

Talk It Over

BARRIERS

(Week 2)

How can you say there is only one true faith?

SMALL TALK

1. Have you ever encountered this question or wondered about it yourself?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ 1 Peter 3:15.** Which part of Peter's instruction helps when people think Jesus followers are judgmental, mean, or narrowminded? How does Peter's instruction correct us or possibly prevent us from being perceived this way?
3. **READ John 14:6.** What does Jesus mean by his very bold claim? How is his claim connected to the whole message of the Bible (consider for example Isaiah 53:5-6, or the entire Old Covenant sacrificial system)? How is the claim both exclusive and inclusive, narrow but an open invitation?
4. **READ Acts 4:12 and its surrounding context.** Why is teaching in the name of Jesus so offensive then, and now? Does Peter follow his own advice from question #2?
5. Is the truth about God logical, or reasonable? Consider Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27. What role does evidence play in this? What evidence did Jesus point to in John 14? (see 14:11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19-20; 29; 30-31)

GETTING PERSONAL

6. Have you run into a redefined view of truth as it relates to "faith" questions? Where people believe all faiths are equally valid? Do these people throw out the laws of logic? Do they use words like "your truth" and "my truth" and define truth subjectively? How do we get past these barriers?
7. The world views matters of faith as personal preferences with a placebo effect. How do you view faith? What makes faith work? What is true faith? What is saving faith?
8. Has anyone asked you about your faith? (1 Peter 3:15) If not, why not?"

MAKING PROGRESS

9. One of our core statements is "Followers say 'Follow me.'" What can you do to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have"?

April 19, 2020

BARRIERS—2

How can you say there is only one true faith?

Series Description:

Nearly everyone has encountered hard questions that seem like barriers between us and God, but what if there are answers that can transform **barriers** that block our way into **signposts** that point the way?

You might be wondering, why are we covering topics like these at this time? I believe we are particularly vulnerable to doubts when we are alone, when we are afraid or worried. Tough questions like these can blossom when we are tuning in more to the bad news than the good news. So, at this time I want to point you to hope and encouragement and give answers to hard questions. These are questions that people struggle with during vulnerable times.

4 BARRIERS

1. How could a loving God allow so much suffering?
2. How can you say there is only one true faith?
3. Hasn't science disproved the Bible?
4. How could a loving God send people to Hell?

Today's Barrier Question Expanded:

“With so many religions and belief systems in the world, with so many people sincerely following their spiritual path, how can anyone say there's only one way to God? It sounds arrogant, narrow-minded, judgmental, mean, and wrong.”

There are actually 2 barriers here. 1. How we present what we believe, and 2. What we believe.

As to the first barrier, sometimes we believers do come across in a I'm right, you are wrong, judgmental, and offensive way. Let's be more like Jesus and less like arrogant obnoxious never listening, know-it-alls.

*1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) But in your hearts revere 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,***

We need to be winsome to win some. Otherwise everyone loses.

Hidden in the objection is this: "How dare you think that I'm not good enough the way I am and the way I believe." Before I address the "I'm good enough issue" let's address another issue about the nature of faith.

Oprah Winfrey's Comment:

In the wake of the #MeToo movement Oprah Winfrey said at the Golden Globe Awards 2017:

"What I know for sure is that **speaking your truth** is the most powerful tool we all have."

Thousands of women stepped out of silence to reveal the abuse and harassment that so many women endured at the wandering hands of powerful men. Doesn't her comment need to be modified to be accurate?

But these women need to be commended not for telling their truth but for telling the truth.

Do you see the difference? Truth is objective, it is not merely subjective.

“Your truth” is not how the Bible describes “faith”. Faith certainly affects us subjectively, but it must also be true, or Paul says of all people we should be pitied.

So the first question we must ask is point number 1.

I. But is it TRUE?

People today often think, “As long as you are sincere about what you believe is all that really matters.” Now, this is a big problem because you can be sincerely wrong.

Someone once said... “The good thing about science” is that “it’s true whether or not you believe in it.” But this is not limited to science: it’s the good thing about truth. Period. Truth is true whether I believe it or not!

“Your truth” and “my truth” subjectively experienced is not important if it is not based on “the truth.” This is most easy to see in life and death scenarios.

ILLUSTRATION: Coronavirus (Vaccine or Home Remedy?)

What if you have been tested positive with the Coronavirus, and let’s say this happens after they have a proven vaccine (let’s pray this happens soon). But lets say you don’t trust the vaccine. You trust your home remedy smoothy recipe of 3 oranges and 3 cloves of Garlic. Will your sincerity make it work? That’s the way some people believe faith works. It’s like the power of believing in a placebo.

The Bible says that is not how faith works. Faith is confidence in the reality of God and his promises.

Faith is not a subjective reaction to a placebo you believe in.

Now, let's get to the heart of the objection.

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

Jesus made many such statements that got people mad then, and still gets people mad now.

You can see how it would. Without seeing his credentials, he sounds like an egomaniac who has lost his mind. But when you have seen his character and credentials, he draws you to himself as the answer you need.

It is no wonder that Jesus was crucified. And this according to his own plan.

By the way this claim is not merely what Jesus taught, this exclusive claim is throughout the whole Bible. The Old Covenant claimed the only way to have a relationship with the Holy and Almighty God is on his terms, not ours. And it turns out it is through a sacrificial system, a system that Jesus fulfills, and brings to a halt because he replaced it with himself. We visited this prophecy last week. Let's look again.

Isaiah 53:4-6 (NIV) {4} Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, ... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. {6} We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

When the medical staff is trying to give you a life-saving vaccine (and let's pray this is available soon) would you be offended? God provided Jesus as your life-saving vaccine.

Though I don't have time to go into all the credentials, I submit to you that Jesus has the credentials to make this claim credible.

Isn't it more important to investigate the claim than dismiss it out of hand because you think it is narrow-minded?

This not a new barrier. This barrier has existed from the beginning of the movement. Just as a vaccine builds a track record of credibility over time, so did the movement of Jesus.

Acts 4:12 (NIV) {12} Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:18-20 (NIV) Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. {19} But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! {20} As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Was Peter gentle and respectful here?

"It's often said that you should respect other people's beliefs. But that's wrong: what's vital is that you respect other people." ... attempting to persuade others to change their beliefs is a sign of respect. You are treating them as thinking agents with the ability to decide what they believe...

McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Confronting Christianity* .

II. What's the ALTERNATIVE?

Do we throw out reason, logic and allow all faiths to be equally true? God said, never. There is only one true God, and one true faith. Jesus said don't throw out your mind. Jesus said, love him with all your mind.

The Law of Contradiction is a principle of logic that says a thing cannot at the same time both be and not be of a specified kind (as a table and not a table) or in a specified manner (as red and not red). So, true faith cannot affirm a personal God who is NOT a personal God, or affirm Jesus is the only way and not the only way. The law of contradiction disallows all faiths to be true.

Would you allow a little satire here to make a point?

You go to the terminal desk at Sky Harbor and ask, which gate is the gate to my non stop flight to Hawaii?"

What would you think of a staff member who says, "It's not our policy to tell people which gate they have to fly out of. That would be rather narrow-minded, wouldn't it? I mean, these are all wonderful planes with hard-working crews and sincere passengers. Who are we to say that one is better than another? Take whichever one you want. They're all going somewhere, and if you work really hard along the way you can make the right transfer from anywhere and eventually get where you want to go."

How ridiculous would that be?! Isn't it just as ridiculous to suggest that all roads lead to heaven? Maybe if you turn around from going the wrong way it is, but some ways are taking you away from Heaven—actually going in the wrong direction!

Now, if you don't care where you spend eternity, then it doesn't matter which road you take. But if you do care about this life and death issue, why not investigate the way God provided. It may be a narrow gate but everyone is invited, and through that gate there is room for everyone who accepts Jesus.

III. Who is being NARROW MINDED?

If you say, “Who do you think you are God telling me I have to do it your way. I’m good enough just like I am.” Who’s being narrow minded, you or God?

Do you really think you are good enough to stand before a Holy God after all that you have done to ignore Him, turn away from him, and purposely go astray? Haven’t you seen how that leads to the unraveling of your life? Jesus whispers his love when he offers himself as the answer to your unraveled life. But he will never force you to choose him.

He is inviting you today. Are you willing to investigate to see if these claims are true? If not, why not?

See you Next week: Hasn’t science disproved the Bible?