

Q&A: Can something be true for you but not true for me?

by Dillon Burroughs

Have you ever heard someone say, “That might be true for you, but it’s not true for me”? This popular expression reflects a philosophy known as *relativism*. Simply put, relativism says objective standards for belief and morality do not exist. All points of view are said to be equally valid. All truths and moral decisions are relative to you as an individual.

Certainly, we can have differing opinions about the best sports teams or styles of music or flavors of ice cream. But what about concrete things like math, science, history, and whether or not murder is wrong?

Two plus two equals four—no matter what we think. Gravity keeps us from flying into space, no matter what we believe about the cause or reality of gravity. As for history, events in the past cannot be altered by our opinions or beliefs. What has happened has happened, *period*. And regarding murder, who would dare to argue that the cold-blooded, unjustified killing of another human being could be wrong for some but right for others?

What about religion? Can religious truth be relative, true for some and not true for others? Keep in mind that religions make fundamental claims about such things as the nature of God, the origin and purpose of the universe, the meaning of human life, and the existence of an afterlife. Are these merely matters of opinion, and can contradictory opinions all count as true? No.

Consider the opening claim of the Bible: “In the beginning God created . . .” This contradicts all religious views that say the world is eternal or else was created by multiple gods or some god other than the biblical God. Is the Bible correct or not in its claim? Either this God made the world, or he did not. There is no third option in which it is true for me that God created the universe but not true for you. There can only be one right answer.

When a person says your religious belief is true for you but not for them, what they really mean is, “You believe that is true, but I believe differently.” The two of you hold differing beliefs about questions to which there is only one right answer. Consider these other yes-or-no questions:

Are human beings born with a sinful nature?

Is Jesus the Son of God?

Is there only one way to know God and receive eternal life?

Did Jesus physically rise to life after his death?

These are foundational beliefs of Christianity. There can only be one correct answer to such questions. The Bible allows for variation of opinion in many areas of life, but some things are true for all people in all places.

So when someone suggests that your religious beliefs can be true for you but not for them, gently point out that some things are either true or not. Jesus really is God’s Son, sent to die and rise again on our behalf. This good news is true for *everyone*.