

Lost in the Woods

Can we know truth or not?

Is truth dependent on our feelings?

Imagine that a group of friends are lost in the middle of a vast wilderness. They know that heading north is the only way for them to survive. Although they have a compass, they decide to toss it into the woods, saying, "No need for that! North is whatever direction each of us wants it to be!" Everyone scatters in their own direction, and most end up hopelessly lost.

Does truth change from person to person?

Clearly, it wouldn't make sense for hikers to act this way in real life. But isn't this how our culture now expects us to act when issues of faith or morality are raised? When discussing God or what is morally right, we are told that there is no true answer; it all depends on our personal feelings or opinions. People will say things like, "What's true for you is true for you, what's true for me is true for me." This way of approaching truth—that moral and religious truth changes from person to person—is called relativism.

We are lost without truth.

Relativism may seem sophisticated or "nice," but it actually keeps us from pursuing truth together. If religious and moral truth changes from person to person, then we can have no common ground to explore together the most important questions of human life. Instead of searching together for truth, each of us is left to wander alone in the wilderness, guided only by our individual feelings and opinions.

Truth is "that which is."

In our example, when a hiker points in a direction and declares, "North is that way!", the statement either corresponds to reality or does not. Traveling in that direction will either bring one closer to the north pole, or it will not. When a statement corresponds to reality, we say that the statement is true. Truth is "that which is." The location of the north pole doesn't depend on our feelings and preferences; such realities are the same for everyone.

We can know truths about faith and morality, too.

In the same way, there are realities of faith and morality that do not depend on our feelings or opinions. If God exists, for example, he exists for everyone, whether people believe in him or not. If attacking innocent students at school is wrong, it is wrong for everyone. This is the traditional, common-sense way of approaching truth: religious and moral truth can be known, and such truths apply to people of all cultures and time periods.

Truth is ours to discover!

When we recognize that there is truth outside of ourselves, it is good news! It means that we can discover answers to the most important questions, such as the meaning of life and the existence of God. We can have meaningful discussions with others who disagree with us, seeking the truth together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In this message series, we will be exploring these beautiful aspects of truth.

