

Series: Bible Believe It Or Not
“Jesus is the only way to heaven”

For the week beginning 3.1.10

Lee Strobel was an investigative law reporter for the Chicago Tribune for over a decade. His job was to learn the facts of a particular case and then report on the verdict. A self-professed atheist, he was more than a little shocked when his wife became a Christian. Fearing the end of his marriage, he decided to go to church with her to investigate.

After hearing the pastor present the biblical picture of Jesus Christ, Strobel was moved but still unconvinced. He decided to investigate the person of Jesus Christ using the same strict criteria he had mastered in the newspaper business. He would put Jesus Christ on trial and seek to disprove Christianity. After interviewing more than a dozen PhD's and historical experts, Strobel accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and savior. Today he has written numerous best sellers in his “Case for...” series, hosts a TV show, and tours nationally. The following is taken from one of his sermons involving what he discovered about Jesus.

“Jesus often surprised people with teachings that cut across the grain of human nature. Lose your life to save it. The first will be last. The meek will inherit the earth. Rejoice in persecution. Pray for your enemies. It’s better to give than

“It's not narrow-minded to act upon the evidence and pursue the truth.”
- Lee Strobel

receive. Turn the other cheek. But, by far, the most outrageous assertion Jesus ever made — His most politically incorrect claim of all — was when He declared in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me.”

This claim rankles people like no other. It’s been called arrogant and narrow-minded and bigoted and snobbish. Some of you are seekers, and something inside of you chafes at this claim. For you, it may be a stumbling block to faith. But I believe that Jesus was telling the truth when He said it. And I believe He said it out of great compassion, not arrogance. And I believe that when we look closer at it, this statement makes ultimate sense. In fact, I believe this single sentence is one of the most critically important bits of information on the planet — and to you personally.”

This week we will look into the ramifications of this claim and seek to uncover some of the common myths of Christianity. We hope that God will reveal Himself to you this week and that He will warm your heart along the way!

THIS WEEK’S STUDY WILL FOCUS ON JESUS BEING THE ONLY WAY TO GOD AND ON THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

MONDAY — “Aren’t all religions basically the same?”

Big Point: *The differences between the major world religions are many and irreconcilable.*

Here is a summary of the major religions Lee talked about this weekend:

Islam— One God (Allah) who is a severe judge and not depicted as loving. Jesus is one of 124,000 prophets sent by God to various cultures. He did not die on a cross, rise from the dead, and is not the hope of the world. Balance between good and bad deeds determines eternal destiny in paradise or hell. Followers of Islam (Muslims) must follow five pillars of Islam.

Hinduism— There is not one official founder or strict set of writings. According to Hindu beliefs, there are many gods and everyone is a god, but unaware of it. Universal spirit (Brahman) is “The Absolute.” In this faith, Jesus is a teacher/guru, but didn’t rise from dead. His death does not atone for anyone’s sins. Salvation is achieved when there is a final absorption into Brahman through a cycle of reincarnation achieved through yoga and meditation.

Buddhism—Most Buddhists are atheists. Jesus is not part of this belief but some westerners think Jesus was an enlightened man. Goal of this life is to reach Nirvana through enlightenment. Nirvana is a state of releasing all desires or cravings as a way of escaping this present life’s suffering. To do this there’s an eight-fold pathway. No soul or spirit. One’s desires and feelings may be reincarnated into another person. In Buddhism, there is no heaven or no hell.

Scientology—Religion of Hollywood completely rejects Biblical description of God. Everyone is a “thetan,” an immortal spirit with unlimited powers over the universe but not all are aware of it. Jesus rarely mentioned. People were planted on earth by aliens. In Scientology, there is no sin so there is no need to repent. Instead, salvation is freedom from reincarnation. Followers must work with “auditor” on “engrams” (hang-ups) to achieve state of “clear.”

Mormonism— There are many gods equal to God. Mormons believe Jesus is the brother of Satan. Jesus wasn’t born from a virgin because they believe God had sex with Mary. Jesus’ death on the cross does not provide atonement for sin. People are saved by works such as Mormon baptism, tithing, ordination, marriage, and temple rituals. No eternal life without Mormon membership.

Biblical Christianity—One God in three distinct persons (Trinity). God the Father created the earth and everything in it. He is personal and involved with people. Jesus Christ has always existed and was never created. He is fully God and fully man. Died on a cross to forgive sins. The Holy Spirit is not a force or energy, but a person who comforts, grieves, convicts, and fills Christians. Salvation is found by God’s grace alone.

NOTES:

READ...What does the Bible say?

Deuteronomy 6:4 (New Living Translation)

⁴ “Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

THINK...Find the answers

What does Deuteronomy 6:4 tell us about the false idea that there are many “gods” in the universe?

Look back to the descriptions of major world religions. What sets Christianity apart from all other religions?

PRAY...God, What do you want me to know & do?

God, help me this week as I look into what makes faith in Christ so different from other religions. I trust that I will become closer to You as I more fully understand the sacrifice that you have made for me.

Random thoughts on the end of life...

*“I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older; then it dawned on me . . . they're cramming for their final exam.” - **George Carlin***

*“Time is the best teacher, but unfortunately, it kills all of its students.”
- **Robin Williams***

DAILY BIBLE READING COMMENTARY: Acts 26

Acts 26:6-9 *“for the hope of the promise: Paul was not being judged because he had done something wrong. He had not turned against his own Jewish heritage. Instead he fervently believed in the promises God had made to the nation of Israel: the promise of a coming Messiah and the reestablishment of the kingdom of God. Paul did not reject the hope of salvation for Israel. Instead he saw that hope fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead confirmed to Paul that all believers would be raised from the dead to enjoy the blessings of the promised kingdom of God” (Nelson’s New Illustrated Commentary 1414).*

Acts 26:20-22 *“Repentance indicates a complete change in thinking. In Rom. 12:2, Paul speaks of the ‘renewing of your mind.’ We do what we think is best, what makes sense to us. Paul was killing Christians because he thought it was the correct course of action. Christ’s revelation changed his thoughts, but his preaching of the Good News was visible proof that he had repented of his former ways. Genuine repentance is evidenced by changed behavior” (Nelson’s 1415).*

TUESDAY — “Who is to say that one religion is right (and another religion is wrong)?”

Big Point: *It is a myth that Christianity is just one philosophy among many, and it is only as valid as any other religion.*

STORYTIME... *Story of the Blind Men and the Elephant.*

Several blind men were walking along and came upon an elephant that allowed them to touch and feel it. “This creature is long and flexible like a snake” said the first blind man, holding the elephant’s trunk. “Not at all—it is thick and round like a tree trunk,” said the second blind man, feeling the elephant’s leg. “No, it is large and flat,” said the third blind man, touching the elephant’s side. Each blind man could feel only part of the elephant—none could envision the entire elephant. In the same way, it is argued, the religions of the world each have a grasp on part of the truth about spiritual reality, but none can see the whole elephant or claim to have a comprehensive vision of the truth.

This illustration backfires on its users. The story is told from the point of view of someone who is not blind. How could you know that each blind man only sees part of the elephant unless you claim to be able to see the whole elephant?

How could you possibly know that no religion can see the whole truth unless you yourself have the superior, comprehensive knowledge of spiritual reality you just claimed that none of the religions have? -Tim Keller, The Reason for God

READ...What does the Bible say?

John 14:6 (New Living Translation)

⁶Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

Colossians 2:8 (New International Version)

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

THINK...Find the answers

What did Jesus claim in John 14:6? How does Jesus’ claim exclude other religions from being equally valid?

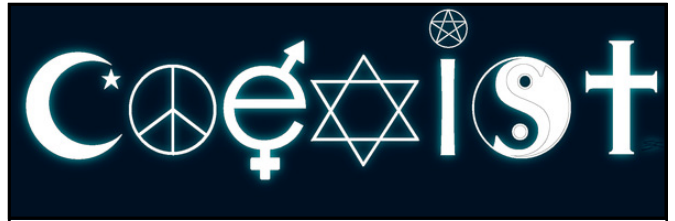
We are taught to be tolerant and accepting of other people—different races, genders, and religions. In light of Colossians 2:8, how can this “tolerance” lead us to incorrectly believe that all religions are true?

NOTES: “For my generation today, ‘tolerance’ is an excuse and an explanation in one. I almost don’t even like the word.” –Kaye, LIO team

LIVE...What will you do now?

When did you first realize that Christianity was the only true religion? Describe this experience. If you have never come to this point of understanding, what, today is holding you back?

If you could know without a shadow of a doubt that Christianity is true, how would it affect your day to day life?



The “COEXIST” movement supposedly promotes world religious peace by proposing that all religions have equally valid claims. Interestingly enough, Christianity is included in this movement even though it is based on Jesus’ exclusive claim to be the only way to God.

PRAY...God, What do you want me to know & do?

Jesus, thank you for being willing to die for my sins so I don't have to try and earn my way into heaven. Please help me remember that you are the only true God, and all others are false. Help me to keep my eyes on you. Amen.

Random Life Philosophies

Duct tape is like the force. It has a light side, a dark side, and it holds the universe together. -Oprah Winfrey

Don't worry about the world coming to an end today. It is already tomorrow in Australia. -Charles Schulz

DAILY BIBLE READING COMMENTARY: Acts 27

Acts 27:28 “A fathom equals six feet (2 [meters])” (Nelson’s 1416).

Acts 27:29-41 “**place where two seas met:** A shoal on the north side of Malta bears the name ‘Bay of St. Paul.’ Since Paul’s visit in A.D. 60, without interruption, the inhabitants of the island have been Christian” (Nelson’s 1416).

Acts 27:42, 43 “The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners because they knew Roman military law. If a prisoner escaped, the soldier on guard would be liable for the punishment of the one who escaped” (Nelson’s 1416).

WEDNESDAY — “Isn’t it snobbery to the “nth” degree to say that Christianity is the only way?”

Big Point: *It is not a snobbish assertion if Christianity is correct!*

STORYTIME: “Say that a young couple has a baby girl and she develops jaundice shortly after birth. Jaundice is a liver disorder that caused her skin and the whites of her eyes to turn yellow. The doctor tells the couple that jaundice is a potentially very harmful disease, but is easily treated. All they have to do is put the baby under a special light and this will stimulate her liver properly and she will be just fine. The parents could have said “That sounds too easy. Why don’t we just scrub her with soap and dip her in bleach instead? You know the jaundice is your truth, Doc, not our truth.” Would anybody accuse the parents if they trusted that doctor and followed the only course of treatment that would cure their baby? That’s not narrow-minded; that’s acting rationally in accordance with the evidence. **It’s not snobbish to act upon the evidence and pursue truth!**” - Lee Strobel

READ...What does the Bible say?

Isaiah 64:6 (New Living Translation)

⁶We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.

Romans 3:25 (New Living Translation)

²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past.

THINK...Find the answers

Read Isaiah 64:6. Why are we unable to approach holy God? Even when we try to do something right on our own, how does God perceive our human efforts?

Many religions stress the importance of good deeds and works in order to earn your way into heaven. But Christianity claims that our salvation comes from Christ alone – no amount of effort on our part can save us. Underline the portion of scripture in Romans 3:25 that answers the question: What must we do to be saved?

LIVE...What will you do now?

Salvation is a free gift from God. There are no strings attached. Was there ever a time in your life when you tried to earn God’s gift of salvation through good works?

If so, describe this experience. Also, in the space below, explain why trying to impress God with our good deeds is impossible.

How **should** knowing that your sin has been removed by Jesus affect your daily life? Now, how does it **actually** affect your daily life?

PRAY...God, What do you want me to know & do?

Today, start by thanking God for his free gift of salvation through Jesus. There is a lot of evidence in the Bible, but also many things that we do not know and must accept by faith. Ask God to give you understanding for the things you may be struggling with and to prepare you to share this good news with others.

Random thoughts on religion and philosophy from Homer Simpson:

"I'm normally not a praying man, but if you're up there, please save me Superman!"

"I want to share something with you -- the three sentences that will get you through life. Number one, 'Cover for me.' Number two, 'Oh, good idea, boss.' Number three, 'It was like that when I got here.'"

DAILY BIBLE READING COMMENTARY: Acts 28

Acts 28:17 *"By this time, the decree of the emperor Claudius (Acts 18:2) had been allowed to lapse, and Jews had returned to Rome" (Nelson's 1418).*

Acts 28:18-22 *"The Jewish leaders had not received any news about Paul from Judea. It may be that after Paul's appeal to Caesar, Paul was on the first ship that made it to Italy. Or the Jewish antagonists may have given up their attacks on Paul, having already failed with Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. A third reason may be that the Jews, only recently back in Rome after the expulsion of Claudius, wanted to avoid trouble."*

Acts 28:31 *"Luke does not reveal what happened to Paul's case. Apparently it had not yet been decided when Luke finished Acts. There are good reasons for believing that Paul was released, since he had been found innocent by all Roman officials up to this point. Ancient tradition tells that Paul actually went to Spain as he desired (Romans 15:24). In his captivity letters, Paul expressed his hope of being released (Philemon 22) and his confidence that he would be released (Philippians 1:25). Paul's Pastoral [letters] contain items that cannot be fit into the Book of Acts, suggesting that they were written later. For instance, Titus 1:5 implies that Paul ministered on the island of Crete, something that is not reported in the Book of Acts. Paul most likely resumed his missionary travels for two more years before being rearrested, retried, condemned, and executed as a martyr some time between A.D. 64-67." (Nelson's 1419)*

THURSDAY – There is never a lack of people waiting to hear the truth...

Big Point: *If you are unable to explain your faith, how can you expect to lead anyone to Christ?*

STORYTIME: *Some years ago I discovered apologetics. Something about studying various ways to defend my faith with someone who has taken an oppositional viewpoint spoke to me. Soon, I found myself calling the phone number on TV to order The Book of Mormon...as I heard somewhere that it came packaged with two Mormon missionaries. My living room became my very own mission field some Saturday mornings. We regularly had Mormons coming over to our house thinking they had all the answers, only to leave with questions, and once, even returning with their elders.*

While this practice might be extreme, it challenged me and pushed me to discover more about my faith, the differences among other major religions, and ultimately, “what is truth?” If we don’t get uncomfortable for Christ, we are probably not fulfilling His will for advancing His kingdom. There are lots of things I’d rather face than God’s judgment for being complacent in my faith. –Patrick, LIO Team

READ...What does the Bible say?

1 Peter 3:15-16 (New Living Translation)

¹⁵Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

Colossians 4:6 (New Living Translation)

⁶Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

THINK...Find the answers

In the above verses, we read about how God created us to showcase His love to others. According to 1 Peter, how should we go about sharing our faith with others?

The passage in Colossians says our conversation should be “gracious and attractive”. In what way(s) could you discuss a topic like sin and death in a “gracious and attractive” manner?

NOTES:

LIVE...What will you do now?

Have you ever noticed someone sharing their faith without “gentleness and respect”? How did this make you feel? Why is it so important to talk to others from a standpoint of love?

If a friend asked you to explain your faith right now, how confident would your answer be? People are always watching us so we must always be prepared! What could you do to prepare yourself for a conversation with someone who had questions about your faith?

PRAY...God, What do you want me to know & do?

God, thank you for Your Word! You have given me the Truth, and I pray You would help me to share it. I pray for compassion, kindness, and humility as I talk to others about You, and it is my hope that You would speak through me. Give me opportunities to share Your love, and the courage to act on them. Amen.

Random thoughts on Jesus

“And some people say Jesus wasn't Jewish; yes he was. C'mon, 30 years old, lives with his parents, come on! He takes his father's business, his mom thought he was God's gift, give it up!” -Robin Williams

“As a child, I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene.” -Albert Einstein

DAILY BIBLE READING COMMENTARY: Hebrews 1

The book of Hebrews was written sometime around 70 A.D. by an unknown author. Some have proposed the book was written by Apollo or Peter. John MacArthur believes that Hebrews is closely connected with the Old Testament book of Leviticus and so understanding the principles of the Levitical priesthood is important to comprehending Hebrews.

While there is no exact geographical reference, it is believed that the book of Hebrews was written outside of Israel; however, there is no reference to Gentiles in the book.

The general outline of the book of Hebrews begins with the superiority of Jesus Christ. The first three verses of Hebrews 1 summarize the entire book: the superiority of Christ to the angels; the superiority of Christ to Moses; the superiority of Christ to Joshua; the superiority of Christ to the old covenant and the old sacrifices.

For Jews, it was always a dangerous thing to approach God. On the day of Atonement, only the high priest could enter the holy of holies where God's presence was. The writer of Hebrews wrote to let believers know that their perfect priest had come once and for all. Jesus came to give us direct access to God—as the book of Hebrews progresses, it is very clear that God desires for us to approach Him boldly.

FRIDAY — S.O.A.P. study on today's Bible reading

We thought this verse would be an appropriate verse to study considering that we've been reviewing the importance of being able to explain why Jesus is the only way. This verse is taken from today's Daily Bible Reading assignment.

Scripture: **Hebrews 2:1 (New Living Translation)**

¹ So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.

Observation: What did you learn in this verse? What might God be trying to say to you through this verse?

Application: Personalize this verse by asking yourself what you need to do as a result of what you've just read - have you been encouraged or is there something you might need to consider differently?

Prayer: Write out a prayer asking God to help you use this verse in your life or to help you understand it more fully. Prayer is a two-way conversation, so make sure to take time to wait for God to respond.

THIS WEEK'S BIG POINT: The most important thing I learned during the Living It Out: Daily Bible Study this week was:

DAILY BIBLE READING COMMENTARY: Hebrews 2

Hebrews 2:1 This chapter opens with a warning to those who are in danger of missing heaven because they “listened” but they didn’t “hear.” “Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were not actively opposed to Jesus Christ but who simply drifted into damnation by neglecting to respond to the gospel.” (from John MacArthur) The writer cares more about his listener’s response to the gospel than just delivering the words.

Hebrews 2:5 The angels were very important to Jewish people because they were the ones who were part of delivering news from God. So when the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is better than the angels, that would get the listeners’ attention.

Hebrews 2:5-9 Jesus is God. However, Jesus came to earth in human form in order to come down to man’s sinful level. Therefore, he was, for a short period of time, lower than the angels. The greatest proof that Jesus was lower than the angels was that he suffered a mortal death as a man.

Hebrews 2:11 Another word for “holy” is “sanctified” which comes from a Greek word “hagiazō,” which means “to make holy.” Since Jesus Christ is holy, then he is capable of making you and me holy through his death and our faith in him.

Family Activity Section

Lesson: Ask the children if they ever have big “God questions”; i.e. *How do clouds stay up in the sky? Where is heaven? Who made lightning?*

Questions this big lead us back to God and His word, and cause us to want us to explore all of his amazing creations. One of the big questions we usually ask as children at some point is “How do we get to be with God?”

Let’s read this verse together: Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

So what is the only way we get to be with God and have a personal relationship with him?

Activity: Share with the children how they can ask Jesus to be their forever friend.

Prayer: *God, I know that Jesus made it possible for me to have you as a forever friend. Without what Jesus did for me on the Cross, I would not be able to do this. Thank you for sending your son to pay for my sin. I want to follow you for the rest of my life. Thank you for making it possible. Amen*

Living It Out: March 2010

*John 15:13 (New Living Translation)
There is no greater love than to lay down one's
life for one's friends.*

Living It Out

It is the dream of CedarCreek that everyone who calls this their church home will be reading and studying the same topics, both individually and in groups. Each week, join with thousands of others at CedarCreek Church in applying God's Word, the Bible, into your daily life. Our hope is that while we learn and grow together, as individuals and as a church, we will collectively live out the weekend message.

Living It Out resources, such as the Daily Bible Study, Daily Bible Reading Plan, Discussion Questions and Scripture Memory Verses, are designed to help us embrace a missional mindset...a mindset that compels us to love Jesus, serve others and tell the world about Christ.

Living It Out: Daily Bible Study...Daily Bible study activities to reflect on the weekend message

Living It Out: Daily Bible Reading Plan...Read through the New Testament in a year

Living It Out: Discussion Questions...Weekly questions to discuss with others

Living It Out: Scripture Memory...Memorize one Bible verse per month

All of these resources are also available electronically at www.livingitout.tv, where you can subscribe to have any or all of them emailed to you as they are updated.

We Want Your Feedback!

Tell us about any questions or comments you have about this week's Living It Out: Daily Bible Study. Forward them to barbr@cedarcreek.tv.

<p>CedarCreek Church 29129 Lime City Road Perrysburg, Oh 43551 Phone: 419.661.8661 Fax: 419.661.8665 www.cedarcreek.tv www.livingitout.tv</p>	<p>RESOURCES: <i>The Bible</i> <i>LeeStrobel.com</i> <i>Reason for God</i> by Tim Keller</p>	<p>Living It Out: Daily Bible Reading Plan scriptures are listed for each day. By completing each of the daily readings, you will read the entire New Testament in 1 year. These readings are separate from the Daily Bible Study.</p>	<p><i>This week's Living It Out: Daily Bible Study written by:</i> Kaye Kinney Rick Kinney Emily Lee Patrick Roper Luke Shortridge Elissa Teal</p>
--	--	---	--