

“Who Cares About Truth?”

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Purpose: Students will realize truth should be the guiding principle for what we believe, and as a result, how we should live our lives.

DURATION: 20-30 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ask students the following question: “*Why do people believe what they do?*” Encourage students to come up with reasons for why we hold certain beliefs (about anything).
2. List their responses on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper according to the columns below. Don’t label the columns until they’ve given all their answers

Sociological	Psychological	Religious	Philosophical
Parents	Comfort	Scripture	Consistency
Friends	Peace of Mind	Pastor	Coherence
Society	Meaning	Priest	Completeness (best explanation)
Culture	Experience	Guru	True
Tradition	Hope	Channeler	
	Identity	Church	

3. Once you have a substantial list of reasons, go through each one and ask, “*Is that a good reason to believe something?*”
4. Sample Discussion:

Youth Worker (YW): “*I see many of you listed sociological factors. For example, you mentioned our beliefs are shaped by our parents. Is that a good enough reason to believe something?*”

Students (S): “*Not necessarily. Parents are wrong sometimes.*”

YW: “*What about cultural factors? Do you think people should believe something because it’s been passed down through tradition?*”

S: “*Traditions aren’t necessarily wrong, but they aren’t necessarily right either. Radical Muslims have a tradition of Jihad, but that can’t be right.*”

YW: “*Good. Some of you mentioned psychological influences such as comfort. Is comfort alone a solid reason to believe something?*”

S: “*No. Just because something is comfortable doesn’t make it true. Lies can often be comfortable.*”

YW: *“So you’re saying truth is an important reason to believe something because there can be consequences when people are mistaken?”*

S: *“Yes, that seems to be the case.”*

YW: *“What about religious reasons? Should we believe something because Scripture tells us it’s true? Should we simply follow whatever a pastor tells us?”*

S: *“No, because how would we know which Scripture is true? Which religious teachings do we follow? All religious leaders can’t be right.”*

YW: *“So, how do we know which religion we should follow, if any?”*

S: *“We would need some outside evidence to indicate the claims are actually true. There needs to be some proof.”*

YW: *“So we agree that something is worth believing if we have reason to believe that it’s true.”*

COMMENTARY:

One of the challenges we face in a postmodern culture is skepticism about reason as a means of knowing truth. It isn’t that young people are unable to reason. They reason with their parents (for a later curfew), with their teachers (for homework extensions) and with themselves (over who to ask to prom). But young people are often reluctant to believe that reason can lead to a genuine understanding of God. We are made in the image of God with the capacity to accurately understand His revelation to the world. Reason is one means that God has chosen to make Himself known to people.

God designed us to be truth-seekers in all areas of life. It is critical to help young people understand why they believe what they believe. Few have given their religious beliefs much thought. Most of their beliefs have been shaped by sociological factors that have very little to do with rational reflection. They have not been formed by weighing the merits of various options and coming to the conclusion that is most reasonable. Such lack of convictions will not maintain a life-long vibrant faith.

This activity is an important step in helping students be aware of their lack of conscious reasons for their beliefs. The idea is to help them recognize that they actually operate their lives on whether they think something is true or false (whether they realize it or not). This is critical for young Christians because without some sense of why they believe, they may hold their faith with reservation or abandon their faith completely when challenged. It’s also important for non-believers, so they can clear away misconceptions and consider the credibility of Christianity.