

The Trouble with Christianity: Absolutism

“You Do You”

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Questions *(use these to get everyone involved in discussion)*:

- What is the best way to spend a vacation, after a long, hard season of work?
- *(After everyone has answered the first question)*: Is your answer true for everyone or just for you?
- We’re talking today about the resistance some people feel toward the Christian faith because of its absolutism. Absolutism is the belief that universal truths exist. Relativism, on the other hand, is the belief that there are no universal truths.
 - Discuss: most of us gravitate toward one end of the absolutist/relativist spectrum. Do you gravitate toward the feeling that absolute truths, laws, and authority are good things, or do you gravitate toward the relativistic side?
 - Have you ever pushed God or Christianity away because of the belief that he/it was too absolutist?

Sermon review:

- On Sunday, Tory spent some time providing “defenses” for why absolute truths are logical, good and necessary. Read those reasons are below. Discuss any that especially resonated with you, or that you’re having trouble understanding or accepting.
 - Defense 1: We make absolute truth claims all the time, without realizing it. Examples: math equations, right to privacy, etc.
 - Defense 2: To say that there are no absolutes is, itself, an absolute claim.
 - Defense 3: We have an inherent sense of right and wrong wired into our being.
 - Defense 4: A world without absolutes would spin into chaos. Examples: 10 Commandments, traffic laws and enforcements, etc.
- Tory made a claim that was foundational to the rest of his sermon: “A denial of absolutes is the overflow of a broken, confused heart who is desperate for freedom.”
 - Do you agree or disagree?
 - How have you seen this principle play out?

Read Galatians 5:1-14

- What situation was playing out among the Galatian Christians that angered Paul so much? *(Leaders: Jewish Christians from Jerusalem had come and begun teaching the Gentile believers that faith in Jesus was not sufficient for salvation. According to these “Judaizers,” faith in Jesus plus circumcision [and keeping the entire Jewish law] was necessary.*
- Why is Paul so passionate in his argument here?
- In what way does Jesus offer the freedom that relativism tries to offer but cannot truly deliver? *(The passage below will open this answer up a bit, but discuss the question before going there).*

Read Romans 7:14-25

- How would you summarize the situation Paul is describing here?
- Have you ever felt that you are unable to do the good that you want, and unable to avoid the harmful things that you know you should avoid?
- If we understand what Paul says here, we have to acknowledge that apart from Jesus, none of us are truly free. We are slaves to inherent sinfulness (our sin nature). How hard is that truth for you to accept or acknowledge?
- We could say that only three people in history have been truly and totally *free*. Adam and Eve were totally free, and yet they used their freedom to partake of the one fruit God had declared off-limits. Every human being since Adam and Eve has been a slave to their sin nature, except for Jesus. He was the third person who was totally free.
 - How did Jesus use his total freedom? (Leaders: he gave up his throne in heaven to come to earth; he spent his earthly life loving and serving people, and honoring God; he gave himself over to sinful officials so that he could die as our substitute on the cross).
- Read Romans 8:1-2.
 - How does Jesus give us the freedom that we could never have without him?
 - How are we to use this freedom, now that Jesus has set us free? (Refer also to Gal. 5:13).
- At this point, how would you answer someone who says that they are resistant to God or to the Christian faith because of the feeling that it's all too absolutist?

Share and pray

- Mention people in your life who are keeping God at arm's length, either because of today's topic or another one in our series. Pray for them to have soft hearts to the gospel of grace.
- Share other needs that you have, and pray for one another.