

EXPLORE GOD: IS CHRISTIANITY TOO NARROW?

Scripture used: [John 14:6 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This is the fifth sermon in the Explore God series, and tries to answer a very common question amongst believers and non-believers alike. A major objection to the Christian faith is the sense that Christianity is too narrow or too exclusive; how can any faith claim to be the only way to God? In this message, we look at the ways that the Christian faith is uniquely inclusive, and how Jesus is able to authentically bring together both a necessary “narrowness” and a broad welcome to all.

KEY POINTS

Christianity points us to a relationship with Jesus - more than a religion. There are four key elements to this:

- **Jesus’ divinity makes Him pivotal.** His claim that He is the way to the Father has to be taken literally, because if Jesus is truly from God and the full expression of God, then Jesus has unique authority to indicate the way to God. The good news is that because of Jesus, we know that God looks for us; we don’t have to look for Him. In fact, Jesus not only looks for us, but Jesus sacrifices for us. John 3:16: “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son.” This is the path to grace and eternal life. It can be challenging to receive such a huge gift, see especially [Ephesians 2:8](#).
- **Sheer grace is the most inclusive approach to redemption.** We can look at some religions as addition: do more good deeds; engage in more rituals. Or subtraction: do less bad stuff; remove oneself from the public space to withdraw from temptation. Or knowledge: try to overcome all illusions and achieve enlightenment. Tim Keller pointed out that all these approaches are flawed, because they are hostage to the inequity of ability. Only sheer grace works. Only sheer grace includes everyone.
- **Jesus was a paradox in His historical time, as he narrowed in on those most needing salvation.** See [Matthew 7:13-14](#). “Narrow” is often equated with narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and bigotry. But it doesn’t have to have this negative connotation. “Narrow” can also be positive in a different sense: focused, faithful (marriage), accurate (health diagnosis and treatment). See [Matthew 9:10-11](#): the Pharisees were upset with Jesus because he was eating with people whom they considered “scum.” Yet, it is true that the people who were eating with Jesus had caused pain and hardship to others; there was a reason they were outcasts. Ultimately, Jesus’ radical inclusiveness means there is plenty of room for repentance and forgiveness; Jesus desires to engage with everyone with full knowledge and a ready, transforming grace.
- **Jesus promises to be available to everyone.** [Luke 15:2](#) - Jesus said it’s not the healthy who need care, it’s the sick. Early Christians flocked to the church because of its generosity, its elevating people (including women and the poor), and its diversity. It operated very differently, even scandalously, compared to most organizations in the Roman Empire. The church was open to others. It ran on Jesus’ mandate of unconditional and fully-informed love. It was not merely tolerant, but it was active in love. People found purpose and meaning from focusing on others – not constantly taking from the world, but giving wholeheartedly.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What is your personal feeling about the “exclusivity” of Christianity? How do you understand Jesus’ claim that He is the “way, the truth, and the life” as it says in [John 14:6](#)? How do you determine the difference between something that needs to be narrow or exclusive (like the right treatment for an illness) versus something that is truly up for a variety of opinions where there is no right or wrong?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [John 14:6](#). What is the significance of the three facets of Jesus’ claim that he is the “way”, the “truth”, and the “life”. As you think about the life of Jesus, what do you think about how Jesus offers a different way to live that makes a difference both in this life and in eternity? As you think about the apparent “narrowness” of Christianity, how do you reconcile it with the radical inclusivity of the huge variety of people from all different walks of life who were drawn to Jesus?
- 3) **DO** - Take some time this week to reflect on the personal invitation that Jesus gives to you to be in relationship with Him. If Christianity seems to be “narrow”, in reality it is not too narrow to extend the offer of grace to each and every person, which includes you. Engage with God about his offer of grace. Join us next Sunday as we conclude our Explore God message series.