of the most famous and influential schools of Vedanta in India.

Now let's look at what the Bible says about the reliability of our sense organs. Proverbs 20:12 says "Ears that hear and eyes that see—the LORD has made them both." Why would God want to fool us by giving us tools that give us false impressions of the world around us?

When John writes his first letter, falsifying the first-century heresy of Docetism, he testifies to the humanity of Jesus by appealing primarily to the sense organs.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you



the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you” (1 John 1:1-3)

Revelation:

Let us now examine ‘Revelation’ which includes all kinds of knowledge derived from authority. Revelation is ‘authoritative’ knowledge acquired supernaturally. Here God is active in emanating his wisdom and the message that he wants to communicate either through nature or through people. 1 Thess. 5:16 says that we can test prophecies. God doesn’t want us to blindly believe anybody; even his ministers aren’t exempted. Similarly, we can also examine the Scriptures and understand that it is the God-breathed word, written for our edification. Only the Bible can withstand the test of truth; correspondence, coherence, non-contradiction, and consistency. Other religious writings can easily be invalidated if it has inherent logical contradictions and inconsistencies or if it goes against obvious scientific facts by pronouncing absurdities like “the sun sets in a pool of muddy water”. One of the prominent scriptures says that its god is the master of deceivers, and it goes on to reject the historical crucifixion of Jesus by saying that it was also a decep-

tion. The sad truth is that millions of ‘believers’ blindly believe these lies because the Bible says that it is the god of this age who has blinded the eyes of ‘believers’ so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). We who are born again serve a God who claimed to be the truth for he has enlightened our hearts to reveal the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)

Intuition:

Some things are known to us intuitively. We have our conscience always telling us what is right and what is wrong. That is how God originally wired our bodies. But when we, in our unrighteousness, started rebelling against God by suppressing the truth, our consciences became seared as with a hot iron (1Tim 4:2). This is why we need thousands of law books with millions of words to guide us in our actions. That is exactly the reason why God revealed His wisdom through the Scripture so that we might not be like the blind leading the blind.

Not only conscience, but we also have our consciousness built by God, which according to Cornelius Van Til, reveals God to us even before any kind of reasoning or sense perception.

“Man’s mind is naturally in contact with God’s revelation. . . It is itself inherently revelational. It cannot naturally be conscious of itself without being conscious of its creatureliness. For man, self-consciousness presupposes God-consciousness.”

Even unbelievers presuppose the truth of God though they verbally reject it. And because of this reason, it is never our burden to convince unbelievers that God exists by giving evidence after evidence. Jews always demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom (1 Cor. 1:22) whereas our mandate is to preach Christ Crucified, not the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

Some valid practices

We live in a post-truth world where almost everyone denies the existence of absolute truth. Many of our friends and colleagues would be agnostics and atheists. While it is important to reveal to them the absurdity of their worldviews, make sure we do that in gentleness and respect. Respect does not mean that we are accepting their views, but respecting them as individuals. We need not call them a ‘brood of vipers’ as John the Baptist did, nor

as ‘Fools’ like the Psalmist says. We need to learn to give our friends due respect, by talking gently and not in a harsh manner.

Finally, always revere Christ as Lord. We should never put God on trial; He is to be the judge. Sometimes I feel that many of us refrain from sharing the gospel with others because we feel that we are bearing an unnecessary burden of proof and don’t consider ourselves worthy of having all the answers to the questions the world is going to strangle us with. Consider how Peter, who was just a fisherman, could encourage fellow believers to always be ready with the reasons for the glorious hope that we have (1Pet. 3:15). What is our hope if we don’t believe that the Holy Spirit will give us the right words at the right time? (Luke 12:12). After all it is the work of the Holy Spirit that sets anybody free from bondage and captivity by convicting them of the truth. John writes in his third letter about how joyful he was when he heard that his children testified of the truth that was in them. May God rejoice in us when he sees us, his children, walk in truth.



Danny Heric Pereira is a philosophy graduate doing Masters in Kerala University. He loves engaging in debates and discussions which are thought provoking and sometimes mind numbing. He believes in being always curious about everything and anxious about nothing. He is currently the secretary of the Friends of Neighbors Cell, Kerala.





Do Not Lie

In one of the evening Bible studies at home with EU students who are mostly medical students, I asked them to share their visions and aims of life. Two of them wanted to start a hospital in a place with less medical facilities, one wanted to work on animal protection, another on Old-age care, and still another wanted to work in AIIMS Delhi. I admired the fact that they had bigger dreams than many EU students I have come across. Many do begin with big dreams but somewhere down the line, they give up.

We continued the discussion and contemplated on what it meant to be created in God's image. We first dwelt on the equality of all men irrespective of race, caste or gender for the fact that we are all created

equally in God's image. We then went on to see the great potential that God has endowed each one of us, and the creative energy we are bestowed with. So, our identity is in God (Christ) who has created us in His image with uniqueness, His likeness, beauty, creativity, and with enormous potential. In most societies today, identity is determined by whether you have a government job or a high paying salary, or status, looks, fame, power, etc. Your demand in the marriage-market is also directly proportionate to your bank balance. No wonder, many of our students and graduates are often left frustrated, hopeless, and bogged down with depression.

The devil is the greatest liar who is the opposite and the antithesis

to the Truth. He comes knocking at our doors to lie about our worth, beauty and potential!

When students finish their studies and feel lost thinking on what to do next, this is where they become vulnerable. While the academically brighter ones do end up with a job soon, the other job seekers often struggle and some go through a period of crisis and self-doubt. This stage of being unemployed is where so many wander away from the Lord. This unemployment problem is also due to our wrong understanding of the definition of work, which hinders us from exploring beyond regular jobs. While there is also the need to be more hardworking on one side and counter-cultural as followers of Christ, at some point all of us go through some crisis and need help. As a fellowship, our EU-EGF also sometimes end up being a fellowship of the successful, the capable and the elites. I know an EGF fellowship where most of the members come in their own cars and are mostly 'big shots'. These so-called 'not yet successful' ones often feel left out, and insecure, and often it is in those times when they need fellowship the most. We have to collectively build an ecosystem where everyone is equal and our worth is not based on 'success'. Also where one has a sense of belonging

so that they don't fall prey to the lies of the deceiver.

The bigger problem lies in our entire upbringing and orientation towards life, success, and God. Since childhood, we have been groomed to seek greatness through different achievements and successes. We were taught to dream of success in Civil Service, in Medical and Engineering fields, or any high paying jobs. We don't often come across parents teaching their kids to seek first the Kingdom of God during his/her school days. In our EU fellowships too, we rarely come across our EGFs encouraging us to explore what God wanted us to do with our lives. We often associate finding God's will to becoming a full time worker in UESI or in some mission fields in rural India. At the most, we were taught to excel in our studies so that we might serve God in our profession as teachers, doctors, engineers, administrators, etc. While this in itself is good and we are to serve God wherever we are placed, we miss a point. Haven't we ourselves limited God's capacity to do greater things in our life right from the beginning? As a movement, our desire is to impact India. However, we limit ourselves from thinking beyond a certain level. Perhaps if we sought God's plans for our life before we



ourselves made up one, God might call some of us to a 'higher calling', a bigger responsibility, which might involve greater hard work. Some might be called to be the next Prof. Enoch for a different ministry to reach out India for Christ, some to find solutions to the problems of AIDS, some for engineering wisdom to help stop floods in the country, some as Economist to end poverty in India, some as crusaders to end caste prejudice or racial discrimination, some as Chief Ministers of states, etc.

The Four Aims of UESI are a result of much prayer and wisdom. It is very unique and holistic, and it encompasses all aspects of God's work. Our Mission Statement talks about evangelizing and nurturing post-matric students in India that they may serve the church and the society. However, very rarely do we raise our EU students to fulfill that. We often end up raising them only for EU/EGF work. Along with laying the foundation in Christian faith, it would be great if we go one step further in helping them in seeking and attempting greater things for God. Our small cell Bible studies should revitalize us for bigger actions outside. Often we prefer lying in the peripheral. Our graduates in some Northeastern states are numerous and capable enough to even bring forth political

changes. However, we believe a lie that such endeavours are not for us and we would rather live as 'holy cows' instead of venturing to make an impact in the murky world. Moreover, we complain that many graduating students don't come back to join EGFs. Perhaps we should also do some soul-searching if we ever really made a deep impact in their lives.

Not only does the devil lie, we also end up lying. We as UESI sometimes have an inflated sense of importance about ourselves, our impact on the nation, and our general capabilities as Bible teachers. My people perish for lack of knowledge, says Hosea 4:6, and it is this same lack of knowledge that puts off our EU students from flocking to our fellowships. We lack knowledge because we EGFs and staff-workers hardly read good books or the scripture more deeply. We are content with what we know but can our EU students relate to us on any other issue or topic besides the Bible? We are supposed to build up an army who would go and bless the church and society for Christ in India, but we the trainers are often found wanting. Important as it maybe, along with our long hours of meetings or writing report, it would be great to build up our faculties along with a greater emphasis on spending enough time with

students. Our doctrinal teachings should create an environment that generates critical thinking on the historical Christian faith which is the foundational truth of the Scripture. Our small bible study cells are the best platform to train ourselves and if we are doing well there as graduates and staffs, UESI people should be the best Bible teachers in the country. We just have to do well in the basics. While so many Christian organizations have already faced the brunt of governmental censorship, I often wonder whether our safety till now is more because we are no longer seen as impactful or a threat.

As a movement, we have to constantly hunger for the truth, truths about God, truths in our intentions and thoughts, truths in our words, and truths in our assessments of ourselves. We should be allergic to any form of lie, and our actions in the meeting halls), our egos in the small ethnic chambers, and our intentions in our engagements with students and graduates alike should strive to be conformed to the likeness of Christ the Truth. For many students and young graduates, we are often their only point of reference, and we mirror the Christ whom we preach through our lives.



David Hanneng, staying with his wife Jemima Phipon in Burdwan. They are active EGF members in West Bengal

Themes for Campus Link - 2022

Jan-Feb 23 - Digital Media: (*Opportunities and Challenges*)

March-April 23 - Stewardship

Word limit - Article = 1400 words maximum, Poem = 16 lines maximum

You can upload your articles, testimonies, short stories, Bible studies, anecdotes, jokes, poems and cartoons based on the themes at <http://campuslinklive.org/submit-for-cl/> or send email to campus.link@uesi.in

Articles other than these Themes are also welcome!



Words of Life in an Age of Words of Lies



The flashing news cards across the globe enlist the unending questions of the human heart. It is right to understand that sin has brought us to this juncture that none can avoid. The rich and the poor have the same end, devastated by the onslaught of abominable human tyrannies. I often wonder *why I have to feed all this toxic news because without making the former the focus of the day, there are scores of good news that enlightens, brightens, brings smiles, builds up, and adds value to lives.* Indeed, personal outlook and choice have a good role in affecting decisions.

In response, certain sections of the digital natives prefer to *feel escaped* in their virtual world. Some *gurus* spread the contradictory message of *self-forgetfulness* in the web of *Maya-jaal*. Still another group of influencers propound to forsake

society and choose the Himalayas as an island.

While many people fall prey to the lies that *life is meaningless, purposeless, and hopeless*, some know and dwell in the eternal reality: *The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*

Confidence in the Word of Life

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This truth is the source and foundation of life. *By faith, we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.* It is significant to note that the repeated words *Let there be...and it was so* brought forth what is seen. This takes us to another beautiful thought. *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.* Do you know how precious you are in the sight of God? Do you know that you can have confidence in the Words of Life?

In the light of this glorious reality, the psalmist acknowledged that

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. The beauty of this metaphor is understood in the fact that ancient lamps provide light and brighten only one step at a time, and such lights give direction to walk confidently. Because trust and faith in Christ require a step-by-step walk with the Master, who has already walked before us victoriously. Such is the nature of daily obedience that does not hunger for a complete blueprint of life. Instead, it is a joy to trust our unseen and unknown future to the All-Knowing God who preserved us in the past, is preserving us faithfully, and will preserve us to His glory by shaping our past and present into Christ-glorifying tomorrow.

In 1868, D L Moody advised Philip P. Bliss (b. Clearfield County, PA, 1838; d. Ashtabula, OH, 1876) to become a singing evangelist. *Beautiful Words, Wonderful Words of Life* stands out as one of his most notable contributions and hymn to the ecclesiastical Body of Christ. This work attempts to express the beauty and manifesting work of the Word of God towards obedience and a submissive Christian walk. What a Christ-centric hymn in worshipping God through the doctrine of the Holy Scripture! Though limited in human expressions, it is refreshing to see the beauty and work of the Words of life. It is essential to

be aware of the *status quo* and deceptive mirages of human corruption and evil that seem to cloud the sanctifying gracious act of the Triune God. Instead, it calls for making the right choice to be *refreshed in the Words of Life*.

Let me move tangentially for a moment. While emphasizing qualitative Bible studies, be it old or contemporary genres, contextually, it is necessary and edifying to reflect on the theological maturity in the choice and selection of songs as an EU, ICEU, and EGF family. This needs to be crystallized without tampering with our confidence in *the student initiative*.

*Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God—
Naught else is worth believing.
Though all my heart should feel
condemned For want of some sweet
token, There is One greater than my
heart Whose Word cannot be broken.
I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever,
For, though all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand forever!*

Penned by the Protestant Reformer Martin Luther, this rhyme describes both millennials and generation Z relevantly as before; these groups of people are the mission fields of our movement. Without confidence in the Word, there is no confidence



in living and fulfilling our calling. On observation, it is significant to pray that our four aims be situated emphatically in the campuses with personal care and fruitfulness. To this end, repenting and returning before hitting the wall of follies is wise.

Conviction in the Word of Life

I think this way, if you think otherwise – that's ok. Such conundrums on opinions are the talk of our generation. We often hear, 'what do you think about this?' Well, there is a growing enmity between opinions and Christian convictions. Our way of living (lifestyle) reflects the value system of a belief (faith or worldview). It forms the essence of conviction which propels one into lived-out life filled with variegated experiences and ripple effects.

In 1521 when Martin Luther (1483-1546), the passionate reformer, was summoned to recant his position and action in an assembly at Worms, Germany, to appear before Charles V, he replied with conviction in the Bible:

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason. I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.

Such is the courage in a man confronted by the Word who stands out in the crowd as a man of biblical conviction. Let us not be found wanting in it.

Contrary to the sophisticated analysis of considering men and women into good, better, and best, God sees anyone and everyone as either righteous or wicked (Ps. 1:1). In Hebrew, the word *rāsā* refers to 'wicked' or 'ungodly' people who are not in covenant relationship with God. They may do kind or charitable, or religious deeds. However, in God's evaluation, they are people 'without eternal merit'. This presents the antithesis 'righteous'. *Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness* (Gen 15:6). Three trilogies of expression for influence from casual by-stander to collusion with mockers against righteous or blessed are expressed in the beatitudes of Christ. For instance, Israel saw this panoramic sight in the persons of the foolish-wise King Solomon (1 Ki. 11:1,2,4) and lustful Samson (Judges 16:1) to abominable king Ahab (1 Ki. 21:20,25).

Luke 9:18-20 presents a classic life of conviction in the Bread of Life. A disciple of Christ cannot cheapen and show lesser significance to Him. A faithful follower of Christ ought to

Truth is the special revelation in the Personhood of Christ Jesus in keeping with the grand Holy Scripture. Genesis 6:9 is a classic illustration of a man who chooses to walk with conviction instead of opinions influencing his surroundings and neighborhood.

walk by conviction in the Person and work of Christ because what you believe about Jesus by upholding it as true affects eternal destiny, which is visible in working daily life of sanctification (by walking in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Triune Being).

To some extent, we may be affected by the opinions of others. However, the Word of God stands firm, being fulfilled in the broad daylight of this generation itself. Our reading, meditation, and study of God's Word must convict us just as a pebble that falls on the seemingly clean pond and exposes the underlying murky-muddy. It is not comfortable to be convicted, for it demands repentance. As recorded in Ps 51:10-12, King David found it hard to live with a guilty conscience. Indeed, it is God's mercy and love that one lives in and with conviction and His judgment when one wilfully ignores, suppresses, and buries His gift of conviction through spiritual insensitivity and rebellion. These effects are emphasized in the ardency of the extreme seeker-centered enticing neo-booming

groups where the life of faith seems to be lived only in Sufi-like mystical chants of melodies. Because when the Word of God and its proclamation are not given due significance, priority, position, reverence, and pulpit tends to be offered merely for altar calls.

How can people be convicted unless the Word is read, preached, and affirmed as the supreme authority? *And He [Holy Spirit], when He comes, will **convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment**; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged* (Jn. 16:8-11). If you find yourself growing dim or spiritually weak, it is because you are not delighting and reading the Bible regularly. Perhaps, we need to order our life. Beware of patronizing the neo-liberal thought that the Bible is outdated and irrelevant. If there is anything most up-to-date today, it would be the Bible. We affirm and manifest that the Bible is supremely authoritative in all matters of faith and conduct for all generations. When Augustine was lost in deep torment and soul sickness in all ugliness of sins, he heard the Voice, repeatedly telling him, 'Pick it up, read it; pick it up,



read it'. He opened up the Scripture and saw Romans 13:13-14: *Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.* It spoke and confronted him directly to his life of sin. St. Augustine confessed, *"I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away."* Well, one might try to corner it to the justification aspect alone. Let us be reminded that in the *already-not-yet* spiritual tapestry from justification to sanctification and glorification, the five *solas* are our pillars in the Scripture.

RC Sproul aptly hit the nail on the head in commenting that *we do not segment our lives, giving some time to God, and some to our business or schooling, while keeping parts to ourselves. The idea is to live all of our lives in the presence of God, under the*

authority of God, and for the honor and glory of God. That is what the Christian life is all about. We are called to live in the presence of God, under the authority of God, and to the glory of God. As biblical as the foundation of UESI, let *sola Scriptura* continue to grip us with conviction in all levels of planning and decisions throughout the constituency.

Cogitatio

The post-Christian world is rushing toward motivational speakers from all walks of life and beliefs who often resort to neutrality and fails to stand in the absolute Truth. Be that as it may, the followers of the Way are mandated to follow Christ radically. Our collective and affirmative responsibility demands intentional-relational involvement with priority and humility. Acknowledging the centrality of the Word as an evangelical, let our reading of His Word be joyful. In *reflexio*, let our life of *Coram Deo* be marked with confidence and conviction in His Word as *locus* towards the fulfilment of our God-given vision, mission, and aims.



James R Debbarma hails from Agartala, Tripura, married to Mrs. Sharon Seb, a Lecturer in a college, an active EGF member, and a Senior Advisor to an EU unit. They are blessed with a beautiful daughter Hadassah. He has been serving as a UESI Staff worker for more than a decade, currently based at Diphu as Training Dept. Secretary, UESI-Assam. His passion lies in the study and exposition of the Scripture with young minds, who also loves to read and write.



Living the Truth

Humans are creatures who do not like to leave things in the lurch; we want closure, we want to know what happens in the end, we want to keep things known to us. I remember watching the movie, *American Psycho* and by the end of the movie, I felt an involuntary urge to almost throw up, not because of the ghastly nature of the movie but because I could not process the ending of the movie; there was no closure and I don't know what happened by the end of the movie. It was not a simple open-ended movie. It was because it just did not make sense, at least, to me. The question in my mind was: which side of the story should I lean toward? Which is true and which is not?

Every time, the question of truth is brought up in a discussion, the first among many examples that is immediately brought out on the table is the story of the elephant and the blind men. It's all about perspective, they say. The elephant

is the tail or the tusk or the limbs or the trunk... Whether the fan rotates clockwise or anticlockwise depends on which side of the fan you are on. So, as the discussion progresses, any lingering question or debate about the nature of truth boils down to one of the two responses: (i) you cannot know what is true, or (ii) who cares about what is true anymore; just believe what you want to and act accordingly.

Most discussions on the nature of truth, at least for Christians, begins at the memorable scene between Jesus and Pilate in John 18 when Jesus was arrested and brought for trial. Jesus, responding to Pilate's question whether he was the king, responded in the affirmative and added on, "... the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me," at which Pilate retorted, "Truth? What is truth?" Whether Pilate was responding to the immediate answer that Jesus gave or contemplating on the philosophical nature of truth as was his education, we never know. However, we do know that the question at hand is: "what is truth?"

In John 8, we encounter a situation that is not very different from our own today, on the question of what is true. The Pharisees were after Jesus trying to trap him in whatever he said, debating with him and questioning all the claims he was making. Jesus, at this point, was revealing himself to the world about who he is but the Pharisees were not able to comprehend his words. At one point Jesus turned to the Jews and said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Then a whole bunch of debate and furore arose regarding who he was and for his blasphemous claims.

For as long as human history existed, truth has always been held in contest, never in balance. Leaders in societies place more interest in truth-claiming rather than truth-telling as a means of control. But what does Jesus mean when he says that the truth shall set us free? How can truth affect our lives? Everybody likes the truth so long as it does not have a moral/ethical bearing upon their lives. Science devotes itself to discovering the truth about the universe. Medical scientists devote their time and energy to discover the true nature of illnesses and find cures for them. We, as patients, like to go to the doctor to know the truth about our illnesses but

once the doctor reveals to us what is wrong with our bodies and the necessary changes that we need to make with regards to diet, sleep or work, we develop a resistance to that truth and would most gladly throw it out of the window.

Can we pick and choose our own version of truth?

There are truths we can know by experimentation and verification but there are some truths we cannot know. Verifiable truths may largely belong in the physical world and unverifiable truths may belong in the metaphysical world. That does not mean we cannot know metaphysical truths at all. Truths pertaining to qualities or attributes, for example, beauty, may not have a definite answer. We understand beauty based on our perception and experience, so different people may have different ways of understanding or describing the idea of beauty. But how about the ideas of love, justice, fairness, etc.? Do they have definite definitions or are they up for grabs? Socrates has a way of dealing with people who have simple definitions or who have not thought through certain aspects of life by entering into dialogue with them and channeling their thoughts, distilling them and presenting to them a more refined way of thinking about the same idea.

University campuses are spaces where bombardment of ideologies happen every single day. It is a space where the previously uninformed can become hardcore endorsers of ideologies. It is also a space where people force themselves to fit into certain categories because they do not want to be the odd ones out. The university is like a potter's wheel, where the mould of clay over time hardens and takes a certain shape, and every single minute on the potter's wheel is an irreversible change unless the whole mould is broken and started over. How then do Christian students present themselves in the university where people are not bothered about truth; the truth has either been replaced by: (i) feelings - what feels good to me is the truth, (ii) nonchalance - I don't care about the truth. I will do what I want, (iii) half-truths - take some truth from here, some from there, and I have my own version of truth.

It does get frustrating for the Christian student who has been taught that the only truth is the Bible and what God has spoken. So, the university spaces can be trying and confusing at the same time because no one is ready to listen to you or no one really cares. I would like to share a few words of encouragement and consolation to

those who may have been going through similar situations:

(i) Jesus Christ alone is Truth (John 14:6). It means that we are NOT the truth, nor are we custodians of the truth. We are simply agents who point toward the truth, i.e., Jesus Christ. We are simply ambassadors. Our task is to simply point others to Christ. Do not be angry or frustrated if people reject what you say or present. We must also be humble to realise that we do not know everything. We do the planting, Christ does the watering and the growing.

(ii) St. Francis of Assisi most eloquently put these words, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." Entering into a dialogue does not necessarily have to be a debate, a seminar, a presentation, or a session on apologetics. For the most part of our lives, people will see what we do, not what we speak. We engage in a dialogue by living our lives differently based on the truth that we know and have impacted our lives. We may not even have to speak a single word in defence when we are living out the gospel in our lives. Let people be attracted to the beauty of our lives and they most certainly will approach us and ask us about the same.

Can we present the Bible as the absolute truth?

Take out all the words in the Bible, both the Old Testament and New Testament, that God (YHWH) himself spoke (OT) and Jesus spoke (NT), and examine whether they make any sense in isolation? Truth statements in philosophy are usually abstract and isolated from the speaker, up for debate and further examination.

Truth statements in the Bible (especially those that are spoken by God himself) cannot be separated from the speaker. "I am the Alpha and the Omega" does not make any sense without the speaker (Jesus). "I am the way, the truth and the life" does not make sense in isolation.

Sometimes, enthusiastic and well-meaning Christians can get lost in debates and arguments over the veracity of the Bible with others who may not see them eye to eye. Yes, we need to defend our faith, speak up for our faith and present our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ as faithfully as we can wherever we are. The only difference we must develop with others while presenting the God of the Bible is to walk with them and do life together. When Jesus was

about to tell his disciples one of the most crucial things about his death and resurrection, he did not prepare notes and give them a 10-point argument or presentation; instead he gave them a meal. Do we have friends who are difficult and who are ever ready to argue with us? Can we find time to speak to them, eat with them, share stories with them and do life together?

So, can we present the Bible as absolute truth? Certainly! By living out the Bible in our daily lives and the bearing it has upon our individual selves, our families, our relationships, our towns and cities, our countries and the world. We cannot present the Bible with arguments, we must live it out as faithfully as it calls us to live. Perhaps there are some "truths" that we may not be able to comprehend with our limited minds, but we are confident that the One who is "Truth", and who has called us by our names will reveal to us in the end and make everything known. Until then, even if we lie in the lurch we are confident because of the One who writes our future. Let us be truth-seekers and truth-speakers, but more so, let us be truth-livers.



Ungshungmi teaches in the junior school section of St. Columba's School in Delhi. He believes in building foundations with the right values from childhood. He has been part of the UESI family for the past many years and has actively involved himself in different capacities.

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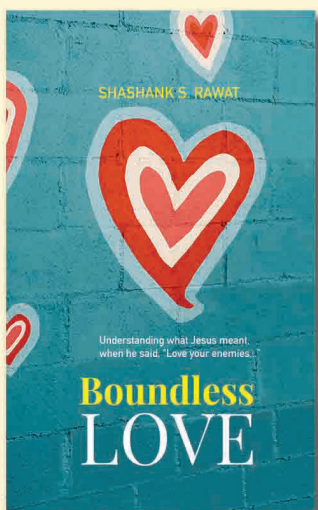
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Hon. Editor



Boundless LOVE

In this atmosphere of hurt and hate, the world needs love and that too of a boundless kind. Jesus' call to self-giving love in Luke 6:27-36 is the basis for this must-read book of Christian discipleship. The author inductively breaks down the passage to help the reader understand and live out Jesus' call to love in a practical manner. This book goes back to the basics of bible study to bring out the authentic meaning of this much heard and yet ignored portion of the Bible. May this book be a blessing in your Christian life and help you live a life of love.

The author is a perennial thinker and an occasional writer. He loves listening to God speak through the Bible and his desire is to help others do the same. He works among university students in eastern India with UESI, an evangelical student's movement, helping them to grow in Christ-likeness.

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