WHAT IS RELATIVISM?

DEFINITION:
The theory of knowledge or ethics which holds that all criteria of judgment (right or wrong, true or false) are relative, varying with the individual, time, and circumstance.

HISTORY OF RELATIVISM

"Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not."
- Protagoras, Aletheia (5th Century BC)

Comes from the German "relativismus" used by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

The term "relativism" first appeared in the works of Sir William Hamilton (Scottish Philosopher, 1859).

Western culture began to see a rapid resurgence of relativism in the 1960's in an attempt to explain problems in philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and religion.

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did was was right in his own eyes."
- Judges 21:25

WHY DO PEOPLE SUBSCRIBE TO RELATIVISM?

"Everyone's view has equal merit."
Why is this statement a problem?

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TOLERANCE

Pre-1960's: Discerning toward ideas; egalitarian toward people.
Post-1960's: Egalitarian toward ideas; discerning toward people.

True tolerance requires a _____ in ideology or thought; otherwise there would be nothing to tolerate.

NOTES:

RELATIVISM ATTACKS CHRISTIANITY

1) Religious Pluralism
   - All religions lead to heaven.
   - All religions are essentially the same.

What is the main problem with this idea?

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2) Moral Relativism
   - There are no universal moral truths, therefore no person can condemn another for their moral behavior.
   - "You do what's right for you, and I'll do what's right for me."

Moral Relativism presents an attack on Christianity in two ways:

From outside the Church –

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From within the Church –

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The primary question: Is truth universal or relative?

NOTES:

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS RESPOND?

1) GROUND OURSELVES IN TRUTH

How do people receive/find truth?

_____ Revelation
We have access to truth through observing the world around us. (See Romans 1:18-20)

_____ Revelation
We have access to specific truth about the universe, anthropology, theology, and more through Scripture. (See John 17:17)

- John 14:6
- John 17:15-19
- John 18:37-38
- 2 Timothy 4:1-5

2) DISCERN TRUTH FROM OPINION: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE TRUTH

Objective Truth – Claims that are based on the _____ of the object of the claim.
Example: Insulin is required to stabilize our blood sugar.

Subjective Truth – Claims that are based on the _____ of the subject of the claim.
Example: Cherry Garcia is the best flavor of ice cream.

Guiding Question: Can someone's opinion affect the truth of the claim? If yes, it's subjective. If no, it's objective.

When someone says, "Christianity is great for you, but it's not right for me," why does that statement logically fall apart?

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NOTES:

1) **As Christians we should have convictions on things. Hold those convictions! Don't waiver from that, even because of fear.**
2) **Do the hard work to learn about the hope you have in Christ and know how to give an answer for that hope.**
3) **As we do this, the Lord will use this to shape culture, tear down barriers, and turn hearts toward Him.**