

Question of the Month

What exactly is a shaman?

Seems like nowadays you can't go anywhere without seeing the word "shaman" plastered all over the place. It's on billboards, sides of buildings, storefronts, lawn ornaments, and even the paper wrappers around our hamburgers. OK, maybe not... but you've at least heard the word before, right?

So what exactly is a shaman? According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a shaman is, "in particular religions, a person who is thought to have special powers to control or influence good and evil spirits, making it possible for them to discover the cause of illness, bad luck, etc."



The impetus for this month's question comes from a conversation I had with a woman on my flight back from a recent speaking engagement. She was reading a book about shamans and the supernatural. She was on her way to a special training session for a limited number of people in which the trainer would enlighten each attendee regarding mental and physical health, as well as spiritual fitness. I told her that I also traveled around giving talks on the "supernatural" and she seemed genuinely interested.

Part of our conversation involved her discussing the idea of a shaman and the various messages they convey. I asked her how she knew exactly where these messages were coming from and how she could determine if they were true. She wasn't quite sure, so I casually shared how we know the message in the Bible was authentically from God and trustworthy as well.

She seemed very pleasant, and we had a very comfortable conversation. She was on a quest to seek truth and enlightenment, which is a laudable pursuit. During our conversation, she shared how the author of the book discussed how all religions were just different ways of conveying similar spiritual concepts, including the idea that Jesus was also a type of shaman. Our time on the plane was obviously limited and I felt the Holy Spirit compelling me not to press too hard and too fast in this situation. So, I purposely limited my comments, but gave her a copy of my book to take with her, no strings attached. I am leaving her in God's hands, allowing the book and other Christians to share further biblical truths with her in God's timing.

I do, however, want to share one additional thought with you, which would have been my next step in discussing things further with her, had we continued our conversation. It's the idea of Jesus as a shaman. Many people who do not necessarily accept all the tenets of Christianity still view Jesus as a "good teacher", innocently wanting to include His wisdom as part of their worldview. However, it's not a valid alternative and here's why... Jesus did not give us that option! Jesus didn't just claim He was wise or that He was speaking for God, He actually claimed to be God Himself! Big difference. And herein lies the problem. If, as the non-Christian spiritualist might believe, Jesus was just a "good teacher", we have a huge dilemma. If Jesus knew He wasn't God, but claimed He was, that makes

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Him a liar, and you can hardly call a liar a “good teacher”. On the other hand, if Jesus actually thought He was God, but He really wasn’t, that makes him deluded. Again, a deluded person wouldn’t be considered a “good teacher”. Our only other option is that Jesus actually was (and is) who He claimed to be... God in the flesh! Last time I checked, “God in the flesh” trumps a “good teacher” every time!

In addition, Jesus boldly stated, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). That’s about as exclusive as you can get and it rules out all the alleged wisdom coming from any of those who consider themselves to be a shaman. The Bible further states, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Here’s my concluding advice regarding those who are seeking wisdom from various sources. First, don’t make it your primary goal to “win an argument” or be abrasive and arrogant in your demeanor. I would recommend that you affirm them for having an interest in things of a spiritual nature. Next, you can ask deeper questions about their pursuit to give you a better idea of where they are coming from and be better positioned to know how to respond. At an appropriate time, you can then share how Scripture not only makes “truth claims” regarding spiritual matters, but it also offers tangible ways of knowing the Bible’s ultimate source is none other than the God of this universe (which we’ve covered in some previous articles and in our various ministry resources). This is a great, non-combative approach to sharing your faith with those whom God has placed in your life. Be constantly praying for and looking for opportunities to do so. You’ll be surprised how God shows-up each time!

In the meantime, if you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don’t hesitate to [contact us!](#)