

WHY DO YOU BELIEVE JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY?

Icebreaker Activity

WHO DID THAT? Have each person write down something interesting they've done on a note card (e.g., skydiving, visited three different countries, won an eating contest, etc.) Collect, shuffle and distribute the note cards until each person has one. Then take turns to read aloud. The individual reading the note card must also guess which person they believe wrote it and why they came to that conclusion.

Series Introduction

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” 1 Peter 3:15-16, NIV

In an age of skepticism, rejection of absolute truth and morality, criticism of Scripture, disbelief in God, and promotion of post-modernism, one should expect there to be arguments, objections, and challenging questions posed to the Christian faith. According to 1 Peter 3:15, we are to be prepared to respond in a winsome and respectful way to anyone who asks us what we believe and why we believe it. This series on Christian Apologetics - the discipline that deals with a rational defense of the Christian faith - is designed to increase your ability to respond well to questions posed about your faith.

This week, we'll discuss the question: *Why Do You Believe Jesus Is the Only Way?*

Why Do You Believe Jesus Is the Only Way? John 14:6

We live in a society where diversity is valued and multiple perspectives are promoted. In many aspect of life, this can be very beneficial depending upon the subject matter. But what about religion? Are there many ways that lead to God? Is there only one way to salvation? Many in our cultural environment consider it arrogant, intolerant and narrow-minded to say there is only one way to God.

Some agree that all religions are analogous to the story of *The Blind Men and the Elephant*. Six blind men visit the Rajah's palace and they encounter an elephant. The first blind man put out his hand and touched the side of the elephant saying, "It's smooth! An elephant is like a wall." The second blind man put out his hand and touched the trunk of the elephant, saying "It's round! An elephant is like a snake." The third blind man put out his hand and touched the tusk of the elephant saying, "It's sharp! An elephant

is like a spear.” The fourth blind man put out his hand and touched the leg of the elephant saying, “It’s tall! An elephant is like a tree.” The fifth blind man reached out his hand and touched the ear of the elephant saying, “It’s wide! An elephant is like a fan.” The sixth blind man put out his hand and touched the tail of the elephant saying “It’s thin! An elephant is like a rope.”

An angry dispute ensued as each blind man argued his case convinced that his own perception of the elephant was true. The Rajah is awakened by the commotion and called out to the blind men saying, “The elephant is a big animal. Each man touched only one part. You must put all the parts together to find out what an elephant is like.”

By analogy, the religions of the world each have a grasp on part of the truth about spiritual reality. No one religion possesses the comprehensive vision of all truth but the aspect they possess will lead them to God.

However, this analogy fails for it assumes that there is a privileged position (the Rajah) that can see the whole truth (the entire elephant) and this is exactly what the illustration is meant to be denying. No one can see it fully but only a portion of it. Interestingly, it is implied that what is needed is some kind of outside revelation to tell the blind men what it really is. What Christianity claims is that the elephant, as a metaphor of God, speaks and reveals itself. In other words, God has spoken and revealed to us the bigger picture.

Here are exclusive claims Christians hold concerning Jesus based on what the Bible says:

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” John 14:6, NKJV

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12, NKJV

There are four distinct views to consider concerning Jesus and salvation: *universalism*, *pluralism*, *inclusivism*, and *exclusivism*. We’ll explore these concepts in our discussion.

Discussion

1. *Universalism* is a belief that everyone is or will be saved - there is no hell. Universalists generally appeal to arguments from God’s love in support of their position. How does Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 25:41 contradict that?
2. Read John 3:16-17, John 6:35-47, and Romans 10:13. What did Jesus teach as the only way to salvation?
 - **Answer!** Whoever trust in Him for salvation will be saved.
3. *Pluralism* is the view that all religions lead to God, namely, that a person can be saved regardless of their religious beliefs and affiliation. A recent survey done by Probe Ministries found that more than 60% of born-again Christians in America between the ages of 18 and 39 believe that Buddha, Muhammad and Jesus are all valid paths to salvation. Why do you believe so many young Christians have adopted a pluralistic worldview? What influences are you seeing in society?

4. Tolerance has traditionally been defined as a willingness to allow a fair attitude toward beliefs different from one's own. The Bible does teach Christians to be tolerant (as defined above), speak the truth in love and be merciful to those who doubt (Eph 4:15; Jude 1:22). Recently, however, tolerance has been redefined as accepting the beliefs of all people and all positions as equally valid. Why is it impossible to view all religions as equally valid?
 - **Ex.** If one person claims $2+2=4$ and a second person claims $2+2=5$, both claims cannot be right.
 - Scripture makes claims about Jesus that other religions do not. Only Christianity teaches that the one true God is three equal and eternal persons – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christianity claims that Jesus is God the Son while all other religions demote Jesus to a status less than fully and uniquely God. In regards to salvation, only Christianity teaches that salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – not of works or from human effort.
 - **Truth is always narrow. Any exclusive claim always rejects its opposite.**
5. How can you be respectful yet disagree with someone of a different religious background? Do you have personal stories or examples? Share.
6. *Inclusivism* is the belief that even though salvation comes only through Jesus, a person doesn't have to consciously believe in Jesus as Savior to be saved. What do you think happens to people who never hear the Gospel?
7. Read Jeremiah 29:13 and Proverbs 8:17. If anyone seeks God, they will find Him. Describe how a person can diligently seek the Lord. How does that apply to your life?
8. There are many ways God reveals Himself: through creation (Rom 1:18-22); through our consciences (Rom 2:14-15); through His Word (John 5:39); through missionaries (Rom 10:13-15); and through visions and dreams (Acts 9:1-9). How did the Lord reveal Himself to you when you first began seeking Him? How has He revealed Himself to you in the last week?
9. Exclusivism is the belief that only those who consciously trust in Jesus for salvation will be saved (John 3:16-18; 14:6). The Gospel message is exclusive, yet God's love is unlimited. What are some obstacles that prevent a person from believing God truly and completely loves them?
10. How do you know God loves you? How would you explain God's love to someone who doesn't believe in God?

Salvation Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thank You that Your Son Jesus came to this earth, lived a sinless life, and died on the cross for my sins. I believe He rose from the dead so I could receive forgiveness, become Your child, and receive the gift of eternal life. I come to You now and repent from all sin. I not only receive Your gift of forgiveness, but I give You all of my life and all of my heart. I believe You have accepted me because Jesus said, "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." You also said, "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Thank You for saving me, making me Your child, and helping me live for you. In Jesus Name, Amen.