

**Series: DOUBT YOUR DOUBTS** > Just in Case You Missed Something

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2, 2018  
**HOW CAN JESUS BE THE *ONLY* WAY?**  
John 1:1-3, 14:6  
SPEAKER: KEN DAVIS

1. Several years ago, I decided to learn how to make really good chocolate chip cookies--so I googled it: **Best Chocolate Chip Cookies**. Do you have any idea how many recipes there are for the **best chocolate chip cookies**? A *lot!* The word **best** is pretty exclusive, right? How can there be 10 **best** recipes?

-One of the recipes really had it down to a science; you use **more** than one bag of chocolate chips, you **weigh** the flour—and that you use coarse sea salt. I thought, “**These are chocolate chip cookies, not nuclear weapons, for cryin’ out loud!**”

-Actually, we **live** in a **GOOGLE** world where the diversity of opinions is unbelievable—on raising kids, having a successful marriage, how to be healthy. There are **more options than people!**

-To make all this even more complicated, stats tell us that the GTA is more culturally diverse than any other city in the world. The USA is a melting pot; we’re not. We call ourselves a **mosaic**.

- a. Canada, in food terms, would be more like a pasta salad than a stew. We’re together—but we retain our individual cultures.

- b. So, can you understand **why** it would sound so loving and **logical** to say, “There are **many** paths to God! **Everyone** is right! **No one** is wrong! God is cool with pretty much **anything** anyone does as long as they’re sincere!” God is love, right? So, **here’s the question we need to ask: IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?**

2. So. Where did this idea that **everyone’s right** and **no one’s wrong** come from? Part of it comes from the move away from the certainty of modernism to **post-modernism**—where **nothing** is certain. Modernism had everything figured out—and proved, supposedly, that everything that was true and right could be seen, touched, smelled or heard—and scientifically investigated. **Post-modernism** called all of that into question.

-The **best** word to describe this is **relativism**. Relativism says that there **is** no such thing as absolute truth. History is skewed by the people who write it, and truth is skewed by the person claiming it—and most truth claims are power plays. What’s left, of course, is **my** truth—and **your** truth—or **his** or **her** truth.

-Now, I just need to say that there are **some** aspects to relativism that are true. The **truth** about how to find a mate, how to honour your parents—or how to live a successful life would be **very** different depending on the country, culture or situation you live in. **Mali** is different than **Markham**.

-And it’s **this** context that causes people in our world—especially the GTA—to bristle when someone says **Jesus is THE way, THE truth and THE life**. It sounds so naïve. Offensive. And **very** exclusive. And it’s opposed by some heavy hitters. Like the following: .

*"I am absolutely against any religion that says one faith is superior to another. I don't see how that is anything different than spiritual racism." Rabbi Shmuley Boteach*

*"My position is that all great religions are fundamentally good." Mahatma Gandhi*  
*"One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe that there's only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to God." Oprah Winfrey*

-Right now, that's pretty much the consensus in the West. It's a little like the theology of Ricky Bobby in the movie, **Taladaga Nights**

where he gets in an accident and thinks he's on fire. And he runs around the race track in his underwear yelling, "**Help me Jesus! Help me, Jewish God! Help me Allah! Help me Tom Cruise! Use your witchcraft to get the fire off me! Help me Oprah Winfrey!**"

-If **all** religions are true, then why not ask for help from **all** of them! Makes sense, right?

a. A pastor in NYC named Tim Keller—a fantastic communicator and thinker—has been reaching out to young urban city dwellers for years. He talks about **cultural defeaters**—that is, **statements or theories that are so widespread, so ingrained and seem so much like common sense that no one even questions them.** The statement, **There are many paths to God,** is a cultural defeater.

b. Part of the problem is that North American's in general tend to confuse **cultural** pluralism and **metaphysical** pluralism. Cultural pluralism is about respecting other's worldviews and ideas and convictions. Cultural pluralism is both good and necessary for us to co-exist in a place like the GTA.

-**Metaphysical pluralism**--believing that all spiritual pursuits and beliefs are equal is a disaster. All religions and belief systems **can't** be the same without grinding them down to nothing and offending everyone. If that's true, the only common dominator is: **Spiritually, I believe...** That's it!

c. Bottom line is--**Exclusivity** is out—and **inclusivity** is in.

-Ravi Zacharias puts it like this: *"Philosophically, you can believe anything—so long as you don't claim it to be true: morally, you can practice anything—so long as you do not claim it is a better way: Religiously, you can hold to anything, as long as you do not bring Jesus Christ into it."*

-Right now, the top Canadian value is **Tolerance.** I looked it up in a dictionary published in 1967 and it said, "**sympathy for another's beliefs or practices different than your own.**"

In other words, you **accept and treat people the same, no matter what they believe.** The **new** definition of tolerance, especially in Canada, is: **No one** is wrong—and **everyone** is right.

3. There's an illustration that is almost always used when it comes to the statement that, **All religions have only a part of the truth.** It's the eastern of **The Blind Men and the**

**Elephant.** It's about these blind men who come upon an elephant—and **each of them tries to get a hold of it and describe it.**

-One grabs the tail and said, "An elephant is like a rope!" The guy who grabbed the leg said, "No—it's like a tree!" One of the men felt it's side and said, "An elephant is actually like a **wall!**" Another grabbed the trunk said, "You're all wrong, it's actually more like a snake!" And they get into a huge argument.

-The **point** of the illustration is none of them can grasp the whole elephant—it's too big. So...everyone is **right**—and everyone is **wrong**.

And it gets applied to religions—who, individually, all have only **part** of the truth meaning that there can be **no one true religion**.

a. It **seems** to make sense, doesn't it? Well, the parable itself is flawed—and I'll tell you why. The assumption is that the one person who **isn't** blind is the one giving the parable.

-Do you see the problem? To say that all religions only have **part** of the truth and no one has **all** the truth—is to say that **you alone** have the superior perspective and knowledge that sees what people of various religions can't.

-Now, the people who believe this aren't evil; but in trying to be **inclusive**—end up saying something very **exclusive**. And it's quite **condescending**, really. To say that all religions only have a part of the truth is to say, "I've studied **all** religions in detail—and I **know** what the whole truth is!"

b. As His follower, I **know** and **admit** that what Jesus said about Himself was exclusive. But to say that **all religions have only part of the truth** is even **more** exclusive. Do you see the problem? In the interest of being **inclusive**—the person who says it is actually being every bit as exclusive—because they believe their view is better and more complete than those of all other religions.

-The issue, see, is **not** about whose truth is exclusive. Truth by definition **is** exclusive. When you say,  $2+2=4$ , that excludes the other alternatives;  $2+2 = 5$ , or  $2+2 = 454$ . To say that the earth is round, excludes an entire organization called the **Flat-Earth society**.

To tell someone that if they want to get from Toronto to Timmons, they'll have to go north--**excludes** getting there by going East, West or South.

4. Now, let me start **here**. There is absolutely **no** doubt that treating other belief systems with respect--along with the people who follow them--is part of Jesus' definition of love. Treat others as you would like to be treated. We've talked about it around here in terms of **RESPECT**. Let me give you a few reminders of that:

\*Respectful people **see others as image bearers of God**

\*Respectful people know how to **differ without demonizing someone!**

\*Respectful people **believe the best about others**

\*Respectful people can **dialogue without interrupting or dominating the conversation**

\*Respectful people **don't use incendiary words**

\*Respectful people are **courteous to everyone**

\*Respectful people **do not stereotype others**

\*Respectful people **have the humility to apologize quickly**

\*Respectful people **take the time to form opinions carefully**

\*Respectful people are **faithful friends who respect the time and convictions of others**

-And I believe respect means working with other people of other faiths who all want to accomplish good things. We **all** want to stop violence and hatred and poverty.

We **all** want things to be fair and equal for people--no matter **what** their faith is.

But cooperation does not mean **agreeing on everything**.

a. Here's what I know; **listening** and **respect** will **always** win you a hearing. When we listen and respond **carefully** others may **thoroughly** disagree with you--but will likely have **respect** for you and what you have to say.

-Jesus made this **crystal** clear in his command: **Do for others what you would want them to do for you**. We've talked about this, right? That if you want people to **believe** the Good News--you have to **be** Good News.

b. Now, **this** is where we find ourselves in a discussion about all religions basically teaching the same thing. Oprah, the great western theologian, put it like this: **Actually there are many diverse paths leading to God**. First, it's quite condescending and smug to **say** something like that.

-The parable of the blind men and the elephant is a little like someone saying. "Stop squabbling like little kids! You're all blind, but fortunately, you have **ME** here! See, I'm not **BLIND**—like you—and I that you're actually all touching part of the same elephant!"

c. Second, when someone says that **all** religions are different paths to the same God—it shows that they honestly don't know what different religions actually believe. Hinduism believes in a multitude of gods--not One. Buddhism isn't about God at all--and doesn't actually believe in a God. Scientology believes that if we follow L. Ron Hubbard's teachings, **we** become gods.

-Jesus told his followers to care for the poor--that when we do that we're doing it for Him. Hinduism says that to help the poor disrupts the process of karma in their lives. Some forms of Islam say it's okay to murder your son or daughter if they shame the family. New Age teaches that all is god, that we are god--and god is all.

-When someone says that **all** religions lead to God, to they include fertility cults who believe in temple prostitution? And what about David Koresh and the Branch Davidians? Or Jim Jones who took his people to Guyana and committed mass suicide? What about religions from the past—as in the Old Testament where parents would place their child in the red-hot hands of Molech and beat drums to drown out their screams?

-Are **all** of these religions simply diverse ways to God? Or is it only the **major** religions that are right? And who **decides**? You see where this goes, don't you?

5. Here's what I know; if you study the core documents of most religions, you find that they teach some things that are true. Now, **here's** the real question: What are they trying to solve? What are they trying to do? There are fundamental differences even there.

-Some are trying to help people to be better people and do the right kinds of things to get them to Paradise or keep them out of hell. Some want to help people make it into a better reincarnation. Some religions want to help people become one with the Divine, or find good luck, or discover the secrets of the universe. Some promise to help humans **become** God. Others claim to help people come to a place of total peace with **no** desires—good or bad. Can you become a **better** person through most religions and their belief systems? Probably. But is **that the point**?

- a. Why would Jesus be the only way to God? Well, at the core of the Christian faith is the fact that this is what Jesus claimed for **Himself**. I'll tell you why. Historically the Bible says that the core problem of life, of relational chaos, of hatred, of greed, of murder, of meaninglessness, of sickness and hopelessness--of every mess on this planet--is **sin**.

-And as part of the story of origins in Genesis, we are told that God created everything good, then created us in **His** image--which is why we have a conscience that tells us what is right--**and** what is wrong. Being created in **His** image declares our value; that we are not just His little underlings that He kicks around--but **image-bearers**.

- b. But what happens next in this story of origins makes sense of **why** we are in the mess we're in; why we **know** what is right--but can't seem to do it--and **know** what is wrong but do it anyway. Our rebellion broke the natural relationship and connection we have with God.

-The prophets--over thousands of years--said that someone would be sent to save us and save everything. He would be the **Messiah** or **Anointed King**. The prophets **also** said he would suffer for **our** sins and give his life for us.

6. What this really boils down to is...**Is Jesus who He claimed to be?** If HE is--it's a game changer. If He is--this isn't really about religion at all--it's about people trying to find peace and be better people and trying to find a way to paradise or nirvana or heaven or a better reincarnation--and God declaring it all to be unnecessary.

-Do you see it? Religion is mostly about people trying to please God—or appease Him, and have better lives. What **Jesus** revealed through His life and teaching is that God loves us--accepts us **just as we are**--and then begins to change us and free us and fill us with life, peace and hope.

-On their own, Jesus' claims to be God are **outrageous**. Yet He didn't just **say** stuff--he backed it up by doing things only God could do. He healed every disease that was brought to him, raised the dead--and then, himself, walked out of the grave three days after being crucified because He claimed to be God.

-Every one of his closest followers died claiming that He was Lord—and walked out of a grave eternally alive three days after He's been publicly executed.

**C.S. Lewis**, a brilliant professor at Cambridge who used to be an atheist said that Jesus was either **mad, bad, or God**:

*"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."*

- a. On the final night of his life as He was preparing his inner circle for his what would happen the next day—Jesus told them that He would prepare a place for them.

**Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:5-6 NIV)**

-Now, I want you to notice something about Jesus' comment here to Thomas—the sceptic in his group. Jesus didn't say, "I'm **one of** the ways to the Father." He said, **I am THE way**. That, friends, is about as exclusive as it gets. If Jesus was just a human who couldn't pull this off—he was a liar.

-And just in case he is misunderstood, He adds this; **No one comes to the Father except through me**. What's fascinating about Jesus is that He compares building your life on any other teaching but his as building on sand; that when the storms of life come, your life will collapse.

-But unlike **any other teacher or prophet or guru or wise man**—Jesus never taught that the way to life was by following all the rules and wisdom He laid out. Contrary to what you hear, Jesus didn't come to just help the world be a more loving place. He came to **save** the world—and **save** everyone in it. Ravi Zacharias says: **Jesus didn't come to make bad people good; He came to make dead people live!**

-Specifically--He came to face and deal with the core issue behind all pain and brokenness; Sin. He laid his life down to mend the broken relationship we have with God that creates so much sadness and confusion.

- b. Let's talk about truth for a minute. If you need surgery—and it's a life or death matter—would it be **loving** for a surgeon to say, "You'll be just fine. Just be **positive!**" No, you want a surgeon to say, "This is the problem; if you do nothing—you'll **die!** So, I'm going to go after it aggressively. It may be painful for a while—but you'll live!"

-According to Jesus, the sin problem that is wrecking everything is **so** severe that the **only** way to solve it was for Him, God, to step out of heaven. By becoming a man, we would know what God is **really** like—and his death and resurrection would actually defeat the power of death.

- c. You understand this, right? It's not prophets giving us a list of things to **get to God**—it's **God coming to us to bring us to Him**. If that's **not** true—then Jesus needs to be dismissed from **every** list of options. If it's **not** true, then religion really is a big crap shoot. So choose your drug of choice—religion, philosophy, education, pleasure, sex, accumulation; it **really** doesn't matter, cause we all end the same. **Dead!**

-But if what Jesus said **is** real and true—then the **worst thing for him to say would be**, "Hey, it's all good. Just do whatever you want—and it'll be fine!" But that's not what He said. His specific words recorded by eyewitnesses who knew Him were: **I AM THE TRUTH!** Notice that He didn't say, "I'm teaching the truth"—He said, **I AM the truth! And that means that everyone has to decide if they'll believe Him. Or not!**

- d. What we're looking for is **LIFE**. We all want to **be** alive. We all want to **feel** alive. We all want to **be** life-givers and life-bringers. We want **life** in our relational world; we want **life** in our spirit. And when **this** life is over—our hope is that **life and love continue**. And we love this home of ours, planet earth—and want to know that everything will once again be beautiful and whole.

-Jesus said that when we believe in Him—and let His Spirit fill our empty, selfish hearts--life starts **now**. The forgiveness Jesus died to give us—starts **now**. The ability to love God and others—starts **now**. The ability to make a difference—and live in a meaningful way—starts **now**.

-Down inside we start to feel the stirrings of forgiveness, of transformation, of peace and joy—it's called **HOPE!** Our lifetime is a gift to figure this out. The question is: Is this **hope** or **hype?** What do **you** think? I've been following Jesus now for over 40 years—and I'm telling you—it's **real!**

7. What Jesus said to Thomas that Thursday night seemed to be dashed to pieces the next day. It clearly **looked** like it was all over.

A lot of fake Messiahs had been nailed to crosses and left them there to die. Thomas, the key sceptic in the group—who **never** doubted his doubts, would never trust Jesus again after this experience.

Then:

**A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:26-28 NIV)**

-You get what he’s saying, don’t you? He’s saying, “I get it now! You’re the **I AM behind everything!** You were telling the truth! And Jesus says, “Because you’ve seen—you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen—yet believe!

- a. Remember the parable of the blind men and the elephant? Know where that story comes from? India—the birthplace of the idea that there are **many** paths to God.

-And it was **Thomas** who went to India to tell them the Good News. There are **not** many paths to God; but **Jesus** has made a way for all people--no matter who they are or what they’ve done—or what traditions they’ve always believed. And for telling them the truth, Thomas was speared to death.

- b. All religions do have one thing in common; they people things to do, to believe—ceremonies, rituals--that will help people please God and get what they need from Him. Religion is **always** spelled **D-O**. Get on **that** treadmill, you’ll never know if you’ve done enough.
- c. Here’s the problem: Life is about relationships—not performance. And that’s **profoundly** true at the spiritual level. Remember Jesus words? All God wants is summed up as, **Love God. Love others**. And when relationships get broken—you mend them right away. God knew we’d mess around with stuff that would make us look better, so **He** took the initiative and made a way.
- d. He didn’t just send a messenger. **He** came. “**If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the FATHER!**” And then He humbled himself and died for his enemies.

**-That’s what God is like!** His plan for us and for everything is **shalom!** Not just peace—but things **as they ought to be**. To do that, God needs our permission to stay with us, change our hearts and truly make us His own. But this happens through Jesus—and no one else. **Jesus** is the way, the truth, and the life! **Christianity is spelled D-O-N-E!**

8. Let me say a few things in closing. First, when someone says, **There are many paths to God**—that is a **truth** claim that they believe is superior to and better for the world than what I’ve been saying—that God has made a way through Jesus. You’re **free** to believe that.

**My** question is this: which **exclusive truth claims** lead to you and I becoming the people we want to become?

-We believe in a God who made everything—and is sovereign over it all. But He is more kind, loving and compassionate than **anyone** could ever imagine. We believe and serve a God who stepped **out** of Heaven—and humbled **Himself**—and entered **our** pain, **our** mess, **our** sorrow. His name is Jesus.

-We follow someone who, yes, pointed to people's sins and said, "This is what is making your life hell and creating pain for others! But if you **come**—I'll forgive!" And then He went to a cross so that **everyone** had a chance at LIFE!

-See, the conversation is not about **whose** views are exclusive. They all are—from Buddhism to Islam to secularism. Let's talk about **whose** exclusive views lead you to be humble and to **serve** your opponents?

\*Let's talk about which set of exclusive beliefs will lead to peace on this earth? At the heart of my exclusive beliefs is a man extending peace to—and dying for his enemies; it's a man loving people who don't love him.

\*At the heart of my exclusive beliefs is the fact that I'm a sinner—saved only by the grace of God. That doesn't make me **better** than others; in fact, I actually **expect** that some people who don't believe as I do will be morally superior to me, because I'm saved **only** by grace, not by how good I am.

\*At the heart of my exclusive beliefs is a message that humbles me before people who don't believe what I believe—and a message that makes me want to serve them because Jesus, the One I follow, died forgiving his enemies and washing the feet of the one who betrayed Him.

\*At the very core of my beliefs is a God who made **everything** good—and has a plan to make it **all** good again—using me, of all people, as one of his **millions** of followers who will be a part of the process—and live forever to enjoy it when it's complete.

\*I follow someone who will **not** allow me to me to trample on others--but who calls me to show **respect** to them, no matter what their view of goodness or faith or reality is. So I'm going to love them and, if I get a chance after listening to them--share the truth that has **changed my life!**

- a. So, here's the deal. Let me say this first to those of you who have been saying, **YES! I follow Jesus too!** Our calling is not to come to others of different faiths and philosophies with a need to be right—and prove that others who disagree are wrong. We come with humility as Jesus did—not to condemn the world, but to help set it right.

-We come simply as recipients of the **gift** of life. We are **not** ethically superior to others; we are simply grace and forgiveness receivers—who have become grace and forgiveness givers. **Humility and love**—is **Jesus'** way.

- b. You may find yourself, this morning, as someone who is **really** sceptical of anyone who says, “Every religion and philosophy is a symbol of our feeble attempts as humans to find their **own** way to God, to peace, to life. **We** couldn’t make a way, so **God** stepped in and made one!”

-If you find that hard to believe—and I understand why you do—why not at least investigate it historically. Why not start with Jesus—who He claimed to be—and whether or not his life and resurrection, as recorded in history, backs up His claims? What do you have to lose?

-I’ll tell you why I say that. I think you’ll run out of time—and life—before you can explore every path. Why not start with someone who rose from the dead and has changed history more than anyone else?

-Why not at **least** check out Someone who had a plan to fill the world—and it’s people—with peace—and is at work right now making it happen? Why not at **least** check out One who split history in half—and changed **every institution**? **Why not?**