

5. *How are we to make righteous judgments when we ourselves sometimes sin, and may even be guilty of the same sin we judge?*

6. *What do these verses tell us about the nature of truth?*

7. *Which beatitude comes to mind in these verses? [Hint: 1 Cor. 4:3–5]*

Comments on vv. 1–5

Compare the “before and after” events of Paul’s life. He admits he was formerly a blasphemer, persecutor and a violent aggressor against Christ (1 Tim. 1:13a). Yet he also insists that even then, he was acting in all good conscience (Acts 23:1, 1 Tim. 1:13b). A Person who does not understand the truth and who makes an improper judgment against someone may not be acting hypocritical in this context. The kind of hypocrisy Jesus speaks against is one that originates from a personal self-righteousness. How do we know this? Because Jesus said that if a person judges by his *own standard*, *that is* the way he will be judged by God. And since he is not perfect, it will be easy for Justice to rule against his inconsistencies. On the other hand, if someone seeks God’s standard, he is willing to be so judged because he knows that standard is consistent and unchangeable. So he is careful to judge and to live according to God’s word. The hypocrite makes his own judgments against others, and does not put things in God’s hands. In this, he displays a lack of meekness. See 1 Cor. 4:3–5.

A hypocrite charges someone with sin as he sees it, according to his personal view of right and wrong. A good example of this is Matt. 15:1–9. In charging the Pharisees with hypocrisy, Jesus was not justifying Himself for doing wrong, for He did no wrong. But the Pharisees were judging Him based on their understanding that their traditions—which they were following, but He was not—were equal to God’s laws. Hence, they viewed themselves as the pre-eminent interpreters of God’s truth. This is the real problem with hypocrisy: one person accuses another in order to set himself above the one he accuses.

Thus, the characteristic of truth found in vv. 1–5 is that ***truth does not belong to us***, so we can not use it for our own purposes. Making proper judgments is indeed necessary (the Corinthians failed to do it in 1 Cor. 5), but a “righteous judgment” requires the perspective expressed in Gal. 6:1–4. For even if we do know the truth better than someone else, knowing and practicing are not the same. Better to win a soul than an argument (Eph. 4:15).

Matt. 7:6 – The nature of truth (2)

8. *In verse 6, what is meant by casting one's pearls before swine? [Hint #1: What is the most holy thing that a Christian has to give to another? Hint #2: Acts 13:44–46]*

9. *What characteristic about truth (and our use of it) do we learn from verse 6?*

Matt. 7:7–11 – The nature of truth (3)

10. *Which beatitude comes to mind in these verses?*

11. *What promise is attached to these verses, as well as to the beatitude?*

12. *How does Jesus attach this promise to the sureness of God's love for mankind?*

13. *How is the so-called "golden rule," in vs. 12, connected to the previous verses? Who "initiates" this rule: the giver or the receiver?*

14. *What do these verses tell us about the nature of truth?*

Matt. 7:13–14 – The nature of truth (4)

15. *In comparison with the lost, how many will be saved?*

16. *How can this verse be reconciled with vv. 7–8? That is, if truth is so readily available to all, how is it that only few will be saved? [See also Lk. 13:22–34]*

17. *What do these verses tell us about the nature of truth?*

Matt. 7:15–20 – The nature of truth (5)

18. *What is meant by a wolf in sheep's clothing? Wouldn't this be easy to see?*

19. *In 2 Cor. 11:14, how effective is Satan's "disguise"?*

20. *According to Jesus, how are we to know the difference?*

21. *How does 2 Cor. 11:1–15 help us understand the phrase, "By their fruits you will know them?"*

22. *How does one know, for example, that apples don't grow on vines or watermelons don't grow on trees? How does one know a good fruit from a bad fruit? [Hint: Heb. 5:11–14]*

23. *What two things do these verses tell us about the nature of truth? [Hint: Acts 20:29–31; Prov. 23:23]*

Matt. 7:21–27 – The nature of truth (6)

24. *True or false: According to these verses, everyone who confesses Jesus as Lord will be saved.*

25. *What "day" is under consideration in vs. 22?*

26. Are the people in vs. 22 trying to fool Jesus, or do they really believe that they have done all the things they claimed?
27. Can you think of anyone in the New Testament who practiced miracles, or prophesied, but was either (1) in danger of losing his soul, or (2) had died condemned?
28. What "storm" (rain, flood, and wind) is under consideration in vv. 25 and 27?
29. What two things do these verses tell us about the nature of truth?

Miracles and the word of truth

Some passages to consider

First test of a false prophet under the law of Moses: Deut. 18:20–22.

Second test of a false prophet under the law of Moses: Deut. 13:1–5.

Judas was among those who healed the sick, cleansed the lepers and raised the dead (Matt. 10:1–8).

Paul had to practiced what he preached, or his good works, including his miracles, would not save him (1 Cor. 9:27).

The Corinthians were using their spiritual gifts to glorify themselves (1 Cor. 12, 14).

Some of the Galatians had already been cast away from Christ, even though they had worked (and may have still been working) miracles (comp. Gal. 3:1–5 with 5:2–6).

Gal. 1:6–10: Do these verses really apply to *anyone*, even today? What about Joseph Smith? The Pope? Mohammed? Religious leaders and scholars? How are we to know the difference?

1 John 1:1–4: How does the apostle John guarantee that a person can have fellowship with Christ?