

# WHO AM I TO JUDGE?



## SESSION 7

Exposing the Mask:  
What Relativism Is  
Often Covering Up





*Nihil Obstat:* Fr. Luis Granados, S.T.D, *Censor Deputatus*  
*Imprimatur:* Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.,  
Archbishop of Denver, Denver, CO, USA, November 21, 2016

Copyright © 2016 Augustine Institute. All rights reserved.  
With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior permission of the publisher.

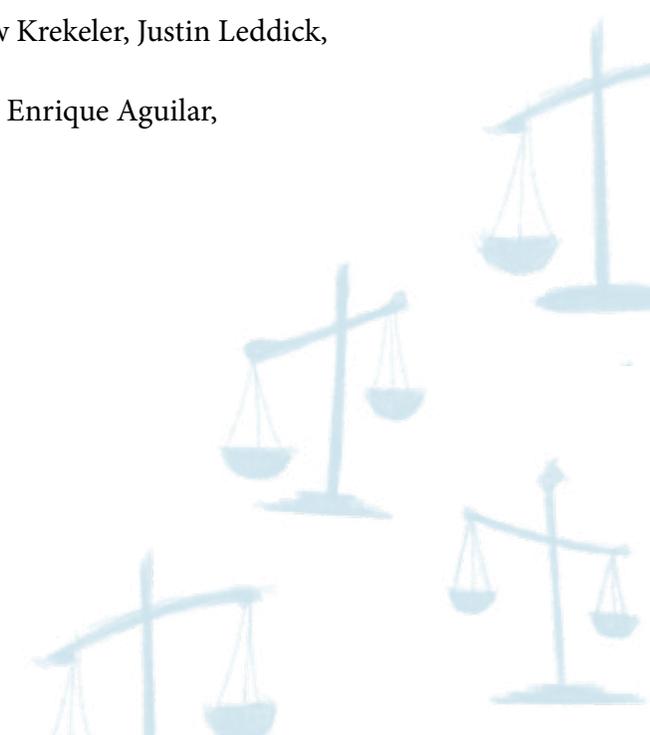
Some Scripture verses contained herein are from the New Testament, copyright 1946; Old Testament, copyright 1952; The Apocrypha, copyright 1957; Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition, Copyright © 1965, 1966, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America; Revised Standard Version Bible, Ignatius Edition, Copyright © 2006, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America, copyright ©1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica* copyright ©1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Writers: Ashley Crane, Dr. Edward Sri  
Media: Steve Flanigan, Aurora Cerulli, Jon Ervin, Matthew Krekeler, Justin Leddick,  
Kevin Mallory, Ted Mast, Molly Sweeney  
Print Production/Graphic Design: Jeff Cole, Brenda Kraft, Enrique Aguilar,  
Christina Gray, Jane Myers, Ann Diaz

**Augustine Institute**  
6160 South Syracuse Way, Suite 310  
Greenwood Village, CO 80111  
Information: (866) 767-3155  
formed.org

Printed in the United States of America  
ISBN 978-0-9982041-1-6



# SESSION 7

## Exposing the Mask: What Relativism Is Often Covering Up

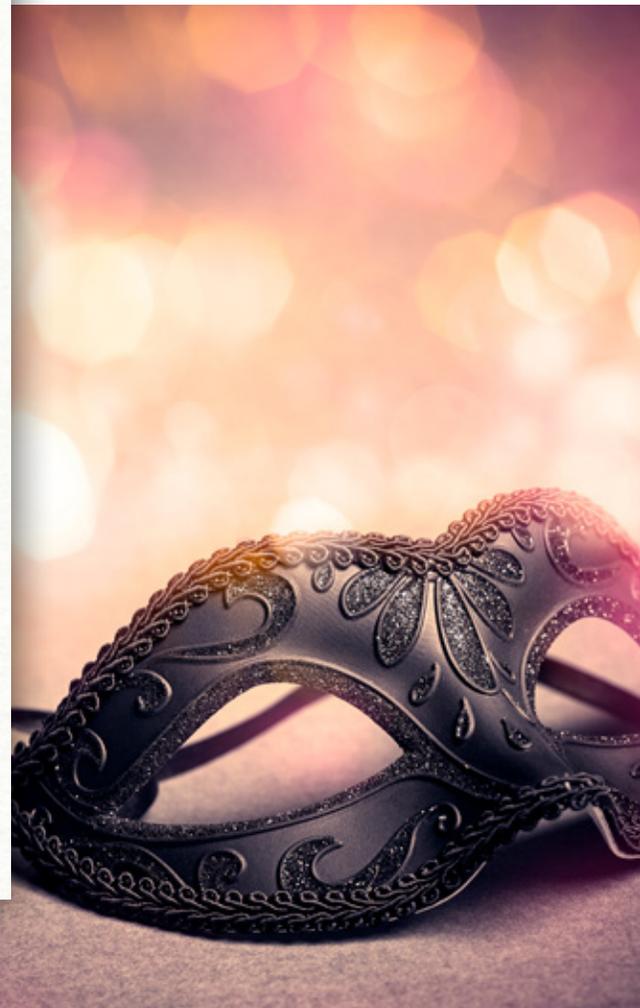
### OPENING PRAYER

Let my cry come before you, O LORD;  
give me understanding according to your word!  
Let my supplication come before you;  
deliver me according to your word.  
My lips will pour forth praise  
that you teach me your statutes.  
My tongue will sing of your word,  
for all your commandments are right.  
Let your hand be ready to help me,  
for I have chosen your precepts.  
I long for your salvation, O LORD,  
And your law is my delight.

Amen.

—Psalm 119:169–174

Carnival mask © BortN66 / shutterstock.com



### INTRODUCTION

Over the course of this study we have explored the classical view of morality and compared it to a relativistic worldview. But it's one thing to lay the philosophies out side-by-side for comparison, and it is quite another thing to be in the midst of the difficulties and brokenness of this world trying to deal with temptation and sin.

As we will see in this session, many people are relativists not because they have impartially compared classical morality and relativism and decided to adopt relativism as a comprehensive worldview, but rather because relativism gives them a way to cope with sin and brokenness in their own lives. The alternative to relativism is not just an alternative worldview—the real alternative is God's love and compassion. Engaging moral relativism is all about showing people how much Jesus loves them—he is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) for everyone, not just “for me.”

## STEP 2: CONNECT

**Do you think it's easier to have patience with your own weaknesses or with those of other people? Why?**

---

---

### DIGGING DEEPER

*"The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it emotionally."*

—Flannery O'Connor

## STEP 3: VIDEO

### I. Recognize that relativism is often a mask

- A. Benedict XVI—dictatorship of relativism—the real dictator is one's own ego and desire
  - 1. Relativism enables us to do what we want without feeling bad
  - 2. Makes us a slave to our desires
- B. Moral relativism is a way of dealing with cognitive dissonance
  - 1. We feel guilty when our actions don't match our beliefs
  - 2. Deal with that guilt by changing our beliefs so our actions are okay

### II. Take on the heart of Christ: compassion

- A. We need to be careful not to set ourselves up as judges over others
- B. Many great saints struggled with the temptation to judge others
  - 1. St. Catherine of Siena—that would be me without God's grace
  - 2. St. Thérèse of Lisieux—what we see as negligence is often heroic in God's eyes

C. Often when we have a critical spirit toward others it is because we haven't come to terms with our own weaknesses and faults

III. Conclusion: What is truth?

A. Can I really know it? How can I know it?

B. Even relativists nearly always live with some recognition that there is some kind of truth outside of our own selves (a brick wall is a brick wall, even if I say it isn't)

C. God is ultimate reality, and our minds need to conform to him—not vice versa

D. We can know truth because God seeks us out and reveals himself to us

1. Jesus is different from any other prophet or religious leader/founder
2. He claims to be God, not just to have a message
3. We have a fundamental choice: is Jesus who he says he is? And if so, what am I going to do about it?
4. We cannot say we want Jesus but reject his Church

E. If we say Jesus is only a Way “for me” and not the Way (for everyone), then we are not truly following him

**DIGGING DEEPER**

*“We will either accuse ourselves or excuse ourselves.”*

—St. John Vianney

**STEP 4: DISCUSS**

**1. What was one thing from the video that you heard for the first time—a new insight or a new way of thinking about morality for you?**

---

---

**2. The video presentation discussed how relativism is often a mask, cover-up, or a justification for one's own sin. How should this possibility guide our conversations when we are talking with relativistic friends?**

---

---

**3. Think about the people in your life. How do you respond when you notice someone's faults—something that frustrates you, something that hurts you, a weakness, or a sin? Without approving of any wrongdoing what can you do to respond with more compassion and not judgment?**

---

---



## STEP 5: COMMIT

“Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15).

Just as Jesus's Apostles had to answer that question and then choose how to act accordingly, each one of us needs to figure out our answer as well. Do we believe, like St. Peter, that he is “the Christ, the Son of the living God?” (Matthew 16:16). Do we believe his own claim to be “the way, and the truth, and the life?” (John 14:6). Either way, what are we going to do about it?

In the video Edward Sri laid out the question according to C. S. Lewis's classic formulation in *Mere Christianity*. In the Gospels, Jesus clearly claimed to be God—so clearly that the Jewish leaders accused him of blasphemy on several occasions and finally handed him over to the Romans to be executed because he “made himself the Son of God” (John 19:7). With claims like this we only have three choices. If Jesus wasn't actually God then he was either deliberately lying or he was simply crazy. Neither a liar nor a lunatic makes for a reasonable Way to follow, even if it's only the Way “for me.”

The only other option is that Jesus was telling the truth about himself: he is in fact God, as he claimed. And if this is the case, Lewis concludes, there is no other option but to fall down and worship him as Lord.

**Imagine that Jesus is standing before you asking you, “Who do you say that I am?” How will you answer him? What will you do to live out your answer?**

---

---

# TRUTH

## DIGGING DEEPER

*“God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. The beginning of sin and of man’s fall was due to a lie of the tempter who induced doubt of God’s word, kindness, and faithfulness.”*

—CCC 215

*“God is also truthful when he reveals himself—the teaching that comes from God is ‘true instruction.’ When he sends his Son into the world it will be ‘to bear witness to the truth’: ‘We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding to know him who is true.’”*

—CCC 217

## STEP 6: WRAP-UP AND CLOSING PRAYER

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty,  
my memory, my understanding, and my whole will.  
All that I am and all that I possess you have given me:  
I surrender it all to your love and your grace;  
with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.  
Amen.

—St. Ignatius of Loyola



