

Lesson 2: True For You But Not For Me
Testing the claims of Relativism

Background Knowledge

Relativism is the philosophical position that all points of view are equally valid and that all truth is relative to the individual. What it means is that all moral positions, all religious and belief systems are relative to the individual. The main areas that *Relativism* has influenced are: truth, morality, and religion or belief (Religious Pluralism). The pervasiveness of this idea can be seen through popular phrases like, “it’s true for you but not for me,” “who are you to say,” “you cannot know for certain that somethings are wrong,” or “it’s up to each person,” etc. Because of this, *tolerance* has become the new virtue for the society driven by the force of Relativism. This position has taken up a lot of ground in today’s world to the point where people have lost the notion of Truth. Indeed, it is a very dangerous idea with deadly consequences if carried to its full implications.

Key Concept

The key concept of this lesson is to expose the foolishness of Relativism by showing through experience that it does not match with reality.

Game: What’s in the Box?

The activity for this lesson serves as a demonstration of the foolishness of *Relativism*. This is done through getting the students to experience it firsthand, using *reality* as the tool to expose. Reality, in this case, is the curious object in each box, while different answers the students give are different claims or “points of view” about what each object is. Relativism says all point of views of reality are valid (the object can be all things). However, in reality each object is absolutely and objectively the thing that it is. The existence of this kind of reality (absolutes) is at the core of what Relativism rejects. Thus, this activity completely tear this false idea into pieces without even having to use any philosophical arguments!

Discussion: Truth VS Relativism

The discussion only serves as a confirmation or conclusion of the activity. Because the students have experienced the idea of Relativism in practice, this discussion will give name to the idea behind that experience. The students will know right away that it’s foolish and unworkable because it doesn’t match with reality.

Clip: Abbott & Costello’s “Who’s on First”

This classic black and white baseball comedy clip shows the breaking down in communication between the two characters, Abbott and Costello. Costello wants to know the names of the players in the baseball team so he asks Abbott. But because of the unusual names of the players (“Who”, “What” and “I don’t know”) confusion and frustration arise. This clip cements the point that because objective reality does exist (in this case, the names of the players) Relativism will break down. Under Relativism, Costello’s interpretation of the names as mere English words is as valid as Abbott’s intention for those words to represent names. But because of the confusion and frustration, Costello’s point of view is proven as invalid in reality.

Bible study: Job 28:12-28

Relativism says we can make our personal points of view into our own truths and coexist happily together. But do we really have that power to make up “truths”? The bible speaks clearly against that idea. Objective truths do exist and it is outside of us. The bible speaks in term of absolutes and makes objective claims about reality. This passage speaks clearly of God as the author of truth (v. 27, 28) and we, human beings, cannot know what’s true unless God reveal it to us (v. 13, 14, 21, 23, 27, 28). And as we can see from this lesson, we are powerless before God’s Truth!

Conclusion

Relativism fails the test of reality. Reality bites this idea into pieces as we can see so clearly through the activity. It doesn’t work because the absolutes and unchangeable standard of truths that it so rejects actually do exist! Relativism, whether or not carried to its full implications, is bankrupt.

Further Study

This list contains some suggestions for further studying for this unit which is on the topic of truth.

Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl. Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air. Baker Books, September 1998.
Paul Copan. True for You, but Not for Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless. Bethany House Publishers, June 1998

For more books and other resources on this topic, visit www.thinkchristianity.com.