



# IS JESUS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD?

A DEFENSE OF THE EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS OF JESUS CHRIST

A RELIGION PROFILE FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, INC.

## INTRODUCTION

Many people stumble over Christianity's claim that Jesus Christ is the only way to a saving relationship with God. The belief that there are many ways to God is increasing in the culture of the United States.

The exclusiveness of Christ is difficult to accept not only for many Americans, but also for many international students, because they come from nations and families where Christianity has not been embraced in their cultural tradition. Such students hold to the view that all religions are equally valid ways to God or to Ultimate Reality. Such a view is known as "religious pluralism."

Christians need to think seriously about how to respond to those who challenge the exclusivity of the Christian faith and who suggest that all religions are of equal value.

The best place to begin is with Scripture. We need to understand biblically why Christians consider Christ to be the only way of salvation. One of the most important reasons for such exclusivity has to do with what the Bible says is the problem that lies at the core of the human condition and the unique solution that such a problem requires.

## HUMANITY'S PROBLEM AND THE BIBLE'S SOLUTION

### *What does the Bible say is wrong with humanity?*

The Bible teaches that, although we are created in God's image and are of unique and special value to Him, nevertheless we are deeply and permanently stained by sin. Sin is, at its root, an attitude of rebellion against and independence from God. The Bible says all have sinned (Romans 3:23).

The most severe consequence of our sin is that it separates us from God. The biblical prophet Isaiah wrote, "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you" (59:2; see also Habakkuk 1:13).

Another consequence of our sin is that it causes our spiritual death. Just as physical death occurs when the spirit is separated from the body, so spiritual death results when we separate ourselves from God. Paul wrote, "you were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1). No other religion portrays humanity as being as bad off spiritually as does Christianity, for a person cannot be any worse off than being dead.

### *What is the biblical solution for humanity's problem?*

The Bible uses several terms to describe what humanity needs, and

each term implies that there is only one way to resolve our problem.

**Forgiveness.** The Bible says we have offended a holy God and that we need to be *forgiven* of that offense before we can be in fellowship with God. *There are not many ways to receive such forgiveness, because only the One who has been offended can forgive us of our offense.* (Mark 2:5-7). Jesus alone paid the penalty for our sin through His death on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). He thereby cleared the way both for God to remain true to His holy character and for Him to extend the offer of forgiveness to us. Thus, John could write, "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and *just and will forgive us our sins*" (1 John 1:9, emphasis added; see also Romans 3:22-26).

**Reconciliation.** The Bible says we have separated ourselves from God relationally because of our rebellion and sin: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). The solution to our being separated from God is that we need our relationship with God to be restored. Our need for such reconciliation indicates, again, that there is only one way to resolve the problem of our having separated ourselves from God. How many ways are there, after all, for me to restore a relationship that I am entirely responsible for having broken? Only one! Through the confession of my

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE OTHER RELIGIONS

guilt, and the hope that the offended one will be gracious enough to forgive me.

Humanity is in the same kind of situation with God. If we are ever to have any hope of being in a relationship with God, we need to take steps to restore our relationship, which means to confess our guilt before God.

**Regeneration.** The Bible says we are spiritually dead. Such a concept, again, implies exclusiveness with respect to the solution to humanity's problem. Why? Because dead people cannot help themselves, and the only one who has the power to give life is God. Our need is to be made spiritually alive, or *regenerated*. To be made spiritually alive is the meaning of such biblical phrases as to be "born again" (John 3:3-6) and to be "born of God" (John 1:12). God has provided Jesus Christ as the One through whom that life will come: "God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions" (Eph. 2:4). Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). He demonstrated the truth of those words by rising from the dead. No other founder of a religion can make such an astounding claim.

### GOD'S FORMS OF REVELATION

Another reason Christians talk about the exclusivity of the Gospel is because several passages in the Bible emphasize the necessity of "hearing" the good news about Jesus in coming to salvation. Paul, in Romans 10:17, says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (see also Gal. 3:2; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 3:15; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

It is important to distinguish between what can be known about

God through what we normally call "general revelation" and what can be known about Him only through His "special revelation." General revelation is called that because it is truth about God that can be known to all people generally. The following are biblical passages that speak of general revelation:

"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1).

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20; see also Acts 14:17).

Such verses tell us that through the creation we can perceive that there is a personal creator God who is both powerful and good. Through Romans 2:15—"the requirements of the law are written on their hearts"—Paul further tells us that through our conscience and the law of God written on our hearts, we can know there is a moral order to God's creation.

It is possible to know much about God through His "general revelation," but there is no indication in Scripture that the way to be reconciled with God can be known through any other means than the "special revelation" of the good news about Jesus Christ. Paul wrote,

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:13-14).

What is the biblical attitude toward other religions? At least four things can be said in response to this question.

First, it is certainly possible that other religions contain truths obtained through either general or even special revelation. Several religions teach many truths of both a theological and ethical nature that coincide with Christian teaching. For example, Orthodox Judaism and Islam affirm theism. Of course, a handful of religions contain truths available through special revelation by virtue of having had contact with the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Islam certainly does.

Second, being sinful, humanity's tendency is to corrupt the truth about God. The Bible speaks of humanity "suppressing the truth" of God as perceived through creation. Paul wrote, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him" (Rom. 1:21). Such suppression is the source of our religious inclinations.

Third, there is no indication in Scripture that any other religious message besides the Gospel of Jesus Christ is capable of restoring us to a relationship with God. Jesus himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6; see also Peter's words in Acts 4:12).

We know that on the human level, the only way for two people who have been estranged to be reconciled is for the issues which separated them to be resolved. This is no less true in our relationship with God than in our relationship with one another. Only by agreeing that our sin is the source of our alienation from God, and only by accepting His solution for the problem—the atonement of

## GENERAL REVELATION CONTRASTED WITH SPECIAL REVELATION

	GENERAL REVELATION	SPECIAL REVELATION
<b>THE CHANNEL</b>	Creation, the heavens (Ps. 19:1-2; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19-20).	Divine intervention in history (e.g., the parting of the Red Sea).
	God's moral law written on our hearts, and our conscience (Rom. 2:15). The law written on our hearts tells us there is a moral standard, and the conscience tells us we are guilty of falling short of that standard.	God's word spoken to humanity (directly—Gen. 12:1; through dreams—Gen. 20:6; visions—Dan. 8:1; angels—Acts 10:3).
		God's Word written by men through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).
		God the Son incarnated as a man (John 1:14; Heb. 1:1-2).
<b>THE RECIPIENTS</b>	Available to all people, at all times and places.	Available to those who witness such events, or who hear or read such words.
<b>THE CONTENTS</b>	Truth about God: His existence, power, goodness, and moral nature (Rom. 1:20).	Truth about our being spiritually dead and separated from God (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1).
	Truth about our failure before the law written on our hearts (Rom. 2:15, "their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them").	Truth about God's plan and provision of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:13-17).

Jesus Christ—can we be reconciled with Him.

Finally, the Bible says there is a spiritual dimension in the origin of religions, and that the intention of the spirits is to deceive humanity and to deflect us from the truth (see John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:13-14). Paul wrote that people will "follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). From the beginning, Satan has distorted the truths of God (Gen. 3:1-5), and his purpose all along has been to "blind the minds of the unbelieving" (2 Cor. 4:4).

One of Satan's lies, and one of the ways in which he blinds people to the truth, is through religions that deflect us from recognizing the full extent of our sinful condition and from accepting God's provision of grace through Jesus Christ. For example, the non-Christian religions have either denied, diminished, or disregarded the absolute holiness of God. As God's holiness is thus dis-

torted, we then become vulnerable to being deceived into thinking that perhaps the goal of salvation is achievable through our own human effort, thus blinding us to our need for a Savior.

### COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

***"Isn't it arrogant and intolerant to claim that Christianity is the only true religion?"***

It certainly is possible to adopt an arrogant and intolerant attitude in claiming to possess the truth about anything, and this is no less possible for Christians. Such attitudes are wrong.

It is important to clarify, however, that to claim that something is true to the exclusion of competing claims is not necessarily arrogant or intolerant. Everyone makes statements that they believe are exclusively true. We must point out also that the

exclusive claims of the Christian message are really claims made by Jesus Christ about Himself and not by Christians about themselves.

In regards to tolerance, we must distinguish between three kinds (adapted from Dr. Erwin Lutzer's *Christ Among Other Gods*, p. 29):

- **"Legal" tolerance:** The recognition that each person has the legal right to believe whatever he or she determines is true or best.
- **"Social" tolerance:** The recognition that people ought to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their religious beliefs.
- **"Uncritical" tolerance:** The notion that no religious belief should be evaluated as being false or inferior to any other religious belief. All beliefs should be granted equal status.

Without question, Christians—and everyone else—should practice both

## THEORIES OF "TRUTH"

(Adapted from *The Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, by Kreeft & Tacelli)

Pragmatic Theory	"Truth is what works."
Empiricist Theory	"Truth is what we can experience or observe."
Rationalist Theory	"Truth is what can be proved by reason."
Coherence Theory	"Truth is harmony among a set of ideas."
Emotivist Theory	"Truth is what I feel."

legal and social tolerance. But "uncritical" tolerance demands a price too high for Christians—or most other people—to pay. It requires the denial of any truth value in any religious beliefs whatsoever.

***"Hasn't the idea that Christianity is the only true religion led to wars of persecution against other religions?"***

This is similar to the first objection. And, yes, there have been wars of persecution waged by Christians (or at least those who professed to be Christians) against followers of other religions. The fact that professing Christians did such things, however, does not mean that what they did was right or that the message of the Bible was wrong. Jesus Christ claimed to be the exclusive way to God, but He would never condone such kinds of acts in His name. Neither does their profession of the Christian faith require us to believe that they were indeed true Christians.

We should not forget, moreover, that Christians have been the object of persecution throughout history as well.

***"I think all religions are equally true."***

This is a very popular and commonly held idea today, probably because it appears to promote an attitude of mutual respect among followers of different religions. Such a perspective, however, is a false foundation for respect because it refuses to acknowl-

edge the very real and irreconcilable differences that exist between the various religions. It instead dismisses such differences as unimportant. How, though, does one respond to such a belief?

First of all, the idea that all religious beliefs are true cannot be held rationally. For if such an idea were true, then the opposite idea—that all religious beliefs are not true—would also have to be true, since it, too, is a religious belief! Such a statement, however, would cancel out the former one!

Second, it is impossible to hold that all religions are true unless we change our definition of the word "true" from its normally accepted meaning. Generally, when we say that a statement is "true," we mean that it corresponds to a reality that does in fact exist independently of our beliefs. This is called the "correspondence" theory of truth.

What most "religious pluralists" in fact do is change their definition of "truth" to one of the other definitions listed in the chart above. It is not unfair to call such definitions "misleading."

Although truth is indeed consistent with experience and reason, and it is coherent, it is more than that. Such definitions are deficient because they do not ground truth in an objective reality. Truth is best defined as that which corresponds with reality—the way things really are.

Finally, though it is possible to find many similarities among the world's religions, a closer look will reveal irreconcilable differences among their most basic teachings. Many people believe that the religions differ on the surface, but on a deeper level they are the same. In fact, the opposite is true: the religions are similar on the surface level, but on the deeper level—the level of their fundamental beliefs and teachings—they are very different.

It is evident from the chart on page five that if what we mean by the word "true" is "that which corresponds with reality," then not all of these religions can be true, for they are contradictory in their fundamental beliefs. Salvation, for example, is either a wage to be earned (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam) or a gift to be received (Christianity). It cannot be both.

It is true that all the religions in the chart could be false, but it is not true that they could all be true!

***"I think all religious truth-claims are relative."***

When a person makes such a statement, he or she usually means one of three things. First, he or she might mean that since none of us can claim to know the whole truth about anything, what appear to be mutually contradictory statements could both be partially true descriptions of a greater whole. Such a view is called "pure" relativism.

Second, he or she might mean that we cannot know anything at all to be true (or at least anything about religion). This is known as *skepticism*.

Third, he or she might mean that all truth (or at least all religious truth) is simply a matter of subjective opinion and feeling. This is *subjectivism*, which holds that "what is true for

**THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RELIGIONS**

	<b>HINDUISM</b>	<b>BUDDHISM</b>	<b>ISLAM</b>	<b>CHRISTIANITY</b>
<b>ULTIMATE REALITY</b>	Impersonal essence of undifferentiated oneness; or many gods	No God (Void); or impersonal "Buddha essence"	A Creator who is unknowable	A Creator who has made Himself known
<b>THE NATURE OF HUMANITY</b>	Divine in our essence	No personal essence	Created by God, but nothing is at all like Him	Created by God and in His image
<b>HUMANITY'S DILEMMA</b>	Trapped in reincarnations in an illusory world, due to ignorance and karma	Trapped in reincarnations in a world of suffering, due to desire and karma	Under the judgment of Allah, due to failure to keep the Law	Under God's judgment, due to sinful rebellion
<b>SALVATION</b>	Deliverance from the world through knowledge, works, or devotion	Deliverance from the world of suffering through the cessation of desire (by own works, or "divine" help)	Deliverance from judgment through obedience to the Law	Deliverance from judgment by faith in God's gracious provision of salvation through Jesus Christ
<b>FINAL STATE</b>	Merging with ultimate reality, or heavenly bliss in presence of gods	Extinction of suffering, desire, and individuality (Nirvana)	Paradise or hell	Heaven or hell

you may not be true for me, and vice-versa."

**"Pure" Relativism.** In responding to "pure" relativism, keep the following thoughts in mind. First, even though it is true that none of us can know the whole truth about anything (particularly about God), this does not imply that we can't know anything at all, nor does it imply that what we can know is inaccurate. God may not reveal everything to us about Himself, but what He has revealed can be truly known!

Second, though it is possible that two parties may possess complementary truths (partial truths that complete each other) about a matter, if they are contradictory (denying and affirming the same thing), then they cannot both be true.

Furthermore, it is impossible for a relativist to live out his or her philosophy in the real world. In real life we must decide whether it is true that a car is racing toward us or not and act

accordingly. We cannot live with the conclusion that the car is and is not racing toward us!

**Skepticism.** In responding to skepticism, to say that it is impossible to know the truth about anything at all is self-refuting. The person who makes such a statement is at least claiming to know that the statement—"truth cannot be known"—is true.

Some people acknowledge that truth can be known about "ordinary" things, but it cannot be known about God. How, though, can we know that nothing can be known about God? Even to say that nothing can be known about God is to make a truth-claim about Him, such that He exists and that He has not made Himself known to us in any discernible fashion. Can anyone claim to know for certain that God has not revealed something about Himself? If we claim such certainty, are we not claiming that we have investigated all knowledge? Such an assertion claims more than can be known by

any one person or even group of people (see *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, by Kreeft & Tacelli, ch. 15). If people, moreover, make the truth-claim that God does not exist, they are again making an assertion that goes far beyond what their finite experience and knowledge warrants.

**Subjectivism.** The "subjectivist" says that truth (or at least religious truth) is not something objective, but resides *within* the individual. We each create our own spiritual values (truths). But what the subjectivist fails to see is that his or her belief that all religious truths are subjective is based on an objective truth claim—that religious truth is subjective. Subjectivism refutes itself.

***"I don't think reason or evidence apply to religion; I think it's totally a matter of one's subjective experience."***

Sometimes people, especially those affected by Eastern thought (e.g., Hinduism), will reject any use of reason

or objective evidence in spiritual matters and insist that religion is entirely a matter of experience. There are really two issues here.

The person who claims that reason and evidence are irrelevant to religion must be asked why he or she believes this is true. If he or she responds by appealing to any kind of reason or evidence to support his or her belief, then he or she is refuting it in the process. One cannot use reason or evidence to show that reason and evidence are irrelevant to religion.

In the second instance, if we base our religious beliefs solely on personal experience, we still need an objective framework by which to interpret and evaluate our experience. Any experience can be described. But without an objective framework we cannot interpret or evaluate that experience. For example, when we have a fever, we can describe how we are feeling. But it takes a thermometer and other diagnostic tools to interpret and evaluate our fever.

The same is true with religious experience. One can have an experience, but the true nature and meaning of that experience is not necessarily self-evident to the experiencer. Say, for example, that a person has had an ecstatic spiritual experience. He or she might feel that he or she had just experienced God. But how do they know for sure that they experienced God? It could have been a deceiving spirit.

In order to obtain an accurate understanding of the source and significance of the experience, the person must have true knowledge of the contextual framework—the spiritual reality—in which the experience occurred. The person can describe his or her experience—what happened, how he or she felt—but having the experience does not qualify him or her to answer questions such as “Who or what was the source of this experience?,” or “What

should I conclude about reality as a result of having this experience?” Such questions can only be answered by one who has knowledge of the objective framework in which the experience occurred.

God would certainly be a source of such knowledge, because He is the ultimate context and He is by definition infinite in knowledge. But how can we gain access to His knowledge by which to interpret our experience? If it can be shown that the Bible is an authentic revelation from God, then this is the “objective framework” of truth, the source of true information by which I can interpret my experience.

Why, though, believe the Bible’s claim to be that revelation from God? Because of the overwhelming evidence that supports its claim to be the Word of God (see the Profile on “How Can We Know the Bible is the Word of God?”). The subjectivist might accuse us of our own kind of subjectivism in that *we have chosen* the Bible as our “objective framework.” Such an accusation will not stick, however, because we are subjecting our commitment to the Bible to the tests of reason and evidence.

***“I believe religions should be evaluated on their practical effects rather than on their objective truth-claims.”***

In a day of widespread pragmatism, this is not an uncommon idea. Consider the following, however.

Simply because an idea yields some practical benefits in the life of the one holding it, does not mean it is true. A person could believe falsely that all people are divine, and that they should therefore be loved and respected. The love and respect he or she shows to people may be good, but it does not make the idea that they are divine true.

Moreover, evaluating religions on the basis of their practical benefits is not as easy as one might think. For one thing, not everyone can agree on what constitutes a good result in people’s lives. What may be a good result in the mind of one, might not be so good in the mind of another. For example, is it a virtue to accept all forms of sexual behavior, or are there limits to such behavior? Such opposing beliefs are both based on religious perspectives.

Furthermore, if true goodness involves not only outward actions but also inward attitudes and motives, then goodness is indeed a very difficult thing for people to measure.

***“If, then, faith in Christ is necessary for salvation, what about those who have never heard of Christ?”***

This is one of the most frequently raised objections to Christian faith. We must respond with care, for in the mind of the objector this issue raises questions about the fairness and justice of God. Not all Christians will respond the same way to this question, but that which we present here we believe represents a biblical response.

Some Christians believe that God will accept the sincere efforts of the “unevangelized” in lieu of personal faith in Christ. If an individual responds appropriately to whatever truth he or she does possess (whether through creation, conscience, or another religion), and if he or she has no opportunity to hear about Christ, this is enough for God. However, though it is hypothetically possible that God could respond in this way, there is simply no clear biblical evidence that He does! Also, this position assumes the innocence of the person who has not heard. The Bible, however, teaches that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

We believe that the more biblical response to the issue of those who

have not heard but who respond to the truth they possess about God (through creation, conscience, or the elements of truth in another religion) is that God will see that they receive the Gospel so as to come to faith in Christ. According to Scripture, God's normal way of communicating the Gospel is through another human messenger ("How shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10:14).

This viewpoint appears to be supported by a statement of Jesus in Luke 8:18, "To him who has shall more be given." That is, to the person who welcomes that which God has already revealed to him or her, God will reveal more. To the person who genuinely receives God's "general" revelation, God will reveal His "special" revelation about salvation through Jesus Christ. The experience of Cornelius provides a case in point (Acts 10).

***"What has happened to my ancestors to whom God evidently did not send the Gospel?"***

It may be tempting to offer a word of assurance that one's ancestors are with the Lord, but this is something we simply are not capable of doing. And, we should offer no false hope when there is no basis for it.

On the other hand, we do not know for certain that they are not with the Lord. God has ways of communicating with people beyond the normal means, and it is not impossible that even at the point of death (before actually departing this world) God did exactly that. In any case, we must leave this question with the God who judges with justice and with love!

**THE CRITERIA FOR  
EVALUATING RELIGIOUS  
TRUTH-CLAIMS**

In the previous section we gave attention to a number of approaches to the

question of truth-claims that we rejected (relativism, skepticism, etc.). But what criteria should we use in determining the truthfulness of religious truth-claims? Here are what we believe to be the most important.

***1. Religious belief must be rationally consistent.***

A claim is worthy of our belief if it is free from internal contradictions. Since it is impossible to even discuss religious truth-claims without using reason, such truth claims must themselves be consistent with the laws of logic, in particular the law of non-contradiction. In other words, a religion cannot both affirm and deny the same thing and in the same respect, and then still hope to make any sense.

To put religions under the scrutiny of reason is not to say, however, that all religious beliefs can be fully explained by reason. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is an example. Some would say the doctrine of the Trinity contradicts itself by saying God is both three and one. Even though the doctrine of the Trinity—God is one in Essence and three in Person—is beyond our finite understanding, it is not a contradiction, for it does not deny and affirm the same thing in the same respect. Essence and Person are not the same things. To state it another way, Christianity teaches that there is one God who consists of three divine Persons. Reason might not be capable of explaining how this is so, but it is not irrational to believe that it is so.

***2. Religious belief must be consistent with known facts.***

This is the "empirical" test. The God of truth would not ask us to believe that which is contradicted by facts that are known through ordinary means. The Bible, for example, is best interpreted in many passages as an historical document claiming to describe actual historical events. Archaeologists have consistently confirmed the historical accuracy of such biblical narratives. The Book of

Mormon, on the other hand, claims to give an historical account about the native peoples who populated North America during ancient times. Its accounts, however, do not conform with archaeological findings, thereby throwing doubt on its veracity.

***3. Religious beliefs must be able to explain why reality is the way it is.***

It is not reasonable to embrace a system of belief that cannot offer an acceptable explanation for why things are the way they are. For instance, if the ultimate ground of our being is an impersonal force that is without differentiation (the belief held in common by the New Age, Hindu, and Evolutionary belief systems), then there is no sufficient foundation for why we should value ourselves as persons above anything else (since personhood would then be a regression from the impersonal ultimate).

***4. Religious beliefs should enable us to live in the everyday world.***

This is the test of "viability." Can we live consistently with such a belief-system, or does it force us into a situation that causes us to live in a way that is inconsistent with some of the belief-system's fundamental precepts? If, for example, there are no ultimate moral absolutes—as pantheists and relativists hold—how then can they justify making moral judgments about the actions of people and of nations, as they inevitably do? Such moral judgments go beyond the cultural relativism to which they hold.

**APPROACHING THOSE WHO  
OBJECT TO CHRIST'S  
EXCLUSIVE CLAIMS**

Our ultimate aim in this profile is not merely to refute false intellectual ideas, but to gain a hearing for the truth that can lead one to an eternal relationship with God. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

**Be careful to express understanding concerning your friend's hesitancy to accept the exclusive claims of Christ.** The claims that Jesus made are indeed awesome in nature. You should not expect, therefore, that such claims will be accepted apart from careful scrutiny. Point out, though, that Jesus Christ welcomes our scrutiny.

**Encourage a thorough examination of the claims of Christ.** You should challenge your friend to read the New Testament and to document the precise nature of the claims Jesus made. Be prepared to guide your friend in a study of these claims from the Gospels. Note particularly these passages: John 8:58; 10:30; 20:28. Go on to show why it is that you believe these claims are true. Point to some of the prophecies fulfilled by Christ and to the astronomical odds against their being fulfilled just "by coincidence." Point to His perfect life (confirmed by His closest companions—1 Pet. 2:22, and unimpeached even by His enemies—Mt. 26:59-60) and His many miracles (again, acknowledged even by those who opposed Him—John 11:47-48). Focus especially on His resurrection from the dead and on the overwhelming evidence for it. Use Morison's book as a tool (see For Further Reading).

Without bringing undue pressure to bear on your friend to trust in Christ before he or she is truly convinced of His identity, **do not be shy about emphasizing the importance of examining the evidence and coming to a decision about Christ.** If there is even any possibility that what Jesus said about the importance of believing in Him is true, then there could be no more significant issue in our lifetime!

Be prepared to help your friend deal with lingering doubts about

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Many times a person may acknowledge that there is a good deal of evidence in favor of trusting in Jesus, but lingering doubts and the specter of counting the cost of following Christ hold him or her back from faith. Encourage him or her to honestly confront his or her doubts.

Point out as well, however, that there comes a time when the evidence is so weighty in support of faith that lingering doubts must not stand in the way of reaching a verdict. In a court of law a verdict must be reached when no *reasonable* doubts remain. This does not mean, though, that there may be no *conceivable* doubt. There may always be some conceivable doubt, but this does not mean that it should keep us from reaching a decision.

**Expose them to Christians from their own religious background,** or who have themselves successfully dealt with the issues that may be troubling them. God uses many people in leading someone to the Savior.

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