

No one can truly understand God, the Bible, “Bible teaching”, or “Bible teachers” without being able to discern or tell the difference between truth and opinion. What is the difference between the two? Does it really matter? Does Jesus want His followers to be an opinionated people, or does Jesus want Christians to be of the truth? Is it okay to teach one’s opinions about God and His word to others? Does God want a teacher to be an opinionated person? “Everybody’s entitled to their own opinion,” right? Is everyone entitled to their own opinion? Is everyone entitled to *share* their own opinion with others, especially with God’s people?

This is a very important subject. For example, when Jesus was before Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king. Jesus replied, “**For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify of the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears My voice.**” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” (Jn 18:37, 38). So first, Jesus told Pilate the reason why He was born, to tell people the truth, not simply His opinions. Second, as Jesus said, people who are “of the truth”, meaning those who belong to the truth, can actually hear and learn what He has said, they “hear” Him, they listen to Him, they follow Him, they obey Him. But people who are opinionated do not truly listen to Jesus. For example, Pilate did not listen to Jesus. Pilate heard the truth from Jesus, but he was not of the truth, since he disputed the truth by saying to Jesus: “**What is truth?**”. And afterward, Pilate crucified the Lord! Besides, Pilate did not listen to the truth which he heard from his wife to: “**Have nothing to do with that righteous man**” (Mt 27:19). Pilate was an opinionated person. He was not of the truth. He did not listen to the truth. But everybody who belongs to the truth, not an opinion, listens to Jesus. For example, “**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me**” (Jn 10:27). This is why Jesus would say, “**He who has ears to hear [to listen], let him hear [listen]**” (Mt 11:15). He was talking about people who had the ears of truth, who could actually hear, listen to, and accept and follow His teachings on a variety of subjects.

To what are you listening, truth or opinion? You might not be listening to Jesus, but simply an opinion. Many worshipers are listening to opinions, not the truth. [Indeed, like those mentioned in Hebrews, many Christians “**have become dull of hearing... you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles [the basics] of the oracles of God**” (He 5:11, 12), like the basic truth about baptism, repentance from dead works, faith toward God, and so on (SEE He 6:1).] Now I want you to be of the truth, not an opinion. Jesus wants you to be “of the truth”, not an opinion. He came to tell you the truth. Jesus said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**” (Jn 14:6). Jesus is the truth. Our God is the God of truth. He is not the god of opinion. God wants His children to be “of the truth”. Indeed, when Jesus comes back, He will only save those who love the truth. People who do not love the truth cannot be saved. “**Those who perish... they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved**” (2 Thess 1:10). So your greatest affection in life must be for the truth, not something else, like opinions. We have to love the truth so much that we can be saved by it.

Opinions cannot save us. Only the truth can save us. Opinions have nothing to do with eternal salvation. They do not build us up toward God. Teachers are to be “**speaking the truth,**” not their opinions (SEE Eph 4:15). God will not commend us for our opinions. He will not reward us for them. They do not make us right before Him. He will not praise us for having such a good opinion about something. Yet He will praise and reward us for the truth; our belief in it, our obedience to it, our love for it, our ability to hear it, etc. In fact, in regards to the parable of the sower, Jesus warned us, saying, “**Take care how you listen**” (Lk 8:18). People are not careful listeners. Worshipers are not careful listeners. Many Christians have become “**dull of hearing**” (He 5:1). Not everybody can hear the truth. So you must be careful to listen for the truth of what Jesus has said, and follow it, not something else, like an opinion.

1. The Difference Between Truth and Opinion

Now when we begin to discuss the word of God, like in a Bible study, when we begin to talk about “the truth” out loud, in front of others, we should settle one very important issue at the outset; the difference between truth and opinion. One is a fact, the other is fiction. One is revealed, the other is hidden. One is accurate, the other is theory. One we know, the other we do not know. One is evident, the other is speculative, speculation, a guess. One is commanded, the other is not. One is from God, the other is from man. One is required, the other is not and may be misleading, vain, misinterpreted, misapplied, or contrary to what is right. So for example, if at 12:00 noon I tell you that it is daylight, I have just told you the truth, not my opinion. It is utterly evident that God created light and called it day. Likewise, He called the darkness night, and there was evening and morning one day (Ge 1:3-5). The first thing which God created was the 24 hour day/night system. We have created a clock which is based on it. We can see in creation, and in the Bible, that this is true. [Now if I told you something contrary to this, well then, I would be, at best, opining, and at the worst, I would be very wrong and misleading to someone. For example, if I told you it is 11:00 AM when it was truly 12:00 noon, well then you might start yawning and want to go to bed so you can get up and do your work in the morning.]

Indeed, in the confines of the Scripture, as to how the Scriptures define it, thus how God defines it, is that “**opinion**” is “speculation”; guessing. It is not a commandment of the Lord. It is from one’s own mind, not the mind of our Lord. For example, Paul said it himself: “**Now concerning virgins I have no command from the Lord, but I give an opinion**” (1 Cor 7:25). So before Paul speculated (opinionated) on this subject, before he guessed, Paul cleared himself by saying that he had no commandment from the Lord about whether or not virgins should or should not marry. And so whatever Paul said **on this subject** is not binding. But in this chapter, he did say some things which were commandments from the Lord. These **are** binding. [In Romans 14:1, there is more teaching concerning “**opinions**”,

which is sometimes translated “**disputations,**” indicating the true nature of “opinion”, that it gives rise to disputes. In 1 Timothy 1:4, the concept of opinion is sometimes translated and defined as “**speculation,**” again indicating the true meaning of “opinion”, that it is guessing, and it says that this does not further the gospel because it is foreign to it, namely “**strange,**” and it is considered “**fruitless discussion**” (1 Tim 1:3, 4, 6).]

2. The Difference Between Opinion and Application

We know that we must carry out, perform, or apply the commandments of Christ in order to fulfill the will of God and please Him. But an “**application**” of a commandment of Christ is not an “opinion”. It could be a **proper** application of a commandment of Christ or it could be an improper (misapplication) of it. For example, baptizers have been commanded to baptize those who believe the gospel (SEE Mk 16:16; Mt 28:19). The proper application of this commandment is water immersion, as the Scriptures say, “**buried**” (Ro 6:4; Col 2:12). A misapplication of this verse would be to sprinkle. There are many churches who sprinkle, and some which pour, for baptism. They have not yet made a correction in their application of it. Obviously, there are many other commandments of Christ which may or may not be applied properly by churches. But some are making applications, not from a commandment of Christ, but from an opinion.

3. Making Applications from an Opinion

Some are making an “application” where there is no commandment at all. For example, some so called “Anabaptists” say, “Since at one time Jesus refused to be made king (Jn 6:15), Christians then must not be a part of the government.” Obviously, this is an opinion (speculation). Jesus refusing to be made king at one time, by force, is not a commandment, and so there is no application to be made for us. It is a strange teaching, foreign to the teaching of the gospel. Likewise, the subject of color. Some say certain colors are sinful and proud (indeed some are sinning by showing favoritism/partiality to the color black, and holding others in contempt and judging others who do not). Yet where is the specific commandment for this opinion? There is none! What about food laws? We have none in the New Testament, excepting the commandment to avoid blood, animals which are strangled, and food offered to idols (Ac 15:20, 29). Besides, Jesus declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19). Yet some teach their opinions on food and drink, and are making a handsome profit from it. For example, one boldly claims in the title of his popular and authoritative book on this subject that it is “God’s Diet”. Others claim to be making “Ezekiel Bread,” or “Ezekiel Granola,” both in many different opinions (flavors), and so on and so forth. When will the application of opinions cease to be an essential part of one’s religion, or a group’s religion, or a profiteers product or service offering and instead the commandments of Christ be taught, applied, and advanced? Opinions (speculations) do not advance the cause of Christ! (READ 1 Tim 1:3-6).

4. The Conclusion of the Matter

Christians must listen to and follow the truth (Jesus Christ), not opinions (man). We must discern the difference between the two. Likewise, we must speak the truth to others, especially God's people, not our opinions. We also must be able to tell the difference between a proper and an improper *application* of a commandment of Christ. And we must discern the difference between an opinion and an application of a command of Christ (opinions do not have a commandment of Christ associated with it). We must not make or teach an application where there is no commandment. We must not make our own opinion a commandment, since there is no commandment of Christ on that subject. And certainly we must not apply our opinions in various ways, since opinions are not commandments. Yet we must properly and fittingly apply the commandments of Christ in order to prove that we have heard and follow the truth, Jesus Christ. We must carry out the words of Christ.

So before you speak about "the truth" to others, especially the brethren, make sure that it indeed is the truth that you are saying, and not simply your own opinion, which came from your own mind, not God's. For example, when speaking about God or His holy word, which is the truth (indeed, Jesus Christ is the truth Jn 14:6), instead of saying, "My opinion is," or, "I have a different opinion," or, "I think," or, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion," we Christians ought to say, "This is the truth," "It is written," "Here is the commandment of Christ," "Here is how to apply that commandment". Answer with Scripture. Answer with the truth of God's word, and apply it with wisdom, not folly. Now when you are challenged over speaking the truth to someone about the gospel of Jesus Christ, like Paul was, say what he said in response to the opposition: "**I utter words of sober truth**" (Ac 26:25). Help people see the difference between the truth and an opinion. Help people see the difference between an opinion and an application of a commandment of Christ. If the response you receive is this: "That's just your opinion," then tell them this: "It is not my opinion; it is the truth!" Then show them why it is the truth from the specific and directly related word and commandment of Christ. But do not twist the Scriptures and read a sentence of it and say, "Here, let's make up a commandment off of this." It has to be something Christ told us to do, directed us to do, warned us not to do, etc. Just reading the word of God and making up commandments is not the way to read or teach the word of God. Yet if you are simply sharing your own opinion with someone, and not God's truth, then before you speak, say, "I am speculating," or "I am guessing," or "there is no commandment from the Lord on this, but..." Finally, as I pointed out to you in the beginning, Jesus came to tell the truth so that those who can actually hear it will learn it and follow it. "**Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it**" (Lk 11:28). As Jesus said, "**Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came,... yet it did not fall**" (Mt 7:24, 25). We can avoid the wrath of God by listening to and following the truth of God. We can stand on the truth of Christ's words, not opinions.

5. Examples in the World Clarify the Point

Christians are not the only ones who have to deal with the difference between truth and opinion; presidents and kings of nations do; business men do, etc. Consider the following examples.

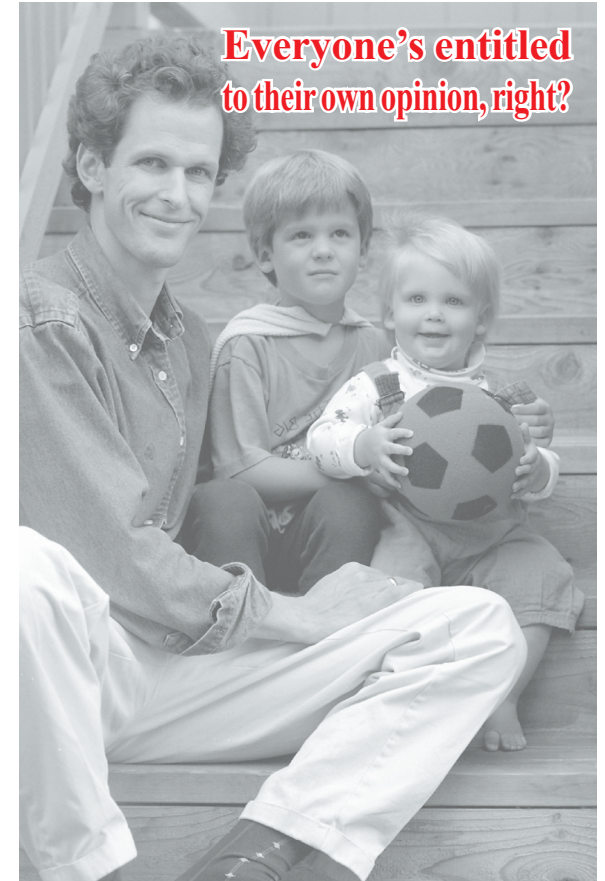
A Personal Experience in the Software Consulting Industry: Before I became a full-time evangelist, I worked for the leading and pioneering international computer consulting firm, Electronic Data Systems (now Hewlett-Packard software services 2012). Our 2nd president, Lester Aberthal, attempted to change the culture of the firm. According to a Time Magazine article on the subject, he wanted to "change the souls" of everyone in the company. He enlisted the help of the renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) school of business. They began to train our top executives on their newly designed management training philosophy called "The Fifth Discipline," written by Peter Senge, and also taught by MIT professor Harold Kaufman, who was a Jew. They taught this fundamental folly: "**What you believe is truth, is really only opinion**." [I heard Peter say this himself on a video Q&A session when asked about the essence of this philosophy.] He made truth equal with opinion. And to prove his point, Peter's colleague, Harold, taught a class, which included leading managers from my company and others, on this subject: "The myth of Jesus Christ." Harold said to his class that Jesus Christ is only an opinion, not truth, but a myth. Harold, a Jew, did not believe in Jesus as the Christ. He was of the spirit of the anti-Christ. And so, even though some in the class may have objected to this being taught, they still came back to our company to teach this management philosophy. And when this false teaching got around our company, what do you think the new thing to say was, especially in regards to matters of Scripture? "That's just your opinion." And so, as Peter Senge said, "there is no truth." Shocking! Twisted! This teaching not only works against the truth about Jesus Christ, it also works against business. What business can run on opinions and not facts? Ask any accountant whether opinions work or not! This teaching is totally destructive to everything. Our company became much more opinionated and much less fact oriented. Our leader simply wanted to take us in the direction of speculation, not fact. This was a lousy decision! It was chaotic and lacking sense. I risked my job by refusing my managers pleas for me to attend this mandatory, weekly, ongoing training. I also influenced one advanced software engineer, who was a deacon, to remove himself from it as well. We sat in an empty office while everyone else was learning that there is no truth, only opinion.

News Article: Polish President Writes to Obama over 'Death Camp' Gaffe, By Olivier Knox, May 31, 2012, Yahoo.com News: Poland's President Bronislaw Komorowski said Wednesday he had written a personal letter to President Barack Obama urging him to do more to correct the record after Obama referred to "a Polish death camp" in a White House ceremony on Tuesday. "I hope we will jointly act to make up for this unfortunate mistake. I believe that every error, every mistake can be corrected if it is given adequate consideration," Komorowski said in remarks posted on his official website. Komorowski stopped well short of explicitly demanding an apology from Obama, who used the phrase Tuesday as he honored World War II Polish resistance hero Jan Karski with a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian American honor. Poland's foreign minister had demanded a full apology late Tuesday. But Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk made no reference to an apology on Wednesday even as he blasted Obama's remark. The phrase shocked Polish leaders and echoed across media in Poland, where the remark was seen as suggesting that Poles — not Nazis — carried out the genocidal policies of Adolf Hitler. Obama's past comments all-but-certainly refute that interpretation, and the White House has said he merely "misspoke." "He was referring to Nazi death camps in German-occupied Poland," Obama's press secretary Jay Carney told reporters at his daily briefing on Wednesday. "And as we've made clear, we regret the misstatement and that simple misstatement should not at all detract from the clear intention to honor Mr. Karski, and beyond that, all those brave Polish citizens who stood on the side of human dignity in the face of tyranny," Carney said. Asked whether Obama had plans to reach out to Polish leaders, Carney demurred. The Polish president cast the issue in terms of improving relations with the United States. "Every recognized and reconsidered mistake can bring us closer together," he said, "to prevent recurrence of **painful phrases that are divorced from the truth** but which influence **opinions** about Poland's history and present day." "We in Poland know well that **the phrase** 'Polish death camps' is not only painful and unfair but **simply untrue**," Komorowski said.

News Article: Checkers Confuse Facts with Opinions, By Mike Gonzalez, 9/24/2012, USAToday.com: Fact-checkers have become a fact of life, so logic dictates that it's time we checked them. It's the age-old conundrum: Who controls the controller? Our system of government depends upon checks and balances, which has long frustrated controllers from both parties. With the fact-checkers, however, there seems to be none. There are many questions about fact-checkers' credibility, but let's start with the pretentiousness of it all. What we have in many instances is journalists who have the chutzpah to claim for themselves **the right to determine what is a fact**. The fact that it's journalists doing the checking doesn't pass the laugh test for many, given the profession's well-known biases. The "fact-checking" facade makes it worse, as James Taranto wrote in The Wall Street Journal: "The form amplifies the bias. It gives journalists much freer rein to **express their opinions** by allowing them to pretend to be rendering authoritative judgments about the facts." Which leads us to the next problem: the checkosphere's bad habit of presenting as quasi-scientific facts **things that are at best debatable opinions**. Consider when PolitiFact stated that President Obama's "stimulus program" (itself a highly subjective phrase) had "saved or created" 1 million jobs. This led economist Brian Riedl to state that such a pronouncement "**belongs in an opinion editorial — not a fact check**... There is no way to determine how the economy would have performed without a stimulus." And then there's the sloppiness. When the Obama administration said it would no longer require states to comply with the work requirements established under the 1996 welfare reform law, Heritage said this action had "gutted" the reforms. We could say this because the expert who wrote the law, Robert Rector, works at Heritage. But when the Romney campaign took up the charge [against gutting the law], the "fact-checkers" gave his campaign gazillions of "Pinocchio's," "Pants on Fire" or whatever other gimmick they have. How many of the 12 fact-checks we counted called Robert to at least check with him? One. As Robert likes to say, "Fact-checkers don't like calling me because they know they run into facts." At least they should heed Mark Twain's advice: "Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please."

Truth vs Opinion

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