

## Jesus and exclusivity

### Matthew 7:13-14

#### The Passage:

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“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. [14] For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

- Two gates
- Two paths
- Two groups
- Two destinations

#### Path one

- Wide gate
- Easy path
- Large crowd
- Takes you off a cliff and leads to your destruction

#### Path two

- Narrow gate
- Hard path
- Few people
- Leads to eternal life

**MAIN POINT:** Increasingly people are denying Christianity on the basis that it is too exclusive, but we need to remember that any truth claim (even things like math) are exclusive truth claims.

To believe that all people have value and dignity is to believe that in-equality is false and to be excluded. To believe that all people are equal on the basis of their inherent dignity as human beings, regardless of their skin color, is to believe that truth exclusively and to believe therefore that racism is exclusively wrong. To believe that no one religion should claim to be exclusively true, is itself an exclusive truth claim.

**QUESTIONS:**

**Q:** Jesus says that there is one path that leads to eternal life and the other path leads to destruction. In John 14 Jesus says that he is the “way, the truth, and the life” and that “no one can come to the Father except through me.” That is an exclusive claim. Each of us are products of this culture that is allergic such claims as these. What do you think about the claims of Christ? Are you at peace with them or not?

**Q:** Do you believe that all truth claims are exclusive? Why or why not?

**Q: Do all exclusive claims cause people to act in a superior way and cause people to mistreat others?** How does the gospel lead to people treating with love and sacrifice instead of judgment and superiority?

- **All major religions teach basically the same thing**

<sup>1</sup> “The problem with this position is its inconsistency. It insists that doctrine is unimportant, but at the same time assumes doctrinal beliefs about the nature of God that are at loggerheads with those of all the major faiths. Buddhism doesn’t believe in a personal God at all. Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe in a God who holds people accountable for their beliefs and practices and whose attribute could not be all reduced to love. Ironically, the insistence that doctrines do not matter is really a doctrine itself.”

- **Each religion sees part of spiritual truth, but none can see the whole truth.**

There is a well-known story that goes along with this idea... *Several blind men are walking along and come to an elephant.* One of them feels the trunk and decides that they are touching a snake. Another one feels a leg and says, “No it’s a tree.” Each blind man could only envision part of the elephant and none of them were able to envision the whole elephant or claim to have “the truth.” This story is meant to say...*the blind men are like the world religions. Each of them only sees part of the truth, and none of them are completely true.* But how can you know that only each blind man only sees part of the elephant unless you claim to be able to see the whole elephant yourself? Who is the person with site? Who has the complete knowledge? How could you possibly know

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter One of Tim Keller’s “The reason for God” is the basis for much of Scott’s sermon this week and a great resource.

that no one religion has the truth unless you yourself have superior knowledge and understanding? This point of view sounds humble, “None of us knows the complete truth” but in the end is just as exclusive a claim “no religion sees the whole truth.” That is an exclusive claim.

- **People only believe in religion because they were conditioned to believe it through their culture and family**

If you believe that all religious belief is conditioned by your culture and your context, you need to be intellectually honest enough to say that that includes your religious belief too, or lack-there-of.

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

This statement is a strong conviction in and of itself, and the person who holds this conviction does everything they can to “convert” people to their way of thinking. When the vast majority of the world has a religious conviction, isn’t it equally arrogant to seek to convert someone to unbelief? Their view is an “exclusive “ claim and if all “exclusive claims” about God are to be rejected, then this one should also be rejected. It is the absolute belief that there is no absolute belief. It is the absolute certainty that there is no absolute certainty.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

-Interested in becoming a member of New Valley or just digging deeper into what it is we believe? Attend the Intro to NV class on June 3<sup>rd</sup> from 8am to noon. Breakfast and childcare are provided. RSVP at [ahwatukee.newvalleychurch.org/events](http://ahwatukee.newvalleychurch.org/events).

-We need volunteers! Our children’s ministry is in need of summer volunteers. We also have openings in Net team, Media and Hospitality. Please email [amanda@newvalleychurch.org](mailto:amanda@newvalleychurch.org) if you want more info or would like to join a team.