

Wrestling with Doubt

Is Jesus the Only Way?

I. Introduction

1. “Reasons why we believe” not “Proofs to prove the skeptic wrong”
2. Reasonable explanations are for defense only!

But in your hearts set apart 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. 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

3. Wrestling with the doubts of skeptics helps you understand them
4. Wrestling with your own doubts helps you grow in your faith

II. Common Doubts

1. Atheism – a belief in no God (a=*not* & theism=*God*)

- a. Maybe not so common

By many measures, Americans are strongly religious: 92% believe in God...
http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5h8ftb8lipCc_XqwfUp0PLhdQGYTwD91FSUQ00

- b. Many who claim to be atheists are not philosophical *atheists*, but are rather *agnostic* (a=*not* & gnostic=*knowledge*)

Atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning. . .” – C.S. Lewis

2. Pluralism – a belief in the truth of many different religions and belief systems (“Plural” means more than one; in contrast to “singular”)

- a. Pluralism is the idea that many religious roads led to God, salvation, truth, or ultimate reality

- b. Pluralism is growing among those who claim to be Christians

57 percent of evangelical church attenders said they believe many religions can lead to eternal life...

http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5h8ftb8lipCc_XqwfUp0PLhdQGYTwD91FSUQ00

3. To wrestle with the question “Is Jesus the only way?” is to wrestle with pluralism

4. Pluralism is inconsistent with Christian belief

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6 NIV)

III. Common objections made by pluralists

1. "All religions basically teach the same thing."
2. "All roads lead to truth, everyone knows that."
3. "It is wrong to impose your beliefs on other people."
4. "It is disrespectful to tell other people that their religion is wrong."
5. "Everybody believes whatever feels right for them. I am more of a spiritual person than a religious person."
6. "Everybody has the right to decide what is true for them. What's true for them, may not be true for you."

If you have never heard anyone make one of these statements, I promise you will. Especially if you spend any time on a college or university campus.

IV. Responses to pluralism

1. "All religions basically teach the same thing."

RESPONSE: *The major world religions teach very different things.*

What do the major world religions teach about God?

- *Judaism – one God who is loving and just*
 - *Christianity – one God in three persons*
 - *Mormonism – many gods who were once human beings*
 - *Islam – one God who is creator and judge*
 - *Hinduism – 330 million gods*
 - *Buddhism – no god*
 - *Taoism – no god*
 - *New Age Spirituality – god is in everything, including the human soul*
2. "All roads lead to truth, everyone knows that."

RESPONSE: *No, not everyone*

Typically, you find pluralism in countries where there is a freedom of religion. You don't see it so much in Communist or Islamic nations.

3. "It is disrespectful to tell other people that their religion is wrong."

RESPONSE: *A person can disagree with the beliefs of another without being disrespectful*

To claim that another person's belief system is faulty doesn't mean everything they teach is wrong. We believe, "all truth is God's truth." It is a false assumption to conclude that disagreement is disrespect.

4. "Everybody believes whatever feels right for them. I am more of a spiritual person than a religious person."

RESPONSE: *Feelings are a wonderful part of our humanity, but they are horrible guides to truth.*

"Feelings are important. God gave them to us for many good reasons. But they are, by themselves, poor guides in life. By themselves, they often lead us away from, not toward, reality and the truth."

--Alex McFarland

[The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity](#), pgs 150-151

5. "Everybody has the right to decide what is true for them. What's true for them, may not be true for you."

RESPONSE: *In most of the big issues of life, truth is the same for everybody.*

For example in:

- Science – the earth is round and it rotates around the sun
- Math – $2 + 2 = 4$
- World affairs – genocide is morally wrong
- Relationships – you are married or you are not married

6. "It is wrong to impose your beliefs on other people."

RESPONSE: Your belief in pluralism is a belief, so why are you trying to impose your beliefs on me?

All doubt is based on an alternative belief.

"Every doubt, therefore, is based on a leap of faith."

-- Tim Keller, [The Reason for God](#)

V. The reason I believe Jesus is the only way

Jesus is the Son of God.

What other choice do we have when we consider the claims of Jesus?

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic -- on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg -- or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

C.S. Lewis
[Mere Christianity](#)

Jesus is either the Lord, lunatic, liar, or a legend.

The human claim to be God is such an extreme claim that it narrows the number of possible explanations.

If he is not the Lord, the Son of God, then he must be a:

- 1) Lunatic
- 2) Liar
- 3) Legend

Did he exhibit any of the traits of a lunatic or a liar? Josephus, a first century Jewish historian called him a “wise man.”

If he was a legend, the clever invention of power hungry political leaders, then why were so many of his followers willing to die for a myth?

Small group questions

- 1) Have you ever heard someone make one of the six objections of pluralism in a conversation, or on TV, or in a movie? If so, describe what you heard.
- 2) Which of the six objections seems like the hardest to refute? Why?
- 3) If Jesus is not Lord, a lunatic, or a liar, or a legend, what else could a skeptic honestly say about Jesus?
- 4) Can a man be called a “wise man” if he honestly thinks he is God in human form?
- 5) What is the one thought you will take away from this material?

Helpful Resources:

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God*

Alex McFarland, *The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity*

Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter*

Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*

Ravi Zacharias and others, *Beyond Opinion*

Peter Kreeft, *Between Heaven and Hell*

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*