

Why Is Christianity So Narrow and Intolerant?
Apologetics Adult Sunday School Lesson
Rev. Dave Dorst, January 11, 2015

Introduction: Multiple Choice test

Which play(s) did Shakespeare write?

- A) Julius Caesar
- B) Oedipus Rex
- C) Doctor Faustus
- D) An Ideal Husband
- E) A and C
- F) B and D
- G) None of the above
- H) All of the above

Even if you don't know the answer to the test above (it's A), you can see that there are 8 answers. Some answers stand alone, others claim multiple answers, and the last two are all or nothing.

If we were to do this with the major religions, it might look like this:

Which religion is completely true in its presentation of God and how humans can be right with God?

- A) Christianity
- B) Buddhism
- C) Islam
- D) Hinduism
- E) A and C
- F) B and D
- G) None of the above
- H) All of the above

Claiming that all religions are alike is like picking letter H. It's still a religious position and an answer! Relativists today want to claim that they are being tolerant and broad by saying that all religions are equal, that none hold the exclusive path to God. But that is a religious position and an exclusive claim.

So today's Apologetic question is: Why Is Christianity So Narrow and Intolerant?

I've taken this to mean, how is Christianity true and all the other major religions are false?

I'm not going to address intolerant in terms of being racist or against homosexuality, etc.

Why would someone make the charge of exclusivity about Christianity? Most likely they know people of other faiths that they love, particularly if they've died, they don't want to hear that they were wrong and are in hell. Or they simply feel that it is unfair that only one religion is true when there are hundreds. Recognize that this could be a very emotional, sensitive area for people asking.

Is it a fair question?

Yes it is because Biblical Christianity has to reflect Jesus' teachings and He overwhelmingly taught that He was the only way to God/eternal life/salvation:

John 14:6 - *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."*

1 Timothy 2:5-6 - *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."*

John 3:18 - *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*

No Christianity is only narrow in the how to be saved, not who can be saved.

It's true that God chooses people from the foundation of the world, but that's not what we mean. What we mean is that it crosses all possible boundaries and is equally accessible to the serial killer and the humanitarian aid worker. From the PhD professor to the uneducated fisherman who never leaves his village. The very definition of grace is that it is not earned or deserved, but God gives it as a gift. Because a certain drug is the only way to cure a disease does not mean the doctors are exclusive because that's the only thing they prescribe. It's only exclusive if they will only give it to smart people or rich people or some other criteria.

No: it's not the only exclusive religion! When someone says that all religions are basically the same, then we can be sure that they have very little in-depth knowledge of the various religions.

SEE CHART OF MAJOR RELIGIONS – THEY'RE ALL EXCLUSIVE.

So saying that exclusive religions are wrong is saying that 80% of the world is wrong, and the elite 20% of postmodern relativists are right.

Law of Non-Contradiction: if two statements about on particular issue contradict one another, or make mutually exclusive claims, then 1) only one of them is true, or 2) they are both false. They cannot both be true in the same sense and at the same time.

Other religions may have some truth in them, even overlapping truth with Christianity. But none is completely true like Christianity.

This topic is chapter one of Tim Keller's book "The Reason for God" because he says it's the top answer when he asks people what their biggest problem with Christianity is. He addresses some of the common objections:

- "All religions are equally valid and basically teach the same thing." Problem: Do you really believe that religions with child sacrifice are equivalent to others? Logical contradictions of polytheistic vs. monotheistic religions. Insistence that doctrine does not really matter is a doctrine itself.

- "Different religions are like the blind men who hold a different part of an elephant and describe it." Problem: the person telling the story can see the whole elephant. So it becomes the most arrogant claim: that all religions are blind men with only part of the truth, but I (the cultural relativist) alone see the whole truth.

- "Religious belief is too culturally and historically conditioned to be truth" Problem: Religious pluralism, atheism, and postmodern relativism are also culturally and historically conditioned!

- "It is arrogant to insist your religion is right and to convert others to it." But, as with all of these lines of thought, that is a religious statement itself! So they're asking you to drop your narrow, exclusive views to adopt their narrow, exclusive view. Their narrow view just happens to be "all of the above." (Refer back to the multiple choice test above)

There are some false assumptions that often spring up when people are labeling things "exclusive."

False Assumption #1: Exclusiveness = Wrong

Things can be exclusive and wrong (whites only clubs), or they can be exclusive and right (unleaded fuel only).

(Might have to define 3 kinds of tolerance: 1) Legal tolerance: equal rights for all ethnicities and religions. 2) Social tolerance: treating others kindly. 3) Intellectual tolerance: all views are equal.)

False Assumption #2: Sincerity = Right

Sincerity has nothing to do with determining truth. A nurse who changed an oxygen tank at a hospital thought she had sincerely helped her patient. She didn't realize it was filled with nitrogen and improperly labeled in the warehouse.

The assumptions that the statement "Christianity is narrow and exclusive" rests on are: God is unknowable, God is loving and not wrathful, God has not spoken in any one religious book or set of doctrines, religious truth is just preferences. All of these are faith assumptions that cannot be proven. How do you know they are true? You don't, you just hope they are because that's what your religion would look like.

What some people would still argue about all religions being equal:

- A) They all point to the same general principles even if the specifics are different; they all lead to heaven
- B) They're true for different people; some people need forgiveness, some people need to do acts of penance, some people need challenge; different religions will give them different things
- C) Difference between fact and opinion: you wouldn't tell someone which ice cream flavor is correct, why can't you let there be favorite religions?

The bottom line is that if you are talking to an unbeliever about this question, you have a great opportunity to tell them that Christianity is true because it is God's revelation to man, and it is unlike any man-made religion because it is based on grace not works. And it is based on God Himself paying the penalty for our sins so that we don't have to earn salvation.