

Objective Truth versus Subjective Experience

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It is not usually the parents' intention to instill faulty patterns of perception and thinking into their children. Unfortunately though, it is often the case. The unhealthy parenting styles often go back several generations. Different life themes unfolded for each of our ancestors (*the great depression, WWI, WWII, the 60's, the computer age, etc.*), and these different experiences, whether faulty or not, impacted how they raised their young.

Our core beliefs start to develop in our earliest experiences and are also formulated by the different people (*especially mom and dad*), cultural experiences and norms, and familial dynamics that continually play with and against each other as we try to develop an understanding of who we are, what the world is, and how we are supposed to interact with our environment around us.

As unique individuals, we can all look back into our own childhood's and see how our upbringing was influenced by the choices our parents and other important people made. Other factors that also play into our self-definitions are based on our individual make-up. This includes our personality type, genetic predispositions, and biochemical factors, to name a few. It is a complicated process. This is why two people can observe the same event and have completely different perceptions of what had occurred.

As parents, we can be challenged to change those parenting styles that proved to be faulty, or that were not effective in our own lives, by applying the principles from the appropriate side of the continuum, which may aide us in establishing the healthy core beliefs our children need to have emotionally stable, productive and satisfying lives.

To accomplish this, we will look at the aforementioned contrasting themes of parenting styles. As we evaluate them, try to determine where on the continuum your parents landed as they interacted with you. Was it to either side or somewhere in the middle? Let's look at the definitions to some of these themes. In doing so, we can explain some of the blessings and consequences that each end of the spectrum brings.

As we begin to attempt to understand this dynamic that establishes our core beliefs, we must first be willing to acknowledge that there is universal objective truth that we can base our lives upon. In the words of C. S. Lewis (God in the Dock, "Christian Apologetics" [1945]):

“One of the great difficulties is to keep before the audience’s mind the question of Truth. They always think you are recommending Christianity not because it is true but because it is good. And in the discussion they will at every moment try to escape from the issue “True—or False” into stuff about a good society, or morals, or the income of Bishops, or the Spanish Inquisition, or France, or Poland—or anything whatever. You have to keep forcing them back, and again back, to the real point. Only thus will you be able to undermine...their belief that a certain amount of “religion” is desirable but one mustn’t carry it too far. One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

As Christian people, we believe:

- God is the source of all truth (Psalm 25:5; 43:3; 85:8-11; 86:11, 15; 89:14; Malachi 2:6; John 17:17-19; II John 1, 2).
- He will ultimately judge the world according to His truth and righteousness (Psalm 96:13).
- God has given us, his children, the Holy Scriptures, as a guide to follow in His truth (Psalm 119:43, 143, 151; Proverbs 12:19; 22:17-21; 23:23-26; Ecclesiastes 12:9-11; Daniel 10:21; II Corinthians 4:2-5; Galatians 2:5, 14; Colossians 1:5, 6; James 1:18; I Peter 1:22, 23; I John 2:4-6).
- We as God’s children believe in the Messiah, the Holy Christ, as the Scriptures foretold (Isaiah 42:1-4, 9; 52:13-53:12).
- The Messiah was revealed in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 8:31-40, 44-47; Ephesians 1:13; 4:20-24; I Timothy 3:15, 16).
- Jesus Christ is truth incarnate, and His claim as the source of all truth is exclusive (John 14:6, 7; John 18:37).
- Jesus will allow judgment to fall upon those who will not accept the truth that He is the Son of God (John 3:16-21).
- God sent His Holy Spirit to fill us, empower us and guide us into all truth (John 4:23, 24; 14:15-18; 15:26; 16:13-15; II Corinthians 6:7; II Thessalonians 2:13; I John 2:20, 21, 27; 4:6; 5:6).
- God desires all men to understand, accept, and correctly explain the truth (I Timothy 2:4-7; II Timothy 2:15, 25, 26; Titus 1:1; I John 1:6-10; III John 3, 4, 8).

This is, however, in contrast to our post-modern societal philosophy, which states that either there is no truth or that truth is relative or subjective. With our acknowledgement of objective truth, and the willingness to admit that we are not perfect by design (Philippians 3:12), we can accept that there will be an internal conflict between objective truth and our subjective experiences that will pull us back and forth—each seeking to yield us into conformity so that this internal battle can cease. This is, of course, impossible because human nature and our perceptions, which are faulty, are predisposed to fall short of truths standard (Romans 3:23).

Objective truth can only be sought after (Matthew 13:44-46) and conformed to (Romans 12:2); thus, the process of transformation from ones environmental nature, or accumulative subjective experiences, to objective truth. This is also the definition of *sanctification*. In contrast, we can also choose to resist truth and be conformed to what ultimately falls short of truths standard, and suffer the consequences of this compromise (Romans 1).