





# Presuppositions

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## Foreword

*Foundations for Living* is a ten-unit elective for high school students, providing the biblical basis and historical development of the Christian worldview. Fundamental truths and principles from the Bible are used to apply the Christian worldview to a range of contemporary issues from family life to art, music, and politics.

Gathering all of a student's education into a unified whole, this course assists contemporary teenagers in recognizing the value of Christian truth. As teenagers discern the differences between Christian and non-Christian worldviews, they will be better equipped for their new adventures in life beyond high school.

*Foundations for Living* contains the following units. The specific unit you will be studying next is highlighted below.

Unit 1 – What Is a Biblical Worldview?

Unit 2 – Presuppositions

Unit 3 – The Doctrines of the Bible

Unit 4 – God's Creation

Unit 5 – The Family

Unit 6 – The Bible and Marriage

Unit 7 – Dating to Matrimony

Unit 8 – Christian Education

Unit 9 – Art, Music, and Politics

Unit 10 – Putting It All Together

**NOTE:** All vocabulary words appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used in the text. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the Glossary.

### Author:

**Douglas B. Mills, Th.M., Ph.D.**

### Editors:

Maynard C. Mostrom, B.A., M.Div, S.T.M.

Peggy L. Warwick, B.A.

Jennifer L. Davis, B.S.

### Art Director:

Greg L. Osborne, A.A.

### Illustrator:

David M. Rabbitte, A.A.

### Layout and Graphics:

Kyle R. Bennett, A.S.

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# Presuppositions

*In our previous unit, we learned about the differences between the ancient Greek culture and the ancient Hebrew culture. These two peoples had radically different worldviews. Their worldviews were based on some fundamental assumptions about God, man, and the world. These assumptions brought about certain presuppositions that affected all the information they processed and the opinions they formed about virtually everything. The worldviews of these two civilizations continue with us today and have been profoundly influential in forming our basic assumptions.*

*We have countless opinions in our civilization about everything. If we were to randomly choose ten people and ask them a question about just one thing, we would most likely receive ten different answers. This is especially true about matters such as religion, politics, and morals. People form their opinions, make decisions, and determine what they believe or disbelieve based upon their presuppositions; and these presuppositions can be so deeply rooted that only a radical experience can change them.*

## The Worldviews Presented in this Unit



## Objectives

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you should be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAK®.

When you have completed this LIFEPAK, you should be able to:

- Gain an understanding of how assumptions and presuppositions affect our thinking.
- Recognize moral relativism and realize that it is illogical.
- Determine the objective source of truth.
- Understand what it means to have a biblical worldview.

# The Worldview Tree

**B**efore you read your first section, we would like to introduce you to the “Worldview Tree,” a recurring visual metaphor that will unify and explain the entire curriculum. It teaches that our actions do not occur randomly; rather, they are the natural results of our beliefs and presuppositions. Therefore, what we believe and think truly does make a difference! This is how it works (see the opposite page for the chart).

The Worldview Tree illustrates how a **culture** develops within a particular **civilization**. This process begins in the soil with **presuppositions**, which move up a root system into the trunk of the tree. Once above ground, the **worldview** affects one’s perspectives on life and directs one’s choices. These choices manifest themselves in a variety of activities, which are repeated over time as an ongoing **heritage**, passed from one generation to the next.

There are four successive steps that lead to a developed culture. The first step is **believing**, followed by **thinking** (or, in the case of Postmodernism, **feeling**). The process moves to **seeing**, and this leads through choices to **doing**. These steps of human progress illustrate how internal ideas lead to external actions.

Each time a Worldview Tree is displayed, its structure remains essentially the same, while its content follows the information in each unit and is represented by the **roots** (boxes in the lower portion of the ground) and the **fruit** (which are located on or near the tree). This content demonstrates how a variety of topics all follow a similar path of development from foundational beliefs (roots) to behavior (fruit).

There are two basic worldviews, God’s and Man’s. **God’s Worldview** is depicted with bright green leaves and healthy red fruit. **Man’s Worldview** is depicted with dull brown leaves and decaying purple fruit. Within **Man’s Worldview**, there are two variations: a single tree represents a single worldview and multiple trees represent a plurality of sub-worldviews (as with Postmodernism, which will begin in Unit 4). Each Worldview Tree asks a thought-provoking question and provides space for your answer.

Historically, these two worldviews (God’s and Man’s) developed over four periods of time as depicted in the pullout chart and provide a picture of the ongoing differences between the Christian and non-Christian perspectives on the origin, history and destiny of humanity.

## WORLDVIEW TREE LOCATIONS

Protestant Christianity . . . . .	34
Modernism. . . . .	35

**Believing** ► **Thinking**

**Civilization:** Locations that display worldviews

**Fruit:** Resulting behavior



**Culture:** Activities that express a worldview

**Roots:** Foundational beliefs

**Worldview:** A comprehensive view of life

**Presuppositions:** Beliefs that develop a worldview

▶ **Seeing = Doing**

# I. ASSUMPTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS



## Assumptions

An **assumption** is something taken for granted. It is amazing how many things we assume. We take for granted that tomorrow the sun will come up, that we will grow old, that little children will act in immature ways, and that the seasons will change. Our lives are filled with assumptions. We assume things because we have seen them happen many times before or because everyone else around us also assumes them. However, upon careful examination, we will find that even the most common assumptions may not necessarily be true.

For example, take the common assumptions listed above. We take these things for granted because that is how they have usually or always happened. In reality, no matter how many times it has taken place before, we do not really know for sure that the sun will come up tomorrow. Each day, people die long before they have grown old. We are amazed at those times a little child displays amazing maturity or intellect. Moreover, if the

sun fails to come up tomorrow, then surely the seasons will no longer change. Yet, these assumptions are normal as well as acceptable. To not assume such things could be described as ignorant or even paranoid.

Assumptions affect the way we think and act. Imagine how one would act if he did not believe that tomorrow would be another day or that the seasons would not change as they always have in the past. Such a person would lead a frightening life. It would be impossible for such a person to perform even the simplest duties. Although we do not know what tomorrow might bring, we are to live our lives assuming that there will be a tomorrow. Notice the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:34: *"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* Although Jesus tells us that we are not to worry about tomorrow, we assume that tomorrow will come.

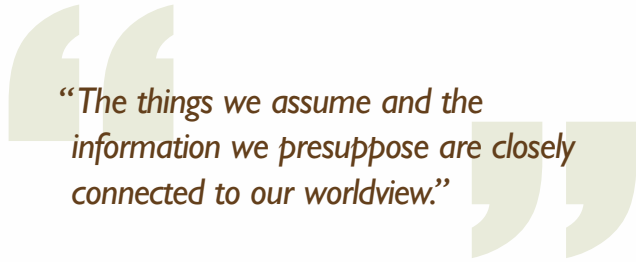
## Presuppositions

A word whose meaning has some similarities to that of assumption is presupposition. To presuppose is to imply as a necessary antecedent (earlier, former) condition. It is a basic assumption which influences our view of the world. In simple terms, this means there are certain things that we already believe. Those things will affect how we process any further information. For example, if we are absolutely convinced that all apples are red, we will assume that any fruit that is not red could not possibly be an apple. Should someone show us a green apple, we would assume there is something wrong with that particular apple or that it really is not an apple at all. Of course, that would be a false assumption, for we all know that apples may be red, green, or yellow. Our presupposition has caused us to disbelieve something that is true.

When driving a car, we assume that our gas gauge is a reliable indicator of how much gasoline is in the car's gas tank. This information will let us know how much further we can drive before we have to fill the tank with gasoline. If a passenger asks us if we are about to run out of gas, we would naturally glance at the gas gauge and answer according to what it indicates. We assume that the information given by the gauge is correct. However, what if our gas gauge is malfunctioning? What if it is stuck on the half-tank mark? How would we know when it is time to refill the tank? It is only when we run out of gas, with the gauge indicating that we still have half a tank, that we are convinced that the gauge is not working properly.

Initially, our presupposition is that gas gauges are trustworthy indicators. Once this is proven false, we will believe otherwise. Those who run out of gas with the gauge indicating there is some gas left will, from that moment on, look at gas gauges differently. People who have driven automobiles for some time can easily relate to our example.

The things we assume and the information we presuppose are closely connected to our worldview. In fact, we could rightly say that our assumptions and presuppositions are what determine our worldview. These have developed over much time and are passed from genera-



*“The things we assume and the information we presuppose are closely connected to our worldview.”*

tion to generation. Our lives are filled with assumptions and presuppositions, and they determine how we think and act. To assume or presuppose is not abnormal. Actually, it is unavoidable. We cannot discard all our assumptions and start anew each day, and we do not need to attempt to do this.

Imagine your mind working like the hard drive on a computer. The initial information loaded onto the computer will determine how all future information is handled. Some information cannot be loaded onto a computer because the initial programs were not made to accept it. Some may be accepted but not work properly, and some may work just fine. Everything depends upon the initial program.

Our minds are very similar. At this very moment, we have a great deal of information stored in our minds. All the information we receive is assimilated according to the information we already have stored. Some will be precisely processed, some will cause confusion, and some will be rejected.

It is very important that we understand this process because it determines how we think and act; this determines the development of our personal worldview. When our presuppositions are true and correct, we will correctly process new information; when they are incorrect, we will not. For the rest of our lives, we will accumulate new information, and we will process new data. How we process that data determines our thoughts and actions.





**Answer the following questions.**

I.1 What are some things nearly everyone assumes? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.2 Why do we assume these things? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.3 What effects do our assumptions have on our lives? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.4 Choose an assumption you have and explain how your life might change if you no longer held that assumption. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.5 How do our presuppositions affect our approach to receiving new information? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.6 What is something you are convinced of and why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.7 Where do we get our assumptions and presuppositions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.8 What are some of the effects our presuppositions have on new information? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.9 Why is it so important that we learn this process? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.10 How do assumptions and presuppositions relate to our worldview? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### People make assumptions based on what they know

**Communication Difficulties.** Different presuppositions also cause great difficulties in communication. When two people with different presuppositions carry on a conversation, they often become frustrated because they cannot understand why their view is not embraced. As Christians, we presuppose the Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, if the Bible tells us something is immoral, based upon our presupposition, we believe it is immoral. When we debate with a non-Christian, we are debating with someone who does not have the same presupposition concerning the Bible. Because of the differences in our presuppositions, such a debate is oftentimes unproductive. It is as if we are speaking to someone from a different world. Unless something takes place that has a radical effect on one's presuppositions, debates can be frustrating endeavors.

An example of this is the ongoing debate over abortion. Christians believe abortion is wrong because of

what God's Word says about human life. Non-Christians do not derive their convictions from the Bible. The bases of one's beliefs (presuppositions) must first be addressed before there can be a common ground from which we can argue such an important issue. Rather than specific issues, it may be more beneficial to address the standards from which we derive our convictions. The true argument is over whether or not the Bible is the standard for all **moral** and ethical matters.

There are many different types of presuppositions and many different ways of presupposing. In a conversation, the one speaking may presuppose something and the one listening may presuppose something entirely different. Consider the following examples:

**Referring Expressions.** Referring expressions are the most common presuppositions. Look at this sentence: "God loves you."

This sentence presupposes that there is a God and that He is active in loving. He cannot love if He does not exist; therefore His existence is presupposed. The speaker presupposes the existence of God. Whether or not he can convince his listener of God's love depends first of all upon the listener's belief in God's existence. Unless that presupposition is established, an argument about whether or not God loves is moot.

"The king of France is bald."

The fact that "king" is the subject of this sentence tells us that the existence of the king of France is presupposed. As in the previous sentence, unless the listener agrees that a king of France exists, an argument concerning his baldness is fruitless.

The only sentences that are not considered to have existing presuppositions are sentences such as "God exists." This is because a sentence cannot claim and presuppose the same thing simultaneously.

Referring expressions can also be quite complex. Look at the following:

"The zeal with which you have approached this task is astounding."

This sentence presupposes that "the zeal with which you have approached this task" exists. In order to use and understand referring expressions, one must clearly understand the complete subject of the sentence. The subject above is "the zeal with which you have approached this task," just as the subject is "God"

in the previous example. To correctly discover the subject, one must ask questions of the sentence. For example, asking, "Who loves you?" of the first example, would provide the answer, "God." Therefore, "God" is the subject. When we ask, "What is astounding?" of the example above, we get the answer, "the zeal with which you have approached this task" as the subject.

**Aspectual Verbs.** Aspectual verbs are verbs such as *stop, start, give up, continue, renounce, finish*, and other similar verbs that tell us of the starting or stopping of an action. Look at the following example of an aspectual verb in action: "Have you stopped being mean yet?"

If the person being asked this question answers "yes," then he seems to be admitting that he has been mean at some time. If he answers "no," then he admits that he is still being mean.

These are but a few examples of how presuppositions are commonly assumed in our everyday speech. The point we are making is that presuppositions vary among people; and differing presuppositions can make constructive conversation very difficult, or even impossible. The first example, "God loves you," is a statement that many Christians use in an effort to convince others of the love of God. We presuppose the existence of God; therefore, the fact that He loves us is easy for us to accept. However, not all people accept God's existence. Therefore, stating that He loves them will not necessarily produce the desired effect.



**Answer the following questions.**

1.11 Why do you think opinions about crucial topics vary so much among people in our culture?

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1.12 What is normally the only way one's presuppositions can change? \_\_\_\_\_

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1.13 How do varying presuppositions often cause difficulties in communicating? \_\_\_\_\_

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1.14 Why do Christians believe abortion is wrong? \_\_\_\_\_

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- I.15 Give your own example of a referring expression. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- I.16 What does your example presuppose? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- I.17 What opposing presupposition might your hearer have? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- I.18 Give your own example of a question using an aspectual verb, and explain how your presuppositions are shown by how the question is answered. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Moral Relativism vs. Moral Absolutism

We stated previously that if ten people were asked about their opinion of something, we might get ten different answers. Amazingly, in our culture many do not see a problem with this. Such situations are often considered expressions of our freedom of thought or the right to one's own opinion. However, there is a serious problem—everything is simply not true! If the question asked were, “Does God exist?” answers today would vary. Consider the answers we might hear:

“Yes, He does.”

“No, He does not.”

“Many gods exist.”

“Not in some personal form.”

“If you believe He does, then He does for you.”

“Nature is in control...you can call that god, if you want.”

“God is the energy of the universe.”

“You are your own god.”

“God is the universal subconscious mind.”

“God is a primitive concept...science has explained much of what was formerly attributed to God.”

These are but a few ways the question may be answered. The problem with so many answers to a clear question is that they could not possibly all be true. They could all be wrong, although we know they are not. Only one could be right, and the other nine are wrong. However, it is not possible that all are right. Sadly, our culture boasts of its freedom to answer questions according to one's own opinions rather than recognize that everyone simply cannot be right when their answers differ so radically.

**Relativism** is the theory that absolute knowledge of things is impossible because it depends upon the mind's purely **subjective** way of relating to them. In other words, one cannot really know the **truth**, because truth depends upon how one perceives it.

*“Moral relativism asserts that individuals or groups can decide what is true or false.”*



Before addressing the problems with relativism, let us consider some aspects of this theory that may be correct. Some questions might be answered correctly, depending solely upon one's perception. For example: "Does that ice cream taste good?" You could have a variety of answers ranging from everyone saying yes to everyone saying no. You could even get variations between yes and no such as, "It's pretty good" or "It's not that great." None of these answers would necessarily be wrong because the answer depends upon the perception of those eating the ice cream. The answer is based on subjective truth. Subjective means relating to, proceeding from, or taking place within an individual's mind or emotions. Whether or not ice cream is good depends upon whether or not we like it.

If we asked a group of people to provide the answer for a mathematical problem, we would be asking about an objective truth. **Objective truths** are free from personal feelings, opinions, and prejudices. The question, "What is the sum of two plus two?" has only one correct answer. One's opinions or tastes do not alter the answer. The correct answer is obviously four and will be so, whether we agree or not, or whether or not we like the number four. If someone stated that the answer was something other than four, we could justifiably claim he or she was wrong.

If someone states that vanilla ice cream does not taste good, we cannot justifiably argue that it does. That answer depends solely upon one's personal taste, while the mathematical answer depends upon a proven fact with only one correct answer. Subjective truths are based on personal tastes, opinions, or preferences. On the other hand, objective truths are realities that are not changed by our sentiments. They are external facts that are true, no matter how we may feel about them.

The category of objective truths may also be divided into two aspects: **rational** and moral. The rational conforms to reason, to the sensible, while the moral has to do with behavior in relation to right or wrong. When someone is wrong concerning a math question, he is rationally wrong; however, when someone steals, he is morally wrong. One who gives the wrong math answer is simply incorrect; one who steals is immoral. The wrong answer of the first would be corrected; but in the second case, the person could be punished.

**Moral relativism** is a type of subjectivism because it holds that moral truths are based upon one's personal opinions or preferences. It is as if one was to decide right from wrong in the same way one decides if vanilla ice cream tastes good or bad. Moral relativism asserts that individuals or groups can decide what is true or false. Right or wrong is based on people's own opinions or traditions.

For example, anthropologist William Graham Sumner dramatically expresses the notion of the moral relativism of a group or culture:

*The "right" way is the way which the ancestors used and which has been handed down. The tradition is its own warrant. It is not held subject to verification by experience. The notion of right is in the folkways. It is not outside of them, of independent origin, and brought to test them. In the folkways, whatever is, is right. This is because they are traditional, and therefore contain in themselves the authority of the ancestral ghosts. When we come to the folkways we are at the end of our analysis.*

[Source: *Folkways* (Boston: Ginn, 1906)]

Moral relativism states, "It's true for me if I believe it," or "It's alright for me if I like to do it," or, as in the quote above, "If we have been doing it for a long time, it must be right." In moral relativism, there is no set standard outside the individual or group. People may all encounter the same moral situation and yet make a variety of choices.

Critics of moral relativism sometimes challenge the idea of cultural variation (the idea that morals may change from culture to culture). For example, in *Elements of Moral Philosophy*, James Rachels attacks moral relativism, arguing that there is in fact a core set of values that is common to all societies and is necessary for any society to exist. These values are (1) we should care

for children, (2) we should tell the truth, and (3) we should not murder. Critics also point out problems of consistency with moral relativism. For example, if moral relativism is true, then we can no longer say that other societies' customs, such as slavery, are morally inferior to our own.

Note that Rachels has opinions concerning cultural moral relativism, but he gives no basis for that opinion

other than his own opinion. Although as Christians we agree with the three values presented above, we do so because these values are clearly stated in God's Word. Rather than relying on our own opinions, which may differ from individual to individual, we rely on an outside standard (the Word of God).



**Complete these activities.**

- I.19 What is the problem with people answering important questions based solely upon their own opinions or preferences? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I.20 In your own words, define *relativism*: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I.21 Write a question that calls for a subjective answer. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I.22 Why may several answers be acceptable for such a question? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I.23 What is an objective truth? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I.24 Give an example (other than a math question) of a question that demands an objective answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I.25 The \_\_\_\_\_ conforms to reason, to the sensible; the \_\_\_\_\_ involves behavior in relation to right or wrong.

1.26 How is moral relativism subjective? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1.27 What is the difference between individual moral relativism and cultural moral relativism? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1.28 What is a Christian's standard for deciding right from wrong? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*“The idea of neutrality concerning morals is a myth.”*



Contrasted with moral relativism is **moral absolutism**. Moral absolutism is the belief that moral rules are created outside the group or individual. Such rules do not change, even when the individual or culture rejects it, and everyone is obligated to obey these rules. The tastes, traditions, or opinions of the individual or culture do not make moral rules, nor can they change them.

Relativism measures morals by a different standard. The standard is the individual and his or her personal conviction. Moral relativism rejects the idea of established moral standards that apply to everyone. This completely redefines what it means to be moral. Moral standards have three principles (relativism holds to none of these):

1. Moral standards are authoritative guides to action. They dictate preference, taste, custom, self-interest, or opinion.
2. Moral standards are instructive codes of conduct. They not only describe how things ought to be, they also instruct how people are to act.
3. Moral standards are worldwide. They are not inconsistent or personal, but apply to all persons. If an act is wrong for one, then it is equally wrong for others.

Consider the practical implications of moral relativism. When we have an established moral standard, we can determine a person's morality. The most moral person is the one who most closely follows the standard. However, without an objective moral standard, there is really no way to measure the morality of a person. It is because of a particular moral standard that we can say that people are honest, loving, or decent.

Abraham Lincoln was called "Honest Abe" because he had a reputation for honesty. Mother Teresa was recognized as a loving person because she devoted her life to helping the needy. Various entertainers are considered decent because they choose not to play certain roles or sing certain lyrics. These descriptions can be used because of a universal moral standard which tells us that we ought to be honest, loving, and decent.

On the other hand, those who have strayed farthest from a universal moral standard have developed reputations as villains, tyrants, and even sociopaths. Although the actions of persons such as Adolph Hitler, Jack the Ripper, or Billy the Kid are totally opposite of those persons mentioned above, their reputations are developed according to the same universal standard. A standard that instructs us to be honest, to love, or to be decent either directly or by implication tells us not to lie, or murder, or be obscene.

To claim that morality is something decided by the individual or the group is to give equal credibility to a Hitler and a Mother Teresa. Yet, moral relativists do exactly that. They claim there is no established standard and that each of us must determine what is good or bad for us. To them, right really means just what is pleasant for the individual.

Another viewpoint held by moral relativists is that no person is to impose their morality upon another. Morality, they claim, is neutral ground; thus, no one is to judge others' actions or force their views upon them. This is how moral relativists define **tolerance**. However, in presenting this view, moral relativists contradict their own position. How can someone who says there is no established moral standard say it is wrong to judge others, or that one should be tolerant of another's view? By implication, they are claiming it is immoral to judge or be intolerant of certain kinds of behavior. Even some of the most ardent advocates of moral relativism support the establishment and enforcement of civil laws. They agree that certain behavior is wrong and deserving of punishment and that other types of behavior are commendable and deserving of reward. In other words, certain behavior is considered tolerable and other behavior is intolerable. To determine which is which requires judgment—judgment according to a particular standard.

Tolerance is defined as the character, state, or quality of being tolerant; specifically, indulgence or forbearance in judging opinions, customs, or acts of others. This definition implies several facts. First, it implies that there must be some sort of judgment. One cannot be tolerant unless one first determines that the opinions, customs, or acts of others warrant tolerance. It is also implied that such opinions, customs, or acts are not the norm or do not measure up to some kind of standard. Granted, such a standard may simply be the opinions, customs, or acts of an individual or a culture. However, the point is that there must be some kind of



### Moral absolutes are implicit in child-rearing

standard in order to insist upon tolerance. It is also noteworthy that those who often demand tolerance have very little tolerance themselves. They say that everyone is to be tolerant of others' opinions, customs, or acts; yet they are intolerant of those who disagree—they are intolerant of intolerance.

The idea of neutrality concerning morals is a myth. At first glance, it appears admirable; but in practice, it is impossible. To tell others to be morally neutral is to impose upon them a moral standard. Moral neutrality, by its own definition, is a contradiction. In addition, attempts at moral neutrality would be supportive of **anarchy** (lawless disorder and political confusion). Upon close examination, we find that advocates of moral neutrality are not supportive of their system as it applies to others; they merely appreciate it as it applies to them.

Advocates of moral relativism or moral neutrality are unable to consistently maintain that position. A good example is in reference to how they would rear their own children. As soon as they correct their children or tell them how to behave, they are imposing their moral standards upon their children. When they reward their children for “good” behavior and correct their children for “inappropriate” (they probably would not use the word *bad*) behavior, they are judging their children and imposing their standard upon them. The use of words such as *ought* and *should* demonstrate that they cannot be consistently relativistic; they cannot



avoid imposing their standard upon others, nor can they avoid judging.

Moral relativism also dispels any notion of justice versus injustice, reward versus punishment, and good versus evil. All of these principles require judgment as well as a specific standard. Relativists would also have to eliminate any compulsion or motivation towards improvement. In order to confirm such a concept, one

would have to rely on some sort of objective standard. To improve is to move closer to an objective goal. Relativists claim no such goal exists, and that each person establishes his or her own goals. Yet, even self-improvement must have some sort of objective goal in mind. People have no desire to improve unless they are aware of a goal that they have not attained.



**Complete these activities.**

I.29 How does moral absolutism differ from moral relativism? \_\_\_\_\_

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I.30 What standard does a relativist use to measure morals? \_\_\_\_\_

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I.31 Moral standards are \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ .

I.32 Moral standards are \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ .

I.33 Moral standards are \_\_\_\_\_ .

I.34 If we adopt moral relativism, why would we not be able to determine that someone like Mother Teresa is a loving person? \_\_\_\_\_

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I.35 To a moral relativist, what is right is simply what is \_\_\_\_\_ .

I.36 What are some implications of the definition of tolerance that are inconsistent with moral relativism?

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I.37 In what ways is moral neutrality a contradiction of terms? \_\_\_\_\_

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I.38 What are some situations in which moral relativism would be difficult to consistently follow?

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I.39 Why are concepts such as justice or improvement meaningless to a moral relativist?

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**For Thought and Discussion:**

I.40 Discuss the difference between judgment that is not right and judgment that is legitimate. Be able to intelligently defend your position.



Adult check

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Initial

Date



Review the material in this section to prepare for the Self Test. The Self Test will check your understanding of this section. Any items you miss on this test will show you what areas you need to restudy.

# SELF TEST 1

**Answer true or false for each of the following statements** (each answer, 2 points).

- I.01 \_\_\_\_\_ Our lives are filled with assumptions.
- I.02 \_\_\_\_\_ Assumptions have no effect on the way we live.
- I.03 \_\_\_\_\_ In Matthew 6:34 Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow.
- I.04 \_\_\_\_\_ Presuppositions affect how we process new information.
- I.05 \_\_\_\_\_ False presuppositions can cause us to disbelieve something that is true.
- I.06 \_\_\_\_\_ New information automatically changes our presuppositions.
- I.07 \_\_\_\_\_ Different presuppositions often make debate unproductive.
- I.08 \_\_\_\_\_ Moral relativism assumes an objective source of morality.
- I.09 \_\_\_\_\_ Some questions may correctly be answered based solely on one's perception.
- I.010 \_\_\_\_\_ Objective truths depend upon personal feelings.
- I.011 \_\_\_\_\_ The rational conforms to reason.
- I.012 \_\_\_\_\_ Moral relativism is a type of subjectivism.
- I.013 \_\_\_\_\_ The standard of moral relativism is the Word of God.
- I.014 \_\_\_\_\_ The most moral person is one who most closely follows an objective standard.
- I.015 \_\_\_\_\_ Tolerance requires judgement of others.

**Fill in the blanks with the correct answer from the vocabulary list** (each answer, 2 points).

## Vocabulary

anarchy	moral absolutism	objective truths	rational	subjective
assumption	moral relativism	presupposition	relativism	tolerance

- I.016 The belief that moral rules are created outside one's opinions or preferences is called \_\_\_\_\_.
- I.017 \_\_\_\_\_ is the theory that absolute knowledge of things is impossible because it depends upon the mind's purely subjective way of relating to them.
- I.018 \_\_\_\_\_ are things taken for granted.
- I.019 \_\_\_\_\_ are free from personal feelings, opinions, and prejudices.
- I.020 Lawless disorder and political confusion is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I.021 A type of subjectivism that holds that moral truths are based upon one's personal opinions or preferences is known as \_\_\_\_\_.

- I.022 A \_\_\_\_\_ person is one who conforms to reason and to the sensible.
- I.023 \_\_\_\_\_ things take place within your mind or emotions.
- I.024 A \_\_\_\_\_ is a basic assumption which influences our view of the world.
- I.025 To be indulgent in judging the opinions or customs of others is called \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Underline the correct answer in each of the following statements** (each answer, 3 points).

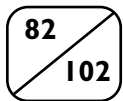
- I.026 Presuppositions will affect how we (**remember, process, repeat**) new information.
- I.027 Differing presuppositions cause great difficulties in (**communication, reading, spelling**).
- I.028 “God loves you” is a (**latent, moral, referring**) expression.
- I.029 (**Aspectual, Action, Common**) verbs are verbs such as stop, start, give up.
- I.030 Subjective means relating to, proceeding from, or taking place within a(n) (**culture’s, society’s, individual’s**) mind or emotions.
- I.031 Moral relativism states, “It’s true for me if I (**believe, learn, read**) it.”
- I.032 To moral relativists, what is right means simply what is (**true, pleasant, objective**) for the individual.
- I.033 (**Culture, Judaism, Anarchy**) is lawless disorder and political confusion.
- I.034 The idea of (**neutrality, righteousness, freedom**) concerning morals is a myth.

**Answer these questions** (each answer, 5 points).

- I.035 Why do we assume so many things? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- I.036 How do different presuppositions cause difficulties in communication? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- I.037 In order to convince someone that God loves him or her, upon what presupposition must you first agree? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

I.038 Why is answering the question, "Have you stopped being mean yet?" a situation in which you cannot win? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I.039 Why must the question, "Does the ice cream taste good?" be answered subjectively?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Adult Check

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Score

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