

# How can there be one true religion? | John 4:1-10



KICK OFF

Do people see religion as divisive and the cause of war? Why or why not?



KEY VERSE

'By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come into the flesh is from God' | John 4:2



BIG IDEA

It is the exclusiveness of Christianity's beliefs that leads to the most inclusive behaviour.



INVESTIGATE

## THE DIVISIVENESS OF RELIGION (Vs 1)

### Read 1 John 4:1

1. What are some of the ways that the world has tried to control religion? Have these worked?

2. Think of some of these ways: what has been the impact?

Outlawing religion

Condemning religion—this approach is sometimes expressed by the following axioms; what are the problems with them?

*"All major religions are equally valid and basically teach the same thing."*

*'Each religion sees part of spiritual truth, but none can see the whole truth.'* (see Newbegin quote side bar)

*'Religious belief is too culturally and historically conditioned to be 'truth.'*

*'It is arrogant to insist your religion is right and to convert others to it.'*

Keeping religion completely private

3. In 1 John 4:1 the Apostle John is talking about 'false teachers.' But notice, he does not say 'test the teachers' - but— 'test the spirits.' Why does he say that?
4. One way of dealing with the divisiveness of religion says: 'you can have your religion, but make sure you keep it private.' Verses 5-6 contrast with each other. Is John contrasting two different worldviews? Is the view 'all religions are equally valid paths to God' a faith position?



DIG DEEPER

Timothy Keller quotes Alistair McGrath who in his 'History of Atheism' says: 'The 20th century gave rise to one of the greatest and most distressing paradoxes of human history: that the greatest intolerance and violence of that century were practiced by those who believed that religion caused intolerance and violence.' (p 5 Timothy Keller *The Reason for God*.)

'There is an appearance of humility in the protestation that the truth is much greater than anyone of us can grasp, but if this is used to invalidate all claims to discern the truth, it is in fact an arrogant claim to be the kind of knowledge which is superior to [to all] ... We have to ask: 'what is the [absolute] vantage ground from which you claim to be able to relativise all the absolute claims these different scriptures make?' (Keller p 9 quoting Newbegin in *The Reason for God*).

## THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIANITY (vs 2—10)

### Read 1 John 4: 1—10

5. How does the Apostle John explain the uniqueness of Christianity in this passage?
6. What contribution does the bodily resurrection of Jesus make to our view of this world and the next?  
1 Peter 1: 3—9

Romans 8: 18—25



### THINK AND APPLY

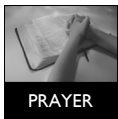
7. How does the Christian's gospel empower Christians to live out Jeremiah 29: 4—7 in our culture?
8. How would you handle the following objections to Christianity's claim to be the only way to God?

*'All major religions are equally valid, produce much wisdom and happiness, and basically teach the same thing.'*

*'Lots of good and intelligent people differ with the Christian viewpoint, so it is arrogant to claim that Christian beliefs are the only true ones.'*

*'You can't hold people responsible for rejecting Jesus when they have never heard of him.'*

*'Nobody can know whose religion is true, so Christianity can't claim it is the only true way.'*



Praise God for the challenges raised by God's Word through this study?

PRAYER

Praying for others in your group.

'Christians, then, should expect to find nonbelievers who are much nicer, kinder, wiser, and better than they are. Why? Christian believers are not accepted by God because of their moral performance, wisdom, or virtue, but because of Christ's work on their behalf. Most religion and philosophies of life assume that one's spiritual status depends on your religious attainments. This naturally leads adherents to feel superior to those who don't believe and behave as they do. The Christian gospel, in any case, should not have that effect. (Keller p 19 The Reason for God).

**PRAISE GOD** for Jesus' authority as: teacher, the Christ, Lord, Saviour, Judge and God.

**CONFESS** that our lives have not been attractive as in Jeremiah 29: 4—7

**ASK GOD** that Jesus' gospel, standards, values and priorities will be evidence in the life of his community: the church.

**PRAY ALSO** that we would humbly and honestly answer people's questions about Christianity.



READ AHEAD

For next week—Why does a good God allow suffering and evil? 1 Peter 1: 1—12