

I. Intro

Good morning to you. My name is Bushawn Carpenter and I am one of the members here at Total Restoration Church. If you are new here, I want to welcome you to week 3 in our sermon series: The God Questions. In this series, we are engaging in God Conversations that consist of the God Questions that much of America has about God. In week 1, we asked the question: “Is God Real”? Last week we asked the question: “Is the Bible True”? And today we will tackle the question, “Do All Roads Lead to Heaven”? These are the questions that make you go, “HMMMMMMMMMM”! During this teaching, I do encourage you to write down any questions or comments you may have on your connection card and drop them into the basket when we do offering. In fact, I think that we will start off by answering two questions we had last week.

A. Question Answering

1. **Question:** *Being that Sunday is the first day, is it true that we are supposed to worship on Saturday?*
 - a. **Heb. 4:4-10:** Shabat (rest)

“...of the place in the Scriptures where it mentions the seventh day: “On the seventh day God rested from all his work.”⁵ But in the other passage God said, “They will never enter my place of rest.”⁶ So God’s rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God.⁷ So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: “Today when you hear his voice,

don’t harden your hearts.”⁸ Now if Joshua had succeeded in giving them this rest, God would not have spoken about another day of rest still to come.⁹ So there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God.¹⁰ For all who have entered into God’s rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world. (Heb. 4:4-10)

- b. 1st Day of the Week
 - i. Resurrection
 - ii. Early Christians Met (**Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2**)

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- c. **Col. 2:16-17:** ¹⁶ *So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths.* ¹⁷ *For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.*

2. **Question:** *How can I pray so that Jesus knows what to help me with?*

- a. We are Sons
 - i. **Rom. 8:15:** *"We've been given the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out Abba, Father."* (**Rom. 8:15**)
- b. The Spirit is Interceding
 - i. **Rom. 8:26:** *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* (**Rom. 8:26**)
- c. The Son is Interceding
 - i. Jesus is at the right hand of the father making intercession for us (**Rom. 8:34**)
 - ii. Jesus always lives to make intercession for us (**Heb. 7:25**)
- d. The Father Already Understands
 - i. **Matt. 6:7-8:** *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father know the things you have need of before you ask Him."* (**Matt. 6:7-8**)

B. Video

C. Text: **John 14:1-9**

¹ *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?"*

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus answered, “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 my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

⁹ Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14:1-9)

D. Pray

E. Jesus Does It All

1. Religious Orthodoxy
 - a. Leaves Rules to get to the Father
 - b. Leaves a roadmap or path to reach eternal words
 - c. Leaves a checklist of things to do to get to fully enjoy earth.
2. Jesus doesn’t fit into the religious box.
 - a. Let not Your Hearts Be Troubled.
 - b. You don’t have to strive to prepare a place in heaven for yourself.
 - i. You don’t have to wonder how you are going to reach the prize.
 - c. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.
 - i. Just use my name, my credit.
 - d. And don’t worry how you are going to survive your time on earth.
 - e. I will not leave you without a Comforter.
 - i. I’ll pray the Father and He’ll send you another Helper (like me)

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- f. He'll take the things that I have shared and declare them to you.
 - i. He will bring all things to your remembrance.
 - g. Everything you need I'll do for you, in you, through you.

3. Message of the Gospel: Spotlight and responsibility on one Person (Jesus).

- a. Everything that man needs, He provides
- b. Propitiation (3x): to appease the Gods.
 - i. Enough work to gain the approval of the gods.
 - ii. N.T. flips this term on its head.
 - iii. What God alone does to appease Himself.
 - iv. Bold statement about the majesty of Jesus.
 - v. All the responsibility on Him

4. Jesus' claims place all the responsibility, access and propitiation on Himself

- a. Very exclusive claim
 - i. No other like Him.
 - ii. No other substitute for Him.
- b. Way, Truth & Life (**John 14:6**)

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

- i. Not an isolated, one-time statement.

c. Narrow is the Gate (**Matt. 7:13-14**):

¹³ *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."*¹⁴ *Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.* (**Matt. 7:13-14**)

d. Neither is there Salvation in Any Other: **Acts 4:12**

¹² *There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."* (**Acts 4:12**)

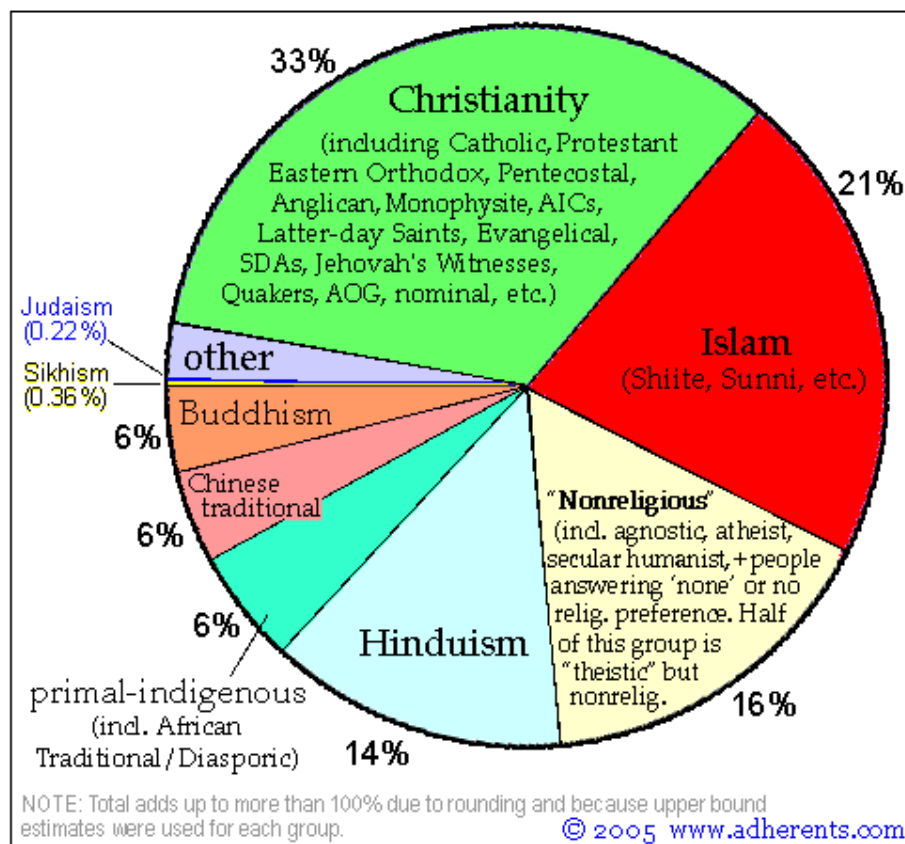
5. No other name, way, gate?

- a. Hard to swallow
- b. Feels insensitive or offensive to make such a bold statement.

II. "The Different Roads"

Over the course of the next 30 minutes, we will look at a few of the different roads or paths available in the world... We will be as sensitive as we can... But we will at least look at them and see whether they seem to actually lead to the same destination.

Do All Roads Lead To Heaven? Do all roads lead to God? Let's out check out the religions of the world and see. Top Ten Religions (By Number of Adherents)



A. Sociological Overview (www.adherents.com)

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1. Every religion with over 10,000 followers.
 2. 10 Groupings represent 98% of religious adherents in the world.
 - a. Includes “Not Religious”

Sociologists have identified and studied every religious system with more than ten thousand adherents. For a complete list, you can go to www.adherents.com and explore these religions in greater detail. But for today, we will focus on the top 10 groupings in the world. May I note that the top 8 groupings make up the religious beliefs of 97% of humanity, including all those who think of themselves as “not religious”. Yes. “Not religious” is actually the third most common “religion” on this chart.

3. Some Religions Common to America Are Missing From the List
 - a. Judaism (#11): 16 Million Followers
 - b. Spiritism (#12): 15 Million Followers
 - c. Mormons & Jehovah’s Witnesses (#13, 14): Vacillate 6 Million and 14 Million.

B. Top Ten By Population

#10: Jucheism

- Followers: 19 million North Koreans
- Founder: Kim Il-sung, 1950’s

Jucheism was founded in the 1950’s by Kim Il-Sung, the first communist dictator of North Korea. Juche is the only allowed religion allowed in North Korea and it is the mandatory religion of every North Korean.

The reason Jucheism has 19 million adherents is because there are 19 million North Koreans, and it’s the only religion you are allowed to follow in North Korea.

Juche means “self-reliance” in Korean. It has no views of diety or the afterlife. It actually serves as a Korean blending of Marxist-Communist thought.

#9: Sikhism (“Seek-ism”)

- Followers: 23 million, chiefly in Punjab, India
- Founder: Guru Nanak, 1469
- View of God: Monotheism
- Means to God: 5 K’s
 - ***Kesh*** (“long hair”)
 - ***Kanga*** (“comb”)
 - ***Kara*** (“metal bracelet”)
 - ***Kachera*** (“short pants”)
 - ***Kirpan*** (“sword”)

The Sikh religion is a combination of Hinduism and Islam. Sikhs often get mistaken for Muslims because of their style of dress (turbans). The founder of Sikhism was a man named Nanak Dev who, after witnessing years of violence between the Muslims and the Hindus in India, disappeared while bathing in a stream and emerged from seclusion three days with a revelation: *“There is no Hindu, no Muslim.”*

Nanak’s solution to the problem of the warring of the Hindus and Muslims was to adopt the monotheism of the Muslims while keeping the concepts of karma and reincarnation from the Hindus. Sikhs believe that in order to escape the endless wandering of the soul that happens as reincarnation follows reincarnation follows reincarnation, you must carry these 5 articles on you at all times (5 K’s):

#8: African Traditional Religions

- Followers: 100 million, in Africa (and places where Africans were enslaved)
- View of God: Animism/Polytheism
- Means to God: Sacrifices

Animism is the spiritual belief that all creation is animated, that all of creation—plants and animals, even rocks and rivers, sand and soil—has *animation* or *life* within it. So this view believes there are many gods, inhabiting every rock and tree, the sky, the moon, the sun.

Animistic religions believe that the means to gain favor with the gods is to make sacrifices to them. Ancient cultures often used human sacrifices. Now animals are commonly used instead.

Most animists hope to ascend somehow to the spirit world after death. Animists in this continent often call this spirit world “the Happy Hunting Ground.” The Romans called it “Elysian Fields.” The Vikings called it “Valhalla.” This spirit world is not too different from earth. Many see it as having grain fields and other natural entities. The key to getting there is living a life that pleases the gods and not having certain things happen to you, like being buried without your head.

#7: Indigenous Religions

- Followers: 300 million, including shamans (Siberia) and pagans (Asia and India) and smaller, pre-literate tribal belief systems
- View of God: Animism/Polytheism
- Means to God: Sacrifices

Similar in every way to the African tribal religions (except for geography and ethnicity of adherents). Sociologists made this separation out of respect for differences in culture.

#6: Chinese Traditional Religion

- Followers: 394 million (mostly in China)
- Founders: Lao-Tzu (604–531 BC) and Confucius (551–479 BC)
- View of God: No particular deity/impersonal force
 - though Lao-Tzu did become venerated generations later)
- Means to God: Not stressed, more of an ethical system than a religious one

Most people who practice these religions, obviously, live in China. Lao-Tzu was the founder of Taoism, and Confucius founded Confucianism. Both are mostly concerned with how to live an honorable life by treating people well and honoring one's ancestors, so none of the major branches of this group concern themselves with God or the afterlife. It's more of a here-and-now focus.

#5: Buddhism

- Followers: 488 million
- Founder: Siddhartha Gautama (563–483 BC)
- View of God: Not stressed
- Means to God: The Four Noble Truths
 - Siddhartha was raised in a high caste Hindu family, so as part of the leisure class, he had time to meditate and think about the nature of life and its problems.
 - At a certain point in his life, Siddhartha became convinced that Hinduism did not hold the secrets to a satisfying life, so he secluded himself under a fig tree for forty days and nights and meditated on the nature of life.
 - While Siddhartha meditated, he became enlightened. Buddha means “the Enlightened One.” Once people are enlightened, they'll understand that god is an impersonal, indescribable force that can't be known or understood.

What Buddha realized under the fig tree became known as the Four Noble Truths (these are the keys to enlightenment).

- I. Suffering is universal.***
- II. Craving is the root cause of suffering.***
- III. The cure for suffering is to eliminate craving.***
- IV. Craving is eliminated by following the Eightfold Path:***

- The ultimate goal of Buddhism is to be free from pain and suffering.
- The only reason that we have suffering is because we have desires and cravings

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- *“Those who love a hundred have a hundred woes. Those who love ten have ten woes. Those who love one have one woe. Those who love none have no woes” (Steve Kumar)*
 - Eliminate desire = Eliminate suffering.

Following the eight-fold path eliminates desires = eliminates suffering = enlightenment.

- (1) Right views** (chiefly, embracing the Four Noble Truths)
- (2) Right thought** (being committed to renouncing all the pleasures of the senses so that you can detach yourself from the world and learn to crave less and less)
- (3) Right speech** (no lying, slandering, or cruel words)
- (4) Right behavior** (no killing any living creatures, no stealing, no sexual misconduct)
- (5) Right occupation** (seek gainful employment)
- (6) Right effort** (strive to rid yourself of all bad qualities and seek human perfection)
- (7) Right contemplation** (be alert and observant)
- (8) Right meditation** (think deeply and regularly about detaching yourself from the world and its desires, temptations, and entanglements)

By following the Eightfold Path, you can achieve a oneness with the universe that will leave you without attachments or hindrance.

- Does not focus on the afterlife as much as it focuses on eliminating suffering in this life.
 - Detachment and Withdrawl.
- Difference Between Buddhism and Christianity.
 - Jesus didn't avoid suffering. He intentionally embraced it.
 - **Luke 9:22:** ²² *“The Son of Man^[e] must suffer many terrible things,” he said. “He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious*

law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.” (Luke 9:22)

- Jesus then taught his disciples to embrace suffering.
 - **Jesus:** *“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33b)*
 - **Paul:** *“¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12)*

#4: Hinduism

- Followers: 1 billion (14%)
- Founded: 1800–1000 BC
- View of God: Pantheism
- Means to God: The Transmigration of Souls/Reincarnation
 - No recognized founder
 - Largest and most-interconnected expression of animism.
 - Developed in India over an 800 year span from different tribal groups
 - “Hindu” means “Indian” in Persian
 - Holy Book: The Vedas and the Upanishads.
 - One universal force (Brahman) that adherents attempt to tap into

 - This inanimate force is god and it’s in everything.
 - God is in everything and everything is in God (all living, dead, and everything in between).
 - The universe’s force, matter and consciousness is always being recycled in a great “transmigration of souls”.
 - An eternity of lifetimes
 - Ultimate goal (destination) is called Moksha (liberated)
 - To be reabsorbed into the great cosmic unconsciousness

 - By living well at different levels (different lifetimes), the hope is to store up enough Karma to eventually be absorbed into the unconscious force (Brahman).

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- Moksha is the ultimate and highest destination (Release), where you lose awareness and simply exist as a part of the universe.
 - Sometimes called “Nirvana” which literally means “Blown away”
 - After living well, dying well, and living well again, hopefully you can reach “Nirvana” or Moksha.
 - Hindu scholars estimate that it takes 600,000 lifetimes to reach “Moksha”
 - **Side-Note:** The expression “Holy Cow!” comes from Hinduism.
 - They see cows, rats, and other animals as the spirits of their ancestors, continuing to cosmically evolve.
 - Harming them or eating them could cause you bad karma, so that you, too, could reincarnate as a lower life-form in your next life.

When you achieve this, you enter Moksha, which means “release” or “emancipation.” So, the Hindu view of the ultimate afterlife destination is Moksha (“release”), where you lose all awareness and simply exist as a portion of the universe.

- New Age Movement
 - In the 1900’s, Indian gurus began emigrating to the United States and presenting their teachings on reincarnation.
 - Americans didn’t like the idea of reincarnating down to a lower species.
 - The American dream is about MORE!
 - Americans who adopted Hindu philosophy modified the trans-migrational highway to run one way only: UP!
 - This movement is called the “New Age Movement”.
 - Believe in reincarnation, but never in a downward direction.
 - New Age Movement teaches that we are all gods and the god-part of us cannot go backwards (only forward).
 - You see New Age Philosophy in the American yoga industry and other meditation type industries
- Differences: Karma & Do Over

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- Karma
 - *“Reap what you sow” (Gal. 6:7)*
 - Karma means that what you do in this life will propel you (ascend/descend) into a particular direction in when you are reincarnated.
 - Do Over on average of 600,000 times
 - **Heb. 9:27**: “...It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”

#3: Non-Religious

- Followers: 1.1 billion (nonreligious Westerns, agnostics, and atheists in current and formerly Communist countries)

#2: Islam

- Followers: 1.6 billion
- Founder: Muhammad
- View of God: Monotheism
- Means to God: The Five Pillars of Islam
- View of the Afterlife: Paradise

History

- Islam’s Founder Muhammed was born about 570 AD.
- Hometown of Mecca had several Christians and Jews living in it, so he was aware of a people who believed in only one God.
- That wasn’t his upbringing though. At that time, Arab people were primarily polytheists, believing in many Gods.
 - Allah, the moon god, was one of those.
- In 610 AD, Muhammed had a visitation from the angel Gabriel.
 - Gabriel revealed that Allah was the true God and demanded absolute submission to himself.
- Muhammed recited the words from Gabriel, then delivered them to his family and friends.

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- For 22 years Muhammed recited, and the result is one of the most significant books in the world: The Koran.
 - Koran (“The Recitations”) are made up of 114 Recitations (or Suras).

5 Pillars

- ***Shahada—Recite the Shahada*** (which is the Islamic creed that states, “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”)
- ***Salat—Pray five times a day facing the city of Mecca.***
- ***Zakat—Give to the poor.***
- ***Sawm—Fast during daylight hours during the month of Ramadan*** (the month in which Muhammad first received his revelation from God).
- ***Hajj—Take a pilgrimage to Mecca*** at least once in your life, if you can afford it.
 - By practicing these five actions religiously, you might be granted entrance to Paradise
 - There are no guarantees because Allah is all powerful and bows to no one.

Differences:

On the surface, it appears that Christianity and Islam serve the same god, but go about different styles to reach the same goal. I’ve probably agreed with that sentiment for much of my life. I certainly won’t use this as an opportunity to pit Islam against Christianity. I ain’t got time for debates. But I will concede that they are at least different roads. Islam: Faithfully adhere to the 5 pillars. Christianity: Trust completely in Jesus. Rely on Jesus as the only means for atonement/propitiation with God. Totally different roads. Are they different roads to the same destination?

- Heaven vs. Paradise. Sounds like the same place to me. But let’s look at the Muslim description of Paradise once more. The Koran pictures it this way: *They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade, and within reach will hang the fruits of both gardens. Which of the Lord’s blessings would you deny? Therein are bashful virgins whom neither man nor jinnee will have touched before. Which of your Lord’s blessings would you deny? Virgins as fair as coral and rubies. (Sura 55:54-56)*

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- Another description of paradise is seen in **Sura 56**:

They shall recline on jeweled couches face to face, and there shall wait on them immortal youths with bowls and ewers and a cup of purest wine (that will neither pain their heads nor take away their reason); with fruits of their own choice and flesh of fowls that they will relish. And theirs shall be the dark-eyed houris, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon [reward] for their deeds. (Sura 56:15-25)

#1: Christianity

- Followers: 2.2 billion (Author's Note: This includes nominal Christians as well as the various sects listed on the chart on page 3.)
- Founder: Jesus Christ
- View of God: Monotheism
- Means to God: Atonement/Substitution
- View of the Afterlife: Heaven

Central Teaching

- One God, eternally existent in 3 Persons
- God is completely just (no unholiness will tarry in His sight)
 - Payment is required for any/ all sin.
 - Nothing an imperfect man/woman can do to get to God.
- Final Destination: Eternal rest in the Presence of God Himself.
 - Glorified bodies.
 - Absence of pain and suffering
 - Absence of temporary circumstances (like marriage, human romantic escapades).
 - Focus of Heaven is on God Himself.
 - Eternally Mesmerized by His Glory and Majesty
 - Worshiped Day and Night; Night and Day

III. Conclusion

A. Recap

1. **98% of all humanity fall into the categories we covered.**

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2. **Every religion has a different road map.** (And defines what a “good life” looks like differently.)
 3. **We’ve made the assumption that all of their destinations are the same.**
 - a. **Almost all their ideas of the afterlife are different.**
 4. **Every one of these claims to be the correct and ONLY way.**
 5. **If any one of these are correct, that would mean that all the others are NOT correct.**

*If all these roads lead to heaven, it implies that God showed up in one part of the world to reveal the only way to Him in one manner, then slid over to another part of the world and shared the ONLY WAY with totally different directions to a totally different place. Is that a loving God?

B. **Question:** Some people may ask, “If there is only one road to heaven, what about all the people on the wrong road”?

1. **Would a loving God let sincere people miss heaven?”** (Or whatever they think of as the ideal afterlife condition.)
 - a. Sincerity is a good thing. But it is very possible to be sincerely wrong.
 - b. San Francisco has several 1-Way streets. A lot of sincere people make the wrong turn, head-first into on-coming traffic.
 - i. The most loving thing to do is to not only inform the driver about the right way.
 - ii. But to rescue that driver from the wrong way and carry them along the right way.

C. But isn’t that a little narrow-minded?

1. Sometimes narrow-minded is good!

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- a. If you doubled over in pain and you went to Barstow Community Hospital, and the doctor informed you that your appendix burst...
 - b. Most would wonder what to do next.
 - i. You've got to get your appendix removed.
 - ii. Can't I just take some antibiotics, Motrin
 2. The most loving thing the physician could do is make it clear that the alternative routes lead to more pain, and ultimately, destruction.

D. I know a Great Physician (Jesus). He has precisely diagnosed the human sickness (sin).

1. The prognosis is terminal. The wages of sin is death.
 - a. All who have ever had this sickness have succumbed to it.
2. There are not several ways out of your predicament. If He told you there were several and you could choose any path you wanted, that would be the cruelest deception ever.
3. If He told you there were any cure at all, it would not be something to complain about. But to shout about.
4. And there's one cure.
 - a. What must I do?
 - b. You can't do anything.
 - c. This Physician (Jesus) offers to do it all. He's the only One qualified.
 - i. He's going to give you a heart transplant.
 - ii. It won't cost you a thing. Will you let Him do it?
5. All you gotta do is trust Him to do it. Isn't that the most loving thing that a loving God could do?