

Moral Relativism by Edward Sri

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note: This series is based on Edwards Sri's latest book:

Who Am I to Judge?: Responding to Relativism With Logic and Love

Understand Relativism With Mercy

EDWARD SRI

*I'll never forget the first time I heard the words "moral
relativism."*



I was in college, talking with a friend who was taking an ethics class on campus. He told me the professor promoted moral relativism — the idea that there is no objective moral truth.

"Truth is relative," my friend said. "What's true for you may not be true for other people. There's no absolute truth that applies to everyone, so each individual makes up his own morality."

I had not yet studied much philosophy or theology, but what he was saying didn't sound right. I started asking him questions: "So you believe in relativism? You really believe there is no absolute truth that applies to everyone?"

"Yes."

"Is that true?" I asked.

"Yes."

"So is relativism true? Is it absolutely true, for everyone, that there are no absolute truths?"

Silence.

"Well ... your relativism seems logically inconsistent!" I exclaimed.

"Gotcha!" I thought to myself. I was quite proud of my amateur apologetic moves. My friend had no answer. He even laughed and admitted that, in espousing relativism, he was asserting at least one truth: that there is no truth.

He even acknowledged that his position was not consistent.

But he did not change his mind. I might have won the argument on that particular point, but he continued being a relativist. And he wasn't worried about how intellectually sound his position was. Relativism just felt right: **Individuals should decide for themselves what's right and wrong. What's true for you isn't necessarily true for me. We shouldn't impose our morality on other people.** My friend was content continuing on as a relativist, despite the arguments presented to him.

And many people in our culture are likely to do the same.

After several experiences like this one with my friend throughout the years, I eventually became convinced that merely debating a relativist does not work. Relativism is not something that can easily be overthrown with a quick, three-point apologetic argument or a superficial "Top 10" list of reasons for why it's wrong.

Relativism is so deeply engrained in the mindset and lifestyles of modern men and women, it's just assumed. "Of course, relativism is right ... Why? ... Well, because each person should decide for himself what is right and wrong. Judging people is bad."

To break through the complex webs of relativism, I will offer seven keys for talking to your relativistic friends, children, relatives and co-workers. These are not proofs to win an argument, but key attitudes and approaches to guide your conversations as you accompany someone in a longer-term relationship. With God's grace, these seven keys can help you open up moral truth in their lives:

- Lead With Mercy
- Law Equals Love
- "I Disagree" Doesn't Mean "I Hate You"
- The Intolerance of "Tolerance"
- Relativism Is a Mask
- Relativism Wounds People
- Taking on the Heart of Christ

First, we must lead with mercy. We must always stand up for the truth. But if that's all we do, we might sometimes do more harm than good. **We need to give people the full Gospel message, which includes both truth and the good news of God's grace and mercy.**

In some cases, the biggest obstacle keeping people from accepting moral truth is the fear that they can't change, that they can't live up to God's moral law, and that their many sins must define them.

Especially in our secular age, the Church, Pope Francis says, needs to be like a **"field hospital," offering urgent care for the many who have been**

wounded by the relativistic culture. Someone gravely injured on the battlefield needs more than a lecture on his cholesterol level. He needs critical attention to the most serious wounds first. Similarly, **we must give souls who don't know the Gospel that critical foundation, not just a condemnation of a particular immoral act.**

The 12th-century mystic St. Bernard of Clairvaux pointed out that **many souls refuse to turn to the Lord because they don't know him to be a God of mercy. If people don't know God's patience, how ready God is to forgive, and how much he can heal their weaknesses, then why would they bother trying to repent? It would be too hard!** Bernard explains that someone considering the possibility of turning his life around will run up against his own weaknesses. If he doesn't know God's mercy and grace, he will give up in discouragement:

"If he does not know how good God is, how kind and gentle, how willing to pardon, will not his sensually inspired reason argue with him and say: 'What are you doing? ... Your sins are too grave and too many; nothing that you do, even to stripping the skin from your flesh, can make satisfaction for them. ... A lifetime's habits are not easily conquered.' Dismayed by these and similar arguments, the unhappy man quits the struggle, not knowing how easily God's omnipotent goodness could overthrow all these obstacles."

That's why **we need to lead with mercy, not just moral truth. Behind the debate you're having**

about some moral issue is a real person who has his own struggles with various weakness, sins, hurts and fears — a person who needs God's loving help.

These souls need more than an argument about why what they're doing is wrong (moral truth). Yes, they need that, but **they also need the encouraging news that they can be forgiven and healed and have a fresh start in life (mercy).**

To merely tell a man addicted to pornography, for example, **that he's committing a mortal sin is not helpful.** Many men in this situation already feel trapped, ashamed and full of self-hatred. They simply can't imagine a way out.

Let's offer them not just a condemnation of certain actions, but **a way out of their sins by sharing the good news of how much God still loves them and wants to forgive and heal them.** Let's pray for them, make sacrifices for them and share with them the Good News of God's truth and his mercy.

*With Relativism, There Is No
Right or Wrong*

EDWARD SRI

Relativism isn't just a bad idea. It's ruining people's lives.



And if we're going to be successful in motivating others to rise above the relativistic culture, we need to help them see what Pope Francis has observed: "*Relativism wounds people.*"

The ideas at the center of a relativistic outlook are dangerous. Just as bad math can lead to faulty engineering and unsafe buildings and bridges, moral relativism can cause harmful effects in people's lives, encouraging people to do things that will hurt themselves and others.

We can see this especially in the relativistic culture's view of freedom.

Authentic freedom is the ability to perform actions of high quality. It's *for* something. If I possess the skills of violin playing, I'm free to play the violin with excellence. If I possess the skills of race-car driving, I'm free to race the car around the track at high speeds.

And if I possess the life skills known as the virtues, I am free to give the best of myself in my relationships and thus find happiness. Virtue gives me the freedom to love other people.

But the modern notion of freedom supporting the relativistic outlook is self-centered. It's simply the ability to make choices. It's merely about being free *from* anyone controlling me. How one chooses to use his freedom, however, doesn't matter. There are no good or bad choices. It doesn't matter *what* one chooses; all that matters is *that* one chooses: "It's my life. I'm free to do whatever I want to do with my life. Don't tell me what to do."

A Tale of Two Marriages

A true story about two married couples who lived in the same neighborhood at the same time can highlight the world of difference between these two views of freedom. One young couple had been happily married for several years with two children when the wife was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She quickly lost the ability to walk and

knew she'd be in a wheelchair for the remainder of her life. This wasn't what her husband was expecting when they got married. The emotional and financial pressure was too much.

Virtue gives me the freedom to love other people.

He wanted a different kind of life. So, in the middle of her battle with cancer, he left his wife and kids for another woman.

According to the modern view of freedom, we can't say what he did was wrong because that's his choice. There are no right or wrong choices, this mindset says. Maybe you wouldn't do that, but we all should celebrate his freedom: He's free to do whatever he wants. And if he wants to leave his dying wife and kids, that's his free choice.

Just blocks away was another couple. The wife was diagnosed with an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis. She also quickly lost mobility and had to be pushed in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. But her situation was more incapacitating. She couldn't bathe herself, clothe herself or feed herself. She couldn't even speak.

Her husband was just hitting his stride in his business, but decided to retire early so that he could take care of his slowly dying wife. He went through practically all of his savings, fully realizing that he would not have much left for himself in his golden years. But that didn't matter. He lovingly poured his life out for her in her remaining years, serving her, feeding her, bathing her and

dressing her. Every day he'd take his wife outside for walks in the neighborhood. He constantly read to her and talked to her, telling her about the weather, their friends and family, what was happening in the world and her favorite baseball team — even though she could not say a single word back.

For years, he never had even one conversation with the love of his life. But he was always by her side, all the way to the end.

Hero of Your Life

And at that pivotal moment, one revealed himself to be a hero, while the other walked away from love and his responsibility to his family.

The tale of these two couples encapsulates the main contrasts between the classical and relativistic worldviews. Both husbands saw their life story take an unanticipated turn. And at that pivotal moment, one revealed himself to be a hero, while the other walked away from love and his responsibility to his family. One lived a kind of life we might expect an individualistic, relativistic culture to produce. The other rose above the mainstream and reminds us of what true greatness is all about.

His life was not about him — it was about giving himself to others, most especially his wife.

Relativism allows people to justify selfish acts that hurt other people. If there is no right or wrong, then I am free to do whatever I want with my life — no matter what consequences there might be for the poor, the

unborn and the people God has placed in my life, whether friends, co-workers, family or, in this case, a dying wife and the kids who will be left behind.

But when we fail to give people a moral compass for their lives and instead train them in the relativistic view of freedom, we shouldn't be surprised when selfish acts like this occur and people get hurt in our culture. For relativism isn't just a bad idea. It wounds people.

Moral Law Equals Authentic Love

EDWARD SRI

"So when is the Catholic Church finally going to update all its teachings on sexuality?"





"So when is the Catholic Church finally going to update all its teachings on sexuality?"

That was the challenging question posed to me in the aisle on a flight home recently. The man had watched a film series on TV that I had been a part of, so when he saw me while boarding the plane, he stopped to ask if we could talk.

"I love the show," he said. "I'm learning so much, and I'm not even Catholic! I'm a Methodist. I had some questions about the Catholic faith. When we get up in the air, could we talk?"

I agreed, assuming he had simple questions about Mary and the Bible, or confession or the Mass. "It will be fun to help him out," I thought to myself.

Little did I know what I was getting myself into.

After our plane leveled off at 38,000 feet, he tapped me on the shoulder to talk. The other travelers were immersed in reading or working on their laptops, oblivious

to our theological conversation — oblivious until he dropped the bomb on me with his question about the Church's teachings on sex.

Immediately, everyone put down what they were doing and looked up at me, wondering how I'd respond. I, too, was wondering how to respond — but I didn't get the chance. For several minutes, he pressed me on how **all other Christian denominations have gotten with the times; how the Catholic Church's teachings on sex are archaic, oppressive and inhuman**; how people should be free to express love the way they want to; how the Church should be more open-minded. He was friendly, but intense and relentless with his questions.

Finally, I sensed I needed to jump in and stop the tirade for a moment:

"Excuse me," I said with a smile. **"Do you know why the Catholic Church teaches what it does about sex? And do you know why it's always going to teach what it teaches about sex? It's because the Catholic Church loves people!"**

That's not what he was expecting.

"I am blessed to work with thousands of college students and young adults around the country in various schools and ministries," I continued. "And these young people are very familiar with the ideas you're describing — ideas from the sexual revolution. They've grown up with these ideas from the culture.

"They've experimented with casual sex, the hook-up culture, free-flowing relationships. And it's not working for them. It has left them empty and wounded. They

describe the fears and insecurities they have in dating relationships ... the pain and heartache in their lives ... how they have felt used ... how they have felt let down ... how they have become disillusioned.

"Do you know why the Catholic Church teaches what it does about sex? And do you know why it's always going to teach what it teaches about sex? It's because the Catholic Church loves people!"

"Many of them come from broken homes and have experienced the heartache of divorce. Many of them doubt they will ever find a lasting love. Do we want more of this for the next generation?"

I also discussed with him how fewer and fewer people are getting married today. Many young people say to themselves, "Marriage? Why bother? I have a girlfriend. We get along; we live together; we have good jobs. Why do we need a certificate from some church?"

Many of them have not seen strong marriages modeled in their own families, and they themselves have gone from one hookup to another and one dead-end relationship to another. So the very idea of a lifelong, joyful committed marriage does not even seem possible.

And yet — and this is utterly fascinating — the strong majority of adults in the U.S. still say that one of their main goals in life is to have a happy marriage.

How can that be? If fewer people are bothering with marriage these days, why are so many still saying they hope to have a happy marriage? Because God made them

for authentic love, and they still desire that kind of love. They just don't think a lifelong love is possible.

That's why we need to proclaim the good news of marriage: The desires young people have for a lasting, committed, total love are good! And they can have their heart's deepest desires fulfilled — if they follow God's plan for love and sexuality, not the world's way.

These are some of the ideas I quickly shared with my Methodist friend at 38,000 feet. I can't say I convinced him in our short conversation, but our chat made him ponder the issue more and admit there were some things he hadn't previously considered. And sometimes that's the best we can do in an initial exchange.

But one thing that is crucial to do in our conversations with relativistic friends is to reframe the discussion. Instead of letting others paint Catholic moral teaching as something negative — something oppressive, judgmental or intolerant — we need to frame each moral teaching within the context of love.

For that's what all of Christ's moral teachings are about. **The moral law is an expression of God's love:** He made us, he knows how we work, and he loves us so much **he gives us the law to show us how to live in a way that will lead to our happiness.**

And the moral law helps us grow in love. These aren't just random rules from our religion. The moral law corresponds to how God made us. It's the instruction manual for our lives. So whatever the particular moral issue might be — whether it's about marriage,

contraception, care for the poor or abortion — we must always bring out how the moral law helps us to love. **Indeed, law equals love.**

'Don't Judge' — How to Respond When Your Relativistic Friend Quotes Jesus

EDWARD SRI

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This line is commonly used to silence us from speaking out on moral matters. "You shouldn't tell others what is right or wrong! After all, Jesus said, 'Don't judge!'"

But the Bible speaks about judging in different ways. On the one hand, we should never judge a person's soul. That's what Jesus critiques when he says, "Don't judge."

Someone's spiritual situation before God is between that person and God alone.

At the same time, Jesus isn't telling us it's evil to use our minds to make judgments about what is right and wrong. Indeed, **the Bible calls us to make good, wise judgments about many things in life. St. Paul, for example, says "the spiritual man judges all things" (1 Corinthians 2:15).**

Many people are afraid to say something is morally wrong because they don't want to be "judgmental." But we need to help them see **there's a big difference between making a moral judgment and judging someone's soul.**

Is it okay for me to use my mind and simply make a judgment? If I notice it's raining, I make a judgment: "I should bring my umbrella." If it's snowing, I make a judgment: "I should wear my winter coat." Am I a mean, bigoted person if I do this? Of course not. God gave me a mind. He wants me to use it.

Similarly, can I use my mind to make a judgment about someone else's actions? If I see my toddler about to run into the street, can I make the judgment, "That's not good for her. She might get hit by a car"? If I do this, I'm not saying she's a horrible person or condemning her to hell. I'm just observing that she is about to do something that will cause her great harm.

Let's take this a step further. Can I use my mind and make a judgment about someone else's moral actions? Let's say there's a young female college student who is sleeping around with one man after another. Can I use my mind and make the judgment, "That's not good for her"? **Can I make the judgment, "She's not going to be happy living this way. She's never going to find the lasting love she longs for. She's made for something better"?** Of course.

But let's be clear: I'm not judging her soul if I do that. She may be doing something objectively wrong, but I don't know her personal situation before God. I don't know her background, her situation or her wounds. "Who am I to judge?" Pope Francis would say. A soul's status before God is something between that person and God alone.

*I wouldn't be judging her soul — that's between her and God alone. **But to love is to will the good of another, to seek what's best for the other person.***

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes how various factors in people's lives may impair their free

choices in such a way that limits their culpability or moral guilt. As Pope Francis explains, "Each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without."

Only God sees the whole picture. Perhaps this young woman comes from a dysfunctional family and has never experienced authentic love. Maybe she was abused. Maybe she has always been taught that this is what it means to be a liberated woman. Such a woman doesn't need me condemning her soul. She needs to know God's love, mercy and plan for her life.

At the same time — and this is absolutely crucial — if I care about her at all, should I say something to her about what she's doing? If she is a close friend or family member, for example, should I talk to her about it?

I wouldn't be judging her soul — that's between her and God alone. But to love is to will the good of another, to seek what's best for the other person. And if I truly love this person, then it's the loving thing to show her the better way.

Certainly, I should do this prudently, in the right time and in the right way, and with great gentleness, humility and compassion.

But it is simply not loving to sit back and never desire to share the truth with her.

Imagine if I see my 2-year-old daughter about to touch the hot stove and I say, "I wouldn't do that. But I don't want to be judgmental. Whatever makes you happy."

Or imagine if my non-swimming toddler is about to jump into a swimming pool, and I say, "Oh well ... if that

works for you! ... I personally wouldn't do that, but I don't want to impose my views on you. It's your life." Would that be a loving thing to do? Absolutely not.

This gets to another tragedy of moral relativism: Relativism hinders us from loving people.

We can become indifferent to the needs of the people God has placed in our lives.

Instead of responding with love and compassion when we notice our brother stumbling in life, we can become apathetic and unresponsive. We can become like Cain, who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That's not love.

Let's rise above the culture of relativism and show more love for the people in our lives by sharing the truth with them.

Relativism's Not Neutral: The Intolerance of 'Tolerance'

EDWARD SRI

Imagine if the next time someone says to you, "Don't be so judgmental," you gently pushed back and said, "Excuse me. Are you judging me?"





Imagine if the next time someone says to you, "Don't be so judgmental," you gently pushed back and said, "Excuse me. Are you judging me?"

Imagine the conversation going something like this:

Friend: "Don't be so judgmental."

You: "Excuse me. Are you judging me? I'm feeling judged right now. Are you saying I'm a mean, intolerant, judgmental person?"

Friend: "Uh, no ... I'm not quite saying that ..."

You: "But you just told me not to be judgmental."

Friend: "Well, when you say something is immoral, it sounds like you're judging others."

You: "Look. You're free to believe whatever you want. If you want to believe there's no truth, no moral right or wrong, you can do that. I'll disagree with you because that doesn't make any sense to me. But if you want to have faith in moral relativism and believe that there is no moral order to the universe, you're free to do that. But whatever you do, please do not impose your belief in no truth —

your faith in relativism — on me! Please don't make me have to follow your religion of relativism!"

Friend: (Silence)

You: "Now, tell me about your relativism. I'm curious: Do you really believe that there is nothing at all that is morally wrong for everyone? How about murder? Rape? Genocide?"

The benefit of this approach is that it quickly turns the conversation to a fundamental issue: Is there moral truth? Too often, we Christians are having to do all of the explaining — answering point by point people's questions about our faith. Let's turn the tables and start asking our relativistic friends to defend their position. "Tell me about your relativism. Explain to me why you think that there's no real right or wrong in the universe. How does that work if each individual makes up his own morality?"

Listen to them.

Let them talk. After a while, ask them a question like, "If a man says, 'For me, kidnapping is okay and rape is a good thing,' does that make it okay for him to kidnap children and rape women?"

Most people have never stopped to think about their relativistic assumptions. It's just something they've taken in from the culture. Fewer people have ever had to give a rational account for this position. So when they actually have to talk about and explain their relativistic worldview, they often admit at least some things are morally right or wrong ("You shouldn't hurt other people") or they start talking in circles and realize they are skating on thin ice.

And when that happens, then they might be more open to hearing an alternative way of looking at the world.

As Pope Benedict once observed, "The more relativism becomes the generally accepted way of thinking, the more it tends toward intolerance, thereby becoming a new dogmatism ... it prescribes itself as the only way to think and speak"

This approach is likely to be more fruitful than most discussions about morality today, which remain on a heated personal and emotional level: "What are you saying about me? Who are you to judge? Who are you to say what's right and wrong?"

Relativists aren't expecting a Christian to play their own "Don't Judge" trump card on them. And when that happens, it might get them to think about deeper issues. And you might have the chance to have a more rational conversation.

Relativists like to portray themselves as holding a neutral position. It's better to be open-minded toward all points of view, they say: Since we can't know truth, no one is right. No one is wrong. All groups can come together under the one big tent of relativism.

At first glance, this seems like a good way to promote tolerance of diverse views. But we must understand very clearly that **relativism, in fact, is not value-neutral. Relativism itself is a certain way of looking at the world. And this view — that there is no right or wrong — is being imposed on us.**

In other words, **the belief that there is no moral truth is itself a point of view.** And those who do not agree with this relativistic perspective are being forced to play by its rules or risk being labeled as "judgmental" if they uphold traditional moral values.

As Pope Benedict once observed, "The more relativism becomes the generally accepted way of thinking, the more it tends toward intolerance, thereby becoming a new dogmatism ... it prescribes itself as the only way to think and speak — if, that is, one wishes to stay in fashion. Being faithful to traditional values and to the knowledge that upholds them is labeled intolerance, and relativism becomes the required norm."

He encourages us to push back: **"I think it is vital that we oppose this imposition ... which threatens freedom of thought as well as freedom of religion."**

For **relativism is "a kind of new 'denomination' that places restrictions on religious convictions and seeks to subordinate all religions to the super-dogma of relativism."**

Relativism is not moral Switzerland. **It is not a neutral, impartial, unbiased position.** It is a certain point of view, a way of looking at the world, and we should not allow others to force this worldview upon us.

The Mask of Moral Relativism

COMMENTARY: Part VI of a Register Series



(photo: Shutterstock)

May 10, 2017

“So, Dr. Sri, do you think I’m a relativist?”

That was the odd question posed to me many years ago at a Catholic convention in the New York City area. I had just finished giving a presentation on moral relativism when an energetic young man chased me down to ask his unusual personal question.

“Your talk got me wondering if maybe *I’m* a relativist. What do you think?”

“Well, I don’t really know you,” I replied. “But you’re here at this Catholic conference. Are you a practicing Catholic?”

“Yes, I’m Catholic,” he said. “I go to Mass, I go to Eucharistic adoration, and I love going to conferences like this one.”

“Good. What about moral issues? Let’s take a big one today — do you think abortion is wrong?”

“Oh yes, abortion is **definitely wrong ... for me.**”

There were those two small words — “for me.” They sent up a red flag in my mind.

“What do you mean by saying it’s wrong *for you*? Don’t you think abortion is wrong for *everyone*?” I asked.

“Well, I’m against abortion,” he said. “But that’s *my* truth. If someone else thinks abortion is okay, that’s *their* truth. So, *for them*, it would be okay.”

His answer made one thing very clear, and I told him so: “You *are* a relativist if you think that!” We then debated whether the baby in the womb is a baby in reality or just in his own personal opinion. But that did not get very far. The young man kept saying that “for him” the

baby was a human life, but for others it might not be. So I tried a different approach.

We were at a conference center in Newark, New Jersey, standing in a grand hallway with large windows looking out across the Hudson River toward Manhattan. It was only a couple of years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

I pointed out the window and asked him, “Are you really that much of a relativist? Look out there! Just a few years ago, there were two towers standing there in Lower Manhattan, and terrorists flew airplanes into those buildings. Thousands of people died that day. Are you willing to go up to the kids who lost a parent in the World Trade Center, look them in the eye and tell them that what the terrorists did was not wrong, because ‘for them’ they thought they were doing good? Could you really do that?” He was startled by this scenario and nervously said, “Wow ... that’s very personal. I lost friends in the towers that day. Oh, wow. ... That would be really hard ...”

He continued, talking about what a horrible day 9/11 was. “It would be very difficult to do that. ... But, if I had to be honest ... yes, I’d have to tell those kids that, for the terrorists, what they did was not wrong.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I needed a big “Plan B.”

In dismay, I replied, “I don’t know what more I could say to you. But you said you love Jesus in the Eucharist, and there’s a Eucharistic adoration chapel set up right here for our conference. **Would you be willing to go in front of Jesus in the Eucharist and prayerfully ask him what *he* thinks of your relativistic views?**”

He agreed, cordially said goodnight and walked into the chapel to pray.

The next day, the young man tracked me down: “Dr. Sri! Dr. Sri! ... I’m so glad I caught you before you left. I wanted to tell you something.”

He caught his breath and slowed down his speech. “I realized last night that I’m not really a relativist. The only reason I’ve been trying to be one is that ...” He paused and looked down at the ground before continuing. “**The only reason I’ve been trying to be a relativist is that I wanted to be able to say premarital sex is okay.**”

Then he raised his head, looked me directly in the eye and said, “I wanted to be able to say premarital sex is okay *for me.*”

What an honest, humble young man! I was so impressed by how he admitted to what was lurking behind his relativistic positions.

He had been trying to justify his own sexual behavior, and moral relativism was a convenient way to do so. By denying that there was an actual ethical standard everyone had to follow, he was trying to ease his conscience and excuse himself for having premarital sex.

Fortunately, this young man had the humility to recognize this and went on to express his desire to live a more chaste life.

But not everyone has this humility. That’s why we need to keep in mind a sixth key to engaging moral relativism: ***Remember that relativism may be a mask covering up one’s own immoral behavior.***

You may hear your friend talking about being nonjudgmental, being “pro-choice” or being open-minded to anyone’s definition of marriage.

But the real issue driving his relativism might be something in his own moral life with which he’s not comfortable. It could be something from his past or something going on right now. It could be what he did to his girlfriend in high school or how he’s treating his wife right now. It could be disregard for his parents, marital infidelity, contraception or addiction to pornography.

When people are quick to say, “You should be tolerant of other people’s lifestyles. You shouldn’t tell other people what’s right and wrong,” realize they might really talking about themselves: “Be tolerant of *my* little sin. Don’t tell *me* what’s right and wrong.”

This recalls what Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger once taught about “the dictatorship of relativism.” “Today,” he said, “we are building a dictatorship of relativism ... whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.” According to the future Pope Benedict XVI, the primary dictator in the relativistic outlook is one’s own selfish desires. As such, relativism often serves as a mask to cover up one’s selfishness or rationalize a particular sin.

That’s why merely arguing with those with this mindset usually doesn’t work. Pray for them. Make sacrifices for them. Offer your Communion for them. Remember: It’s not just an intellectual battle, but also a spiritual one.

Part VII: the importance of taking on the heart of Christ when recognizing someone's faults.

I was not able to find part VII yet