

Sun., Aug. 23:

Message Series: FAQs: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts

Message Series Theme Verse: Psalm 119:130

Message: "FAQs #8: Is Jesus the Only Way?"

Memory Verse: "Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mortals by which we can be saved." -Acts 4:12

Scripture: John 14:1-7

Blurb: What do we do with Jesus' radical claim that salvation only comes through Him? How do we talk about this in a culture that believes in multiple paths to God? Is this really important enough to make a big deal out of it? Our question this Sunday is "Is Jesus the Only Way?" We'll unpack the Bible's teaching and get talking points for how to share about this with others.

Out door worship.

Offering boxes available as people leave.

Parking spaces designated for drive in worshippers.

OPENING MUSIC: *Questions (You Are Faithful)* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

COVID Ready Response Phases, based on cases, local conditions, and protocols

Available on church website

Yellow Phase - Masks indoors

Worship outside, will move indoors if weather is bad

This fall, no Wednesday evening meals - will do outdoor Bash this week

Groups and teams can self choose, but we will offer groups virtually

We'll share when the phase code changes

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mortals by which we can be saved." -Acts 4:12

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

The Way

Surrounded (Fight My Battles)

Living Hope

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: "End of Summer Bash" -Pastor Andrew

OFFERING & PRAYERS: -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

MESSAGE: FAQs #8: "Is Jesus the Only Way?"

Frequently Asked Questions: Your Questions Answered with Biblical Facts. Is Jesus the Only Way to God? John 14:6 "Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

I've gotten a few questions around this that I'm putting all together for today.

This is perhaps the most audacious thing that Jesus ever said. Now, Jesus' said a lot of crazy things, like "you must love your enemies," and "turn the other cheek," and "forgive seventy-times seven times," and "it's better to give than to receive," and "you've got to lose your life to save it," and "the last shall be first," and "the meek will inherit the earth." Jesus was a turn-things-upside-down kind of a guy. He said lots of outlandish things that went against our normal way of thinking. But by far the most outrageous thing He ever said, the most politically incorrect words ever to come from His mouth, are "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by Me."

Christians actually claim this? How exclusive, narrow-minded, and privileged! Maybe you could have gotten away with claiming that in isolated places, or in pervasively Christian settings, but in today's world, we are way too diverse and eclectic to dare claim something like this. It's a global culture now. You just can't go around claiming that your way is right for everyone, and that everyone else is wrong.

This really turns folks off. And more and more people, even Christians, are letting this one slide.

Some Christians try to get around it. Perhaps it doesn't mean that you must be exclusively a Christian in order to be saved. Perhaps it means that *because of* Jesus you are saved. Jesus achieved our access to God, but each of our individual paths to find God may be our own choice. Maybe you don't have to personally claim Jesus, such as one of the other major religions.

But the Bible double downs on this! Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mortals by which we can be saved." It doesn't say "salvation is *earned* by no one else." It says, "salvation is *found* in no one else." Salvation is only found by finding Jesus.

1. Exclusive.

A huge criticism against persistent Christians is that they are just so exclusive! Yet, my plain reading of the Bible says the fact that this criticism is correct. Christianity is exclusive. According to the Bible, the only way to God is by choosing Jesus. This means that other paths don't lead you to God.

Again, current culture says that there are many paths. All religions are good. After all, all the major religions are basically the same, right? They all have some form of seek God, shape up, love one another, be kind, do good.

But, by each religion's own definition, this cannot be. There may be some shared similarities, but that doesn't make them the same. A square and a triangle are not the same, even though they both have lines and angles. Chairs also have feet, legs, arms and backs. But they aren't the same as people.

I've explained this before, right? Christianity is very different, at it's very core, from all other religions. Other religions all claim to identify what you have to DO to find God...all the various systems of works and effort: what you must DO to be saved. Christianity, alone, says that you don't have to DO anything. Jesus already has DONE it for you. Very different. Both can't be true. Irreconcilable.

Besides, if any of the other paths were viable, then Jesus would not have had to come and die for our sins. The Bible shows quite clearly that Calvary was very *unpleasant* for Jesus, and that Jesus, even at the last minute—in the Garden of Gethsemane—asked God the Father to check one last time to be sure that there was no other possible way. There wasn't. Nothing else worked.

Only Jesus. Why? Because only Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Only a real human can truly pay for the cost of human sin. Yet only real God can bring life from death and apply that to all people. Only Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Only Jesus can be the savior. And only by grabbing a hold of this Savior can people get access to the salvation that only He earned. Others may claim to offer life abundant and eternal, but only Jesus has secured it, and shares it. Exclusive.

2. Offensive.

It is bigoted and privileged to claim that only my way is the only right way. That's offensive! Yet, my plain reading of the Bible says the fact is that this criticism is correct. Christianity is offensive. According to the Bible, none of the other religions do it.

This means that you can't just decide who God is, what God is like, or how God wants you to live. You don't get to choose! It's not up to you, or about you! God is real. That means I can't decide who I want Him to be. It's kind of like my best friend. He is who he is. I can't just believe what I want about him, I have to accept him for who he is. If I choose to believe that he is a carpenter when he is a teacher, I am not treating him as real.

God is real and comes and reveals who He is to us. We see that clearly in Jesus. We have the explanation in the Bible. It is disingenuous to not receive Him as He has revealed Himself to be.

Now, this comes as an affront to us, because God then challenges what we wish He were or who we prefer Him to be. We have to put away what we want, and to accept who He is. When we accept that God is real and other, then our preferences are offended.

The Bible says that the Gospel is offensive. 1 Corinthians 1:18, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But it is the power of God for those of us who are being saved." Our sensibilities are offended. It only becomes power when we believe. That's why true belief requires a leap of faith.

3. Jealous.

The Bible says over and over again, in very plain terms, that our God is a jealous God. We heard this in the 10 Commandments. A few chapters later, in Exodus 34:14, God says again, "For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

I'll tell you, I have a very godly wife. She's very godly, because she is very jealous. She is so jealous, so jealous, that she will not give me permission to commit adultery. Can you imagine? She is so exclusive, so easily offended, so jealous. I can't even get emotionally attached to another woman!

Now, let's say we plan a date next summer—after COVID—to go to paradise: I don't know, somewhere in the Carribean. We commit to taking a beautiful cruise, just she and I together, a time in paradise. Now, let's say that for the next year, I chase other women. I go out, have fun, shack up, all year long. Now, when it's time to go on the cruise, what's going to happen? I'll tell you what will happen: she'll get on that cruise, but she's not letting me on the cruise. I've violated her all year. I've chased other women. She is jealous. All year long I chose against my upcoming experience in paradise with her.

Can you make the connection? God is a jealous god. If I run after all other religions and beliefs, doing what I want, what makes sense to me, and what feels good to me, then what will happen when it comes time to go to paradise in glory with God? God's going to paradise, but I'm not getting in. Why? Because God is a jealous God. He will only be ours on His terms. The Bible says that when we follow other gods, that God calls us adulterers. It's unfaithfulness, in it's truest sense.

All those people who claim that any religion is fine, have not learned the hard truth of a jealous woman scorned. Our God is a jealous God.

So, Christianity is exclusive, offensive, and claims a jealous God. But I want to re-frame this all a bit. Normally this question is asked, "Why can't God's grace include non-Christians? Why does God exclude those who believe differently? That's not a very loving God."

You're framing it wrong. It's not about a God who chooses to give salvation to some and withhold it from others. It's not about inclusive verses exclusive. It's about a God who chooses everyone—inclusive—and because of His deep love, gives Himself so completely so that everyone can be saved. He offers it to everyone, and then stands on top of a box, jumps up and down, flails His arms and screams, "It's right here! Come get it! It's free! Come take it! It's for you! No strings attached!"

It's not "on" God, however, if *we* don't stop and pick it up. God's radically gracious.

Let's say that a year from now there's finally a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine. Dear God, please! It's been proven to be successful, but it's only available at the Wyoming clinic. Now, let's say that our local Walgreens wants to make some money. So, they offer an alternative. The syringe is filled with a drug that makes you feel good, and gives you a buzz. It's cheap and easy, but it doesn't inoculate

against COVID-19. What is your doctor going to tell you? Yes, you can choose either vaccine. Both are equally available...but only the one will actually work.

“But doctor, that’s exclusive! I like how the other one makes me feel. How close minded!” No it’s not! It’s identifying what is true, what will actually work. It’s generous and gracious to point out the real way. It would be a travesty for my doctor to tell me that I can use whatever vaccine I prefer.

Only Jesus’ death on the cross saves us from sin. Only Jesus’ resurrection breaks the power of death. Only by choosing Jesus do we have access to this forgiveness and life. It is not an exclusive claim to say *only Jesus*...it is gracious and generous to clearly speak the truth, to identify the way, and to offer abundant and eternal life. Other options may seem good. They make you feel good for a time. But it is only in Jesus that we actually receive life. “Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mortals by which we can be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

It’s about what works. Be careful, Christians, for sliding on the exclusivity of Jesus. Our very salvation is at stake!

Two side points. Salvation is earned by Jesus. We can’t earn our salvation. But disciples of Jesus are called to do good works. Now, works can’t put us right with God. The Bible says in Titus 3:5, “God saved us. It was not because of any good works that we ourselves had done but because of His own mercy that He saved us.” But, once we have God, and God has us, then God calls us to go and do good in our world because of God in our lives. They are our response to God.

It’s like that person you fall in love with. When I fell in love with Reese, I was so amazed by how awesome she was, how she loved me so amazingly, how she chose me, that I began to think differently. I began to think about what I could do to make her happy. I couldn’t help myself...it was my response! I wanted to do things out of my love for her. To this day I want to do whatever she wants.

When we meet Jesus, and we realize just who He is, and what He has done for us, His love for us changes us. It changes how we think! We start looking for ways that we can please Him by how we live. We also want the world to be like He wants the world, and we do what we can to help.

A second point, and one of you specifically asked me this: if Jesus is the only way, what about those who never hear about Him? Another one of you asked about kids who die before they are able to know and choose Jesus.

The Bible, in Genesis 18:25, asks the question: “Will [God,] the Judge of all the earth do right?” The answer is, God will! God is just. Paul says that God only holds us accountable for what we know. Abraham, he points out, and all the righteous people from the time before Jesus, were deemed righteous by God even though they didn’t know about Jesus.

Now, the Bible says that all of creation points to God. It is plainly evident that there is a God. To deny that is to willfully refuse to see what is clear. So, all people know to turn to God.

Nobody is going to be excluded from Heaven because they’ve never heard the name Jesus. The reason people will not get to heaven is because they’ve either refused to take the Jesus they have heard about seriously, or they’ve told God the Creator their entire life that they can live just fine without Him, that they don’t need Him. So when they die, God will say to them, “You never wanted me or chose in your earthly life. I honor that choice, and I will not violate your free choice and force you into heaven.”

Now, time for the application. You have heard about Jesus. You now know about the Way, the Truth and the Life. God is real. What are you going to do about Him?

Stop knowing about Jesus, and start trusting in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. Many people think that salvation comes when they agree that Jesus is the Savior. But, the Bible says in John 1:12 that it’s not enough to just believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Even Satan believes that! We don’t just move from being a non-believer to being a believer. We must make Him our life’s choice. Become a disciple. Follow Him! So, it starts with you. If you haven’t decided to become a disciple of Jesus, today

is a great day to do that. You can do that right here and right now. In your heart, open up and ask Him to come in. Give Him your life. Pledge yourself to Him. Ask Him to be your Savior and Lord!

And then, the same with how we answer this question to others. Stop spending your time and attention on trying to find ways of rationalizing non-believers into heaven on the sly, and start trying to get them in the front Door...who is Jesus! Disciples make disciples!

I want to close with a great analogy that Lee Strobel used. I didn't know this, but he said that he always loved to paint. And growing up he was given the corner of the basement to do his paintings. One day, when he was fourteen years old, he was home alone working on an oil painting. He was impatient and wanted this oil painting to dry faster. So he hooked up a bunch of heat lamps and aimed them right at the painting.

Suddenly, the corner of the basement erupted in flames. He ran into the laundry room where there was a phone, dialed zero, and begged, "Send the fire trucks! My house is on fire!" When he went back, he saw that already the whole corner of the basement is engulfed in flames. He ran back into the laundry room and filled up a bucket with water and tried to throw it up towards the ceiling so it wouldn't burn through. No use. You can imagine the smoke that's produced by all his oil paints and turpentine.

There were no windows in the basement, and the lights shorted out. The fumes started to make him disoriented, and before he knew it, he couldn't even remember where the stairs were; he didn't know how to get out. Fear seized his body and he realized, "I can't save myself! If somebody doesn't rescue me, I'm going to die."

Just then a policeman opened the basement door and stepped down the stairs. He had a big flashlight and called out, "Police officer! Anybody down here?"

Do you see it? The police officer had come down into Lee's mess and could lead him out. Lee reflected, "He was fully capable of leading me to safety. And he knew where the stairs were. He knew the one and only escape root from that basement. And to make it better, he had the big flashlight to illuminate the way."

Now, it wouldn't have been enough for Lee to just believe that this officer could save him. He would have died down there if he had just stood there believing it. He had to put his faith in the police officer, accept his help, and choose to follow him.

We cannot save ourselves, no matter what we may prefer to think or believe. Only Jesus can save us—He has come down into our mess!—but He can only save us when we choose to follow Him.

Only Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. "Salvation is found in no one else." Follow Him! Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *My Jesus, I Love Thee* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

This Wednesday: End of Summer Bash!

Next week's message:

Next week: Outdoor worship! Bring lawn chair and hat.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mortals by which we can be saved." -Acts 4:12

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify