

Relative Truth

Grace and Truth—part 5

May 7, 2023

Why is it so easy to throw out absolute truth and why is relative truth so attractive?

DAY 1: A case study of relative truth.

1. “The only absolute truth is that all truth is relative.” This was spoken by me, fifty years ago. Ironically, that statement is a logical non sequitur. It is a logical fallacy. In other words, that statement discredits and negates its own statement. It is nonsense.

2. Off to the university Mary went. She had been raised in the church, and was sincere in her faith. Within a year she was a full-blown “truth is relative” coed. How did that happen?

3. She’d taken sociology, anthropology, and philosophy.

In all those courses it was just **assumed that truth was relative.**

4. The philosophy professor gave a limited the history of the pursuit of truth in philosophy. Mary’s professors all assumed that truth simply evolves culturally, by cultural forces.

5. In philosophy, the professor looked at what different philosophies taught about truth. But, **Christianity was not even mentioned as a source of truth**, even though it had been the dominant religion in western civilization for 2,000 years.

6. Why wasn’t Christianity even considered? Several reasons, which we will look at this week:

a. They insisted on a sharp divide between the secular and the sacred. It was OK for Mary to believe what she wanted at church or in her personal life, but when Mary wanted to stand for absolute truth elsewhere, she was shot down.

b. Relative truth appeals to our pride. We want to believe we are the captain of our soul.

c. Relative truth “absolves” us of having to believe we are accountable to God for how we live.

d. Relative truth allows us to “override” our conscience in order to let feelings and desires be the central drivers in our life, instead of what God wants.

e. Relative truth “promises” a life of “freedom” Instead, veering away from absolute truth leads us toward types of addictions to the very desires we foolishly believe will bring us freedom.

f. Relative truth tells us we are living “authentically.” This depends solely on believing that matching up my actions to my desires is living “authentically.”

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Relative truth allows you to “create” your own world; “creating” your own truth

1. Satan attempted, and successfully persuaded Eve to create her own reality. Satan shifted Eve’s understanding of God, life, and God’s commands. That shift in reality had devastating effects on Eve, Adam, their marriage, and every human being since then.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

² *The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”*

⁴ *“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

2. “Your truth is true for you, and my truth is true for me.” This sounds like the road to (1) Freedom, and (2) the ability to get along with others.

3. Instead, it eventually will create the opposite results of both items.

4. To create “your own truth” is to create your own reality.

5. The acceptance of relative truth is the inevitable disconnection we will have with people. With relative truth, “you have your truth; you have your reality. I have my truth; I have my reality.” As long as our realities don’t collide we can maintain some kind of relationship, however shallow. But when our realities collide, whether it be marital conflict over money, how we raise our kids, how we spend our time, our sexuality, who in life we cheer for – almost anything of real substance, then different realities will collide.

6. My truth and your truth. We are then talking about two realities. Where our truths line up, we can exist together. But when our truths don’t align together, we are then talking about two different realities. Understanding the other person becomes extremely difficult. In a marriage, this drives a wedge between two people who once loved each other, because there is not a disconnect between husband and wife that is wedge-building.

7. We are **not** creators of our reality. *We are receivers of reality.* And it is in the receiving of life’s reality that we find the raw material for deep communion in relationship. We must be equally subject to reality, not two people trying to create their own reality. When their distinct realities collide there is nowhere to go, but to call the other person a “toxic” person.

Truth is not something to create.

Truth is something to discover.

Truth is something to which we must gladly submit.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Relative truth “solves” the problem of unwanted authority

1. Human beings are most committed to their presumed autonomy. We love to feel we are in control, and can do whatever we want to do. But according to the book of Proverbs, that’s how fools think. We are not designed to be our own authority.

2. Consider The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words: ² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ “You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

3. God’s truth provides people with commands *for our benefit!* It is similar to loving parents providing restrictions of their children and teenagers *for the benefit of the children!*

4. Commands provide guardrails for living. Commands are meant to (1) protect us from our foolish ways, and (2) to provide for us the way toward our best life.

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: Relative truth “absolves” me from any responsibilities I don’t want

1. All of life has structure, responsibilities, expectations, and effects.

a. To be successful as a child in your family, you must accomplish the responsibilities your parents demand of you. There are chores you should be required to do to help pull the wagon of responsibilities in your home. If you don’t do your responsibilities you will become a child difficult to parent and likely a very spoiled adult.

b. To be successful as a student, you must accomplish the responsibilities your teacher or professor demands of you. If you don’t you will fail.

c. To be successful at your job, you must accomplish the responsibilities your boss demands of you. If you don’t, you will be updating your resume—regularly.

d. To be successful as an athlete in team sports, you must accomplish the responsibilities your coaches demand of you. That includes physical training, skills training, watching game film, and practice, practice, practice. If you don’t you will find yourself off the team.

2. The same is true with God and people. He has responsibilities for us to accomplish. If instead, we go off on our own to accomplish what we want to accomplish, eventually we will find ourselves with some very unwanted effects in our lives.

3. We are not independent agents. We are accountable to God for our life.

Hebrews 9:27 And just as it is appointed, once for man to die, and after that to face judgment.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

4. The facing of coming judgement is meant to jolt us out of our spiritual lethargy and self-centeredness to consider our lives and ways.

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: Relative truth promises a life of “freedom”

*John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² **Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**”*

³³ *They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”*

1. These Jewish men could not see how they were slaves of sin, and needed freedom from sin.

³⁴ *Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*

2. When we slough off God’s commands, His absolute truth, and insist on doing what we want to do, eventually the very thing we so passionately believe will meet our deepest needs will enslave us. We can become addicted to almost anything—sex, money, getting high, alcohol, having to be right, control, acceptance, fame, success, materialism, how we look, how we feel, etc.

3. Jesus then challenged these men to consider the two alternatives—the life of a slave or the life of a son.

³⁵ *Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.*

4. Jesus then pronounces Himself the Son of God that can set people free from whatever addictions plague us.

³⁶ *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

5. What strikes you from this verse?

⁴ *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...*

6. What strikes you from these verses?

*Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its **deceitful desires**...*

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?