

Leader's Guide

Questions Redirected: Is Jesus the Only Way?

Primary Scripture - “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” —Acts 4:12, ESV

Central Truth - Christianity does not teach that Jesus is merely one helpful spiritual teacher among many. It teaches that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who became man, lived without sin, died in the place of sinners, and rose bodily from the grave. Salvation is found in him alone, but the invitation to receive salvation is freely extended to everyone who repents and believes.

Preparing to Lead - This discussion addresses one of the most common and potentially controversial questions Christians encounter: “Is Jesus really the only way to God?”

Some participants may believe that all religions are different paths leading to the same destination. Others may think Christianity's claim is arrogant, intolerant, or unfair. Still others may believe that Jesus is the only way but struggle to explain why.

Your goal is not to pressure the group into a debate or make anyone feel attacked. Help participants think clearly about the claims of Jesus and consider the historical foundation of the Christian faith.

Keep returning to three central questions: What did Jesus claim about himself? What did Jesus accomplish that we could never accomplish? What evidence did Jesus give to authenticate his claims?

Christianity's exclusivity does not originate with Christians believing they are wiser or more moral than others. It originates with the identity and work of Jesus Christ. Christians do not claim that they discovered a way to reach God. They believe that God graciously came to rescue sinners through his Son.

Opening the Conversation

Consider beginning with this golf-related question:

If ten respected golf instructors gave you ten different ways to swing a club, how would you decide which advice to follow?

Allow several people to answer. They may mention the instructor's reputation, the results produced by the method, the player's physical abilities, or whether the instruction holds up under pressure.

Then ask:

Have you ever received conflicting swing advice from two instructors? Can two very different golf swings both produce good results? What matters more—how a swing looks or what it consistently produces?

After the group has discussed these questions, explain that different golf swings can produce successful results. Jim Furyk's swing looks nothing like Adam Scott's, yet both became major champions. Golf

allows room for different techniques because more than one method can deliver the clubface effectively to the ball.

Religious truth claims are different. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions do not merely offer different techniques for reaching the same objective. They make conflicting claims about God, human nature, sin, salvation, Jesus Christ, and life after death. Contradictory claims cannot all be true in the same sense at the same time.

The important question is not whether a religious claim is exclusive. Every belief system excludes beliefs that contradict it. The important question is: **Which claims are true?**

Read the Scripture - Read Acts 4:8–12 aloud.

Peter and John had been arrested after healing a man who had been unable to walk. The religious authorities demanded to know by what power or name they had performed this miracle.

Peter answered that the man had been healed by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth—the same Jesus whom the authorities had crucified and whom God had raised from the dead. Peter then declared:

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Ask another participant to read John 14:1–6.

Jesus did not say, “I know the way,” “I can show you a way,” or “I am one of several possible ways.” He said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Jesus’ statement leaves little room for reducing him to one religious teacher among many. He placed himself at the center of salvation and reconciliation with God.

Discussion One: Different Golf Swings and Contradictory Truth Claims

Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus, Butch Harmon, and Hank Haney have different approaches to the golf swing. Jim Furyk’s looping motion appears radically different from Adam Scott’s classic swing. Nevertheless, both swings have produced excellent shots and major championships.

There is no contradiction in saying that different golf swings can be effective. Golfers have different bodies, strengths, limitations, and natural movements. More than one technique can produce solid contact.

Religions, however, make claims about ultimate reality. Christianity teaches that there is one God who exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Islam denies that Jesus is God and rejects the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Christianity teaches that Jesus died as an atoning sacrifice and rose bodily from the grave. Islam denies central elements of this account. Buddhism does not begin with belief in a personal Creator and presents a fundamentally different understanding of humanity’s problem and its solution. Hindu traditions offer different understandings of God, the self, karma, reincarnation, and liberation.

These are not minor differences in technique. They are contradictory descriptions of reality. They cannot all be true in the same way.

Consider asking: **Why is it reasonable to accept different approaches to the golf swing but unreasonable to say that contradictory religious claims are all equally true? Why does the idea of many paths to God sound attractive in our culture?**

Religious pluralism often sounds humble and tolerant, but pluralism makes its own exclusive claim. It claims that no one religion possesses the complete truth and that the exclusive claims of individual religions should not be accepted.

We can respect people of other faiths without pretending that all religions teach the same thing. Christians should listen carefully, speak respectfully, and treat every person with dignity. Genuine respect requires honesty about our differences rather than hiding them behind the statement that all religions are essentially alike.

Discussion Two: Jesus Claimed to Be More Than a Teacher

Consider asking: **What makes Jesus different from every other religious leader?**

Jesus did not present himself merely as a moral teacher, prophet, philosopher, or spiritual guide. He claimed a unique relationship with God the Father, claimed authority to forgive sins, accepted worship, and exercised authority over nature, sickness, demons, and death. He taught that a person's eternal destiny depended upon their response to him. He also predicted his death and resurrection.

In John 14:6, Jesus joined three extraordinary claims together.

When Jesus said, "I am the way," he did not merely point toward a path that people could travel through greater effort. He said that access to the Father comes through him personally.

When Jesus said, "I am the truth," he did not merely claim to teach true ideas. He presented himself as the ultimate revelation of God. Jesus is God the Son, who became truly human without ceasing to be truly divine.

When Jesus said, "I am the life," he claimed to be the source of spiritual and eternal life. Humanity is spiritually dead in sin and needs more than education, inspiration, or moral improvement. We need new life.

Possibly Ask: How is saying "I am the way" different from saying "I can show you a way"? Can someone call Jesus a great moral teacher while rejecting his central claims about himself? Why does Jesus' identity matter as much as his teaching?

Avoid suggesting that people are saved merely by believing Jesus existed or agreeing that his teaching was valuable. Biblical faith involves trusting Jesus as he truly is—the crucified and risen Lord who alone can reconcile sinners to God.

The issue is not whether Jesus can be added to someone's existing spiritual beliefs. The issue is whether Jesus is Lord and whether his claims are true.

Discussion Three: Our Problem Determines the Savior We Need

Consider asking: **According to our culture, what is humanity's greatest problem?**

People may mention ignorance, poverty, injustice, intolerance, lack of education, psychological wounds, or harmful environments. These problems are real, and Christians should care about suffering and injustice.

Scripture, however, identifies a deeper problem beneath all the others: sin.

Sin is more than making mistakes or failing to reach our potential. Sin is rebellion against the holy God who created us. We do not naturally love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We worship created things rather than the Creator, seek independence from God, and fail to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Our problem is therefore not merely that we need better instruction. We need forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life.

A golf instructor can help correct a faulty grip, swing plane, or alignment. Jesus did not come merely to adjust our spiritual mechanics. He came to rescue people who are guilty, helpless, and unable to save themselves.

Religion based upon human achievement says, “Do enough, improve yourself, and perhaps you will be accepted.” The gospel says, “Christ has done what you could never do. Repent and trust in him.”

Jesus lived the perfectly righteous life we have failed to live. On the cross, he willingly bore the judgment our sins deserved. He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death. Salvation is not a reward for good people. It is a gift of grace to guilty people who trust in Christ.

Read Ephesians 2:8–9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Ask: Why is moral improvement not enough to reconcile us to a holy God? How does salvation by grace remove the basis for spiritual pride? Why is grace good news for people who know they have failed?

The gospel humbles everyone. Christians are not people who found the right path because they were smarter or morally superior. They are sinners whom God rescued by grace. The exclusivity of Christ should never produce arrogance. Properly understood, it produces humility, gratitude, love, and a desire for others to receive the same mercy.

Discussion Four: The Resurrection Authenticates Jesus’ Claims

Possibly Ask: What evidence would you require from someone who claimed to be the only way to God?

Jesus did not ask people to accept his claims without evidence. His identity and teaching were authenticated through his works, his fulfillment of Scripture, his sinless life, and ultimately his resurrection from the dead.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8.

Paul summarized the message he had received and delivered to others: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to Peter, the apostles, more than five hundred people at one time, James, and finally Paul.

Christianity stakes its credibility upon events it claims occurred in history. The apostles did not merely say that Jesus continued to inspire them or lived in their memories. They testified that the man who had been crucified, killed, and buried appeared to them alive.

The resurrection confirms that Jesus is who he claimed to be, that his sacrifice for sin was accepted, that death has been defeated, and that his promises can be trusted.

Paul said that if Christ had not been raised, Christian preaching would be empty, Christian faith would be futile, and believers would remain in their sins. Christianity is therefore open to investigation. If Jesus did not rise, Christianity collapses. If he did rise, his claims demand a response.

Why is the bodily resurrection essential to Christianity? How would Christianity change if the resurrection were only a symbol or inspiring story? Why did the apostles repeatedly emphasize that they were eyewitnesses?

You do not have to answer every historical question in one meeting. It is appropriate to say, “That is an important question. Let’s examine the evidence rather than dismissing it.” Christianity does not ask people to abandon their minds. God commands us to love him with our minds as well as our hearts.

Discussion Five: Exclusive Savior, Inclusive Invitation

Some people hear the statement “Jesus is the only way” and assume Christianity must be narrow, hateful, or intended only for certain kinds of people.

The gospel is exclusive concerning the Savior: there is salvation in no one else. The gospel is inclusive concerning its invitation: everyone who repents and believes in Jesus will be saved.

Jesus does not belong to one nationality, ethnic group, economic class, political party, or social circle. God is gathering a people from every nation, tribe, language, and social position.

This does not mean everyone is automatically saved regardless of their response to Christ. It means no one is excluded because of their background, social position, past sins, ethnicity, education, or moral reputation. **No one is so good that they do not need Jesus, and no one is so sinful that Jesus cannot save them.**

Ask: What does it mean to say that the gospel is exclusive in its Savior but inclusive in its invitation? How should this truth affect the way Christians treat people who hold different beliefs? What would you say to someone who believes their past makes them unacceptable to God?

Keep the emphasis on grace. The Christian invitation is not, “Clean up your life, become like us, and then perhaps Jesus will accept you.” The invitation is, “Come to Christ as you are, confessing your need, and receive the mercy only he can provide.”

Those who come to Christ are not left unchanged. God forgives them, gives them new life, and begins transforming them. Transformation is the fruit of salvation, not the price paid to obtain it.

Working Through the Study Questions

1. Why can different golf swings produce successful results while contradictory religious claims cannot all be true?

Different golf swings are alternative techniques for accomplishing a physical task. Because golfers have different bodies and abilities, several methods can produce solid contact and good results.

Religions make truth claims about objective reality. They give incompatible answers to important questions. Is there one God, many gods, or no personal Creator? Is Jesus God incarnate, a prophet, or merely a teacher? Did Jesus die for our sins and rise bodily? Is humanity's fundamental problem sin, ignorance, or desire? Is salvation received by grace or achieved through human effort?

Contradictory claims cannot all be true in the same sense at the same time. We must therefore examine the claims and ask which worldview best corresponds to reality.

Possible follow-up: **Is it unkind to disagree with someone's religious beliefs? How can we disagree without becoming disrespectful?**

2. Why does Christianity place so much importance on the bodily resurrection of Jesus?

The resurrection authenticates Jesus' identity and confirms the saving significance of his death. It shows that Jesus defeated death and that the Father accepted his sacrifice for sin.

Without the resurrection, Jesus' predictions would have failed, the apostles' testimony would have been false, and Christians would have no certain hope of eternal life. The apostles did not preach a vague message about the human spirit surviving death. They proclaimed that Jesus' tomb was empty and that they encountered the risen Christ.

Possible follow-up: **Why are Jesus' appearances to eyewitnesses important? How does the resurrection give Christians hope when facing death?**

3. How would you explain the statement, "The gospel is exclusive in its Savior but inclusive in its invitation?"

The gospel is exclusive because Jesus alone accomplished what was necessary for our salvation. Only Jesus is fully God and fully man. Only Jesus lived without sin. Only Jesus died as the substitute for sinners and rose victorious over death. Salvation cannot be separated from him.

The invitation is inclusive because Jesus welcomes every person who repents and believes. Salvation is not restricted by nationality, ethnicity, wealth, education, social standing, or previous religious background.

The door is open to everyone, but everyone enters through the same door: Jesus Christ.

Possible follow-up: **Why can no one boast about being saved? How should grace shape the way Christians speak to people who believe differently?**

Responding to Common Objections

“Isn’t it arrogant for Christians to claim that Jesus is the only way?”

It would be arrogant for Christians to claim that they invented the way to God or earned salvation by being morally superior. That is not the Christian message. Christians confess that they could not save themselves and depend entirely upon God’s grace.

The proper Christian attitude is: “I am not better than you. I am a sinner who has received mercy, and I want you to know the same Savior.”

“Aren’t all religions basically teaching people to be good?”

Most religions encourage some form of moral behavior, but morality is not the whole of religion. Religions disagree about who God is, what is wrong with humanity, how people are saved, and what happens after death.

Christianity does not merely tell people to become better. It announces that God acted in history to rescue sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel is not primarily good advice about what we should do. It is good news about what Christ has done.

“What about sincere people who follow another religion?”

Sincerity is important, but sincerity cannot make a belief true. A golfer can be completely sincere about reading a putt and still choose the wrong line.

The Christian message is that all people are lost apart from Christ. No one is condemned because they failed to be religious enough. We stand guilty because we have sinned against the God who created us.

God is perfectly holy, just, and merciful. We can trust him to judge rightly. At the same time, Jesus commanded his followers to take the gospel to every nation because people need to hear the good news, repent, and believe.

“Doesn’t saying Jesus is the only way lead to intolerance?”

Jesus taught his followers to love their neighbors and even their enemies. Christians should defend the dignity and religious freedom of people with whom they strongly disagree.

Tolerance does not require believing that every religious claim is true. It means treating people with respect while honestly acknowledging significant differences.

“What if I still have questions or doubts?”

Questions should not be feared or hidden. Jesus invited people to consider his words and works. The New Testament repeatedly appeals to eyewitness testimony and public events.

Encourage the person to read the Gospel of John and ask: What does Jesus claim about himself? What evidence does he provide? What does he say humanity’s problem is? What does he promise to those who believe? What response does he require?

Faith is not pretending to have no questions. It is entrusting yourself to Christ because you have come to recognize who he is.

Closing Summary

Golf gives us room for different swings, methods, and instructors. One golfer may swing like Jim Furyk and another like Adam Scott, yet both can succeed because there is more than one way to deliver the club to the ball.

Our relationship with God is different. We cannot choose from several spiritual techniques according to personal preference because our deepest problem is not faulty mechanics. Our problem is sin, and we cannot rescue ourselves from its guilt and power.

Jesus did not come merely to make us more disciplined, religious, or successful. He came to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. He lived the righteous life we failed to live, died the death our sins deserved, and rose bodily from the grave.

That is why Christianity points to Jesus alone. The church does not possess salvation. Jesus does. Christians are simply beggars telling other beggars where bread can be found.

The claim that Jesus is the only way is exclusive, but his invitation is extended to everyone. Anyone who turns from sin and trusts in Christ will be forgiven, reconciled to God, and given eternal life.

The most important question is not simply, “Is Christianity exclusive?” Every worldview excludes beliefs that contradict it. The most important question is:

Is Jesus who he claimed to be? If he rose from the dead, we cannot treat him as merely one option among many. We must listen to him, trust him, and follow him.

Optional Leader Preparation

Before the gathering, consider reading Isaiah 53:4–6, Mark 2:1–12, John 1:1–18, John 10:22–33, John 11:17–27, John 20:24–31, Acts 2:22–36, Acts 17:22–31, Romans 3:21–26, Romans 10:9–17, 1 Corinthians 15:12–20, 1 Timothy 2:5–6, and Revelation 5:9–10.

Do not measure the meeting’s success by whether every objection is resolved. A productive gathering may leave participants with important questions to explore. Keep Jesus at the center, explain the gospel clearly, welcome honest questions, correct misunderstandings respectfully, and trust the Holy Spirit to use God’s Word.

Keep redirecting the conversation to the central question: **Is Jesus who he claimed to be?**