

Absolute Truth

By Jim Davis

Not long ago I had a conversation with a woman psychiatrist. We were in-flight between Atlanta and New York and we began discussing some of the impact and negative influences that the immorality of former President Clinton had upon the American people. As we discussed morals and values she seemed to come to a moment of revelation. She resolved, "You believe in truth with a capitol 'T.' I believe in truth with a small 't.'"

I think that my bold and joyful affirmation that her statement was correct was no comfort to her. But what she said was at the very heart of an issue that has polarized our country. Unfortunately, it has not only affected secular society but the church as well. What she meant by this statement is that I hold that there is absolute truth. I believe that God's word gives clear moral guidelines for human relationships and behavior. Her view of truth with a small 't' means that morals are relative. What is wrong for you may not be wrong for another person in certain circumstances.

Let me put it another way. Suppose a third person on the airplane was trying to make a decision about employment. This person is a single parent raising three children. She explains that she is working as a waitress making minimum wage but was recently offered a job as a stripper making around \$600 a night. She is trying to make a decision as to whether she should or should not work as a stripper.

The psychiatrist would most likely counsel her to take the job. She would reason that making enough money to send the children to college would be justification enough to do what others may consider improper behavior. I on the other hand would tell her not to take the job. I might offer her a number of reasons as to why she should not seek the seedy but lucrative employment. But the bottom line for me would be because the Bible is God's word on the matter and it teaches us that it is immoral. This would also be true for the young person trying to decide if they should live with their partner before marriage or not or any other moral decision.

The determining factor in moral relativism is, will the end justify the means? We may decide that more money to take care of the little ones justifies how we get the money. Some would say that the end justifies the means as long as you are not knowingly hurting others. But how do you know for sure? How can we decide if the end result will really be for good? The real problem with moral relativism is that the person decides what is best with imperfect wisdom and incomplete knowledge. Little 't' puts big 'M' (man) on the throne. Man rules in the place of God. He decides what is right and what is wrong.

What is really fascinating to me is that Christians who hold to absolute truth are perceived as being both backward and arrogant. Actually, I would think that one who ascends to judge what is morally right or wrong would have to be somewhat prideful. But our culture has determined that any lifestyle, belief, or behavior is acceptable. "Tolerance has become so important that no exception is tolerated."¹ Moral relativism has become absolute truth. Anyone that bullies a little 't' by implying that there is a big 'T' will be scorned or worse. If you are not following me, try one of these tests. Go into a public forum and say, "homosexuality is immoral." Or you might say, "abortion is murder." Or try to say this one, "wives should submit to their husbands."

According to a George Barna poll taken in the early 1990s 66 percent of Americans

believe “there is no such thing as absolute truth.” The percentages for those who claim to be evangelical Christian is almost as high, being recorded at 53 percent.² Today we are a polarized nation. It was evident in our recent elections. A cultural shift has taken place and it is obvious that the little ‘ts’ are gaining. Gene Edward Veith in his book on Postmodernism stated our dilemma. “While people have always committed sin, they at least acknowledged these were sins. A century ago a person may have committed adultery flagrantly and in defiance of God and man, but he would have admitted that what he was doing was a sin. What we have today is not only immoral behavior, but a loss of moral criteria. This is true even in the church. We face not only a moral collapse but a collapse of meaning. There are no absolutes.”³

The question we must ask ourselves is how important is this battle? Do we really need truth with a capitol ‘T’? Should we take the heat? Should the Church endure the social stigmatism of being rejected as intolerant? The answer is unequivocally yes. Or should I say absolutely. If the conflict is just between absolutist and relativist then it would be trite and unimportant. But if the conflict is really between man—who wants to rule—and God—who should and will rule—then we are in serious trouble. God gives moral instruction for our benefit. He has graciously recorded those things in His word that are necessary for our good health and survival. When we choose to ignore the revealed instruction of God we are inviting serious consequences and ultimately invoking His judgment.

It is time for Christians to take a stand. Will you determine to submit to the authority of the Scripture? Will you reject the cultural pressure and social standards for the truth capitol ‘T’ as it is recorded in the Bible?

Notes:

1. Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1999), 23.
2. George Barna, *The Barna Report: What Americans Believe* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991).
3. Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 18.