

What is Relativism?

OK so you may be thinking: “That is one big word. How are we supposed to learn about a word that I don’t even use? What are you doing to us...?”

Fear not – this is basically all about how people say they have their own ‘truths’ and about what this means for us as Christians.

[Wikipedia notes that](#) – “Moral relativism is the position that moral or ethical propositions do not reflect absolute or universal truths but instead are relative to social, cultural, historical or personal references, and that there is no single standard by which to assess an ethical proposition’s truth. Relativistic positions often see moral values as applicable only within certain cultural boundaries or the context of individual preferences. An extreme relativist position might suggest that the moral or ethical judgments or acts of one person or group cannot or should not be judged by another, though most relativists propound a more limited version of the theory.”

So, basically moral relativism believes there is not a fixed morality (such as given by God) but rather that moral judgements are dependent on a person’s personal experiences, beliefs and preferences.

A Story

PLEASE NOTE – This is not a true story – but is a version of an urban legend on the internet.

A woman was away in a hotel for a weekend. She walked into the elevator on her way down from her room, when she noticed two big black men at the back of the elevator. They were big and intimidating. The woman froze. Her first thought was: These two are going to rob me. But she didn’t want to be racist so she stayed on the elevator.

Avoiding eye contact, she turned around stiffly and faced the elevator doors as they closed. A second passed, and then another second, and then another. Her fear increased! The elevator didn’t move. Panic consumed her. She thought – I’m trapped and about to be robbed!

Then, one of the men said, “Hit the floor.”

Instinct told her: Do what they tell you. She dived down onto the elevator floor and thought, ‘take my money and spare me’. More seconds passed. She heard one of the men say politely,

“Ma’am, I meant hit the floor you need on the elevator button..” The one who said it had a little trouble getting the words out. He was trying hard to hold in a laugh. She lifted her head and looked up at the two men. They reached down to help her up.

She thought: ‘What a spectacle I’ve made of myself.’

She was too humiliated to speak. She wanted to blurt out an apology, but words failed her. How do you apologize to two perfectly respectable gentlemen for behaving as though they were going

to rob you? As the elevator reached her floor, she ran out and away from the embarrassment of the situation

At the end of the weekend, she went to pay her bill. Amazingly, she found that it had already been paid. On the receipt was a message, "Thanks for the incident in the lift, that was the best laugh we've had in years. Look out for that in my next movie."

It was signed: Will Smith}

OK so this story isn't true. The point from it is that it's easy to make snap judgements, but what are we basing those judgements on? You may believe something, and believe it sincerely, but it may be very wrong, as happened with this woman.

Use the words of a rap I created from one of my poems

This is called "We Spend Our Lives Searching." This is also available as a spoken word video... <https://youtu.be/8ULc0TAaQ5I>

You may want to read out this cypha, as a poem, as it has some powerful truths in it (hopefully!)

Isaiah 40 and 41 – God tells us that idols are useless

Isaiah 40.18-19:

"To whom, then, will you compare God?
What image will you compare him to?"

As for an idol, a craftsman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and fashions silver chains for it."

Isaiah 41.21-24:

"Present your case," says the LORD.
"Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King.

"Bring in your idols to tell us
what is going to happen.
Tell us what the former things were,
so that we may consider them
and know their final outcome.
Or declare to us the things to come,

tell us what the future holds,
so we may know that you are gods.
Do something, whether good or bad,
so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear.

But you are less than nothing
and your works are utterly worthless;
he who chooses you is detestable.

Isaiah 41.28-29:

I look(at the idols) but there is no one—
no one among them to give counsel,
no one to give answer when I ask them.

See, they are all false!
Their deeds amount to nothing;
their images are but wind and confusion.

This is about false gods being nothing. Only God is real. God challenges the pieces of wood and metal shaped my mere man, by craftsmen – to come forward and answer some questions. God questions how people can compare him to an image or a statue. God challenges people to bring their idols in and get them to prophesy or give counsel – but there is nothing, no answer. This shows that they are all false.

But this reveals a flipside too. From these verses we know that God can present his case, that God is logical, rational and speaks clearly. We find that there is no comparison to God. God knows the former things, things to come, considers things, declares what is to be. God knows about good and bad things, recognises the characteristics of humans. God detests idols, things people put in their lives ahead of God. We find an accurate description of all the false gods across the world that people worship – they are less than nothing, utterly worthless, useless. God gives counsel, unlike these silent images and statues. God alone, is living and speaks with his people. Who is there like God? There is no-one like God.

Tony Campolo story:

On the plane from LA to Philly. Person sat next to him asked what his job was. He was very tired and wanted to sleep so said 'I'm a Baptist Evangelist' (normally ends the conversation). If he wants to speak he says he's a sociologist. Man said to him, 'know what I believe? I believe religion is like going to Philly (I hope not Tony thought). 'There are many ways to get to Philly, but we all end up in the same place.' Tony went to sleep. Near Philly there were great storms and he said to the man, 'I believe it's not like that at all. There's only one way down onto this runway and the control tower knows it. I'm glad the pilot isn't saying, 'don't worry, there's many ways to land on the runway..' Truth is there is only one way to God, through Jesus.

Moral Relativism and Christianity

Moral relativism has many conflicts with the Kingdom of God. As Christians, we believe there is one true God, that the only way to God is through Jesus, and that the ultimate authority on moral and other issues is the written word of God, The Bible. The Bible makes it clear that God is above all and that any other worship is idolatry and against the nature of God. The Christian faith believes that only by accepting Jesus as Lord of your life can people be 'right' before God.

Moral relativism doesn't believe in a single moral code or entity with moral values. So the concept of God and the Bible would be just one moral option, relevant only to those who choose to follow it. They believe other standards are down to the individual and no more or less valid than the Bible. So there is a conflict.

Moral Relativism and Common Sense

There was a story in a local paper recently about a man who alleged to have been thrown out of another club because he was kissing another man. Outraged, the man claimed that he was within his rights to do what he wanted and that it was others who 'had the problem'. But is this true?

Is it true that we can do and believe in whatever we want – and if anyone takes issue with it, they are the one with the problem? No. The ultimate level of this is complete anarchy where people can kill, sacrifice children, rape women, abuse people – but this is all OK because this is my morality and you have to live with it.

There have to be clear moral guidelines and standards. Otherwise people will (and do) exactly how they feel. Increasingly we live in a world where there is no fear of consequences. If there is no God, no rules, then nothing is wrong, and whatever I do means nothing as I won't ultimately be held to account for it.

But can we have shifting standards? No, not really. Because if we are guided by the standards that man or society applies, then we allow society to be a moral guardian. This can never be right as society is so messed up, so twisted and varied in what it believes. How do we set one belief against another? By the greatest compromise? By doing what the loudest and most vocal group wants?

Moral relativism takes away choice and freedom. God's Word actually brings us freedom, because it sets a clear standard by which we can live and enjoy life.

If there was no sun, there would be no morning, no evening, no day or night, no light or dark. Everything we do has a reference point with the sun. The same is more true about God and his Word. Without the Bible, we have no reference point, no guide, no moral code, no law, no certainty of what is right or wrong. More than that, we know that God created all things, knows the past and the future, holds everything in his hands (as we saw in Isaiah).

If we as humans ignore God and his Word and take our reference points from each other and from false idols – then we will be in serious trouble – as we are now.

It's not enough to believe something – it may be wrong!

I may believe that I am a superhero and can fly, but if I tested my theory I would find that I was wrong. You can believe something sincerely and passionately, but you may well be very wrong. One time, people in the world (especially the church) believed the world was flat – but it isn't.

Many people believe all kinds of things in the world of relativism. The claim of Christianity is that there is only one truth, only one way, only one life – and that is through Jesus alone.

Do all roads lead to God?

No, every major religion has a different 'God'.

For example, Hindus believe in many gods. Muslims don't believe Jesus was the son of God and follow Allah, and have to earn their 'salvation' by what they do. Judaism has a system where again to reach Yahweh, Jews must obey certain rules and laws from the Torah (Old Testament rules). Buddhists want to escape life completely – into an after-life and become nothing.

There can be no way that all roads lead to one 'God' because all the ways are different, the rules are different, the gods themselves are all different. So there are 2 choices: either there is no god, or there is one true God. That is what we believe as Christians.

You do things your way and I'll do things mine

Many people argue – you do and believe what you want and I'll believe and do what I want. The thing is we've done that & just look around at the consequences and the mess we are in. And I promise that except for a massive move of God, things will only get worse in the world (except for God's people!)

We all worship something

Think of a couple chart songs like Robbie Williams, 'Make Me Pure'. In it, we have the line, 'Lord make me pure'. Another song by the band Longview, called 'Further' talks about God's love and light. Many love songs could easily be worship songs, sung to God.

What do you worship? You worship something. It may be God, it may be TV, clothes, the internet, football, sport, fashion, alcohol, other drugs, money, success, fame, power.. All of these things are idols, all set ahead of God. And God really hates that. He also hates it because it brings a barrier between you and him. Have you ever seen a movie where someone is in usually a US prison and receives a visit from a loved one? The prisoner is behind a glass window and they can only speak by telephone. The glass pane and the prison walls separate them. That is what an idol does, that is what not knowing God does. It separates you from God.

Christianity's claims are true

There are many adverts in magazines and on TV for things like tarot cards, palm readings, the stars etc. These things, apart from being highly dangerous (as you engage with occult and satanic deception), are totally unreliable most of the time. By the way if you have ever received a reading of any sort, I strongly recommend you reject everything that was said completely. You may want to go and chat to a Christian friend or leader and pray.

But the Bible is unlike any other book (and definitely unlike the garbage in The Da Vinci Code). The Bible has had literally 100s of prophecies fulfilled (many of them told 100s of years in advance like the prophecy of Jesus from Isaiah 42). There have been 13 of 16 prophecies about Israel fulfilled, including God gathering Israel back and making the nation of Israel, as happened in the 20th century.

Christianity claims to be unique...

Jesus said, **'I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one can get to the Father except through me.'** (John 14.6)

God's gift is a free gift that needs simply to be received, unlike other religions. The Bible says that: **'God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.'** (Romans 6.23)
The Bible also says, **'For it is by God's undeserved favour and kindness that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so no-one can boast about it'** (Ephesians 2.8-9)

Christianity doesn't have a set of rules

But there are guidelines. But it's about relationship, it's about God changing your heart.

Will you ask God into your life to change your heart today. Say: Lord Jesus, I believe you are the way, the truth and the life. I confess that I have done things wrong and have sinned against you. I am really sorry and I turn away from my life of sin. Jesus, I confess with my mouth that you are Lord, I believe you died for me on the Cross and rose again and now sit next to God in heaven. I believe you will return one day. I ask you to be Lord of my life completely, to fill me with your Holy Spirit. Thank you Jesus.

Now, please tell someone you've prayed this prayer – it's really important that you tell someone. It's really significant if you've prayed that prayer. Please get some support from other Christians and a church near you – or message us and we'll send you a free booklet.