

Does it Matter if There Is a God?

If someone walked into the room right now and yelled, “The sky is green,” what would you do? You might be startled, at first, that someone would make such a bold declaration. After the shock of someone yelling faded away, your next thought is likely, “The sky is not green.” You might even feel compelled to look out the window just to make sure something weird is not happening. Upon seeing clear blue sky, your next thought is definitely, “This person is wrong. The sky is as blue as, well, the sky.”

You just encountered objective truth and knowing what that means is important to pretty much any big question we ask in life.

When you look at the sky, it either is or is not blue. A statement to the contrary is wrong and can be immediately verified. If someone says, “The sky is green,” we can look up and see that the sky is not

green. But what if that person insists that the sky is green? What if you tell them, “Listen, you sound crazy. The sky is definitely not green,” to which they respond, “Well, it is your opinion that the sky is blue. Mine is that the sky is green. We can both be right.”

You know that you both cannot be right. The sky is not simultaneously green and blue. One of you is right, and one of you is wrong.

We come face to face with objective truth all the time, and we are most familiar with it in the realms of science and math. In these fields, we can verify if something is or is not true by testing a hypothesis or performing various calculations and proofs. In these fields, there is often a “right” and a “wrong” answer.

In other fields, though, we find “subjective truth,” where each person has an opinion and everyone can be right, so long as they can support their point of view. For example, when you read a book for English class, two people may have completely different perspectives on the writing. One may interpret the book in one way and think it was great, while the other may think the book was terrible. In this situation, both people can be right.

But think about that same book — what if one person interprets the book one way and says, “I think the author meant this,” and the other person says, “No way, the author definitely meant this” — can both people be right?

At first, you might think, “Yeah, because they are both interpreting the book. Both opinions, if well supported, could be valid.” That much is true — both opinions could be valid. But there is an objective truth: the opinion of the author herself. When she wrote the book, she had an intended interpretation — this is the objective truth. Sometimes we know it (the author writes it down in her autobiography) and other times we do not (she was one of those creative types who wanted her intention to remain a mystery).

Whether we know it or not, there is still a “right” answer when it comes to how to interpret the book. Both people can be right in thinking the book is amazing or terrible (because these are subjective opinions), but they cannot both be right if their interpretations differ. In fact, they both may actually be wrong if their interpretations differ from the author’s intention.

We need to understand objective and subjective truth because they matter when it comes to big