Chapter 1 - Can We Handle The Truth?
Can We Handle the Truth?

- “Men stumble over the truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.” - Winston Churchill

- We demand truth in every area of our life (money, health, relationships, etc), but not in morality or religion.

- Our rejection of religious and moral truth is often on volitional rather than intellectual grounds. We don’t want to be held accountable to any moral standards or religious doctrine.

- “We love the truth when it enlightens us, but we hate it when it convicts us.” - Augustine

- Romans 1:18-32: “Men suppress the truth by their wickedness.”
Can We Handle the Truth?

- If you live your life based on faulty ideas or assumptions, then you can seriously hurt yourself and others.
- There really are moral standards and laws in the universe which, if broken, have harmful or fatal consequences. Such truths are absolute – that is unchanging throughout history – and knowable.
- These moral standards are not dependent on our opinions, feelings, or preferences.
Can We Handle the Truth?

Four questions concerning truth:

1. What is truth?
2. Can truth be known?
3. Can truths about God be known?
4. So what? Who cares about truth?
Can We Handle the Truth?

- Truth:
  - Telling it like it is
  - That which corresponds to its object
  - That which describes an actual state of affairs

- Absolute: Something that is true for all people, at all times, and in all places.
  - All truth claims are absolute, narrow, and exclusive.
  - All truths exclude their opposites.
Can We Handle the Truth?

Seven Truths About Truth:

1. Truth is discovered, not invented, and it exists independent of anyone’s knowledge of it.

2. Truth is transcultural – it is true for all people, in all places, at all times.

3. Truth is unchanging even though our beliefs about truth may change.

4. Beliefs cannot change a fact, no matter how sincerely they are held.

5. Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it.
Can We Handle the Truth?

6. All truths are absolute truths, even ones that appear relative, like preference claims.

7. Contrary beliefs are possible, but contrary truths are not possible. In other words, we can believe everything is true, we cannot make everything true. Truth is not subject to our changing whims or desires.
Can We Handle the Truth?

- Self-defeating statement: A statement that fails to meet its own standard and therefore cannot be true.
- The key to recognizing self-defeating statements is to apply every statement to itself to see if it meets its own criteria.
- Road Runner tactic – turning a self-defeating statement on itself.
Can We Handle the Truth?

- All ideas have consequences.
- False ideas about truth lead to false ideas about life.
- These false ideas give apparent justification for what is really immoral behavior.
- Pluralism: The philosophical idea that all religions are equally acceptable and true, and that all religions lead to God in the end.
- Religious beliefs cannot all be true, because many religious beliefs are contradictory – they teach opposites.
Can We Handle the Truth?

- World religions have more contradictory beliefs than complementary ones.
- Tolerance
  - Original definition: Treating those with different ideas respectfully
  - Modern definition: Accepting all ideas as equally true
Can We Handle the Truth?

1. If not all religious beliefs are equally true, then it can be dangerous for us to pretend that they are, since our beliefs will affect our decisions in this life and ultimately our eternal destiny as well.

2. The claim that “you ought not question someone’s religious beliefs” is just as exclusive and “intolerant.” Pluralists think all non-pluralist beliefs are wrong. So pluralists are just as dogmatic and closed-minded as anyone else.

3. The prohibition against questioning religious beliefs is also an absolute moral position.
4. The Bible commands Christians to question religious beliefs. (Deut. 13:1-5; I John 4:1; Gal. 1:8; 2 Cor. 11:13)

5. The pluralist’s claim that we ought not question religious beliefs is a derivative of the false cultural prohibition against making judgments.

6. Are pluralists ready to accept as true the religious beliefs of those who support violence?
Can We Handle the Truth?

- While we should respect the rights of others to believe what they want, we are foolish, and maybe even unloving, to accept every religious belief as true. Because if Christianity is true, then it would be unloving to suggest to anyone that their opposing religious beliefs are true as well, because it would affect where they will spend eternity.
The Elephant Parable compares the ability to know truth with a group of blind men feeling an elephant. Each perceives only a part of the elephant and so believes it is something different. However, this parable is told from the point of view of an objective observer who can tell what the animal as a whole really is. So even though the parable claims to prove that no one person has a monopoly on truth, it in fact shows that objective truth exists, since without it there would be no way to tell that the blind men were wrong in their assumptions.
We too can see truth in religion. If we deny that there is truth in religion, then we aren’t actually blind, we are only willfully blind.