

# The Conflict Between Subjective Experiences (Subjective Truth) and Objective Truth

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## Subjective Experience

Subjective experience plays a major role in the treatment of mental health because of its powerful influence on one's self-perception and understanding of his life situation. According to Roe & Lachman, mentally ill individuals (depression, bipolar, anxiety, etc.) who lack insight into their circumstances and the factors contributing to their illness are "one of the best predictors of a poor outcome in treatment." Positive treatment outcomes are dependent on the individual's ability to accept a reality beyond his own subjective belief. If a person believes his circumstances to be hopeless, a solution cannot be achieved. This is where subjective understanding meets the "what I believe" and "what I do" aspects of the Core Values Model. What one believes, based on what he subjectively interprets, determines the outcomes and probability of success of subsequent choices and behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Every individual has his own subjective view of his life, dysfunctions and issues. Regarding mental health, if that subjective view lacks insight of objective reality, one can "become" their illness and therefore completely lose their sense of self, thus creating a new self-identity built around the illness itself.<sup>2</sup> Thus, subjective understanding directly correlates to a person's sense of self, or the "who I am" aspect of the Core Values Model. This is not only true for those enduring mental illness, but for the general population as well. Trauma victims often "own" their experiences by choosing to see the abuse as a result of some kind of inherent self-deficiency. This subjective understanding of reality either reinforces a false sense of identity, or else creates a new one.<sup>3</sup>

Different ethnicities and cultures often find their identities in both positive and negative social experiences that influence or define the people as a whole. The Norwegians take pride in the ingenuity and courage of the Viking era. The Italians pride themselves in the architectural and artistic abilities of their people over the centuries. Most cultures hold onto different strengths their ethnicity possesses in one form or another, which serves to maintain an important component of one's personal identity and collective patriotism.

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<sup>1</sup> David Roe & Max Lachman, "The Subjective Experience of People with Severe Mental Illness: A Potentially Crucial Piece of the Puzzle" *The Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* 42, no. 4 (2005): 223-230.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Flora Hogman, "Trauma and Identity Through Two Generations of the Holocaust" *Psychoanalytic Review* 85, no. 4 (1998): 551-578.

Conversely, other groups identify themselves by their negative social experiences too. Even though several generations have passed, African Americans still hold onto the broken identity that slavery brought to their people. Collectively, the Africans who were brought to America lost their families, national distinction and belief systems that made them each unique from the other cultures impacted by the slave trade. Likewise, the Holocaust influenced identity formation based on subjective experiences of trauma that resounded not only in direct survivors, but also for the generations that came after them in their families. In a study of four survivors and their children, it was found that the appalling trauma had equally severe implications for identity formation. The survivors themselves struggled with their conflicting identities as victims, survivors, members of the Jewish people and perceived outcasts in a world that they believed turned its back on them. The most common experience of their children was that they found themselves compelled by their identity as survivor's children to "fix a world inherently sick," and the need to protect them from such a hostile environment. The survivors and the children similarly felt "set apart" and "outcast" from an uncaring world. This demonstrates how the powerful nature of the subjective experiences of some individuals, families and even whole ethnicities profoundly influences the identity of not only themselves, but also of the following generations.<sup>4</sup>

Bianchi-Berthouze & Lisetti propose that an individual experiences the world around him on two levels: the object and the subject. The object is the reality of what is being experienced, and the person experiencing it is the subject. For example, in the statement "I see the sunset," the sunset is the object and "I" am the subject. Every experience is unique because no two individuals perceive the same experience the same way. This subjective factor creates the need for an objective frame of reference by which to compare one's experience. For example, to explain the color "red," one must use a reference that is objectively true for most that experience it. Thus, when trying to explain "red," one would compare it to the color of blood or a stop sign. Similarly, to explain an emotion, it must be tied to an objective reality that is common for most individuals. For example, "sadness" is an emotion that is usually felt when a loved one dies.<sup>5</sup>

Emotions tend to be the most subjective forms of experiences because they differ more significantly from individual to individual.<sup>6</sup> While "sadness" is a common emotion for those who lose a loved one, not all people experience sadness in the same way. Some might feel more angry, numb or confused. This subjective factor makes it far more difficult to use an objective frame of reference, as opposed to using blood to refer to the color red. Emotions are tied inseparably to the subjective experience of the individual. As "what I feel" is equally inseparable from "who I am," "what I do," "how I think" and "what I believe," subjective experience holds an equally integral role in the formation of these elements.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Nadia Bianchi-Berthouze & Christine L. Lisetti, "Modeling Multimodal Expression of User's Affective Subjective Experience" *User Modeling and User-Adopted Interaction* 12, no. 1 (2002): 49-58.

<sup>6</sup> Appendix B.

Subjective appraisals of the world and circumstances have cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions in the forms of judgments, emotional reactions and behavioral reactions. Wills asserts that people who have some form of spirituality tend to have more positive appraisals of the world and thus have more normal ranges of well-being. He states that this trend is due to the fact that spirituality causes a person to “feel part of a greater whole,” “feel a need to contribute to the world” and to “desire that contribution to remain after death.” He defines spiritual well-being as a “connection with the self, community, environment and the sacred” and “an inner resource that produces awareness of one’s inner self.”<sup>7</sup> This point is evident in the aforementioned examples of both the African American and Jewish communities, in that spirituality helped both groups to maintain a corporate identity despite their persecution.

Wills merely presupposes that spirituality in general, not the objective truth of Christ, is the source of spiritual well being. He differentiates hedonic well-being, or the pursuit of pleasure to avoid pain, from eudaimonic well-being, which is the pursuit of the actualization of potential. The difference between these two forms of well-being is the intention behind behavior. Hedonic well-being is achieved when one does a positive activity to gain a positive emotion. Eudaimonic well-being is achieved when one does a positive activity to express the best within themselves in order to realize their full potential. Spirituality is proposed to be the source of eudaimonic well-being.<sup>8</sup>

Wills does an admirable job of discussing the impact of subjective appraisals on thought, emotion and behavior as well as the powerful influence of the spiritual aspect of self, but his stance on general spirituality instead of specifically Jesus Christ limits the truth of his statements. Again, if certain truths are truer than others, one must logically be the standard that the other truths deviate from. Therefore, finding any source of spirituality to follow eudaimonic well-being is just another form of subjective appraisal given to the same unreliable and skewed perspectives. Only Christ provides the objective truth necessary to ground one in his subjective appraisals, and only Jesus Christ gives one the True frame of reference to build his life upon. The exclusivity of Jesus’ statements leaves no other options in finding God. Those who place their faith and trust in Jesus rest in the truth that God’s Spirit freely gives, satiating their souls with the truth of His very presence.

Richardson asserts that subjective experience is not just the product of one’s perception of external events, but also the result of the perceptions generated by one’s inner world. He states that since subjectivity is not scientifically measurable, the only way to study it is to do so by examining cognitive processes of perception and the observation of relevant behavioral responses. This supports the Core Values Model’s assertion of the link between these elements because it demonstrates the influence of subjectivity on thoughts and behavior. The perception of the outside

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<sup>7</sup> Eduardo Wills, "Spirituality and Subjective Well-Being: Evidences for a New Domain in the Personal Well-Being Index" *Springer Science & Business Media* 10 (2009): 49-69.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

world generates a similar schema of perception for one's internal world, which subsequently influences cognitive processes and behavioral responses.<sup>9</sup>

Richardson also agrees that spirituality has a profound and significant influence on not only subjective perceptions, but also the resulting cognitions and behaviors. He states that spiritual experiences have a "noetic" quality, or a quality of increased understanding of the depth and factors contributing to an experience. This is because the added dimension of spirituality accentuates an experience more than if it was not present. However, like Wills, he limits spirituality to a general definition of any experience that has the qualities of: "a deeply felt positive mood, noetic qualities, alleged ineffability or inability to describe the experience, a persistent positive change in attitude and behavior, a sense of sacredness and a transcendence of time and space."<sup>10</sup> Essentially, his definition limits spirituality to anything that is difficult to explain and generates a positive change. This again falls short of the ultimate, unadulterated standard of truth, a personal connection with, and an understanding that, Christ is the only true source of spiritual resources and objectivity.

Forschler puts forth a theory known as "subjective consequentialism," which is "the view that when one faces a choice of actions, they should try to determine which action will cause the most good and then act accordingly." This concept draws a link between subjective understanding of how the world reacts to actions, the consequences of choices and their impact on the world, and an equally subjective view on morality. Subjective consequentialism essentially pits subjective understanding against objective reality because it asserts that people only have the capacity to perform subjectively. Forschler states that it is "unreasonable to condemn one for failing to perform objectively when it requires one to use information that is subjectively unavailable." Thus, people cannot be held accountable for actions that they do not know objectively to be wrong because subjective experience tells them otherwise.<sup>11</sup>

While on the surface this sounds reasonable, it conflicts with the concept that "ignorance of the law is no excuse." It also assumes that objective truth is an unavailable resource. This directly conflicts with what is written in Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse," and Romans 2:14-15, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." God's objective truth is written on the heart of every man, which is why a sense of right and wrong is inherent, even in those who do not know

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<sup>9</sup> Alan Richardson, "Subjective Experience: Its Conceptual Status, Method of Investigation, and Psychological Significance" *The Journal of Psychology* 5 (1999): 469-485.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Scott Forschler, "Truth and Acceptance Conditions for Moral Statements Can Be Identical: Further Support for Subjective Consequentialism" *Cambridge University Press* 21, no. 3 (2009): 337-346.

Christ. Man has a choice—either to follow God’s direction, or else ignore it in favor of their limited and self-reliant subjective understanding.

Kierkegaard puts forth an interesting perspective on the interaction between subjective experience and objective truth; that both are needed to interact in the human heart in order to put truth into action. He states that truth requires a thinking subject, and thus the interaction between truth and subject creates the being. God, the objective truth, is the “what” and man, the subjective object, is the “how.”<sup>12</sup> In Jacoby’s account of Kierkegaard’s theory, he states:

What distinguishes Christianity from paganism is not just the “what” but the “how.” In fact the “how” is the “what” since the entire content of Biblical revelation is an imperative to a certain type of active relationship. If the question is asked, “what is the Bible about?” The answer, according to Kierkegaard, must be: it is about how to live in relationship with God. Certainly Kierkegaard believed that the Bible tells us what truth is, but it is central to Kierkegaard’s philosophy that it be borne in mind that this question is asked in existence, and therefore the question of what must naturally become how. That God “is” truth, but this is still not the truth for an existing individual. The whole issue is determined by existence. The question “what is truth” must become “how can I live truthfully” The abstract question of what, when it is purged of the how, is meaningless for an existing individual. Hence the “where” of the way of truth is: how it is actualized in concrete human existence.<sup>13</sup>

This creates a difference between worldly subjectivity and Christian subjectivity. Without the direct object of Christ, worldly subjectivity is without grounding and therefore conflicting and inconsistent. When the “what” of God meets the “how” of Christian action, a relationship is formed. Kierkegaard states that “Christ is the objective reference of faith: He is the how and this is the way and what of truth.” As Christ is God incarnate, He serves as the perfect example of how a man acts out the “what” of God’s truth. Christ is also the direct correlation between action, subjectivity and objectivity, and thus He is the way God requires us to follow.<sup>14</sup> As critically important as the crucifixion is, Jesus first came to live. John 1:4 states, “In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.” Jesus also came to show us how to live. His life established the precedent of how mankind should live out His truth. Of course, it is not possible to accomplish this task without God literally indwelling a person. I am only a weak and broken vessel that holds the life of Jesus Christ. Only Jesus is the light of men. It is Jesus Christ living within me that shines into the darkness, not me myself.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew Gerhard Jacoby, “Kierkegaard on truth” *Religious Studies* 38 (2002): 27-44

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Hansson proposes another theory on the relationship and interactions between subjectivity and objectivity, adding third and fourth elements known as “actuality” and “possibility.” The objective is defined as, “what one ought to do depending on what is factually true.” The subjective is defined as, “what one ought to do depending on what he believes will happen.” Actuality is defined as, “whether or not the decision to make an action is based on what will actually happen.” Possibility is defined as, “what could happen when one takes an action.” Objectivity here is linked with actuality, and subjectivity is linked with possibility.<sup>15</sup>

Hansson asserts that objectivity and subjectivity can be interrelated in two ways: with the objective as the primitive or with the subjective as the primitive. With the objective as the primitive, what one believes subjectively, he objectively should do. With the subjective as the primitive, the objective is “an idealized epistemic situation in which full knowledge is available to determine the truth value.” With the subjective primitive, objectivity takes precedence so that the subjective decision is grounded in reality. With the objective primitive, subjectivity takes precedence because individual perception becomes the basis for what one deems to be objective, therefore negating the very actuality of objectivity. Again, this theory presupposes that the only way to determine subjectivity or objectivity is to observe an action resulting from a cognitive process and subsequent belief. One holds a subjective belief about reality and cognitively decides to act in accordance with that belief.<sup>16</sup> Ergo, objectivity is being based on subjective experience, which confirms again that objectivity cannot come from within; it must be from an external source.

Klaaren et al. discusses the interaction between subjective perceptions, cognitions and emotions. Subjective experiences create mental schemas through which individuals evaluate, anticipate and generate preferences about situations. These schemas then create affective expectations for how a situation will generate emotions. Klaaren et al. states that these affective expectations “influence the way people reconstruct their experiences, overriding at least to some extent what was actually experienced.” Thus, subjective understanding can skew one’s perception of the world to such an extent that both recollections and expectations are completely ungrounded in reality.<sup>17</sup>

Affective expectations create a link between knowledge structures and actual experiences, which subsequently inform future decisions and behavior. For example, a person may make a decision to do something and then an uninvolved or unlinked event may cause unpleasant emotions. The person links the unpleasant emotions with the decision due to the fact that they subjectively interpreted a correlation that does not exist in reality. Thus, subjectivity takes precedence over objectivity and colors the individual’s perceptions, expectations, decisions, emotions and behavior.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sven Ove Hansson, “Objective or Subjective ‘Ought?’” *Utilitas* 22, no. 1 (2010): 33-35.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Kristin J. Klaaren, Sara D. Hodges, & Timothy D. Wilson, "The Role of Affective Expectations in Subjective Experience and Decision-Making" *Social Cognition* 12, no. 2 (1994): 77-101.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

There are two hypothesis related to this concept: reinterpretation hypothesis and selective memory hypothesis. Reinterpretation hypothesis states that, “as time passes, people reinterpret aspects of an experience that conflicted with their affective expectations to be more in line with their expectations.” Thus in memory, individual’s subjective perceptions actually change their interpretation of an event to correspond to those perceptions, even if they do not reflect reality. Individuals can begin with an objective understanding, but then subjectivity overrides actuality and creates a false interpretation. Similarly, selective memory hypothesis states that: “expectations act as a filter on people’s memories for past events, such that they are less likely to remember aspects of the event that conflicted with their expectations or more likely to remember consistent events.” Just as ones subjective perceptions can change interpretations, they can also change actual memory. These changes reinforce false or incorrect schemas, and alter future cognitions, emotions, beliefs and behavior.<sup>19</sup>

Each study predictably concludes that objectivity cannot come from within. Moreover, even when one knows the truth, his subjective experiences will invariably color and change the truth to conform with him prior knowledge base. Therefore, one needs to have a written standard to keep him from deviating from truths tenets. In the Bible, we see God, and we also see how God sees us; we also learn to see ourselves as we really are. God cuts through the rationale and selfishness of one’s subjective experiences with His objective truth (Hebrews 4:13). As God shines truth into our souls, exposing the areas that fall short of truths standard, we maintain the journey of growth and conformation to what is actual fact. Not that we could ever be perfect, but we recognize in our imperfection that we need help. This is why we celebrate God’s amazing grace! Even though we are who we are—imperfect—God loves us. He simply wants us to be honest with ourselves and with Him, to trust Him, and to allow Him to transform each of us into the image of His Son Jesus.

### Objective Truth

Objective truth is the superior lens through which people can challenge their personal logic and assumptions. Subjective reasoning is inherently given to distortion and misinterpretation, thus develops a fluctuating and skewed perspective of reality. The altered perception is considered true based upon one’s subjective rationale, therefore modifying his value system, which subsequently alters how he sees himself. Here is where many misinterpretations and misconceptions are found during one’s attempt to communicate with others.

Each person relies upon his foundation of subjective experiences as he communicates his values and perspective. This foundation is also what one bases his judgments on as he attempts to understand the viewpoints of another. Every view differs because each person has a distinctive framework of reference upon which his

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

assessment is formulated. Disagreement is most often inadvertent, yet inevitable because of the uniqueness of everyone's individual paradigm, acuity and understanding of truth and reality.

One point of contention that will always surface is how one believes his unique paradigm of subjective experiences is the truth, while other perspectives will vary to him in legitimacy, depending on how similar they are to his. Often, each person becomes his own standard by which truth is based. From this basis all others are judged, as if the blind is attempting to lead the blind. As each person exerts his perspective, subtle compromises are accepted for the sake of goodwill; nevertheless, each holds his ground because he really believes he is in the right, because every situation and interaction is weighed against his personal experiences.

However, if one's core understanding of self is allowed to be shaped through objective truth, his cognitions, behaviors, emotions and belief system has the ability to be restructured upon a universally homogenous foundation that serves as an independent and comprehensive source of correction. In turn, this standard validates the genuine self, and differentiates truth from what is not truth. Hence, one is better equipped to confront his faulty values because they are enveloped in truth.

A good example to illustrate this point is titled "the nice Nazi." This fellow who lives next door is helpful in times of need, and he is willing to assist when everyday problems arise. He is friendly too, always having a smile and a clever joke to share. The only issue is that he is a Nazi. He vehemently believes that all Jews, homosexuals and people with disabilities should be exterminated. How does one judge this scenario? He is very nice and helpful, and he passionately believes in his cause. Is this man's truth equal to other truths; moreover, to the universal objective truth? Does truth vary in its legitimacy? Does one's fervent belief in something to be true qualify it as such?

The first considerations that need to be resolved include: what is truth? Is it a universal standard, and if so, how is one able to be conformed to its authority? Let us start with logical, deductive steps in order to establish a foundation to build upon. For one to define what ought to be and what should not be, he is speaking from a code of fairness, or a moral code which defines what is right and wrong. However, is this standard subjective, or tailored to how one thinks things should be or must that standard be objective, or universally applied, so that the code applies equally to everyone? If the standard that one bases fairness on is subjective, it cannot be fair at all because there will be thousands of differing opinions for general situations, and millions of views regarding specific situations, of what ought to be.

Subjectivity therefore will predictably create a double standard between the expectations of self when compared to others. Most unsurprisingly, one will judge himself according to his intentions, while he typically judges others by their actions. One can easily justify why he should not be penalized for breaking the law, but in the same situation he is pleased to reason why another person deserves the full consequences of the law his poor actions. It is much easier to let oneself off the hook for wrongdoing, but he usually does not extend that privilege as easily to others,

especially if another's actions inconvenience him in some way. One may confess to talking on his cell phone while driving, but he also finds himself denouncing the same actions in other drivers, because the prior situation has a rationalization to justify his behavior. Nevertheless, he is either wrong for talking on the phone, or wrong for judging someone else for doing the same thing. So then, an objective standard cannot be subjective at the same time, or come from within; hence it must be from an outside source to be impartial and universally fair. As one attempts to understand this dynamic in establishing his core values, he must first be willing to deduce and acknowledge that there is a universal objective truth that he can base his life upon.

It is recognized that approximately one-third of the world's population claim to be Christians.<sup>20</sup> Even though there are several denominations and sects within this faith, the overwhelming majority of the believers in Jesus Christ do not genuinely prioritize conforming their lives to the truth of God's Word. Instead, most Christians live their lives based upon their subjective experiences comprised of faulty values, biases and contradictory perspectives, just as the world does. Yet, inferential logic brings one to recognize that truth cannot be subjective; it must be based upon an independent, objective source. Once that source is recognized, logic also dictates that it should be submitted and conformed to. In the words of C. S. Lewis:

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 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.<sup>21</sup>

The Christian Bible claims to be the universal standard of truth as God's spoken Word and revealed through His Son Jesus Christ. One can never fully comprehend all of the treasures contained in this compilation of books, but it is worthy of trusting and basing one's life upon because it is infallible in its tenets and principles. The Christian's foundation of belief that the Bible is God's standard of objective truth includes:

1. God is the source of all truth.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Brierley, "World Religion Database: Detail Beyond Belief" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010), 18-19.

<sup>21</sup> C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1972), 101.

<sup>22</sup>Ps 25:5; 43:3; 85:8-11; 86:11, 15; 89:14; Mal 2:6; Jn 17:17-19; 2 Jn 1, 2

2. He will ultimately judge the world according to His truth and righteousness.<sup>23</sup>
3. God has given us, his children, the Holy Scriptures, as a guide to follow in His truth (children of God, or those who are the spiritual lineage of Abraham, are persons who by faith have accepted God's free gift of grace in His Son Jesus Christ, and have placed their trust and confidence in Him alone as the means of salvation).<sup>24</sup>
4. We as God's children believe in the Messiah, the Holy Christ, as the Scriptures foretold.<sup>25</sup>
5. The Messiah was revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>
6. Jesus Christ is truth incarnate, and His claim as the source of all truth is exclusive.<sup>27</sup>
7. Jesus will allow judgment to fall upon those who will not accept the truth that He is the Son of God.<sup>28</sup>
8. God sent His Holy Spirit to fill us, empower us and guide us into all truth.<sup>29</sup>
9. God desires all men to understand, accept, and correctly explain the truth.<sup>30</sup>

This is, however, in contrast to our post-modern societal philosophy, which states that there is no objective truth, and that "truth" is either relative or subjective. Again, although contrary to what God's Word states, and in direct opposition to what God desires for His people, a large portion of Christianity falls into this category as well. This inherent contradiction is the central dynamic within the Core Values Model. Even when one recognizes the standard of truth, he has great difficulty in conforming to that standard because of the required change from what he has based his life upon, to something different, albeit superior.

The inconsistency and bias appropriated by the variables in such subjective thinking is demonstrated by Ravit Nussinson et al. in their discussion on the changeable nature of judgment, saying that, "People use subjective experience to make judgments but when they realize that that judgment is contaminated they use a metacognitive correction process to correct for the assumed effects of that contamination on judgment."<sup>31</sup> This implies what Nussinson et al. refers to as the

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 96:13.

<sup>24</sup> Ps 119:43, 143, 151; Prv 12:19; 22:17-21; 23:23-26; Eccl 12:9-11; Dn 10:21; 2 Cor 4:2-5; Gal 2:5, 14; Col 1:5, 6; Jas 1:18; 1 Pt 1:22, 23; 1 Jn 2:4-6

<sup>25</sup> Is 42:1-4, 9; 52:13-53:12

<sup>26</sup> Jn 1:14; 8:31-40, 44-47; Eph 1:13; 4:20-24; 1 Tm 3:15, 16

<sup>27</sup> Jn 14:6, 7, 18:37

<sup>28</sup> Jn 3:16-21

<sup>29</sup> Jn 4:23, 24; 14:15-18; 15:26; 16:13-15; 2 Cor 6:7; 2 Thes 2:13; 1 Jn 2:20, 21, 27; 4:6; 5:6

<sup>30</sup> 1 Tm 2:4-7; 2 Tm 2:15, 25, 26; Ti 1:1; 1 Jn 1:6-10; 3 Jn 3, 4, 8

<sup>31</sup> Ravit Nussinson & Asher Koriat, "Correcting Experienced-Based Judgments: The Perseverance of Subjective Experience in the Face of the Correction of Judgment" *Metacognition Learning* 3 (2008): 159-174.

“immutability of subjective experience.”<sup>32</sup> Essentially, subjectivity is so pervasive in one’s cognitive processes that even when he knows that his perceptions and judgments are objectively incorrect, he is still intrinsically reluctant to alter that perception to fit in with objective truth.

Equally or more pervasive is Nussinson et al.’s exposition that, “the correction process is confined to cognitive judgment and does not extend to the biased experience itself.”<sup>33</sup> Even when one’s individual subjective experiences contrast with his own personal judgments, he is still hesitant to alter those judgments. A simple example might be when one observes a person going through a traffic light that had turned to red; the onlooker's response would typically be critical and disapproving. Yet, when that same onlooker is pressed for time, he can easily justify going through the same red light because his situation is different, special or more important. In this double standard, the offender can see objective truth shining through, except he is able to rationalize away this reality because his own egocentric subjective conditions make the illegal scenario permissible, excusing his actions within his own subjective mind.

Emotions are inevitably connected to both personal values and external ethical influences. The ability of one to regulate his emotions, and the resulting ability to demonstrate appropriate behavioral responses, reflects one’s personal values and is indicative of his morals, character and beliefs. If said values, morals and beliefs stem from subjective experiences and cognitive judgments alone, the emotions and behavior will more easily fluctuate and be vulnerable to inconsistencies, second-guessing and unhealthy tendencies. If the values, morals and beliefs stem from objective truth, the emotions and behavior will be stable and consistent because the initial cognitive processes are established on a secure and unchanging source.

Thus, in adhering to objective truth by having a relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ, and resting in God’s Word as the foundation to build one’s life upon, fallibility and error due to the subjectivity of human nature is avoided, in part, and the understanding of an objective standard of what truth is will serve as a pathway toward correction and growth for those areas of imperfection that remain. Therefore, one creates a healthier interaction between self and one’s thinking, emotions, behavioral responses and beliefs.

If one believes that God exists (which in it self is comical, as id God’s existence is based upon what I think or do not think) he should be able to deduce that he does not belong to himself, rather he belongs to the One who created him. However, mankind in his natural state believes he does, in fact, belong to himself. Humans spend their entire lives perfecting egocentrism as if self is the purpose of existence. Here is where much of man’s problems reside. As one holds onto self as the central theme to his life philosophy, to some degree, every recurrent egotistical act will endorse and ultimately crystallize his negative core values by cognitive and

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 165.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 169-174.

behavioral reinforcement. Invariably, these actions will also create a ripple effect impacting other people. As each one lives alone in the center of his own universe of self, he makes choices based upon his subjective experiences and cognitive reasoning primarily considering how his choices, and the actions of others, will impact or benefit himself.

This is not the same as Darwin's survival of the fittest, because the issue is not survival. The issue is self-centeredness. Each man seeks his own, very often at the expense of another, because he considers his rights and needs above the rights and needs of his fellow man; as his fellow man does the same we have turmoil. At its extreme, when this idea is multiplied by three hundred million, anarchy would result. What saves the human race is we have been designed and created in God's image, so the objective standard of truth abides within each one of us inherently. Even though most people do not intentionally pursue truth, it still shows itself to some degree. But the narcissistic individuality and self-absorption of man's natural state also resides within and often taints truth to various degrees, so that it becomes easier and easier to justify one's subjective choices, since everyone else seems to be considering his own rights and needs above the rights and needs of others too.

Because of one's personal benefit, society applauds the selflessness and heroism of those who have sacrificed self on the behalf of others. Yet sadly, those attributes exhibited in the gallant and courageous are not contagious. This is another reason why every society bears so many ills.<sup>34</sup> When people accomplish altruistic deeds of self-sacrifice, they are generally viewed as admirable. This is because a universal truth undergirds these actions and defines them as good. In the same manner, selfishness and self-absorption is considered by most to be a negative trait.

In the twelfth chapter in the Gospel of John, Jesus offers a parable that will help us understand this point by explaining the law of God's kingdom. Just as a seed must die in order to give life, Jesus must die in order to give life to the world. This same law applies to humans as well—especially those who choose to follow Christ.<sup>35</sup> True joy and satisfaction in life will never be found in pursuing temporal happiness, whether in success, money, power or materialism. To relinquish one's hold on or control over life, to let go of one's expectations—to give up—is ultimately the key to peace, but it is also a requirement of participation in the kingdom of God. This principle also appears in the Synoptic Gospels as well, which demonstrates its foundational importance to all the early evangelists.<sup>36</sup>

On the spiritual level, Jesus' sacrifice is the perfect example for this point. He is the Light that is shining with brilliance in the world, calling people to join Him in experiencing forgiveness and the relationship that God is offering them. At the same time, the forces of darkness are working harder and harder to extinguish it. Jesus passionately urges people to join God's ranks, calling, "Put your trust in the Light while you have it, so that you may become sons of Light."<sup>37</sup> His death brings about

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Lerner, "Emancipatory Spirituality" *Tikkun* 15, no. 3 (2000): 33-38.

<sup>35</sup> John 12:25

<sup>36</sup> Mt. 10:39, 16:25; Mk. 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33

<sup>37</sup> John 12:36

life for others. As the Author of life, He willingly laid down His own life so that mankind could have life—how profound is that! As followers of Jesus, one must acquire His life (Light) so that he can truly live. This requires one to willingly sacrifice and yield his game plan and personal expectations. Every other option leads to isolation and death (darkness), like the unregenerate seed—to prevent a seed from germination, one must keep it dry, cool and in darkness.

Jesus uses strong language here to demonstrate a vivid contrast between what people think is life as opposed to what life actually is. The dynamic meaning of this phrase in English might be “those who deny their life” or “those who despise their life in this world (NLT).” As a seed by itself is dead in its dormancy, a person physically alive without the Spirit of God exists within a three-dimensional dormant life too. Therefore a person is not choosing death by following Jesus. Rather, he is allowing God to transform what is dormant or dead by adding the Light, water and warmth needed to germinate, steadfastly growing into the image of Jesus Christ!

Isolation and dormancy is the antithesis of God’s desire for our lives. Every aspect of God’s character involves intimate relationship. Yet, this is the insidiousness of sin, which continually whispers into our ears that we need to place ourselves first. One’s choices never consume him in one day. Prior experiences justify one’s present choices gradually, one at a time, moment-by-moment, day by day, whether good or bad.

It is either the incremental process of sanctification, which is a growing dependence on God through His Spirit and His resources, a softening of the heart and a prioritizing of relationships, or the incremental process of hardening, which is a dependence on self and one’s own resources, a hardening of the heart, and a prioritizing of self.

Again, the question comes down to whom will I serve? When I choose to serve me and prioritize myself, I am alone as a dormant seed—dead. When I choose to die to prioritizing my own self-focus, and allow God to work in me through the power of His Spirit, I germinate and spring into life!

As created beings, it is only in submission to the Creator (Light) that we will find sustainable peace and joy in life. It is only in yielding that one gains victory, in quitting where one actually wins, and in surrender when one conquers. This notion runs against all human logic and the very essence of what our experiences tell us to do, but it is emphatically true. Because by dying to self, we function within the framework that we were designed to live in by our Creator to thrive.

One must recognize and humbly accept that he is only grafted into the Vine, and not the Vine itself. The Vine has a massive trunk, and His roots run deep to ensure stability, water and nutrients no matter how adverse the conditions are. As a graft, one is simply a cutting from a twig. Therefore, he does not have the ability or resources to self-sustain. When independent from the Vine, he can only wither and die. Yet, when dependent upon the Vine for his resources, and trusting in the Vinedresser’s careful pruning, he has the potential to thrive and produce fruit.

One need not complicate this issue by thinking he needs to do anything other than yield himself to God's inexhaustible resources. One's responsibility is to simply be filled with God and trust He will do what needs to be done in his life.

Most of us as Christians accept this theological construct as truth, and indeed it is. Yet, why is it so difficult to stay in the place of submission when we know it is the only safe place to be? It is because this transformational process—sanctification unto holiness—is incremental. As a seed falls to the ground, it does not become a strong, fruit-bearing plant immediately. This is why the famous words “one day at a time” hold as much truth for us today as they did when Jesus said them (Mt. 6:34).

The daily progression of being transformed from darkness to light is the process the Apostle Paul expressed saying, “He who began the good work in you will be faithful to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).” God began the work (salvation), it is He who will complete the work (sanctification), and it will be a process that continues until we leave this broken world and go home to heaven (glorification). Thus we have been saved, are being saved and will be saved. The common thread to each step is living obediently in the Light of Jesus Christ, just as He did unto His Father.

Again, Jesus is the perfect example for this point. As a human being, Jesus could comprehend disobedience to the Father, but never did. Jesus obediently conformed His life to the Father's will (John 5:19-23, 6:37, 8:29, 38, 14:31; Heb. 5:7-10) because He is Truth. In John 12:27, we see Jesus expressing His “troubled spirit” because of what was in front of Him—utter humiliation, rejection and crucifixion. Much moreover, for the first time in all of creation, Jesus, who knew no sin, would take upon Himself all sin. History has never seen such purity defiled. Yet, His conclusion remained fixed in always bringing glory to the Father no matter what the circumstances were, because one's subjective circumstances never override truth. Jesus rested completely in His Father's sovereignty and plan for His life.

This final act of glorification when Jesus Christ was laid upon the cross, and it was “lifted up,” everything changed forever. From that point forward until the end of the ages, the cross of Calvary will hold not only salvation, but impending judgment too. The cross unmasks those who choose self-sufficiency and those aligned with Satan, both being opposed to God. It also identifies those who are children of Light—those who believe and are therefore saved—from those who are in darkness and in opposition to the Truth. We therefore see an irony in the phrase “lifted up,” because when Jesus was lifted up from the earth on the cross, He also radiated the brilliant love of His Father for the whole world to see. Like light shining into darkness, with all of its radiance, so that everything hidden in the darkness will be exposed (12:31-33). So then, what one assumes to be death is actually life!

One of the most controversial issues our society faces today stands as a strong example of man's universal selfishness and apathy. Woefully, it has also become a social norm. It is the unmistakable fact that an unborn child is alive and fully human. This reality stands in unyielding and stark opposition to the social and legal falsehood that terminating a child's life at anytime during his gestation should ever

be plausible. In recent decades, the universal truth of the sanctity of human life has been eroded by societal apathy and indifference, revealing moral deterioration both personally and communally. There should be a conflict within one's core value system regarding the legalization of killing children.

Rationalizing the issue by attempting to determine when the child's life begins inside his mother's womb is madness, for what will be human is human. Moreover, justifying abortion under the second amendment's "right to privacy" holds no legal or moral commonsense or weight. The truth is that both mother and society consider these children without value, untimely or inconvenient. Objective truth ought to prevent such a detestable law from even being considered. This stands as a lucid example of how one's subjective experiences based upon collective values can desensitize and override objective truth. Presently, there is little if any difference of opinion between the secularist and the Christian regarding abortion. Sadly, this should not be so, especially for those who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

As written on the Korean War monument in Washington, D. C., "freedom is not free." Because all men and societies are interconnected on this small sphere in space, every action must logically have a reaction. Whether because of international war or interpersonal transgressions, someone will always have to pay a price for liberty. Also, because of man's interrelatedness, autonomy is not possible, nor could the illusion of one's self-sufficiency be freedom because man is enslaved to himself. Self-sufficiency therefore is essentially rebellion from freedom and from the One who created him. Therefore man does not need independence, he needs to surrender. C. S. Lewis conveys this argument most eloquently stating:

Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor—that is the only way out of our 'hole.' This process of surrender—the movement full speed astern—is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will we have been training our selves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death... But the same badness, which makes us need it, makes us unable to do it. Can we do it if God helps us? Yes, but what do we mean when we talk of God helping us? We mean God putting into us a bit of Himself, so to speak. He lends us a little of His reasoning powers and that is how we think: He puts a little of His love into us, and that is how we love one another. When you teach a child writing, you hold its hand while it forms the letters: that is, it forms the letters because you are forming them. We love and reason because God loves and reasons and holds our hand while we do it.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 2001), 56-57.

The logic of Lewis is based on the truth according to the Holy Bible, yet it runs against the natural propensity of mankind. The only source of objective, universal truth in its completeness is God, and He is pleased to teach it to those who are willing to see the truth of their need, a need that can only be filled by God because He created us, and designed mankind as a whole to only find their completeness in Him.

Gary M. Burge brings the important components of choice and belief into the equation by stating his thoughts regarding John 3:19-21:

Yet it is not so simple. The affections of people in the world are corrupt; their desires are fallen; they are not eager to be redeemed. They 'love darkness instead of light;' in fact, they hate the light.<sup>39</sup>

This observation reveals the serious moral struggle between God and mankind where some consciously elect to not only ignore or resist the Light, but also actually wage war against it.<sup>40</sup> By rejecting Jesus' Truth (Light), one in essence is deciding to oppose God's amazing gift of freedom from the darkness. Jesus has come as the Divine Light, which has penetrated, unveiled and exposed the darkness for what it really is.<sup>41</sup> Thus Jesus came to reveal and to save, to provide a way of escape for those entrapped by the darkness, not to judge, but to free from judgment.<sup>42</sup> But the world continues to see the cross of Calvary as offensive because it requires yielding one's will and recognizing that he needs the solution, which is outside of his own abilities and resources.

It does not matter how well your life is going, how wealthy you are, your profession, circle of friends, health, looks, etc. Once one is willing to look beyond the facades, illusions and puppet shows, he will also deductively conclude, as I have, that nothing ultimately matters except the truth. Why pursue and base your life on anything less? You might choose to keep running from, and not submit to, what truth is telling you, but you must admit to yourself that you do not have all the answers and there is something more and greater to your existence than what you are experiencing right now. For the answers to these questions, one must look up toward heaven for the answers. So then, true freedom and objective, universal truth actually abides in one's personal connection to God, not in separation from Him.

In John 14:6, one will find a fork in the road where he must choose his direction. "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" This is an exclusive claim. Jesus is not simply showing us the way—He is the Way as well as the truth. Does it not make sense that the way of life would also be truth? Access into the Father's presence in heaven is only in and through Jesus Christ—Truth incarnate. He is the only one who can lead His followers back to the places He will prepare, because He Himself is the Way.

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<sup>39</sup> Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2000), 118-124.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 119

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 118

<sup>42</sup> Jn 8:15

By contrast, those who love the Light, who look to, trust and believe in Jesus and live by the truth, not only gain eternal life, but also gain a perpetual yearning for more truth. The prophet Daniel said, “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”<sup>43</sup> As light illuminates from the sun, so Jesus radiates the glory of the Father.<sup>44</sup> As Jesus shines the glory of the Father, we reflect the glory of Jesus into the darkness.<sup>45</sup>

Again, John 14 continues to express how the essence of God’s character is manifested through Christ. We, in turn, are to manifest that same character in our lives. As Jesus radiates the glory of God, we are to reflect that glory into the darkness—like the moon reflects the radiance of the sun. God is welcoming mankind into the interwoven relationship shared between Himself, His Son and His Spirit. The oneness Jesus has experienced with His disciples and the intimacy and unity Jesus shares with His Father were linked after the resurrection! The chasm too deep and too wide for man to cross was bridged forever on Easter Sunday (14:20)! This profound spiritual union is beyond the world’s comprehension (14:22). Out of love, the Father and Son come to abide within the life of those who believe (14:23). Truth shines! As such, Christians are called to know the truth and to do the truth, to believe in the Light, be sons of Light and walk in the Light.<sup>46</sup> Each expression of self is mentioned as components to be transformed by His Light.

Jesus is the Truth, the authoritative representative and revealer of God. Jesus hears what God says and obeys what God tells Him to do.<sup>47</sup> This verse places Jesus into the role of Mediator, creating the one and only avenue to God the Father. Only God can lead us to Himself, which brings us back to the opening verses in the Gospel of John (1:1-2) explaining the ultimate union (and differentiation) between the Son and Father. Therefore, if His disciples really knew Jesus, they would know the Father as well (14:7). Jesus and the Father enjoy reciprocity of life—therefore Jesus is the Life—He and the Father are one (vv. 9-11). If one chooses to believe in Jesus, he also shares in their reciprocity of life.

Nothing can change the faulty, skewed subjective perspectives that one embraces as truth can. When people make the choice to believe, and place their faith in God’s provision for us in Jesus Christ, they are transformed into children of God.<sup>48</sup> They experience the power of God’s Spirit.<sup>49</sup> They experience power by living in the truth.<sup>50</sup> This becomes a wellspring within one’s soul that overflows as joy into every expression of his life. Objective truth is therefore at work in the lives of those who trust in Jesus, and who pursue a righteous life because of God’s work in their being—their hearts, minds, desires, values and behaviors change because truth transforms

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<sup>43</sup> Dan 12:3

<sup>44</sup> Heb 1:3

<sup>45</sup> Jn 8:12

<sup>46</sup> Jn 12:35-36

<sup>47</sup> John 5:19, 8:29

<sup>48</sup> 1 Jn 3:10 [NIV]

<sup>49</sup> Jn 3:5-6 [NIV]

<sup>50</sup> Jn 3:21 [NIV]

the self—not because they have the instinctive desire or intrinsic ability to be godly on their own.<sup>51</sup>

This concept is a critical component of the Core Values Model. Without the universal, objective standard of God’s truth for one to base his life upon, there is no other dependable, consistent, enduring and comprehensible foundation upon which he can build. Truth is the only standard one can use with confidence to challenge and transform faulty subjective values and beliefs. As King David wrote, praising God for His word, “Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is truth.”<sup>52</sup> “Thou art near O Lord, and all Thy commandments are truth. Of old I have known from Thy testimonies, that Thou hast founded them forever.”<sup>53</sup> Again, David writes, “Consider how I love Thy precepts; revive me, O Lord, according to Thy loving kindness. The sum of Thy word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting.”<sup>54</sup>

David recognizes that God’s Word is worthy of trusting and building upon because it is true and established forever. He subjects his feelings and cognitions to the standard and promises of God’s Word when he writes, “Let my cry come before thee, O Lord; give me understanding according to Thy Word. Let my supplication come before Thee; deliver me according to Thy Word (Jesus [Jn 1]).”<sup>55</sup> He also recognizes the impact of God’s Word psychologically, behaviorally and emotionally on his core values: “Those who love Thy law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble... My soul keeps Thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.”<sup>56</sup> He acknowledged that God’s objective truth was the lamp to illuminate each step, and the light for his pathway.<sup>57</sup> David passes his desire for truth onto his son, Solomon, who expresses these famous words of wisdom: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”<sup>58</sup>

With the recognition of objective truth, and an understanding that none can be perfect because of selfishness and other culpabilities, one can rationally see that there must be an internal conflict between objective truth and anything that falls short of its standard because truth irrefutably offends. If truth does not offend, it cannot challenge the apathy within one’s soul, or the ignorance found within one’s selfish choices, which are based within his subjective experiences. And since by nature one bases his life on subjective experiences, he will inevitably endure the internal conflict between self-centeredness and truth.<sup>59</sup> This divergence will continually pull him back and forth and influence every decision.

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<sup>51</sup> Jn 3:21b [NIV]

<sup>52</sup> Ps 119:142

<sup>53</sup> Ps 119:151-152

<sup>54</sup> Ps 119:159-160

<sup>55</sup> Ps 119:169-170

<sup>56</sup> Ps 119:164, 167

<sup>57</sup> Ps 119:105

<sup>58</sup> Pr 3:5-6

<sup>59</sup> Phil 3:12

Both objective truth and subjective experiences seek to have him yield into conformity so that this internal battle might cease.<sup>60</sup> But the battle will never cease nor compromise its pursuit because human nature and one's perceptions, which are faulty, are predisposed to fall short of objective truths' standard; thus one's natural propensity is to fall back upon his subjective experiences.<sup>61</sup>

So then, since objective truth is not inherent, it can only be sought after and conformed to.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the process of transformation, called sanctification, is from one's innate nature, or subjective experience, to God's nature, or objective truth.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, one's only alternative is to choose to resist truth and be conformed to what ultimately falls short of truths standard, and suffer the consequences of this compromise.<sup>64</sup>

William H Willimon stresses that Christ is, in essence, the ultimate object and manifestation of objective truth. Willimon asserts that Christ did not say He was teaching about truth, but that He is Truth.<sup>65</sup> Truth is not based on subjectivity. Rather, the truth of Christ is inherently inseparable from His being. Humans are given the ability to reason and discern. That ability is supposed to be used to identify and follow God's truth rather than attempt to use one's reasoning abilities to logically disprove Christ as the object of truth.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, an understanding of Christ as Truth goes far deeper than just cognitive understanding. As Willimon states, "[Christ] did not call for cognitive assent; He asked for a life of discipleship involving the whole self, not just the mind."<sup>67</sup> Both Old and New Testament Scripture state that one is to love the Lord God completely—with the self and all the expressions of self—all one's heart (emotions and feelings), all one's soul (self, personal identity, values), all one's strength (physical expressions, behavior, interactions with others and environment) and all one's mind (cognition, thought).<sup>68</sup> Knowing truth transforms because God's Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, indwells all who recognize, believe and trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.<sup>69</sup> Jesus Christ came into humanity as a man, and died on the cross so that His blood would cover the price for mankind's debt, transgressions and insufficiency.<sup>70</sup> This is the only source where one can find the truth.

By doing so, God cleanses the believer's heart from sin and unrighteousness, and fills all who believe in Him with His Spirit.<sup>71</sup> It is through the work of God's Spirit

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<sup>60</sup> Rom 7:14-15

<sup>61</sup> Rom 3:23

<sup>62</sup> Mt 13:44-46; Rom 12:2

<sup>63</sup> Jn 17:17

<sup>64</sup> Rom 1:18

<sup>65</sup> William H. Willimon, "Jesus' Peculiar Truth: Modern Apologists for Objective Truth are Making a Tactical Error" *Christianity Today* 40, no. 3 (1996): 21-22.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37

<sup>69</sup> Jn 14:16-17

<sup>70</sup> Jn 3:16; Eph 1:7; Heb 9:22; 1 Pet 1:18-19

<sup>71</sup> Jn 4:14

that objective truth implements and accomplishes the transformation of one's subjective experiences into the light of His truth. Karl Barth considered being the leading Swiss theologian of the twentieth century stated, "When we are at our wits' end for an answer, then the Holy Spirit can give us an answer. But how can He give us an answer when we are still well supplied with all sorts of answers of our own?"<sup>72</sup> It often seems that one will not consider what God is offering to him until he exhausts his own resources, and looks outside of himself for the answers to his problems.

The first truth instilled into one's heart from his Creator is that he is a child of the living and true God. The Apostle Paul tells the Galatians that the Holy Spirit is the One who assures our hearts that we are God's children declaring:

But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.<sup>73</sup>

Likewise, feelings alone are inadequate to glean an understanding of Jesus as Truth. Willimon also asserted that one should not ask, "how do I feel about Christ," but rather "is the Gospel, is Christ, objectively and absolutely true?"<sup>74</sup> Willimon uses the example of the rise of atheism in the modern world, where people have argued against the existence of God and objective truth based on their subjective feelings and desires. He asserts that when Christians began to portray God as fair, orderly and compassionate in ways that only appeal to man, people began to question His existence when their subjective experiences taught them that the world around them was not orderly, fair or compassionate. This subjectivity with regards to feelings, desires and preferences about what kind of God exists only served to undermine the ultimate objectivity of His existence.<sup>75</sup>

Again, C.S. Lewis' famous statement about Christ as liar, lunatic or Lord speaks volumes to the notion that Christ is either absolute objective truth, or else He is nothing. The very nature of objective truth is an "all or nothing" statement. Once subjectivity and opinion enter the equation, objectivity is no longer valid. Thus, if Christ is truly Lord, it cannot be reasoned that He is anything less; because anything less would mean that He is less than who He claims to be. To deny His Godhood then is to imply that He is either a liar or a lunatic.<sup>76</sup> Lewis stated:

"I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I do not accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who

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<sup>72</sup> Francis Chan *Forgotten God* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing, 2009), 103

<sup>73</sup> Gal 4:4-7

<sup>74</sup> Willimon, "Jesus' Peculiar Truth," 22

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 31

was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.