

Worldview: Relativism vs Absolute Truth

July 30, 2017

Preparation:

1. From John 17:17: What did Jesus mean when he prayed “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”?
2. Recall memory verse from this week: Proverbs 1:7

Relativism: the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

Individual Relativism: what is ethically right is relative to the individual

Cultural Relativism: what is ethically right is relative to one’s culture

“Life has no meaning a priori... It is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose.” — Jean-Paul Sartre

“Truth is what is true for you.” – L. Ron Hubbard

“We have made an extraordinary transition. From moral absolutes to moral relativism...Moral problems become medical ones and yesterday’s sinners become today’s patients.” Ellen Goodman

“You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist”. - Friedrich Nietzsche

Superman (or Overman) theory: would emerge when any man (or woman) with superior potential completely masters himself and strikes off conventional Christian “herd morality” to create his own value, which are completely rooted in life on this earth.”

Absolute truth: inflexible reality: fixed, invariable, unalterable facts. For example, it is a fixed, invariable, unalterable fact that there are absolutely no square circles and there are absolutely no round squares.

“The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God.” – John F. Kennedy

“The idea of cultural relativism is nothing but an excuse to violate human rights.” Shirin Ebadi

“In contrast to ethical relativism, Christianity sets forth a system of absolute moral values and affirms that God has placed within the very structure of this universe certain moral principles that are fixed and immutable.” Martin Luther

Absolutes and Scripture:

Believers see God as the source of truth

Psa 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.

Psa 119:160 The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

God sees Himself as the source of truth

Isa 45:18-19 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other. (19) I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.' I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.

Jesus sees God the Father as the source of truth

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Jesus sees Himself (God the Son) as the source of truth

Joh 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Joh 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Jesus sees God the Holy Spirit as the source of truth

Joh 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

There is exclusivity (absoluteness) in the truth

Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Gal 5:6-7 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (7) You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Act 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Scripture is the standard of truth

2Ti 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17) that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

2Ti 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

The Church is the standard-bearer of the truth

1Ti 3:14-15 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, (15) if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Eph 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Man is saved by knowing the truth

Col 1:3-6 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, (4) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, (5) because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, (6) which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,

2Th 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

Jas 1:18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Man is condemned in his rejection of the truth

2Ti 4:1-4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: (2) preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (3) For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, (4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Rom 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Rom 1:24-25 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

“If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with fact. Of course, anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about.” C.S. Lewis

Consider these absolutes. Are there equivalents in our society that demonstrate the folly of moral relativism?

1. Heaven and Hell
2. Sin
3. Death
4. Judgment
5. Exclusivity

Preparation for next week

Reflect on Matthew 6:24. Consider what other masters tempt us in our service to our Master.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.