

## Truth Exists ... Absolutely!

by Alex McFarland

*That's true for you, but not for me. "Truth" means different things to different people. There's no one absolute truth for everybody.* Have you ever had your Christian perspective dismissed with statements such as these? You may not walk around thinking about the nature of truth. You probably don't use words like *epistemology* in casual conversation. But in this chronically skeptical culture, those of us raising or working with adolescents need to be prepared to explain and defend the existence of truth. Here's how...

Let's start by defining our terms. The nature or essence of truth is often described as *absolute truth*, *ultimate truth* or, as our Founding Fathers put it, *self-evident truth*. The biblical view of reality is one in which truth exists, can be known and is relevant for all people. Author and speaker Josh McDowell phrases it this way: "That which is true at all times in all places for all people." Nicely said. Since truth is related to the character of God, which is eternal and unchanging (Mal. 3:6; Ps. 90:2; Heb. 13:8), the nature of truth is fixed. Truth doesn't have an expiration date. It's not up for revision or re-invention.

Not long ago, some people would've called us arrogant for daring to answer the question "What is truth?" Not anymore. Now the mere assertion that truth *exists* earns dirty looks. The relativistic spirit of our times presents challenges for both the missions-minded Christian and the values-minded parent: How can people be convinced to turn from sin if no objective moral standard exists to be violated? And how can our children live according to biblical morals when a relativistic posture seems to be a pre requisite in social, academic and professional arenas? Fortunately, dogmatic relativism can be exposed as both flimsy and hypocritical.

Romans 1:18-22 notes that truth exists and describes the destructive end of all who willfully suppress it. But you don't need a Bible to point out problems with the relativistic worldview. Apply common sense. Next time a skeptic argues definitively that truth is relative, note the assumptions he's making. For one thing, if truth doesn't exist, then by definition his statement is also false. And how can relativists be certain about their

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position if "truth can't be known"? Apparently, the only one allowed to be dogmatic is the relativist! In order to reject truth, skeptics must imply the very thing they're denying. It's what scholars call a self-defeating statement.

God hard-wired our brains for rational thought. With a little practice, we can become adept at spotting error and defending truth. Our culture has become quite comfortable pontificating about the nature of reality and the absence of absolutes. Christians are chided into silence because "all beliefs are equally valid" and people are "sure that no one can be sure." Besides relativism's inherent logical flaws, the fact is, such platitudes just aren't livable. I doubt someone would remain tolerant of a bank teller who said, "You and your bank statement both say your account contains \$5,000. That may be true for you, but it's not true for me." We can talk as if the world is relative, but how we live proves that it is absolute.

It's more critical than ever to instill a love of truth in the hearts of students. Given this, Focus on the Family's teen apologetics ministry has partnered with Wheatstone Academy, a California-based summer program. A week at the Academy gives Christian young people a unique, cutting-edge experience that prepares their hearts and heads to stand up for truth. More than an intellectual exercise, it's a life skill. An authentic commitment to truth involves both *orthodoxy* (right belief) and *orthopraxy* (right action). A relationship with the One who called Himself *the Truth* (John 1:1, 14:6) must manifest itself in what our teens believe and how they behave. Truth exists. And it can be known.

*Author and speaker Alex McFarland is Focus on the Family's director of teen apologetics. He also hosts the radio show "Truth Talk Live." For more information about Wheatstone Academy's summer teen apologetics programs, call 866-960-1027 or visit [wheatstoneacademy.com](http://wheatstoneacademy.com).*



## the ask editor

### How long has Focus on the Family been publishing *Plugged In*?

The first newsletter rolled off the presses in July 1990. Back then it consisted of just four pages and was called *Parental Guidance*. In '96 we doubled its size and changed the name, partly because the original name suggested a film emphasis (even in those days we covered a broad range of media), but also because our readership had expanded

beyond the home to include teachers, youth pastors and others concerned about teens. The look morphed again in spring of '99 to a single cover image and more new features. Just this year, *Plugged In* evolved to full-color and 16 pages. The look may have changed, but our mission is the same: Improve teens' spiritual health by helping you guide them through the world of pop culture.

