

IS JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

Leader pages on pp. 144-147

THE POINT:
BECAUSE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN BRING US TO GOD.

1 JOHN 5:1-13

MEMORY VERSE

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him. ² This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and obey his commands.

³ For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden, ⁴ because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. ⁵ Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

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⁶ Jesus Christ—he is the one who came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and by blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement. ⁹ If we accept human testimony, God's testimony is greater, because it is God's testimony that he has given about his Son. ¹⁰ The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within himself. The one who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about his Son.

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¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³ I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

KEYWORDS

Born of God (vv. 1,4)—Refers to the spiritual transformation that happens when a person puts his faith in Christ. He receives a new nature born of God (John 1:12-13; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Our faith (v. 4)—Faith is the ability of those born of God to keep on overcoming Satan's lies and sin's temptations in the victory which Jesus has already won (John 16:33).

Water (v. 6)—The witness that refers to Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist, when God confirmed that Jesus was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased (Matt. 3:13-17).

Blood (v. 6)—The witness of Jesus's atoning death on the cross, through which Jesus provided our salvation from sin and death by shedding His blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20; 1 John 1:7).



WHAT MAKES JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

We can all be narrow-minded sometimes. It's funny to hear somebody insist that staying on Highway 231 will get you there faster when you're convinced that taking several side roads saves time. A person can be so focused—so narrow-minded—that they can't see the advantages of another route.

Christians are often accused of being narrow-minded. The accusation is that Christians aren't tolerant of other people's beliefs. Christians are rather straightforward about their belief that Jesus Christ is the only way to God, but there is no such thing as not being narrow-minded. Every faith in existence is narrow-minded with its own teachings.

- Atheists are narrow-minded toward those who believe in God.
- Animists are narrow-minded toward those who only believe in one God.
- Universalists are narrow-minded toward those who believe there's only one way to God.

Everyone is narrow-minded. The question is not whether or not we are narrow-minded, but whether or not our narrow belief represents the truth. The apostle John points us to the right kind of narrow-mindedness.

He Is Offered to Everyone //

1 John 5:1-5

Everyone has a way that they think reality is to be designed and understood by.

- Atheists believe that the natural universe, operating by natural laws, is all that exists.
- Animists believe that humans in the natural world interact in a symbiotic relationship—a mutually beneficial relationship—with the gods and spirits in the spirit world.
- Universalists believe that all human beings will eventually be saved; having the liberal idea of universal salvation
- Non-Christian theists believe in a single god, but one that is different from the God revealed in the Bible.

Being aware of these understandings is important because every belief about the formation of reality comes with its own belief about salvation. Of course, many non-Christian faiths don't refer to their belief about salvation using the word "salvation." Instead, they refer to it as "the ultimate thing one can achieve in life."

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WHAT ARE THE REASONS PEOPLE SAY THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GOD?

While it's important to understand how other belief systems express their narrow-minded beliefs, as Christians, we need to begin with understanding our own beliefs. Only then do we have what is needed to compare the other beliefs to. The Bible is very clear about the nature of salvation, and we see that in 1 John 5:1-5.

Christian salvation is a much broader concept than most Christians think. It is more than just receiving Christ into your life. While that is the beginning point of salvation, it isn't the complete picture. Christian salvation isn't a single event, it is a process.

- **Justification.** The beginning point of the salvation process is called justification, and John spoke of this in verse one. Being "born of God" (saved) comes by believing "that Jesus is the Christ." The biblical concept of "believing" is not simply intellectual agreement of an idea. It is the experience of entering into an actual personal relationship with an objectively real personal God. It's the access into this personal relationship that begins the salvation process.
- **Sanctification.** Salvation doesn't end with justification. Think of a marriage relationship. Entry into marriage may start with a marriage ceremony, but then the couple lives in relationship with one another for the rest of their lives. Comparing that to Christian salvation, we enter into a relationship with Christ by inviting Him into our lives, which we are to daily live.

The part of the salvation process that exists past the entry point is called sanctification. It's characterized by continual spiritual growth in our relationship with God. Our sanctification—"our growing" in the salvation Jesus provided—is experienced as "we love God and obey his commands." Our obedience shows and proves our love for God. In verse 4, John spoke of overcoming the world. This is an expression that points out God is actually working in the life of an individual to accomplish His purposes in the world.

He Is Unique for the Task // 1 John 5:6-10

When trying to discover truth about anything, we have to think through what evidence exists to back up our conclusions. When it comes to studying the physical world, there will be some way to explore it scientifically. But when it comes to spiritual truth, there is evidence that can be brought to the table. So, what about Jesus? What do different beliefs say about Him?

HOW DID YOU BECOME CONVINCED THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?



DIGGING DEEPER THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

Not believing in Jesus Christ as the only way to God is not new. Every Christian should expect to be confronted by this issue. If you've never been challenged, consider whether others even know what you believe. Another reason Christians may not experience questioning about our exclusive beliefs is because we aren't exposing ourselves to others who don't believe in Christ or, even worse, we are living in a Christian bubble. That means we are surrounded only by believers with no interactions with non-believers. But Jesus said each believer should "let your light shine before others, so that they [the world] may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). We are the inspiration that a hopeless sinner needs to escape the darkness of the world. Our purpose is to be a bridge that connects others to Christ. It is our cause,

How can you live your life as a bridge to Christ for others and not live in a Christian bubble?

- Naturalists, who don't believe in God, generally acknowledge the existence in history of the man called Jesus. They have no evidence to back up their belief that Jesus was nothing more than a human man.
- Animists generally consider Jesus to be one of the ancestor spirits, but those who believe this have no evidence to back up their belief.
- Pantheists typically believe Jesus was a man who, during His life on earth, achieved the highest level of enlightenment that humans can possibly achieve. Their belief has nothing to back it up.
- Non-Christian theists variously think Jesus to have been a prophet or some highly enlightened person sent to earth by God to accomplish particular tasks. And as with the other faith systems, they have no way to back up what they believe.

Many argue that, since the Christian belief that Jesus is God in the flesh is also ultimately based on faith, there is no evidence to back that up. However, that is not true. The evidence for this is found both in the historical record and in the personal experiences of people coming to know Jesus in a personal relationship. John laid this out in verses 6-10.

John used the phrase "water and blood." This is a reference to the completeness of Christ's public ministry that began with His baptism (water) and ended with His crucifixion (blood). John went on to put emphasis on Christ's death by saying, "not by water only, but by water and by blood." He did this not only to explain the spiritual significance of Christ's death, but also to reemphasize the historical reality of what Christ did when He came to earth.

But the fact that Jesus was a real person acting in history is not the single evidence that He is the only way to heaven. We also have the work of the Holy Spirit "who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth." The Holy Spirit gives testimony in believers' hearts that this is true.

In verses 7-8, John explained that this historical and spiritual evidence clearly reveals the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Ultimately, believing in Christ is a decision that is made by faith, meaning there is no way to prove it scientifically. Actually, nothing about God's existence can be proven scientifically because science can only deal with things that relate to the material world. But our faith is not blind faith, and it is not faith without evidence. Since God does exist and has revealed Himself to humanity, His existence represents actual reality.



He Provides Eternal Life //

1 John 5:11-13

Many people criticize Christians for stating that eternal life is found only in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—as if that exclusivism were a negative thing. Reality can only be structured one way, and everyone has a belief about how that structure exists. Every belief system in existence excludes everyone who doesn't embrace its view and belief of reality.

HOW CAN WE SHARE THAT JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD WITHOUT ALIENATING PEOPLE?

In the final analysis, though, all of them fall apart because they are unable to back up their beliefs using their own theological requirements. Because Jesus truly is God incarnate and objectively died on the cross and rose again from the dead, He is the only One who has proven to provide eternal life. And that is confirmed as we enter into a relationship with Him.

While many other belief systems disagree with being labeled exclusive, Christianity stands squarely in reality and embraces the obvious.

THE POINT:

BECAUSE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, HE IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN BRING US TO GOD.

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

While beliefs from all of the various worldview systems existed in New Testament times, there was a particular false belief (Gnosticism) that was being promoted among the Christians that John was dealing with. Gnosticism taught there were various levels of gods in the universe, and that gaining their pleasure and guidance required special knowledge that only the Gnostics had. So, they taught that salvation was to be found only in the secret knowledge taught by Gnostic teachers. John disagreed with the Gnostic's claim by declaring that salvation is not found in Gnostic teaching, but only in Jesus Christ. He wrote: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." John doubled down in verse 12 by positively affirming, "The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Salvation is relational and has nothing to do with special knowledge gained by listening to Gnostic teachers.

Finally, in verse 13, John said, "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." John recognized that there were spiritual wolves walking among the believers who were trying to get them to believe a false gospel. He wanted the Christians to be clear that the exclusive

truth of the gospel was not found in false Gnostic teaching, but only by belief in the name of the Son of God.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus has expectations for His followers who He knew would have to continue the work He began. Though He knew Christians would be faced with opposition, He believed in the divine potential He promised to each one who believed in Him. Jesus explained how we can be successful in confidently sharing that He is the only way to God. In John 14:12-17, Jesus knew we could do greater works than He did through the power of the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, who guides and directs us to truth and uses us to share truth. Realizing the boldness needed to share the truth of Jesus is only found in the power of the Holy Spirit can bring relief to Christians who feel ill-equipped to do so. Jesus has set us up for success so that He will be glorified by believing in, obeying, and asking Him to help us share Him to others.

How can Jesus's promise help you overcome any hesitation to share the gospel truth?

LIVE IT

How does the truth that Jesus is the only way to God impact your life?

If the truth that Jesus is the only way to God doesn't impact your life, how can you be confident in sharing with others? Sharing the truth starts with our knowledge, understanding, and confidence in the truth that Jesus is the only way to God. Once this truth has been consumed into our minds and hearts, we will live to reach and serve others for Christ. Begin embracing this truth by doing the following:

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- **Trust for change.** Trust God for the miracle of a changed life. If you want to know how to become a follower of Christ, talk with your group leader. You can also read the inside front cover of this book.
- **Identify exclusive beliefs.** Do a study of the beliefs of Naturalism, Animism, Pantheism, Universalism, and Non-Christian Theism. As you study, make a chart to identify exclusive points.
- **Defend your faith.** If you know someone who complains about the exclusive nature of Christianity, find out what faith system they believe. Discuss with that person the exclusivity of his or her beliefs.

DAILY READINGS

1. JESUS IS THE RIGHT CHOICE // JOHN 14:6-7

In school, English class was fascinating to me. I loved the certainty in math but solving the problem was my problem. With math, $2 + 2$ will always equal 4. It does not matter the method used to solve the math problem; the solution to the equation will always remain the same. Jesus provided salvation to all by dying on the cross being obedient to God, the Father as we learn in Luke 23:44. By doing so, God promises eternal life as long as we believe as stated in John 3:16. Like math, God provides the assurance of our eternal with one solution. The Son of God.

In John 14:6 Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

2. OH, SWEET JESUS! // 1 JOHN 5:1

I often keep candy in the pantry where my nieces, nephew, and daughter know to ask for it before getting some. One day I put a candy dish filled with candy in the living room. My niece walked in and asked, "Auntie, are the candies for everyone!" I answered, "Yes, baby girl, they are." The apostle John teaches us that everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him. Jesus is for everyone who believes. And just like that sweet candy my niece was so excited to have, Jesus is even more excited when we choose Him, His love, and His salvation.

Taste and see that the LORD is good. – Psalm 34:8

3. THE ONE WAY // 1 JOHN 5:6

It is hard to determine what's real v. fake, good v. bad, right v. wrong in today's world. We are told to look to culture, social media, or friends to gain our understanding. As believers of Christ, the Bible offers the truth. The Bible is clear that there is a hell (Ps. 9:17), and the Bible is clear that there is a heaven (Matt. 6:9). God sacrificed His Son for a special purpose, and that purpose is our salvation. We must choose Christ by believing in

Him. In doing so the apostle John explains that by believing God's testimony we shall have eternal life.

There was a sole purpose for Jesus, and there is a sole road to our place in heaven.

4. JESUS, OUR TO THE FATHER // ACTS 4:12

Before Global Position Systems (GPS), my father would put his large map on the hood of the car and show his daughters the many ways to get to the same destination. I was amazed at how he seemingly always knew how to get anywhere. Today, we have directions in the palm in our hands. There is little thought or planning behind our current direction finding process and some do not remember any other way to the same destination, because they consistently depend on the GPS, believing to provide the only way. With salvation, Jesus is the only way. Using the Bible as our GPS, we learn, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."

Jesus is the only to the Father. He is our spiritual GPS.

5. OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS // JOHN 14:15

Research says that people make 35,000 decisions per day, big or small, right, or wrong, we make a lot of decisions. God gives us freedom to choose not just the many decisions per day about the highs and lows of life. But we have the freedom to choose to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ or not to follow Him. While the first step in our salvation is choosing to believe Christ, 1 John 5:3 informs us that obeying God's commands shows our love for God through the Holy Spirit. What helps us obey God's commands? The Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to help guide us to follow His commands. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth."

The sacrificial love of Christ should be all we need to obey and follow God's Commands.