

Only one way?



This month's question comes courtesy of Mike Z., who emailed me recently looking for some advice regarding a tough situation. His real name is Kevin Jansen, and he lives on Oak Street in Decatur, AR, but I need to protect his identity, so we'll just call him "Mike Z." (Obviously, I'm just kidding. I made that name up. It really is Mike Z., and he's in Washington State.)

This article is essentially what I sent in response. It will not only give you a response to the situation but can also be used to further develop your critical thinking skills as you dissect situations like the one Mike describes.

The Scenario

Here's the backdrop for this article. Mike told me he was witnessing to a non-Christian friend who told him the one problem he has with Christianity is that Jesus is the only way. The skeptic also said, "Christians, Jews and Muslims all have the same God. You're telling me that a Muslim who is genuinely pursuing God and dedicates their life to God is going to Hell?"

These situations are often much more "emotional" than "academic." There is generally a lot of emotion associated with discussing such a question, and it can be difficult to attempt to give an answer without upsetting the person who asked.

A question comes to mind regarding formulating a response to the question being raised. Is the person looking for an answer that is true or just one that will make them feel better (independent of whether or not the answer is true)? That's something that needs to be addressed. Most rational people will admit they ultimately want to know the truth, even if it turns out to be something they don't fully understand or are not fully comfortable with.

So, the focus needs to be on what is actually true. If we can't figure that out, nothing else really matters. If we can, then how we feel about it is something we can certainly discuss, but it would pale in comparison to the answer being true.

Something hinted at in the person's questions is the idea that "all religions are basically the same." That certainly cannot be true because some religions believe in only one God (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) while others believe in many gods (Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Mormonism) and atheism (yes, it is a religion) posits no gods at all.

It's easy to see they can't all be right. The truth has to be there are no gods at all, only one god, or many.

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Secondly, the god of Islam is not the same as the God of the Bible. Yes, there are similarities, but there are extremely significant differences. Here are just a few:

- Allah (Islam) is not a trinity; the biblical God certainly is
- Allah is not a heavenly father to anyone; the God of the Bible is our Heavenly Father
- Allah only loves you if you seek him first; the God of the Bible loved us before we ever loved Him.
- Allah is very capricious (i.e., given to sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behavior) as opposed to the God of the Bible, who is a God of order and does not change.

Not to get off on a tangent about Islam, I was just giving another example of how the various religions can't all be right.

Another very interesting point is that if there truly is more than one way to heaven, Jesus went through all that suffering, torment, incredible anguish, and a horrific crucifixion for nothing! It wasn't necessary. After all, there are other ways to get to heaven! What does that say about Jesus? Nothing good. It would make Him out to be a fool. It would also make Him out to be a liar. Why? Because He claimed to be the only way (John 14:6). If He was a liar, we can't even view Him as a good or moral teacher, as some say He was (as opposed to actually being the Son of God).

Now, to comment on the scenario that was posed: "You're telling me that a Muslim who is genuinely pursuing God and dedicates their life to God is going to Hell?" This is the emotional part. Let's unpack this a bit.

I'll start off with a simple analogy. I live in Wisconsin, and I happen to be a Green Bay Packer fan. (I'm not as avid as I used to be, but I'm still a fan.) Imagine I'm walking up to the stadium just before a game, and I see someone else and happen to glance at their ticket. It seems to look a bit strange, to say the least. I ask him about it, and he says he took a blank piece of paper and wrote "PACKER TICKET" on it, with today's date and seat: Section 120, Row 2, Seat 4 (right on the 50-yard line). Then I say, "Ah, that's not going to get you in the stadium to see the game." Then he says, "Who are you to tell me this isn't good enough? Do you have any idea of how huge of a Packer fan I am? I've watched every game they've played since I was 8 years old! Just because I didn't get my ticket the way you did, doesn't mean mine isn't any good!"

That person might be very sincere in wanting to get into the game, but their approach isn't going to cut it. What's much more important at this point isn't their sincerity or their good intentions; it's following the guidelines established by the NFL and the Packers organization. Furthermore, it's not "my opinion" that will keep them from entering the stadium, it will be "the truth" that keeps them out. Their emotions and opinions will not come into play when they face the person at the ticket booth.

Now let me share two direct comments on the specific statement made: "You're telling me that a Muslim who is genuinely pursuing God and dedicates their life to God is going to Hell?"

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First of all, yes, “you” are telling them something, but what you are sharing is not just your philosophy. You are simply pointing out what the Bible has to say about the issue of going to heaven. If they don’t believe what you are sharing, they are saying they don’t believe the Bible. It’s not about you; it’s about what is written in the Bible. If they don’t believe the Bible, that’s their choice, but there’s so much evidence that the Bible truly is the inspired Word of God, and there are also consequences for rejecting it. You care enough about the other person to want them to know. It is not your job to force them to believe it. God Himself gives them the ability to accept or reject His Word, but He reserves the right also to have consequences for choosing to disobey. (If God did not judge sin, He could not be considered a just or righteous judge.) Again, it’s not your philosophy, it’s the “truth claims” found in the Bible about the nature of reality.

Secondly, independent of where someone lives or what “religion” they are brought up in if they sincerely seek to know the truth about God, He will reveal Himself to them:

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who seek him.** (Hebrew 11:6)

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and **I will love him and manifest myself to him.** (John 14:21)

God is spirit, and **those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:24)

Not only do we need to “seek God,” but we also need to do it properly, specifically seeking truth, as opposed to just doing it our own way. Think back to the Garden of Eden. God created Adam and Eve in perfect relationship with Him. He also gave them free will. They were presented a lie (by Satan) claiming that what God told them wasn’t correct. Adam and Eve chose to believe the lie, thinking they knew better than God! That NEVER works! What are people doing today? God has told us what is required (only one way - Jesus) and guess what, we somehow think we know better! “Who is anyone to tell us there’s only one way. That’s so narrow minded!” Well, consider what Jesus said.

“Enter by the **narrow gate.** For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For **the gate is narrow** and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

If someone is involved in some other religion but sincerely wishes to know the truth, God will reveal truth to them. Millions have left whatever manmade belief system they were raised in, turned to the only true God and His Son, Jesus Christ, and found eternal life.

When Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,” He was either lying, deluded... or He was speaking as LORD! Everyone must decide for themselves. That will be the only question on the test when we face our Creator!

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There's so much more I could share, but I need to keep this semi-brief. Even though what I've shared is very logical, we are still mainly dealing with a heart issue. We need to pray that the Holy Spirit works to remove the skeptic's blinders and softens their hearts until they see the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3-4) and bow their knee. We need to be diligent in sharing the Gospel message!

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.
(Galatians 6:9)

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#)!