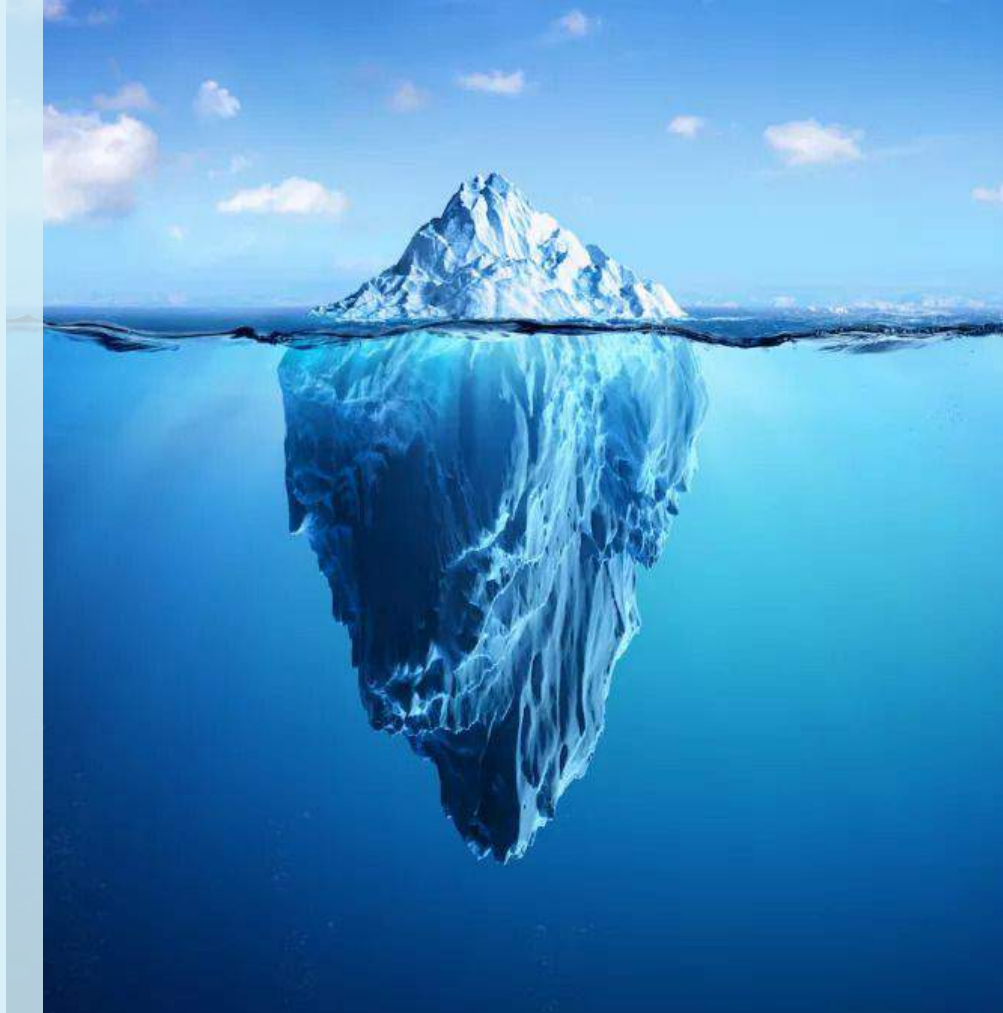


A DEEP LOOK INTO WHAT'S BELOW THE SURFACE

THE TRUTH STUDY



PREPARED BY



The **WHY** behind the **WHAT**

In a time when what's true feels uncertain, when we are awash in a tide of misinformation and more news than we know what to do with, Future Majority was curious - could there be a better way to come to terms with what's true and what's not? And more importantly, could there be insights we could gain from individuals who had changed their mind about what was true in their own lives?

To answer these questions, we embarked on a unique study using metaphor elicitation, a form of deep psychological, image-based research, to uncover the bigger story behind how people know what's true, how people change their mind and how

Our work seeks to **uncover the why behind the what** and provide clear guidance to the governing parties of today to better meet the needs of the American people and deliver results that will change their lives for the better.

METAPHOR ELICITATION

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Our research is a deep qualitative approach called **METAPHOR ELICITATION**.

Developed at Harvard, and perfected in the Corporate Research Space, **METAPHOR ELICITATION** is a powerful form of research, using participant-sourced imagery, that is designed to look into not only what people think, but why they think and feel as they do.

Corporate America uses this method to make billion dollar decisions and launch some of the biggest brands today. And yet, the world of politics has yet to fully embrace the benefits of this kind of research - until now.

We used METAPHOR ELICITATION to gain a deeper understanding of how Americans view the Democratic and Republican parties of today.

The insights that come from this approach are like none other.

WHY THE DIFFERENCE: THE POWER OF DEEP LISTENING



In traditional focus groups, participants speak for an average 3-10 mins total, sharing whatever thoughts they feel comfortable sharing publicly and are aware of, consciously.

With polls, researchers get off-the-cuff responses to closed-ended questions for at most 10 minutes.

In **METAPHOR ELICITATION**, participants are asked beforehand to spend several hours gathering images that resonate with them. Trained interviewers then met with them for up to two hours for an open-ended discussion on their political thoughts and beliefs, in what often feels like a therapy session. Then, hundreds of hours are spent analyzing what participants have shared.

What this process does is unearth the raw, unvarnished truth - what people truly think and feel.

The Participants

Who: We spoke to **32 Americans** -

16 Converts - who had either converted from ardently held political and/or religious beliefs and had converted to another set of ardently held beliefs

16 Loyalists - who had maintained their ardent and/or political beliefs for their entire lives

Where: The voters came from **across America**- and were a representative sample across measures of race, income, education, location, and gender.

We Asked Participants to Bring In a Series of Metaphorical Images, Representing:

- Their thoughts about feelings about how they know what's true

We Also Explored:

- How to navigate misinformation, with participants imagining that they were responsible for giving someone a primer on how to find what's true and avoid what's not online.

All imagery that follows, unless otherwise indicated, was provided by the research subjects.

Part 1. Truth Storytelling

These days, with the rise of social media and proliferation of contradictory news sources, many people are finding it difficult to identify what's true and what's not – in the news and even beyond the news. We're interested in understanding how you know what's true and what's not in your life.

When you think about your beliefs – and what you've held onto as true and what you've let go of and adopted new beliefs about – how have you come to be able to identify what's true and what's not? Has there ever been a time that you believed something to be true and then changed your mind? On the flip side, have you ever believed something to be false or untrue and then changed your mind? What did that process look like?

Now having considered these questions, please select 5-7 metaphorical images that represent your thoughts and feelings about how you know what's true.

These images need only be meaningful to you, but they must be metaphorical. What we're looking for here is a reflection of your understanding of how things are true, or untrue.

Part 2. Identifying Misinformation

We all know that these days, there's tons of information out there you can get from just about any source - some of it is true, some of it is not. I'd like you to imagine for a moment that I'm someone you've been sworn to protect from fake news and that in this scenario, I don't know how to assess what's true and what's not in the world of news.

Now imagine you're going to give me a primer on how to know what's true and what's not. What would you say? Where would you point me to? Where would you steer me away from? And what principles would you share with me that would help keep me able to tell the difference between what's true and what's not?

STUDY STRUCTURE

Objective & Hypothesis

The study was designed to uncover how people think about truth. In order to sharpen our understanding, we studied the extremes - converts and loyalists, those who had radically changed their religious and/or political perspective or taken the radical step of holding onto their perspective their entire lives.



Our hypothesis was that of those we studied, converts would have a more complex understanding of how to get to truth because they had gone through the transformation of believing one thing, then believing something entirely different.



Results & Future Work

While we did find that converts often have a more complex skillset to finding out what was true, it wasn't always the case. And conversely, while we expected loyalists to have a more limited skill set at getting to the truth, we were, at times, surprised at finding complexity when we expected much less.

What was the case, across the board was that defining truth wasn't easy. Opinions varied significantly not only at how one could figure out what was true, but also what the nature of truth, itself was.

As we think more and more about the role that misinformation and disinfo has in tearing apart our societies, **it's clear that we need to find common truths** and be able to identify better ways of getting to what's true if we are to come back together.

Our hope with this study is that it helps us reveal a starting place for where we are with truth, and shed some light on some promising paths forward for bringing people together, **helping them not only identify what's true, but giving them a reason to fight for truth.**



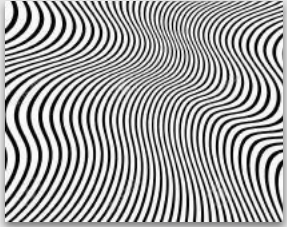
The background of the slide is a photograph of an American flag flying in a field of tall grass at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The flag is positioned in the center of the frame, with its stars and stripes clearly visible. The overall mood is patriotic and serene.

The State of Truth In America




“And I’m still on the fence with this vaccine, still it’s just fairly new. But with the moon, I just feel like, do I know they really walked them to the moon? I wasn't there. But that's like with dinosaurs, they said that dinosaurs exist, but **I've been living 34 years and I have yet to dig in the yard and find a fossil.** And then they say, well, it's certain areas and stuff. Okay. Well, other people live in different areas and they have yet to find a bone that I know of yet.”- *Nikita, Convert*

We're Confused. **WE'RE LOST.** And We're Disoriented.



We See **TRUTH**
(and Information)
AS A NATURAL FORCE.





**AND IN FACT, TRUTH CAN
COOL DOWN
HOT SITUATIONS.**

ON SOCIAL MEDIA, We Deal in Lies and Lose Sight of the Truth.

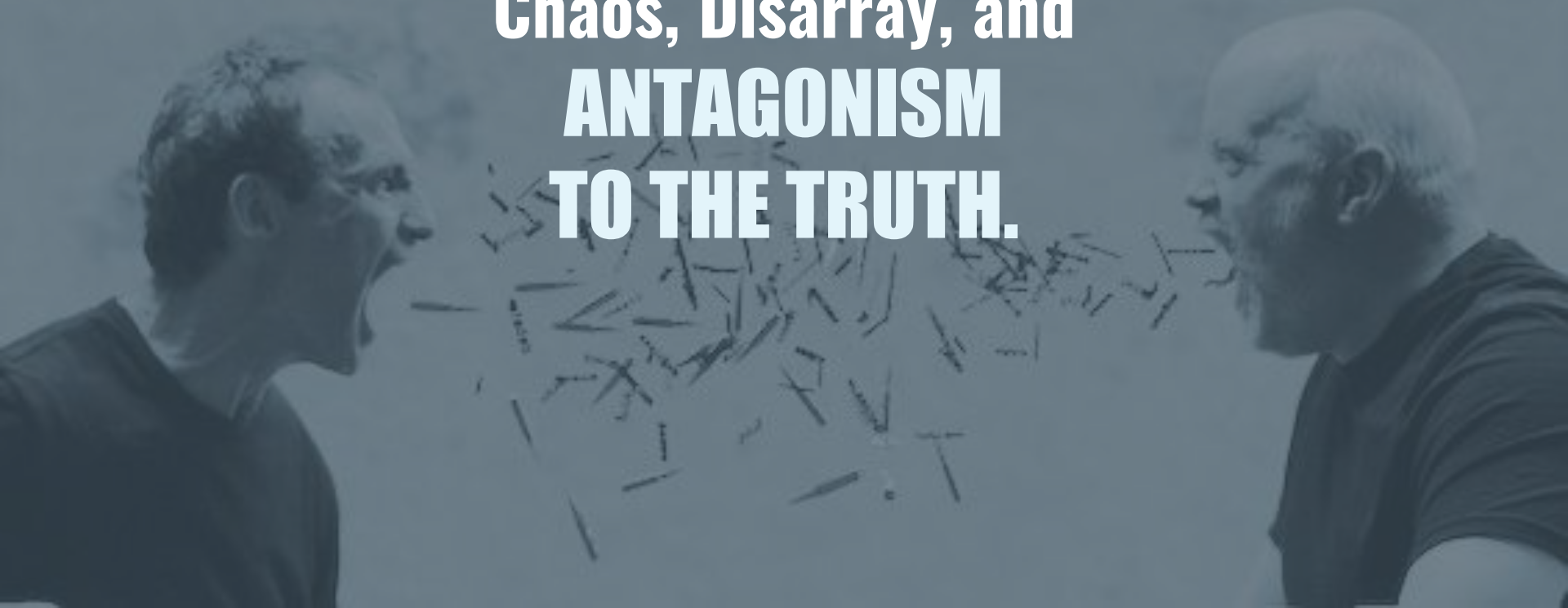


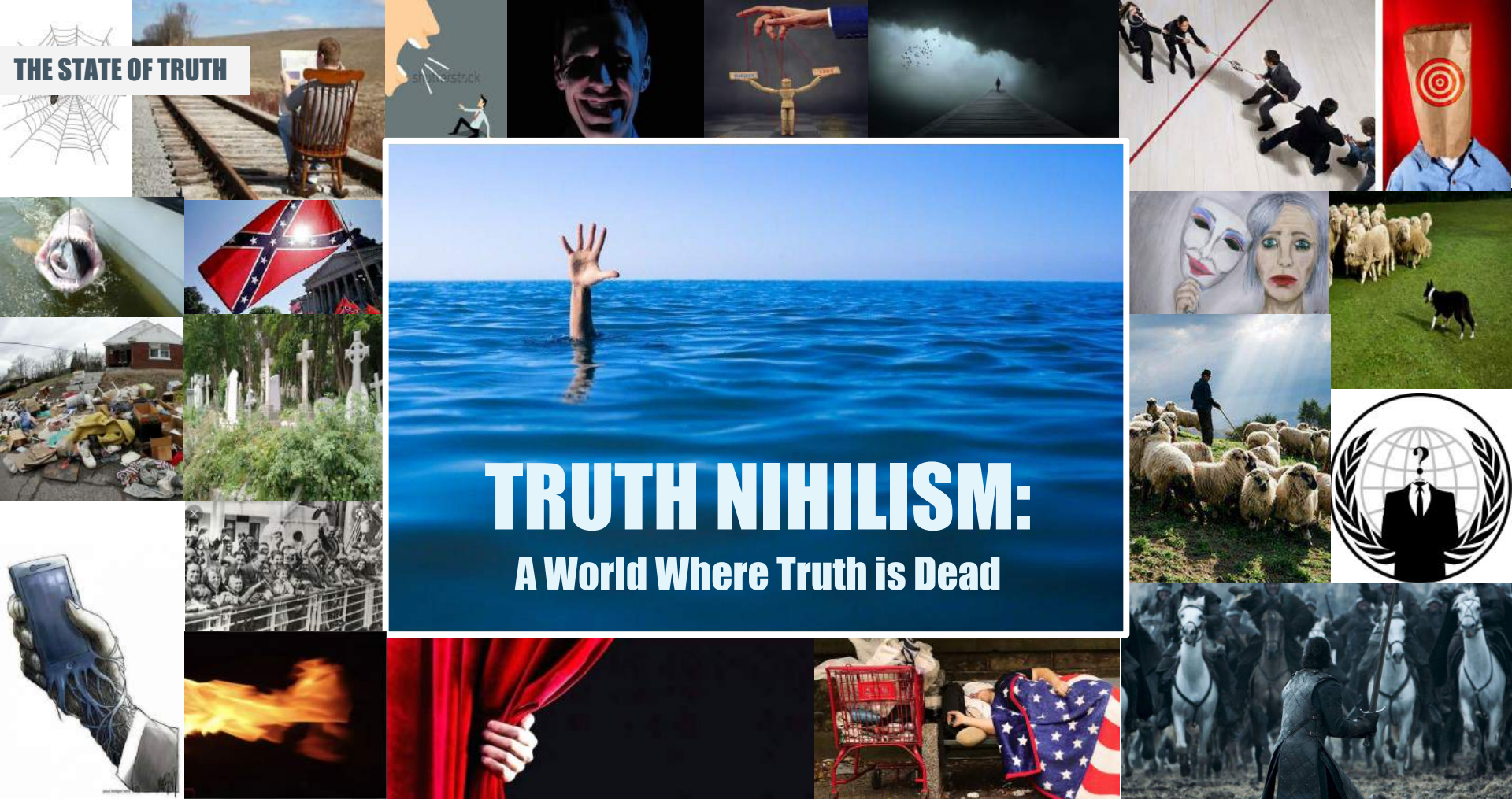
**AND THE MEDIA ISN'T MUCH BETTER,
Leaving Us at War For and Against Truth.**

A group of three people are seated around a green poker table, engaged in a game. The man on the left is wearing a blue shirt and a baseball cap, looking towards the center. The woman in the middle has long dark hair and is smiling. The man on the right is wearing a grey shirt and is looking down at the cards. The table is covered with a green felt, and there are stacks of colorful chips and cards scattered across it. A glass of water is visible in the foreground. On the right side of the image, there is a large, stylized graphic of orange and yellow flames against a dark background. The text 'And with Politics Being a A PLACE FOR BELIEFS & GAMES - NOT TRUTH...' is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, bold, white font.

**And with Politics Being a
A PLACE FOR BELIEFS & GAMES -
NOT TRUTH...**

**Our relationship with these
entities creates
Chaos, Disarray, and
ANTAGONISM
TO THE TRUTH.**





THE STATE OF TRUTH

TRUTH NIHILISM:
A World Where Truth is Dead

Despite All of This...

THERE IS STILL SOME HOPE

- Most people believe that truth exists.
- About half of our respondents believe that absolute truth exists.
- And over half of all respondents believed that Truth is backed by an unwavering Moral Authority like God, natural law, or some other rightful force.



And the Stories We Tell THE NEXT GENERATION MATTER.





How Do We Get To The Truth?

(and what can we learn from those who have taken the journey?)



**You need to have a means to manage it –
To distill it, purify it, navigate it...
OR YOU'LL DROWN.**



There's always a choice to embark on a JOURNEY TO TRUTH...

“You won't know [what's true] until you start journeying down that path. And hopefully not to say you'll you've taken the wrong path because any one of these paths could be the correct path, you don't know. They could be the same path to the same end. All three of those roads could lead to the ultimate truth. We're all different human beings and we all have our own different vision of where we should go.”

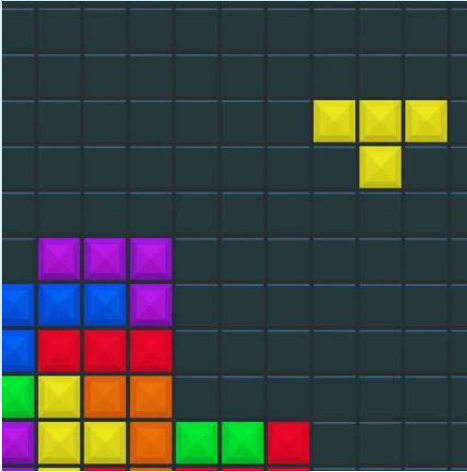
- Javier, Loyalist

For those who make the choice to embark, it's usually because of...



CORRUPTION

They become disenchanted when seeing perceived corruption or hypocrisy



INCONGRUENCE

A disruption in the pattern of what they expect - with what they believe and their own belief system or lived experience



A NEW PERSPECTIVE

They change their context - physical and otherwise - and start seeing the world differently

“I’ve been conditioned to at a certain point you just take it as that’s it. At a certain point, it’s no sense in continuing past a certain point. Because I think at a certain point... what you’re trying to get to just gets distorted and... **if it’s actually the truth finding mission or fact finding mission, it can actually turn into something else bigger than what you were asking for, and I think sometimes we just don’t want to go those places.**

Once you think you’ve honed in on one specific thing on this, **this image is not what you thought it was. It’s just so many other things to unravel once you pull that thread. And so it’s a version of the truth, it may not be the total truth. So this is a stopping point. If you can get to the split, stop there.**

I think the truth in this path stops right before the split. If you stop at that point, I think that’s where you get the most truth, because I think past that point people have to make up or give you what you want to hear, or what they think you think that’s the truth. I think it definitely gets distorted after a while. I know for me it did. It just kept getting convoluted to a point where I started questioning my own truth, like “What did I really see? What was that really?” So I think it stops right before that split.”

- *Naronda, Loyalist*



**But for many (usually loyalists),
there’s a STOPPING POINT
on the journey...**



And so for this journey, we need to
TAKE OFF OUR BLINDERS.

“My parents indoctrinated me heavily into the Catholic church ... Being indoctrinated in the Catholic church was limiting **because of those horse blinders, there was so much of the world I wasn't seeing. There was so much of the world I wasn't experiencing..** Very slowly, but very surely, [the blinders] evaporated. A very restricted view, and then **as they started to evaporate, I could see more and more of the world beyond the blinders,** and then finally the memory of the blinders survives, that I recognize that, yes, I was blinded, that I was limited in my worldview.”

- John H., Convert



WE NEED TO BE PRESENT.

“This perfectly portrays the way I feel about how a lot of people seek out information...I liked the zombie part because I feel **a lot of people are heavily dependent on social media and various news outlets to tell them how to behave, what to think, and what to believe.** And I think that a lot of people tend to believe what they read **without a lot of critical thinking.** But I was always a critical thinker when I was growing up. I questioned everything.... I was seeking the truth.... The way the world has devolved in the last couple of years is that **people aren't really seeking the truth. They're just seeking what confirms their bias.** It's this mindless, lacking critical thinking view of the world that gets into their heads through their phones....

They're just seeking what goes along with what they think is the right thing.” - *Annette, Convert*



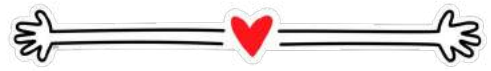
WE NEED TO BE SELF-AWARE.

"When baby elephants are captured to be taken to zoos or the circus, **they're chained**. And the chain is strong enough to hold them at that point. **But as they get older, they don't change the chain because they've been educated, they've been conditioned to think I can't break it**. So even as full grown elephants, they could just rip that chain apart. They don't struggle against it because they've been beaten down or have accepted their fate... The truth for him as an infant elephant is he can't get out... and that's what they're counting on that after a while, the elephant is going to keep trying. Then he's going to get to a point, he's going to go, "I can't get out of this. This is my truth. I'm stuck here."

Over the course of the years, that false truth becomes reality for them. So now you have this false truth that is now the reality for a **3,000-pound, 20-foot high elephant that can't break a chain that it can probably break this by sneezing**. When something is not real and becomes truth, you have to be very careful that you know the false truth from the real truth. *[What would happen if the elephant knew the real truth in this image?]* It would break through and would leave." - Edgar, Loyalist

ALL WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE BIGGER PICTURE

“I was thinking a lot about truth being circular, and not being a linear process... and then also being a pattern. **There is nothing in the universe that's in isolation from anything else, everything is very interconnected**, and everything is interdependent... I was thinking about the interdependence of all facts, and all truth. That is one way that **I measure and evaluate new information, is by looking at how it's interconnected with other forces and other realities in the world**. All of these things are circular and interacting with each other, and nothing is just lines in isolation from other lines, it's interconnecting circles... I think they could be the very atoms that make up the universe. They could be experience, and one circle could be a person's life or it could be ... I think it could be the image is history, and then lines are experiences, or they could be ideas, or they could be scientific facts, or they could be sociological ideas. It could be so many different things, **and all of those things are true... All of those things working together.**” - Annalise, Loyalist



“It’s all of these units working together, and they’re individuals who have a purpose, but also it’s creating something together, and **there is a way to do it that creates something collectively.**”

- Annalise , Loyalist



Because while the journey to truth can feel lonely, ultimately, **WE CAN'T GET TO TRUTH ALONE.**



“Different people of different races and cultures making up the strata of our country. **Everyone holds a puzzle piece and has the idea that their country is shaped like their piece, but when put together it changes the shape of the country.**”

- Michael S., Loyalist

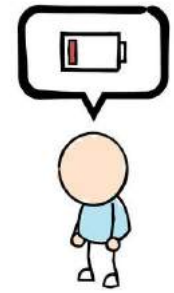
WE NEED TO OBSERVE HOW THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER (AS OPPOSED TO MAKING THEM FIT)



**BUT YOU SEE, THERE'S
A COST TO ALL OF THIS.**

“If someone were to say, tell me some information about one of my dogs or something, then I would think - is this important information that I need to know that may help me in the future? And most likely, anything relating to my dogs would be important. So then, I would move on to my next step. Whereas if it was something saying, like, "Your mom's ugly" or something like that, I would just say, give it a second to say that was really silly and not even worth giving more thought or responding to. **I've learned to treat my energy like a currency and I don't want to waste too much of it on silly things...**

I don't have an unlimited amount of energy to do research or spend so much time processing everything. So, in order to save that energy for what's important, my first step is to figure out what is even going to be worth using that energy on.” - Andy, Loyalist



“You have to be willing to hear the facts and be willing to **admit you're wrong**, but you can't hesitate because then you kind of dig yourself in a hole. You have that defensive reasoning, and someone's telling you all this stuff and you're defending it. So then at the very end, if you end up flipping, it's like, “Well, what was all that stuff you were talking an hour ago?” I think **the only way [out of the hole] is to just admit you were wrong**, and flip to the other side. **It may be hard, but that's the only way you can get the truth out**, especially if you're going to pass on more information to other people. And at least now you will have all the facts.”

- Oshea, Convert

“**I didn't understand [Black Lives Matter] and I was judgmental, like a lot of white people**. But I'm like, I'm going to do the same thing for for Black Lives Matter. I want to investigate, to see what I can find compared to what is being displayed to me in the media. And I was listening to stories and it wore me down. I had to take a couple breaks from listening and reading some of the stories just because they all ended death or violence. The feelings I was feeling... And then I had black friends, who they're like, “Yeah the stuff that you're feeling is what we've been trying to tell you.”

And I'm like, “**Oh my god, I get it. I feel so bad and I'm so sorry that I didn't try to do this a while ago. So I admit that I was wrong** and that I don't understand **but I'm doing my best.**” - Ashley, Convert



There is a risk to BEING WRONG



AND A RISK IN TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH

“It represents reaching for the truth. It's out there, you just gotta reach for it..

Right now you can't find the truth because there's so much, just like the water, the space, the air. It's vast - you have to really reach and try to find it..

I always try to research stories that I have questions about. To me it's like just grasping to try to find it..

If you believe everything you hear, you're not informed. Because like I said, there's just too much propaganda out there. You just have to keep searching and you just gotta keep reaching to find the truth.”

- Cindy, Convert

Reorienting Ourselves TO THE TRUTH

“You spend your entire childhood being told this is how your belief should be, this is what you should do, you don't do this, so on and so on, and then you just... You get to the point where you're like, "Okay, some of that doesn't make sense," you start, "Okay, maybe I'll go a different way for once."... **Just like on a roller coaster. When you go over the peak and circling down, you get the thrill, and going up is the anticipation and the what if...** that's exactly what it felt like.”

- Erin, Convert

“I'm just trying to figure out what's right and what's wrong on the news. I compare about five, sometimes more news sites trying to figure out who's telling the truth and who's not. You put on CNN, they're saying one thing, FOX says something different, completely the opposite of that. Even local news... One might tell me a little bit about this story and then the other one will tell me more details of the story... I try to compare all the different ones and try to ... put it all together to try to figure out what the truth really is... **[It's] like a rollercoaster, kind of up and down. You read one site and you think everything's this way, you read another it's the other way. It's just like you're going up and down, back and forth trying to figure out what's really right and what's not, what's a lie and what's true.**”

- Bobbi, Loyalist





“So that wind, that's that change. Because you think it's a bridge, and you think, engineered, it's structurally sound. And so, I have this foundation from my parents, and my mom is the strongest person I've ever seen on the planet, so [she] was my engineer that helped me build my bridge on my foundation. **But then that wind starts coming through, that change, those differences of opinion,** those things in life where you're thinking, "Oh, okay, well I didn't see that coming. I didn't expect that." And then something big comes through, and **it shakes you to the core, and then your bridge collapses.**” - *Theesa, Convert*

Breaking Down The Very Foundation OF WHAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE

“I will tell you to **tune in with who you are and your heart...** you want to make sure it’s feeling good for you.”

- *Nadia, Loyalist*



**ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, SOME DON'T WANT TO PAY THE PRICE.
FOR LOYALISTS, THE TRUTH FEELS GOOD
AND THEY ARE UNWILLING TO SHAKE THEIR FOUNDATION.**

“It's a Japanese method of **restoring broken pottery to make it more beautiful and more stable than it was before it was broken**. And I feel like it's a metaphor for my life because there were a lot of hardships when I was growing up and a lot of damage done to me as a little kid that I felt pretty broken when I was growing up, but... I was able to put the pieces back together in a way that made me a better person...

I don't think that the truth shattered my bowl, harmful people shattered my bowl. **I guess my truth was what happened as a result of putting the bowl back together. That's how it fits. The truth comes as a result of me putting the bowl back together...** I'm still trying to do that, even now.” - *Annette, Convert*



**But for those who change,
they must reimagine
WHAT'S POSSIBLE.**



**In this way, we
embrace growth
coming out of the
world we
inhabit into
A NEW TRUTH.**



**WHAT
TRUTH
FEELS LIKE**

LIBERATING • LOVING • PEACE • LIFEGIVING

(MORE COMMON WITH CONVERTS)

GROWTH • VALIDATION

(MORE COMMON WITH LOYALISTS)

TOOLKIT TO TRUTH

In short - in order to change one's own relationship to truth, one must have:



AGILITY

Actual ability to look at things from multiple perspectives



EMPATHY

To see beyond yourself and have a heart for others' experiences



WILLINGNESS

To take a risk, a leap of faith, to be wrong

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark, textured sweater and a bracelet, is shown from the chest up. She has her hands clasped in front of her and is looking down. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with greenery. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

What Impacts How Truthful Something Feels?

The truth is slow and can CHANGE PERSPECTIVE OVER TIME.

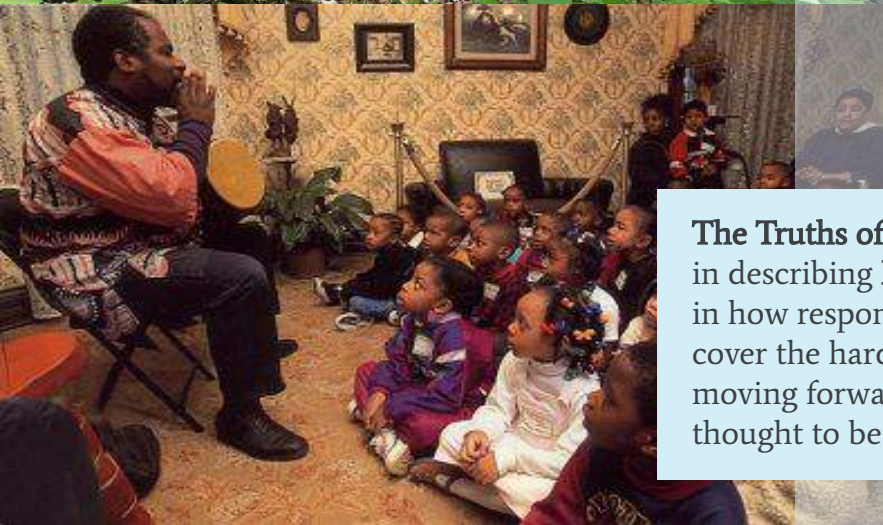
*“This is water that's going to be flowing, so water is going to be my beliefs, it's going to be my life experiences, the people I meet, flowing through this canyon of truth and the walls of the canyon are the stable truth. And I think with time, those evolve... **The evolutions or the erosions of my truth are not drastic or dramatic.** I don't believe, overnight, that things just change... I think **it does change over time... I think truth reveals itself.**”*

- Michael S., Loyalist

*“But all these **news outlets... are always in a race to be the first one to break that story...** That becomes the impetus, especially to the editor, the owner of the publication, to be number one on the billboard. So there's always that race to get the story in there first... Some people think, “Well, because they were the first to break the story, it's got to be true.”... **Whether it be true or not, think for instance the story on the border patrol agents on horseback.** The thing that came out of there, they're whipping the Haitians and so forth how inhumane... And come to find out **the guy who took the picture says, “Yeah, they weren't doing anything wrong.** They were just riding the horses and trying to control the horses.”*

- Javier, Loyalist





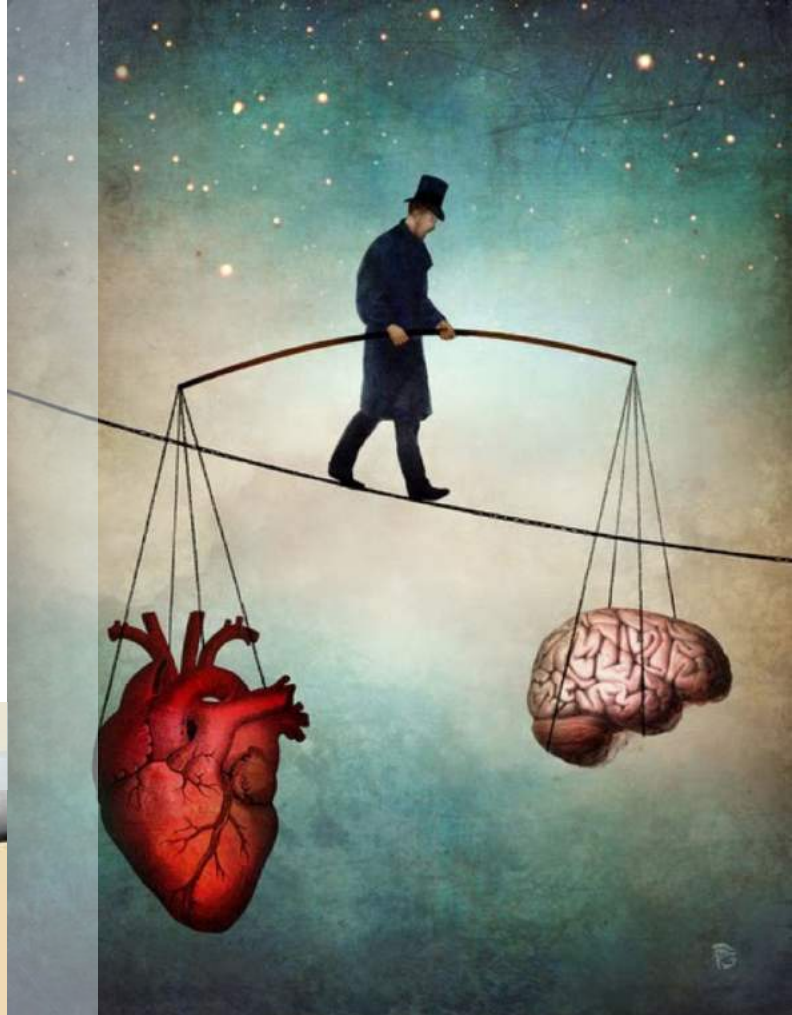
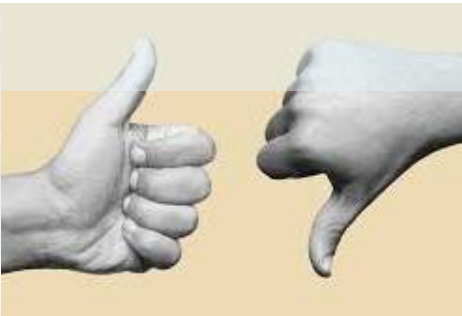
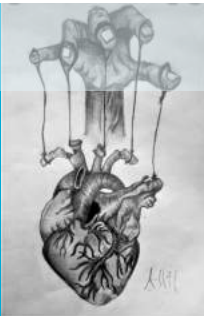
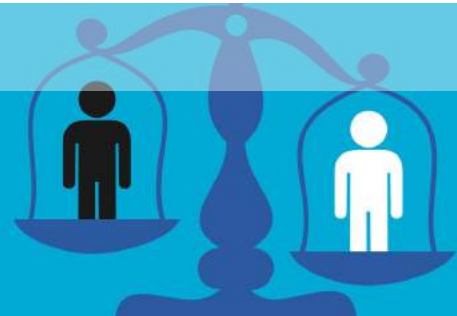
The Truth of A HUMAN STORY

Across all segments, there is a clear distinction made between the truth of science vs. truth of human experience. **The Truth of Science** concerns knowing with precision what we know about the universe around us in contrast to the **Truth of Human Experience**, which concerns our lived realities as they are felt in our bodies, emotions, and relationships. This is the collection of circumstances and reactions we have to suffering, hardship, loss, and other reminders of our humanity.

The Truths of Human Experience were more meaningful to religious conservatives in describing **Experiential Truth** and **Universal Truth**. Furthermore, it plays a role in how respondents think about News outlets as more trustworthy when they cover the hardships of “real” people, and may prove useful in cultivating **empathy** moving forward. Our study found that news sources that cover the stories of those thought to be elite and privileged were less trustworthy.

Truth as Balance: WEIGHING THE OPTIONS

- Balance common metaphor around truth – about half of our participants believe that between two truths, the actual truth rests directly in between
- Most common expression is that of balance between two perspectives (Right/Left)
- A potentially healthier expression of balance could be balance between heart and head (leading to critical thinking) or the importance of weighting perspectives, opening up a third way





How Do We Know What's True?

THERE ARE FOUR ANCHORS TO TRUTH



CULTURAL TRUTH

Getting to truth through pre-established social mores or legal precedent. This is about being an insider, part of a community and following its lead.



REIMAGINED TRUTH

Getting to truth as an outsider, often oppressed, having to reimagine what truth is for you based on your own experiences.



DIVINED TRUTH

Believing that the truth is innate in you, instilled by God, and living your truth as a self-identified outsider of larger culture.



SCIENTIFIC TRUTH

Getting to the truth scientifically/mathematically, and following the lead of science/math to know what's true.

FOUR ANCHORS TO TRUTH

Individuals believe what they've experienced and oftentimes, their experience is one of oppression.

Individuals use life lessons as a guide for what's true or not.

REIMAGINED TRUTH

Individuals believe truth is not man made, but God made and the divine is within them. Truth is not negotiable - it is absolute, immutable, and universal, and they are a self-identified outsider of a larger culture.

DIVINED TRUTH

MAN MADE

OUTGROUP

NATURE

INGROUP

CULTURAL TRUTH

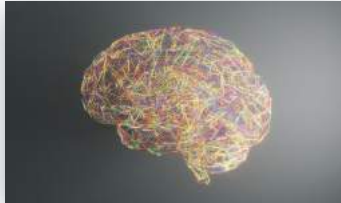
Individuals believe in the truth that has been determined by society. They believe in established systems, like legal precedent, as an arbiter of truth, and accept truth by the consensus of the people.

SCIENTIFIC TRUTH

Individuals believe truth is pure and of nature, absolute and immutable. Truth is verifiable and logical. One gets to the truth scientifically/mathematically, and follows the lead of science/math to know what's true.

CULTURAL TRUTH

INGROUP, MANMADE TRUTH



With cultural truth, individuals believe in the truth that has been essentially man made. They believe in established systems, like legal precedent, as an arbiter of truth, and accept truth by the consensus of the people.

“I think that what comes out of the judicial system, there's a lot of interpretation of facts and of laws and of precedent set... there's been a ton of deliberation by a lot of experts and a lot of facts presented... **Getting at the truth of what actually happened is what happens in a courtroom.** And at the end of the day, there's evidence that can be presented that casts beyond a reasonable doubt that someone's guilty or not guilty. **But unless there's irrefutable evidence to the contrary, a lot of it is just coming to the most logical conclusion based off of the facts presented.** So, I think if you're looking for a good source of people trying to get at the truth, it's in a courtroom.”

- Kristin, Convert

“**Sherlock Holmes and Batman**, are both, in their respective worlds, **the greatest detectives...** they follow the clues to a **logical conclusion** and they both accept the irrationality of other humans... Basically **if B follows A then C must follow B.** I wake up in the morning and I see the sunrise, logically, I'm thinking, "Okay. Yeah, the earth is revolving and the sun appears to rise, but actually, the planet I'm standing on is moving." It is logical to proceed from the idea that, "Well, we're on a planet, the spin and the mass of the planet provides gravity, which means that I don't fall off the planet, and because the planet revolves, the sun appears to change its position in the sky. It's not changing its position, where I'm at is changing my position," that would be a demonstration of logic.”

- John H., Convert

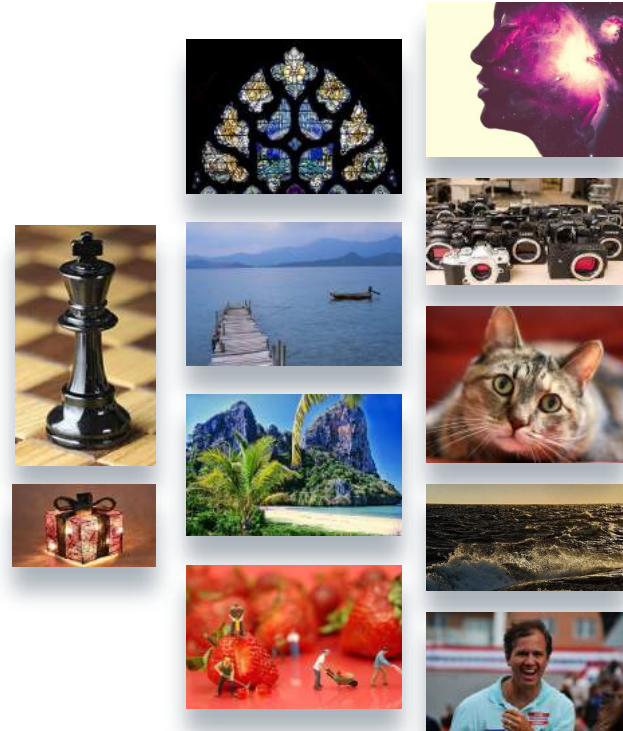
With reimagined truth, people believe what they've experienced. For them, truth is their biography, and oftentimes, their experience is one of oppression. This kind of truth is looking at larger cultural systems, realizing they don't work for you, and then using life lessons as a guide for what's true or not into the future.

“And when I see this piece, I see the black queen which is the strongest piece in game. I'm on a journey of truth, and not just my truth. **My goal is to help other people realize their truths, and how it doesn't have to be tied into what the world thinks or what the world expects.** And that's what that means to me, because I've never felt like I've been able to be myself in my previous life. It's me focusing on being myself, and not accepting everything that people deliver to me. And **accepting that as my truth, that it has to be my truth. That it's okay for me to say, "No, I'm not okay with that," or, "No, I don't want to be that," or, "I don't want to do that. This is what I want to do."** - *Theesa, Convert*

“You're not looking through one lens, you're looking through a multiplicity of lenses... then you flip up all of it and then what you see is true. What you see is you're seeing it, undistorted... **There's these different lenses that come down in front of the eyes** and that helps you to see things more clearly based on who the individual is themselves, their understanding of the truth. **Because people's, again, life experiences and traumas and biases and personal prejudices,** and none of these are negative, **they're all just kind of where people are. People go through and suffer things and go through and experience things, and have to have a lens in front of them that helps them to see the truth the way that they can see it,** but that doesn't change the objective trueness of the truth. It's their own biases, it's their own prejudice, their own life experience or whatever, that's distorting the truth.” - *Michael S., Loyalist*

REIMAGINED TRUTH

OUTGROUP, MANMADE TRUTH



DIVINED TRUTH

OUTGROUP, NATURAL TRUTH



Those who believe in divined truth see the world, they believe, through the eyes of God. For them, their truth is not man made, but God made and the divine is within them. For them, truth is not negotiable - it is absolute, immutable, and universal, and they are self-identified as an outsider of a larger culture.

“God gives you wisdom and it just comes to your mind instantly like in the twinkling of an eye, you already know you're saved and **you know whatever God opens your eyes to and teaches you is the truth..** The word is the truth. So you read the Bible and when you read the Bible, it opens your eyes. And **the only book you really need in your life is the Bible. It's the book full of wisdom and truth and guidance.** And it has the answer to any kind of question you have in life.... It's got the answer for everything.”

- Bobbi, Loyalist

“I feel like **the truth is God.** He is the ultimate truth, man. I believe that obviously, there's different religions and such, and disciplines, I should say, that they would agree, but in my opinion, **God is the truth and that's who I seek for all the truth.**”

- Angel, Loyalist

For these folks, there is a divine natural law that we are in pursuit of discovering. Truth is pure and of nature, absolute and immutable. Truth is verifiable and logical. Getting to the truth scientifically/mathematically, and following the lead of science/math to know what's true.

“It represents either the golden ratio or the Fibonacci sequence... mathematical truth as a form of the ideal test for truth. **The things that we know with the greatest certainty are mathematical...** So many things are gray or disputable or a matter of opinion, as opposed to truth, even whether they're a matter of opinion or a matter of fact is up for debate, but **if you accept the fundamental premises or the rules of math, two plus two can only be equal to four, there is no gray, there is no alternative answer, there's only one answer, the right answer** and the wrong answer. And it's not just a closed system that has a internal gain, it matches reality, and one of the signs of that is that the greatest and **the most complex and difficult achievements in human history, all rely on math.**”

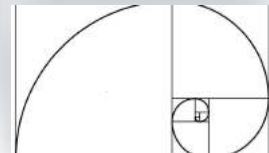
- Charles, Convert

“If you're aren't going out there and you're researching and discovering the truth, you're not going to get it. **You have to have these people, researchers, these scientists doing this out in the field, doing the work, doing the legwork... get[ting] solid physical evidence.** You can be in the lab and theorize all you want, but once you're out in the field you can actually collect, defy the theory says with evidence... **If you want to just go back down to the basics, the scientific method.... allows you to go through and make ideas and then test those ideas to see if they're actually true.**”

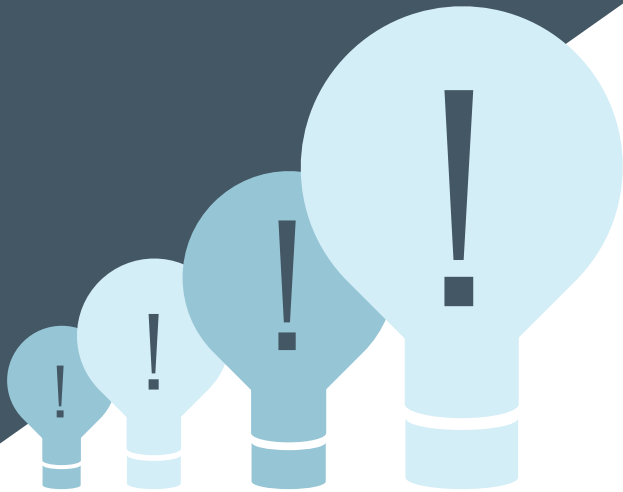
- Trevor, Convert

OBJECTIVE/SCIENTIFIC TRUTH

INGROUP, NATURAL TRUTH



WHAT'S THE POINT? AND WHY DOES THIS MATTER?



1. The existence of these different forms indicate **we are a society that holds multiple beliefs about what's true and has different ways of knowing what's true.**
2. Because we're not working from the same system - **appeals to groups regarding what's true won't hit the same for everyone.**
3. **People can and do access these different ways of knowing as singular approaches or in composite.**
4. But we do know that **the ability to access multiple approaches while also being aware of these approaches represents critical thinking.**



STEPS TO GETTING TO TRUTH

DELIBERATED TRUTH

How You Know What's True

1

SEEK INFORMATION

- Avoid social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, unless you trust the person posting it
- Local news is less sensational and may be more principled in its journalism
- Google searching is good, but ignore sponsored results or results based on algorithms. Compare to other search engines like Bing, or go several results down.

2

COMPARE THE NARRATIVE

Compare the narrative overlaps & discrepancies between accounts of the same event/topic. Is there a consensus across sites/posts?

3

EVALUATE THE RELIABILITY OF THE SOURCE

- Is it providing “tangible” (verifiable) evidence?
- Is the person publishing/posting an expert?
- Does it cater to elitists & privileged people only? Or does it also speak to concerns & struggles of everyday, common folk?
- Is there a hidden agenda here? Who paid for this? Is it trying to sell me something?
- Look up Snopes

4

CONSULT WITH FRIENDS

- Have they encountered alternative versions?
- Do they trust their sources?

9

CHOOSE!

Choose the version that makes you feel you've made the best decision.

- This might imply literally a feel-good outcome:
- Though this may also be uncomfortable and difficult in the short-term but with long-term positive results

8

TRUST YOUR GUT

Your intuition is sharpened over years of experience and should not be ignored!

7

EXPLORE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

- Sometimes pushing beyond your comfort zone is needed
- The more you broaden your horizons, especially through travel, the easier this is.

6

MEASURE THE NARRATIVE

Measure the narrative against your values, morals, and upbringing. Do they match?

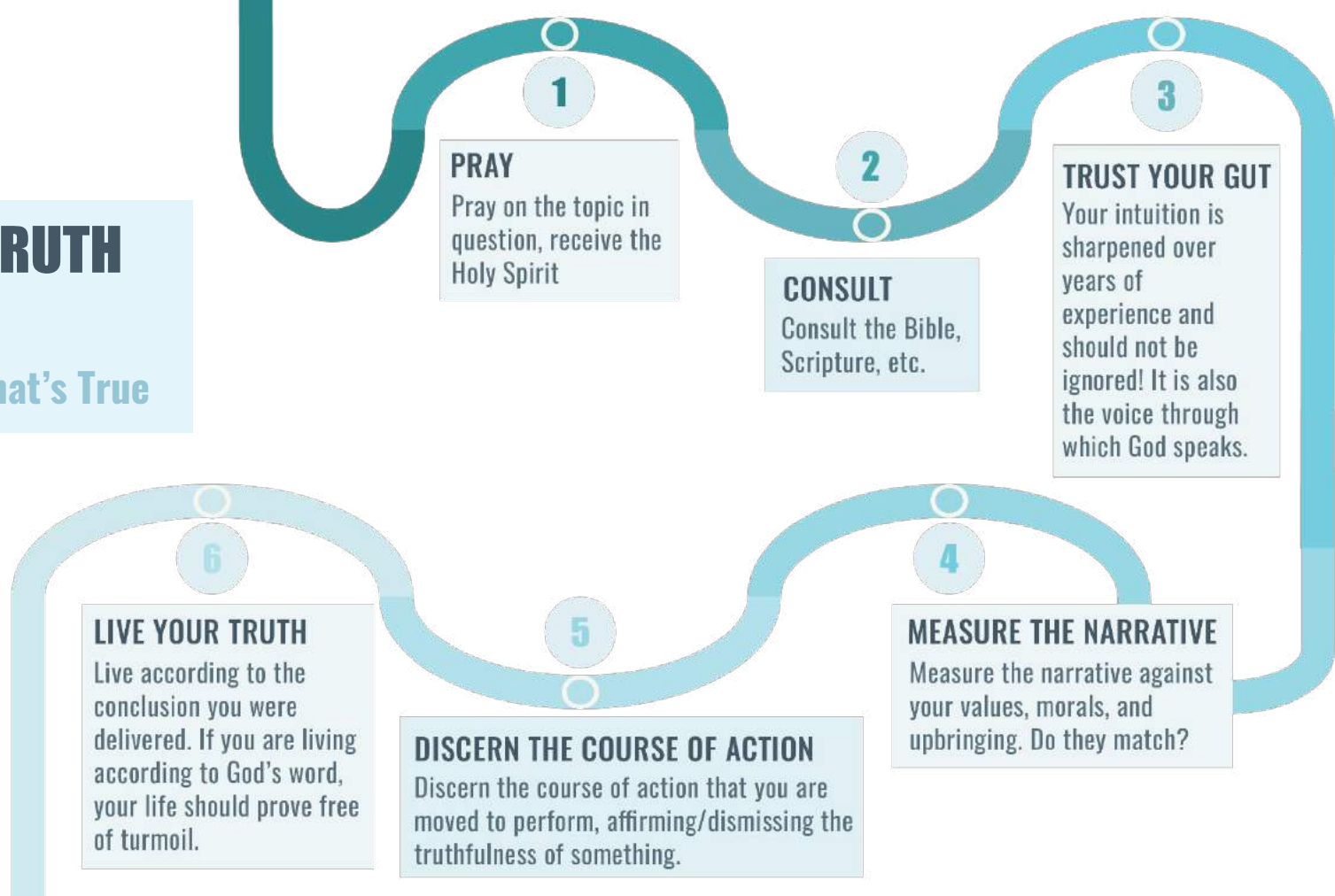
5

SEARCH EXPERTS

Look up the experts you have come to trust.

UNIVERSAL TRUTH (RELIGIOUS)

How You Know What's True



EARLY RECOMMENDATIONS

Rebuild Trust

Right now, people are skeptical of hidden agendas behind the news and distrust abounds. Media organizations and other disseminators of information must be especially mindful of the following:

Truth is Slow. Acknowledge the slowness of truth, and people's reservation against speed. Slow down the news, reduce [sensory stimulation](#), and improve people's relationship with the truth

Centering Human Stories - Storytelling with person whose like me to win back trust or increase believability

Balance, or at least a third way to see things. It's not about weighing perspectives equally but accounting for both head and heart while offering more than two counter narratives

Change the Media Ecosystem

When individuals describe the media environment, it is sometimes antagonistic, and always chaotic. It's clear that our media ecosystem is not serving the populace. We need to provide a better environment for people to get to truth while raising awareness that their current sources of information aren't required to present both sides of a given issue, due to the repeal of the fairness doctrine. We need to find to ways to introduce discipline into the truth-seeking process, along with a sense of consistency and steadiness, in order to calm down the chaos. A potential type of media for exploration could be [News without Commentary](#).

EARLY RECOMMENDATIONS

Bolster People on the Journey

Individuals are keenly aware of the cost of changing their minds, and the cost of doing their research. Many have decided to stop before they've even started.

We need to find ways to **encourage people along the way to go from certainty to uncertainty**, giving space to individuals and the opportunity to change, all while developing a growth mindset that pushes people to go beyond what they have always known and learning something new.

Provide a Soft Place to Land

The journey to truth often involves leaving a feeling of safety and/or trusted community.

Those interested in changing people's minds must provide a **“soft place to land”** for those taking the leap of faith into a new way of thinking.

EARLY RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage Empathy

Rife among those who tended to have nihilistic beliefs about truth was a profound lack of empathy for others. This lack of empathy was accompanied with a sense that certain groups of people always lied and that the truth was dead.

Empathy is a key factor in getting to truth for those who seek it, so finding ways to increase empathy among the populace feels important to getting to truth.

Build Critical Thinking Skills

Many of our participants had a partial toolkit to getting to truth and didn't have a full set of critical thinking skills. It's critical we establish and teach more tools to navigate the information ecosystem today.

Additionally, **it's important we build awareness of not only of one's own way of thinking, but of others**, in order to broaden perspectives, build empathy, and help people see the bigger picture.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

1. **Take a Breath. Put down the Phone. And Slow Down.** - The news in our feeds comes at us really fast, and over stimulates us to the point that we're reacting from a gut place, not a thoughtful place. Find ways to slow down your news consumption and be present, by practicing deep listening and asking good questions.
2. **Ask Yourself Why** - Consider the why behind what you believe to be true. Is it because it's comfortable? Credible? Just feels right? Or have you pursued and examined other truths? Many people look for information that confirms their existing beliefs instead of looking to grow and adopt new information. Push yourself to examine your own thinking and then consider new information.
3. **Hold Onto Your Humanity, Your Hive and Your Hope** - If you find yourself identifying other humans in extreme terms - always liars, never truthful - consider that you may have a limited view of the bigger picture. Try to put yourself in the shoes of someone who believes differently than you. What might their life experiences look like? What might guide their thinking?
4. **Expand Your Thinking** - Find ways to introduce yourself to new ways of looking at the world. You don't have to embrace those ways, but even considering how others live and/or think about life can help you think more critically about what you accept and reject as truth. Discipline yourself to reflect on the world through multiple lenses and consider others perspectives. How can personal values guide what's true for you? Scientific and/or legal principles? The personal experience of yourself and others? Get comfortable with looking at the world differently.
5. **Build a Better, More Truthful Future** - Given our current truth-challenged environment, consider ways in which you can make the media, politics, and life online more truthful. Is it using and suggesting fact-checking sites? Refusing to repost something that makes you feel emotional without researching it? Questioning dominant narratives (and your own ways of thinking)? Establishing and modeling good critical thinking and media habits will not only be good for your peace of mind, but for others.

THE RESEARCH TEAM



GRETCHEN BARTON is the Research Director for Future Majority and Principal at Worthy Strategy Group, LLC. With a special interest in the psychology underpinning behavior change, Gretchen has designed and delivered a number of initiatives in the policy space, including hazing behavior and how to stop it, and most recently, poverty in America for the Gates Foundation.

She has led research and served as a behavioral science strategist for major organizations and campaigns (e.g. the NFL, NextGen, New Moral Majority, Ideas 42, Way to Win and others), uncovering key messaging insights to turn out the youth vote, revealing voters' deepest hopes and dreams for presidential campaigns, and unearthing deep insights for key organizers in the build up to the 2020 election. She recently researched and released "Winning the Future: A Deep Dive into the Unconscious Minds of Voters" in partnership with Wide Angle Research to help understand this strategic moment in American history for the Democratic Party.

Gretchen holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Communications and Planning Campaigns with distinction in research from Cornell University. She has written for the Journal of College Student Development and the American Journal of Health Behavior, and co-authored, "Prevalence and Profiling: Hazing Among College Students and Points of Intervention." She recently co-authored "The Science of Winning with Stories: Using Agency, Urgency, and Community," a reflection on the most effective messaging to engage and move a populace.

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