

8/18/24 Christ Fellowship

What Would Jesus Do About Religion

John 14:1-6

Somebody tell me your absolute favorite food. You're on death row and you get one last meal. What are you ordering? Is it Mexican food? Pasta? Chicken fried steak? Fried chicken? What? If you tell me vegetables, I'm going to have you escorted out.

Now, how do you eat that? Huh? How do you eat your favorite food? Well, that's the dumbest question ever, isn't it? I get the food on the fork, open my mouth and chew and then swallow. What kind of question is that?

But what if I ask the question this way: how does your body use that food? How does your body know how to take the nutrients out of the food you eat and send them to the places that need them? How does your body know to use potassium to help kidney function and calcium to promote bone strength? *How does your body use food* is a completely different question than *how do you eat*.

Now, if I asked you how are you saved, what would you say? We are saved by grace and through faith, as it says in **Ephesians 2**. That's it. That's easy. It's not complicated. The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" ([Acts 16:30](#)). Paul and Silas responded, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved*" ([Acts 16:31](#)). That's it. Period. You don't have to be baptized. You don't have to take the Lord's Supper. You don't have to have some kind of feeling. You don't have to even go to church or be a good person. Just believe.

Now, what if I asked you how that works. How does the blood of Jesus on the cross wash away all our sins? How does sanctification work? What is atonement? What is propitiation and how does it differ from expiation? How can God be one and still be Father, Son and Spirit? AAHH! My head is going to explode...but I'm still saved.

Just like you don't have to know how your body uses food you eat, you don't have to understand God to be saved. **Kenneth Clark** worked in television and lived and died without faith in Jesus Christ. He admitted in his autobiography that while visiting a beautiful church he had what he believed to be an overwhelming religious experience. "*My whole being,*" Clark wrote, "*was irradiated by a kind of heavenly joy far more intense than anything I had known before.*" But it created a problem. If he allowed himself to be influenced by it, he knew he would have to change, his family might think he had lost his

mind, and maybe that intense joy would prove to be an illusion. So he concluded, "*I was too deeply embedded in the world to change course.*" (*Our Daily Bread*, February 15, 1994.)

It's not about a feeling or some experience you have. It's just faith. It has nothing to do with anything we do. It's just faith. Now, compare that to every other religion in the world. So, I did some research...I googled it...and I found out how to become a Buddhist. Want to hear about it? First, you have to learn the four noble truths. Then join a temple. Then take refuge in the Triple Gem, uphold the 5 precepts and practice the middle way. Got all that?

Becoming a Muslim is easier. Want to become a Muslim? Believe that Allah is God and then you must recite the Shahada and you have to have a witness there while you do it to make it legal. Then you take a shower to cleanse yourself. Not too hard but you still have to do some things.

Other religions include all kinds of other acts that the followers must do to get to Heaven or Paradise or Nirvana or whatever they call it. But today I want to look at what Jesus would do about religion. In other "research" I found the definition of religion as "*the belief in and worship of a superhuman power, especially a God.*" So, let's turn to **John chapter 14** and see what Jesus said about how to get to God.

As you turn there you need to remember the context of this setting. **John 13-17** are all set in the upper room with Jesus and His disciples. Here He washes their feet, predicts the betrayal of Judas and the denial of Peter. And Jesus tells them He will have to go. He has told them previously that He will be killed but now Jesus knows it is imminent. I'm sure they could tell something was very wrong and upsetting to Jesus but all they could think about right now was their own problems.

So, because Jesus wants to encourage them in their grief about Him leaving, He tells them some good news, some encouraging news. Let's pick it up at **John 14, verse 1** and read through **verse 6**. "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God^[a]; believe also in me. ²My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going.*"⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"⁶ Jesus answered, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*"

The Jewish rabbis and teachers spoke a lot about the way of God. It was all through the Old Testament. God said to Moses in **Deuteronomy 5**, “*You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you.*” **Isaiah** said, “*Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, this is the way. Walk in it.*” (Is. 30:21) The psalmist in **chapter 27** said, “*Teach me your way, Oh Lord.*” And here Jesus tells His disciples simply, “*I AM the way.*”

I miss the good old days of really good customer service, don't you? When I go to Lowes or Home Depot and I ask some random worker where the widgets are I want him to show me, not tell me. When he says it's over there on aisle 46F, top shelf, next to the whatyamacallits, well okay, I'll probably find it but it sure would be nice for the guy to just say, “*Yes sir. Follow me.*” And then go put his hands on it. Right?

That's what Jesus is doing right here. He doesn't just give advice or give directions. He takes us by the hand and says, “*Follow me.*” I AM the way. Now, I want you to see something here. Like you, I have been reading this passage since I was a little kid. We probably all memorized this passage in Sunday School as kids. But I have never really seen this passage fully like I did this past week.

I'm so thankful for Thomas. Yes, we call him Doubting Thomas for a reason but he asks a great question that gets an even better answer. He says, “*Jesus, we don't know where you are going and we want to know the way.*” And Jesus says, “*You know the way because you know Me. I am the way.*” And Jesus is saying that, yes, He is the way to Heaven but He is the way to everything. Everything that is right and good and the way that gets blessed; the way that is shown mercy and given wisdom. Jesus is the way to all that. And if we want all that then we need to know Jesus better and better.

In **Philippians 3**, did Paul say, “*I want to be comfortable and I want to have enough money and I want to take a vacation once a year and I want new bass boat*”? No! Paul said, “*I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*” That's what Paul wanted because Paul knew the secret to life. How is this not the secret to life?

Do you want joy in this joyless world? Jesus is the way. Do you want peace when the world around you is caving in? Jesus is the way. Do you want blessings and wisdom and power to overcome? Jesus is the way. This is the secret to life and the super-duper mega bonus is...it's the secret to death as well. Do you want Heaven for all eternity? Jesus is the way.

Now, let me ask you a question. If I told you that to have all this you needed to donate twenty bucks and stand on your head every day for ten minutes, would you do it? Would

you give ten minutes and twenty dollars to have peace and joy and blessings and wisdom and even heaven? Of course you would! Well, I have good news. It's even simpler than that. All you have to do is believe that Jesus is the way.

Okay, so now what do you think my next question is going to be? Do you think it will be, what does belief look like? No. That's not it but I'm getting there. My next question is, is there anybody here that can actually stand on your head? Can you? I'm quite sure I can't but I don't know for sure because it's probably been forty years since I tried.

I ask that because if I truly believed that giving twenty bucks and standing on my head was the secret to life and the way to truly find happiness and joy and peace and wisdom and even Heaven, what do you think I would do? If I truly believed it then I would start at least trying to stand on my head. I might not be able to do it at first but if I believed it would lead me to a full and abundant life with Heaven afterward, then I'm going to work on it every day.

For some of us that are older and not quite in the peak physical form that we used to be, that might mean making some changes to what we eat and what we do. I might want to get stronger all over to be able to stand on my head better and longer until I could do it for ten minutes. But I wouldn't just say, "*I believe it.*" You would be able to tell it. You could see it in my body and on my face. I could prove it by actually standing on my head. My life would change even if it were just in some small way.

I looked up some quotes from Buddha and one right off the bat caught my eye. "**Do not look for a sanctuary in anyone except yourself.**" But if you think Buddha is the way to peace and joy in this life and Heaven afterward then you better get to upholding the 5 precepts and practicing the middle way. Whatever that means.

If you think Allah is the way to peace and joy in this life and Heaven afterward, just know the Quran says, "**Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.**" So, you better get to reciting the Shahada and taking a shower.

But if you believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life like He said He was then know that Jesus also said in **Matthew 11**, "*Come to me you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*" And He said in **John 3** that we don't change ourselves. He makes us born again. And when we are born again it will be obvious to ourselves and to other people around us. We are not the same as we used to be. We talk different. We act different. We don't look like the world wants us to look. We don't use the same words they do or go to the same

places. We are holy, set apart for His work and more so every day because of His work in us.

I need to notify some of you of your rights. If you go fishing with me, anything you say can and will be held against you in a sermon illustration. I went fishing with Billy Perry the other day. Now, don't even ask if we caught anything. That's not the point of this illustration. But even though he didn't catch any fish, I love me some Billy. Billy has some of the craziest stories to tell about a life he doesn't lead anymore. These stories could easily have turned out tragic, but we can look back now and laugh because Billy is a new creation. Oh, he's still Billy but he doesn't do what he used to do. He doesn't talk like he used to talk. He doesn't go where he used to go...except to prison. He still goes there but now it's his choice. And Billy's greatest joy now is going back to the prisons and telling other people how Jesus changed his life. And now he's full of those kinds of stories like only Billy can tell. Thank you, Lord!

How about you? Does that describe you? Are you a new creation? I'm not asking if you are perfect. I'm asking, are you changed? Would your neighbors agree that you are changed? Would your high school buddies say so? Are you continuing to change? Is God continuing to work in you, giving to you and taking away from you things to make you more like Him? Are you getting closer to Him every day? Are you understanding things now that you didn't before? That's what it looks like to believe.

And you can have that life if you want it. And you don't have to do anything except believe. And when you believe you will get baptized and you will join a church and you will pray and read scripture and do all those things that help you to know Him better but none of that saves you. All you have to do is truly believe. Do it right now as the music plays.