

# Confronting Christianity

## Week #8

### Small Group Notes

#### Introduction:

Ice breaker: What would you tell someone that says, “That may be your truth, but all views are equally valid”? Explain.

*This week we are going to look at a tricky topic: The exclusivity of Christ vs religious pluralism. The criticism says, “How can there only be one way to God? There must be many ways to God. Christianity is just one of them.” Claiming biblical truth in a culture that denies objective truth is difficult. Jesus Himself understood this when he provocatively proclaimed, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).*

#### Discuss:

1. John 14:1-14

Explain: *Jesus had just told his disciples that He was going to leave them (13:33). They were troubled because they did not understand what lay before them. However, God's control over the future should have had a comforting and strengthening effect on them. Here in this passage, Jesus firmly establishes his identity and his relation to God the Father, which serves to explain not only the path he must take, but also the path his disciples will follow. In this well-known “I am” statement by Jesus, the entire force of the Gospel lands powerfully on his person and work. The disciples—and the readers—are encouraged to consider the magnitude of the person and work of Jesus, in order that they may find their true rest (v. 1) true home (v. 2–3) and their true work (v. 12–15).*

Ask: 2-3 Discussion questions related to the content.

- ❖ **Why is Christianity exclusive? What is problematic about people who say that all faiths should “coexist”?**
- ❖ **Do you think Christians are closed-minded? Why or why not?**
  - *Is believing that 2+2=4 closed-minded? There is such a thing as objective truth.*
- ❖ **[Look back at John 13.] What reasons might the disciples have had to be troubled? What fears do you have in life right now?**

- ❖ **What is Jesus' answer to those fears (14:1)?**
  - He tells his disciples to “believe” (have faith in) God and also Himself. This is a bold claim. Jesus is equating himself to God.
- ❖ **What do other religions and belief systems say about Jesus? Where do they place their faith?**
  - That he was just a man, just a teacher, etc.
- ❖ **(Have a volunteer read v.2-5) What is Thomas really asking here? What does he want Jesus to tell him?**
  - *In the context, “my Father’s house” refers to heaven so Thomas is in essence asking, “How does one get to heaven?”*
- ❖ **How is Jesus' answer different from how any other religion answers the question, “How do I get to heaven?”**
  - (“Do” vs. “done.”) / (“Complete objectives” vs. “Know a person.”)
  - *Jesus was not saying that He was one way to God among many.*
- ❖ **(Have a volunteer read (v.6-7). What does it mean that Jesus is the Way? Truth? Life?**
  - *By boldly affirming these three categories, Jesus fulfills the three main offices God provided for his covenant people: prophet, priest, and king.*
    - **As prophet**, Jesus is the truth of the Father—he is the Word made flesh, the final word God has spoken to his people (Heb. 1:2).
    - **As priest**, Jesus is the way to the Father—he is both the sacrifice for our sins and the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12:24).
    - **As king**, Jesus is the life from the sovereign giver of life, the eternal Father—who gives life now and in the coming age for eternity (Heb. 6:5).
- ❖ **How might Jesus' claim in (v.6) been received by people during Jesus' day?**
  - *When Jesus made these claims, he was not just telling people that they ought to believe in him to be saved. (Though that is true) Those words meant so much more the Jews of his day. **Jesus was again claiming to be God** using OT references.*
    - **God shows the way to live.** Jews often referred to Torah (God's decrees and instructions) as *The Way*. “Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave” (Exodus 18:20).

- **God is the standard, the author, and the giver of truth.** "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is the truth" (Psalm 119:142)
  - **God is the author of all life.** "Love the Lord your God, obey his voice and hold fast to him, for he is your life and length of days..." (Deuteronomy 30:20)
- ❖ **How might Jesus' claim at the end of (v.7) been received by people during Jesus' day? Why?**
  - His statement "you do know Him and have seen Him" must have been staggering to the disciples.
    - The Jews taught that no one had seen God at any time (see John 1:18).
    - The Greeks claimed that God was invisible.
    - But Jesus asserted that if anyone knew Him and saw Him, that person had known God and seen God.
- ❖ **What is so offensive about Jesus' statement of exclusivity today?**
  - *It highlights our incorrect views. No one likes to be told that they are wrong.*
  - *It highlights our inadequacy. No one likes to be told that they are bad/evil. It means that in God's eyes, we're not good enough, not competent enough, and can never muster enough merit on our own. We are sinners. We need a savior. We need help.*
- ❖ **Do you feel that what Jesus said in (v.6) is narrow and limited, or do you feel it is freeing? Share why.**
- ❖ **How is the gospel inclusive?**
- ❖ **In John 10, Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." What do you think Jesus meant by "life to the full"?**

#### **Application:**

- ❖ **How would you respond to someone who says, "There are many ways to God"? What would you say to someone of a different faith?**
- ❖ **What might you need to do to be more prepared to speak to someone of a different faith?**

**Close: How can we be praying for one another? How can we encourage one another this week?**