

ONE WAY?

I. Introduction:

The most common objection to Christianity today is that the Gospel is exclusive. It claims to be the only true way to know God. The implication is that other ways are false. Many find this highly offensive and label those who hold such views as **arrogant, hateful, fanatical** and **narrow-minded!** When people hear such claims, they often respond with the following arguments¹:

A. *"All religions are the same, deep down."*

Many assert that all religions teach essentially the same thing. They differ only in their rituals and external forms. But just **the opposite** is true. People who pretend otherwise simply reveal their ignorance or their willingness to promote a lie. Chesterton makes the observation that dubbing a knight with sword and decapitating a man's head are similar actions. But though the action may appear similar, the results are very different!

B. *"How can you be so arrogant? All roads lead to God... some just get there quicker."*

God is sometimes compared to a mountain and the different religions are different paths toward the summit. How arrogant and narrow-minded it is to pretend that only one path reaches the destination. But the basic assumption behind this analogy is that religion is man's search for God not **God's search for man**. If we made the road, then it would indeed be arrogant to claim that our road is the only one that gets you to the top.

But if God made the road, we must find out whether he made many or one. If he made only one, then the shoe is on the other foot: it is humility, not arrogance, to accept this one road from God, and it is arrogance, not humility, to insist that our man-made roads are as good as God's God-made one. (Kreeft, *Fundamentals*, p. 77).

C. *"Each religion sees only part of the total truth. None can see the whole truth."*

Like the blind men and the elephant, people examine God and come away with different impressions (a rope, a wall, a snake, etc.). This analogy is correct in teaching that men are spiritually blind. But it fails to communicate Christianity's most startling claim: the elephant **speaks!** If the elephant says, "I am an elephant," then there is no more need for guessing.

D. *"It fosters religious imperialism and elitism to insist that your way is the only way."*

But imperialism and elitism have nothing to do with it. Christians did not invent the Gospel, they **received** it. They believe Jesus is the only way, not because they are imperialistic or elitist, but because this is what Jesus taught.

E. *"If Jesus is the source of this doctrine, then what an ego-maniac he must have been!"*

But this objection assumes that Jesus is **just a man**, like Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed. Yes, a man making such claims would indeed have been arrogant. But what if Jesus was more than a man? What if he was simply telling the truth about his identity?

¹ A distillation of the thoughts of Peter Kreeft (*Fundamentals of the Faith*, pp. 74-80) and Tim Keller (*The Reason for God*, pp. 3-21).

F. *"But this is so intolerant. I thought Christianity was the religion of love."*

It is! But it is also the religion of **truth**. One separates truth and love at great peril. The Gospel emphasizes both and encourages its adherents to always "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

G. *"But all God really expects of us is sincerity."*

Really? How do you know this? The assumption behind this objection is that there is no **objective truth** in religion, only subjective sincerity. Is sincerity all you expect from your surgeon? Or your airline pilot? It is possible to be sincerely wrong.

H. *"Doesn't this mean, then, that all non-Christians are damned?"*

There are no innocent pagans. There are no innocent Christians either. Everyone needs a Savior. And Christ is the only one! God is just. We need never fear that someone will be treated unfairly at the final judgment. Each one will be judged according to **the light he has received**. (Romans 1-2)

II. The Scandal of the Gospel.

A. Stone of Stumbling or Cornerstone?

² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴ And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who **is not offended by me**." (Matthew 11:2-6. ESV)

The Greek word here is SCANDALIZO, the origin of our word "scandalize." It describes an action that is offensive, scandalous; one that causes someone to stumble or even fall. Jesus is saying there is something about him and his message that is potentially so offensive it will cause many to **turn away**. Other places in Scripture also speak of this reality.

- ⁵⁴ and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they **took offense** at him. (Matthew 13:54-57)
- Jesus said to them, "You will all **fall away** because of me this night. (Matthew 26:31)
- As it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of **offense**; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (Romans 9:33)

The Gospel makes clear that ultimately there are two, and only two, responses to Jesus:

- 1) Embrace him in faith as the **cornerstone** (Ephesians 2:20), the foundation (I Corinthians 3:11), the Rock (Psalm 18:2).
- 2) Reject him in disbelief as a **stumbling stone** and a rock of offense (Romans 9:33; I Peter 2:8).

B. The politically incorrect Jesus.

But what is it that is so offensive, so scandalous about Jesus?

- 1) The scandal of his **lavish love**.

When Jesus came to his home town and preached, all spoke well of him (Luke 4:22) until he spoke about God's love for Gentiles and the marginalized.

*²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah...
²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of **Sidon**, to a woman who was a **widow**.²⁷ And there were many **lepers** in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the **Syrian**.²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away. (Luke 4:25-30)*

Jesus loved the "wrong people." His love reached out to sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, lepers, and other races. He was a "**friend of sinners**." (Luke 7:34) Many found this scandalous and highly offensive. Such lavish love caused them to stumble.

- 2) The scandal of his **shameful death**.

When Jesus first began to teach his disciples about the cross, they were scandalized! "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." (Matthew 16:22) A crucified Messiah? God on a cross? Many stumbled at this. Many still do.

- *For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a **stumbling block** to Jews and folly to Gentiles... (I Corinthians 1:22-23)*
- *But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the **offense** of the cross has been removed. (Galatians 5:11)*

- 3) The scandal of his **outrageous claims**.

The most scandalous thing about Jesus was not his life of love or his death on a cross but the claims that he made about his own identity. Many stumbled when they became aware of who he claimed to be!

- a. He claimed that the Scriptures (Old Testament) **spoke about him**.

³⁹ *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, (John 5:39)*

- b. He claimed to be the one who would **judge the world**.

²⁵ *Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. (John 5:25-27)*

- c. He claimed to be able to give **eternal life**.

- ¹⁴ *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)*

- ³³ *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life..." (John 6:33-35)*

- ¹⁰ *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)*

- ²⁵ *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. (John 11:25-26)*

- d. He claimed to be able to **forgive sins**.

³ *And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins **but God alone?**" (Mark 2:3-7)*

- e. He claimed that his body and blood were **real food**.

⁵³ *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life... ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink... ⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you **take offense** at this? ⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. (John 6:53-55, 60-61, 66)*

f. He claimed to be equal with God.

- ¹⁸ *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:18)*
- ⁵¹ *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.* ⁵² *The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'* ⁵³ *Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"...* ⁵⁶ *Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.* ⁵⁷ *So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"* ⁵⁸ *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."* ⁵⁹ *So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. (John 8:51-53, 56-59)*
- ²⁴ *So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."* ²⁵ *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me...."* ³⁰ *I and the Father are one."* ³¹ *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.* ³² *Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"* ³³ *The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." (John 10:24-25, 30-33)*
- *Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"* ⁶² *And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* ⁶³ *And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need?"* ⁶⁴ *You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. (Mark 14:61-64).*

g. He accepted worship.

- ¹¹ *And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)*
- ³² *And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.* ³³ *And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:32-33)*
- ³⁵ *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"* ³⁶ *He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"* ³⁷ *Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."* ³⁸ *He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:35-38)*

h. He claimed to be **the only way** to God.

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." ⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has **seen the Father**... (John 14:6-9)

He could have so easily removed the offense and been so much less scandalous if he had only said: *I am a way, a truth, and a life. One of the ways to come to the Father is through me...* There is nothing comparable to this in other religions! C. S. Lewis states the issue clearly.

If you had gone to Buddha and asked him "Are you the son of Bramah?" he would have said, "My son, you are still in the vale of illusion." If you had gone to Socrates and asked, "Are you Zeus?" he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, "Are you Allah?" he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, "Are you Heaven?", I think he would have probably replied, "Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste." The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man.... We may note in passing that He was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects - Hatred - Terror - Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval. (*God in the Dock*. Chapter 19. "What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?" pp. 157f.)

4) The scandal of his **followers**.

The offense of the Gospel **spread** from Jesus to his followers. Those who believe that Jesus is the only way and especially those who preach such a message should expect the same reception that Jesus received.

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of **my name**, because they do not know him who sent me. (John 15:18-21)

The thing the world finds so offensive about Christians is not their morality, worldview, or even their religion. The thing about Christians that scandalizes others is that we dare to name "**the Name**"... the name of Jesus. After Peter and John had healed the crippled beggar, they were called before the Sanhedrin for questioning.

⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what **name** did you do this?"⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the **name** of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is **no other name** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."¹³ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another,¹⁴ saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it."¹⁵ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this **name**.¹⁶ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the **name** of Jesus.¹⁷ But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,¹⁸ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:7-20)

The Name of Jesus is like no other. No one can remain neutral before this name. It is either loved and cherished or hated and vilified. His name will be a cornerstone for some and a stumbling stone for others.

If you confess at a fashionable cocktail party that you are plotting to overthrow the government, or that you are a PLO terrorist or a KGB spy, or that you molest porcupines or bite bats' heads off, you will soon attract a buzzing, fascinated, sympathetic circle of listeners. But if you confess that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, you will find yourself suddenly alone, with a distinct chill in the air. (*Fundamentals of the Faith*. Peter Kreeft. p. 74)

TABLE TALK

1. Jesus was politically incorrect. What does this tell you about Jesus? What does this tell you about our culture?
2. Look again at some of the eight common arguments (pages 1-2) our world today gives when they hear Christians claim that Jesus is the only way. Which of the arguments do you find it most easy to identify with? Why?
3. Give an example of a time when you discovered how scandalous and offensive the exclusive claims of Christ are in our world today.
4. Have you found it difficult to name the Name? When? What happened?
5. Look again at the claims of Christ on pages 3-6. Try to picture yourself living in first century Judea. How would you have responded to someone who made such claims?

III. Who do you say that he is?

A. The theological importance of the question.

Jesus made it clear that the question of his identity was central. There is no question in the Gospel more important than this!

*¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But **who do you say that I am?**" (Matthew 16:13-15)*

Everything hinges on how this question is answered. **Everything!**

B. So who is he? There are only five possible answers.

Peter Kreeft (*Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, pp. 158-171.) says there are logically only five possible ways to answer the question "Who is Jesus?"

- 1) **Liar**. Perhaps Jesus was a con artist. He knew he wasn't the Son of God but decided to trick people into believing that he was.

Problems with this theory:

- Jesus just doesn't fit the psychological profile of a con artist.
- Jesus was a good man. Even his enemies concede this. But someone who intentionally lies about his identity is not a good man.
- Jesus taught that it is important to tell the truth. And yet if he knowingly lied about his identity, then it is difficult to explain his ethical teaching.
- Jesus was crucified because he claimed to be the Son of God. Would he have died for a lie? What did he gain by dying?
- Many today want to say that Jesus was indeed a good man but he was not God. But how can a liar be good? Especially a liar who claims to be God!

- 2) **Lunatic**. Perhaps Jesus sincerely believed he was indeed the Son of God but alas, he was mistaken. Psychiatric hospitals are full of people who are mistaken about their identity. Perhaps Jesus was mentally unstable and deeply confused. This would not make him wicked, but it would make him **unworthy of trust**.

Problems with this theory:

- Jesus just doesn't fit the psychological profile of a lunatic.
- Persons with psychiatric problems related to identity are typically characterized by egotism, narcissism, predictability, inflexibility, dullness, and an inability to truly love other people. Jesus was not like this at all!
- It is incomprehensible that lunacy could have transformed so many millions of lives for the better over the centuries.

Again, no one has stated the argument more cogently than C. S. Lewis.

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 a 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. (*Mere Christianity*, pp. 40f.)

- 3) **Myth**. Perhaps it wasn't Jesus who was mistaken about his identity. Perhaps the real culprits are the disciples. Maybe they **conspired** together and made up the whole story including the part about Jesus claiming to be God. Mythology accounts for appearances of gods in other religions. Perhaps this is how to "explain" those passages where Jesus claims to be God.

Problems with this theory:

- The New Testament documents do not have the character of myth but of history. Much of it has the feel of a genuine eye-witness description.
- The story of Jesus was recorded a very short time after the events they claim to recount. Usually myths develop many generations later.
- If the Jesus story is a myth, then who invented it, and what possible motive would they have had? What gain was there in promoting a story like this?
- Jews were not prone to myth-telling or believing in myths. How, then, did the myth gain such acceptance among Jews so quickly?
- The New Testament is explicit: *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* (II Peter 1:16)

- 4) **Guru**. Maybe Jesus claimed to be God but never intended to be taken literally. Rather, he wanted people to understand his claims in terms of **eastern mysticism**. Jesus had achieved a state of higher consciousness, enlightenment. He discovered that he was part of the Divine.

Problems with this theory:

- Jesus was a Jew! The Jewish faith makes no room for pantheistic notions of enlightenment.
- To imagine Jesus as an Eastern mystic demands that one either ignore the way the New Testament describes him or resort to other sources for information about him (Gnostic gospels, fictional accounts, historical revisionism, etc.).
- If Jesus was in fact a guru, he failed completely in teaching Eastern thought to his followers!
- The number of doctrines that Eastern gurus typically hold that are in flat contradiction to Jewish-Christian teaching are almost too numerous to mention: pantheism, an impersonal "God," the cyclical nature of time, good and evil are illusory, the elimination of the self, universalism, many paths to God, etc.

- 5) **Lord**. Having eliminated the possibility that Jesus might be a liar, lunatic, myth or guru, we have only one option left: Jesus was who he claimed to be! No one says it better than C. S. Lewis.

There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at burglars hush suddenly: was that a *real* footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion ("Man's search for God!") suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? We never meant it to come to *that!* Worse still, supposing He had found us? (*Miracles*, pp. 96f.)

That moment came for Thomas when the risen Christ appeared to him showing his hands and side. Thomas' response was immediate.

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:27-29)

IV. Why, then, would anyone reject Christ?

Almost no one rejects the Gospel for purely intellectual reasons. The real reason is usually something related more to the heart than to the head. The problem is most often in **the will**, not in the intellect. It is not that we can't believe, but rather that we won't.

*Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still **would not** believe in him.... (John 12:37. NIV).*

A person who is going to effectively promote the Gospel is going to have to do more than answer intellectual questions. He is also going to have to address the deeper **sticking points** that make faith impossible.

- A. **Emotional wounds.** Emotional barriers to faith include things like an abusive father, unanswered prayers, the death of a loved one, or some other traumatic loss. Where was God? How could God allow such a thing to happen? The argument is best summed up by the plaintive cry of a woman who asks, "How can I believe in a God who let my baby die?"
- B. **Moral choices.** Believing in Christ necessitates a change in morals. Some people simply do not want to change their lifestyle and so choose a life of unbelief. The issue here is not that someone can't believe. They don't want to! This barrier to faith is sometimes uncovered by asking the question: "Is there something in your life that you're afraid you'll have to give up if you become a follower of Jesus Christ?"

*And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people **loved the darkness** rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (John 3:19-20).*

Aldous Huxley was at least honest enough to admit that his atheism was rooted in his immorality. "I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning.... We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom" (quoted in Strobel, *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary*, p. 113).

- C. **Public opinion.** Many refuse to believe because the cost in popular opinion is simply too great. Such people prefer man's opinion to God's. They refuse to believe in God for fear that they would be ostracized or labeled "weird."
- *How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God. (John 5:44).*
 - *For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10).*
- D. **Other Christians.** The cause of unbelief for many is not Christianity, but Christians! I think it was Frederick Nietzsche who said, "If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you are going to have to look a bit more redeemed!"
- E. **Pride.** Many refuse to believe because they do not want to give up control. Faith in Christ means bending the knee and acknowledging that Jesus is Lord. This requires humility. William Ernest Henley's poem *Invictus* captures the arrogance of unbelief.

It matters not how straight the gate
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

- V. The chicken and the egg: faith and reason.

Which comes first: reason or faith? Do I believe because I understand? Or do I understand because I believe? The Bible insists that the real battle is not in the intellect but in the will.

*If anyone's will is to **do God's will**, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. (John 7:17).*

TABLE TALK

1. Why is it impossible to claim Jesus was a good man but was not divine?
2. Discuss John 7:17. Why do you think the lesson ends with this verse?
3. What was your biggest sticking point in coming to faith? Intellectual questions? Emotional wounds? Moral choices? Public opinion? Other Christians? Pride? Fear? Explain.
4. Think of someone you know who is an unbeliever. What is their sticking point? Is the barrier to faith intellectual? or emotional? What could you do to be a more effective witness?
5. Who do you say Jesus is?

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