

# Pickpocket or Good Guy?

## *Relativism in Real Life*

### Someone took your phone.

You feel a tug at your clothes, and you realize that your phone is no longer in your pocket. A man is walking away with it in his hand. "Stop him!" you yell. "That guy stole my phone!"

### Does it work to make up our own truth?

As we explored in previous messages, relativism is the idea that moral and religious truth changes from person to person. In matters of morality and faith, there are no truths that apply to everyone: we all make up our own truth. As a theory, it sounds like a nice way to help everyone get along. But in real life, relativism quickly falls apart.

### Can we say that an action is wrong?

If relativism is true, then the man who took the phone could rightly say, "Stealing may be wrong for you, but it's okay for me to do." Similarly, we would have no right to complain when someone cuts us off in traffic, speaks rudely to us, or breaks into our house. After all, who are we to force our personal standards of morality upon them? If everything is just a matter of opinion or personal point of view, then nothing can really ever be off-limits.

### Can we take a stand for what's right?

If relativism is true, then we cannot fight against evil. In the example of the pickpocket, there would be no reason for the bystanders to act when you call for their help. "Who am I to judge whether it is wrong for him to take your phone? What's true for you is true for you, what's true for him is true for him." If we accept relativism, then we have no logical basis to take a stand for anything, since there is no right or wrong that applies to everyone.

### Can we discover truths beyond ourselves?

If relativism is true, the pickpocket in our example cannot discover answers to important questions such as, "What is the purpose of my life?" It would be like a math teacher telling the students that whatever answers they put down on the exam will be counted as correct. The exam would quickly start to seem pretty pointless. In a similar way, if we are all supposed to make up our own answers to life's biggest questions, we are easily left with a sense that there are no true answers. This leads to a quiet sense of despair, which we often try to hide through constant distractions, such as social media, television, sports, and work.

### Thankfully, truth can be known!

Instead of relativism, we can embrace the traditional, common-sense way of approaching truth: religious and moral truth can be known, and such truths apply to people of all cultures and time periods. We have no problem saying to the pickpocket, "It is wrong to steal." We can confidently stand up against evil. We can search for answers to life's biggest questions, discovering a purpose in life that goes beyond ourselves.

