

SEEKING THE TRUTH

Yves Perriard – June 2025

"Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth" – Buddha

"Our life is what our thoughts make it" – Marcus Aurelius

"The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple" – Oscar Wilde

"Peace if possible, truth at all costs" – Martin Luther

"It is better to debate a question before settling it than to settle a question before debating it" – Unknown

"We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking" – Albert Camus

"The needs of thy people are great and their knowledge (understanding) is small" – Shemoneh Esreh

"Never say 'I will study when I have the time,' because you may never have the time to study!" – Rabbi Hillel (c. 100 BC)

If passion for God is the fuel that gives us the power to run our lives, love for the truth is the steering wheel that keeps us going in the right direction. Whether we like it or not, we must apply our minds to constantly seek the truth, or else we will be misguided in all sorts of useless and even dangerous directions. Already a thousand years ago, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote that "He who understands truth without loving it, or loves without understanding, possesses neither one nor the other." To seek God from all our mind is as important as loving Him from all our heart, and it is not an easy balance to keep. Just study the history of the Church to see how the pendulum between reason and emotion has swung in both directions.

At times, the Church was lost in fruitless intellectual debates, lacking passion and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. At other times, the opposite happened. Take the Pentecostal movement: for much of its history, it was strongly anti-intellectual, despising the use of reason in seeking God. For most Pentecostals, logic seemed incompatible with a Spirit-guided life. It took 69 years from Parham's day until the founding of the first fully accredited Pentecostal seminary. Compare this to the Puritans, who established Harvard only six years after settling in Boston in 1630. The Puritans, who held the motto "All truth is God's truth, wherever it may be found," believed a godly nation without intellectual cultivation fell short of God's plan.

Where Do You Stand?

Are you intellectually as well as emotionally engaged with God? Are you as disciplined in seeking truth through reading as in prayer? Bonhoeffer, whose passion matched his intellect, wrote: "It is the nature, and the advantage, of strong people that they can bring out the crucial questions and form a clear opinion about them. The weak always have to decide between alternatives that are not their own."

If you want to avoid the pain of investing your life in theological error, you must become a diligent student of truth.

I believe truth lies in three domains:

1. Knowing God through Scripture and tradition
 2. Understanding creation through reason and study
 3. Knowing ourselves with clarity and humility
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1) To Know the Truth About God

Before we define our theology, we must define our hermeneutics.

What are your hermeneutical principles? Every believer wears interpretive "glasses"—the lenses through which we read Scripture. These assumptions shape everything we believe about God. Consider questions like:

- Is silence in Scripture restrictive or permissive?
- Should we abstain from what is not mentioned (e.g., Sunday school, instruments) or use them freely?
- How literal should we take the Torah or the socio-economic laws in the Old Testament?
- Were Paul's teachings on women and slavery culturally bound or universal?
- How do we harmonize cultural context, literary genre, and apostolic instruction?

Most people never examine how they interpret the Bible—just as most Americans are unaware how they "read" other cultures. Yet awareness of our own lens is essential.

Once you've defined your hermeneutic, you must consider what others believe. Only by comparing theological systems, especially those different from ours, can we refine our understanding. As Peter T. McIntyre said, "Confidence comes not from always being right but from not fearing to be wrong."

As Karl Barth suggested, “Truth walks the razor edge of heresy.” Every movement, denomination, or theologian adds something to the universal understanding of truth. Even the churches we most disagree with may hold keys to biblical insight. Consider:

- **If 95% of a denomination is right, question the 5% that may not be.**
- **If 95% seems wrong, humbly examine the 5% that could be true.**

As Augustine said, “A thing is not necessarily true because badly uttered, nor false because spoken magnificently.”

We must have the courage to critique our own tradition and the humility to learn from others. Truth that makes us free may disrupt what we've always believed, but it must be pursued at all costs (Martin Luther).

Once your soul has been enlarged by truth, it can never return to its original size. – *Blaise Pascal*

Expose lies where truth prevails; seek truth where lies prevail.

2) To Know the Truth About Creation

God reveals Himself not only through Scripture but through creation. The dominion mandate calls us to study and steward the world. That includes the physical world, society, science, economics, and politics.

“All truth is God’s truth, wherever it may be found.”

Pascal said, “Since we cannot know all that there is to be known about anything, we ought to know a little about everything.” Christians should be Renaissance thinkers—versed in many areas but grounded in Scripture.

Have you studied biblical principles about economics, the environment, architecture, war, food, or even leisure? What about God’s concern for nutrition, fasting, or stewardship of your body?

Hear Both Sides – Always!

“The first to present his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.” (Proverbs 18:17)

Objectivity demands that we explore multiple perspectives before drawing conclusions. The following topics are grouped thematically. Each one demands a careful, two-sided study:

Theology	Church Life	Personal Life	Politics & Society
Trinity vs. Oneness Theology	Tithing in the Church	Vegetarianism & Healthy Food	War, Army, Pacifism
Dual Covenant Theology	Women's Role in Church	Alcohol Use	Democracy as Political System
Baptism & Salvation	Head Covering & Women's Hair	Smoking	Death Penalty
Predestination vs. Free Will	Instruments in Worship	Birth Control	Civil Disobedience
Eternal Security of Believers	Apostles Today	Polygamy	Political Involvement
Eternal Torment vs. Annihilation	Lord's Supper Requirements	Plastic Surgery & Implants	Islam's True Nature
Sabbath vs. Sunday	Church Buildings	Divorce & Remarriage	Environment & Climate Ethics
Decalogue vs. Antinomianism	Tongues as Initial Evidence	Gambling & Entertainment	Public School vs. Homeschooling
Open Theism	Feet Washing	Culinary Pleasures	Stem Cell Research & Cloning
Soteriological Conditions	Church Government Forms	Dancing	Evolution vs. Creation

Top 3 Areas of Urgency:

1. **Health & Healing:** Understanding food, rest, fitness, and healing theology.
2. **Environment:** Our context affects our health, peace, and future.
3. **Finances:** Economics shapes life decisions, values, and calling.

Churches should function like universities: unified in faith, diverse in expertise. Each believer should be well-rounded, while developing mastery in one area. Tolerance and truth-seeking grow together.

Vinoth Ramachandra wrote: *"Respect for the beliefs of another entails that we take the trouble to explore what those beliefs mean for the believer, not arbitrarily assigning one's own private meaning to them."*

3) To Know the Truth About Ourselves

"The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable." – Jim Davis

“We can only know God well when we know our own sin.” – *Blaise Pascal*

To truly know God, we must know ourselves—our biases, wounds, and motivations. David Benner wrote: *“Paradoxically, we come to know God best not by looking at God exclusively, but by looking at God and then looking at ourselves.”*

The journey of self-discovery will lead us to recognize both our sinfulness and our belovedness. Only then can we grow.

Conclusion: Truth as a Path to Freedom and Unity

Loving God with our mind means:

- Being aware of our interpretive assumptions
- Diligently learning from those we disagree with
- Seeking both sides of every major issue

This is the only way to avoid deception and foster real unity in the Church. True churches are always reforming (*reformata semper reformanda*).

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you have an intellectual passion for truth?
 2. Can you explain your hermeneutical approach?
 3. Do you study what others teach?
 4. Are you willing to pick up truth outside your denomination?
 5. Are you ready to question your own tradition?
 6. Can you objectively explain both sides of any issue?
 7. Do you invite outside voices into your church or life?
 8. Are you cultivating broad biblical convictions across life domains?
 9. What areas are you an expert in?
 10. Can you describe your strengths and weaknesses objectively?
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“All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.” – Galileo