

It's Not All Relative

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In my practice, I keep reliving an all-too-common scenario. My clients, two Christian teens, have been having sex with each other. The parents are distraught and don't understand why their children are living immoral lives.

The teens have the answer: "Sex between two people who love each other and plan to marry is not wrong. We have vowed to marry when we get through college. What's the problem?"

My response: "You can't know who you are going to marry when you are only a junior in high school."

The teens vehemently retort, "We know we will be together, no matter what you or anyone else says." At this point, they are staring at me, totally dumbfounded about why we are having this discussion.

My turn to question. "You are both Christians, right?" They nod their heads. "Absolutely, we love God."

"OK, so where does it say in the Bible that sex between two people who think they love each other is sanctioned outside the covenant of marriage?" They don't know, of course, but they're certain it's in there somewhere. When I point out that it isn't and that their behavior is what the Bible calls fornication, the blank faces return.

The problem is that we are coming from two different

perspectives. I, the parent representative, am talking about moral values based on biblical absolutes. The teens don't believe in absolutes; thus, the disconnect.

When it comes to moral values, most teens don't seem to have a clue about what the Bible really says. God and His Word have been made relative to their culture.

The Barna Research Group confirms this fact. In a 2001 national survey among teenagers, here's what they found: Only 6 percent of the teens surveyed believe moral truth is absolute, whereas 83 percent believe moral truth depends on the circumstances. In other words, truth is relative to the situation.

Thus, in the minds of most teens, if you love someone and think you might marry that person, sex is OK. Barna also found that 75 percent of adults between the ages of 18 and 35 embrace moral relativism, so it isn't surprising that today's teens think as they do. They learned it from the adults who preceded them!

What is surprising is that the data shows that only 9 percent of teens who claim to be born again believe in moral absolutes! This means that 91 percent of the Christian teens they surveyed make up moral rules according to their own circumstances.

And how do these teens make their moral decisions? By how they feel in a situation, by whatever gives them the most benefit, by whatever makes the most people happy, by expectations of friends and families, and by parental values. A small group of teens (7 percent) reported making moral decisions based on

biblical principles.

Obviously, we have a lot of work to do. We've dropped the ball when it comes to transmitting the timelessness of the gospel. Jesus' message was not relative to the culture, the time or a specific situation. Included in His Word are timeless truths about moral behavior.

So if you are a parent, a youth leader or someone who cares about teens and kids, you are in a battle. You have to counteract the daily bombardment of cultural relativity.

Start encouraging teens to check out what the Bible really has to say on numerous moral subjects. Don't moralize with the teens; open a dialogue and explore Scripture. They may be ignorant, but they aren't stupid!

Focus dinner discussions on daily news items and school happenings that allow you to present the biblical view. Use pop culture to comment on the beliefs of non-Christians with the words of Christ. Talk about the impact of relativism on their thoughts and emotions.

Moral absolutes aren't a fad that went out with go-go boots. They are words of life given by our Creator. However you can package this important ongoing discussion about values, have at it, for it's the power of the Word that transforms lives.