

WHY ONLY ONE WAY TO GOD?

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THE MAIN THING: Many people believe that Christian claims are exclusive, intolerant and narrow-minded and that, at their core, all religions are the same. Jesus is unique among other religious leaders as only through Him can one be saved from the uncertainty of the struggle to be free from our sin. Jesus' claims can be trusted because they are supported by His life and witnesses. His path truly is the only way to life eternal.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Connect and pray as a group*

1. Tell of a time when you have encountered someone who has made a special claim about themselves. Did you believe that claim? How did you know or discover that the claim was true or false?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

Observation and Reflection

1. Refer to the Matthew and John verses in the sidebar. (Add other verses you know.) Where might people think the statements are exclusive, intolerant or narrow-minded? What are the benefits of believing? What are the consequences of rejecting Christ out of hand?
2. Look at Jesus' claims in John 10:25-30 and John 14:6. Skim through John chapters 9 through 14 to see the actions and statements that Jesus made that show God's character and which verified His claims about Himself.
3. The sermon referenced several analogies (the Mountain with many pathways to God, the party invitation to enter only through the front door, a car and one key, Apollo 13 solution of the only way to survive). Which illustration helped you clarify why Jesus is the only Way?

Application

1. Look at John 14:6. In what other 'ways' or 'truths' to seek your own 'life' have you been trusting? Break into smaller groups to confess; pray for one another to align your will and direction with Christ.
2. There are 21 'I am' statements by Jesus in John's Gospel. (Use a concordance to find these). Which one(s) speaks to you? Meditate on, and memorize that verse.
3. Review the straightforward claims that Jesus made. Then read Matthew 10:34-42. Prayerfully consider what cost God is asking you to count in order to experience the reality that 'Jesus is the Only Way.' What are the blessings that follow?

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 7:13,14

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

John 1:12

¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

John 4:13-14

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 11:25

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Acts 4:12

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Ephesians 2:8,9

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

1 Timothy 2:5-6

⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.

1 Peter 1:19

¹⁹ ...but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Everyone makes claims of some sort. Not all are received well. One such claim made by Christians is that Jesus is the only way to God. It is not a claim made lightly or out of an arrogant attitude, but simply because it is what Jesus said about Himself. He made many such claims in all seriousness (John 4:13, 11:25, 14:6 etc.). Look at John 14:6. Jesus did not say that He was 'A' way, but 'THE' way. His life, teaching, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection were witnessed by His disciples who affirmed His claims (Acts 4:12, 1 Tim 2:5-6). Why then do many react negatively when they hear these statements?

1. People see Christianity as being exclusive. Yet Christianity isn't the only religion that is exclusive. Islam teaches the only true god is Allah and the worship of any other means damnation to hell. Buddhism was born out of Buddha's rejection of two fundamental Hinduism claims related to caste and their scriptures. Hinduism is uncompromising on the authority of their own scriptures relating to reincarnation and karma. The Sikhs came out of a rejection of Buddhism and Hinduism. Atheists reject the views of those who believe in any God. Even Bahai-ism which claims to embrace all religions rejects people who believe there is only one way to God. Thus to reject Christianity on the basis of exclusivity is to reject all major world religions.
2. People perceive Christianity to be intolerant. They suggest that making exclusive claims rendering others' beliefs to be false will lead to intolerance at best and conflict and wars at worst. By removing the exclusive religious claims, it will bring about greater peace on earth. Tolerance of each other's beliefs is essential for peaceful co-existence and greater religious freedom in order for people to learn from one another and freely choose their own faith. However, tolerance cannot be confused with truth. Some argue that no 'view' or 'truth' should be seen as 'more true' than another lest it promote intolerance. Tolerance is respecting someone's belief of something, such as them thinking the world is flat when your belief is that the world is round. However one cannot be called intolerant by simply sharing this opposing belief. The world cannot be both flat and round at the same time. Nor can God exist and not exist at the same time. Truth is what is real whether we each have different perceptions or opinions about it. It is discovered and is certainly not subjective. Two opposing viewpoints cannot be equally valid or right at the same time. Truth by its very nature is exclusive.

Today many acknowledge that there are differences in religions, yet believe if you strip them down to their essentials, all religions fundamentally teach the same thing. Thus whichever religion you choose is fine so long as you are sincere. If religion is man's effort to reach God, and God is at the peak of a mountain, then the different paths (or religions) up to the peak are all good as they ultimately arrive at the same place. Are there similarities? Yes, truth resides within the moral laws or values. However each also have significant differences. As one example, Buddhism denies the existence of a personal God. Christianity affirms the existence of a personal God. Hindus do not believe in a personal God but in Brahman, an impersonal absolute reality that is in all things - that God is in everything and everything is God. Some Hindus believe that there are millions of gods which are manifestations of the Brahman. They cannot all be true because they contradict each other. The conclusion of the matter is this: all religions should be tolerated but not all religions are the same, and therefore not all religions are equally true.

3. People perceive Christianity to be narrow-minded. Jesus claimed to be the only way to God (Matthew 7, John 14:6). People react negatively to the idea of having to follow just one way. Yet we live with this perspective daily, such as you holding one right key to your car. All other religious leaders pointed to a way and never claimed to be more than just a man. Jesus claimed to be God (Mark 14:61). His life, miracles and resurrection supported His claims to the truth of His statements (John 8:46, 1 Peter 1:19). Thus His claims are not arrogance – He is simply telling the truth.

What is the truth? It is that we are all separated from God by sin. Religions in their own way are attempting to connect with God or do something to earn God's favor, be it a virtuous life through religious duties (Hinduism), the 8-Fold path (Buddhism), keeping the Torah and Commandments (Judaism), or through the five pillars of faith which are good works and disciplines to offset one's sins at the Day of Reckoning (Muslim). The essence is that if you do 'enough' you will achieve your paradise. Yet, how do you know if you have done enough? You don't. Christianity teaches about a relationship. We cannot reach God through our efforts. Instead God reaches out to us through Jesus Christ. All are guilty of wrongdoing and that penalty has a price. Who will pay it? Jesus offered Himself as our substitute to pay the penalty we owe because of our sin. No other religious leader did this, or could do it. There is no striving through works to go to Heaven (Eph 2:8-9) but good works grow out of your friendship with Jesus. Everyone is invited to be friends with Jesus (John 1:12) and to be a part of His family. Nobody is excluded. But He is the door – the only way to God, and by accepting and trusting Him by faith you will be saved from hell. Eternal life with Jesus can begin today if you accept His free gift.