



Facing the Reasonable Questions of a Skeptical Culture

HOW IS CHRISTIANITY DIFFERENT FROM EVERY OTHER RELIGION?

Unfortunately many have been disenfranchised by religion. After taking a go at it, some have turned away from religion and church altogether. Others have seen from the outside the hopelessness that can exist in a religious culture and want no part. It's unfortunate how many people have a troubled view of the church. It's even more unfortunate to admit that many come by this view honestly. At one point they were burned by the church. They couldn't measure up to the standards and were cast aside due to their inability to conform. In their mind, the Church is a place of judgment and hypocrisy. They assume "religious people" are waiting around every corner to judge their sins and banish them to hell. They have seen the worst religion can offer and are over it.

Imagine you begin a dialogue with one of these poor souls. This person knows you're a Christian and has one question for you—"Why do you follow Jesus?" They ask the question in trepidation because they understand Christians have a way of judging those who disagree. But in complete sincerity they want to understand how you're able to live in this religious context. How have you survived the judgment? How can you keep following a person and religion that just keeps pointing out your weaknesses? For a person who has seen the worst that the church can offer, this is a reasonable question. Do you know how you would answer—why do you follow Jesus?

Just for a moment let's compare Jesus with every other "holy person." From the outside, it's easy to lump Jesus in with Muhammad, Buddha, Joseph Smith, or the Dalai Lama. All of these men have many followers. All of them promote their religion in order to better a person's life. All of them have a book containing their sacred writings. Martyrs have died on behalf of all these men. Individuals around the world would declare their lives are changed forever due to these men's actions. But what makes each of them different from the other? And for our context, why do you believe that it is only through Jesus that you can have access to God?

The first step in answering this weary soul is to ask them to describe their perspective of Jesus and his followers. For many the Jesus we see in Scripture is very different than the Jesus offered in society. The reason Jesus and Christianity have become so unpalatable is because of how Christianity has been promoted in culture. Popular Christianity can sound no different than other religions. Like every other religion, Christianity is often promoted as a process of applying the teachings of Jesus, in order to better your life here on earth and secure a glorious life in eternity. Disciples must work hard to achieve the standards set before them. All the while being held accountable by the Bible and the community around them. Therefore, people live their lives comparing themselves to each other

and to their Savior. In the mind of this weary soul, Jesus is just another wrathful judge.

But we know that this is not the case. Jesus and Christianity stand opposed to all other religions in one dynamic way. Our salvation is not based upon our ability to follow after our savior; it's based upon us placing our faith in the abilities of our Savior. Jesus offers hope to the helpless and grace to the broken—but not through our work and personal pursuits, rather through His perfect work. Our salvation and eternal standing is found in the finished work of Christ. He did everything necessary for us to stand blameless before our holy God. Christianity is not a religion about measuring up or having a perfect performance before the Lord. Instead, Christianity is a religion calling us to place our faith in what Jesus has done for us. Why is Christianity different? Because it is the only religion that truly offers rest. Jesus has accomplished everything necessary for our salvation. We can rest in that assurance.

Hebrew 4:11-13 *Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of*

spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrew 4:14-16 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Discussion Questions

Often Christians can seem unloving based upon how we evangelize the lost. Is there a difference between defending that Jesus is "right" and sharing the Gospel?

How has popular Christianity confused the message of the Gospel?

Christianity is the only religion that offers rest to the weary soul. Describe what that rest looks like on a daily basis.

REFORMED SPIRITUALITY

WEDNESDAY NIGHT ADULT BIBLE STUDY | TAUGHT BY JON MOFFITT

This course will seek to orient the Christian life within a reformed perspective by rethinking the evangelical construct of spiritual disciplines and learning to live within the freedom of faith in Christ. Over the five weeks of this course, we hope to reshape our approach to the Christian life by replacing the dread of our typical experience with the delight of the Gospel.

October 3 What is Reformed Spirituality: *Defining terms, form and function*

October 10 The Historic Decline of Reformed Spirituality: *The influence of the Counter-Reformation & Roman Catholic Theology*

October 17 Reformed Spirituality and Sanctification: *Our works or God's?*

October 24 Means of Grace: *Transitioning from an inward to an outward perspective*

November 7 The Church and Reformed Spirituality: *Reclaiming the importance of a corporate spiritual reality*