

Week 3

Is There Really Only One Way to God?

March 7



Hey, Church family!

My name's Clare and I work on our life group team here at The Creek. You know, in all my years as a Christ follower, I've found that many Christians, at some point, have struggled to manage the tension of being inclusive while declaring a faith that seems *exclusive*. I personally wrestled with these questions:

- Is there REALLY only one way to God?
- Do I believe what Jesus said about himself?
- Who am I to tell people they've got it wrong?
- What if I am wrong?

Over the years I've had close friends who came from all different faith backgrounds. For some of my friends, their faith was a part of their family identity, their culture, and heritage. They grew up in their faith. Perhaps at some point, they made a conscious choice to believe, but very few of these friends explored other paths to God.

At one point in my life, I would say that my faith, while a choice, was still very enmeshed in my family identity. I had close friends who were Jewish and Muslim, and we regularly had deep conversations about God and Jesus and what we believed. In an effort to be inclusive, I felt myself slowly shift towards a more pluralistic worldview. I was still convinced Jesus was the way to God, but I felt like He was the right way *for me*. I was regularly invited to celebrate holy days like Passover and Eid with my non-Christian friends. I affirmed their beliefs and they affirmed mine. It felt loving, inclusive, and compassionate to encourage one another in our respective faiths. Who was I to tell my friends what to believe?

Eventually, I shared with a Christian friend about how I had come to embrace this idea that we could all find our own paths to God. He seemed puzzled and asked me if I believed Christ was the only way to God. I told him – yes, but I believed that *for me*. I felt it would be unloving to impose that belief on my friends. He then challenged me – if I believed Jesus was the only way to God, then wasn't it unloving if I didn't share this truth with my friends?

With that question, it felt like my world turned upside down. I began to examine *why* I believed Jesus is the only way to God. I read Scripture and other books, and recalled experiences that made up the foundation of my faith. I was extremely uncomfortable with my conclusion. I was *not* loving my friends and neighbors well by proclaiming a pluralistic worldview. I came to realize that sharing my faith was not an imposition on others but rather an invitation to the ultimate experience of inclusion.

Here are some questions that I think might be helpful for us to consider as we wrestle with this issue:

- What feelings or tensions (if any) bubble up within you whenever you think about the question, “Is Jesus the only way to God?”
- If you had to tell someone who thinks differently from you that Jesus is the only way, what feelings would you have about that? Excitement? Fear? Anxiety? Why?
- Perhaps you’ve never struggled with this issue. If that’s the case, what was it that convinced you that Jesus is the only way to God? What has given you the confidence to share that with others? Who is someone new you can share Jesus with? Take some time to jot down some of your reflections in a journal or in your phone.
- If you do struggle to believe that Jesus is the only way to God, could you quantify your belief with a percentage? Is it 97%? 34%? What would it take you to get to 100%? What would it take to raise that percentage for you?

Maybe you don’t wrestle with believing, but you lack the scripture and knowledge to support your beliefs. Maybe you aren’t convinced yet, but you are open to learning more. Wherever you are in this journey, rest assured: You are not alone! I’m right there alongside you in this journey.

Here are some resources I’ve found helpful:

1. Scriptures: **John 4:25-26, Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, John 3:16-18, John 3:36, John 10:30, John 11:25, Acts 16:30-31** are just a few.
2. Two great short books that address this topic: *More Than a Carpenter*, by Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, and *The God Conversation*, by J.P. Moreland and Tim Muehlhoff.
3. If you really want to dig in deep, here’s a 2-hour debate between a Christian philosopher and an atheist philosopher: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tYm41hb48o>
4. If you want to just get your toes wet on this topic, here’s a shorter video from Tim Keller explaining his answer in about 5-6 minutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGX1fHWU1TA>

I hope you feel encouraged as you reflect on this truth – **there is only one way to God**. If you aren't at 100% in your belief, I challenge you to seek what you need to fill in the blanks. Don't be afraid to ask for help. I'm so glad I did!

With gratitude and joy,
Clare