

CAN WE TRUST OUR FEELINGS TO DETERMINE TRUTH?

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Many people assume that because they feel or believe something that it must be true. Some people may even have legitimate experiences that seem to validate those beliefs.

But is this really a trustworthy way to determine what is true?

CAN WE TRUST OUR FEELINGS (HEART)?

Jesus taught that our sins are not merely an issue of wrong behavior but that a person's true corruption comes from his heart

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(Matthew 5).

Our sin causes us to feel wrongly about many things. This is why so many people get married —making promises of everlasting love to their spouse — only to later have a change of heart that leads them to get divorced. The Bible cautions us against relying on our feelings to determine truth. Jeremiah 17:9  says,


“The heart is deceitful above all else, and desperately wicked, who can know it”.

Because our feelings have been corrupted in this way, our hearts cannot be trusted to accurately determine truth.

CAN WE TRUST OUR BELIEFS (CONVICTIONS)?

Some people think that they can trust their beliefs simply because they feel strongly about them. Just because a person is so convinced of something that he is willing to take drastic action, does not mean that he is right.

The terrorists who carried out the 9-11 attacks on the U.S. Did so out of belief — a conviction so sincere that they were willing to die for it — Does that mean that they were right? Are their actions justified simply because they fervently believed in their cause?

Perhaps the most thoroughly convicted group of people in the bible was the Pharisees. They held to their beliefs so ardently, and yet could not even recognize their own Messiah. John 8:43-45  says,

“Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires...When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.”

The Pharisee's beliefs led them to kill the Son of God. But all the while they thought they were righteous, Jesus said that they were believing a lie. Conviction then, no matter how strong is not sufficient for determining what is ultimately true.



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CAN WE TRUST EXPERIENCES?

But what about when a belief is substantiated by a genuine experience? Isn't it more likely, then for the belief to be true? Not necessarily— especially when a person holds deep presuppositions at the time of the experience.

Imagine a child lying awake in bed on Christmas Eve, eagerly awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. She hears thumping from the roof above her, and then rustling beneath the Christmas tree downstairs. When the sound has stopped, she cannot withhold her excitement any longer. She runs downstairs to see a beautifully wrapped present under the tree with her name on it.

To the girl, this experience is PROOF that Santa Claus came!

The experience WAS REAL, and yet the girl was wrong in her conclusion. Had she not had the presupposition that Santa was coming, she might have realized that the thumping on the roof above was actually a family of squirrels, and that the rustling beneath the tree was caused by her parents.

Experiences are not certain ways to know what is true.

What's the Point?

Our thoughts, our feelings, and our desires are very important, but we should not place sole reliance on subjective means to determine what is really true.

Not only does the Bible teach us to not rely exclusively on feelings, beliefs, or experiences, but it commands us to,

■ **"Test everything. Hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21 📖).**

No one worldview has exclusive claim on this wrong way of thinking. So everyone who wants to know what is really true, must be willing to set aside his presuppositions, and examine his beliefs by objective means. Jesus teaches us that to determine truth we must ABIDE in HIS WORD. This is why Christians love the Bible, and are eager to submit our feelings, beliefs and experiences to God's Word and not the other way around.

“Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’” (John 8:31-32 [↗](#)).

VERSE REFERENCES



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Ritch was born and raised in the western suburbs of Chicago. He served as a U.S. Marine in the Iraq War before returning to Illinois where he met and married his wife (Laura) and served a local church as a pastor for 7 years. In September of 2013, the Sandfords moved to South Jordan, where they planted The Mission Church and created GodLovesMormons.com. They host a weekly Bible study for ex-Mormon Christians, and are actively involved in evangelism in their community.

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