

# Relativism About Right And Wrong, Truth And Error

At present, most Western countries have experienced drastic increases in crime, a breakdown of families and declining morals. Such things are partly a result of the spread of the philosophy that there are no absolute moral rights and wrongs and no absolute truth.

In Western countries, nearly all non-churchgoers and even numerous churchgoers believe the lie there is no such thing as absolute right and wrong. In his statistical research in 1998, George Barna found that two-thirds of supposedly born-again Christians in the U.S. did not believe in absolute truth.<sup>1</sup> They believe in the theory that each person's view of truth and associated right and wrong is just as valid as every other person's. This theory is called relativism. Relativism can be defined as the belief:

- there is nothing which can be said to be absolutely true.
- there are no absolute changeless moral standards that apply to all people in all situations.

According to relativism, something can only be said to be true or false or right or wrong in terms of the *experiences* and *reasonings* of a *particular person* or *group*. Truth is seen as being only *relative* to what occurs in the *minds* and *physical sense experiences* of *humans*.

The philosophy of relativism is promoted by many other types of philosophies taught at Western universities and by various Eastern religions.

Relativists make their minds and physical senses into “gods” which determine for themselves what is right, wrong, true and false. But note in Isaiah 5:20, God warns He will punish those who call evil things good and good things evil: ***“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”***

## Relativism is also based on an intellectual type of faith

Often people will say, “You can only argue there are absolute standards of right and wrong on the basis of faith.” The answer to this is, “But it takes at least as much intellectual faith to believe there is no absolute rights and wrongs.”

## Relativism is an illogical and contradictory philosophy

Relativism is a ridiculous contradictory philosophy because it basically says, “It is absolutely true that there is nothing which is absolutely true” and “It is absolutely right that there is not one thing which is absolutely right.” Such statements are illogical and are forms of intellectual hypocrisy.

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<sup>1</sup> George Barna, “The Second Coming of the Church”, Word Publishing, Nashville, 1998, page 123.

## **The Bible is the only source of absolute truth about right and wrong**

The Bible is the only source of absolute truth and knowledge of absolute rights and wrongs. All other books contain a mixture of truths and rights with varying degrees of probabilities and possibilities, errors and wrongs. This applies to all books of science, history, philosophy, sociology, economics, geography and so on. Contrary to what rationalists say, absolutes cannot be discovered by human reason.

Absolutes cannot be found by science, contrary to what is said by those following the false philosophies of logical positivism and scientism.

Love is not the only absolute either as some humanists teach. The Bible teaches many other moral absolutes.

Because humans are created in God's own image, they have the ability to receive supernatural revelation from Him of absolutes through His written Word. This does not mean, however, we must accept any one person's interpretations of the Scriptures as absolute. All interpretations themselves should be tested, just like the Bereans did in Acts 17:10-11: *"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."*

## **We cannot know absolute truth about many things**

There are many things about which we cannot know the absolute truth while living in this earthly life. For example, we can only make guesses about whether the universe never ends or has boundaries and how many more years there will be before Jesus returns to Earth.

Also, there are many matters about which the written Word of God does not say there are absolute moral rights and wrongs. For example, the Bible does not command all humans only to eat Italian meals, wear blue clothes, drive green cars with four cylinders, play cricket and work only on farms.

Also, in Romans 14:1-23, Paul shows God does not give New Covenant believers any absolute commands about some religious matters such as whether to observe certain days as devoted to the Lord. But about a great number of other matters, the written Word of God teaches absolute truth and absolute moral rights and wrongs.

## **Evangelistic methods change but God's Gospel does not**

It is true evangelistic methods change from age to age and Christians can have differences from nation to nation about matters on which the Bible does not teach moral absolutes. But sadly, many born-again Christians have become *relativistic* by going beyond Biblical limits in their attempts to make the Gospel *contemporary* and *relative* to the surrounding non-Christian culture.

### **Bible Study Questions**

1. Define relativism.

2. Of what do relativists make gods?
3. Why is relativism based on a type of faith?
4. Why is relativism an illogical and contradictory philosophy?
5. What is the only source of absolute truth?