

## HOW TO GET TO GOD

## John 14:5-6

*Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." – John 14:5-6*

The Gospel of John records seven important statements Jesus made about himself. John 6:35: *"I am the bread of life."* John 8:12: *"I am the light of the world."* John 10:9: *"I am the door."* John 10:11: *"I am the good shepherd."* John 11:25: *"I am the resurrection and the life."* John 15:1: *"I am the true vine."* And our text, John 14:6: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* These self-descriptive statements strategically alluded to the covenant name with which the Lord revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. Exodus 3:14 records that the Lord responded to Moses' question, *"What is your name?"* by saying: "I AM WHO I AM." These "I am" statements of Jesus were very controversial, because in making them Jesus clearly identified himself with God. Centuries later, the controversy remains. John 14:6 is the most controversial, offensive, and unpopular of them all.

The scene is THE UPPER ROOM. It is the last meal Jesus will have with his disciples before his crucifixion. He would be arrested just hours after the conclusion of this supper. This is the last opportunity the Lord had to instruct and encourage his disciples before he would be taken away from them. In John 14:1-4, Jesus says: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."* The disciples were trouble, confused, and overwhelmed by the idea of Jesus going away. To comfort them, Jesus said, *"You know where I am going. And you know how to get there."* This did not comfort the disciples. In verse 5, Thomas said, *"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* The Lord answered: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

This statement is the Lord's response to Thomas' question, *"How can we know the way to the place where you are going?"* Jesus did not show the way. He did not proclaim the truth. And he did not teach them how to live. Jesus declares himself to be the personification of the way and truth and life of God. In essence, Jesus said, *"You don't need to know the way to God. You know me!"* Just in case they missed the point, he restated it in the bluntest of terms: *"No one comes to the Father except through me."* If believing Jesus is the only way to God is intolerant, then Jesus himself is intolerant. He is the one who said it first. In so doing, Jesus answered the question of how a person can establish a personal relationship with God the Father. Let me give it to you in five words: JESUS ONLY AND ONLY JESUS. John 14:8-9 says, *"Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the and it is enough for us.'" 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. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"*

- To know Jesus is to know God.
- To believe in Jesus is to believe in God.
- To receive Jesus is to receive God.
- To hate Jesus is to hate God.
- To honor Jesus is to honor God.

Jesus is the only way to God. Every person who goes any other way is a lost person who needs to find the way, a deceived person who needs to know the truth, a dead person who needs to receive the life. In short, everybody needs Jesus! Here are four reasons everyone should embrace Christianity's claim that Jesus is the only way to God.

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## **I. IT IS AN *EXCLUSIVE* CLAIM.**

Every life is a spiritual journey that is only successful if God is the destination. There is no more important question than this: "If God is real, how do I get to him?" Proverbs 14:12 warns: *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* In the ancient world, it was said, "ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME." Is that true of the Father's house? Can that be accurately said as it relates to getting to God? The answer depends on who you ask. Religion says all roads lead to God. Religion says there are different and equally valid ways that all lead to God. Religion says it does not matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere.

But Christianity proclaims that all Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, cult members, New Agers, moral people – every person who is without Jesus – is on a dead-end street as it relates to getting to God. In so doing, we simply affirm what Jesus Christ himself claimed: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."* Mankind is lost, deceived, dead, and needs to get to God. *"No one comes to the Father except through me."* Jesus Christ is all-sufficient PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING. We need no other prophets to reveal God's word or will. We need no other priests to mediate God's salvation and blessings. We need no other kings to control our thinking and behavior. We are saved SOLUS CHRISTUS – by Christ alone. To trust Jesus for salvation is to trust so completely in him that you are willing to go to hell if Jesus alone cannot save you. It is Jesus along or we are not going to heaven at all.

Mark it down: Christianity is not a creed, a ceremony, or a code of conduct. It is a person. Christianity is Christ and Christ is God. While other religions are built on the moral and ethical teachings of their founders, the teachings of Christ are not what Christianity is based on. Christianity is based on Jesus Christ. The founders of other religions point away from themselves. But Jesus always points to himself. He says, *"No one comes to the Father except through me"* The rest of the New Testament agrees with this claim. John 1:12 says: *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."* Acts 4:12 says: *"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among them by*

*which we must be saved.” 1 Timothy 2:5 says: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*

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## **II. IT IS A CREDIBLE CLAIM.**

If I claimed to be PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, you would say I was crazy. But if Obama himself stood here and claimed to be Obama, you would believe him. There would be confirming evidence. He would look like and talk like Obama. He would have Secret Service protection and be surrounded by a crowd of reporters. Similarly, there is plenty of confirming evidence that Jesus is God and therefore credible when he claimed to be the only way to eternal life.

R.C. SPROUL writes about a humiliation he experienced as a freshman in college. His English professor was hostile to Christianity. In the middle of class she looked at him and said, “Mr. Sproul, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to God? He gasped as he felt the weight of the question and knew that every eye in the room was on him. His mind raced for away to escape the dilemma. He knew that if he said yes, people would be angry. He also knew that if he said no, he would betray Christ. Finally, he mumbled, “Yes, I do,” almost inaudibly. The teacher was furious. She said, “That’s the most narrow-minded, bigoted, and arrogant statement I have ever heard. You must be a supreme egotist to believe that your way of religion is the only way. Sproul quietly slouched back into his chair. Then he asked here if she thought that it was at least theoretically possible that Christ could be the only way to God. She allowed the possibility. Then he asked if she thought it was possible that a person could come to the belief that Jesus was God, without being narrow-minded or bigoted. Though she did not believe the deity of Christ, she recognized that a person could believe without being bigoted. Then he explained to her that the reason he believed that Christ was the only way to God is because Christ himself taught that in *John 14:6*.

I am glad R.C. SPROUL published that story for two reasons. It is encouraging to know that a person as theologically brilliant as Dr. Sproul had times when his witness for Christ was weak. It is also encouraging to know that you can believe Jesus is the only way to God and share that truth with others, without being arrogant, intolerant, or narrow-minded. It is true that some Christians share their faith in an arrogant manner. But it is not necessarily arrogant to believe and proclaim that Jesus is the only hope of salvation. It is one thing for me to claim that Jesus is the only way to God because that is the way I took. That would be to make my experience supreme and it would be the height of arrogance. But it is another thing for me to claim Jesus is the only way to God based on objective standards such as his virgin birth, his exclusive claims, his sinless life, his mighty miracles, his fulfilled prophecies, his substitutionary atonement, and his physical resurrection.

JOSH MCDOWELL entered university as a young man looking for a good time and searching for happiness and significance. He tried going to church, but found religion unsatisfying. He ran for student leadership positions but was disappointed by how quickly the glamour wore off. He tried the party circuit, but woke up Monday mornings feeling worse than ever. He finally noticed a group of students engaged in Bible study, and he became intrigued by the radiance

of one of the young ladies. He asked her a reason for it. She looked him straight in the eye, smiled, and said, "Jesus Christ." "Oh, for heaven's sake," he retorted, "don't give me that garbage about religion." She replied, "I didn't say religion. I said Jesus Christ." The students invited him to examine the claims of Christ and the evidence supporting Christianity. He accepted their challenge, and after much study and research, finally admitted that he could not refute the body of proof supporting Christianity. McDowell received Christ as his Savior, and his research became the background for his best-selling book of apologetics, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

Indeed, faith has its reasons. So why is it that so many people reject the credible claims of Christ? We prefer a generic brand-X "god" for the same reason the Israelites compelled Aaron to craft the golden calf. We want an accessible God who will serve our purposes. Think about it this way. If a person was running around impersonating you, there would be no way to expose that person, without some objective way of proving that you are who you are and the other person is not. Because you have fingerprints, identification, and a signature, you can expose the fraud. Likewise, the only way a false god can survive is if there is no objective standard. That is why sinful people won't accept the credible claims that Jesus is the only way. They do not want to deal with the fact that God has fingerprints. God has and I.D. God has a name.

John 3:19 says: *"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."* But no matter how much the world may hide in the dark, we must be faithful to our mission and message. We must proclaim to this dark world, Jesus is the light of the world! JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE wrote: "The chief offense of Christianity is its founder and his extraordinary claims... Eliminate the truth of Jesus of Nazareth with his exclusive claims, substitute another Jesus, and Christianity will be popular. But preach the true Jesus, and some will inevitably be offended." It is your right to reject the claims of Christ. But you cannot reject them and be a Christian at the same time. 1 John 5:9-12 says: *"If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has born concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."*

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### III. IT IS A LOGICAL CLAIM.

America is a melting pot where people from every conceivable racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds have come together to form one nation *E pluribus unum* – from the many, one. One of the things that has held this democratic experiment together for so long is the principle of religious toleration. Under this principle, all religious systems are guaranteed freedom of expression and equal treatment under the law. No one religion has exclusive claim to legal rights or government

establishment. The government of the United States expresses the will of the founding father that there be no “established national religion.” Thus, we have no state church that claims exclusive privilege under the law. Thank God for that. We are truly blessed to live in a land where we are free to worship God after the dictates of our own heart. But that blessing has turned into a curse, because we have blurred the line between religious liberty and objective truth. We have come to believe that equal tolerance of differing religions means the equal validity of those religions. So when Christians – or any group, for that matter – make claims of exclusivity, the response is most often one of shock, anger, and rejection.

But when Christians claim that Jesus is the only way, we are not being intolerant, close-minded, or unreasonable. To the contrary, Christianity’s claims of exclusivity are perfectly logical. Equal tolerance does not mean equal truth. The Bill of rights gives you the legal right to be theologically wrong. But that does not somehow automatically make you theologically correct. No one can deny others the right to attempt to approach God in their own way. But that does not mean their way will work. It is foolish to suggest that you have inevitably met the right God, no matter what form he may take when you find him.

Imagine that you and I met for the first time after this service. And you leave saying to yourself, “That preacher is alright.” Monday morning, you stop at Starbucks on your way to work, and you seem there, with some other guys. And we all have on UPS uniforms. Hesitantly, you speak. I speak back. We begin to chat. You think to yourself, “He must be one of those bi-vocational pastors.” But your radar goes off when you notice my nametag. It says Samuel Greene, not H.B. Charles. And when the other UPS guys say, “Same, are you ready?” you can’t resist. You ask, “I thought your name was H.B. Charles?” Rushing out the door, I say, “It is. Talk to you later.” Then we end up meeting later that same day. After work, you go to a restaurant for dinner, and there I am sitting in the waiting area. Hesitantly, you speak. I speak. We begin to chat. And you’re looking for an opportunity to bring up the UPS incident. Before you get your chance, the host says, “Mr. Larry Smith, your table is waiting.” And I get up and leave. You say, “I thought your name was H.B. Charles?” And I say, “It is. Talk to you later.”

If that happened, you would conclude that somebody has a big problem. It is also truth that someone has a problem if the reality of God keeps changing depending on where you meet him. That would violate the law of non-contradiction. It is a fundamental principle of logic that A cannot be A and not A at the same time or in the same sense. This is why every since you learned that  $2+2=4$ , you have not allowed anyone to tell you it equals 22, no matter how sincere they were. When you go to the store, and the clerk gives you the wrong change, you act like a mathematician correcting them. You don’t just let it slide, saying, “Maybe she has a different way of counting.” Yet when it comes to God, we accept different truth-claims indiscriminately, no matter how contradictory they may be. We even think that in so doing we are demonstrating how logical, open-minded, and intellectual we are. In reality we are only demonstrating how sinful, foolish, and deceived we are.

It is absolutely not true that all religions are basically the same. You don't need to be a biblical scholar, a great theologian, or an expert on world religions to establish the differences among the various religious truth-claims. If you want to know that difference between Christianity and the beliefs of Islam and Judaism, all you need is a basic understanding of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. Muslims and Jews may believe that Jesus was a great teacher, a mighty prophet, or a godly example. But they do not believe that Jesus is the Second Person of the holy Trinity, the only-begotten Son of God, who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. They don't believe he was born of a virgin on the first Christmas day and that, in the miracle of the Incarnation, he was so much God as though he was not man, yet so much man as though he were not God. They may believe that he died on a cross. But they believe the crucifixion was nothing more than the Jews ridding themselves of a non-conformist and the Romans ridding themselves of a nuisance. They do not believe that his death was a sovereign act, an eternal plan, a gift of love, a willing sacrifice, and a perfect atonement. They definitely do not believe that he was literally, physically, and visibly resurrected from the dead on the third day. I repeat. All religions are not the same. Therefore, intolerance can be a good thing.

When I get on an *airplane*, I want to know that the mechanics that checked it out were absolutely intolerant. I don't want a mechanic who says, "It looks like the engines are malfunctioning, but maybe it can handle one more flight." I want a doctor who is intolerant of cancer and every other sickness and who does not mind hurting my feelings in order to save my life. Likewise, you should be intolerant of any and all falsehood concerning the eternal destiny of your soul. You should determine to know the true way to God.

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#### **IV. IT IS A *GENEROUS* CLAIM.**

If Christians are right in claiming that Jesus is the only way to God, we are still left with the problem of a so-called narrow-minded God who provides only one way of redemption. Let me respond two ways. First of all, God is not being narrow-minded in giving only one way, because that one way is sufficient. John 3:16 says: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*" And Hebrews 7:25 says: "*Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*"

Likewise, God is not being narrow-minded in only giving one way. God is generous in providing any way to him at all! Suppose there is a God who is altogether holy and righteous. Suppose that God freely created mankind and gave mankind the gift of life. Suppose he sets his creatures in an ideal setting and gives them the freedom to participate in all of the glories of the created order with freedom. Suppose, however, that God imposes one small restriction upon them, warning them that if they violate that restriction, they will die. Suppose that for no

just cause the ungrateful creatures disobeyed the restriction. And suppose that when they rebelled, God redeemed them, rather than killing them.

Suppose the descendants of the first transgressors increased their disobedience and hostility toward their creator to the point that the whole world became rebellious against God, and each person did what was right in his own eyes. Suppose God still determined to redeem these people and freely gave special gifts to one nation so that through them the world would be blessed. Suppose God delivered his this people from poverty and enslavement to a ruthless Egyptian Pharaoh. Suppose this privileged nation, as soon as it was liberated, rebelled against their God and liberator. They consistently violated his law. But God, still intent upon redemption, sent prophets top lead with his people to return to him. Suppose the people killed the prophets and mocked their message. Suppose the people then began to worship idols of stone and things fashioned by their own hands. Suppose these people invited religions that were contrary to the truth of the real God and worshiped creatures rather than the Creator.

Suppose that in an ultimate act of redemption, God himself became a human in the person of his Son. But this Son of God was rejected, slandered, mocked, tortured, and murdered. Yet God accepted the murder of his own Son as punishment for the sins of the very people who murdered him. And God offered to his Son's murderers total amnesty, complete forgiveness, transcendent peace that comes with cleansing of guilt, victory over death, and eternal life of complete felicity. Suppose God gave these people as a free gift the promise of a future life that would be without pain, sickness, death, or tears. Yet God said to these people, "There is one thing that I demand. You must honor my Son and you must serve him alone." Suppose God did all of that, would you be willing to say, "God, That's not fair! You haven't done enough?" If man has in fact committed cosmic treason against God, what reason could we possible have that God should provide any way of redemption? In light of our rebellion against God, the issue is not why is there only one way, but why is there any way at all?

AMAZING GRACE SHALL ALWAYS BE MY SONG OF PRAISE  
FOR IT WAS GRACE THAT BOUGHT MY LIBERTY  
I DO NOT NOW JUST WHY HE CAME TO LOVE ME SO  
HE LOOKED BEYOND MY FAULTS AND SAW MY NEED

I SHALL FOREVER LIFT MY EYES TO CALVARY  
TO VIEW THE CROSS WHERE JESUS DIED FOR ME  
HOW MARVELOUS THE GRACE THAT CAUGHT MY FALLING SOUL  
HE LOOKED BEYOND MY FAULT AND SAW MY NEED