

Big Questions
5. Is Jesus the Only Way to God?
October 16, 2022

Welcome to our Big Questions series! My name is Christy, and I'm one of the pastors on staff. We are so glad you are here today. We are talking through some of the big questions of faith that people wrestle with. Today we are going to talk about one that is a real hot-button issue! Is Jesus the only way to God?

This is not an uncommon question. When I answer it, I say, "Yes." Jesus is the only way to God; but I want to be transparent. I went on a journey to get there. We are going to encounter people who just aren't there yet. And that's okay!

When I was about seventeen years old, I was already over all things church. I just wasn't interested. It was not important to me. I remember having a spiritual conversation with someone who let me know that unless I accepted Jesus, I was not going to heaven. I began to ask a lot of questions surrounding this idea. I was of the school of thought that there had to be other ways to heaven. Surely, God would not want people to perish.

It seemed pretty unfair. Also, it seemed a little arrogant to me that this person talking with me would suggest that Jesus is the only way to God. I began to think about people who do not know him...

So, I called the pastor from my church from a phone that was on the wall, because that was what I did back in the day. I asked about this foolishness..."Is Jesus really the only way to God?" I left that conversation more frustrated because I didn't get the answer I wanted. In fact, I got someone who was trying to convince me, and it bugged me. It took me another five years to be convinced. I was bothered by the idea. It made me uncomfortable. Jesus makes radical statements that there is no other way to God but through Him.

In John 14:6-7, Jesus is encouraging one of His followers Thomas. He tells him:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7](#)If you really know me, you will know [6](#) my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

This is quite a claim to digest! Many people think of Jesus as a good person. Many think He was a great teacher or a good humanitarian. People can accept the fact that Jesus is a nice person, but His claim to be God is the part that is hard to take. It's easy to say he was a fine human being who did and taught nice things, but they draw the line at Him being God.

So today I want to speak to two groups. I want to speak to the group that is asking the Big Question and I want to speak to the group that is trying to answer the Big Question. I'll address the first group...those who are asking the question; "is Jesus the only way to God?"

I want to humbly offer that my answer is, "Yes." And, I'd like to put a disclaimer out there, that I am not trying to convince you of this truth in a 25-minute message, but would like to share how I arrived at my conclusion. And I want you to know that if you are wrestling with this question, that's okay! You are safe to wrestle with questions like this in our church and in our Life Groups. Also, I understand! These are questions that every person who follows Jesus must answer. I want faith with integrity. I didn't say "yes" to Jesus until I could say it with integrity; that He was the only way to God. I couldn't say that until I believed it. I want to alleviate the pressure for you and offer you freedom to wrestle with the questions.

To me, it seemed like such an arrogant thing to say. It sounded so harsh. But when I study the person of Jesus, not only did he teach a way to live that goes against the grain of culture, He made radical claims about His personhood. He said things like:

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Matthew 11:27

Jesus said: "I and the Father are one." John 10:30

And then again in conversation with some folks, Jesus explains his eternal nature as God.

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:56-58

And even in all the healings, miracles, teaching, and claims to be God, this isn't what got me there. Apologist, C.S. Lewis gives some critical points to think through when we are determining if the claims of Jesus are true.¹ He reasons Jesus was either a liar, lunatic or Lord. Other apologists grapple with the legend question. Was he a historical figure?

So, we have legend, liar, or lunatic to think about.

The first question: Is Jesus a legend? When I think of legends, I think of fictional characters that just keep getting better over time. Think of this, he was someone who came to save us. To connect us with our Father in heaven. If I were the author of this legend, I'd spice it up a bit. I'd make Jesus handsome with bulging muscles. Hallmark knows how to do it. He would be the

¹ C. S. Lewis, *THE CASE FOR CHRISTIANITY* (New York, NY: Macmillan), 45.

handsome carpenter from Nazareth that performed miracles and had an ultimate show down with Satan.

Instead, scripture tells us that he was plain. He was ordinary and average. A prophecy in Isaiah 53 lets us know, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." In other words, he wasn't the most attractive guy in Nazareth.

In his new book, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*, Bart Ehrman, historian and professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, wanted to provide solid historical evidence for the existence of Jesus.

"I wanted to approach this question as an historian to see whether that's right or not. Paul knew Jesus' brother, James, and he knew his closest disciple, Peter, and he tells us that he did." Ehrman says. "If Jesus didn't exist, you would think his brother would know about it, so I think Paul is probably pretty good evidence that Jesus at least existed."

In *Did Jesus Exist?* Ehrman builds a technical argument and shows that one of the reasons for knowing that Jesus existed is that if someone invented Jesus, they would not have created a messiah who was so easily overcome.

"The Messiah was supposed to overthrow the enemies – and so if you're going to make up a messiah, you'd make up a powerful messiah," he says. "You wouldn't make up somebody who was humiliated, tortured and the killed by the enemies."²

This historian who does not believe in the Deity of Jesus, does provide strong evidence outside of the Bible of his existence. In fact, in 368 pages, he dedicates his argument as to why Jesus was in fact a true historical person who walked the earth. But he goes on to say that he models His teachings, and thinks that Jesus was a good pattern for a way to live your life, he does not believe He was God.

But this presents a problem. Because Jesus cannot be a good person that we model and learn from but then we just ignore his claims about being God!

Our next question becomes: Is he a liar or a lunatic? We see religious leaders throughout history who had large followings. What sets them apart from Jesus is they never claimed to be God.

- Buddha did not make this claim
- Mohammed did not claim to be Allah
- Moses did not claim to be Yahweh

² NPR, All Things Considered. *DID JESUS EXIST? A HISTORIAN MAKES HIS CASE* (April 1, 2012 4:15 PM)

But Jesus makes a startling claim; “if you see me, you’ve seen the Father.” (John 14:9) In other words; we are One.³

C.S. Lewis addresses the liar or lunatic argument in his work, *Mere Christianity*. He says this:

“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. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.”⁴

As one who was seeking the truth, CS Lewis makes a great argument that you really cannot accept Jesus as a good, moral teacher but ignore His claim to be God.

The fact is, when we read the Bible, we see that people felt a way about Jesus. Jesus was not a benign person in history. His claim to be God is what led him to the cross. People either hated Jesus or they loved Jesus. There was no middle ground. In some scriptures we even see where He was feared.

The same rings true today. People are either intrigued by the notion of Jesus, feel threatened by the mention of Jesus, or they worship Jesus. There are places in the world you are not free to speak of Him. There are underground churches flourishing because they have grappled with these questions, is He liar, lunatic, legend? Or is He Lord?

We ask big questions and we want to know the answers. But in true Jesus’ style, He always flips the script and asks us Big Questions!

One of the most powerful questions Jesus asked His disciples is the same question we all have to answer at some point. In Matthew 16:13-16, it says,

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he

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https://www.josh.org/answer/jesus-claim-god-even-believe/?mwm_id=496610987446&utm_campaign=MW_googlegrant&mwm_id=496610987446&gclid=CjwKCAjwqJSaBhBUEiwAg5W9p6ckP-vcQWKrlpWOx38IS9nsqAIO3D8X-fMHAFkki_2eKou89UnpsRoCeumQAvD_BwE

⁴ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/is-c-s-lewiss-liar-lord-or-lunatic-argument-unsound/>

asked, “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

His follower Peter answered. He was not liar. He was not lunatic. He was not a legend. He was Lord. And we have to answer the question too.

See, for me, it’s not about what I prefer. It’s about how Jesus has revealed Himself to me as I’ve sought out what is true. I saw Jesus in the scripture, though I did not as a non-follower of Jesus put a lot of stock into the Bible. Eventually the Bible became important, but I recognized Jesus in the people around me. I experienced Jesus through the Church, with a capital “C.”

I made Jesus Lord because of the people who invested in me. I was given space to talk about the things that bothered me about the exclusivity of Jesus. As I hung with people who followed Jesus and grappled with what He said, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through me,” I began to realize this message of exclusivity was really good news. Because though there was one way, the way is open to everyone. He beckons everyone to come to Him and enter through this gate.

Though I grew up in church and walked away from it for a time, I really didn’t make Jesus Lord there. My faith in Jesus as Lord was formed in safe spaces of back-and-forth challenge in relational discipleship. I grew through conversations with people who embraced me and Holy Spirit truth revealed to me. I learned how to hear from God in community and how to answer, “Yes, You are Lord” to Jesus in community.

So, with that being said, there are some of you who are trying to answer the Big Questions with people you are discipling. And so, here’s what I would encourage you to do...

Be okay with where people are at. We share our experience. We share our story. We share how we became convinced. And then we allow God to be at work in the lives of people.

We don’t get offended when people aren’t there. Nothing screams Jesus loves you like a great theological debate! I am currently sharing about Jesus with some folks who are culturally Muslim. And I’m okay with pointing to Jesus again and again and allowing Him to reveal Himself as more than a Prophet to them. We can be okay with not closing the deal. God is looking for our obedience, not our arguments. If I want people to know Jesus is the way, I will model to them what Jesus is like.

I became convinced that He was who He said He was. I became convinced that Jesus was God in the flesh, God dwelling with people, Immanuel, God with us. I became convinced that Jesus died and rose again. I serve Him as Lord.

But there is a problem we face. The problem we face is that there are people on the street, not just random streets, but our street, our office, our school, our gym, our teammates that believe

there are many ways to get to heaven. And maybe we don't answer Big Questions because we really never grappled with them.

It's easy to ignore lost people when Jesus isn't Lord and isn't the only way. But when you wrestle with the questions yourself, and you become fully convinced that there is no other way, then we risk being loveless if we don't prioritize obeying the command of Christ to go and make disciples.

Here at Crossroads, it's our goal to equip everyday missionaries. We want to provide you with tools to get into friendships with lost people. One of the ways we are doing that is through Amen to Action. At the beginning of November, we are partnering with other churches in the area to provide 1 million meals to the Pittsburgh Region.

Here's the rub though, coming to pack some meals isn't what helps spread the gospel. Sending a hungry person food is excellent, but the only way people will know Christ is through us.

A couple of weeks ago at Next Step (one of our gatherings for new people that we have each month) I heard: "I learned about Jesus through a neighbor. I was an atheist and I wanted to be like my boss, just without the God thing. I had a persistent friend."

This is the way that we help people to know Jesus is Lord. We get to partner with God to share about our faith. Letting people know Jesus is the only way comes through the context of friendship and relationship. Amen to Action is a tool to help you invite someone who needs to know Jesus as Lord.

Lost people may not say yes to a church invitation. It took me a long time, and I had a church history. But people who are far from Jesus will spend a Saturday morning packing meals for people in Pittsburgh.

These are Big Questions. And they were things I scoffed at for a time. But now that I have experienced Jesus as Lord. I spend my very life sharing that truth with others. He is the Way, the Truth and Life and no one comes to the Father but through Him.

And the good news is, there is no one that He is not calling out to. There is no one He doesn't want. And you and I get to go. We get to share our story, we get to provide safe spaces for conversation, we get to pray for people, and then we get to stand back and watch God work in powerful ways.